

**MONASTICISM
AND
CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE
IN
EARLY ISLAMIC PALESTINE
c.614-c.950**

by

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies of early Islamic Palestine have stressed the minimal impact of the Arab conquest on the Christian communities of the region. None, however, have sought to trace the trajectories of these communities beyond the eighth century. This thesis provides the first long-term study of the impact of the Arab conquest on monasticism and pilgrimage between 614 and 950. The study explores the changes to the physical landscape of monasteries and Christian cult sites, in terms of site abandonment and continuity, and situates these processes in the broader political and economic context of the Palestinian region between the seventh and tenth centuries.

This thesis offers a systematic critique of current theories which view Palestinian monasticism and Christian pilgrimage as social entities dependent upon patronage from Byzantium and the early medieval west. Rather, it stresses the need for a more nuanced recognition of monastic communities and Christian cult sites as places closely interlinked with localised developments and the high degree of variation between communities in terms of patron economies and social transactions. This study demonstrates that these variances often provide the key to understanding the highly varied response of Palestinian monastic communities and Christian cult sites to early Muslim rule.

**To Amy
For everything**

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| AASS | <i>Acta Sanctorum</i> , 71 vols. (Paris, 1863–1940) |
| APAAME | Aerial photographic archive for archaeology in the Middle East, University of Western Australia (Crawley, 1978-) |
| BGA | De Goeje, M. J. (ed.). 1970/1930 (Blanchere, R. [ed.]), <i>Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum</i> (Leiden, 1870-1894) |
| BHG | F. Halkin, <i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca</i> (Subsidia hagiographica 3 rd edn., Brussels 1957) |
| CFHB | <i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i> (Series Washingtoniensis, Washington DC, 1967-); (Series Berolinensis, Berlin, New York, 1967-);)Series Vindobonensis, Vienna, 1974); (Series Italica, Rome, 1975-); (Series Bruxellensis, Brussels, 1975-) |
| CSHB | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i> (Bonn 1828-1897) |
| CSCO | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> (Paris and Louvain, 1903-) |
| Mansi | <i>Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima Collectio</i> , ed. J. D. Mansi (Florence 1759) |
| ODB | Kazhdan, A. P. <i>et al.</i> 1991: <i>The Oxford dictionary of Byzantium</i> , Oxford and New York. |
| PL | <i>Patrologiae Cursus completus, series Latina</i> , ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844-1974) |
| PG | <i>Patrologiae Cursus completus, series Greco Latina</i> , ed. J. P. Migne (Paris 1857-1866, 1880-1903) |
| PO | <i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> , eds. R. Graffin, F. Nau (Paris, 1930-) |
| <i>P. Colt</i> | Kraemer, C. J. 1958: <i>Excavations at Nessana vol. 3: non-literary papyri</i> , Princeton, NJ. |
| <i>P. Mird</i> | Grohmann, A. 1963: <i>Arabic papyri from Hirbet el-Mird</i> , Louvain. |
| <i>P. Petra</i> | Frösén, J., Arjava, A. and Lehtinen, M. (eds.) 2002: <i>The Petra Papyri I</i> . Amman. |
| MGH | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> (Hanover-Berlin, 1826) |
| MHG, <i>Leges</i> | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Legum)</i> , 5 vols. (Hanover, 1835-1889) |
| MHG, <i>Epp.</i> | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Epistolarum)</i> , 8 vols. (Berlin 1887-1939). |

- MGH (SGUS) *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum)* (Hanover, 1871-1965); n.s. 13 vols. (Berlin-Weimar, 1920-1967)
- MGH (*Script. Rerum Langobardicarum*) *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et italicarum saec. VI-IX)* (Hanover, 1878)
- MGH (*Script. Rerum Merovingicarum*), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum)* 7 vols. (Hanover, 1885-1920)
- MGH (SS) *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (scriptorum)*, 32 vols. (Hanover, 1826-1934)
- Synax, CP* *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum*, ed. H. Delehay (Propylaeum ad AS Novembris) (Brussels, 1902)

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION, PRIMARY SOURCES AND DATING

PRIMARY SOURCES

For works whose original titles are unknown I have adopted the English translation of the titles assigned by their editors. Thus the collective hagiographies of Cyril of Scythopolis are referred to as *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* rather than by their Latin titles.

ARABIC

I have adopted the conventions of the Encyclopaedia of Islam but have included the alterations more commonly preferred by modern scholars.

These are:

J rather than Dj when referring to ج

Q rather than Q̣ when referring to ق

I have also tried to use the original Arabic name of an individual or place rather than their western equivalent (eg Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq rather than Eutychios). There are a few cases, however, where I have adopted the western equivalent used more commonly in current scholarship (e.g. Theodore Abū Qurrah and Peter of Bayt Raʿs).

GREEK

I have avoided the tendency to Latinise Greek names wherever possible. Therefore, words or names ending with 'us' have been transliterated as 'os' (e.g. Prokopios rather than Procopius) and I have adopted the convention of transliterating the Latin 'C' with a K wherever possible (e.g. Prokopios rather than Procopius). However, when referring to some figures or places

more commonly known by their English or Latinised equivalent (e.g. Constantine V or Scythopolis) I have adopted the anglicised form to avoid confusion.

DATING

In terms of chronology, this thesis adopts the standard Gregorian calendar. I have omitted the more religiously charged conventions BC/AD and the use of the more neutral alternatives BCE/CE. In any case, all dates given in this thesis refer to the Common Era unless otherwise stated. I am aware that this convention overlooks the use of Hijri calendar in Palestine in the early Islamic period. However, given that this study encompasses and compares a number of different regions and periods (many of which maintained their own calendars) I have adopted a single system in the interests of clarity.

PLACE NAMES

The convention of naming places and settlements are more complicated, especially ancient sites more commonly known by their Greek rather Arabic equivalents. In such instances, I have tried to acknowledge both Arabic and Greek names (e.g. Gerasa/Jarash). Similarly, for sites whose ancient name is unknown, the coexistence of Arabic, Hebrew and Anglicised names of settlements, especially in modern Israel, is invariably a problem. In this thesis I had adopted the names by which they are most commonly referred to in modern publications in the interests of clarity and cross-referencing.

QUOTATIONS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

Quotations, translations and transcriptions are presented in this thesis with no alterations to the original publications.

INTRODUCTION

THE BRIDGE FROM LATE ANTIQUITY, 600-950

Focus on the emergence of a Christian ‘holy land’ in the Levant, as both a theological construct and a physical landscape, has a long history which stretches to the origins of Byzantine studies as a discipline. The publication of a succession of core texts, alongside a series of early excavations following the 1880s, established an interest in the Christian cult topography of the region which has continued uninterrupted over the past century.¹

The discipline quickly gathered momentum during the course of the early twentieth century. A series of excavations and surveys at church sites and monasteries during the British Mandate, under the direction of Derwas Chitty, and those under the supervision of church-sponsored institutions – including the still active Franciscan Institute – has contributed to the accumulation of a wide corpus of church sites through which scholars have traced the development of a Christianised landscape in the region.² Following a temporary hiatus during the conflict of the 1960s, activity was quickly resumed. Developments in the past five decades have witnessed the growing contribution of government funded (under the auspices of various antiquities authorities) excavations and the continued presence of

¹ Most notable among these early publications (concerning the Byzantine period) were those of the Palestine Pilgrims Text Society, see Le Strange 1886, Stewart 1887a, Stewart 1887b, Stewart 1887c, Stewart 1888 and Stewart 1889. Archaeological studies are represented by the earliest preliminary surveys of monastic structures by Vailhé 1897-98 and Vailhé 1898-99. Equally influential (and still in use) are the preliminary surveys by Clermont Ganneau 1898 and Clermont Ganneau 1899.

² See Chitty 1928, Chitty 1928b and Chitty 1932. These studies focussed on the growth of monasticism in the Judean Desert. This was collectively synthesised in his later, still widely used, publication, see Chitty 1966. See also Crowfoot 1938: 171-269. Active predominantly in the 1940s, Sylvester Saller of the Franciscan Institute added considerably to this corpus, see Saller 1941a, Saller 1941b and Saller 1941c for a discussion of the excavations at Mount Nebo. For his excavations at Bethany see Saller 1957 and those of ‘Ein Kārem see Saller 1946. A rough contemporary of Sylvester Saller was Michael Avi Yonah active between the 1930s-1970s, see Avi Yonah 1933, Avi Yonah 1940, Avi Yonah 1947 and Avi Yonah 1966. Schick 1998: 80-85 offers a discussion of archaeological projects in the region during the twentieth century.

American and European academic institutions.³

Augmenting this broader corpus of church sites has been a renewal of interest in the larger urban centres of the region. Systematic (if rudimentary) approaches to Byzantine urban centres, now within the borders of the state of Israel and the Palestinian territories, have been subjected to archaeological approaches far longer in this regard (since the early twentieth century), but developments since the 1967 conflict have shown growing activity and publication of sites in modern Jordan including Jarash, Pella, 'Ammān and Umm Qays.⁴ Additional projects in Israel – Scythopolis/Baysān, Tiberias/Ṭabarīyyah and Hippos/Sussita – have supplemented this trend; collectively facilitating far broader appraisals of the landscape throughout the Byzantine period until the eve of the Arab conquest.⁵

'Christian archaeology' is steadily being situated within this broader canvas: even if only as a component of a prolonged process of urban change in the region following the Late Roman period.⁶

Far less understood are the trajectories of this landscape following the collapse of Byzantine hegemony in the region: first in 614 to the Sassanians and then in the 630s to the

³ The collective surveys of Ovidiah and Di Silva offer a useful overview of this until the 1980s. See Ovidiah and De Silva 1970, Ovidiah and De Silva 1981 and Ovidiah and Di Silva 1982. For the activities of Michele Piccirillo in Madada, Kastron Mefa'a and Mount Nebo see Piccirillo 1989, Piccirillo 1990, Piccirillo 1991, Piccirillo 1992b, Piccirillo 1994, Piccirillo 1994b, Piccirillo 1994c, Piccirillo 1995b, Piccirillo 1997, Piccirillo 1998, Piccirillo 2001 and Piccirillo 2003. This provides a broad summary of the activities of the Franciscan institute since the 1970s. See also Baggatti 1971, Baggatti 1983 and Baggatti 1979. Baggatti's excavations of Nazareth are published in Baggatti 1969. See also Politis 1989, Politis 1992, Politis 1995, Politis 2011 and Politis 2012 for examples of excavations conducted by the Hellenic Foundation and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. Aviam 1990, Hirschfeld 1992 and Magen 1993a provide examples of research focussed on Christian cult buildings on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Israeli academic intuitions.

⁴ For recent work on Jarash see the collected studies in Zayadine 1986 (ed.). See also Walmsley *et al* 2008 and Blanke, Daamgard, Simpson and Walmsley 2007: 177-197. For 'Ammān see Northedge 1993: 87-88, 157-160. For Umm Qays, far more limited at present, see Weber 1998 and Al-Daire 2001. For Pella see Smith 1983 and Balderstone 2009: 93-106. For the discussion of Pella in the Byzantine period see Smith 1992: 145-182 and the post-Byzantine phases in Walmsley and Smith 1992: 123-141.

⁵ The excavations of Scythopolis/Baysān have been most recently surveyed in Tsafrir and Foerster 1994 and Tsafrir and Foerster 1997. For Tiberias/Ṭabarīyyah see the collections discussions in Hirschfeld 2004b and Stacey 2004. For Hippos/Sussita, the collected reports of excavations may be found in Segal *et al* 2005, Segal *et al* 2006, Segal *et al* 2007 and Segal *et al* 2008. The collective results of these excavations are now beginning to offer the opportunity for more synthetic appraisals of this material. Kennedy 1985 offers the standard model for urban change in the region between the Byzantine and early Islamic period. This has been augmented and developed by Wickham 2005: 26-27, 130-133, 450-459, 613-621, 770- 780 and most recently by Walmsley 2007 and Petersen 2010. A further, though more problematic, synthesis of this evidence is offered in Dauphin 1998.

⁶ The classic study remains Kennedy 1985.

confederate Arab armies following the death of Muhammad. Until comparatively recently, the period was relegated to the peripheries of the debate about Christian communities.⁷ This academic neglect stemmed from a more invidious series of anti-Arab prejudices which assumed an immediate and detrimental shift in established Christian social conventions after 632.⁸ This manifested itself in a series of ways. Most notably, in the proclivity of early researchers to assign a *terminus ante quem* of c.640 to all church site chronologies, which reinforced the perceived cultural and material hiatus of Christian life assumed to have emerged in the wake of Arab-Muslim conquest.⁹

The discovery of a series of churches dated to the eighth century – gathering momentum since the 1960s – has provoked a complete reversal of this once established consensus.¹⁰ Emerging in its place have been more systematic analyses of post-Byzantine occupational sequences which have collectively indicated the substantial material continuities of Christian life in Palestine beyond the mid-seventh century.¹¹ Moreover, recent archaeological studies are now beginning to embark on a more considered reflection on the limitations of chronologies established by older excavation reports – a trend which encapsulates the now relative openness of scholars to Umayyad continuities even if only in conceptual terms.¹² These revisions are not unique to the research focussed on the social history, or material culture of Palestinian Christian communities, but parallel equally

⁷ Thus Hirschfeld 1992, Binns 1994 and Chitty 1966 (to name the three most formative studies) all terminate analysis in this key period. The approach is replicated in Sivan 2008 who again terminates discussion in the 630s.

⁸ Crowfoot 1938: 239. A perceived collapse in regional settlement is by no means redundant. Ribak 2007: 80 accepts a detrimental shift in Christian life as a result of the Sassanian and Arab conquest. Similar sentiments are also expressed in Dauphin 1998: 352-372.

⁹ An example of such an approach is the excavations of Avdat. Negev 1986: 9 attributes the destruction to Arab hostility or subsequent socio-economic collapse. See Magness 2003: 187-188 for a critical review of this hypothesis. Equally affected by this trend have been the reports for the settlements of Oboda and Mamphis, see Negev 1997: 150-151 and Negev 1988: 7.

¹⁰ See Di Segni 1992, Piccirillo 1994a, Piccirillo 1994b, Piccirillo 1994c and Piccirillo 1995b. The excavations of Fiema and Frösén 2008 and Politis 2012 have also demonstrated considerable occupation of the sites of Jabal Harūn and Deir 'Ain 'Abata.

¹¹ Thus Di Segni 2003: 247, Piccirillo 1995a, Schick 1995 and Walmsley 2007: 120-126.

¹² *Ibid.* This methodology has been most recently demonstrated by Magness 2003 and in the earlier study by Magness 1997 which attempts to re-evaluate problematic chronologies. Further criticisms of this trend are outlined in Walmsley 2000: 266 and Walmsley 2005: 513-514.

energetic developments within the archaeologies of settlement and economy in the Umayyad period. However, the well established nature of ‘Christian archaeology’ in the region has meant that church sites have been among the main beneficiaries of these revised analytical approaches.¹³

The last thirty years, in particular, has generated a series of studies focussed on outlining substantial post-Byzantine continuities – both through excavation or sensitive readings of epigraphy – the results of which will be discussed and confirmed here. Nonetheless, there are flaws with this approach which require further scrutiny. Although material continuities are well acknowledged, our broader understanding of the communities which generated them are not well defined. The shadow of the older ‘decline’ model is still a spectral ghost at the revisionist feast – kept alive by the resilience of older ideas of catastrophic social fracture attributed to the Sassanians in 614.¹⁴ Such chronologies contradict the impression emerging from recent archaeological research, but have yet to receive systematic challenge in terms of Christian communities.

The general issue of continuity is less pertinent for discussions of the period 650-750, which remains the most popular in terms of modern analytical energies. However, it is notably acute for the later period 750-950, where developments remain less well understood. The integration of this later phase into the broader analysis of the discipline is, however, vital as redrawn archaeological chronologies increasingly point to the ninth and tenth centuries as the period which saw the most abrupt change to the Levantine Christian landscape.¹⁵

It was this key period which witnessed the progressive emergence of a series of characteristics which were to typify the physical and social profile of Palestinian Christians

¹³ Magness 2003, Petersen 2010, Walmsley 2007 and Wickham 2005: 613-620 all offer useful summaries of the predominant thinking regarding Umayyad phases in urban centres. Di Segni 2003: 247-267 and Piccirillo 1995a summarise the main thinking on Christian life.

¹⁴ Thus Schick 1995: 47-48. This is also perpetuated in Dauphin 1998: 352-360 and recently in McCormick 2011: 42-44.

¹⁵ There are few studies dedicated to this period. However, the recent study by Michel 2011 has noted the acceleration of abandonment in the ninth century.

until the eleventh century. Our understanding of the emergence of the Crusader kingdoms of Outremer has yet to seriously engage with this formative three hundred year period (between 750-1050) which laid the basis for later developments following the eleventh century.¹⁶ This study offers an overview of these developments until 950 and offers a sound foundation from which to understand the more complex picture which emerged following the Byzantine military offensives of the 960s-970s under Nikephoros Phokas and John Tzimiskes and the ensuing reactions that it provoked in the Muslim world for another century, notably under al-Ḥākim.¹⁷ This study provides, in essence, a foundation to the eleventh-century debate – a bridge between the more familiar worlds of Late Antiquity and the Crusades which have so dominated academic debate over this region in the past decades.

This study will outline the patterns of survival and continuity amongst monastic communities and Christian cult sites: albeit with some qualifications. Although I support this emphasis, I do not wholly endorse the rather open-ended dialogue of ‘continuity’ in contemporary discussions, given that the basic parameters and characteristics of that ‘continuity’ have yet to be systematically defined. Christian life was not instantly fractured by the institutional changes of the seventh century – a wealth of material makes this traditional position not only untenable but also reductionist in its approach to the material. Yet the real continuities in Christian life – notably after 750 – functioned within a period which saw the progressive retraction of the Christian landscape to a shadow of its sixth-century level and the emergence of a community increasingly characterised by social and economic introversion. The community extant by the tenth century was radically altered from its Late Antique form; reduced in its economic strength and less overt in its relationship to public life and institutions than it had been in 600.

¹⁶ The three most recent monographs devoted to an analysis of Christian life following the Arab conquest, McCormick 2011, Ribak 2007 and Schick 1995 all terminate discussion between c.700 and c.820.

¹⁷ Overviews of these developments, which cannot be systematically reviewed here, are offered in Whittow 1996: 310-335. For the reign of Al-Ḥākim see Walker 2009.

This is less the case of the period 650-750 where continuities are more stable and have been well-explored in a series of published studies. Most notable is that of Robert Schick's monumental corpus, the essential premises of which I agree with, although I am not always in agreement with his interpretations and chronology.¹⁸

Schick's thesis has indeed proved formative in its promotion and outline of the debate but has yet to provoke a wider critical wave of subsequent studies aimed at expanding or qualifying his work and its underlying data.

This study modifies elements of Schick's hypothesis which require revision and provides a broader perspective of the region beyond his original chronological scope (600-800). Schick's interpretations were for one too interlinked with the idea that Muslim presence was indicative of the absence of a Christian one: a position which over-simplified a far more fluid social arrangement in a period where a distinct Muslim devotional identity is difficult to determine and Muslims may have formed only a fraction of the population in Palestine.¹⁹

Equally, in a number of cases, Schick's study did not fully develop the absolutely crucial issues of chronology presented by the archaeological corpus relating to Christian sites.²⁰ The study's acceptance of drastic change in 614 is one issue upon which I cannot agree, and I will also argue for a wider integration with the broader archaeological environment in which Christian cult sites functioned in this period.²¹

Furthermore, Schick's own criteria to determine post-Umayyad occupation were uneven. Whilst I would concur with use of textual sources to supplement the meagre archaeological material (especially at sites subject to reoccupation or which have not been excavated) his use of iconoclastic intervention to identify cases of eighth-century occupation

¹⁸ Schick 1995.

¹⁹ See, for example, Schick 1995: 374

²⁰ Schick does, however, raise the central issues of chronology and broader economic changes in his discussion *Ibid*: 134-138.

²¹ *Ibid*: 20-48, 391-92.

is more problematic.²² The absence of iconoclastic intervention in a number of Palestinian churches cannot be indicative of pre-Umayyad abandonment once the underlying social factors of this trend are better understood, as this study will explain.²³ Nonetheless, Schick's study remains a benchmark of modern appraisals which the present study seeks to build upon rather than systematically dismantle.

However, focus must also be directed at monastic communities and pilgrimage – two social developments acknowledged in mainstream discussions, including that of Robert Schick, but which have yet to experience fuller and more individualised engagement.²⁴

In this regard critical analysis of monastic communities remains weighted towards their apologetic contribution, as Christian writers in the ninth century began to systematise the articulation of their faith in response to increasingly coherent Islamic challenges.²⁵

A particularly vibrant branch of recent scholarship has been dedicated to exploring this shift. Here, focus on a series of influential writers and works have collectively contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the theological and intellectual mechanisms employed by Christian writers to underpin the primacy of Christian orthodox belief.²⁶ Several of these were produced in Palestine by monastic writers resident in the major coenobitic establishments of the Judean Desert – a feature which makes a study of the material and social world of these monastic sites in the ninth and tenth centuries all the more pertinent.²⁷ This academic branch, focussed on the intellectual realms of Christian life, will undoubtedly continue to flourish as the profile of the discipline grows and access and negotiation of the vast repertoire of Arabic and Syriac sources improves in coming decades.

Since the late nineteenth century, fruitful collaboration between monastic archivists – notably

²² *Ibid.*: 377.

²³ See Appendix D.

²⁴ Schick 1995: 96-100.

²⁵ The main study of these developments in Palestine is Griffith 2008. For additional examples see the discussion and accompanying notes pages 241-249.

²⁶ Griffith 2008 offers the most comprehensive thematic overview of these developments. See Thomas and Roggema (eds.) 2009 for the most recent bibliography which lists the major contributions to this subject.

²⁷ Griffith 1988 and Griffith 1997 discuss the most prominent works or figures known from this period.

those of St Katherine, Mount Sinai – have endorsed this trend by facilitating the publication of several key works.²⁸

Nonetheless, a notable feature of recent scholarship is the lack of a contextual apparatus within which to situate these literary creations. The nuances which characterise modern understanding of post-Byzantine and Melkite monastic theology are not present in our understanding of their broader social world – the landscape in which they lived and the wider socio-political context from which their literary works emerged. One aim of the present study is to offer a complimentary apparatus in which to place these debates.

The emphasis on theology is not wholly unremarkable in view of the wider trajectories of research in recent years. Archaeology has only recently entered the debate; in part as a result of a fairly tacit perception of monastic communities as entities isolated from temporal concerns and as perpetual enactors of the social and economic stasis which they projected through their own textual constructs.

In this regard the exemplar of Egypt has proved formative in shaping the prevailing thinking of this thesis – if only in the broadest of methodological terms. Notably, the discrepancy between the Egyptian monastic self image crafted by theology, and that which emerges from the broader repertoire of textual material, has remained a well noted field of comment and dialogue between archaeologists and literary historians.²⁹ Byzantinists focussed on Egypt and historians of early Islam are more fortunate in this regard than their Palestinian-focussed counterparts; fortunate in terms of the size of the source repertoire and fortunate in its diversity and genre.³⁰ The discovery and publication of a key series of papyri hoards have

²⁸ For a discussion of these activities see Brock 2011, MacRoberts 2011, Parpulov 201 and Thomson 2011. Also key are the catalogues of the Arabic and Syriac manuscripts preserved at St Katherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai compiled in Atiya 1955, Brock 1995, Dunlop-Gibson 1894 and Lewis 1894.

²⁹ See Bagnall 2002 and Goehring 1999.

³⁰ See Boud'hors, Clackson, Luis and Sijpesteijn 2009, Clackson 2008 and Delattre 2004. See also the earlier study by Maspero 1911.

proved instrumental in this broader critical revision.³¹ Palestine lacks a comparative body of material to provoke traditional interpretations and offer alternative paradigms beyond the construct of hagiography. The material from Egypt offers no direct solution to this issue – certainly not in terms of supplementing the limitations of the Palestinian corpus. Yet it does expose its relative limitations: how little survives of the broader picture (of which we occasionally see glimpses in the hoards of Nessana, Khirbat Mird and Petra) but, equally, how the well explored corpus of saints lives and historical writings are products of a system of filtration whose impact upon contemporary perceptions of Palestinian monasticism has yet to be fully determined.³²

This debate is more pertinent for Palestine than in Egypt: a land of central confessional importance to the Christian world (particularly the Chalcedonian communities which dominate the textual corpus) and a region upon which the exegetical and social ideals of Byzantium and the medieval west were frequently projected.³³ This in itself was not a static process, as broader developments in the early medieval world – the collapse of the West Roman Empire, ‘Iconoclasm’ and the Byzantine military offensives of the tenth century – all placed new demands on this history and how it was narrated.

These all impact on our present ability to fully encapsulate the nature of monastic communities in Palestine; especially in terms of our understanding of these communities in more localised contexts and beyond the prism of sources often composed outside of Palestine, which projected a particular view of monastic and pilgrimage activity. Many of these remain poorly understood. This underscores the need for a far more open dialogue between scholars focused on Palestine with the broader community of western medievalists and Byzantinists whose own study of the conceptualisation of the ‘Holy Land’ in the early medieval world will

³¹ See note 30 above. This is also beginning to generate synthetic discussions of the changing status of monastic and Christian communities in the early Islamic period, see Papaconstantinou 2010 and Sijpesteijn 2012.

³² For the papyri hoards see Frösén, Arjava, and Lehtinen (eds.) 2002, Gagos and Frösén 1998: 473-81, Grohmann 1963, Kraemer 1958, Lehtinen 2002: 277-278 and Perrot 1963: 506-555.

³³ Explored in Wilken 1992.

prove vital in understanding their role in defining future perceptions of Palestinian monasticism in the first millennium.

The original intent of this study had been a focus on developments in Palestine following 650. Yet closer scrutiny of the sources, and existing studies, repeatedly raised issues of interpretation which could not be comfortably overlooked. This thesis, therefore, has aimed to deconstruct and challenge these interpretations which have direct bearing on understanding the long-term trajectory of the Christian cult landscape following 600.

The essential association of Palestinian monasticism and pilgrimage to more immediate networks of Christian communities, elites and patron economies, is one feature of this concern. A tendency to correlate the trajectories of monastic communities and pilgrimage networks with broader political change is a common approach.³⁴ It is one interlinked with our reliance on hagiography and one which this thesis will seek to qualify. This study does not propose a complete rejection of the contribution of individuals or communities beyond the Palestinian sphere from the Aegean or the west. However, a constant obstacle whilst researching for this work was the familiar tendency in scholarship to ascribe a socio-economic homogeneity upon a monastic and pilgrim milieu which in fact demonstrates substantial complexity in its material forms and social relationships. The homogenous approach is exacerbated by the genre of our dominant source material (always hagiography) but does not adequately reflect the diverse impression which emerges when the collective archaeological corpus is compiled and systematically reviewed. Our understanding of these complexities, fully established by 600, is integral to understanding the later trajectories of these communities beyond the eighth century.

³⁴ Thus Dauphin 1998: 351-372, McCormick 2011: 39-47, Ribak 2007: 19 and Schick 1995: 96, 109.

Therefore Chapter One of this thesis is dedicated to outlining a selection of these issues: a reflection upon current methodological approaches, to both monasticism and pilgrimage, and their inherent flaws. I will expose both the complexity of this material and provide an apparatus which can incorporate data which has been systematically marginalised in contemporary approaches.

The purpose of this approach is to provide a more secure basis for our understanding of post-Byzantine processes. Broader questions regarding changes in social roles, patron economies and physical landscapes are central to the early Islamic debate, but can only be observed and appreciated in the context of a secure understanding of the patterns which preceded them. It is my hope that the material in this chapter provides the foundation for a reconstruction of an alternative analytical model for our understanding of monastic and pilgrimage activity in the period c.300-c.600.

Chapter Two offers a systematic review of the period 614-630 and the impact of the Sassanian occupation on the region. As discussed above, the recent rejection of the role of the Arab conquest in the fracture of Christian life has not instigated a systematic questioning of the idea of drastic and violent shift in the seventh century. Rather, it has routinely endorsed the shifting of this change to the years 614-628 as a period which instigated a swift deterioration in the social and material prosperity of monastic communities and a decline in the number of pilgrims. This perception is not only in contradiction with the prevailing archaeological corpus, but owes its existence to a selection of texts which have never been critically evaluated. The primary purpose of this chapter is to offer a review of these issues and propose an alternative perspective of the transition.

Chapter Three addresses the formative period 650-750: tracing the rise and consolidation of Umayyad control until its collapse around a century later and its impact on these communities. Similarly, Chapter Four explores the changing nature of the physical and

social landscape following the Golan Earthquake of 749 until 950, observing fluctuations in changing monastic/cult-site settlement patterns and attempting to provide some explanation behind these processes.

Chapter Five reintroduces a series of themes raised in the previous chapters in a new context: that of exploring the continuation of pilgrimage. The chapter offers an overview of the more complex impression which emerges with the incorporation of archaeological and epigraphic data. Equally, it explores the inherent limitations of modern terminology in the definition and understanding of this practice in the Byzantine world.

Finally, this thesis will conclude with a synthetic overview of the changes to the landscape of monasteries and Christian cult sites between the seventh and tenth centuries and propose a series of explanations for its transformation following the Arab conquest.

SOURCES AND APPROACHES

This study aims to integrate the archaeological and textual material. The restrictions of word limit have meant that my discussions of individual texts or sites are kept to a minimum within the main discursive body of the thesis. I have included critical examinations of source material where possible, but only in cases where they impact substantially on the present debate. This is not an exhaustive evaluation of each contemporary source, which remains beyond the scope of this study. This is notably the case with traditions of the ḥadīth whose individual provenance and authenticity warrant separate critical attention. However, limitations concerning authenticity or manuscript transmission have been noted with all material where appropriate for each of these sources and I have aimed to acknowledge alternative views of these accounts where possible.

I have used available translations of the key sources, but with Arabic, Greek and Latin

texts I have consulted originals where possible. My inadequate knowledge of Syriac, Armenian and Georgian, however, has restricted me to the use of published translations.

This study is predominantly concerned with the political and economic roles of monastic communities and pilgrimage sites (alongside their patrons). It is not an exhaustive survey of monastic theology or devotional life (both of which have been extensively covered elsewhere) but sketches the broader social frameworks in which such activities unfolded.³⁵ Similarly, it acknowledges, but does not detail, Islamic perceptions and literary constructions of monks and Christians in popular genres such as *diyārāt* poetry. These have been fully explored in a series of detailed studies.³⁶ Such texts are not always as they appear and must be read reservedly in a context of deeper considerations of political satire and gender construction.³⁷ Their value as tools through which actual social conventions of monastic-Muslim social intercourse may be observed are debatable. Nonetheless, they provide a key series of insights into a more pervasive attempt at the deconstruction of the Christian holy man in Islamic thought by the ninth century which may be acknowledged within this debate. In addition, I have limited the discussion devoted to the chronologies and occupational histories of each site in the main body of the text. An individual description of each site has been included in Appendix A. I have used this study as an opportunity to highlight limitations with present chronologies rather than to systematically review them in all cases. This is both due to the relative size of the corpus (now numbering into the hundreds of sites) and equally the limitations of publications which do not always present diagnostic material in sufficient quantity to facilitate such renegotiations. I have commented on individual cases where chronologies are debatable but concede that this study will not be able systematically to re-

³⁵ A broad synthesis is offered in Griffith 2008 for this region, with examination of individual sources presented in Thomas and Rogemma 2009 (eds.). Further discussion is offered in Hoyland 1997a with individual contributions, covering the role of Palestinian monasteries, in Griffith 1988 and Griffith 1997.

³⁶ Campbell 2009 and Kilpatrick 2003. See also the discussion of Troupeau 1975: 265-79 and Wright 1997 : 1-23.

³⁷ Sprachman 1997:202-204 and Wright 1997: 15-17.

evaluate the chronology of the broader corpus. This issue is crucial, but will require a much larger project than the present one to resolve.

The use of texts in the analysis of site chronologies needs to be carefully evaluated. Hagiography and polemic, as we shall see, are problematic indicators of chronology, but there are cases, such as geographical descriptions or manuscript colophons, where textual testament is more secure than that presented by more inflated rhetoric of others genres. Where possible, I have tried to ensure that the dating acquired from textual material are confirmed by more than a single source (whether textual or archaeological) to establish their authenticity. This approach is restricted in its capacity to clarify a complete understanding of the chronologies of a single site, but does offer an impression of its general extent. In cases where prolonged occupation or processes of post-medieval reclamation inhibit intrusive excavation, the literary material is necessary to supplement the restrictions of the material data and is unavoidable.

In terms of case studies, I have limited myself only to the discussions of sites where a monastic presence is explicitly confirmed either in textual or epigraphic evidence. I am aware of the limitations this restriction brings in elucidating the number of sites which existed in Palestine by the year c.600 (some of which are discussed in Chapter One) but consider the number of sites discussed here (around 70 from various regions) to be representative of more widespread general patterns. The justification for my decision is discussed in Chapter One, where we shall see that previous attempts to link material remains, which appear geographically isolated, or only correlate roughly with textual descriptions, may have drastically inflated the number of monastic sites said to be present in Palestine by the end of the Byzantine period. In relation to this, I have avoided the temptation to create a series of archaeological criteria which may be used to identify a monastic site where no explicit written record of monastic activity can be found. This is an interpretation and approach with

which others may disagree. However, I am suspicious of a methodological approach which would seek to impose uniformity, or a homogenous identity, upon a social group which appears to have been characterised by complexity; both in its social interaction and physical structuring. To establish such criteria would risk imposing a westernised conception of monastic spatial organisation which does not belong in discussions of the Late Antique east which, unlike its western counterpart, does not appear to have adhered to an ideology which stipulated monastic spatial conformity. Subsequent studies may augment or challenge this approach, but, I anticipate, will not undermine the broader themes of the present study. Historical discussion has been primarily limited to Chalcedonian communities. This focus was determined by the nature of the dominant material surviving from within the Melkite church or from the Byzantine and post-Roman west. The evidence is too brief to permit a more detailed investigation of other confessional groups in the region (such as the Monophysites) following the Arab conquest, although I would speculate that, in any case, with the exception of Gaza, that many of the sites addressed in this study were predominantly Chalcedonian in their confessional learning.³⁸ Certainly this appears to have been the case for the larger coenobitic communities and cult sites employed in this study.³⁹ The affiliations of the smaller, more localised, centres are less certain and not assisted by the lack of literary documentation which would permit further clarification of this issue. At present, no study or criteria with which one may distinguish Chalcedonian from other communities has yet to be proposed which can withstand critique.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, I am cautious about imposing a rigidly dichotomous perspective to distinguish communities whose own conception of their identities may have been more ambiguous and fluid at a localised level. Whether or not such criteria may ever be conclusively established is debatable, but would not impact substantially on my

³⁸ On Monophysite monasticism in Gaza see Horn 2003: 109-128.

³⁹ See Appendix A.

⁴⁰ Mango 1977: 58-74, has argued for the preference of Monophysite communities for aniconic decoration in church floor schemes. This is plausible, although the use of non-figural decoration in Chalcedonian churches makes such distinctions less clear cut in the archaeological corpus. See Appendix D.

argument.

Lastly, the geographical focus of this study requires definition. I have limited my discussion primarily to the region which now encompasses modern Israel, modern Jordan, the Palestinian territories and the Sinai Peninsula. These regions approximately correspond to those which encompassed the Byzantine provinces of Palestina Prima, Secunda, Tertia and Arabia and were later to be known as the *Jund al-Urdunn* and the *Jund Filastīn*.⁴¹ I acknowledge that such a regional focus is largely an artificial construct that does not adequately reflect similar developments in what is now southern Syria. Nonetheless, the political boundaries of the period are not the sole means through which this landscape was defined in the Late Antique and early medieval period. From the general impression of the literary material it is evident that the particular religious associations of this region, spanning the Galilee to the Sinai Peninsula, were concurrently thought of in terms distinct from its administrative structure. Whether or not we accept that the diverse pilgrims' accounts represent actual journeys, their descriptions unveil alternative ways of viewing this space, if only in conceptual terms. Written in the ninth century, Peter of Bayt Ra's description of the Christian holy places presented a list which conforms roughly to the area surveyed in this study (Fig.Int.1).⁴² This description was not a reflection of the political or economic landscape of Peter's world – which extended beyond these spheres. Rather, it was a spiritual topography which co-existed with them. This may not have been an accurate reflection of how this landscape was physically negotiated, but it does indicate how it was conceived in intellectual terms by monastic communities and pilgrims as a region distinguished by these associations. This study, therefore, is aimed at surveying the trajectory of that world – physical and intellectual – beyond the seventh century until the closing decades of Abbasid control around 950.

⁴¹ Parts of this study, however, do incorporate some sites that were later incorporated into the *Jund Dimashq*. However, this study will not focus on other examples in that region.

⁴² Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, 310-361 (ed. Cachia 1960: 164-207, tr. Watt 1960:134-154).

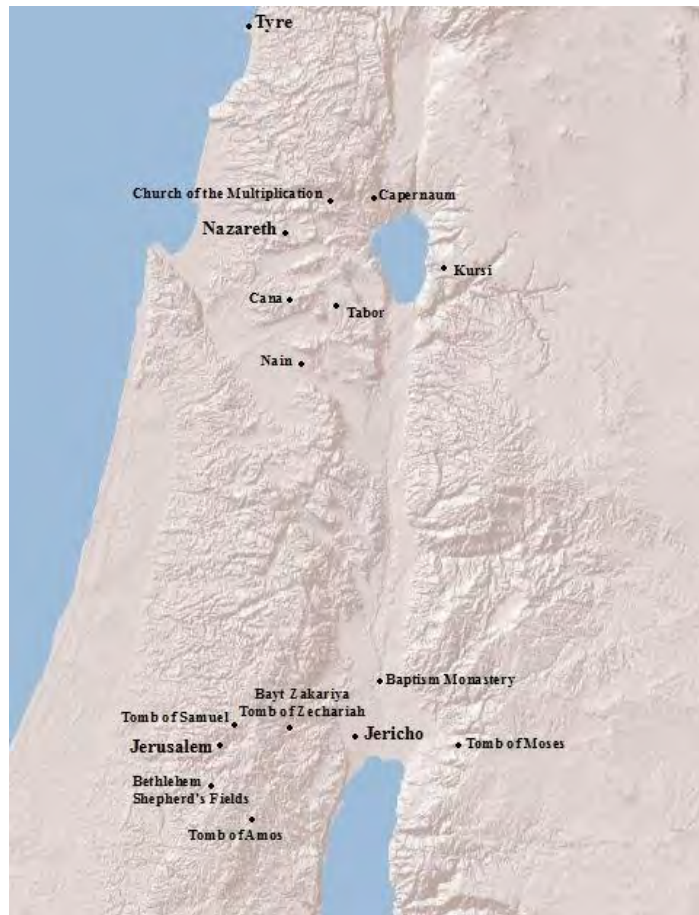


Fig. I.1 The Palestinian holy places described by Peter of Bayt Ra's in the *Kitāb al-Burhān*.

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CHAPTER ONE

PALESTINIAN MONASTICISM c.500-c.960

CONTEXT, PROBLEMS AND APPROACH

After over a century of research the Christian cult landscape of Palestine and the Transjordan arguably remains the most extensively covered element of Byzantine material culture in the region. It is also one that is characterised by a number of inconsistencies in terms of the interpretation and understanding of its development.

Although the rapid expansion of the Christian cult landscape between the fourth and sixth centuries is well acknowledged, scholarship still lacks a long term analysis of its evolution over the course of the first millennium.⁴³ Systematic analysis of architectural profiles and decorative elements have promoted an acute understanding of the development of church architecture in the region yet, comparatively, we know almost nothing about the exchange networks which built them; still less the groups and social networks which commissioned and inhabited them. There is a common perception that our understanding of the elements which brought about the expansion and eventual diminishment of the Christianised landscape in the Levant is best explained in terms of external historical processes.⁴⁴ Thus, the apparent surge in church foundation during the fourth to sixth centuries is explained in terms of a supposed economic boom which resulted from the growing attraction of the 'Holy Land' as a destination for pilgrims and elite benefaction.⁴⁵ Likewise, its ostensible collapse after the seventh century is understood in reference to comparative

⁴³ Earlier treatment of the subject has been offered in Gil 1992: 430-489, Kennedy 1986, Perrone 1995: 31-49 and Piccirillo 1995.

⁴⁴ Avi Yonah's influential article, published in 1958, still underpins more recent analysis of Byzantine Palestine: Masarwa 2011: 152, Patrich 1998 and Parker 1999: 169.

⁴⁵ Thus Patrich 1998 stresses the importance of pilgrimage and the export of relics as significant factors in the development of the region. This is based, seemingly, on the earlier study of Avi Yonah 1958: 39-51, whose analysis is based on hagiography and does not consider the broader archaeological corpus. Avi Yonah views the growth of oil and wine production as a response to the growing demands stimulated by pilgrimage. This view is still apparent in recent studies, see Masarwa 2011: 152. This is despite criticisms levied by archaeologists: Kingsley 2001b.

cases of external political transition for which the Sassanian and Arab conquests offer convenient, and widely accepted, agents of change.⁴⁶ This perception is partly a result of disciplinary partition. The archaeology of the ‘Christian Holy Land’ is, in many respects, a floating discipline, in as much as the trends that scholars identify are seldom discussed in reference to the contexts which both proceeded and followed them. Few studies of the seemingly rapid boom of Christian cult building after the fourth century, for example, are framed in terms of developments in late Roman Palestine between the first and third centuries.⁴⁷ Similarly, our understanding of the mechanisms which instigated change over the course of the fifth to tenth centuries are seldom examined in terms of broader shifts in the social and economic landscape in which monastic and cult sites existed.

The role of archaeology is crucial to this broader debate in terms of exploring the general trajectory of the monastic landscape following the 630s and its connection to the political, economic and human landscapes with which it co-existed. This is essentially because archaeological data is still widely perceived as providing empirical data which can be enlisted to support and animate interpretive models inspired by textual sources. Thus a view of Palestinian monastic life and Christian pilgrimage as phenomena closely interwoven with, and dependent upon, the political and ecclesiastical rhythms of the Byzantine Empire are models seemingly endorsed by a corresponding archaeological dossier. Such issues play into wider (and still current) methodological concerns with the archaeology of the early Islamic period: poorly defined ceramic chronologies (especially for Abbasid phases); truncated stratigraphic layers and poorly described excavations. Christian cult monuments are not isolated from these concerns but remain a core component of the material assemblages which largely perpetuated a view of the post-Byzantine period as one of endemic decline until comparatively recently. Alternative models have since emerged for the period c.630-

⁴⁶ Binns 1994: 243-244, Patrich 2011 and Perrone 1995: 53.

⁴⁷ For a recent questioning of this hypothesis see Bar 2004a.

c.1000 but the Christian cult topography remains one area which requires additional review. I have no intention in this chapter of stressing the exclusivity of monastic or pilgrimage sites in terms of understanding the transformation of the Levantine landscape after the seventh century. But as an institution which gained increasing focus by the sixth century as a central point for localised political and social organisation, it presents an imposing archaeological corpus which is difficult to ignore. It is also one which, if handled indelicately, still has the potential to tip the scales in favour of traditionalist decline models. It is, therefore, important that this study begins with a review of the archaeological issues which confront any study of monasticism and pilgrimage in the early Islamic period: what it can (or cannot tell us) and, mostly importantly, how the handling and interpretation of the material has evolved after a century of research. In what follows I will introduce three case studies which exemplify these legacies and then reflect on their implications to the wider debate about Palestinian monasticism in the post-Byzantine era.

1.1 1930S-1980s: SHIVTA/SOBATA

Excavated intermittently since the major expedition conducted under the auspices of New York University and the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (1934-1936), Shivta is among a number of critical sites in Byzantine Palestine where architecturally focussed excavation strategies have had detrimental implications on our understanding of their occupational histories.⁴⁸ This observation has equal implications for our understanding of the settlement's foundation phases and eventual abandonment. Broad consensus among scholars has generally considered the site as a Nabataean foundation into which a series of churches – three were identified by the Colt expedition – were constructed at some point after the fourth

⁴⁸ Discussions of the three major phases of excavation appear in Seagal 1983. For further discussion of the churches see Negev 1974.

century. This chronological framework, however, is largely hypothetical.⁴⁹ The series of excavations conducted by the Colt expedition (1934-1936), which identified three churches, winepresses and a possible bathhouse; by Avi Yonah in (1958-1960) which concentrated on clearing the streets to facilitate visitor access; and by Arthur Seagal (1979-1982), collectively remain unpublished in terms of stratigraphy or finds.⁵⁰ Our understanding of the gradual evolution of the site, or individual structures such as churches, thus remains largely undefined and probably irretrievable.

The excavations of Shivta are emblematic of the general approach to Byzantine cult structures which undermine recognition of diagnostic material related to early Islamic activity. Ceramic profiles in particular were a noted casualty of this trend.⁵¹ This gap was fostered by the architectural focus of early excavation strategies but nurtured by the predominance of historical frameworks in the analysis of post-Byzantine material culture and pervasive racial stereotypes directed at Arabs by European commentators.⁵² The collective effects of this legacy are all apparent at the neighbouring site of Avdat. Excavated in three major seasons (1958-1961, 1975-1977, 1989) but never fully published, its excavator, Abraham Negev, attributed the final abandonment of the site to the 630s and correlated this directly with the Arab conquest.

⁴⁹ The studies of Negev 1974 and Seagal 1983 identified no phases or structures that predate the first century.

⁵⁰ Seagal 1983.

⁵¹ As with examples of monastic sites within the Judean Desert region and those of the Negev (both subject to intensive archaeological activity prior to the 1990s). For Negev the sites, many of which were considered abandoned by the close of the seventh century, see Magness 2003. Magness has stressed the continuity of the majority of sites into the eighth century with punctuated patterns of abandonment in the ninth and tenth centuries. This issue is further compounded by the increasing localisation of ceramic production – in cases such as Mar Samwil and possibly Mount Nebo, ceramic types produced by the monastic community itself – and economic distribution that has been observed throughout the Syro-Palestinian region following the seventh century, see Walmsley 2000: 321-331. This accentuates the difficulties of observing monastic-pilgrim continuities within a framework of broad regional change; particularly in regions where ceramic chronologies are poorly defined. The ceramic production at Mar Samwil is mentioned in the excavation report Magen and Dadon 2003: 128-130 but has yet to be fully explored.

⁵² Walmsley 2007: 21-23. This trend is by no means fully defunct. The excavators of the Church of Hagios Theodoros at Khirbet Beit Sila still assigned the abandonment date of the church to the aftermath of Arab conquest in the seventh century: Batz 2002: 51.

‘The number of wine presses and other installations connected with the production of wine <at Oboda> exceeds anything known from other towns of the Negev. Perhaps this contributed to the fury with which the churches of Oboda were burnt by the Arab conquerors: unable to exploit this source of riches, the Arab set the churches on fire.’⁵³

This is problematic on a number of levels. For one, it adopts a view of the Arab conquest as a socially and ideologically uniform movement which had developed a clearly defined attitude towards the established Christian population of Palestine by the mid-seventh century. In this respect, the adoption of the term ‘Arab conquest’ lends a degree of homogeneity to the conquest which is no longer fully accepted. More recent revisionist approaches to the period have stressed the diversity of the earliest Arab armies, noting the presence of Christians and disaffected Sassanian soldiers among their ranks.⁵⁴

In other respects, this perception of the Arab conquest as one characterised by hostility to Christian cult sites lacks any substantive basis. Excavations at a number of urban centres (which have often included Christian churches) active during the seventh century and located close to regions of Byzantine-Arab military confrontation, such as Pella and Umm Qays, have yielded no evidence for destruction phases associated which may be linked to Arab armies.⁵⁵ In both settlements, excavations have identified a stable period of occupation throughout the early seventh century at the Mausoleum and Terrace churches of Umm Qays and the East, West and Civic-Complex churches of Pella.⁵⁶

These alternative perspectives of the transition to Arab rule, which are being observed among a number of other excavations in the region, underscore the inherent flaws with

⁵³ Negev 1986: 9.

⁵⁴ Sijpesteijn 2007: 439.

⁵⁵ Thus excavations at Pella, close to the site of the Battle of Fahl (c.635), yielded no evidence for destruction in the early seventh century: Smith 1982, Smith 1992: 145-181 and Walmsley and Smith 1992: 183-198. Excavations at Umm Qays, close to the site of the Battle of Yarmouk (c.636), which has mostly concentrated on churches, has similarly yielded no material to suggest destruction or substantial change to urban life in this period see Al Daire 2001, Vriezen 1992, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001 and Weber 1998. The battles are discussed in al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān*: 115, 135 (ed. de Goeje 1866: 115,135, tr. Khuri-Hatti 2002: 176-177, 207) and Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6126 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 337-338, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 469-470).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* In all of these examples, excavations yielded no evidence for destruction or damage to the site before the eighth century.

approaches to the material culture associated with monastic (or more generally Christian cult sites) following the seventh century.

Besides limiting our ability to determine post-Byzantine monastic continuities, these approaches have further implications. For one, the lack of a nuanced chronology for the development of Shivta inhibits a more contextual reading of its monumental buildings, especially its churches (in terms of foundation or abandonment), in relation to trends reflected within the wider settlement. In turn, the trajectory of the settlement itself, in terms of its survival beyond the seventh century, is extremely difficult to observe in relation to neighbouring sites in the Negev, many of which, such as Avdat and Elusa, present similar obstacles.⁵⁷

Whilst these issues are not unique to the archaeology of Shivta's church buildings, they are iconic of some of the key failings of recent approaches to monasticism and pilgrimage in the period 300-1000. There are three churches currently known from the settlement of Shivta only one of which, the North Church of Hagios Giorgos (Fig.1.1), presents evidence for a possible monastic presence. This association is known primarily from a burial inscription dated to 630, relating to the monk Arsenios, which appears alongside a series of tombstones of former priests whom, we may presume, were connected to the church.⁵⁸ All three churches were excavated during the Colt expedition of the 1930s but the plan of only one, the South Church (Fig.1.2), was published.⁵⁹ None have been subject to a full archaeological report and we do not possess any accounts of the material recovered during excavation. Small details, mostly about the South Church, may be extrapolated from the fragmentary reports. At some point (possibly the ninth century) a mosque was constructed adjoining the baptistery of the South Church and involved the blocking of the north entrance

⁵⁷ See the overview, with extensive critique, in Magness 2003: 177-194.

⁵⁸ On these inscriptions see Negev 1981: 51-59.

⁵⁹ Magness 2003: 185.

into the baptistery chamber.⁶⁰ A series of Arabic inscriptions in the narthex of the church may also relate to this phase.⁶¹ Such material is evidence of the complex occupational lives of the Shivta churches beyond the seventh century which is clear from a number of similar churches in the region – Mamphis, Nessana and Rehovot-in-the-Negev – but which is now impossible to observe in terms of the evolution of the site.⁶² In a number of cases, as with Avdat and Mamphis, such activity was seen as indicative of hiatus to Christian cult life assumed to have emerged in the wake of the ‘Islamic’ conquest.⁶³ The epigraphic dossier of the North Church at Shivta, which records a series of burials between 608 and 679, and the South church, which was refurbished in 639, has prevented more nihilistic assessments of the archaeology of Shivta (in contrast to Avdat) but did not contribute to any further attempt by its excavators to trace the trajectory of that continuity.⁶⁴ Beyond our ability to confirm its occupation into the late seventh century, little can be said about the subsequent history of either the South Church or the monastic church of Hagios Giorgos of Shivta. Our ability to identify seventh-century phases at Shivta is, therefore, determined solely on the basis of dated epigraphic dedications: an issue replicated across a number of churches in the region.

A recent re-inspection of the ceramic corpus selectively published by Colin Baly has been undertaken by Jodi Magness and has suggested continued activity at Shivta into the Abbasid period: a date which conforms to her broader reading of evidence from the Negev.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Baly 1935: 175-177.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² On the Arabic inscriptions at the Church of Mamphis, which indicate activity in the early Islamic period, see Nevo, Cohen, Heftman 1994: 15. The Churches of Mamphis are discussed in Negev 1988. On the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, see Tsafirir 1988a. On Nessana, see Kendall 1962: 25-45 and Kraemer 1958.

⁶³ Negev 1988: 7, 63 and Negev 1997: 150-151.

⁶⁴ Negev 1981: 52-57. These issues are replicated across a number of important Byzantine cult sites in Palestine and the Transjordan. These are too numerous to address here but characteristic examples include the churches of Rihab many of which were excavated prior to the 1950s but whose results were never published. Our ability to identify seventh-century phases at these sites is based exclusively on dedicatory inscriptions dated to the 620s and 630s.

⁶⁵ Baly 1962: 287 and Magness 2003: 186.



Fig.1.1 Shivta, the North Church.
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Fig.1.2 Shivta, the South Church.
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By Magness' own admission, these reviews are limited in what they may inform us about the post-Byzantine trajectory of Christian cult sites. Abbasid wares may indicate extended human occupation but contribute little to identifying whether such activity coincided with a continued use of churches for liturgical practice.⁶⁶ Thus Shivta is emblematic of a number of key flaws in early excavations projects which have direct bearing on our ability to observe the long-term span of monastic life in the Levant between the seventh and tenth centuries: poorly published excavation projects, rife with questionable historical assumptions, which pay little attention to the stratigraphic history of churches and the wide settlement history of the site.

1.2 1980s: MA'ALE ADUMMIM

Discovered during the foundation of Ma'ale Adummim in the West Bank in the early 1980s, the monastic complex identified as the 'Martyrios Monastery' is among the most important sites to feature in recent archaeological discussions of Palestinian monasticism.⁶⁷ The walled complex of the monastery, which covers over 10,000 square metres, is one of the largest identified Byzantine monastic establishments in Palestine and the Transjordan. The extent of land holdings beyond the walled establishment is unknown, but excavations inside the walls revealed a considerable complex, comprised of a large basilical church, a crypt and a series of interconnecting auxiliary unit rooms (Fig. 1.3).⁶⁸ Despite its size and the quantity of material which emerged from the site (as indicated by the available publications),⁶⁹ the excavation results have never been fully published and are limited to three summary chapters in edited

⁶⁶ Magness 203: 185-187.

⁶⁷ Magen 1990 and Magen 1993.

⁶⁸ Magen 1993: 170.

⁶⁹ These included quantities of Fine Byzantine Ware, architectural elements and bronze, none of which is fully published: Magen 1993: 192-194.

volumes.⁷⁰ The most extensive of these, which appeared in an edited volume on Christian Archaeology in 1990, was limited to a discussion of its decorative mosaic programme.⁷¹ Discussion of the site's phasing and its diagnostic material have never emerged beyond a rudimentary six-page summary, which appeared in 1993, and a photograph of some complete vessels photographed in a post-excavation display setting.⁷² A series of publications aimed at non-specialists have also emerged but, as yet, no serious attempt to produce a final report has been undertaken by its principal excavators now thirty years after its excavation.⁷³

The preliminary discussions widely employed in current debate are also of finite value. Beyond a description of architectural layout, which included basic dimensions of individual structures, the publications divulge little information about the archaeological results from the monastery in terms of its material or spatial evolution.⁷⁴ This has crucial implications for our ability to reconstruct periods of change within the site itself and to place it in the broader context of regional monastic development. In terms of spatial usage, the reports contribute little beyond a series of functional identifications for individual units – a 'hostelry' and 'refectory' to name two examples – which have not been accompanied by supporting archaeological criteria.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Magen 1990, Magen 1993 and Magen 1995.

⁷¹ Magen 1990: 153-164.

⁷² Magen 1993:183, 192-194. These have been identified by Magness 2011: 87 as Fine Byzantine Ware form 2c.

⁷³ Magen 1995.

⁷⁴ Magen 1993: 172-190.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*: 191, 188-189.



Fig.1.3 Ma'ale Adummim, Martyrios Monastery. The lack of detailed published discussions of the site's phasing makes it difficult to determine the appearance of the monastery at one particular period. The section shaded in yellow is the 'kitchen-refectory' unit identified by Magen which yielded quantities of Fine Byzantine Ware Form 2c

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Fig.1.4 Ma'ale Adummim, Martyrios Monastery, the 'Arab farmhouse' chapel.

©Rotem Hoffman 2011

The absence of detailed discussion of stratigraphy and diagnostic material also limits a full re-appraisal of the site's occupational phasing, which, from the inception of the excavation project, was framed by a series of problematic assumptions. Its foundation date and periods of expansion were, for one, derived principally from the hagiographical writings of Cyril of Scythopolis to such an extent that the archaeological material was reduced to an essentially illustrative role and contributed little to defining the site's chronological parameters.⁷⁶

In a similar manner, a combination of textually-based chronologies and (then) accepted perceptions of the period 614-640 as one of violent fracture, resulted in the automatic identification of a Sassanian destruction layer (which essentially ended monastic occupation at the site) and the attribution of later seventh-century activity to post-monastic 'Arab' squatters.⁷⁷ Even observations made by Yitzhak Magen during excavation, which would contradict or provoke the dating of this final phase and the nature of its subsequent occupation, were largely overlooked in the published report.⁷⁸ The coin hoard which emerged from the site is one such example. Comprised primarily of Herakleion coins of the period 612-614, the hoard was automatically interpreted as a response to the Sassanian occupation.⁷⁹ This interpretation is not inconceivable (indeed the pattern is known in other contexts) but the excavator's acknowledgment of a coin among the hoard dated between 750 and 760 casts doubt on the validity of this interpretation and would suggest a much later date of deposition.⁸⁰ Similarly, Magen's identification of a post-monastic farmhouse and agricultural area (which he dated to the eighth century, based on the presence of Khirbet Mefjer ware) did not adequately explain the presence of a small structure at the centre of the complex which

⁷⁶ *Ibid*: 170-174.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*: 174, 184-186.

⁷⁸ Magen 1990.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*: 174.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*: 174. For a discussion of coin hoards dating to the Sassanian conquest with references see Walmsley 2007: 324.

exhibited clear indications of a bema and an apse (Fig.1.4).⁸¹ In both the examples of the hoard and farmhouse, the pre-determined idea of Sassanian/Arab military destruction and the perceived redundancy of Christian cult structures after the Arab conquest, were essentially imposed upon a material sequence that contradicted the premises of both pre-conceptions. In terms of monastic continuities, the presence of a small chapel structure in the reduced complex, probably dateable to the mid-eighth century, proposes a longer cult function than Magen assumed and, in the context of this thesis, provides another example of post-Byzantine continuity.⁸² This is corroborated by Jodi Magness' recent re-evaluation of the photographed ceramic assemblage which has brought into question the initial 614 destruction date proposed by Magen.⁸³ The photographed assemblage of Fine Byzantine Ware bowls (Form 2c) from the 'kitchen-unit' of the monastery – a form produced between the mid-seventh and mid-ninth century – undermines the credibility of a 614 abandonment phase.⁸⁴ Regrettably, whilst observations by scholars such as Magness draw attention to the relative flaws with established chronologies, without the full published excavation record, they cannot propose a more comprehensive resolution to its failings; many of which will never be fully rectified.⁸⁵

1.3 JABAL HARŪN

The site of Jabal Harūn, situated in the hinterlands of Petra, was subject to a decade of intensive excavations conducted by the University of Helsinki focussed on the monastery and church complex beneath the summit of the mountain.⁸⁶ A close reading of the epigraphic

⁸¹ Magen 1993: 184-185.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Magness 2011: 86-87.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* The chronology of Fine Byzantine Ware Bowls is presented in Magness 1993: 200.

⁸⁵ This is equally true of the churches of Mamphis, Shivta and Nessana whose chronologies have been readdressed in Magness 2003: 183-190.

⁸⁶ Preliminary reports appear in Frösén *et al* 1998: 420-439, Frösén *et al* 1999: 525-533 69-410, Frösén *et al* 1999, Frösén *et al* 2001: 359-376, Fiema 2003 and Frösén *et al* 2004: 97-116. The final report is published in Fiema and Frösén (eds.) 2008.

material from the church in the context of surviving papyri and literary sources has allowed us to identify the site as Aaron's monastery, recognised as the burial site of Aaron brother of Moses.⁸⁷

The excavation results of the church (we await those of the monastery) were published in final form in 2008 and present one of the most systematic publications of a monastic and cult site in the region presently available.⁸⁸ It is one of few excavations at a Christian cult site where details of stratigraphy are fully published and where a comprehensive discussion of the ceramics and other excavated material appears.⁸⁹ Moreover, it is one of the few monastic foundations where the occupational history of the site can be traced from its foundation until its abandonment and where its occupational chronology was determined independently of textual frameworks. In this respect, the excavations of Jabal Harūn offer an ideal example of archaeological publication that is missing among the majority of sites in the region. The results of the excavation have pointed to a fifth-century foundation date for the tri-apsidal basilica which appears to have been constructed as a *memoria* close to the Tomb of Aaron on the summit of Jabal Harūn (Fig.1.5).⁹⁰ At least four major phases of damage to the site were identified but, importantly, none of these phases were linked by excavators to a hostile Sassanian or Arab presence.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Miettunen 2008.

⁸⁸ Fiema and Frösén 2008.

⁸⁹ Gerber 2008: 287-310 and Gerber and Holmqvist 2008: 311-329. Discussions of the glass appear in Keller and Lindblom 2008: 331-367 and metal finds in Pouta and Whiting 2008: 393-403. The phases of the site are discussed comprehensively in Mikkola *et al* 2008.

⁹⁰ Mikkola *et al* 2008: 103-118.

⁹¹ *Ibid*: 118-169.



Fig.1.5 (left) Jabal Harūn, aerial view, the monastic basilica.
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Fig.1.6 (below) Summit of Jabāl Harūn, the *Weli*.
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A destruction phase, which resulted in the construction of pilasters around the supporting columns, is instead likely to be linked to one of a series of earthquakes which affected the region in the seventh century.⁹² The most drastic destruction level, which resulted in the reuse of the main basilica for domestic activity and the concentration of liturgical activity into the north chapel, is likely to be linked to the Golan Earthquake of 749.⁹³ In both cases the excavators have been keen to stress the continued occupation of the site after these events, with liturgical activity continuing into the late ninth century/early tenth century when the complex was finally abandoned.⁹⁴ This is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it offers a long term view of a monastic site which shows considerable continuity throughout the Abbasid period and one that it is not framed by ideas of drastic or immediate change resulting from the political shifts of the seventh and eighth centuries. Secondly, whilst the results acknowledge notable continuity into the ninth century, this continuity is not described in terms of an open-ended stasis. Instead, it offers a perspective of a site where occupation continued but was characterised by substantial shifts in spatial usage and the gradual retraction and declining material wealth of the site over the course of the seventh to tenth centuries.

Literary sources record that Jabal Harūn and the Tomb of Aaron remained in the hands of the Melkites into the tenth century: descriptions which compliment the evidence proposed by the excavations conducted by the University of Helsinki.⁹⁵ It is possible that the occupation described in the sources refers to the continued maintenance of a church on the summit of Jabal Harūn which housed the Tomb of Aaron: now situated beneath a *weli* whose construction post-dates the thirteenth century (Fig. 1.6). Early surveys conducted at the site in

⁹² *Ibid*: 135-146.

⁹³ *Ibid*: 147-159.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*: 159-164.

⁹⁵ The Tomb of Aaron is described in the ninth-century Melkite work, *Kitāb al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's, see *Kitāb al-Burhān*, 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 205-206, tr. Watt 1960: 160-161). It is also discussed in two works by Al-Mas'ūdī, dated to the tenth century, who notes that the site remained in the possession of the Melkites: *Murūj al-dhahab* (ed. and tr. Barbier de Meynard 1861: 94) and *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa al-ishrāf* (ed. de Goeje 1894: 113-114).

1916 by Theodor Wiegand identified remains of the earlier Byzantine structure incorporated into the *weli* which were corroborated by additional finds made by the Finnish Jabal Harūn project between 1998 and 2008.⁹⁶ The continued function of the *weli* as a Muslim shrine and place of active pilgrimage in the present day restricts more intensive archaeological investigation that may identify post-Abbasid phases. Herein lays the third important point which is pertinent to a number of sites in Palestine and the Transjordan. As with Jabal Harūn, evidence for monastic and cult continuity into the tenth century is often to be found (or inferred) at sites that were subsequently redeveloped after the eleventh century (often truncating earlier phases) or where continued modern occupation hampers more intrusive archaeological methods. Jabal Harūn, therefore, presents one of a number of churches where we can identify post-Umayyad continuity but where we are restricted in our capacity to outline the physical characteristics of these later phases.

The excavation results of Jabal Hārūn, though invaluable, are also extremely difficult to contextualise in relation to broader settlement patterns in the region between 700 and 1000. Our understanding of the monastery's relationship to its hinterlands, both in terms of exploitation and ownership is one (surely significant) element which remains unknown. Debate over the nature of occupation in Petra during the early Islamic period has yet to reach a consensus, with the more negative perspective of post-Byzantine abandonment supported by Zbigniew Fiema coming under some criticism by Alan Walmsley who has alternatively stressed the problematic, largely Nabataean focussed, nature of excavations in the region.⁹⁷

In this regard, the contentious debate over the extent of early Islamic settlement at Petra inhibits a full correlation between the continuities explicit in the monastery with those

⁹⁶ Wiegand 1920: 141-145 and Miettunen 2008: 34-38.

⁹⁷ Fiema 2002: 191-252 argues for considerable decline in the urban activities for Petra in the early Islamic period. The dating of destruction of the main church to c.600, rather than the traditionally assumed c.550, has extended the chronology of this decline into the seventh century. Fiema's argument for decline in the early Islamic period has been challenged by Walmsley 2007a: 90 who stresses the longer occupational profiles demonstrated by surrounding settlements.

of the immediate urban and rural landscape. Furthermore, it obscures our ability to make more conclusive statements about the factors which facilitated such prolonged endurance at the monastery even if that survival was increasingly marked by the gradual retraction of the site after 750.⁹⁸

The close association between the monastery at Jabal Harūn and prominent clerical families in Petra apparent from the sixth-century papyri hoard unearthed in the Church of Hagia Maria points to the importance of a more integrated approach to monastic and settlement archaeology.⁹⁹ This is, essentially, a trajectory that future studies will need to address. Whilst more recent studies have contributed to redefining and identifying cases of post-Umayyad settlement at monasteries what we currently lack is a more contextual understanding of these sites in relationship to their wider social frameworks.

In the context of the present thesis, the issues presented by Shivta, the Martyrios Monastery of Ma'ale Adummim and Jabal Harūn are pertinent. Issues of chronology, of spatial change and the regional distribution of monastic/cult sites are crucial to exploring post-Byzantine monastic continuities. They are, however, dependent upon the results of the earlier studies from which these observations are drawn: the quality of their publication, the methodology of its excavators and the chronological and conceptual frameworks through which that material was assessed. The level of critique to which one subjects this material can produce radically contrasting views of archaeological developments during the seventh-century transition – as comparisons between the recent syntheses of Robert Schick, Eliya Ribak and Claudine

⁹⁸ Mikkola *et al* 2008: 159-164.

⁹⁹ On this see Gagos and Frösén 1998: 477. A further reference to a monastery is suggested in *P. Petra* inv.86 see *Ibid*: 480-481.

Dauphin or Chris Wickham, Alan Walmsley and Jodi Magness attest.¹⁰⁰ Although not wholly representative of the debate, these six scholars represent the general divisions which remain inherent in critical approaches to the Palestinian seventh century and the relative isolation of ‘Christian archaeology’ from the models proposed by archaeologists and historians focussed on wider settlement or economic processes. Whereas Schick, Ribak and Dauphin, who accept the original dating proscribed in earlier reports, perceive the seventh century as one of rapid dislocation for Christian communities, this general decline and fracture model has been systematically dismantled by the analyses outlined by Wickham, Walmsley and Magness.

Ma’ale Adummim and Shivta are representative but not isolated examples of the restrictions which confront any analyst of monastic and cult life in the post-Byzantine Levant. They are among a group of ‘red-herring’ sites whose existence is known, but where excavation strategies, publication qualities or the interpretation of their material restrict detailed analysis of their early Islamic phases. At present, sites where chronologies are insufficiently described, or require systematic renegotiation, outnumber the sites where more sensitive dating and detailed publication propose longer occupational profiles than formerly recognised.

These issues impact not only upon the appraisal of individual sites but, importantly, our ability to appraise regional changes and trends which are drawn from this material. The irregularity of publication quality and the fact that much of the archaeological material

¹⁰⁰ Dauphin 1998: 452-357, Ribak 2007: 19 and Schick 1995: 21-45 and all support cases of destruction or drastic change to monastic life due to the destructive impact of the Sassanian siege. This is based on a straightforward reading of the original abandonment dates proposed by excavators. Jodi Magness has remained particularly active in the re-analysis of the chronologies proposed by older excavations which has led to a rejection of drastic social change in this period: Magness 1992, Magness 1993 and Magness 2003. Part of the issue remains centred on the problematic chronologies of seventh-century ceramic types which were often assigned to the sixth century: Walmsley 2007b: 326-331. Considerable advances have been made in recent years in the creation of more nuanced ceramic chronologies for the period 600-700 in certain regions. For the southern Dekapolis, around Jarash and Pella, see the discussions in Watson 1992, Watson 1992b and Watson 1995. Magness 1993 surveys the evidence for Jerusalem and sites now in modern Israel. The ceramic corpus relating to the south of the region, especially around Petra, is less clearly defined. An important contribution, however, appears in Gerber 2008: 287-323. Although not directly concerned with Christian monumental programmes, the studies of Wickham 2005: 232-242, 627-634 and Walmsley 2007a, whose conclusions are based on the dating proposed by the more recently refined ceramic typologies, identify no dislocation to site occupation as a result of the Sassanian or Arab conquest.

requires systematic review are among the major inhibitors to observing long-term transitions within the Christian monumental landscape of early Islamic Palestine.

Chronology may remain the core issue, in terms of analysing the metamorphosis of that landscape in terms of site distribution, but it is not exceptional. In this respect, current archaeological strategies have been equally prohibitive to the analysis of post-Byzantine monasticism by limiting more holistic observations of monastic sites in the context of their broader social landscapes: the patrons who funded them; the social demographic who recognised their role and the exchange networks that created and connected them to the wider world whether local, regional or trans-regional. The Martyrios Monastery encapsulates many of these limitations: a monastery whose existence is known but where archaeological approaches have failed to clarify its position and role in relation to its broader socio-economic environment.¹⁰¹ Though currently less popular than the more recent emphasis on redefining chronologies, the creation of a more integrated social and economic framework in which to situate monastic trends is nonetheless crucial and something that this thesis seeks to explore. This is essentially because although questions of chronology permit our understanding of how the physical Christian landscape evolved, they cannot fully explain the factors which instigated its creation between the fourth and seventh centuries and those which endorsed its gradual retraction after 800.

As I will outline in this study, central to understanding and explaining the physical changes to the Palestinian monastic milieu following the seventh century is a concurrent observation of changes to the social landscape which conditioned the nature of their continuity: economic, political and devotional. At present, our understanding of the chronological patterns of the landscape and its association with wider social transactions is insufficiently secure to facilitate immediate and uncritical appraisal. Though this study cannot

¹⁰¹ For example, no discussions were dedicated to the provenance of the finds (including ceramic material). Equally, as the excavation focussed only on the walled complex, the project failed to situate the site within the context of its involvement with the productive landscape, including detailed questions about monastic diet etc.

fully to resolve these issues, the following discussion will introduce a series of case studies that underscore the importance and potential of more integrated archaeological approaches to monastic communities in respect to their broader social and economic context.

1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL LEGACIES

Despite the growing profile of research into the emergent political and economic trends in Palestine following the breakdown of Byzantine political hegemony in the seventh century, few themes have received a level of analysis comparable to that reserved for its Christian population. In terms of modern analytical coverage, they remain the most visible social group from within the Palestinian ‘sectarian milieu’, first described by John Wansbrough, which characterised the Palestinian social landscape from the seventh century until the close of the first millennium.¹⁰²

General strategies within archaeological research throughout the twentieth century, principally aimed at identifying post-Byzantine developments, have endorsed the predominance of Christian cult sites in the debate due to the general preference for the excavation and study of church buildings. Whilst this investigative scope has been qualified in recent years by several excavations – predominantly focussed upon general patterns of urban development or settlement history – conducted within urban centres in Palestine and the Transjordan, the material culture of Christian cult-buildings continues to represent a substantial component of the corpus of archaeological sites and features known to have remained active following the mid-seventh century.¹⁰³ The approach remains even more

¹⁰² Wansbrough 1978.

¹⁰³ Jarash: for the recent excavations of the eighth-century mosque see Blanke *et al* 2007 and Walmsley *et al* 2008. Walmsley and Damgaard 2005 offer a discussion of the mosque in relationship to other eighth-century examples within Syria-Palestine. Further discussion of these finds in a regional context is offered by Walmsley 1996 and Walmsley 2007. See also Gawlikowski 1992: 357-361. A synthetic study of the Late-Antique phases of Gerasa/Jarash has been published by Kennedy 2007. Churches are among the most predominant of the

pronounced among rural settlements where churches often represent the only excavated features.¹⁰⁴

This situation is a product of strategic approaches towards Byzantine material culture undertaken during the formative phases of archaeological investigation between the late nineteenth century and inter-war period (c.1918-c.1938), whereby Byzantine archaeology emerged as a derivative discipline of Christian archaeology.

The focus has been sustained beyond the post-war period by the activities of Christian-led research institutions, such as the Franciscan Institute, alongside more contemporary economic incentives responding to expanding pilgrimage-tourism markets within modern Israel and Jordan, which have encouraged prolonged archaeological investigations at the sites of Deir 'Ain 'Abata, the 'Baptism Church' and Mount Nebo.¹⁰⁵

excavated features of this period. The main, though not unproblematic, study of Jarash's churches remains that offered by Crowfoot 1938:171-294 with separate discussion of the mosaics offered by Biebel 1938: 309-340. The excavation report for the Bishop Isaiah church near the North Theatre is discussed by Clark 1986: 303-342 and the slightly later Bishop Marianos church (dated 611) by Gawlikowski and Musa 1986:137-162. Scythopolis/Baysān: for an archaeological survey of Scythopolis/Baysān in the Byzantine period see the discussion by Tsafirir and Foerster 1997: 85-146. Pella: an overview of the main developments in Pella between the seventh and tenth centuries is offered by Walmsley 1988: 142-159 and Walmsley 1991: 135-159. For Gadara/Umm Qays see the discussion by Weber 1998 and Al-Daire 2001. Much older, predominantly architectural, studies are offered for Oboda and Mamphis in Negev 1997 and Negev 1988. For Tiberias/Tabariyyah see the collected studies in Hirschfeld 2004 and Stacey 2004. Excavations at Rehovot-in-the-Negev have predominantly focussed on the North Church, for which see the collected discussion in Tsafirir 1988a and the re-analysis of the phasing in Magness 2003: 191-194. Likewise, at the settlement of Madaba, excavations have concentrated on the excavation of churches and mosaic schemes. The first discussion of the Crypt of Elianos is offered in Séjourné 1897: 648- 657. For the Church of the Theotokos see Piccirillo 1980 and Di Segni 1992. Many of the churches have never been fully published with available literature concentrating primarily on mosaics and inscriptions see Piccirillo 1993: 49-132 and Skartsis 1996: 6-15. The Church of the Map is discussed in Lagrange 1897: 165-184 and in the collected studies by Piccirillo and Alliata 1999. For the site of Hippos/Sussita see Seagal *et al* 2004; Seagal *et al* 2006 and Seagal *et al* 2008. Capernaum was subject to systematic excavation by the Franciscans see the collected results in Corbo 1975, Loffreda 1974, Spijkerman 1975 and Tzaferis 1989. Criticism of the dating of Capernaum, focussed mainly on the excavations of Tzaferis, has been offered in Magness 1997.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, the settlement of Kastron Mefa'a where excavation has predominantly focussed on churches. For a discussion of the main church complex of Hagios Stephanos see Piccirillo and Alliata 1994 (eds.) and the earlier discussion in Piccirillo 1991: 327-364 and Alliata 1991: 365-422. For the Church of Hagios Paulos see Pappalardo 2002: 385-440, Piccirillo 1997: 375-394 and Sanmori and Pappalardo 1997. The Church of the Tabula Ansata see Piccirillo 2003: 285-324 and the Church of the Lions see Alliata 1992: 227-250. This is also true of Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Madaba, see Dauphin 1975, Di Segni 1992, Piccirillo 1992: 373-408, Piccirillo 1994d: 381-404 and Tsafirir 1988a.

¹⁰⁵ Deir 'Ain 'Abata is associated with the Prophet Lot. Whilst the dedication and association of the site with the Prophet Lot of the Book of Genesis in the Byzantine period is unsubstantiated by textual evidence, the presence of an inscription mentioning 'Αγιος Λωτ', within the nave mosaic of the main basilical church, would appear to endorse this interpretation see Politis 2011: 158-160. The identification of the church, which incorporates a natural cave accessed through the north aisle, as the site where Lot and his daughters sheltered,

For the purposes of the present study, this has proved beneficial by facilitating the accumulation of a sizeable corpus of archaeological and epigraphic material available for collation and synthesis with over 200 sites identified in the systematic, though now dated, survey of the published material by Asher Ovadiah.¹⁰⁶

The prominent focus on the Christian architectural landscapes has not emerged without more critical implications. In regions where excavations of churches and monasteries dominate the published archaeological material, as with the flourishing examples of church construction in Kastron Mefa'a (modern Umm al-Rasas),¹⁰⁷ such confined focus upon church archaeology often impedes our ability to observe the occupational histories of Christian cult-buildings within a wider framework of regional or more immediate socio-economic or settlement change. It has, in addition, served to reinforce approaches to monasteries or pilgrimage churches as isolated components of the Palestinian archaeological landscape, whereby processes of expansion, or decline, are viewed as primarily responsive to immediate political and cultural shifts; among which 'Islam' is routinely identified as a major contributing factor.¹⁰⁸

Fortunately, the pattern is not consistent on a regional level. A successive series of excavation projects, particularly those focussed on urban sites within the anachronistically

following the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 19: 30-38), lacks any substantive basis in the surviving material. However, this identification remains the most common in non-specialist and promotional material. For an example of the popular literature associated with the site see Politis 2004. Excavations reports for the monastery, although all preliminary, are found in Politis 1988: 287-296; Politis 1992: 281-290; Politis 1993: 503-520, Politis 1995: 477-491 and Politis 1997: 341-351. The final report appears in Politis 2012 (ed.). For a discussion of the Baptism Church, which includes both an archaeological report (primarily survey) and a discussion about the strategy for tourist development, see Waheeb 2001: 419-425. See also Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003: 9-18. Mount Nebo has been subject to two major archaeological investigations conducted by the Franciscan institute. For the results of the latest series of projects see the collective discussions in Piccirillo and Alliata 1998: 193-219. For a report of the earlier projects, conducted in the mid-twentieth century, see the collected studies of the archaeological and epigraphic material in Saller 1941a, 1941b and 1941c.

¹⁰⁶ For this corpus see Ovadiah 1970 and the supplementary material in Ovadiah and De Silva 1981: 200-261.

¹⁰⁷ See note 4 above. Henceforth Umm al-Rasas will be referred to by its Byzantine/Umayyad name Kastron Mefa'a.

¹⁰⁸ Compare the statements in Binns 1994: 245-246, Chitty 1966: 143-16, Hirschfeld 1992: 236-237, Patrich 2011: 205-218 and Ribak 2007:16, 19 which collectively equate monastic/pilgrimage decline to a broad political template of Islamic expansion.

termed ‘Dekapolis’,¹⁰⁹ have contributed to a developing understanding of Christian building in the broader context of changing settlement patterns, urban investment and artisanal production within these larger urban centres. Chief among these projects are those in Jarash, conducted by the Danish and Polish teams in the areas flanking the *dekumanos* and in the Churches of the Bishop Isaiah and Bishop Marianos, which have indicated continuous occupation throughout the seventh century.¹¹⁰ It is a pattern also noted by the Sydney-Wooster excavations conducted in Pella.¹¹¹ In these examples and a number of other settlements, the maintenance of the existing Christian infrastructure occurred within a broader social setting which demonstrates notable continuities into the eighth century¹¹² (although estimating the scale of activity post c.800 continues to be a subject of ongoing debate).¹¹³ In

¹⁰⁹ It is anachronistic in the sense that the term was no longer used by the period of the study. It is used, however, to refer to the sites of Gerasa/Jarash, Hippos/Sussita, Philadelphia/‘Ammān, Pella/Tabaqat Fahl, Scythopolis/Baysān. See note 103 for an extended bibliography concerning these excavations. The urban settlements which fall in the geographical focus of this study are: Pella, Capitolias/Bayt Ra’s, Hippos/Sussita, Gerasa/Jarash and Philadelphia/‘Ammān.

¹¹⁰ On the excavations conducted by the Danish team, see Blanke *et al* 2007 and Walmsley *et al* 2008. The Polish excavations are discussed in Zayadine 1986.

¹¹¹ Smith 1992.

¹¹² For Jarash/Gerasa, see the report on the mosque in Blanke *et al* 2007, Walmsley *et al* 2008 and Damgaard 2011. The *sūq* complex is discussed in Walmsley *et al* 2008. For questions of economic activity and production see Walmsley 2000: 305-309, 321-323 and Watson 1989: 223-261. Similar correlations can also be observed at Pella for which see the reports in Smith 1992 and Walmsley and Smith 1992. There remain areas of the Palestinian region where understanding of early Islamic phases, particularly those following c.800, is more imprecise and obstructs a full correlation between examples of Christian cult-building maintenance/abandonment and concurrent patterns of occupational continuity and material wealth. The city of Petra, where focus on Nabataean phases hinders the identification of Byzantine and early Islamic activity, presents one example. Earlier studies at the Negev sites of Oboda and Mamphsis, where abandonment phases were automatically attributed to the Arab conquest, yield further examples of these limitations. For Oboda see Negev 1997: 121. For Mamphsis see Negev 1988: 7, 63. Similarly, the substantial urban continuities and growth in the cities of Jerusalem, Ramlā, Tiberias/Ṭabarīyyah, Aqaba or ‘Ammān/Philadelphia, which have accelerated over the past century, inhibit more intensive archaeological investigation within their urban cores. Given that these centres appear to be the most active in the period 750 -1000, this remains a severe limitation.

¹¹² See note 97 for a discussion of Petra. The investigations of Piccirillo have produced some well known examples of church investment in the Umayyad period. Of particular note, excavated in the nineteenth century, is the Church of the Theotokos in Madaba which was partially refurbished in 767. For a discussion of the dating of the mosaic panel see Di Segni 1992. Substantial urban expansion at Madaba throughout the twentieth century inhibits our ability to observe this abandonment in the context of the wider settlement profile of the site in the Abbasid period. The excavation of two Umayyad houses in the vicinity of the Church of Prophet Elias, on the opposite side of the *dekumanos* from the Church of the Virgin, produced evidence for activity until the ninth century see Alliata 1994: 393-394. Foran 2004: 113-122, has also identified a series of late-Byzantine domestic structures that were renovated in the Umayyad period.

¹¹³ The ceramic corpus of Jerusalem has been fully published by Magness 1993. A discussion of Jerusalem and Ramla is also offered in Avni 2011a. For ‘Ammān see the excavations on the citadel by Northedge 1993. The settlement is also discussed briefly by al-Muqaddasī see *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1877, 175, tr. Collins 2001, 147), confirming occupation in the tenth century. Excavations at Tiberias in

this regard, the examples of the Transjordan are most explicit. A series of church constructions in Rihab, Khirbet es-Samra and the environs of Aljoun indicate a continued expansion of rural cult sites into the 630s mirrored by a similar burst of activity in the eighth century in the Madaba plateau at Kastron Mefa'a (718/756), Ma'in (717/718) and Madaba (767).¹¹⁴

Monasteries and pilgrim-cult centres are more difficult to integrate with these more recent urban surveys for two key reasons: firstly, several of the monastic/cult sites which have been excavated and published to a utilisable standard – Deir 'Ain 'Abata, Jabal Harūn situated near Petra and Mount Nebo – are located in areas where understanding of post-Byzantine settlement/economic profiles – both within the urban core and the settlement hinterlands – remain problematic or subject to conflicting interpretation.¹¹⁵ Secondly, as discussed earlier, our ability to correlate the occupational chronologies of monastic-pilgrim cult centres with broader archaeological patterns in Palestine is still heavily determined by the quality of published excavation reports and the chronologies of post-Byzantine ceramic

Hirschfeld 2004: 3-26 and an earlier study by Stacey 2004 have pointed to the continued occupation and urban activity following the ninth century. For the descriptions of al-Muqadassī see *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1877, 155, tr. Collins 2001, 132) still notes its status as the administrative city of the district of al-Urdunn in the tenth century. See also the discussion by Harrison 1992: 51-59. The town is also described by al-Muqadassī see *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1877, 161, tr. Collins 2001, 137) further mentions the existence of a marketplace, mosque and baths at this time although the limited excavations at the site have not yet confirmed their material state in the early Islamic period. The history of Ayla has been briefly surveyed by Whitcomb 1994: 155-170. For Ascalon/Asqālan see the preliminary discussion in Hoffman 2004: 25-50.

¹¹⁴ On Rihab and Khirbet es Samra see Avi Yonah 1948: 68-73, Piccirillo 1981: 62-69 and Piccirillo 1993c: 304-309. On the sites of Mar Elyas and Khirbat al-Ṭanṭur, near Aljoun, dated to 622 and 625 respectively see Piccirillo 2011: 109- 110. On the Church of Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a, see Piccirillo 1994h: 241-258. Di Segni 1992 discusses the Church of the Theotokos at Madaba dated to 767. On Ma'in see Piccirillo 1993c: 200-201.

¹¹⁵ See note 97 for a discussion of Petra. The investigations of Piccirillo have produced some well known examples of church investment in the Umayyad period. Of particular note, excavated in the nineteenth century, is the Church of the Theotokos and Madaba which was partially refurbished in 767. For a discussion of the dating of the mosaic panel see Di Segni 1992. Substantial urban expansion at Madaba throughout the twentieth century inhibits our ability to observe this abandonment in the context of the wider settlement profile of the site in the Abbasid period. The excavation of two Umayyad houses in the vicinity of the Church of Prophet Elias, on the opposite side of the *dekumanos* from the church of the Virgin, produce evidence for activity until the ninth century see Alliata 1994: 393-394. Foran 2004: 113-122 has also identified a series of late-Byzantine domestic structures that were renovated in the Umayyad period.

assemblages.¹¹⁶

In this respect, poorly defined ceramic typologies often endorse a false pattern of endemic decline in the early seventh century and have served to distort long-term assessments of monastic occupational profiles.¹¹⁷ Madaba offers an illustrative example. Although the continued use of church buildings into the mid-eighth century in the city has been well acknowledged, due to the refurbishment of the Church of the Theotokos commemorated in an inscription dedicated in 767, modern urban expansion in the twentieth century at Madaba inhibits our ability to observe this continuity (or indeed subsequent processes of decline or abandonment) in the context of the wider settlement history of the urban centre.¹¹⁸

The nature of our preliminary reports (characteristic of the churches of Madaba which are not published in final form), which dominate the available published material and deviate little from discussions of architectural design or mosaic programmes, further exacerbates the issue.¹¹⁹

The inclination to isolate the material obtained from excavations at monasteries and pilgrimage churches from broader socio-economic evaluations of Syria-Palestine must be understood in the context of established interpretive models. Here, a false perception of Palestinian monasticism and pilgrimage, on both an archaeological and conceptual level, as social groups which maintained only nominal – essentially superficial – associations with localised economic networks and populations has legitimatised their isolation from more

¹¹⁶ See note 100.

¹¹⁷ Monasteries and cult sites which exemplify this issue include Kursi, Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Horvat Berachot. In all three cases the original excavators assigned early eighth-century abandonment dates to the sites which have since been disproven by recent analysis. For Kursi see the original ceramic chronologies outlined in Tzaferis 1983: 30-36 and the revisions in Stacey 2004: 15. For Rehovot-in-the-Negev see Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1988: 78-96 and the revision in Magness 2003: 191-194. On Horvat Berachot see Tsafir and Hirschfeld 1979 and the revisions in Magness 2003: 109-111.

¹¹⁸ Di Segni 1992. Some piecemeal excavations conducted by Foran 2004 have stressed continuity into the eighth century.

¹¹⁹ All of the churches of Madaba, for example, are discussed only in terms of their mosaic programmes see Piccirillo 1993c: 49-132. Similarly the phasing of sites such as Kissufim, possibly a monastery, is presented solely in relationship to dedicatory inscriptions, see Cohen 1993: 277-282.

recent revisionist approaches to developments in the seventh century. As will be explored below, the role of hagiography and more residual traces of modern anti-clericalism have proved influential in sustaining this problematic interpretive approach.

These methodological restrictions are less explicit among existing archaeological appraisals of Syro-Palestinian Christian communities in the early Islamic period.¹²⁰ This is essentially because much of the present debate related to this topic remains focussed on redefining occupational chronologies – primarily abandonment dates – alongside evidence for ‘post-Byzantine’ architectural investment (particularly dedicatory inscriptions).¹²¹ But it a focus endorsed by the prevailing assumption among recent studies that current interpretations of monastic social integration in the Byzantine period offer a methodologically dependable and useful foundation for the explanation of subsequent patterns following the 630s.¹²² As we shall see, this is problematic.

The problematic issues about these social relationships are threefold. The first concerns current understanding of the social and economic role of monastic communities in Palestinian society prior to the 630s (in particular, the identity of its primary patrons); the second focuses on how the changing social and economic trajectories of the Islamic period modified and transformed these existing relationships; and the third, whether patterns and relationships which already existed by the late-Byzantine period (here taken as c.550-c.630) had any bearing upon the subsequent developments of these sites and communities after the

¹²⁰ Thus McCormick’s synthesis of the region in the early ninth century is based on the problematic studies of Hirschfeld 1992 and Binns 1994. Compare with McCormick 2011: 44-46.

¹²¹ For the major archaeological study of Palestine’s Christian communities which focuses predominantly on the question of occupation chronologies, see Schick 1995. Numerous examples of post-Byzantine structural embellishments and new constructions have been identified through the sensitive readings of the epigraphic material by Leah Di Segni. For the most recent regional overviews see Di Segni 2003 and Di Segni 2009. An earlier discussion, predominantly based on his own excavations, is offered by Piccirillo 1995: 47-56. The information that may be extracted from epigraphy in terms of social and economic relationships has yet to receive a detailed individual study.

¹²² Thus McCormick 2011: 33-44, argues for substantial decline in the monastic population by the ninth century based on the devastating effects of the Sassanid occupation of 614-628 and the extra-regional character of Palestinian monastic recruitment which was susceptible to regime change. A similar acceptance of the destructive nature of the Sassanid interval is reiterated in Schick 1995: 20-48.

mid-seventh century.

The lack of sustained methodological dialogue between Byzantinists and early Islamic scholars regarding approaches to the material culture of Christian communities is primarily a product of disciplinary partition. Publications focussed on the analysis of monasticism and pilgrimage in the Byzantine period habitually terminate analysis in the 630s (but often offer little offer detailed treatment beyond the Sassanid interim 614-628); scholars focussed on the early Islamic period, assuming the methodological security of earlier studies, routinely commence their analytical narratives following the capitulation of Jerusalem to the Arab armies in the 630s (traditionally given as 636).¹²³ This approach, which has endorsed an assessment of the period 614-638 as definitive to the declining prosperity of monastic/pilgrimage sites, and transformative in terms of their socio-economic role, remains widely unchallenged.¹²⁴ One of the core tenants of this thesis, however, is that this approach is too simplistic and is in contradiction with studies of urbanism and economic production which have increasingly drawn attention to the longevity of late-antique trends into the eighth and ninth centuries.

¹²³ Binns 1994: 243-244 and Hirschfeld 1992: 16-17. Regarding post-Byzantine developments, Schick 1995: 1-19 offers a very brief introduction of the situation prior to the Sassanian conquest and mostly focuses on narrative events. Humphreys 2010 similarly discusses Christian communities in the early Islamic period by adopting political frameworks although he does introduce issues about established interpretations. McCormick 2011: 44-45 similarly bases his argument about the trajectory of post-Byzantine Christian communities on the presumption that our understanding of developments prior to 600 is secure.

¹²⁴ Compare the major, and still prevailing, studies of Binns 1994: 245-246, Chitty 1966: 143-163 and Hirschfeld 1992: 236-237 whose analytical treatment terminates around 630. The approaches of Binns 1994 and Chitty 1932, which are structured around hagiographical chronologies, offer very little discussion beyond the year 614: corresponding with the events of the *Life of George of Choziba*. Similarly, Schick's main discussion begins with the Sassanid occupation of 614 see Schick 1995: 20-48. Patrich 2011 also sees the Sassanian and Arab conquests as marking a distinct break with existing practices. A more long term portrait of epigraphic trends, spanning the fifth-eighth centuries, is offered by Di Segni 1999: 149-178.

1.5 THE EXTERNAL PATRONAGE MODEL

The central issue in the context of the present debate remains primarily one of patronage and social sponsorship: whether the underlying social and economic support for monastic and pilgrimage centres, and their human agents, can be identified as originating from among localised Christian populations, or as a system which was dependent upon the intervention of extra-regional – essentially Aegean-Mediterranean – elite networks and associated revenues.¹²⁵ This debate is crucial to identifying and situating the socio-economic factors which facilitated both the ongoing patterns of monastic-cult site investment in the Umayyad period and the eventual decline in their number and material wealth during the ninth and tenth centuries.¹²⁶

Consensus among recent publications has favoured the latter of these interpretations and, certainly in terms of academic focus, monastic and pilgrimage support networks are generally viewed in terms of elite exchange between Palestine, Byzantium and the nascent polities of the post-Roman west.¹²⁷ This general ‘westernised’ perception of monasticism in the region is a result of the general exclusivity ascribed by modern scholars to hagiography when addressing broader questions of ethnic composition and patron networks concerning Palestinian monastic foundations. In this respect, two key sources, Cyril of Scythopolis’ *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* and the *Leimonarion* of John Moschos, predominate in endorsing this perception of the Palestinian monastic milieu as, in the words of Michael McCormick, ‘distinctively and deeply extra-regional in its recruitment’.¹²⁸ The grip of hagiography over recent approaches to Palestinian monasticism is neatly exhibited by the work of Yizhar Hirschfeld whose monograph remains, without question, the most widely cited study of the

¹²⁵ See the comments in Patrich 1998: 470-472.

¹²⁶ For discussions of Umayyad investments see Chapter Two. Discussion of declining patronal endowment after 750 and processes of abandonment are discussed in Chapter Three.

¹²⁷ See the most recent comments by McCormick 2011: 44 following a precedent established in Binns 1994: 91-95, Dauphin 1998:158-165 and Hirschfeld 1992: 12-13.

¹²⁸ McCormick 2011: 44.

subject and a work that underpins analysis of post-Byzantine developments.¹²⁹ Hirschfeld's main hypothesis, drawn from hagiography, that Palestinian groups formed only a fraction of the monastic population of the Judean Desert, has formed the basis of almost all critical approaches to Palestinian monasticism since its publication in 1992.¹³⁰ This premise is essentially flawed. For one, it places an inordinate degree of emphasis on a series of texts which, as we shall see, have yet to receive a level of critical study which justifies their role in underpinning almost everything we know about Palestinian monasticism as an area of study.¹³¹ It also accepts, without reservation, the essential empirical value of hagiography, without more considered reflection of its limitations in reconstructing the ethnic or social composition of an individual monastery; still less the broader monastic population.¹³² Equally, the study overlooks the wider evidence (some of which is presented in the textual material) which alludes to a more complex series of connections to localised populations whose contribution, comparative to that of non-Palestinian donors, remains widely

¹²⁹ This includes the studies of Joseph Patrich and Michael McCormick: Patrich 2011 and McCormick 2011: 44.

¹³⁰ Hirschfeld's discussion 1992: 12-13, admittedly only concerns Judean Desert monasticism which may have attracted a more diverse monastic demographic. However, Hirschfeld's conclusion that Palestinian monks were in a minority, based on direct readings of *Cyril of Scythopolis* and the *Leimonarion*, is problematic given that such sources offer no indication of the broader demographic profile of an individual community. It should be noted that there are no indications in Hirschfeld's work that would suggest he believed these patterns to be applicable to other regions in Palestine or the Transjordan. This does not reflect how his work is used in Binns 1994 and McCormick 2011 to underpin regional studies.

¹³¹ See pages 54-62.

¹³² This is a premise which underpins Binns 1994: 91-95, Dauphin 1998:158-165 and McCormick 2011: 44. There is no material that would permit us to estimate the size of the monastic community in any Judean Desert monastery at any point between 500 and 1000. I do not accept the calculations of 250-300 monks in the sixth century based on Patrich 1995: 56 and subsequently used by McCormick 2011: 39 to estimate the declining rate of the monastic population in the early-ninth century. This is essentially because Patrich's estimate is based primarily on hagiography (whose issues I have discussed in the main text) and secondly because archaeology does not, as yet, support his hypothesis. No systematic excavation has been conducted on Mar Sabas with the aim of producing a nuanced occupational history of the site and thus it remains difficult to estimate the size of the monastery at any given point between 500 and 1000. Patrich's estimations are also based on a loose criterion of spatial analysis which appears to calculate population rates based on settlement size and the size of individual cells (none of which are, in any case, securely dated). This falsely imposes concepts of modern spatial requirements on a monastic population whose own perceptions of 'ideal' living space may have differed drastically from our own. Realistically, we have very little understanding of how space was used at the monastery in the Byzantine or early Islamic period given the redevelopment of the site in the twentieth century. Lastly, Patrich's estimations (and McCormick's subsequent use of them) fail to consider broad questions of hierarchy or social distinction between monks in monasteries that may have resulted in vastly disproportionate uses of space at Mar Sabas.

unexplored.¹³³ Rather, the unquestioned conflation of the concepts of ‘Palestinian monasticism’ and ‘Judean Desert monasticism’ has ensured that the hagiographically dominated interpretations of Hirschfeld are extended to explain all post-Byzantine monastic developments without regard for local socio-economic variance. We need only, however, consider the localised and family-orientated monastic or clerical groups which emerge in the Petra and Nessana papyri to acknowledge the highly variegated nature of monastic life which co-existed with the Judean foundations by 600.¹³⁴ These examples will be discussed later, but I have introduced them here in the interests of outlining the complexity of the monastic milieu which the Arabs encountered by the 630s. They offer a perspective of monastic life that is no more or no less valid than the vision sketched by the writings of Cyril of Scythopolis or John Moschos. But they demonstrate both the complexity of Palestinian monastic identity and the diverse ways in which that existence was defined and projected within a single regional context. Our approaches to this material need to be equally sophisticated.

This more holistic approach to the known epigraphic, archaeological and textual material is visibly lacking in current approaches to Palestine monasticism of the Byzantine period. As such, our understanding and ability to estimate the impact of the Arab conquest on monasticism rests almost exclusively on a body of earlier material defined by the authority of a single genre. Questions on the ethnic composition of monastic communities, or the reliance of foundations to external non-Palestine support, is a single component of a much broader series of issues concerning the subject. But it is unquestionably the most crucial. Based upon this premise, current explanations of patterns of monastic-cult site survival in the early

¹³³ Hirschfeld acknowledges several cases within the source material whereby monasteries are directly patronised by local Palestinian notables through donation or posthumous legacy although these are not addressed in his closing comments on the decline of monasticism see Hirschfeld 1992: 102-104. The key question which remains to be addressed is the extent to which the Judean monastic cluster offers a representative sample wider regional developments

¹³⁴ Koenen 2003 and *P. Colt* 79 and *P. Colt* 80.

Islamic period are routinely correlated with broader trends of political change and sustained patterns of external contact – primarily that of Arab-Islamic expansion – in the East Mediterranean.¹³⁵ The interpretation is broadly correct: during the broad span of the early Islamic period (c.630-c.1000) we may observe a demonstrable decline in the general social and economic profile of monastic and Christian cult sites which continued until the establishment of the Latin kingdoms in the eleventh century.¹³⁶ However, the interpretation is insufficiently nuanced in chronological terms and increasingly undermined by the well publicised examples of structural embellishment to Christian buildings throughout the eighth century (many known since the late nineteenth century) and the paucity of evidence for systematic institutional hostility directed against Christian cult buildings by the Umayyad and Abbasid authorities.¹³⁷ Several of these examples require little introduction: the Church of Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa'a is dated by an inscription to 718, another in Madaba to 767 and a smaller intervention at the nearby chapel of 'Ayn al-Kanisah to 762; with further examples from Palestine and the Tur Abdin region also noted by modern commentators.¹³⁸

This expanding corpus of post-Byzantine dedicatory inscriptions has been largely unsuccessful in provoking nuanced assessments of the patron networks or social context that sponsored them.¹³⁹ Rather, such general continuities are habitually credited to the continued fluidity of elite contact between Byzantium and Palestine – which ostensibly continued until the early ninth century – as vestiges of a reduced 'pilgrimage' economy (to which monasteries are often linked) based on extra-regional (non-Palestinian) exchange.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ See note 125. Patrich 2011 offers the most recent example of these traditional theories.

¹³⁶ For a discussion of church construction and monasticism in the Crusader states see Jotischky 1995, Pringle 1993, Pringle 1998, Pringle 2007 and Pringle 2009.

¹³⁷ See the discussion in Chapter Three. Already by the point of the publication of Hirschfeld 1992 and Binns 1994 several of these examples were known. A preliminary report of the Hagios Stephanos complex at Kastron Mefa'a had already emerged, see Piccirillo 1991. The dating of the Church of the Theotokos at Madaba was also known, see Dauphin 1975. Although admittedly outside the regional scope of the two works, these examples did not provoke a more nuanced assessment of the impact of Arab rule after the 630s.

¹³⁸ Di Segni 2003 and Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 230-232.

¹³⁹ On the corpus of post-Byzantine dedicatory inscriptions see Di Segni 1999b.

¹⁴⁰ McCormick 2011: 45-48 and Patrich 2011.

Whilst this remains plausible, and will be developed further in Chapters Four and Five, there are a series of key qualifications that warrant additional reflection if we are to proceed with this reasoning. Chief among these is the question of scale. A core limitation of the external patronage model is that aggregate estimations of the comparative scale of pilgrimage from the west in the Byzantine and early Islamic periods are elusive.¹⁴¹ We currently possess little quantitative data to estimate its extent in numerical terms; nor, crucially, do we know the proportionate impact of such benefaction comparative to that contributed by local networks of pilgrims and regional elites. Studies have routinely assumed the primacy of the former, but one has the suspicion that the approach remains essentially a product of the overwhelming role of hagiography in circumscribing research strategies and interpretive models.¹⁴²

An equally problematic feature of recent research is the tendency to view ongoing monastic continuities following the 630s in relation to continued exchange between Palestine and the Aegean rather than as responses to localised needs.¹⁴³ Whilst examples of contact are known to have continued,¹⁴⁴ the general perception that this facilitated the more explicit continuities among monastic foundations into the eighth century requires more considered review. The hypothesis remains tacitly accepted, but is demonstrably at variance with recent appraisals of socio-economic change in this period where Palestine, alongside Egypt, remained one of few regions of the post-Roman world where patterns of patron investment remained stable throughout the late seventh and early eighth century.¹⁴⁵ Focussing further west on the Byzantine Aegean and Asia Minor, the seventh and eighth centuries yield no

¹⁴¹ The perception of declining numbers of pilgrims in the early Islamic period is reiterated in Christodoupolos 2008: 57-59, Hirschfeld 1992: 17, 236, Kislinger 2008: 120, Maraval 2002, Olster 1993: 317-318, Re 2008: 171, Schick 1995: 109.

¹⁴² Chitty 1966 and Binns 1994 are most characteristic of this approach. For a similar example of the role of hagiography in defining archaeological strategy see Hirschfeld 1990: 425-447 and Patrich 1995.

¹⁴³ McCormick 2011: 44-45.

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter Four, pages 219-223.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, Di Segni's discussion of Hammath Gader patronised by Mu'āwiya in Di Segni 1992: 307-328, Di Segni 2009 and the earlier discussion in Green and Tsafrir 1982: 94-96. Additional examples such as the restoration of 'commercial' buildings in the cities of Scythopolis/Baysān and Gerasa/Jarash and Capitolias/Bayt Ra's are known during the reign of the Caliph Hishām (723-743). For a discussion of the Scythopolis restoration, see Tsafrir and Foerster 1997: 123, 138-40. For Gerasa/Jarash see Walmsley *et al* 2008.

comparative patterns of investment or commissioning of monastic (or church) sites which would suggest the existence of a social group which maintained sufficient resource between 630 and 750 (the most active period in terms of post-Byzantine church building in Palestine) to facilitate the maintenance of the Christian topography in Palestine during the same period.¹⁴⁶ Broadly stated, the pattern proposes quite the opposite prior to 750. The general nadir in churches building in Byzantium unfolded as a component of a series of broader transformations to urban/rural space in the Aegean and Anatolian involving more drastic contraction to occupied urban areas and a general re-emphasis of monumental building upon defensive structures rather than monastic foundations.¹⁴⁷ In turn, the gradual recovery in Byzantium during the reign of Constantine V (c.741-c.775), which saw a renewal in church and monastic construction in Constantinople coincided with more prevalent patterns of site abandonment in Syria-Palestine as a result of the Golan Earthquake.¹⁴⁸ The contradictions in current explanations for post-Byzantine monastic continuity in Syria-Palestine – a continuation of church foundation driven by individuals from the Aegean where comparative patterns of church building are unknown – are not easily harmonised.¹⁴⁹ In any case, we possess no surviving material that would enable us to determine the extent of patron exchange between Palestine and the Mediterranean between 600 and 1000.

¹⁴⁶ See Di Segni 1999b: 166-178 for a discussion of dated dedicatory inscriptions from churches and civic buildings of the seventh-eighth centuries. For Bayt Ra's see Lenzen and Knauf 1987: 38-40.

¹⁴⁷ Wickham 2005: 626-635. Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 573-616 offer a useful overview of transitions to elite structures in Byzantium in the seventh and eighth century. A useful overview to changes in urbanism in the Byzantine Aegean and Asia Minor over the course of the seventh century (accompanied by extensive bibliography) is offered in Haldon 1997: 99-117. Ivison 2007 offers a useful (and updated) overview of Amorion between the seventh and ninth centuries. See also Dunn 1994 and Foss 1975 for widely cited studies of this transition in the seventh century.

¹⁴⁸ The literature on these two subjects is immense and beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, I direct the reader to Wickham 2005: 795-802, and Verhulst 2002. For Byzantium see Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 212, 511-529. McCormick 2011: 180-196 discusses the Charlemagne's investment and possible contribution to the renovation of the Church of the Anastasis. This corresponds, as McCormick notes, with a phase of reconstruction recorded in the *Nazm al-Jawhar* of Sa'id Ibn Baṭrīq, Patriarch of Alexandria, see *Nazm al-Jawhar*: 33 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 148-148, 127-128). The interventions of Charlemagne were sufficiently ambitious to be noted in Constantinople in the tenth century by Constantine VII, see *De Administrando Imperio* 26.8-10 (txt Moravcsik, tr. Jenkins 1967: 108-109).

¹⁴⁹ For the most recent discussion see Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 598-601. For a comparative discussion of Byzantine elites, urban investment and criticism of the widely perceived elite migration to Byzantium following the Arab conquest see Wickham 2005: 232-242, 627-634. For a discussion of emigration from Syria and the continuation of some family groups in the region see Kennedy 2010: 90-94.

Contacts between the Jerusalem Patriarchate, Constantinople and the Carolingians may be observed throughout the period and show little indication of a reduction in frequency – which we are unable to qualify in any case – following the Umayyad period.¹⁵⁰ These episodes of exchange continued into the ninth century and after 800, were increasingly characterised by requests from the Patriarchate for financial assistance. As will be explored in Chapter Four, these periods of exchange in the Abbasid period, which provide better evidence of contact when compared to seventh and early eighth centuries, coincided with fairly rapid patterns of contraction and abandonment among monastic foundations and pilgrimage cult centres during the ninth century – mirroring similar processes in the urban and rural settlements in which they were situated. As will be explored later in this study, this offers a more consistent contextual framework through which to explore the progressive decline in Christian building activity and claims of impoverishment evident in the source material by the ninth century.¹⁵¹

This is not to argue that a potential decline in pilgrimage or elite exchange from Byzantium occurred without impact, nor that such support was insignificant to the survival of a number of sites. My point is simply that we must recognise the possibility that such ‘external’ support was often unsystematic (both in frequency and regional distribution) and circumscribed by the cultural prerogatives of its patrons. One has the suspicion that the priority afforded by modern scholarship to these external Aegean-Mediterranean relationships is a reflection of the general nature of the surviving source material which has

¹⁵⁰ Further discussion of this is offered in Chapter Four. For a discussion of continued contact between the Byzantine world and Palestine until late ninth century see Griffith 1998: 182-3. Epistolary exchange between the two Patriarchates is known from Niketas of Paphlagonia’s *Life of Ignatios*: PG 105: 545, 487-579, which mentions the attendance of the *synkellos* Elias at a council convened to depose the Patriarch Photios. Correspondence is known from the Eighth Ecumenical Council of 879 see *Mansi* XVII: 441-443. Later suggestions of diplomatic exchange between Constantinople and Jerusalem during the reign of Leo VI, seeking sanction for his marriage to Zoe Karbonopsina, may be found in the *Life of Euthymios, Patriarch of Constantinople*: 78-79 (text and tr. Karlin-Hayter 1970: 78-89). For a discussion of Palestinian contacts with the Carolingians see the most recent study by McCormick 2011: 76-91. See the earlier discussion by Runciman 1935. For the contact between the Patriarch of Jerusalem (probably Elias) and King Alfred of Wessex (c.877-99) see Asser, *Life of King Alfred* (ed. Stephenson 1904:76-77, tr. Lapidge 1983: 101)

¹⁵¹ For the ongoing debates surrounding the social and economic conditions of Palestine after the mid-eighth century see Walmsley 2007: 144-145 and the earlier study of Walmsley 1992b.

defined the prevailing methodological and interpretive approaches to the subject. Hagiography and the patristic works of the fourth to sixth centuries – the most common products of non-Palestinian intellectual and social contexts – have received the most attention among modern analytical approaches, alongside the surviving pilgrimage accounts of the Byzantine period (here taken as 330-630): Theodosios, Jerome and the anonymous ‘Pilgrim of Piacenza’.¹⁵² The degree of analytical engagement with each respective source, however, remains comparatively imbalanced. Given that much of the academic interest in Palestinian monasticism and pilgrimage evolved as subsidiary fields to early Christian studies, the field of Patristics remains the most accessible; the majority of works composed by the Church Fathers, which refer to Palestine, are published, have been subject to numerous critical appraisals, and are now available in modern translations and editions.¹⁵³ Pilgrimage accounts, although mostly translated and available in modern – though not always critical – editions, are more problematic. General acceptance of the narrative details and initial premise of the text (i.e. a historically attestable journey) as reflecting normative Byzantine pilgrim practice has sanctioned the inordinate level of attention placed upon the topographical details of the narratives at the expense of critical considerations of the texts as products of specific social, literary and exegetical contexts.¹⁵⁴

In contrast, the diffuse character of the available archaeological and epigraphic data which emerges from Palestine – which still eludes synthesis – has resulted in the relative

¹⁵² See, for example, Bitton-Ashkelony 2005; Kuelzer 2002; Maraval 1988, 1995 and Sivan 1990. English translations of these sources are available in Wilkinson 2002. Adomnán. *De Locis Sanctis* (ed. Meehan 1983, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 167-296), Hugeburc, *Life of Willibald*, (Tobler 1874:1-84, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 233-251), Epiphanius the Monk, *Hagiopolita* (ed. Donner 1971: 66-82, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 207-215).

¹⁵³ Bibliographic references to the extant critical editions are reproduced individually in Chapter Five.

¹⁵⁴ Thus Adomnán’s description of the Holy Land in the *De Locis Sanctis* is often used by scholars focussed on Palestine in the late seventh century without reference to the critical observations of Thomas O’Loughlin which have stressed the formative role that the liturgical and intellectual concerns of Adomnán’s community at Iona had on the internal descriptions of Palestine presented in the text. Among the extant corpus only the *De Locis Sanctis* of Adomnán has been considered from the perspective of its immediate social context. See the ongoing discussion by O’Loughlin 1992, O’Loughlin 2000 and O’Loughlin 2004. A study of Willibald has appeared in Aist 2010. On Bernard the Monk see Halevi 1998. Discussions on the earlier texts of Egeria appear in Hunt 2004: 97-110 and Hunt 2000: 34-54.

isolation of this material from broader analytical appraisals of the subject. Exceptions occur, as with the extensive epigraphic dossier compiled by Leah Di Segni, but, broadly speaking, additional mediums, such as graffito inscriptions or papyri, have yet to be integrated into wider discussions and, where such material is enlisted, seldom in a manner which provoke or moderate the existing interpretation of Byzantine and post-Byzantine monastic practice as developments dependent upon external – non-Palestinian – trends and individuals.¹⁵⁵

This abrasive tension between archaeology and the prevailing interpretive template defined by hagiography and Patristics is rarely acknowledged. Generally speaking, hagiographical or Patristic works, more abundant, more widely available and – ostensibly – better understood, have determined the basic research strategy and interpretive framework of Palestinian monastic-cult site development and the nature of its underlying social and economic support.¹⁵⁶ As outlined above, a more systematic review of its role is critical to establishing a more sophisticated understanding of the impact of the Arab conquest (both in the short and long term) to Palestinian monasticism. We will turn to this problem now.

1.6 PALESTINIAN MONASTICISM AND THE TEXTUAL AGENDA

Of central importance to this model are the key works of Cyril of Scythopolis and the so-called '*Spiritual Meadow*' or *Leimonarion* of John Moschos which have underpinned general appraisal of Byzantine Palestinian monasticism/pilgrimage and the diasporal nature of its communities and primary patrons. Cyril of Scythopolis' chronological outline of Palestinian monastic expansion has proved particularly influential – underpinning the most widely referenced modern historical assessments of Derwas Chitty and John Binns (whose

¹⁵⁵ For discussions of the epigraphic dossier see Di Segni 2003, Di Segni 2007. For further examples of studies of pilgrimage based primarily on texts, see Kuelzer 1994 and the shorter English study in Kuelzer 2002. For a discussion of this material see Chapter Five. More nuanced discussions are offered by Jacoby 2006.

¹⁵⁶ Thus Binns 1994: 95-98 and Hirschfeld 1992: 102-111.

reconstructions seldom deviate from the details of the original source) alongside the benchmark archaeological appraisals of Yizhar Hirschfeld.¹⁵⁷ The general acceptance of the *Lives* as a chronological authority has been accompanied by a similar use of the biographical details of hagiographical protagonists (many of whom are described as having originated from Aegean or Anatolian contexts) as the basis for reconstructing broader monastic patron networks.¹⁵⁸ The ‘foreign’ patronage networks extrapolated from literal readings of Cyril’s text have found additional validation from the anecdotes of John Moschos, (whose protagonists reflect similarly diverse geographical origins), which are routinely enlisted to supplement this model.¹⁵⁹

The biographical details of monastic founders offered by these two sources have informed the current perception of Palestinian monastic benefaction and site economies as dependent upon non-Palestinian intervention.¹⁶⁰ Equally, their role has nurtured a view of monastic development in the region as one punctuated by periods of rapid foundation and growth that uniformly correspond to the chronologies of the protagonists encountered within the *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* and the *Leimonarion*.¹⁶¹ Archaeological appraisals, especially those in the Judean Desert, have reinforced this impression, acknowledging two substantial periods of growth in the mid-fifth and mid-sixth centuries (thereby coinciding

¹⁵⁷ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* (ed. Schwartz 1959, tr. Price 1991). For the use of this source as a chronological and archaeological framework see Binns 1994: 23-55, Chitty 1966, Hirschfeld 1992: 3-5 and Hirschfeld 1993: 149-152.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, Binns 1994: 91-95 whose reconstruction of the social and economic connections of Palestinian monasticism are based primarily on Cyril of Scythopolis. His assessment of a more diverse community (which included figures from outside of Palestine) at monasteries such as Choziba may be plausible but the evidence which underlies this assumption is problematic. Binns’ hypothesis is based on a series of burial inscriptions from Choziba which are accompanied by toponymics and which point to fairly extensive connections to Anatolia and North Syria (and few from Palestine). The dating of the inscriptions proposed by Schneider 1931: 297-332, 317-329, however, makes this interpretation difficult to assess. The inscriptions are dated variously between the sixth and eleventh centuries. Therefore, although the monastery may have contained monks from outside of Palestine, there are no indications from this material that they formed the dominant social group at the monastery. Equally, if these inscriptions are later than the tenth century, they may reflect the more complex series of interaction associated with the Crusades.

¹⁵⁹ For the use of John Moschos’ *Leimonarion* in this regard see Hirschfeld 1992: 69-112 and Penkett 2003.

¹⁶⁰ Hirschfeld 1992: 102-11 and Ribak 2007: 19.

¹⁶¹ For a collective example of this approach see Hirschfeld 1993: 149-151. Individual examples of this approach may be found in the excavation of Ma’ale Adummim 1993: 170-175 and the hermitage of John the Hesychast, see Patrich 1993: 39-49.

with the accepted chronologies of the *Life of Euthymios* and *Life of Sabas* respectively), followed by an apparent diminution in the foundation of monastic sites during the later sixth and early seventh.¹⁶² The foundation and structural enlargement of several of the larger monastic complexes and pilgrimage sites currently identified – Martyrios, Euthymios, Sabas and Theodosios – are generally ascribed to one or both of these periods.¹⁶³ A fifth- or sixth-century foundation date for these sites is not implausible given that recent observations of epigraphic data have proposed a peak in site foundation by the mid-sixth century.¹⁶⁴ However, the use of textual chronologies to establish the foundation date of a site is insufficient given the lack of an accompanying portfolio of diagnostic material from monastic sites to confirm the textually-driven chronologies proposed by their excavators.¹⁶⁵ Contextual chronologies for monastic sites – e.g. chronologies determined by their relationship to ‘established’ archaeological patterns – are also potentially misleading. The mosaic renovations of the Church of the Theotokos at Madaba (dated 767), initially dismissed as a possible Abbasid construction due to its apparent contradiction of (then) accepted archaeological patterns, serves as a useful caution to this approach.¹⁶⁶

My concerns with this methodology, which currently impacts upon our perception of Byzantine monastic development and its underlying social and economic sponsorship, derive primarily from the nature and quality of the source material which underpin these interpretive models. Eduard Schwartz’s critical edition of Cyril’s *Lives* (which underpins all modern

¹⁶² Binns 1994: 90-91 and Hirschfeld 1992:10.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*: 171-3. The foundation of the Martyrios monastery in the fifth century is dependent upon the chronology of Cyril of Scythopolis; see Magen 1993. For a discussion of the Euthymios monastery, see Chitty 1932, Hirschfeld 1993: 339-371 and Meimaris 1989. For Sabas, see Patrich 1995: 57-166 and for Theodosios see Pringle 1998:271-272.

¹⁶⁴ See Di Segni 1999.

¹⁶⁵ Hirschfeld 1993: 357, Hirschfeld 2000: 315-362 and Magen 1993: 172-174.

¹⁶⁶ Now dated to 767, the scheme was originally assigned a date of 661 in order to compliment preconceived notions of a decline in church building in the early Abbasid period: a decline which has been systematically challenged by the discovery of a number of church renovations – Kastron Mefa’a, ‘Ayn al-Kanisah and Khirbet es-Shubeika – which postdate 750. For the Church of the Theotokos at Madaba, see the discussion and revised dating in Di Segni 1992: 251-257. Further excavations at Khirbet es-Shubeika, ‘Ayn al-Kanisah and Kastron Mefa’a, have produced cases of post-Umayyad church renovation, to further refined this chronology. For Khirbet es Shubeika see Syon 2003 and Tzaferis 2003. For ‘Ayn al-Kanisah, see Piccirillo 1994e: 528-529 and for Kastron Mefa’a see Piccirillo 1994h: 242-243 (inscription 1).

editions and translations) relied on only a portion of the surviving manuscript dossier; only around forty percent of the known Greek manuscripts were consulted during its compilation and no apparent attempt was made to incorporate the earlier versions preserved in Arabic and Georgian which exhibit notable inconsistencies with the Greek tradition.¹⁶⁷ In addition, the modern method of presenting the *Lives* as a single coherent work – arguably a position reinforced by the uninterrupted pagination of Schwartz’s edition and Price’s subsequent English translation – has resulted in the general acceptance that Cyril’s composition was framed by a predetermined and essentially dependable chronological conception of the *Lives* to provide a basic skeletal chronology into which broader archaeological and historical patterns of monastic-cult site development may be placed. At present, it remains difficult to confirm the existence of any such historical framework concretely, given the present dearth of detailed critical appraisals of the source and, crucially, the absence of the chronological timeframe from the Arabic versions of the text which predate the earliest known Greek versions by a century.¹⁶⁸ Yet, at a cursory glance, the manuscript evidence would imply that prior to the tenth century the *Lives* were transmitted as individual autonomous works. *Lives* of Sabas, Euthymios and Kyriakos are attested individually among the ninth-century Arabic translations which survive in Mount Sinai and the existence of a similar process of transmission among Constantinopolitan circles appears to find some confirmation in the manuscript tradition of the Greek corpus.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, the earliest evidence we possess for a

¹⁶⁷ The edition of Schwartz 1959 was derived primarily from Paris Coislin gr. 303, a late tenth or early-eleventh century manuscript which was supplemented by Schwartz with two fourteenth- or fifteenth-century manuscripts. For criticism of this edition, see Hombergen 2001: 58-65. For the earliest Arabic copies, which survive in Vatican Arabic MS 71, see Leeming 1997. The manuscript and translation has not been fully published. The manuscript was copied at the monastery of Mar Sabas in 885 by David Antony of Baghdad and provides the earliest surviving Arabic copy of the *Lives* of Sabas and Euthymios. This may provide useful insights into the perception of this cult from its most important centre. For a discussion of the scribal activities of David of Baghdad, see Griffith 1989.

¹⁶⁸ Leeming 1997: 206. Brock 1995: *SP* 36 has noted the existence of an earlier Syriac version which predates the Arabic copies. It is unclear however if the chronological timeframe common of the Greek versions of Cyril of Scythopolis’ *Lives* appears in the Syriac copies as the version remains unedited. This cannot be touched upon at present but is an area which warrants more systematic attention.

¹⁶⁹ Separate Arabic lives of Euthymios and Sabas are attested in Vatican Arabic MS 71. For the *Life of Kyriakos* see Sinai Arabic 395. On the tradition in Greek see Hombergen 2001: 131-168.

collective compilation of Cyril's hagiographies is the Greek codex, Fonds Paris Cosilin 303, dated to the late tenth or early eleventh century.¹⁷⁰

A more detailed appraisal of the corpus may support the analytical handling of Cyril's works as a collective body framed by a predetermined perception of Palestinian monastic development. That supposition, however, can only be verified by a more comprehensive examination of the wider social context in which this work was conceived and transmitted. For now, it is critical to note that reservations regarding the precision and dependability of the account have recently been raised by Daniel Hombergen who has argued that an inordinate degree of authority has been placed upon Cyril's reconstruction of the fifth and sixth centuries – particularly concerning the Origenist controversy – and notes that Cyril's reportage is contested by other contemporary material.¹⁷¹ The current unconditional use of Cyril of Scythopolis as an interpretive basis for our understanding of Byzantine monastic development is questionable in view of its qualifications.

In view of the uncertainty over whether or not the *Lives* represent a structured and calculated collection, we are faced with the wider concern of the variations between the earlier Arabic and Georgian narratives and those of the later Greek copies which underpin Schwartz's edition. These have yet to be fully appraised in a systematic study, but the general pattern, which would imply successive attempts at the refashioning of cults during the tenth century, has been noted in comparative observations between other Greek hagiographical accounts and earlier Arabic, Georgian or Syriac recensions where they survive.¹⁷² For the purposes of the present study, it is crucial to note that two of the earliest surviving copies of the Arabic versions of the *Lives of Euthymios* and *Sabas* copied in the monastery of Mar

¹⁷⁰ Devreesse 1945: 286-288. In addition, Coislin Gr. 303 also contains the only known copy of another widely used 'Palestinian' hagiography, *The Life of George of Choziba*: Paris MS Coislin gr. 303. For the edition of the source see Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba*, (ed. House 1888 and House 1889).

¹⁷¹ Hombergen 2001: 131-368.

¹⁷² As with the *History of the Exploits of Bishop Paul of Qanetos and Priest John of Edessa* where the origins of Paul in the Paris Coislin 303 is said to be Attaleia in Pontos whereas the earlier Syriac version considers it to be Qanetos in Italy. See the discussion by Smith 2009: 121-122.

Sabas in 885, which form a literary diptych, omit crucial biographical details present in the Greek redactions.¹⁷³ These variances between the Greek and Arabic versions are crucial to re-evaluating our perception of the Palestine monastic milieu – in social, as well as in terms of patronage – given that the biographical details developed in the corresponding Greek tradition underpin the primacy afforded to Aegean-Anatolian links in the development of Palestinian monasticism.

Identifying the extent to which these distinctions represents later Byzantine modifications, or alternatively, a recasting of the narrative within Melkite literary circles, is only possible by applying a more systematic approach to the development and transmission of the Sabaite cult and its hagiographic tradition.¹⁷⁴ We do not yet know the extent to which this occurred on a broader level; neither the Greek nor the Arabic traditions are sufficiently edited or published to facilitate a quantitative analysis of the variations of the individual Sabaite traditions as they exist in their variant forms. These distinctions, however, where they can be identified and correlated, indicates that such biographical moulding was not necessarily an arbitrary exercise in the translation of a cult between the Byzantine and early Islamic worlds and must be considered in the broader context of hagiographical construction. Discrepancies between the Syriac and Greek traditions of the *Life of Maximos the Confessor* provide another explicit example of the variant traditions which could envelop a monastic figure.¹⁷⁵ The monophysitic Syriac tradition, in a deliberate attempt to undermine and subvert

¹⁷³ Similarly, several of the Christological arguments and activities of Sabas known from the Greek tradition are missing in Vatican Arabic MS 71 see Leeming 1997: 248-249. Names of monastic founders and the supposed Severan Controversy are also missing *Ibid*: 231.

¹⁷⁴ Leeming 1997 does not offer any clarification on the issue but suggests that the *Life of Euthymios* in Vatican MS 71 is a copy of an older Arabic version rather than a translation from Greek, see Leeming 1997: 191. The *Life of Euthymios* in the codex is evidently of a different hand to Anthony David of Baghdad although is contemporary with the *Life of Sabas*, *ibid*: 117, 221. Leeming argues that the Arabic versions are abbreviated redactions of longer Greek versions, *ibid*: 258-259. This is possible, although Leeming's hypothesis is based on the assumption that the Greek critical edition by Eduard Schwartz is secure – a hypothesis contradicted by the analysis of Daniel Hombergen see note 171.

¹⁷⁵ Brock 1973: 302, 314. The *Life*, which is only partially preserved, survives in a single manuscript in the British Museum, BM. 7192. Ff. 72b-78b, dated to the seventh or eighth century. Brock 1973: 300-301, argues for a Maronite Monothelete provenance for the text.

Maximos' credibility and claim to sainthood, places particular emphasis on his origins as the illegitimate child of a Samaritan linen merchant and a Persian slave; the Greek tradition, where Maximos is revered as a defender of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, presents more grandiose origins for Maximos as the child of two well-regarded Constantinopolitan aristocrats.¹⁷⁶ Whilst identifying which of the two traditions has a more accurate historical basis is a task which has received consideration elsewhere, its central premise, that descriptions of ethnicity or origin could be perceived as illustrative of a monk's moral or spiritual character, underscores that such biographical details cannot be routinely extracted without careful consideration of the immediate and wider literary and social context of Cyril's text and its subsequent redactions.¹⁷⁷ The use of highly ethicised tropes in Egyptian *Apophthegmatic* literature to illustrate monastic encounters with evil, or the known variations of biographical construction in the Greek and Syriac recensions of Theodoret of Kyrrhos' monastic lives,¹⁷⁸ demonstrates the difficulty with viewing both the Cyrillic *Lives* and the *Leimonarion* in isolation from other contemporary forms of monastic literary production and more recent critical approaches to these texts.¹⁷⁹ Consistent scholarship, primarily directed at Egyptian and Syrian monastic literature, over the past twenty years has repeatedly stressed how authorial and cultural context frequently determined the image of the monastic enterprise projected through monastic literature;¹⁸⁰ the *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* requires a comparable objective critical review.

These limitations are magnified by comparative appraisals of the *Leimonarion*. The diffuse nature of the manuscript corpus, which survives in multiple versions and several linguistic traditions, has impeded a more complete appraisal of the manuscript tradition

¹⁷⁶ BHG: 1234.

¹⁷⁷ Boudignon 2004: 11-44, has argued for the merits of a Palestinian rather than a Constantinopolitan origin for Maximos. Another example of a similar biographical change emerges in the Syriac and Greek versions of the *History of the Exploits of Bishop Paul of Qanetos and Priest John of Edessa*, see Smith 2009: 122.

¹⁷⁸ Similar tensions between the use of Greek and Syriac among the protagonists of Theodoret of Kyrrhos has been noted by Urbainczyk 2002: 68-79. For Theodoret himself, see the discussion in Millar 2007.

¹⁷⁹ See the comments by Mayerson 1979: 304-311.

¹⁸⁰ See Ashbrook-Harvey 1988: 376-394 and Goehring 1999: 13-31.

within current scholarship.¹⁸¹ The Greek text underlying the modern English translation – which remains the most widely referenced in current scholarship – is, by the translator’s admission, unstable and has yet to be remedied by the publication of an edited volume: an issue, which, given the volatility of the tradition, may never be fully rectified.¹⁸² The matter is compounded further by the fact that the text appears to have been subject to interpolation at a relatively early stage: the identification of two variant versions by the Patriarch Photios in the ninth century provides the most explicit example, although accusations of tampering – irrespective of their credibility – appear as early as 787 in the Acts of the Second Council of Nikaia.¹⁸³ Given the relative ease with which its internal details were supplemented and conflated, determining the qualities of the original sixth-century composition remains a precarious issue. Any application of the text in its present state to broader appraisals of Palestinian monastic society in the Byzantine period must be approached with considerable caution. Despite this, questions concerning the reliability (or not) of the current standard edition of Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives* and John Moschos, *Leimonarion* have seemingly bypassed recent historical-archaeological appraisal of the sixth-century monastic milieu. The correlation of the internal topography of the *Leimonarion* with sites encountered during archaeological survey remains a common strategy, as does the use of the text to identify the incumbent cult-figure or relic of a particular monastic-cult site.¹⁸⁴ Thus at ‘Iraq Isma‘in, the existence of a monastic cult centred around a miraculous icon of the Virgin and Child is accepted irrespective of concerns about the authenticity of such selections which emerge when texts such as the *Leimonarion* are observed within the wider framework of the iconomachy debates of the eighth and ninth centuries.¹⁸⁵ Of the four anecdotes which

¹⁸¹ *Leimonarion*, PG 87. 3, 2352-3112. For the most comprehensive English translation, see Wortley 1992.

¹⁸² See the comments in Wortley 1992: ix-xiv.

¹⁸³ Photios, *Bibliothēke*: codex 198 (ed. Henry 1962: 95; trans., Wilson 1994:182). *Mansi* XIII: 184D-192D. For further discussion, see Brubaker 1998: 1239-1240 and Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 200-201.

¹⁸⁴ Taxel 2008: 61-62.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 69.

mention pilgrimage or monastic connections to icons, none are immune to speculation about their authenticity.¹⁸⁶

At a basic level, this example indicates the need for a broader contextual reflection among modern scholars of the overall processes of transmission of both the *Leimonarion* and the *Lives* and for a more holistic engagement with dialogues of other disciplines. The interpolation of the *Leimonarion* demonstrates that it is not a text that can be casually disengaged from subsequent historical developments; indeed, the very practice of interpolation demonstrates that the processes and outcomes of its transmission were often defined by the cultural imperatives of later redactors. Whilst the appearance of icons in the narrative may furnish little understanding of sixth- or early seventh-century Palestinian monastic practice, and perhaps more about eighth-century Byzantine requirements, they reflect its status as a text which was exploited as an instrument which could be utilised to project and authenticate the prevailing attitudes of later centuries. Essential to the theological arsenal which underpinned the iconodule justification of image veneration was the question of tradition and historical precedent; the manipulation of the *Leimonarion* may represent a single component of this broader programme of iconodule historical remoulding.¹⁸⁷ Yet, it is precisely because of this that analysis of its internal details, figures and underlying topographies needs to be approached with considerable caution; the lateness of the manuscript tradition presents the very plausible possibility that our understanding of the Palestinian sixth century is circumscribed by Byzantine post-iconoclastic retrospection and appropriation of the Palestinian monastic past.

¹⁸⁶ Brubaker 1998: 1217-1220 and Brubaker and Haldon 2001: 200-201.

¹⁸⁷ Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 787-799.

1.7 ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE EXTERNALIST MODEL

Archaeology is widely enlisted to validate the perception of the monastic-pilgrimage milieu crafted by the hagiographical tradition and sustained in contemporary historical reconstructions.¹⁸⁸ Newly discovered monastic sites are often associated with monastic foundations known from hagiography, sometimes with little justification, and this has given the appearance of adding further weight to the credibility of this current methodological approach. Thus sites such as Khirbet Tina or 'Iraq Isma'in are often correlated with foundations known from hagiography based on little substantive data.¹⁸⁹

This approach has circumscribed an essentially illustrative role for archaeological research into monastic communities and pilgrim-centres in Palestine – one where discussions of architecture plans, structural embellishments and liturgical furnishing serve to provide a 'visual theatre' for the activities described in the hagiographical narratives rather than a critically provocative body of material which may challenge the essential premises of the textual construct.¹⁹⁰

This complex membrane of 'accepted truths' about Palestinian monasticism is not, however, impermeable. It must be stressed that this apparent corroborative relationship between text and material culture is undermined by the over-emphasis on textual sources and

¹⁸⁸ Taxel 2008:64-69 and Tzaferis 2001 advocate particular support for the use of archaeology in this regard.

¹⁸⁹ See the preliminary surveys by Vahilé 1898-9, 1899-1900 for the earliest, but still influential, examples of this approach. Similar agendas are apparent in the identification of the Heptastomos Laura and the Khirbet Tina Laura see Corbo 1960 and Corbo 1962. A further example is offered in the identification of Khirbet ed-Deir with the Laura of Severianos, see Hirschfeld 1999. The practice continues in the present day as with the identification of 'Iraq Isma'in as the Monastery of Samson based on a passage from the *Leimonarion*, see Taxel 2008: 61 and Gass and Zissu: 2005. Thus, McCormick's survey of monastic sites identifies an eighty percent drop in the monastic population between 600 and 800 based on the monastic sites surveyed by Vahilé, see McCormick 2011: 35-40. This is problematic given that there are no indications that all of the sites identified by Vahilé actually functioned as monastic foundations.

¹⁹⁰ See, for example, Hirschfeld 1992: 69-101, whereby descriptions of diet and living conditions are directly correlated with hagiographical accounts. Discussions of the vast amount of ceramic material from sites such as Ma'ale Adummim, which included high quality ceramics, marble and glass, seldom acknowledge the discrepancy between the material finds and the perspective of monastic life portrayed by hagiography. For a comparative treatment of this anomaly with regards to Egyptian case studies, see Bagnall 2002. The routine lack of environmental sampling at such sites, which often elicit more ephemeral evidence of dietary habits, has also reinforced the credibility of hagiographical reconstructions.

a consequent under-valuing of archaeological material as an independent body of data.¹⁹¹ The descriptions of Cyril of Scythopolis have, for example, defined archaeological strategies to the monastic network of the Judean Desert and the hinterlands of Jerusalem in terms of site identification, chronology and social function.¹⁹²

The approach has engendered three misconceptions: firstly, that current estimates of the monastic population and number of sites active by c.630 are assured and proffer a suitable control for comparative study of monastic settlement patterns in the early Islamic period; secondly, that the published chronologies of monastic sites are correct; and lastly, that assessments of patterns of continuity/abandonment among monastic or pilgrimage sites may be attributed to a uniform series of factors and developments.¹⁹³

Inspired by the topographic descriptions of hagiography, archaeologists have assembled a catalogue of archaeological sites deemed ‘monastic’ often exclusively on the basis of their approximate geographical conformity with hagiographical accounts.¹⁹⁴ Whilst the identification of several monastic complexes via this method is confirmed by archaeological evidence, a comparative catalogue of sites, the identifications of which have not withstood more intensive archaeological investigation, expose the limitations of this approach.¹⁹⁵ The strategy has been criticised in some isolated cases but the broader trend

¹⁹¹ See again the example of Ma’ale Adummim in Magen 1993: 172-174, the Monastery of Chariton in Hirschfeld 2000: 315-362, or the Monastery of Euthymios whereby the earliest phases were based primarily on textual accounts. For a description of the Monastery of Euthymios see Hirschfeld 1993: 357. Excavation by Hirschfeld admittedly qualified Chitty’s original dating of the monastic church, Hirschfeld 1993: 362 and the discussion of the later period is primarily based on archaeological finds (although these are not fully published).

¹⁹² Binns 1994 and Hirschfeld 1992 are the main studies based primarily on Cyril of Scythopolis.

¹⁹³ McCormick 2011: 33-35, following Hirschfeld 1990, assumes that the current estimate of sixty-five active monasteries in the Judean Desert to be correct.

¹⁹⁴ The Martyrios monastery at Ma’ale Adummim may provide an example of the effective use of this approach with the identification of the tomb of the archimandrite Paul which probably corresponds to a figure discussed in Cyril of Scythopolis’, *Life Euthymios*: 72.10 (ed. Schwartz 1959: 72.10, tr. Price 1991:69) who is described as abbot of the Martyrios monastery. Similar approaches are known from the ‘monastery’ of ‘Iraq Isma’in identified by its excavators with the monastery of Sampson mention in the *Leimonarion*, see Gass and Zissu 2005: 176-180. Another approach is to correlate material remains with sites known from visual records such as the Madaba Mosaic Map. Thus the site of Horvat Midras was identified by its excavators as the Church of Zechariah, see Ganor, Klein, Avner and Zissu 2012. This is possible but the material assemblages of the church provide no evidence of such an association.

¹⁹⁵ Amit and Magness 2000: 273-291.

remains unquestioned and commonly replicated. The lack of critical engagement with this issue is partially due to over-reliance on the textual material, but also in the lack of a defined series of archaeological criteria which may be used to identify a monastery.¹⁹⁶ The preferential status often granted to the excavation of churches and their adjacent structures in archaeological strategies has exacerbated the issue and has resulted in the routine identification of sites as ‘monasteries’ based primarily on a perceived isolation from neighbouring settlements – an opinion which has not withstood more intensive investigation of the surrounding landscape in more recent re-examinations.¹⁹⁷ More neutral consideration of stratigraphic layers or evidence of functional purpose forces a revision of these early attributions.¹⁹⁸ For one, the dichotomous contrast between monastic ‘religious’ and secular ‘productive’ spatial usage that is often implicit in early archaeological reports requires qualification, given the multiplicity of roles which ecclesiastical institutions are known to

¹⁹⁶ A similar concern with regards to Anatolian monasteries has been expressed by Hill 1994.

¹⁹⁷ Thus the sites of Qasr er-Rawabi (identified as the Monastery of Gabriel) and that of El Qasr, were both identified as monastic foundations based on the compactness of their plan and the presence of interconnecting rooms, although excavation at the site yielded no evidence that would support their identification as monastic complexes Hirschfeld 1992: 45-46. For criticism of the attribution of single cell dwellings to anchorites, see Amit and Magness 2000. See, for example, the site of Khirbet Abu Rish, whereby the complex is described as a monastery despite no definitive evidence to confirm this interpretation, see Magen and Baruch 1997. The presence of burials and winepresses, which are features of monasteries in some contexts, are also found in churches where monastic associations are not explicit. The Church of Hagios Giorgos at Rihab, dated to the 530, for example, provides no evidence for a monastic association but did house a series of tombs in auxiliary chambers (three of which were located in an underground cave) attached to the church. Horvat Beit Loya is one example of a church, with no explicit monastic association, where oil presses are found in a structure adjacent to the baptistery, see Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 271-272. The Khirbet Abu Rish church appears to have incorporated a series of rock cut tombs and a cave which was accessed through the church space, see Magen and Baruch 1997: 345-347. The surviving inscription may support its identification as a pilgrimage church see Tzaferis 1997: 355-357. Similarly the site of Sha’ar ha-‘Aliyah was identified as a monastery based primarily on the separation of the auxiliary rooms and aisles from the nave by walls, a feature the excavator says is not characteristic of non-monastic churches see Dothan 1955. Other examples of this phenomenon, which do not suggest a monastic presence, have been identified by Di Segni 2006/7.

¹⁹⁸ One example is the identification of Horvat Beit Loya is expressed by Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 265 based, presumably, on its perceived isolation from the neighbouring settlement. The extant inscriptions, however, provide no indication that the site functioned as a monastery, see Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 267-271. Compare with other examples, such as the double complex of the Church of the Rivers and Church of the Palm Tree and the connected complex of the Church of the Priest Wa’il and the Church of the Tabula Ansata, Kastron Mefa’a, see Bujard *et al* 1992: 291-306. The Church of Horvat Hesheq shows a similar appearance of adjacent rooms or courtyards whose association with the church is difficult to determine (see Fig. 1.1 and Fig. 1.2), see Aviam 1993.

have performed by the sixth century.¹⁹⁹ Clerical involvement in monetary lending, economic production or fiscal and legal administration, as it emerges through the Petra and Nessana papyri, indicate the fluidity of the boundaries which separated the religious and ‘secular’ duties of clerical personnel in localised Palestinian contexts by the 530s.²⁰⁰ The complexity of clerical social roles, established a century before the Arab conquest, proposes any number of possible interpretations of the function performed by rooms that enveloped a basilical church. The existence of similar architectural arrangements in churches that do not appear to have had any monastic associations, such as those of the Church of the Rivers/ Church of the Palm Tree complex, Kastron Mefa‘a or those in Jarash, such as Hagios Theodoros, propose the underlying difficulty in presuming that such spatial arrangements are indicative of a homogenous category of monastic building (Fig. 1.7, 1.8). Conversely, examples such as the monastery of Sergios and Bakkhos in Nessana, which presents no architectural features that would distinguish it from a rural church, draws attention to the complexity of designating such sites as ‘monasteries’ or communal ‘lay-churches’ based on a single architectural criterion.²⁰¹ In respect to the Sergios-Bakkhos monastery, it is only due to the surviving papyri and epigraphic corpus that a monastic presence could be confirmed by its excavators.

¹⁹⁹ See Gibbon 1781: Chapter 37 (ed. an English Churchman 1854), Jones 1964: 929-937 and the discussion by Gwynn 2008: 224-227. Avi Yonah’s influential article, Avi Yonah 1958, still underpins more recent analysis of Byzantine Palestine, see Parker 1999: 169. Avi Yonah’s article follows the Gibbon hypothesis very closely in terms of understanding the role of monastic communities in Byzantine Palestine.

²⁰⁰ For the monastery at Nessana’s role in tax collection see *P. Colt* 55; regarding monetary lending, see *P. Colt* 45 and *P. Colt* 46; in legal proceedings see *P. Colt* 57 and in the feast of Sergios *P. Colt* 50. For the Petra papyri, see the edited publication by Frösén, Arjava and Lehtinen 2002.

²⁰¹ See Kendall 1962: 25-45 where the monastic church exhibits no indication of other structures which would propose a monastic identification for the church. The assumption that Byzantine monasticism was characterised by uniform spatial organisation and architecture has been criticised by Hill 1994.



Fig. 1.7 Kastron Mefa'a, complex of the Church of the Tabula Ansata and Church of the Priest Wa'il.
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Fig. 1.8 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of the Rivers and the Church of the Palm Tree.
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Fig. 1.9 Kastoria Mefakia, view of the nave of the Hagios Stephanos basilica, (dated 718).
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Fig. 1.10 Kastoria Mefakia, donor portraits and accompanying inscriptions in the north aisle of the Hagios Stephanos basilica, (dated 718).
© Reynolds 2012



Fig. 1.11 Kastron Mefa'a, Hagios Stephanos basilica, the donor inscription mentioning a monk from Phisga (possibly Siyagha, modern Mount Nebo) in front of the bema screen.
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Fig. 1.12 Transcriptions and translations of donor inscriptions in fig. 1.10 and fig. 1.11
Transcription and translation Piccirillo 1994h: 249-251.

Μνήσθιτη Κ(ύρι)ε τῶν δούλων/σου Πιτρ/όνα Ραββου (και) τον αὐτο/ῦ τέκνον.

Remember Lord your servant Petrona son of Rabbos and his son.

Ιωάννις υἱος Ιωάννου Συαηδου

John son of John Suades

Κ(ύρι)ε μήσ/θιτη τοῦ δούλου σου Κ/αηουμ μον/αχοῦ πρ(εσβυτέρ)ου Φισγα

Lord! Remember your servant Kaioum monk and priest from Phisga.

The inadequacy of terminological segregation of ‘monastic’ or ‘lay’ church space, founded in ideas of monastic spatial conformity familiar from western Benedictine case studies, requires that these concepts are substantially reconsidered in Levantine archaeological contexts. The appearance of monks in the dedicatory inscriptions of urban or rural churches, as in the Hagios Stephanos complex at Kastron Mefa‘a and the Chapel of the Priest John in Khirbet al-Mukhayyat, Hagia Sophia in Rihab, or those listed in the later *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* where monks are attested as custodians of churches (often those which were destinations for pilgrims), underline the frequency of social transaction between monastic communities and lay populations (Fig. 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12).²⁰²

A feature which emerges from acknowledging this complexity is that aggregate estimations of the monastic population and number of active sites at the beginning of the early Islamic period around 636 are difficult to compute.²⁰³

²⁰² For the monastic presence at the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane or the church of Nazareth, see *Commemoratorium*, 13, 35-36 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 203, 211). For Khirbet al-Mukhayyat see Piccirillo 1981: 174, fig. 228.

²⁰³ There is, as yet, no regional synthesis of all monastic sites prior to 600 which would enable us to calculate this number. Problems, in any case, abound. Hirschfeld’s identification of 65 monasteries in the Byzantine period, which underpins McCormick’s calculation, is problematic. For one, many of the sites Hirschfeld introduces provide no explicit case for monastic occupation and the general impression from his analysis is that any site perceived sufficiently isolated from settlements was automatically interpreted as a monastic site. Secondly, Hirschfeld’s correlation of sites with those described by Cyril of Scythopolis is also uncertain given that, again, no sites encountered provided explicit evidence for monastic occupation, see Hirschfeld 1992: 8-79 and McCormick 2011: 35-39. I am equally pessimistic about the calculations for population sizes in individual monasteries such as Sabas. Hirschfeld 1992: 25 and Patrich 1995: 67 identify a possible monastic population of around 250-300 monks. The *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* dated to 808 gives a total of 150 monks, see *Commemoratorium*: 29 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 209). The hypotheses of Hirschfeld 1992 and Patrich 1995, do not, however, identify the criteria on which their calculations are based. This is particularly true of their approach to spatial analysis which seems to assign modern space/habitation ratios which may not match early medieval uses of this space. The identification of a total monastic population of around 4000 in the Judean Desert must remain tentative, especially in view of the problems with identifying a number of sites as monasteries. I am also more cautious about the role of texts such as the *Commemoratorium* in calculations of monks. It is not altogether clear, either in terms of the Greek hagiographical material (which underpins Hirschfeld and Patrich) or the *Commemoratorium* (which underpins McCormick’s analysis), of what cultural precepts conditioned what each respective writer and source identified as a ‘monk’. This issue cannot be explored here, but does have implications on the basis our estimations of Palestinian monastic populations. As with the examples of the Hagios Giorgos Church of Shivta there are a number of sites whose occupants clearly identified themselves as ‘monastic’ which are omitted from, but coexisted with, our literary accounts.

1.8 CONSIDERING CHRONOLOGY

The reliance upon textual frameworks to define individual monastic site histories has important implications for the chronological reliability of several excavations. Thus at Ma'ale Adummim, the monastic site of Martyrios – identified by the phonetic similarity between ‘Martyrios’ and Khirbet el-Muraṣṣaṣ – was assigned a fifth-century foundation date and sixth-century expansion phase based on direct correlation of the archaeological material with the chronology proposed by Cyril of Scythopolis’ *Life of Euthymios* and *Life of Theodosios*.²⁰⁴

Whilst the extant epigraphic documentation may validate this identification – accepting the inscription as a sixth-century feature – the accepted chronology of the site’s monastic occupational history as one characterised by two successive periods of construction in the fifth and sixth centuries, is more difficult to determine given that the dating of the excavated material and structural features was heavily informed by the chronological frameworks proscribed by the textual tradition.²⁰⁵ The pattern is replicated in several other cases throughout the Judean Desert,²⁰⁶ here, it has served to sanction a (perceived) pattern of flat ‘single-phase’ chronologies at individual monastic or pilgrim-church sites which show no significant signs of activity or structural enhancement, following the sixth century.²⁰⁷ This lack of nuanced chronological observation has reduced present analysis of monastic-pilgrim cult sites in the early Islamic period to an austere binary opposition between ‘abandonment’ or ‘continuity’, which negates more detailed observations of potential changes to the spatial

²⁰⁴ Magen 1993: 170-196. See also the comments in note 162.

²⁰⁵ See, for example, the comments of the post 614 phases which are credited to Arab squatter occupation Magen 1993: 184-185, 196.

²⁰⁶ Thus the site known as the ‘Laura of St. John the Hesychast’ was identified and phased primarily through textual frameworks, see Patrich 1993. Similar issues also pervade the studies of the Euthymios monastery and the monastery of Mar Chariton see Hirschfeld 1993 and Hirschfeld 2000. As discussed earlier in the introduction, this study cannot remedy the flaws of the published data fully.

²⁰⁷ Patrich 1993: 233 where phasing of the Laura of Sabas is correlated with Cyril of Scythopolis’ chronological framework. Similar approaches characterise the Hermitage of John the Hesychast, see Patrich 1993: 315-337. For Kastellion, see Wright 1961: 1-21.

layout or social function of monasteries following the mid-seventh century. The monastic site of Kursi provides one characteristic example of this approach. Although criticisms of the original 614 destruction date assigned by Vassilios Tzaferis have been levied by David Stacey, who has proposed continued occupation at the site into the ninth century, the insufficiencies of the excavation reports do not permit more detailed appraisal of the nature of its seventh or eighth-century occupational sequences.²⁰⁸ Discussions of sites such as the Martyrios monastery and Shepherd's Fields are similarly restricted; beyond our ability to verify their survival into the late-seventh and tenth centuries respectively, we can say little about the nature or characteristics of their post-Byzantine, Umayyad or Abbasid phases.²⁰⁹

Approaching monastic communities as entities characterised by homogenous social and political roles, an issue that will be raised repeatedly throughout this study, is also problematic. Reliance on the narratives of Cyril of Scythopolis and John Moschos, whose characterisations are crafted to emphasise the mimetic parallels between the lives of all monastic figures, has served to reinforce approaches to monasticism or pilgrimage as socially and economically static entities.²¹⁰ Archaeological interpretations in the region, framed by this pervasive ideology and informed by hagiography, often perpetuate this basic assumption. Where change is identified, as with the emergence of oil presses or features associated with artisanal production, as with the sites of Kursi and Horvat Berachot, these developments are virtually always perceived in negative terms and attributed to the activities of non-monastic 'squatter occupation' or interpreted as indicators of endemic economic or social decline.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Stacey 2004: 15-16.

²⁰⁹ For a critique of the dating of the Martyrios monastery, see Magness 2011: 86-87.

²¹⁰ In Binns 1994: 99-120 and Hirschfeld 1992: 69-111 again we may observe the use of hagiography to define the social and economic profiles of Judean Desert monasticism over a period spanning more than 150 years.

²¹¹ Thus the appearance of oil presses and other industrial activity in Kursi was seen as indicative of a post-crisis phase: Tzaferis 1983: 16. A further example of a church or cult sites where later phases are assigned to squatter occupation is that of Horvat Berachot whereby the presence of Arabic inscriptions – probably Islamic – are attributed to Arab squatters based, presumably, on the assumption that the Arab conquest precluded the possibility of monastic continuity. See Chapter Three for the problems with this approach. Similarly, the internal re-organisations of the monastic church of Kursi, which saw the sealing of several entrances between the north wing and the basilica and the emergence of an oil press is interpreted as a response to Sassanid

Yet it is evident from several sites that spatial organisation in monasteries and cult sites frequently responded to the demands of changing socio-devotional contexts. At Ma'ale Adummim, despite the difficulties presented by the published chronology,²¹² excavators identified a sixth-century reconstruction phase to improve access to the cave-crypt.²¹³ A similar process, which appears to have accelerated in the sixth century and would imply a response to growing social demand for access to relics in Palestine, can be observed in the North Church at Shivta where the main single-apsed basilica was redeveloped into a tri-apsidal form to facilitate access to its reliquaries.²¹⁴

This pattern of punctuated development within monastic space highlights the limitations of static chronological models which hinder our ability to identify episodes of post-Byzantine renovation or use. Sensitive assessments of dating formulas and stylistic criteria in epigraphic inscriptions, spearheaded by Leah Di Segni over the past twenty years, have contributed immensely to redefining the parameters of the debate and outlining examples of continued investment into Palestine's Christian structural landscape following the mid-seventh century.²¹⁵ However, there are some limitations to this approach which need to be stressed. The general reliance on dated inscriptions to identify post-Byzantine activity may offer a rather restricted view of monastic continuities in the region especially at sites where spatial changes or construction were not embellished with dated dedications. Equally,

destruction, see Tzaferis 1983:15. The presence of oil presses in church complexes (especially atria) is, however, known from other contexts with the archaeological material suggesting that they were incorporated into the church complexes whilst the building still actively functioned for liturgical worship. For a study of the oil presses at Horvat Beit Loya, see Patrich and Tsafirir 1990: 287-300. The presence of iconophobic intervention in the mosaic schemes of the church would imply that it continued to function as a site of liturgical celebration into the mid-eighth century. On the church of Horvat Beit Loya, see Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 265-272. The dating of the iconophobic activity in Palestinian church floors is discussed in Appendix D.

²¹² See the discussion pages 26-30.

²¹³ Magen 1993: 178-181. See also Magen and Talgam 1990: 99-100.

²¹⁴ See Margalit 1990: 321-334 for a discussion of this church and comparison with other regional examples. These developments are paralleled in the examples of Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Horvat Hesheq and the possible addition of a new basilica to the Octagonal Terrace Church of Umm Qays in the late seventh or eighth century, see Vriezen 1992 and Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001. The practice is also known from later contexts, as with the incorporation of a *mihrāb* in the Church of the Kathisma in the eighth or early ninth century, see the discussions by Avner 2007 and Avner 2011. Earlier studies of the church appear in Avner 1993, Avner 2000 and Avner 2003.

²¹⁵ See Di Segni 2003 and Di Segni 2007.

the inadequacy of the broader published archaeological corpus, which presents a catalogue of sites framed by traditional interpretations and chronologies, inhibits more successful attempts at contextualising such examples on supra-regional scale.²¹⁶ A potential resolution to this issue, focussed on the re-dating of inscriptions, has been acknowledged by scholars in the field and will require ongoing re-evaluation of the existing archaeological corpus in future years.²¹⁷ This will, however, only contribute to redefining broader settlement histories of sites. As discussed above, even the most refined re-analysis cannot rectify the loss of data associated with truncated post-Byzantine phases which occurred due to poorly stratified or architecturally-focussed excavation strategies. The collective limitations of the published corpus, however, makes more detailed re-appraisals and re-dating of this material presently unfeasible. Publications of excavations conducted within modern Israel and Jordan remain inconsistent and are not always of sufficient quality to permit a reinterpretation of the diagnostic data that underpins their published phasing.²¹⁸ Among the major monasteries and cult-shrines excavated throughout the twentieth century, only a handful are published in finalised form (though not always with sufficient description of the diagnostic material or stratigraphy) and, among these, many relate to excavations completed prior to the 1980s which are often underpinned by outmoded dating criteria for diagnostic material. In other examples, focus has been directed towards identifying the foundation date of a site rather than outlining a more long term perspective of its occupational history; thus, in cases such as

²¹⁶ Stylistic developments in epigraphic formulas has been a notable and publicised casualty of this trend as poorly defined dating sequences, particularly in relation to seventh-century phases, have limited our ability to observe evolutions in epigraphic conventions – which may reveal further examples of foundation post 600 – between the Byzantine and early Islamic periods see Di Segni 2003: 257-258.

²¹⁷ See the comments of Di Segni 2009: 359-360.

²¹⁸ The published accounts of the excavations at the Martyrios monastery and Shepherd's Fields offer only brief discussions of the ceramic and numismatic data; in the former case only a photograph of some of the excavated wares has been published. For Martyrios, see Magen 1993: 192-195 and Shepherd's Fields, see Tzaferis 1975. Magen assigned this ware to a pre-614 phase. Magness 2011: 87-98 suggests, however, a mid- seventh century date for this ware. A further issue is the delay in the publication of final reports. The excavations of the Nea Church in Jerusalem undertaken by Avigad between 1962-1982 which was not published until Gutfeld 2012: 141-267.

Khan Salīḥ, we know nothing of its post-Byzantine material sequences.²¹⁹ Preliminary reports are far better represented, but often, as with the case of Umm Qays, offer only impressionistic views of the results and are difficult to critique.²²⁰ To this may be added excavations at monastic-pilgrimage sites – Deir Ghazali, Mevo Modi'im, Horvath Qasra and Horvat Hanot – discussed in notes and bulletin reports, which have yet to be fully published and expanded.²²¹ These collective limitations circumscribe a very limited opportunity for the renegotiation of several site chronologies – presenting the possibility, particularly with excavations conducted in the early twentieth century, where much data was discarded, that several of the sites may never be fully integrated with more recent research and archaeological models.²²² These limitations mean that, as discussed in the introduction, this study can only offer tentative revaluations of this material.

1.9 LANDSCAPES OF PATRONAGE

Interwoven with issues of chronology are broader issues concerning the identity of the patronage and exchange networks which underpinned the evolution of the monastic and cult landscape of the Syro-Palestinian region. As was addressed above, the widely accepted premise that monasticism was characterised by its close dependence upon external networks and individuals requires substantial review. Nonetheless, general acceptance of the theory has resulted in the tendency in recent studies to view monastic/cult sites as a homogenous

²¹⁹ Prignaud 1963.

²²⁰ Preliminary reports appear in Al-Daire 2001, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001 and Weber 1998.

²²¹ For Mevo Modi'im: Eisenberg and Ovidiah 1998. For Horvath Qasra: Kloner 1990. For Horvat Hani: Dahari 2003: 269-272 and Deir Ghazali, Avner 2000.

²²² This is because whilst the identification of later intervention at these sites (which is currently facilitated through the re-interpretation of dated epigraphic material) may support a potential shift in the understanding of their occupational span (at least beyond the seventh century), this approach is admittedly restricted in its capacity to reconstruct a complete occupational profile for such sites. For monasteries or pilgrimage sites such as Martyrios at Ma'ale Adummim and Shepherd's Fields, the discussion remains primarily one of identifying flaws in the present chronologies rather than a comprehensive archaeological reappraisal.

social category characterised by uniform socio-economic relationships. Monastic production and exploitation of their rural hinterlands is one element where hagiographical accounts have proved hugely influential in defining a portrait of Palestinian monastic economies as largely self-sufficient and marginal to the wider economic framework of their rural and urban hinterlands.²²³ Surviving accounts from the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery at Nessana, which detail considerable monastic involvement in the orchestration of agricultural yields and production, provides some tentative indications of the weakness of this model, but one which has not received sufficient study to draw more extensive conclusions at present.²²⁴ Similarly, monastic land ownership and exploitation, features which must surely have a role in explaining the post-Byzantine trajectories of sites, are so poorly understood as to render their incorporation into the present study unfeasible.

Archaeological strategies have remained unsuccessful in acknowledging the potential complexities of monastic patron economies and relationships to concurrent networks of exchange. Partly, as mentioned earlier in this discussion, this is because the data presented in the major synthetic studies of ‘Palestinian monasticism’ derives primarily from monasteries in the Judean Desert and because archaeological strategies, alongside related publications, are predominantly weighted towards the exploration of architectural layouts or ceramic and glass typologies. Investigative procedures such as bio-archaeology or petrographic analysis, which often provide evidence of more ephemeral networks of exchange, are only in their infancy among excavations in modern Israel and Jordan although, where they have been implemented, have revealed the large extent of monastic exchange networks.²²⁵ The analysis

²²³ Hirschfeld 1992: 102-112. Preliminary attempts at sites such as Jabal Harūn are beginning to emerge, see Lavento *et al*; 2007: 145-156. These, however, occasionally show the influence on the hagiographically-driven models characteristic of approaches to the Judean Desert, see *Ibid*: 145-150.

²²⁴ Mayerson 1962: 224-256. See also *P. Colt* 44-46 and *P. Colt* 82, 90.

²²⁵ I have used the term ‘bio-archaeology’ in accordance with the British-European definition which includes all biological remains encountered during excavation. Recent environmental analysis of remains from Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata, have revealed the presence of *Scaridae* (Red Sea Parrot fish) as an important component of the monastic diet. This suggests that the community remained connected to exchange networks with the Red Sea

of human burial also remains comparatively understudied, with often only cursory discussion of paleodemographic information – biological gender and approximate age – presented within subsequent final reports.²²⁶ This is primarily a product of the cultural appropriation of human remains by contemporary religious or political communities,²²⁷ alongside ongoing ethical debates, which often prevent the application of more intrusive investigative techniques on human remains. This has, however, important implications for present discussions of Palestinian monasticism where the question of ‘ethnogenesis’ – essentially the geographical origins of monastic individuals – remains a dominant point of debate in contemporary scholarship. In addition, the lack of systematic analysis of human remains within monastic archaeology, has permitted the continued application of practices and approaches to skeletal remains which have been universally discredited by broader archaeological scholarship. Examples where the biological ethnicity of human remains is determined by skeletal characteristics or craniofacial anthropometry (which assume distinctions between European, Arab/Bedouin and Jewish skeletal structure can be measured in quantitative terms) remains the most common of these residual, but critically outdated, approaches.²²⁸ Collectively, results derived from this problematic methodology are still routinely enlisted to underpin the perception of the Palestinian monastic milieu as comprised of Aegean-Mediterranean migrants irrespective of the increasing contradiction of this hypothesis in contemporary osteo-archaeological and anthropological research.²²⁹ As it currently stands, this lack of

(approximately 600 km distance) in the eighth to early ninth centuries, see Politis 1992: 284 and Beech and Prame 2012: 479-489.

²²⁶ See, for example, the report of skeletal material from the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev: HersHKovitz, Ring, Rak and Arensburg 1988.

²²⁷ In some cases, such as the site of Martyrios at Ma’ale Adummim, skeletal remains were handed over to church authorities for re-burial see Magen 1993: 178.

²²⁸ Thus Reich 1996 and Nagar 2003. This also influenced the analysis of the remains at Rehovot-in-the-Negev which distinguished between Jewish and Christian burials from skeletal remains: HersHKovitz, Ring, Rak and Arensburg 1988: 193-209.

²²⁹ Boaz 1995 and Williams *et al* 2005: 340-346 using case studies from Pleistocene and Nubia respectively period draw attention to the relative difficulties in this approach. Armelagos and Van Gerven 2003: 53-65 provides an overview of developments since the late nineteenth century. Jones 1997a offers a useful summary of the abuses of these concepts in Palestinian archaeology. For the most comprehensive discussion of the question of ethnicity in archaeological research, see Jones 1997b. For a discussion of the problematic concept of

systematic analytical investigation inhibits our ability to determine whether or not Palestine's monastic-pilgrim milieu was 'Palestinian' or 'non-Palestinian' in its human composition or economic basis.

A further casualty of this methodological blind spot is our incapacity to observe potential fluctuations in the living conditions of such 'monastic' individuals across the Byzantine and early Islamic periods.

This limitation will undoubtedly be resolved as the profile and methodological sophistication of Byzantine and early Islamic archaeology in Syria-Palestine expands and matures in coming years and useful results for further debate begin to follow. A more straightforward limitation, one which can be more readily engaged with the available archaeological data, centres on the question of resource and technical quality: in effect, the geographical provenance of the materials used in the construction of a monastic complex or pilgrimage church, and how we can measure the technical sophistication of their use.²³⁰ Although architectural surveys and excavation reports habitually note stone typologies represented in individual constructions and features,²³¹ few studies have sought to correlate this data with reference to the wider geological landscape of Syria-Palestine in order to postulate where such communities acquired resources for construction.²³² This is, however, critical to our understanding of the extent of the economic outlay and exchange systems

ethnicity in early medieval contexts see Pohl 1998: 13-24. Anthropologists have consistently emphasised the essentially problematic nature of the terminology 'race' which can incorporate a broad spectrum of traits including, religious faith, biological race, culture, language and geographical spaces. Wallman 1977: 531-532 conveys the relatively difficulty with the terms and the varied interpretation of them between scholars of European and American backgrounds.

²³⁰ These approaches are already established for sites in Anatolia, see Ousterhout 2008: 128-156 and Pickett 2011a.

²³¹ This concentrates primarily on the embellishment of the main basilical church.

²³² We lack, for example, a detailed archaeological survey of Roman, Byzantine and early Islamic quarries in the region. Recent isotopic studies directed at sculptures of the Roman period have begun to investigate the original quarries of marble work in Umm Qays/Gadara, 'Ammān/Philadelphia and Jarash/Gerasa are beginning to reveal links between these cities and the marble quarries of western Turkey and Thassos, see Friedland and Tykot 2010. Al-Naddaf, Al-Bashaireh and Al-Waked 2010: 75-83, have identified two chancel screens made from Proconnesian marble from churches in northern Jordan. Both screens are, however, poorly provenanced having been confiscated from treasure hunters. However, the study raises some interesting perspectives which warrant further application in more secure contexts.

which facilitated monumental construction in rural and urban contexts. Where this material is available, as at Sinai and Nessana, even preliminary observations of the material and technical investment utilised in church construction, demonstrate the immediate distinction in the scale of their respective patron support bases. Whilst the redevelopments of the eighteenth and nineteenth century impede a more complete rendering of the original appearance of the main monastic church at Sinai, the sixth-century apse mosaic of the Transfiguration, delicately executed in glass as well as gold and silver tesserae, provides a useful comparative of economic scale (Fig. 1.13, 1.14).²³³

A comparative observation of the Sergios-Bakkhos monastery of Nessana, where epigraphic and papyrological data appear to portray a more localised patronal support base limited to local family units or village collectives, reflects the more modest capacity of its primary economic sponsors. Here, the main church demonstrates far higher use of local building materials, the use of wall paintings – though we lack spectroscopic investigation which would enable us to determine their compositional materials – and a lower, though still proficient, level of technical skill.²³⁴ The architectural report by Welbury Kendall noted the particular use of local limestone in the main fabric of the building,²³⁵ with Harris Dunscombe Colt noting the more limited use of marble for architectural embellishments and liturgical

²³³ Forsyth 1979: 62-64, Weitzmann 1966: 392-405 and Weitzmann 1979: 82-86. Discussions of glass mosaic tesserae, including production methods and costs, are offered in James 2006: 29-47. James has pointed to the production of glass tesserae at the sites of Petra and in Jarash and has proposed that the production of glass tesserae was less expensive than previously assumed. I would accept this hypothesis but would argue that its findings do not substantially alter the central point of this study. The Hagia Maria Church in Petra, for example, appears to have been the main church of the urban centre and was closely associated with the locally prominent Obodianos family. In contrast, the apparent lack of similar use of glass tesserae in the churches of Kastron Mefa'a or Umm el-Jimal, which appear to have been plastered, may reflect their relative integration into more modest and localised patron networks. Surviving plaster fragments from the Church of the Priest Wa'il suggest that the apses of some of the churches were decorated with wall paintings rather than mosaic, see Piccirillo 1993b: pl. 5.

²³⁴ This has also been observed in the example of Umm el-Jimal, where architectural analysis of the churches and domestic structures has demonstrated the prevalent use of local material and construction techniques which did not require intensive labour investment. See the discussion by De Vries 1985. Similar techniques and use of local materials are also apparent among the smaller churches of Kastron Mefa'a. Liturgical furniture in the Church of the Lions and the Church of Hagios Paulos, for example, were primarily fashioned from oil shale, see Piccirillo 1992: 207-209 and Piccirillo 1997: 379-381. For a similar discussion for the Churches of Hagios Sergios and Hagios Stephanos, which exhibit the use of bituminous schist and some limited use of marble, see Acconci 1994: 290-313.

²³⁵ Kendall 1962: 25.

furnishing.²³⁶ The recent analysis of Bert De Vries on a series of buildings in Umm el-Jimal has drawn further perspectives of the value of analysing construction methods within this discussion.²³⁷

In the examples of Umm el-Jimal, the use of economical building techniques and stone materials, which could be used without the additional support of sophisticated mechanical apparatus or extensive manpower, offers further examples of church construction methods within more modest economic scales (Fig.1.15, 1.16).²³⁸ The characteristics of Umm el-Jimal are replicated at Kastron Mefa'a, where a similar use of local materials (fossiliferous limestone for architectural features and bituminous schist for liturgical furnishing) and stone masonry techniques (such as door lintels) that could be used with minimal technical investment characterise the smaller churches of the Priest Wa'il, the Church of the Tabula Ansata and the Church of the Palm Tree (Fig. 1.17, 1.18).²³⁹

Observations of buildings materials may not facilitate a full appraisal of the economic distinctions between all individual monasteries or cult sites. Nonetheless, such straightforward comparisons between sites of similar date, such as Sinai, Nessana and Kastron Mefa'a, reveal considerable variations in the economic and exchange networks which facilitated their creation. This may appear an arbitrary point, but given the frequent assumption that the monastic and cult landscape of Palestine developed as a result of a homogenous series of social and economic connections, it is worth stressing here.²⁴⁰ Given the paucity of surviving documented evidence, archaeological material, due to its relative

²³⁶ Colt 1962: 50.

²³⁷ De Vries 1985: 252-254.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Both the churches of the Priest Wa'il and the Church of the Tabula Ansata reflect the use of locally sourced limestone and bituminous schist. On the Church of the Priest Wa'il, see the discussion in Piccirillo1993b. For the Church of the Tabula Ansata, see Piccirillo2003a. Similar use of local stone also characterises the Church of the Lions; see Piccirillo 1992: 201-208 and the Church of Hagios Paulos, see Piccirillo 1997: 379-381.

²⁴⁰ See pages 46-54.



Fig.1.13 Sinai, St Katherine's basilica, apse mosaic.
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Fig.1.14 Mount Sinai, St Katherine's Monastery, detail of Moses, reflecting the use of gold-leaf and glass tesserae. The Mosaic of the burning bush scene.
©<http://www.solo-mosaico.org> 2010/2011

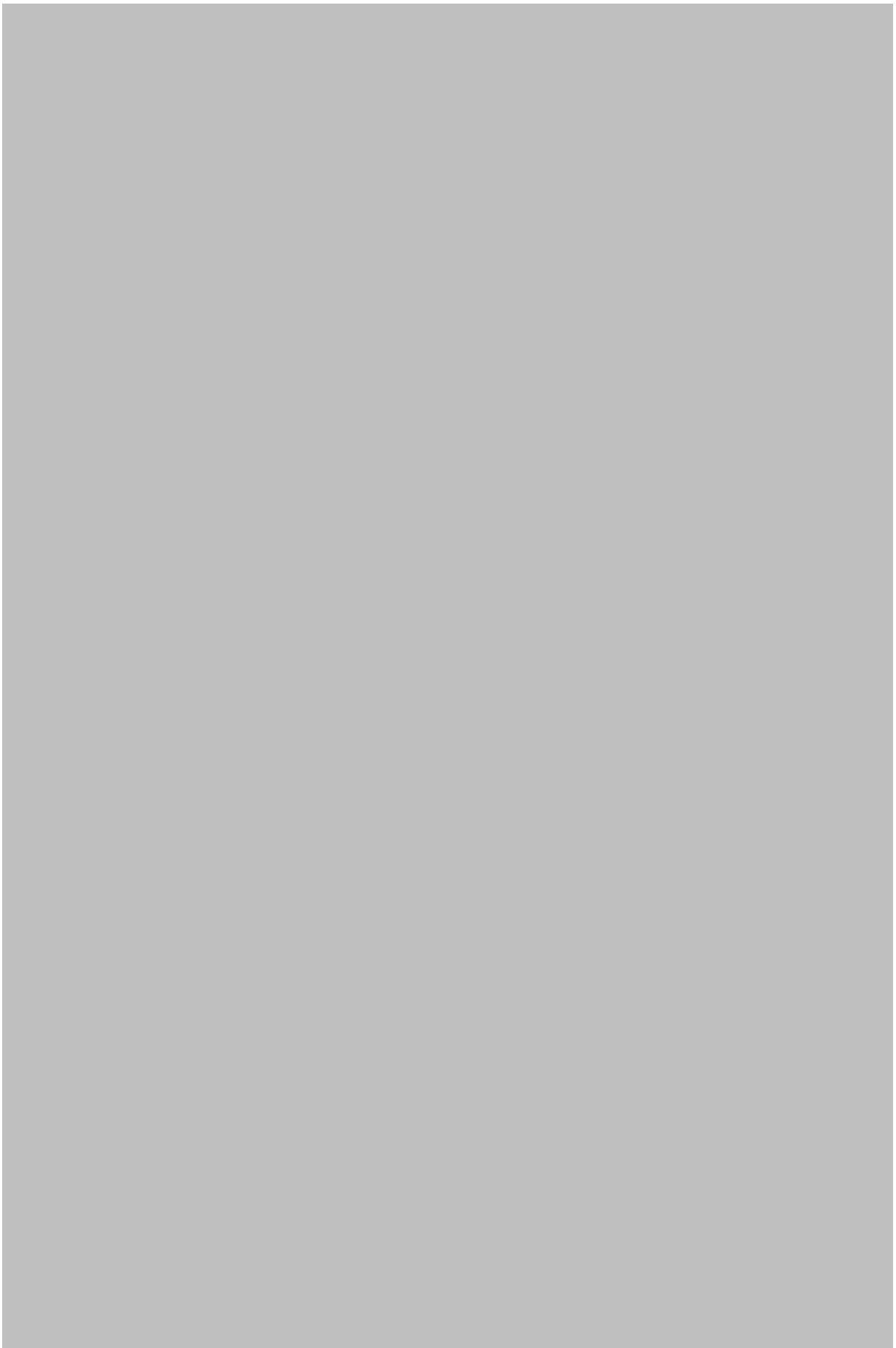


Fig.1.15 Umm el-Jimal, House XVIII.

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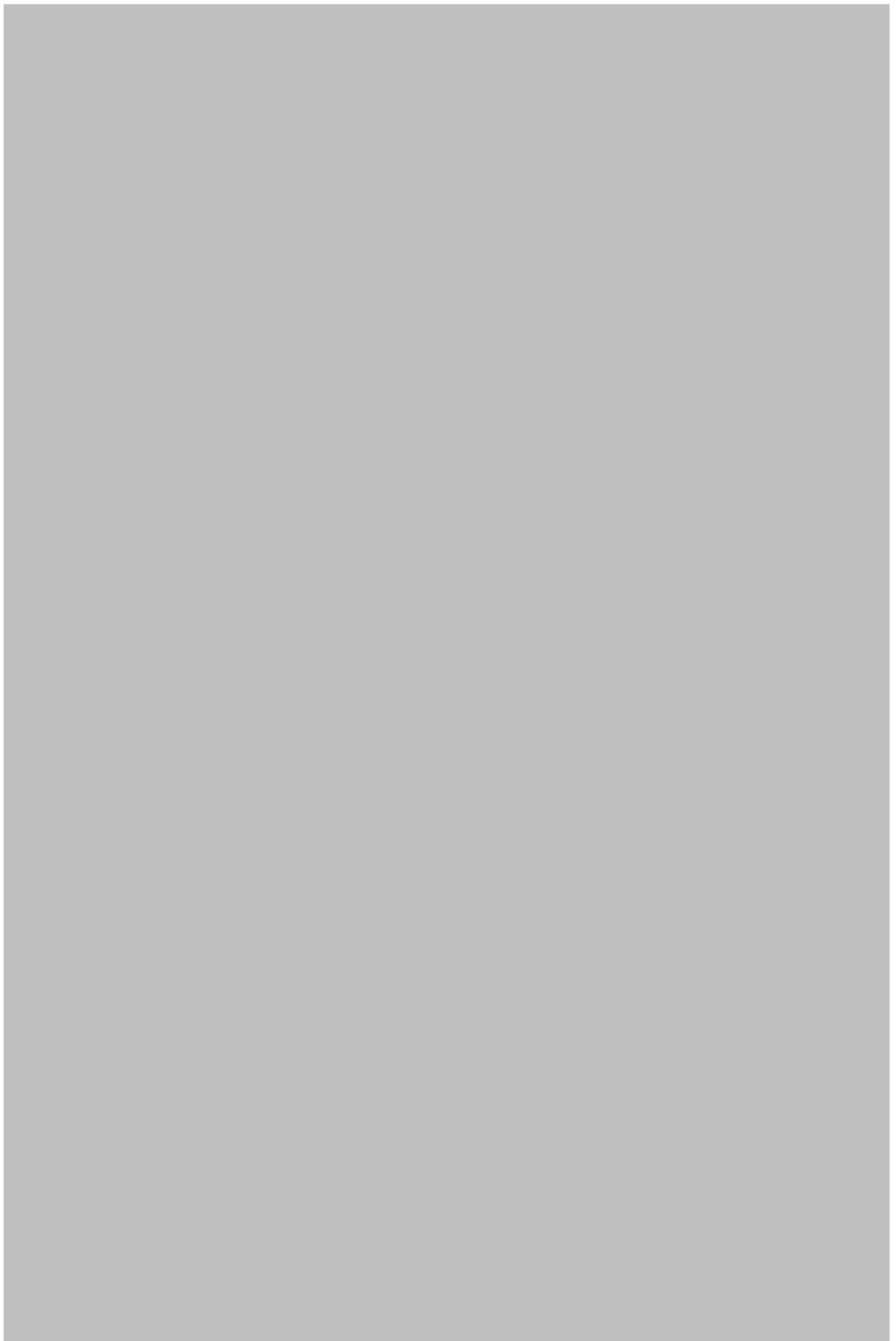


Fig.1.16 Umm el-Jimal, door lintel.

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Fig. 1.17 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of the Priest Wa'il, dated to 586 (facing south east). The use of smaller stones for the construction of the walls, which were subsequently plastered, finds parallels in the contemporary techniques observed at Umm el-Jimal.

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Fig. 1.18 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of the Priest Wa'il, dated to 586 (facing north east). The connecting arch, similar to those of Umm el-Jimal, is comprised on small, easily lifted, voussoirs, which De Vries estimates could be positioned with relatively simple equipment.

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availability, provides the most effective means through which we may recognise that not all monasteries or pilgrimage centres entered the early Islamic period on identical patronal, economic or social bases. As will be explored in the subsequent chapters of this study, these distinctions are important to explaining the subsequent survival of sites beyond the seventh century.

1.10 PALESTINIAN MONASTICISM CONTEXT

The socio-economic disparity demonstrated by the differences between Nessana, Sinai and the Transjordanian sites of Umm el-Jimal and Kastron Mefa'a is underscored if we observe the variant nature of monastic patronal networks which had emerged by the late-sixth century throughout Palestine and Arabia. Although much of the above discussion has sought to qualify the traditional image of a monastic-pilgrim milieu underpinned by Byzantine elite migration, it would be equally ill-conceived to propose an interpretation which stresses the exclusive role of localised networks and revenues. There are several cases where the direct intervention of Byzantine elites or the imperial family in the construction and patronage of monastic communities or pilgrimage sites is known. Justinian's commissioning of the foundations of Mount Sinai and the Nea Church in Jerusalem are two examples which followed an imperial precedent established in the fourth century.²⁴¹ Accepting the authenticity of the tradition, the protocol of imperial sponsorship of Palestinian sites may have continued – and perhaps concluded – in the later sixth century under the Emperor

²⁴¹ Prokopios *Buildings*, V. 8: 4-9 and V. 6: 1-26 (ed. and tr. Dewing 1940: 342-343, 355-357). To this may be added Justinian's minor benefaction of monasteries including the construction of cisterns/wells at Mar Samwil and the Baptism Monastery near the Jordan: Prokopios, *Buildings*, V. 9: 15, 19, V. 9: 1-22 (ed. and tr. Dewing 1940: 358-359) lists the lists subject to restoration or the construction of cisterns that were commissioned by Justinian.

Maurice with the addition of the upper church at the Tomb of the Virgin in Gethsemane.²⁴² But a characteristic feature of the imperial programmes was the focus afforded to the appropriation and development of sites with direct biblical and exegetical significance to Byzantium and the Christian oikoumene of the former Roman west.²⁴³ The major pilgrims' accounts of this period provide similar patterns of intersection, with the churches of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Mount Sinai, or sites associated with the miracles of Jesus, forming the main topographic itinerary for pilgrims by the sixth century regardless of their respective social or geographical origins.²⁴⁴ These sites were likely to have been underpinned by a social and economic support network which included (but also extended beyond) localised contexts. This is apparent at sites such as Mount Sinai, where pilgrims originating from Byzantium, Armenia and Egypt are known throughout the sixth and early seventh centuries, the latter primarily through graffito inscriptions scattered across the routes of the Wadi Hajjaj and a small corpus of papyri.²⁴⁵

In terms of the present discussion, this suggests that the patronage of the Byzantine imperial family, and the focus of pilgrimage itineraries on particular sites, had collectively succeeded in the formation of a network of high-status monasteries and cult-sites centred

²⁴²The evidence to link Maurice to the church is, however, tentative and based primarily on the description contained in the *Jerusalem Lectionary* (ed. and tr. Tarnishvili 1959-1960: 1148) and the *Sinai Georgian Menanion (Sinai Georgian 34)* (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958:84) for the feasts on 15 August. This dating was accepted in the archaeological study by Baggatti, Piccirillo, Prodomo 1975: 15-18.

²⁴³ Thus Constantine and Helen's interventions focussed on the development of the Sepulchre/Anastasis complex, the Church of the Nativity and the Church of the Eleona. Harvey 1935 offers the most complete structural survey of the Church of the Nativity with additional discussion in Richmond 1936. On the church of the Eleona, see the discussions in Vincent 1910: 573-574 and Vincent 1957: 48-71. Contextual discussions of the churches in terms of other Constantinian building programmes offered in Krautheimer 1986: 57-65 and Wilkinson 1993: 23-27. There are some additional examples of imperial patronage which focussed on churches not directly linked to biblical events. Eudoxia is reported to have donated columns of Carystian marble in the building of the Cathedral church of Gaza: Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 84 (ed. and tr. H. Grégoire and M. A. Kugener 1930, tr. Mango 1972: 31). Similarly, Emperor Zeno, following the Samaritan revolt, commissioned the construction of the Church of the Theotokos on Mount Gerazim: John Malalas, *Chronographia* 9. 6-45 (ed. Thurn 1997: 306-307, tr. Jeffreys, Jeffreys and Scott 1986: 212-213).

²⁴⁴ See Appendix A.

²⁴⁵ See Negev 1977 for examples of Greek pilgrims' inscriptions and further discussion in Chapter Five for problems with the dating. Further discussions are offered by Figueras 1995. A discussion of the Armenian inscriptions, with further discussion of the Georgian and Latin corpus, is presented in Stone 1982. To date there has been no systematic survey of the Arabic corpus although important discussions appear in Sharon 1993 and Kawatoko and Tokunaga 2006. Kawatoko and Tokunaga also note the presence of Latin and Coptic inscriptions in this study.

around Palaestina Prima (but also including Sinai) which maintained simultaneous connections to the urban elite of Palestine and those of the Byzantine Aegean. This is evident when one considers the close interconnections between the monasteries of the Judean Desert, Sinai and the affairs of the Jerusalem episcopacy. Most importantly, it is these foundations which produced Patriarchs of Alexandria and Jerusalem, and other high-ranking clerical figures, from among the ranks of the monastic hierarchy: Patriarch Sophronios (c.634-c.638), a member of a prominent Damascene family, had been resident in the Theodosios monastery – near Bethlehem – prior to his investiture as Patriarch.²⁴⁶ The proximity of this relationship between a cluster of high-status monastic foundations, the Patriarchate and the prominent urban families of the Syro-Palestinian region, remained, as we shall see in Chapters Three and Four, a prominent feature of the post-Byzantine period.

This characterisation of an elite-based, externally driven monastic network requires qualification, however, given that further evidence reflects a more complex interaction between such monastic-cult sites and localised populations. Sinai, in addition to its imperial support, was also aided by the benefaction of local Christian communities through the agency of individual pilgrims or communal endowment.²⁴⁷ Similar examples of local benefaction of monastic and cult sites emerge in other regional contexts. Among the papyri hoard unearthed during the excavation of the Hagia Maria church in Petra, the single largest Byzantine papyri hoard discovered in the Transjordan, at least two documents have been identified which name

²⁴⁶ See the discussion by Chadwick 1974. A further discussion of Sophronios' life is offered in Allen 2009: 15-23. Modestos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, is described by Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq as the Archimandrite of the Monastery of Theodosios near Bethlehem: Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 30 (ed. Breydy 1985, tr. Breydy 1985: 127-128, 108). This follows a pattern of connections between the Patriarchate and Palestinian monastic foundations that were already established by the fifth century. Patriarch Martyrios (c. 478–c.486) was formerly a monk of the Monastery of Euthymios before being appointed a priest in the Church of the Anastasis see Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymios*: 51.4, 61.32 and 62.15 (ed. Schwartz 1969, tr. Price 1991: 47, 58- 59). Patriarch John III (c.516-524) was the son of Marcian, Bishop of Sebastia (an associate of Sabas) and was appointed a deacon of the Church of the Anastasis prior to his investiture as Patriarch, see Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas*: 127.5, 127.14, 150.8 (ed. Schwartz 1959: 127, 150 tr. Price 1991:136-137).

²⁴⁷ *P. Colt* 89 provides an example of such a transaction whereby the collective donation of the Nessana community was conveyed via a trading party. The traders themselves also contributed to the monastery after having prayed there. See *P. Colt* 89: lines 23-24.

monasteries as beneficiaries in the wills of local personages; by far the most embellished of these accounts is that of Papyri Inv.6a dated to the year 573.²⁴⁸

I, Leontios son of Obodianos, priest and superior of the Church of...and Valen(tino) son of Samiabion, deacon, and Gesios son of Euthenios...and Gesios son of Obodianos, priest of this Church of our Blessed and All-holy Sovereign, the Glorious God-bearer and Ever-Virgin Mary and in our presence he said as follows. “It is true that it has first to lead my hope in Lord and Benevolent God who has the power over living people and dead bodies, therefore, as one can see, because I am lying in bed, and no one among all can oppose the command of God, wherefore, having the human destiny in mind, I wish and direct in your presence that, if indeed I do pass from this present life through the illness that I am suffering from, all my belongings whatsoever which I leave behind should be administrated by Kyrikos son of Petros the Most Holy Presbyter and Superior of the Saint High Priest Aaron and by the aforementioned Theodoros son of Obodianos, the Most Beloved of God, Orthodox and Christ-loving, and that by them who are taking care, from those (belongings) my mother Thaaious should be nourished and clothed during the whole time of her life, and after her death from what will be left of my mentioned belongings whatsoever which I leave behind, one half passes to the mentioned Holy House of our Lord the Saint High Priest Aaron and the other half to the Most Holy Hospital of the Saint and Gloriously Triumphant Martyr Kyriakos situated in the same city...”

Petra Papyri Inv.6a II.5-16²⁴⁹

Jakkob Frösén has made a convincing argument that the same ‘House of Holy Aaron’ is to be identified with the monastic community – also custodians of the Tomb of Aaron – on Jabal Harūn situated in the hinterlands of the city of Petra.²⁵⁰ Although nothing can be said of the cultural or ethnic affiliations of the Obodianos family, it is evident from cross-references with other documents in the hoard that its association with Petra stretched back over a century, likely emerging from the military families garrisoned in Palestinian cities following the fourth century.²⁵¹

There are further examples which imply that such relationships between monastic communities and local elite infrastructures were already fully formed by the mid-sixth century and were not exclusively characterised by posthumous donations. The Syriac corpus of Khirbat Mird offers a further example of such connections, recording the foundation of a hospital during the days of Lord Kaioum.²⁵² A further inscription of the North Church of

²⁴⁸ For a discussion of this papyri, and the above translation, see Gagos and Frösén 1998: 477. A further reference to a monastery is suggested in *P. Petra* inv.86, see *ibid*: 480-481.

²⁴⁹ Gagos and Frösén 1998: 476-477.

²⁵⁰ Frösén and Miettunen 2008: 5-27.

²⁵¹ See the discussion by MacAllister 2002: 9-10 and the further discussion by Koenen 2003.

²⁵² See Perrot 1963: 531-532.

Nessana, dated to the early seventh century, identifies the donor as the monk Sergios, a former tax assessor from the city of Emesa (modern Homs), alongside his sister Pallut and her son John (a former metropolitan of the city).²⁵³

This complex dialogue of local and institutional patronage of monastic or cult sites should not, however, be stressed too broadly. Sinai, as a major centre of pilgrimage, arguably represents a type of monastic institution whose patronal base incorporated and transcended such localised-regional divisions; undoubtedly facilitating its accumulation of considerable financial resource. Aggregate estimations of this wealth are elusive, but the record of a transaction in the Nessana papyri, between the monk Martyrios and a trading caravan, involving the transferral of 270½ nomismata, provides some impression of its relative scale.²⁵⁴

Archaeology provides a useful counter narrative to the uniform scope of the textual corpus where monasteries such as Sinai predominate; here we see a far more multifaceted picture of monasticism and pilgrimage emerging in the context of increasing localisation of Christian cult in Palestine and the Transjordan by the sixth century. Several churches, primarily constructed after 450, which incorporated tombs and crypts dated to the Second Temple period (c. 570 BCE-70 CE) – Horvath Qasra, Horvat Midras and Horvat Hani – offer three cases of this phenomenon.²⁵⁵ These examples are paralleled by the emergence of similar arrangements, involving the incorporation of relics and tombs into the main church space or in subterranean crypts, throughout the sixth century.

²⁵³ Kirk and Welles 1962: 173, inscription 94.

²⁵⁴ *P. Colt* 89, line 23. This is the single largest sum mentioned in the papyri hoard recovered at Nessana. The sum is difficult to contextualise with respect to other monastic institutions but evidently is far higher than any transaction made by the Hagios Sergios and Bakkhos monastery of Nessana.

²⁵⁵ See Di Segni 2007.



Fig.1.19 Horvat Berachot, subterranean crypt beneath the church with a reliquary niche.

Reproduced from Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979: plate 30



Fig.1.20 Horvat Berachot, cross section of subterranean crypt beneath the church.

© G. Solar. Reproduced from Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979: 300



Fig.1.21 Umm Qays, the stone covered tomb in the crypt beneath the altar of the Mausoleum church.
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Fig. 1.22 Umm Qays, the crypt and tomb beneath the altar of the 'Mausoleum Church'. The tomb is located beneath the supporting arch.
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Fig.1.23 (above) Umm Qays, the octagonal ambulatory in the Octagonal Terrace Church. The recess inside the octagonal chamber contained a stone-lined tomb.

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Fig.1.24 (Left) Umm Qays, The stoned-lined grave in the Octagonal church. The octagonal centre was screened by a bema. The grave was incorporated into an altar platform.

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Fig. 1.25 Umm Qays, Octagonal Terrace Church, aerial view of octagonal apse with ambulatory.
© APAAME_20111002_MND-1125.jpg



Fig. 1.26 Rehovot-in-the-Negev Plan of the North Church.
© Tsafrir 1988

At Horvat Berachot, a natural cave formation – possibly a fourth-century tomb – was redeveloped in the sixth century to form the crypt of a basilical church which was accessed by a stairway (Fig. 1.19, 1.20).²⁵⁶ The Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays offers a corresponding example of a church constructed over a subterranean crypt (Fig 1.21, 1.22).

Comparative cases are known elsewhere in the city, where a centrally placed burial in the bema (accompanied by several reliquary boxes) formed the focus of the Octagonal Terrace Church; redevelopments of church *pastophoria* in the Negev provide further studied examples of the localisation of Christian cult (Fig. 1.23-1.26).²⁵⁷

The question of assigning identities – often minor biblical or extra-canonical figures – to the entombed figures, to whom these sites were ostensibly dedicated, has continued to captivate scholars of the field, resulting in a catalogue of attributions of varying plausibility and several more whose identification remains elusive.²⁵⁸

It may be proposed, however, that this approach is not the most effective way of interpreting these sites. Nor is their apparent anonymity necessarily alarming. Indeed, the obscurity of such sites within the literary record exposes the degree to which the surviving texts proffer a very restricted view of the Palestinian sacred landscape and its monastic milieu.

²⁵⁶ See Tsafir and Hirschfeld 1979. A similar arrangement has also been observed at the North Church in Rehovot-in-the-Negev, see Tsafir 1993: 301.

²⁵⁷ Weber 1998: 453-458. The redevelopment of *pastophoria* in the Negev is discussed in Margalit 1987, Margalit 1989 and Margalit 1990.

²⁵⁸ Two examples of this phenomenon include the site of Khan Saliba, excavated by Prignaud 1963: 243-254, which has been associated with the Monastery of Adam mentioned in Cyril of Scythopolis. The site produced no evidence which would confirm this association. Similarly, the site of Horvat Qasra has been identified by Leah Di Segni as a site associated with Salome from the *Protoevangelion of James*. Di Segni 2007/2007: 398. Although the dedicatory inscriptions and graffiti invoke Salome, the site itself yielded no evidence to confirm that the site was associated with the Hagia Salome of the *Protoevangelion*, see Kloner 1990 and Di Segni and Patrich 1990. A further example includes the site known as 'St Peter's monastery' which Hirschfeld 1990: 287-294 identifies as a site built by the Empress Eudoxia. The site, however yielded no evidence that would endorse this claim. The identification of a church at the site was, for one, uncertain as shown in the plans and discussion presented by Hirschfeld. Similarly, this identification appears to have been based solely on the presence of a reservoir, which Hirschfeld attributed to the site's function as a way-station for pilgrims along the Jerusalem-Jericho road.

Fig. 1.27 Inscriptions from the churches of Nessana.

Κατ(ετ)ήθη ὁ μαρκαρ(ιος) Σεργιος Πατρικου πρεσβ(υτερος) κ(αι) ἡγουμένου μενι περιτιο(υ) ΚΡ

Ινδικτιῶνος ἰ ετους ΥΠΦ.

Here was laid the blessed Sergios son of Patrikos priest and hegoumenos on the 26th of the month of Petitios on the 10th indiction of the year 486 (592 CE)

Inscription 12

North Church, Nessana²⁵⁹

Κυριε Ιησους Χριστος μνήσθητι των δουλῶ[ν] Σελαμας κ(αι) Κωμμέης κ(αι) Ἀλά(φαλλλος κ(αι) Ἀμρος
(και) Λεώντης κ(αι) Ἀντονινας και Σελαμας και Θαῆς κ(αι) Κυρά και Ἀμμηώ(νιος) και Ἀμμέης και
Νεσστ(ώριος) κ(αι) Ἀπρικοως κ(αι) <illegible> Παντης ει ἄγα πόντης ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστ[ω]

Lord Jesus Christ remember your servants Selamas and Kommees and Khalaf and Amr and Leon and Antoninas and Selamas and Thaes and Kyra and Ammonios and Ammees and Nestorios and Aprikos and all those who love us in Christ.²⁶⁰

Entrance of North Church

Μνήσθητι κ(ύρι)ε τοῦ δούλου σου Δουβάβου Θωάμο[ν]

Remember, Lord, your servant Dubaib son of Thomas.²⁶¹

Entrance of the North church

+ ἅγιε Σεργι(ε) κ(αι) ἅγιε +

Στέφανε βοήθη[τε] τοῦ δοῦλου Ἡσιού(ου) Σαούδου Κασιου Κασιου (κ(αι) τοῦ οἴκου α[ὐ]τοῦ κέ...

+ Holy Sergios and Holy + Stephen help your servant

Ayyun son of Sa'ud son of Qasi son of Qasi and his family....²⁶²

Martyrium

²⁵⁹ Kirk and Welles 1962: inscription 12.

²⁶⁰ Kirk and Wells 1962: inscription 30.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*: inscription 31.

²⁶² *Ibid*: inscription 46.

| Settlement | Donors |
|--|---|
| Sobata | Jumāhir, priest (A) son of Taim Markios Abba Victor, priest Usaid Zakarios son of ath-Thuwaitil Unnamed woman Unnamed inhabitant Unnamed inhabitant |
| Elusa | Stephen |
| | John son of Stephen |
| | John son of Raqīʿ |
| | George son of Dārīb |
| | Zunayn son of Abraham |
| | John son of Abraham |
| | Unnamed inhabitant |
| Betomolacha (location unknown) | John |
| | Unnamed woman |
| Phakida (exact location unknown but somewhere in the northern Sinai peninsula) | Unnamed inhabitant |
| Neoteros (location unknown) | Unnamed inhabitant |
| Boteos (location unknown) | Menas |
| | Sergios |
| | Unnamed inhabitant |
| Phakidino (possibly to be identified with Phakida above) | Markios |
| | Unnamed inhabitant |
| Berosaba/ Beersheba | Unnamed inhabitant |
| Berthiba | Malkon |

Fig. 1.28 Donation list of the Monastery of Sergios and Bakkhos based on *P. Colt 79* (early seventh century) which lists donors from outside of the settlement of Nessana.

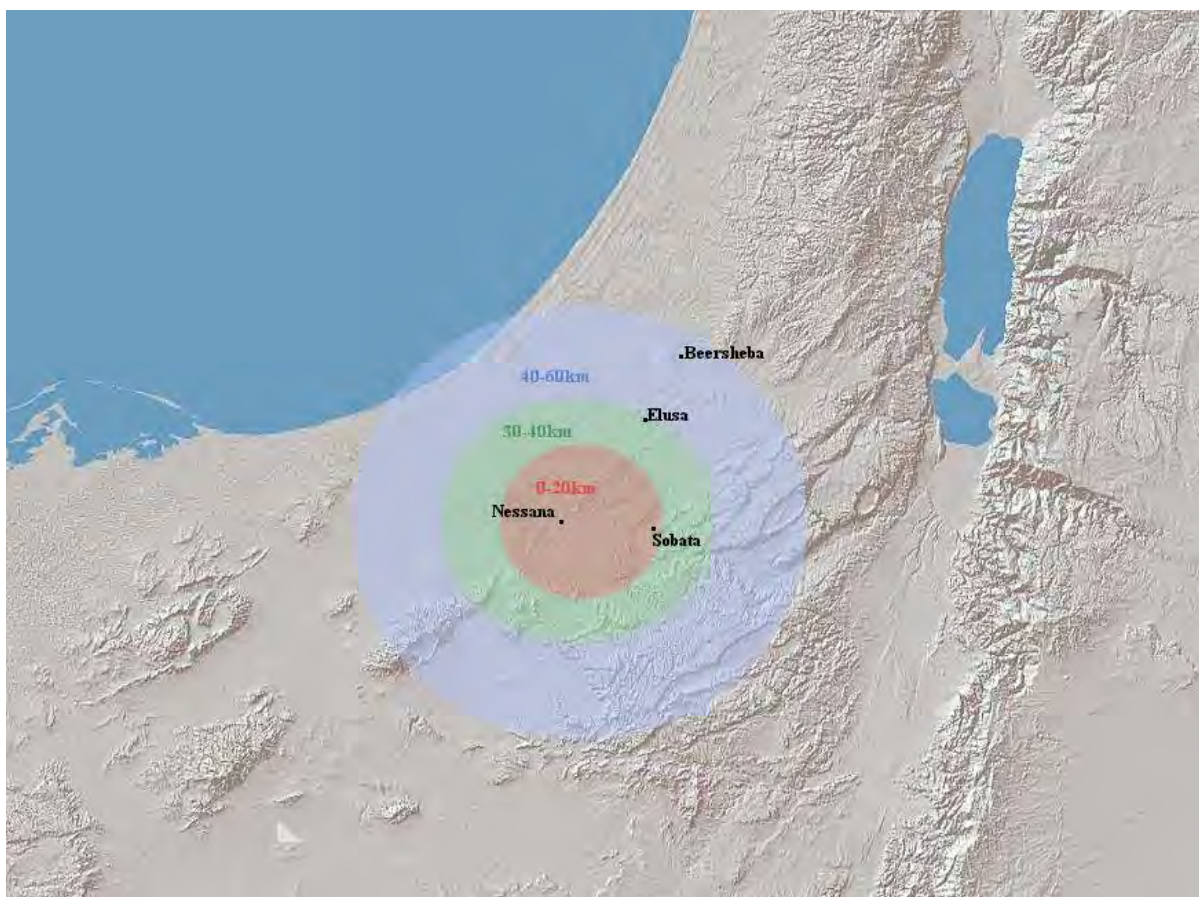


Fig. 1.29 Approximate distance of donors to the Sergios/Bakkhos monastery mentioned within the Nessana papyri.
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| Name of Donors in <i>P. Colt 80</i> (dated 685) | Also attested in |
|--|---|
| Abraham son of Ammonios | <i>P. Colt 76</i> |
| Stephen son of Hanun | <i>P. Colt 58, P. Colt 81, P. Colt 77</i> |
| George son of Raqī' | <i>P. Colt 58</i> |

Fig. 1.30 Donors mentioned in *P. Colt 80* who are documented in other papyri from the archive of the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery at Nessana.
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Archaeological patterns, in contrast, reflect the growth of a more complex matrix active by the sixth century – which may arguably be correlated with the increasing monopoly of Christian institutions as vehicles for social expression – where imperially sponsored foundations coexisted with sites founded in response to localised social requirements and probably supported primarily by more immediate revenues. The evidence we have for recreating such networks is rather impressionistic, but its character can be gleaned from closer scrutiny of epigraphic formulas and surviving documentation; the role of the Petra Obodianos family in the support for the monastery of Jabal Harūn has already been noted above.²⁶³ The papyri archives of the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery of Nessana, and its epigraphic dossier, provide a further example of a monastery underpinned by localised collectives. Many of the dedicatory inscriptions, commemorating structural enhancements or burials, are related to the Sergios-Patrikos family whose members performed the role of *hegoumenos* at the North Church in the period c.590-c.690 (Fig. 1.27).

Additional inscriptions, located in the entrance to the church, further inform our awareness of this localised relationship, and many of the families or individuals cited are also attested in the surviving archive of the monastery.²⁶⁴

This image of more localised benefaction is augmented in the corresponding papyrological dossier which records contributions to the maintenance of the church and donations – termed ‘*προσφορᾶς*’ and ‘*εὐλογία*’ – possibly in honour of the deceased, made to the monastery in the early seventh century.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ See note 248.

²⁶⁴ It is also reflected in the individuals such as Stephen son of Hanūn attested in *P. Colt* 58.2, *P. Colt* 77.19, *P. Colt* 80.4, *P. Colt* 81.6 and *P. Colt* 85.11 or Abraamios son of Ammios attested in *P. Colt* 76.7 and *P. Colt* 80.2 who emerge in the donation registers of the monastery and a number of legal or taxation documents that would link them to the settlement of Nessana.

²⁶⁵ *P. Colt* 79.

Fig. 1.31 Mosaic inscriptions from the Church of Horvat Hesheq.²⁶⁶

+ Ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας Δημητρίου διακ(όνου) (και) Γεοργίου υιοῦ και ἀναπαύσεως Σόμαδος πατρὸς και Δημητρίου και Θεοδώρου τέκνων.

For the salvation of Demetrios the deacon and of Georgios (his) son, and for the rest of Somas (his) father and of Demetrios and Theodora (his) children.

+ Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ ἁγίου και ἐνδόξου μάρτυρος Γεοργίου μνήσθητι εἰς ἀγαθὸν τοῦ δούλου σοῦ Δημητρίου διακ(όνου) τοῦ κτισαντος τῶν ἁγίων οἶκον τοῦτον και Γεοργίου υιοῦ παν(τὸς) τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῶν +

+ O Lord God of the holy and glorious martyr Georgios remember for good your servant Demetrios the deacon who built this holy house and Georgios his son and all their household +

Fig. 1.32 Mosaic inscriptions from the North Church, Rehovot-in-the-Negev.

+ Κ(ύρι)ε ἀνάπασον τὸν δοῦλ(όν) σου Ἡλιαν Μακεδ(ωνίου) τὸν τρισμάκαρ(ιον) πρεσβ(ύτερον) ἐκουμή(θη) ἐμην(ι) Δαισιῳ ζ', ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) ε'.

+ Lord, give rest to your servant Elias, son of Makedonios, the thrice-blessed priest, fell asleep on the 7th month Daisios in the year 437, in the 5th year of the indiction.

Inscription 5, burial inscription of Elias dated to 542.²⁶⁷

+ Ἀνεπ(ά)η ὡ μα[ακάρ(ιος) Μακεδόνιο[ς
ἐμμην(ι) Ἀρ[τε
μ(ισῳ) α' ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) ἡ' ἔτ(ους) +

+ Came to rest the blessed Makedonios, on the 1st day of the month Artemisios, the first year of the inscription, year...+

Inscription 6, Burial inscription of Makedonios.²⁶⁸

Βοηθοῦ Μακεδωνίου

Boethos son of Makedonios

Inscription 28, inscription of the abacus of a limestone capital.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Reproduced from Di Segni 1993: 66-70.

²⁶⁷ Tsafirir 1988b: 157-158.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ Tsafirir 1988b: 171.

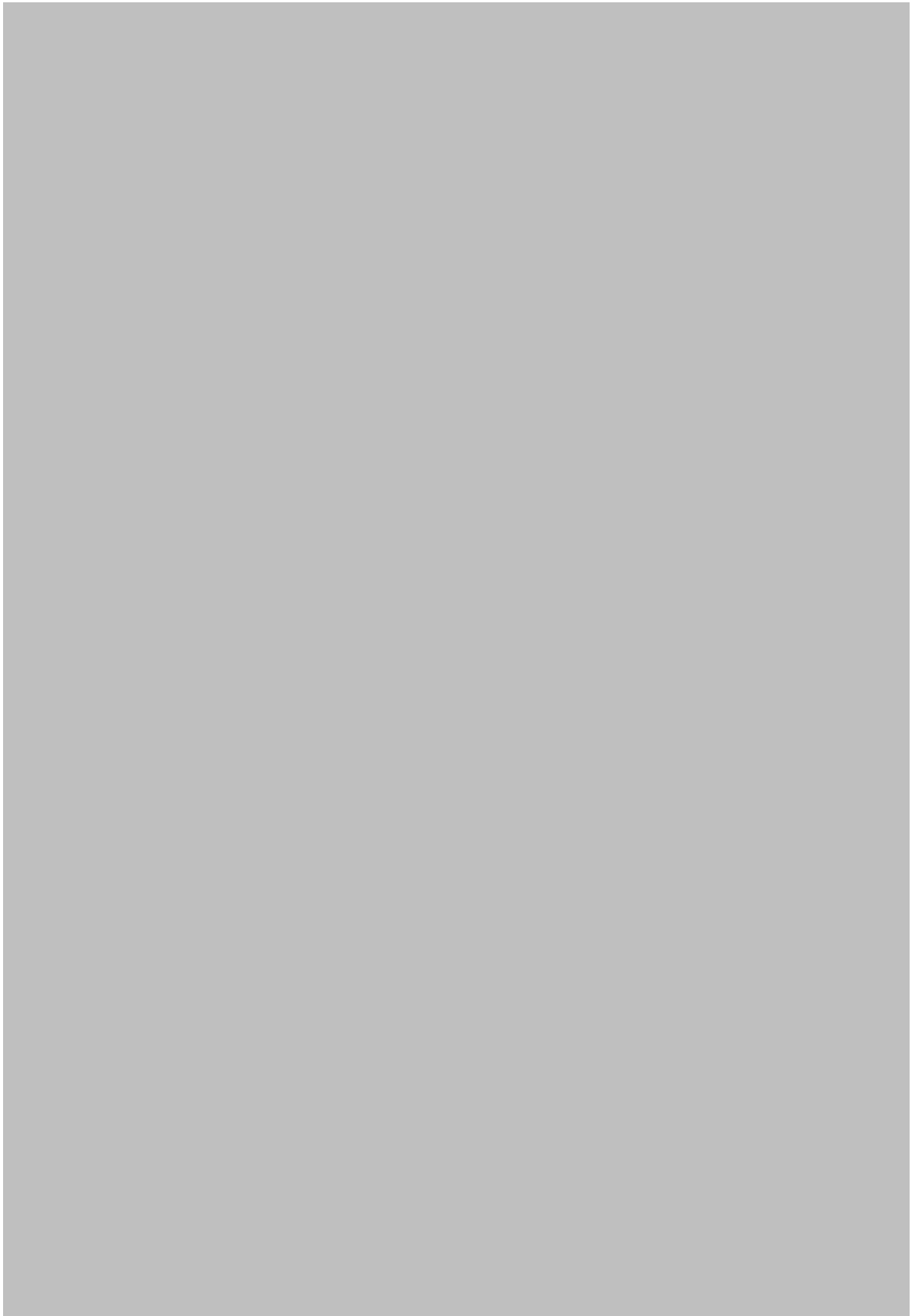


Fig. 1.33 Horvat Hesheq, Galilee, Church of Hagios Giorgos, apse with reliquary shaft (see centre of apse).
© Rotem Hoffman 2010

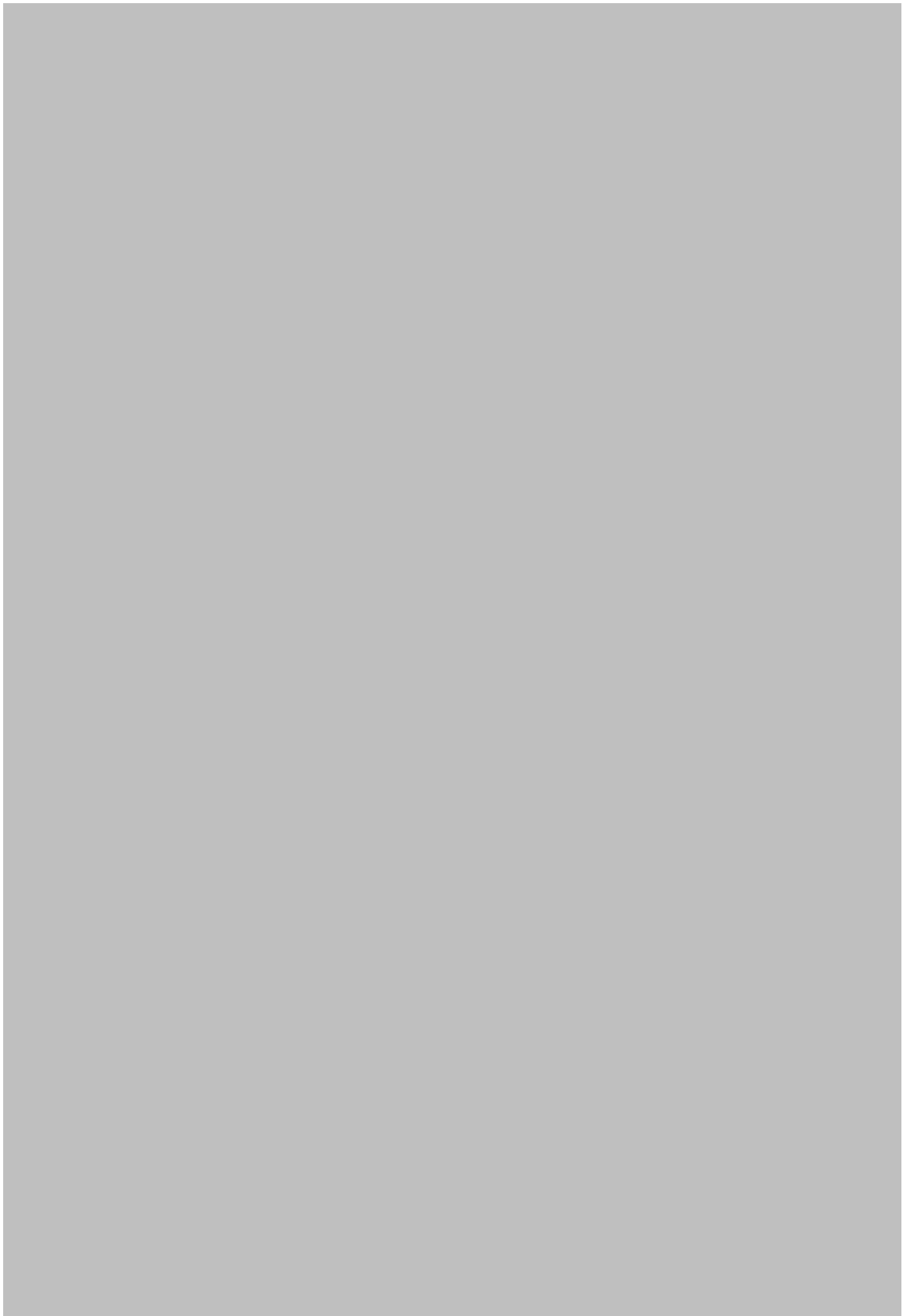


Fig.1.34 Horvat Hesheq, Galilee, the Church of Hagios Giorgos, burial vault.
©Rotem Hoffman 2010

The record reveals a network of localised support from Christian individuals based in Nessana and neighbouring settlements – accounting for around half of all the mentioned donors – and also from Christian families in Shivta, Elusa and Beersheba (Fig. 1.28, 1.29).²⁷⁰ Although the fragmentary nature of the papyri impedes full assessments of the scale of these donations, the existence of a later record, dated to 685, confirms the survival of such patterns following the Arab conquest (Fig.1.30).²⁷¹ The lack of corresponding documentation for the monasteries in the central and northern extents of the Palestinian region, and for Arabia, restricts more refined observations of the prevalence of these relationships on an intraregional level. But dedicatory inscriptions suggest similar patterns of local support for Christian cult sites that existed concurrently with the larger elite network.

At Horvat Hesheq in the Galilee, the construction of a small church – where excavators identified three reliquaries situated in the nave, chancel and south apse – was facilitated primarily at the behest of a single family whose names are recorded in all of the extant dedicatory inscriptions (Fig 1.31, 1.33, 1.34).²⁷² The epigraphic corpus of the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev yields similar examples of kinship groups contributing to the embellishment of church space (Fig 1.32). Even the *Lives* of Cyril of Scythopolis record two instances of local Palestinian notables bequeathing property and money to the monastic communities of Sabas and Euthymios;²⁷³ the pattern emerges again in the eighth century *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*, where several monks, drawn from the ranks of urban or rural-based Christian elite, are recorded as having donated their inheritance and landholdings to their community.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ *P. Colt* 79, with discussion 227-229.

²⁷¹ *P. Colt* 80.

²⁷² See Aviam 1993: 54-65 and Di Segni 1993: 66-70.

²⁷³ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas* 25: 109.6-9 and *Life of Kyriakos* 7: 226.11-13. (ed. Schwartz 1939: 109, 226, tr. Price 1991:118, 248-249).

²⁷⁴ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 9.5 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 11, 11).

A characteristic feature of the monastic-pilgrim milieu by the year 600 appears then to have been the simultaneous existence of localised, regional and inter-regional responses to the role of Christianity as the dominant mediator of divine authority and intercession. Sinai, Jabal Harūn and Horvat Berachot are components of the same broader response to the increasing demand for the access to intercession and the importance of Christianity as vehicle for devotional and social expression.

The emergence of three broadly distinctive groups of monastic-cult sites by the late sixth century may be proposed from this. Firstly, those situated at sites or in settlements of fundamental significance for the confessional identity of the entire Christian oikoumene – Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Sinai and monastic sites connected to major cult figures – subject not simply to imperial benefaction, but to a social and economic support network deriving from the Palestinian urban based elites and rural populations.²⁷⁵

Secondly, monastic and cult sites of important regional significance – Jabal Harūn, Mount Nebo, Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata – communities associated with biblical cults and subject to the benefaction of urban-based elites and localised populations, but which rarely appear as components of a more universal Christian conception of the Palestinian hierotopy.²⁷⁶

Lastly, sites of profound localised significance – Nessana, Horvat Berachot, Horvat Hesheq – interconnected with localised patterns of Christian devotional practice and rural-elite populations, but which exhibit little indication of more extensive connections beyond these localised networks.²⁷⁷ Such groupings are, by definition, impressionistic and do not necessarily preclude points of fluidity between the various categories; we need to be cautious of reducing observations of this apparent hierarchy into a dialogue of extant tension between elite and popular devotional practice or a simple rural/urban dichotomy.

Nonetheless, these distinctions are necessary to acknowledge the complexity within a

²⁷⁵ See pages 85-87.

²⁷⁶ See note 88.

²⁷⁷ See notes 91.

Christian landscape, which had largely consolidated by the year 600, and to explain the divergent responses among individual communities and regional groups to the lasting implications of Arab rule. The variation in site distribution and continuities across the period 600-950, which this study has identified, exposes the relative weakness of an interpretive model which attributes such change to broad over-arching claims of political change, Islamic hostility or religious conversion. Although a large number of sites did not endure these shifts, as this study will discuss, many did and for far longer than once believed. Identifying the characteristics which facilitated this continuity, therefore, can be best achieved by an individualised approach to each site within its own respective political and socio-economic context and, only then, in relation to broader regional trends. Outlining the factors which enabled a site to survive is invariably interwoven with those which distinguished it from its less successful contemporaries.

The above discussion has provided a framework through which such variations may be explored in context of understanding monastic and pilgrimage continuities following the seventh century. That is the aim of the following Chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

TRANSITIONS: PALESTINIAN MONASTICISM 614-628

2.1 THE SASSANIAN CONQUEST: IMPACT AND LEGACY 614-628

The early seventh century was a period of formative institutional change within the Syro-Palestinian region and one which witnessed two major episodes of political upheaval. Responding to both the political and military instabilities during the reign of Phokas (c.602-c.610) and the subsequent rebellion by Herakleios in 610, a successive series of military campaigns by the Sassanians undertaken between 612 and 619 resulted in the loss of Syria Palestine and Egypt to Byzantine control. Though restored to Byzantium by the campaigns of Herakleios in the 620s, the more permanent successes of the Arab armies a decade later culminated in the permanent isolation of Palestine from Byzantine political control.²⁷⁸ Following the capitulation of Caesarea Maritima (later Qaysariya) to the Arab commander Umar ibn al-Khattāb in 638 – one of the last major urban centres of Palestine to capitulate to Arab military occupation – the Palestinian region was to remain permanently under the political and fiscal jurisdiction of non-Christian government until the late eleventh century.²⁷⁹

The immediate impact of these political developments is among a series of contentious issues in recent analytical approaches to monasticism and pilgrimage in Syria-Palestine. Principally, the debate centres on the question of the survival and condition of

²⁷⁸ For a brief chronological overview of the developments leading up to, and including, this period see Foss 2003, Haldon 2008, 249-63, Howard-Johnston 2010 and Kaegi 2003: 58-100. Kennedy 2004: 57-81 offers a useful overview of events from the perspective of the Arabic sources.

²⁷⁹ Agapios, *Kitāb al-‘Unwān* 454/478 (ed. and tr. Vasiliev 1912), Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*: 11.VII: 422-423/430-431 (ed. Chabot 1899-1910), *Chronicle* 1234, 259 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920) and Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6133 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 341-342, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 474-475). See also Holum 1992 and Holum 2011. This is broadly correct for the southern regions of Syria-Palestine around Jerusalem and the Transjordan where John Tzimiskes was unsuccessful in extending Byzantine control. The more northerly regions around Caesarea and possibly the Galilee (Tiberia/Ṭabariyyah) were, however, temporarily incorporated in the Byzantine territory in the 960s. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study, which ends around 950, none of the sites considered in this study were under non-Christian jurisdiction during the period. For a discussion of the campaigns of John Tzimiskes see Matthew of Edessa, *Chronicle*: 16 (tr. Dulaurier 1858: 19-20) Walker 1977: 301-327 and Walker 2009: 226-230.

these institutions at the beginning of the early Islamic period following the 630s and the extent to which the political upheavals between 614 and 640 determined the trajectory of these communities.

In view of the extensive archaeological corpus, questions of site chronologies and post-Byzantine continuity have remained a prominent feature of debate in recent decades. These remain divided into two, essentially opposing, strands of opinion.

The first follows traditional interpretative models and argues that the episodic military confrontations of the seventh century instigated instant negative change in terms of site destruction and permanent rupture to existing patterns of socio-economic sponsorship for monasteries and pilgrim-cult sites.²⁸⁰ The second, far less developed theory, argues that the much diminished landscape of monasteries and cult sites that emerges by 950 may be attributed to a more convoluted process of social, economic and political transition in the region between the seventh and tenth centuries.²⁸¹

As we shall see, the evidence favours the second of these theories. In fact, the justification for beginning this study with a critical review of the Sassanian interim 614-628 is to demonstrate the problems inherent in the traditional belief that the disruptions initiated during this fourteen year period were formative to the socio-economic status of monastic-pilgrim activity in the region in the 630s.²⁸² This thesis is in need of re-evaluation.

A progressive series of studies emerging since the late 1970s, initiated by the results

²⁸⁰ The most comprehensive example of this approach is Dauphin 1998: 352-360, following an already well established path: Meyerson 1964: 191-192, Patrich 1995: 143 and Tsafirir and Foerster 1994:102. See also, Binns 1994: 53-54, Chitty 1966: 160-163, Hirschfeld 1993: 152 and Perrone 1995: 53-54 for specific examples of how this is perceived to have affected monasticism. See note 278 for references to general discussions of this period. Traditional perceptions of this period are still to be encountered in recent studies on religious communities in Palestine: Ribak 2007: 72-73. Schick 1995: 47-48, although essentially rejecting the devastation attributed to the Sassanians, still considers the period to have been definitive for the fortunes of Palestine's monastic population. Schick also provides a useful summary of the church sites where supposed destruction phases have been attributed to the Sassanian conquest of 614: Schick 1995: 293-484.

²⁸¹ For discussions which reject the more cataclysmic impact of the Sassanian conquest of Palestine see Avni 2010, Magness 1992 and Walmsley 2007: 45-47. Criticism of the dating of the 'destruction layers' in Jerusalem attributed to the Sassanian conquest of 614 is levied in Avni 2010.

²⁸² Hatlie 2002: 209-220, McCormick 2011: 40-41 and Schick 1995: 47-48.

of systematic stratigraphic archaeological investigations (alongside more nuanced ceramic chronologies) have proved effective in counteracting the negative appraisals of the Arab conquest as a period of widespread devastation to monasteries and pilgrimage churches in the region.²⁸³ A consequence of these revisions is that routine attribution of destruction layers encountered during the excavation of churches to Arab military hostility is now rare and has been accompanied by a progressive critique of traditional negative reconstructions of this period, which can now be seen to have been framed by pervasive nineteenth-century racial stereotypes and prejudice directed at Arabs and Muslims.²⁸⁴ This achievement, though vital, is somewhat double-edged. Whilst it has exonerated the role of the Arab conquest as the primary catalyst for the abandonment and declining socio-economic strength of Palestinian monasteries and cult-churches in the post-Byzantine period,²⁸⁵ these challenges to traditional interpretation have proved far less influential in militating against the inclination to perceive these patterns of abatement as still responsive to a solitary catastrophic period in the early-seventh century. A general reaction by a number of scholars to the revisionist models of the

²⁸³ For a systematic review of these debates and their implications on site chronologies: Magness 2003 and Walmsley 2007. Discussions of ceramics are offered in Magness 1993 (focussed on Jerusalem) and Watson 1989 (on Gerasa/Jarash). Discussion of the seventh-century transition appears in Sodini and Villeneuve 1992. General overviews of ceramic production in the region are offered in Sauer and Magness 1997, Walmsley 2000: 321-329 and Walmsley 2007: 49-58.

²⁸⁴ See Magness 2003 for the implications of this on site dating and the review of ceramic assemblages by Falkner 1993/94 and Magness 1993. See also Walmsley 2007a for a review of current debates. A useful synthesis of urban and rural activity is offered by Wickham 2005: 450-59, 613-20. For a discussion of Gerasa/Jarash, where discussions of Umayyad and Byzantine features have often focussed on the monumental features of the city: Clark 1986, Blanke *et al* 2007, Gawilkowski 1992, Gawilkowski 2004 and Walmsley *et al* 2008. For Scythopolis/Baysān see Tsafirir and Foerster 1994 and for Tiberias see the collected studies in Hirschfeld 2004b and Stacey 2004. It has been more recently proposed that the major phase of urban expansion actually occurred in the seventh and eighth centuries see Harrison 1992. Excavation reports for Pella may be found in Smith 1983, Smith and Day 1989 and Walmsley and Smith 1992. A further synthetic discussion of the Transjordan is provided by Walmsley 1996. A re-dating of the traditional chronology of Capernaum proposed in Tzaferis 1989 is offered by Magness 1997. The site of Caesarea/Qaysariyah has not been fully excavated, but published excavations have again pointed to considerable occupation between the seventh and eleventh centuries see Brosh 1986:66-89 and Walmsley 2000: 290-294. Holum 2011 suggests that the Arab military incursion against the city may have resulted in fairly substantial changes to the nature of urban settlement in the city. However, there are no indications of similar breaks associated with the Sassanian occupation and the findings of Holum do not discredit the idea that the city remained continuously occupied until the eleventh century. For a discussion of Aqāba see Whitcomb 1994: 155-170 and Khouri and Whitcomb 1988. Preliminary discussions of the basilicas at Umm Qays, which show no occupational break in the seventh century, are offered in Al Daire 2001: 553-560, Vriezen 1992, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001 and Weber 1998.

²⁸⁵ In terms of the present discussion, this term is used in reference to developments in Palestine. Therefore, 'post-Byzantine' is used in reference to developments following 634.

Arab conquest has increasingly sought instead to implicate the Sassanian occupation 614-628 to explain these observations of decline and abrupt fracture. In other words, the Sassanians simply substitute for the Arabs as the causative agents for abrupt decline. Consequently, there has been little attempt to re-evaluate whether or not the seventh century – and the material which underpins traditional interpretations – can really be seen as a period which initiated a spontaneous collapse in the number, economic prosperity and social relevance of monasteries and Christian pilgrimage sites in the region.²⁸⁶

Aggregate estimations of this ostensible destruction are elusive, but a reading of the last systematic gazetteer of church sites in Palestine, compiled by Asher Ovidiah and Carla Gomez Di Silva, yields approximately twenty-six sites – many with multiple churches – whose destruction and abandonment are directly attributed to the Sassanian conquest of Palestine and the ensuing socio-economic collapse which was believed to have characterised the region following 614.²⁸⁷ Irrespective of quantitative estimation, the broad consensus among contemporary archaeological studies has conceptualised assessments of the Sassanian occupation as a period of fracture – driven by military hostility and Christian isolation from the socio-economic patronage of Byzantium – from existing Byzantine patterns of monastic and cult site investment. The process is widely perceived as one from which monasteries and

²⁸⁶ Thus Dauphin 1998: 352-360, Mayerson 1964: 191-192, McCormick 2011: 41-43 and Ribak 2007, 72-73 all support a major phase of devastation or detrimental change to Christian life in the period 614-628. The sentiment is neatly summarised by Robert Schick in his analysis of the Sassanian period. ‘The conquest of Palestine by the Sassanian Persians in 614...proved to be the first major blow that the Christians of that region were to suffer...from which they never fully recovered’: Schick 1995: 20. The period is generally perceived as one of oppression for Palestine’s Christian community, but in contrast, one of liberation for Palestine’s Jewish population who are considered to have formed an alliance with the Sassanian army. This assessment derives predominantly from the textual sources of this period, notably Strategios, *Capture of Jerusalem* (Version A and B), ed. and tr. Garitte 1973), Strategios, *Capture of Jerusalem* (Version C and V) (ed. and tr. Garitte 1974), Strategios, *Capture of Jerusalem* (Georgian Version) (ed. and tr. Garitte 1960). Sa’id Ibn Batrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 27, 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 115-119, 127-130, 95-99, 107-108), and Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*. II. 400, IV: 404 (ed. and tr. Chabot 1899-1910). See Averil Cameron’s comments on the exaggeration of the Jewish role in the capture of Jerusalem in Cameron 1994: 75-93. Hagith Sivan 2000: 286-298, has argued that the Persian capture of Jerusalem generated messianic expectations among the Jewish community, though the evidence for this is based predominantly on *piyyutim*, which remains extremely difficult to date and interpret with accuracy. For a discussion of the source material, which does not mention Jewish involvement, see Clermont-Ganneau 1898.

²⁸⁷ See Ovadia and De Silva 1970 for the original study and supplementary cases in Asher and Di Silva 1981 and Asher and Di Silva 1982.

cult-sites never fully recovered.²⁸⁸ Explanations for this perceived ‘614’ hiatus may be sought primarily in the habitual inclination amongst archaeologists, active predominantly (though not exclusively) prior to the 1980s, to assign without question a 614 date to final occupation phases of monastic or church sites.²⁸⁹ This circular argument was compounded by being sited within a broader methodological framework whereby literary material routinely informed the chronologies applied to both the diagnostic material and the stratigraphic phasing of monasteries and pilgrim cult sites in archaeological research, as was discussed in the last chapter.²⁹⁰ With regards to monasticism and cult churches, the issue has remained generally unproblematised on a collective level: resulting in an imposing legacy of sites that reinforce the ‘614’ chronological fracture. This pattern, however, is being progressively contradicted by the results of recent excavations at sites such as Mount Nebo, Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata and Jabal Harūn, which exhibit no comparative rupture in their occupational sequences or function in the early seventh century.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ See the references in note 285.

²⁸⁹ See Dauphin and Edelstein 1993: 53, Magen 1993: 174, Mazar 1975: 38, Patrich 2011, Tzaferis 1983 and Tzaferis 1993, 77, for some examples of this endemic approach which has yet to be systematically catalogued throughout the regions of Palestine or the Transjordan.

²⁹⁰ The discussions offered by Claudine Dauphin’s monumental synthesis of sixth- and seventh-century Palestine reflects a strong reliance on the textual sources as a framework through which archaeological evidence is assessed: Dauphin 1998: 351- 443. Even archaeological reassessments, such as Schick 1995 20-46, still reflect the predominance of the textual evidence as a foundation of archaeological interpretation. This is, at present, a situation which cannot be fully remedied given the limited number of well-published archaeological sites.

²⁹¹ For a discussion of the excavations at Mount Nebo, including its satellite monasteries see Piccirillo 1990, Piccirillo 1994e, Piccirillo 1998 and Piccirillo 1998b. Accounts of the earlier excavations conducted by Sylvester Saller are presented in Saller 1941, Saller 1944a, Saller 1944b and Saller 1944c. The results from the excavation of the monastery of Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata appear in the full report published in Politis 2012. For preliminary discussions: Politis 1988, Politis 1992, Politis 1993, Politis 1995, Politis 1997 and Politis 2011. The monastic site of Jabal Harūn was fully excavated by the University of Helsinki. A final report on the phasing of the church and chapel is offered by Mikkola *et al* 2008: 99-176. Preliminary discussions of the site and its relationship to the Petra hinterland are offered by Frösén *et al* 1998, Frösén *et al* 1999, Frösén and Fiema 2001 and Fiema 2007.



Fig. 2.1 Kursi, Galilee, the basilica of Kursi (facing northeast).
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Fig. 2.2 Kursi, Galilee, the basilica of Kursi (facing southwest).
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Fig. 2.3 Kursi, Galilee, chapel of the 'miracle of the swine'. The main basilica of Kursi can be seen in the distance.

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Fig. 2.4 Kursi, Galilee, apse of the basilica.

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Fig. 2.5 Kursi, Galilee. Plan of the basilica and atrium of Kursi: phases I and II. The blocking of entranceways in the atrium and aisles, as well as the oil press in the north aisle, belong to phase II which post dates c.747/749 but was originally dated to the late-seventh century.
©Reproduced from Tzaferis 1983: 16



Fig. 2.6
© Conger 2008.

Kursi, Galilee. The oil press in the north aisle of the basilica. Excavations by Tzaferis 1983:15-17 originally saw this phase as post-Sassanian rebuilding. Stacey 2004: 16 suggests a post c.747-749 dating for this phase.

More recent attempts to readdress the chronologies of individual excavations, though presently focussed on broader urban/settlement patterns, are beginning to clarify the extent of the issue and offer alternative perspectives of the period in archaeological terms. Increasingly, reappraisals of sites such as Jerusalem, Caesarea and Capernaum have emphasised the minimal systematic destruction of rural settlements and urban cores in this period.²⁹² Prominent among these examples are the recent reanalyses of excavations from Tyropoeon Valley in Jerusalem and Capernaum by Jodi Magness and a related series of excavations in Jerusalem by Gideon Avni. The collective observations of each of these scholars have rejected the dating of the 614 layers dates in favour of substantially later (often post 850) Abbasid abandonment phases.²⁹³ A series of excavations in the Dekapolis and Galilee, in the urban cores of Tiberias, Hippos, Jarash and Umm Qays have similarly failed to identify any episodes of destruction that coincide with Sassanian occupation.²⁹⁴

Comparative approaches dedicated to monasteries and pilgrimage churches have been slower to respond to this broader analytical revolution – a limitation, in part, fostered by the varying quality of archaeological publication, where treatment of diagnostic material is often minimal (thus not conducive to reappraisal) and, as discussed in Chapter One, due to the priority afforded to architectural rather than stratigraphic discussion in early archaeological

²⁹² Most active in this approach are the works of Avni 2010: 35-48, Magness 1992, Magness 2003 and Magness 2011: 88-93.

²⁹³ Magness 1997: 481-486.

²⁹⁴ Excavations at Tiberias published in Stacey 2004 have yielded no evidence for disruption during this period. This is also mirrored in the findings of Hirschfeld 2004b in a series of excavations conducted near the modern sewage plant and the church complex on Mount Berenike. The excavations at the sewage plant proposed no substantial change until the Golan Earthquake of 749 see Hirschfeld 2004b: 18. Similarly, excavations at the main church revealed a similar absence of a destruction phase attributable to the Sassanian occupation Hirschfeld 2004b: 101-123. Hirschfeld 2004b: 131 suggests that a reduction in monastic occupation on Mount Berenike coincided with the Sassanian occupation. This, however, is not supported by any evidence within the publication. For discussions of Hippos/Sussita, mostly concentrated on the churches see Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2004: 52-64, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006: 42-60 and Segal 2008: 31-35. A synthesis discussion is offered in Młynarczyk 2011. Excavations in Jarash have similarly produced no evidence to indicate violent shift in the first half of the seventh century. The bathhouse complex adjacent to the Tetrapylon continued until the site was redeveloped as a mosque during the eighth century, see Blanke *et al* 2007: 177-197. Churches represent the main means through which urban continuities in Jarash are primarily traced.

research at these sites.²⁹⁵ In particular, the brevity of discussion dedicated to stratigraphy and diagnostic material in the published reports offers only a limited opportunity for a systematic renegotiation of the wider corpus.

For sites such as the Martyrios monastery at Ma'ale Adummim, Kursi and Shepherd's Fields at Keniset er-Rawat, where claims of Sassanian destruction layers remain accepted but questionable,²⁹⁶ the paucity of published material restricts present discussion to one of identifying flaws rather than a comprehensive chronological renegotiation of their respective stratigraphic phasing (Fig. 2.1-2.6).²⁹⁷ A key outcome of this approach is that archaeological assessments of monasteries and pilgrimage-churches, especially for seventh-century sequences excavated in the 1970s or earlier, are increasingly in contradiction with observations from more recent excavations at Palestinian urban and rural centres. Here, a regular series of reports, emerging since the 1980s, have stressed continuity in occupation and economic production throughout the seventh century.²⁹⁸ This contradiction, rather than

The excavations paid little attention to the post-Byzantine occupational sequences. However, the presence of iconoclastic intervention at the churches of the Bishop Isaiah, Hagios Giorgos and the Hagios Petros would suggest that these sites remained in use until the mid-eighth century. For a discussion of the Church of the Bishop of Isaiah and those excavated in the earlier Yale project see Clark 1986: 303-341 and Crowfoot 1938: 171-249. Similar eighth-century continuity has also been noted for the Bishop Marianos church see Gawilkowski and Ali-Musa 1986: 137-161. On the dating of Palestinian iconoclasm see Ognibene 2002: 109-116. For Umm Qays see Al-Daire 2001, Vriezen 1992, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001 and Weber 1998.

²⁹⁵ See Magen 1990, Prignaud 1963, Tzaferis 1993 and Tzaferis 1975.

²⁹⁶ The dating of the destruction phase at the Martyrios monastery has been questioned by Magness 2011: 87 who noted that the Byzantine ceramics identified by Magen are likely mid or late seventh-century wares. At Kursi, the original 614 destruction date, identified by Tzaferis 1983: 15-17, has been rejected by Stacey 2004: 15 who dates the phase to the Golan Earthquake of 749. This suggests that the 614 destruction date of Shepherd's Fields assigned by Tzaferis 1975: 14-15 also requires substantial review. The traditional dating is still to be found in the widely referenced Schick 1995: 391-392, 382-385, 365-366 and Ribak 2007: 4.

²⁹⁷ The 614 destruction date for the Martyrios Monastery assigned by Magen 1993: 174, has been questioned by Magness 2011: 87. Furthermore, the identification of the later phase as an Arab farmhouse is doubtful. See my discussion in the gazetteer Appendix A. Shepherd's Fields is further examples of an excavation where priority was afforded to architectural plan see Tzaferis 1975 and Tzaferis 1993: 204-6. In this case, the monastery or site probably survived into the ninth century (see the entry in Appendix A). However, the attribution of the destruction of the Phase 1 site to Sassanian hostility is not supported by evidence in the report. See Tzaferis 1975: 14. The issues of the report of Kursi were fostered in part due to the fact that Tzaferis chose to organise the publication of the pottery in terms of typology rather than stratigraphy, see Tzaferis 1983: 31. Tzaferis attributes this to the lack of a clearly defined stratigraphy in the church basilica and atrium: Tzaferis 1983:30-31. The dating of the ceramics at Kursi was brought into question by Stacey 2004: 14-15.

²⁹⁸ The bibliography on this issue is substantial and grows annually. For the most recent overviews of the debate, with further bibliographies see Walmsley 1996, 126-58, Walmsley 2000 and Wickham 2005: 772-777. In addition see the bibliographic references offered in note 112.

provoking broader reflection of the difficulties with contemporary research strategies on monasticism and pilgrimage, has, unfortunately, led to archaeological approaches to Christian cult buildings as entities which can be routinely segregated from these recent observations of socio-economic stability across the region.²⁹⁹

This is not a productive assumption. The segregated view of monastic communities has, however, been endorsed by continued use of the surviving literary narratives as a framework for understanding Sassanian political and military strategy in the period – where Christian communities, monasteries and churches constitute the primary protagonists and literary set-pieces – often without forensic analytical appraisal of their respective authorial and literary contexts.³⁰⁰ By the same token, the view of a 614 fracture has been compounded by several of the factors outlined in Chapter One: notably, the inclination to correlate the success of monastic communities and cult centres (both social and economic) with the stability of elite contact between Palestine, Byzantium and the nascent polities of the former Roman west.³⁰¹

The widely held perception of a Sassanian or Arab disruption of these pan-Mediterranean connections is, consequently, often credited with undermining the social relevance and primary patron support base of monastic and cult sites by the mid-seventh century and instigating a swift pattern of regional contraction among monastic/cult sites.³⁰²

Renegotiating this complex issue and challenging its essential premises is not a straightforward process. Routine assignment of abandonment phases to 614 has served to

²⁹⁹ Thus Patrich 2011, who views the early seventh century as one of fracture for the monastic communities of the Judean Desert.

³⁰⁰ Thus Schick's landmark qualifications on the Sassanian period are still framed by a literary corpus primarily written from a Christian perspective. Similarly, Foss 2003: 159-163 discussion of Sassanian administrative policy derives primarily from the *Life of Anastasios the Persian*. Although both studies have rightly emphasised elements of continuity, there has been very little systematic questioning of the context of these sources.

³⁰¹ Avi Yonah 1958: 46-49 advocates a Palestinian economic system based around 'empty mouths' in the form of monastic figures and pilgrims. The strong association between monasticism and economic growth in Palestine is also repeated in Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2006: 288-289 and Mayerson 1985: 75-76. See also pages 45-54.

³⁰² See for example the comments by Hirschfeld 1992: 235-236.

restrict more subtle observations of seventh-century diagnostic material (such as ceramic sequences) at monastic and Christian cult-sites.³⁰³ Furthermore, the process of chronological renegotiation is not assisted by the brevity of the chronological bracket of the period 614-628, which is not sufficiently long to yield significant changes in ceramic typologies and, consequently, our ability to identify short-term localised trends at the many monastic sites enlisted to endorse a perception of a monastic crisis following 614. The increasingly localised nature of regional ceramic production during the seventh century, which often restricts comparisons of ceramic material between individual monastic sites, has added a further layer of complexity to this issue.³⁰⁴

Problems with dating resonate across several related media beyond ceramic material. A more subtle understanding of stylistic developments in epigraphic formulas (primarily in mosaic inscriptions) across the period 600-700 has been similarly hampered by the prevailing 614 abandonment or destruction date assigned to monastic occupational sequences.³⁰⁵

Undated inscriptions encountered in mosaic floor schemes, where stylistic criteria are central to their dating, are a noted casualty of this assumption. The current dearth of studies dedicated to outlining evolutions in epigraphic convention following the sixth century has accordingly limited the opportunity to identify sustained patterns of patron intervention; especially at monastic sites where post-Justinianic sequences are obscured or ignored.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ See Magness 2003:191-194 for an effective use of re-dated material in prolonging the occupational profiles of a cult site. Johns 2003 discusses the general problems of identifying seventh-century activity.

³⁰⁴ On this: Walmsley 2007: 49-59 and the overview in Wickham 2005: 770-780.

³⁰⁵ These observations have been astutely made by Di Segni 2003:257-258 in reference to inscriptions of the early Islamic period. They are, however, equally applicable for discussions of the 614-650 break in dedications where a similar gap, arguably a reflection of truncated settlement occupations at church sites (a major contributor of epigraphic material by the seventh century), brought about by the tendency to artificially assign abandonment dates to 614.

³⁰⁶ For a discussion of the dated inscriptions in this period see Di Segni 1999b.

2.2 PATRONAGE AND BUILDING 614-630

At present there are six known examples of church constructions dated between 614 and 628 (Fig. 2.7). Three are located in the rural settlements of modern Rihab and Sama in the Transjordan with another in the hinterlands of Jarash, dated to 622, from the monastic-cult site of Mar Elyas (Fig. 2.8-2.14).³⁰⁷ Two further poorly published examples, situated in Khirbat al-Ṭanṭur in the hinterlands of Mar Elyas (dated 622) and Khirbat Dariya near Pella (dated 624) have also been identified.³⁰⁸ Burial inscriptions related to priests or *hegoumenoi* in Shivta (618),³⁰⁹ the martyrion of Hagios Theodoros at Avdat/Oboda (dated 617) (Fig. 2.15-2.16),³¹⁰ and the Church of Sergios and Bakkhos in Nessana (dated 628), yield comparative evidence for minor cases of localised activity and continuity among monastic familial units.³¹¹ This provides counterbalance to the common perception of the period as one which ruptured existing social and administrative structures among monastic communities and localised Christian Episcopal polities.³¹²

The epigraphic dossier of Rihab proffers a corresponding example of micro-regional stability among localised Christian communities and networks of benefaction and complements the patterns seen from the churches of Shivta and Avdat. Archbishop Polyeuktos, most likely incumbent in Bostra, is identified in the dedicatory inscriptions of Hagios Basilos (dated 594)³¹³ and Hagios Paulos (dated 595) of the late-sixth century,³¹⁴ and

³⁰⁷ The last indication of a monastic presence in Rihab occurs in the dedicatory inscription of the Hagia Sophia church dated to 605. Whilst this inscription represents the last dated intervention at the site, the presence of iconoclastic intervention, currently dated to the period 720-750, suggests that the site functioned throughout the period with no significant functional change. For a discussion of the church and its inscriptions see Avni Yonah 1933: 68-72 and Piccirillo 1981: 68-70. A proposed dating for the iconoclastic interventions is offered in Ognibene 1998 and Ognibene 2002: 109-117. For a description of the Church of Mar Elyas see MacDonald 2012: 74-81. I am grateful to Mr Mohammed Atoom, one of the original excavators of the site, for information regarding the site's chronology and stratigraphic phasing. Further discussion of this unpublished site is also offered in MacDonald 2010: 74-81.

³⁰⁸ Piccirillo 2011: 110 and Chaniotis, Corsten, Stroud and Tybout 2013.

³⁰⁹ Meimaris 1992: inscription 471.

³¹⁰ This is the burial of Kaptio son of Erasinos, see Negev 1997: 137.

³¹¹ Kirk and Wells 1962: inscription 13 records the death of Patrick son of George in 628.

³¹² Negev 1981: inscriptions 48-61. Colt 1962: 141, 165, nos. 167-172.

³¹³ Piccirillo 1992a: 311-312.

still held office in the 620s, as emerges in two further inscriptions from Rihab in the churches of Hagios Stephanos and Hagios Petros (dated 620 and 623 respectively) (Fig. 2.17).³¹⁵

The emergence of his successor, Archbishop Theodoros, in the 630s in the churches of Hagios Menas (dated 635) and Hagios Elias (630?), adds additional weight to this broader impression of stability and episcopal succession at a micro-regional level (Fig. 2.18).

Each of these churches offer examples of the continued construction of churches throughout the Sassanian interim at the behest of single patron families: much like the earlier patterns seen from the Church of Hagios Giorgos at Horvat Hesheq and the Church of the Bishop Isaiah in Jarash.³¹⁶ Monastic associations in the Rihab churches constructed between 620 and 635 are less explicit than in the examples of Shivta where the inscriptions, which mention *hegoumenoi*, offer more conclusive indicators of a monastic presence. Nevertheless, the presence of iconoclastic interventions in the Church of Hagia Sophia (dated 605), where the inscription identifies a *hegoumenos*, would indicate that the site continued in use throughout the seventh century and would point to more silent patterns of monastic continuity not visible through dated inscriptions.

Localised continuities among rural elite families may also tentatively be suggested upon closer inspection of the Rihab material, whereby the patronymic ‘Ματρώπιος’ is attested by three individuals in dedicatory inscriptions spanning 595-635 at the churches of Hagios Paulos, Hagios Petros and Hagios Menas.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ Aviam 1993, Bowsher 1986: 319-322 and Di Segni 1993a.

Fig. 2.18³¹⁷

Rihab, dedicatory inscription from Hagios Menas (dated 635)

Χάριτι Ἰησοῦ [Χ]ριστοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ἐκτίσθη κ(αι) ἐψηφόθη καὶ ἐτελιώθη ὁ ναὸς ἁγίου Μηνᾶ, ἐπὶ Θεοδόρου τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου καὶ θεοτιμήτου μητροπολίτου, ἐκ προσφορᾶς Προκοπίου Μαρτυρίου καὶ Κομητισσῆς συμβίου καὶ τέκνων αὐτῶν ὑπὲρ ἀφέσεως ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ ἀναπαύσεως γ[ον]έων. (Ε)γράφη ἐν μηνὶ Μαρτίῳ χρόνον ὀγδόης ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) τοῦ [ἔτους] ΦΚΘ

By the grace of our God and saviour Jesus Christ this church of the Holy Menas was built, furnished with mosaic and completed at the time of Theodoros the most holy and God-honoured Metropolitan, from the offerings of Prokopios son of Martyrios and his wife Komitissa and their children for the remission of sins and the rest of their parents. Written in the month of March, 8th indiction of the year 529.

Rihab, dedicatory inscription from Hagios Elias (dated 630s?)

+ Ἐπὶ τοῦ ἁγιω(τάτου) Θεοδώρου ἡμῶν μητρ[οπολι(ου)] (καὶ) ἀρχιεπισκ(όπου)] ἐψηφ(ώθη) οὗτος ὁ ναὸς τοῦ ἁγίου προφήτου Ἰσαίου ἐκ κα[μάτων καὶ σπο]υδῆς Σαμμασιου Θεοφ(ίλεστάτου) πρ(εσβυτέρου) (καὶ) Γεωργίου αὐ[τοῦ υἱοῦ(?) καὶ] Ἰωάννου Μακαρίου ὑπὲρ μνείας (καὶ) ἀναπαύσε(ω)ς τῶ[ν γονέων καὶ διαφερόν]των ἐν μηνὶ Δύστρῳ χρ(όνοις) ὀγδόης ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) τοῦ [... ἔτους] ι τῆς ἐπαρχίας

In the time of the most holy Theodore our metropolitan and archbishop this mosaic [was laid] in this church of the holy Prophet Isaiah through the labours and zeal of Sammasaios the priest, beloved of God, George his son(?) and John and Makarios for the memory and rest of their parents during the month of Distro, the 8th indiction of....the province.

Fig. 2.19³¹⁸

Dedicatory inscription from H. Basilos (dated c.594), Rihab

+ προνοία Θεοῦ ἐθεμ[ελιώ]θη κ(αι) ἐτελιώθη ὁ ναὸς τοῦ ἐνδοξ(οτάτου) μάρτυρ[ος] τοῦ ἁγ(ίου) Βασιλ[ίου] ἐπ[ὶ] τοῦ ἁγιωτ(ατου) κ(αι) ὁσιωτ(ατου) Πολεύκτου ἀ[ρχιεπισκό]που [ἐκ ἐπιμ]ελ(ειας) Ζνῆς διακο(νισσης) καὶ Στεφάνου κ(αι) Γεωργίου κ(αι) Βάσσου κ(αι)] Θεώδωρου κ(αι) Βαδ[αγίου ὑπερ] ἀναπαύσε(ως) Προκοπίου κ(αι) γ(ο)νέων ἐγράφη τοῦ ἔ(τους) ΥΠΘ χρό(νοις) ιβ' ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος).

By the provision of God this church of the most honoured and holy martyr Basil was built and furnished in the time of the most holy and most devout Bishop Polyeuktos through the diligence of Zoe the deaconess and Stephen and George and Bassos and Theodoros and Badagos for the rest of Prokopios and their parents. Written in the year 489 in the 12th indiction.

Dedicatory inscription from H. Stephanos (dated c.620), Rihab

+ Ἐν ὀνόματι τ(ῆς) ἁγίας (καὶ) ὁμοουσ(ιου) Τριάδος [ἐπὶ τ]οῦ ἁγιωτ(ατου) Πολεύκ(του) ἀρχιεπισκόπου ἐθεμελιώσθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος τοῦ ἁγίου Στεφάνου (καὶ) ἐψηφωθ(η) (καὶ) ἐτελιώθη ἐκ προσφορ(ας) Σεργίου πρε(σβυτερου) (καὶ) Στρ(ατωνος) υἱων Γεργίου ἐν τῷ πατρικῷ αὐτῶν τοπῷ Ἰωάννου Καρκουσίου παραμο(ναρίου) ἐν μηνὶ Μαίῳ χρ(όνοις) η' ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) τοῦ ετ(ους) ΦΙΕ

In the name of the holy and blessed Trinity in the time of the most holy Bishop Polyeuktos this church of the Holy Stephen was built, furnished and completed through the donation of the priest Sergios and Str(atonos) son of George, in the place of his father, (and) John Karkousos the Paramonarios in the month of May at the time of the 8th indication of the year 515.

³¹⁷ Transliteration and translations from Piccirillo 1981: 68-71.

³¹⁸ Transliteration and translations from Piccirillo 1981: 68-71.



Fig. 2.7 Map of sites (in red) where inscriptions dating between 614 and 628 are currently identified.

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Fig. 2.8 Mar Elyas, the dedicatory inscription in the nave of Mar Elyas mentioning the donation of the priest Sabas and his wife (dated 622).

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Fig. 2.9 Mar Elyas, aerial view of second phase site (circa seventh to ninth centuries).
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Fig. 2.10 Mar Elyas, the hypogeum accessed via a door to the south of the main seventh-century complex.
© Reynolds 2012



Fig. 2.11 Mar Elyas, the sixth-century triconch basilica incorporated into a former natural cave at Mar Elyas (facing west).
© Reynolds 2012



Fig. 2.12 Mar Elyas, the sixth-century triconch basilica incorporated into a former natural cave at Mar Elyas (facing east).
© Reynolds 2012



Fig. 2.13 Mar Elyas, inscription dated to 622 either commemorating the refurbishment of the floor or the construction of the basilica (facing west).
© Reynolds 2012



Fig. 2.14 Mar Elyas, the upper triconch basilica at Mar Elyas, possibly dating to 622 (facing east).
© Reynolds 2012



Fig. 2.15 Avdat/Oboda, the martyrion of Hagios Theodoros.
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Fig. 2.16 Avdat/Oboda, burial inscription in the church of Hagios Theodoros dated to 617.
Transcription and translation Negev 1981: 37

+ Ἀνεπαεί ὦ μακαριος Καπιτω [ἀ]ββας Ἐρασινου ὁ πρεσβύτερ[ος] τῇ μηνι
ὑπερβ(ερεταιου) ἐ ἡμερα, ἔτους ΦΙΒ ινδ(ικτιωνος) ς´

Came to rest the blessed Abba Kapito, the priest (son) of Erasinos, on the 5th of the month
of Hyperberetaios of the year 512 (617 CE) of the 6th indication.



Fig. 2.17

The tombstone of Zacharias dated to 641. One of a series of inscriptions in Shivta dated between 612 and 643.

© Teicher 2011

+ [Καλτετ]έθ ἡ ό τρις] μάκαριος Ζαχαριου Ο—ΔΙΑ μη(νι) Γορπιέου η ινδ(ικτιῶνος)
ιε ἔτους + ΦΛς

Here was laid the thrice-blessed Zacharias (son of (?)) on the 8th of the month of Gopiaeos, the 15th indiction in the year 536 (641 CE).

Shivta, North Church, inscription of the Tomb of Zacharias.

Transcription and translation Negev 1981: 51

In a further inscription in the church of Hagios Stephanos (620), the settlement of Rihab is explicitly identified by its donor, Str[atonos?] son of George, as τῷ πατρὶ ἑαυτῶν τόπῳ (the place of his father). This suggests, albeit tentatively, that at Rihab we are observing a fluid sequence of quasi-hereditary succession among localised clerical families, throughout the period 600-640, in similar fashion to that implied by the epigraphic formulas and papyri of the Nessana community.³¹⁹

The limited archaeological interventions at Rihab prevent a more complete understanding of these programmes of church building in the context of a broader economic assessment of the village during the seventh century.³²⁰ But comparative observations between the Rihab churches exhibit no evidence for substantial weakening in investment, or the economic capacity of local donors, between the late-sixth and early-seventh century. The mosaic embellishments of the churches dated between 620 and 635, although perhaps indicative of more localised resource than significant wealth, exhibit a fairly uniform pattern of investment capacity and technical skill consistent with the churches constructed in the sixth century.³²¹ This pattern would appear to endorse a broader impression of micro regional socio-economic stability among local families in the environs of the village.

The church clusters of Rihab, Sama and Mar Elyas, however, are exceptional examples for the period. Ongoing excavations throughout Palestine and the Transjordan have not yielded comparative examples from the Galilee, the Golan Heights or the Judean Desert region to supplement this picture.³²² It is this apparently regional hiatus in church construction, excepting the nucleated examples of the northern Transjordan in Rihab and Mar Elyas, which is central to arguments that advocate a breakdown in elite benefaction of

³¹⁹ See page 98.

³²⁰ This is not assisted by the fact that none of the excavations conducted on the churches have ever been published in final form.

³²¹ A comparative discussion of the mosaics, with illustrations, is offered in Piccirillo 1993c: 310-314. Discussions of the inscriptions appear in Avi Yonah 1948: 68-72 and Piccirillo 1981: 62-69.

³²² In addition to the burial inscriptions discussed above, we have a possible burial chapel in Jerusalem and further tombstone inscriptions from Karak and Umm Hamat (both in the Transjordan) see Schick 1995: 43-44. This may change with ongoing research and I base my conclusions solely on the available published material.

monasteries and cult-sites following the Sassanian conquest.³²³

However, this ostensible collapse in patronage following the year 614 is, arguably, an interpretative rather than data driven position. Partly, it reflects our present inability to recognise cases of investment (as outlined above), where we possess no dated epigraphic formulas. Yet, equally, it exposes the limitations of the way in which monastic continuities between 614 and 628 are often determined. Current methods for estimating occupational stability are still largely dependent upon the discovery of new constructions or embellishments to cult buildings after 614 to determine a continued monastic presence.³²⁴ These identifications are almost always dependent upon the discovery of dated *tabula ansata*. This dependence has fostered a problematic association between identified phases of architectural expansion and the continuation of monastic life and revenue structures after the Sassanian conquest. Though related, the two are not coterminous. At sites such as Deir 'Ain 'Abata, for example, the intervening eighty-five year gap between the mosaic dedications of the main basilica (dated 606 and 691) must have been accompanied by sustained revenue despite our inability to identify its nature or origin.³²⁵

This suggests that our reliance upon structural embellishment to verify monastic socio-economic continuities following 614 requires qualification. In this respect the term routinely employed in papyrological and epigraphic formulas to identify cases of donation (*προσφορά*) was fluidly applied to a multitude of media in the period in monastic or cult-site contexts. This included examples of church buildings and the embellishment of existing structures – mosaic, painting or liturgical furniture – alongside donations in coinage, land and

³²³ Avi Yonah 1966: 101. See also Olster 1993: 317 for an example of this approach. This attitude has been questioned in the analysis of Doron Bar 2004a: 314-317 and in Kingsley 2001b. Whilst Bar rejects the idea that the Palestinian economy was stimulated by 'Christianity', an objection with which I agree, his analysis still follows the standard formula of monasticism as an externally driven movement: Bar 2005: 59.

³²⁴ I will only address questions of patronage from families and communities in this period here. The problems with identifying patronage from pilgrims, and interpretive issues with the material, will be addressed in Chapter Five.

³²⁵ For a discussion of these inscriptions see Politis 1992: 281-283.

agricultural produce.³²⁶

The coexistence of these forms of endowment in individual monastic contexts is apparent in the surviving inventories of the Monastery of Sergios and Bakkhos in Nessana. Here, the archive provides an example of a patronage structure fully established by the early seventh century, where monetary donations or goods in kind were well integrated into the revenue streams of the community and existed concurrently with the architectural interventions commemorated in the church's epigraphic dossier.³²⁷

The complexity of this system, which may also be observed in less amply documented contexts,³²⁸ is instructive in terms of highlighting the imbalance of the existing source material. Collective reliance on evidence not susceptible to biotic degradation (such as mosaics and epigraphic records on stone material) provides only a fragmentary portrait of

³²⁶ Compare, for example, *P. Colt* 79 with *P. Colt* 80, a donation inventory dated to the early seventh century, which lists a number of monetary donations for the purposes of maintaining the monastery (possibly the women's quarters) as well as donations for the possible saying of masses and the celebration of the festival of Hagios Sergios. *P. Colt* 80, tentatively dated to 685, lists donations made by the community in the form of wheat. A further example is preserved in *P. Colt* 50, which records a further donation (possibly monetary) from the Bishop George for the purposes of the festival of Hagios Sergios. Further examples of patronage from Nessana emerge from Kirk and Wells 1962: inscriptions 30, 31 where collective groups appear to have paid for the renovation or expansion of the church complex. Examples of the use of προσφορά in mosaic inscriptions are known from the Church of Nazareth see Bagatti 1969:100, and from the church of Hagios Stephanos in Rihab see fig. 2.17 and the churches of Hagios Giorgos and Hagios Ioannes in Khirbet el-Mukkhayyat see Di Segni 1998: 439. Monetary donations are known from earlier hagiography. The *Life of Theodosios* records a monetary donation of Mamas the *koubikoularios*: Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Theodosios*: 240.15 (ed. Schwartz 1939: 240, tr. Price 1991: 267). One of the most frequent transactions involved the transferral of property to the monastic community by a monastic aspirant. Sabas is recorded as having donated his familial property upon entering the Monastery of Theoktistos; *Life of Sabas*: 92.1 (ed. Schwartz 1959: 92, tr. Price 1991:100). Legacies bequeathed in wills appear as another feature of this structure; one example is Sabas' mother Sophia whose wealth was secured by Sabas for the Laura following her death: *Life of Sabas*: 109.3-109.17 (ed. Schwartz 1959:109, tr. Price 1991:118). The continuation of this practice is suggested by a similar series of legacies recorded in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*: Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 9.1-9.5 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 11, 11). The replication of this practice outside of the Judean Desert is suggested by *P. Petra* Inv.6a which records a similar donation to the Monastery of Aaron, which we may presumably identify with the complex discovered on Jabal Harūn, see Frösén, Arjava and Lehtinen 2002.

³²⁷ The original excavations and inscriptions are published in Kirk and Welles 1962 with the papyri in Kraemer 1958.

³²⁸ Such as Mar Sabas where the *Life of Sabas* provides us with a number of examples of donation, in money and goods in kind see *Life of Sabas*: 136-136.5, 171.6-171.10, 186.3-186.14 (ed. Schwartz 1959: 136, 171, 186, tr. Price 1991: 145, 180, 194-195). We have, however, no surviving material, similar to that of the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery at Nessana, which would allow more substantial evaluations of Mar Sabas' revenue systems.

individual site economies and patronage networks.³²⁹ The system which may be extrapolated from the Nessana papyri suggests a system of patronage whereby architectural intervention was an auxiliary, rather than fundamental, component of the revenue required to facilitate the monastery's central social and religious roles.³³⁰ In several cases, donations were made by individuals for the purposes of maintaining existing buildings or as contributions to expenditure accrued during liturgical celebrations or calendar festivals.³³¹ We have little idea how this pattern was replicated on a regional level beyond the Negev, but fragmentary evidence from sites such as Sinai and Kastellion/Khirbet Mird in the Judean Desert, suggests the ubiquity of these patterns across the region.³³²

In short, the Nessana documents highlight the limitations of epigraphic data as the sole means of identifying the continuation of networks of benefaction throughout the seventh century. The evidence we currently possess for the persistence of these systems is, however, fairly impressionistic and circumscribed by several of the issues outlined above. Nevertheless, the continued occupation and function of several monastic and cult centres

³²⁹ Examples of donations of church furnishing may be observed at Mount Sinai with the dedication of a Bronze cross by Theodora in memory of Proklos and Dometia. For this, see the discussion by Weitzman and Ševčenko 1963: 385-98 and the more recent discussion by Elsner and Wolf 2010: 47-55. Discussions of patronage seldom extend to discussions of bio-degradable materials such as wall plaster (where inscriptions are identified but are too fragmentary to reconstruct), textiles or consumable goods which may provide further examples of patron exchange. For examples of donations in the form of grain see *P. Colt* 80. Examples of donation in goods in kind are also known from textual accounts. The *Life of Sabas* records an example where a wealthy woman, Genarous, hired two weavers to produce curtains for the monasteries of Kastellion and the Spelaion, see Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas*: 186.3-186.14 (ed. Schwartz 1959: 186; tr. Price 1991: 194-195). The *Life* also records an example where the citizens of Madaba donated grains and pulses to the monastery of Mar Saba, *Ibid*: 136-136.5 (ed. Schwartz 1959: 136, tr. Price 1991: 145). Identified examples of inscribed wall paintings are known from Nazareth, see Bagatti 1969: 123. For Rehovot-in-the-Negev see Tsafirir 1988: 178-180. Further examples of donations in the form of liturgical furnishing may be observed in the monastery of Khirbet ed-Deir where a marble altar table was donated by the deacon Alahaeos and the monk Aias, see Di Segni 1999c: 99, inscription 2.

³³⁰ See, for example, the donation lists preserved in *P. Colt* 80, 81 which postdate the Arab conquest. In contrast, evidence for further architectural investment at the site is absent after the early seventh-century. The evidence from *P. Colt* 80 and *P. Colt* 81 would, therefore, point to a functioning patronage system at Nessana which did not incorporate significant architectural expansion by the 680s.

³³¹ See *P. Colt* 50 where the Bishop George appears to have sent a donation to the monastery for the festival of Sergios.

³³² For the discussion of the Syriac letter (dated to the seventh century) which mentions the donation of a hospital and other property to the monastery see Perot 1963: 506-555. For Sinai, see the bibliographic references in note 254. Fragments of papyri, written in Greek and Aramaic, have also been unearthed at Deir 'Ain 'Abata, see Politis 2011:164 and Brock *et al* 2012: 418. These were too incomplete to determine their content excepting for a few biblical passages. Nonetheless, Deir 'Ain 'Abata presents a further example where cases of papyri and parchment records are known to have existed.

throughout the period, which demonstrate little evidence for impoverishment or decay – Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata, Jabāl Harūn, or the churches of Hippos/Sussita – indicates that such sites maintained access to sustainable sources of revenue throughout the duration of the period which were sufficient to facilitate the continuities explicit in their occupational sequences.³³³ For the Transjordan the ceramic assemblages of the large coenobitic sites of Jabal Harūn and Mount Nebo all indicate sustained occupation throughout the seventh century and exhibit no substantial changes in spatial use.³³⁴ It is a pattern also replicated in the Galilee, as with Kursi, and at sites such as the Kathisma in the environs of Jerusalem.³³⁵ This pattern of sustained seventh-century occupation is clear in a number of micro-regional contexts. As we have observed, the seamless succession of *hegoumenoi* documented for the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery of Nessana between the 590s and the 680s suggests that the site maintained significant levels of monastic continuity in a broader archaeological context which exhibits no substantial architectural investment at the site after the sixth century.³³⁶

Similar patterns emerge at the monastic-cult site of Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata, where collective archaeological data points to a continual occupational presence over the seventh century, albeit with little indication of substantial structural enhancement between the dated inscriptions of 606 and 691.³³⁷ This pattern is mirrored in the main monastic church of Jabal Harūn, where the continued use of the site throughout the seventh century visible in ceramic

³³³ See Politis 2012: 115-158 for a discussion on Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata. Jabal Harūn and the churches of Hippos/Sussita are discussed in Mikkola *et al* 2008: 118-138 and Bordman 2005, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2004, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2005, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2007, Schuler 2003, Schuler 2004, Schuler 2005 and Schuler 2007.

³³⁴ On the ceramic corpus of Aaron’s monastery at Jabal Harūn see Gerber 2008. Mikkola *et al* 2008: 119-136 discuss the sixth- and seventh-century phases of the monastic church. On the pottery of Mount Nebo see Schneider 1950.

³³⁵ On Kursi see Tzaferis 1983: 16 and the revision to the chronology in Stacey 2004: 15. Preliminary discussions on the church of the Kathisma are offered in Aver 2006/7 and in the earlier studies of Avner 1993 and Avner 1998. My thanks are also due to Rina Avner for answering my questions about the dating of this site.

³³⁶ The last dated inscription at Nessana is dated 630/1. The site, however, may have continued in use until the tenth century. See the discussion in Magness 2003: 179-185.

³³⁷ For a discussion of the excavation see Politis 1993 and Politis 1997. For a discussion of the dedicatory inscriptions see Politis 2011:160-161 and the final report in Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012.

sequences, is similarly invisible in the surviving epigraphic corpus.³³⁸

These examples contribute to a broader pattern mirrored at sites throughout the region, which indicate a sustained pattern of consolidation and maintenance (in a context of limited structural expansion) of the existing monastic and cult-site topography during the first half of the seventh century. Excavations at the churches of Umm Qays, Pella and Tiberias, all of which incorporated reliquaries or venerated tombs, have yielded further examples to support the impression of the seventh century as one of occupational stability for cult-sites situated in urban *loci* and all from churches where there are no surviving dedicatory inscriptions. The pattern is mirrored among rural cult-churches, such as Horvath Qasra and Horvat Hani, alongside the larger coenobitic complexes of the Judean Desert.³³⁹

The response of some monastic communities affected by an earthquake in the mid-seventh century also supports the overall impression that such complexes survived – although in what form is less clear – the turbulent political upheavals of the period 613-661 and remained sufficiently prosperous to facilitate essential maintenance at existing sites when required. At Jabal Harūn, excavations have confirmed a major renovation phase to the basilical church following damage linked by excavators to the earthquake of 659; a comparative phase, which entailed similar extensive rebuilding in this period, may also be suggested for Mar Euthymios in the Judean Desert and the Baptism Monastery at the River Jordan.³⁴⁰ Recent studies have not identified the economic networks which facilitated these

³³⁸ Gerber 2008. None of the inscriptions encountered during the excavation were dated. See the discussion in Frösén, Sironen and Fiema 2008: 273-281.

³³⁹ For a discussion of the continued occupation of the churches of Umm Qays, albeit only a preliminary one, see Al Daire 2001: 553-560, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guineé 2001: 537-545 and Weber 1998: 443-56. For a discussion of the churches at Pella see Smith 1983. The Church of Mount Berenike in Tiberias/Tabariyya was fully excavated by Hirschfeld 2004b. For a discussion of the church's occupational history see Hirschfeld 2004d: 75-76. Hirschfeld suggests a reduction of the site around Mount Berenike in response to the Sassanian conquest of 614, see Hirschfeld 2004d: 130-131. However, he provides no evidence to substantiate this claim which contradicts the occupational history reflected across the site. For Horvath Qasra, see the very brief report in Kloner 1990: 129-136 and Horvath Hani, see the brief report by Dahari 2003: 102-106. Discussions of all the sites, including those of the Judean desert, in this period are offered in Appendix A.

³⁴⁰ Discussions of this phase at Jabal Harūn are offered in Mikkola *et al* 2008: 135-137. The destruction of the monastery by Mar Euthymios is recorded in the *Maronite Chronicle*. On the *Maronite Chronicle* see Palmer 1993: 29-35. Excavations by Meimaris 1989 suggested a substantial rebuilding phase in the mid-seventh century

restorative programmes. But such programmes do imply that at least some were still able to draw upon a revenue base sufficient to undertake necessary programmes of repair. Furthermore, the extent of their scale is underscored when such examples are compared to the subsequent and less enthusiastic response of Christian communities following the Golan earthquake of the mid-eighth century.³⁴¹

This image of monasteries and cult-sites ‘getting by and making do’ correlates well with the data which has steadily emerged from systematic excavation in urban and rural centres over the past thirty years; which confirms similar patterns of sustained production and settlement occupation throughout the period. Evidence from the Negev villages (perhaps with the exception of Mamshit), Caesarea, Tiberias, the Dekapolis urban cluster and the Galilee corroborates this overall impression of the period c.610-c.661 as one marked by continuity albeit in a context where monumental activity between appears fairly restricted.³⁴²

The factors which contributed to this temporary cessation of major building programmes in urban and rural centres are, for the most, unclear. This is partially due to the rather polarised nature of current interpretive frameworks for discussions of Christian communities in the seventh century, which, as we have seen, tend to characterise the period as one of absolute destruction, or one of unbroken continuity. This polarisation has restricted a more nuanced recognition of transient negative (or positive) changes instigated by the political and economic transitions of the period. In addition, the traditional inclination to homogenise Palestinian elites (and their underlying source of wealth) as a coherent socio-economic group has encouraged the application of a template explanation for the notable

in response to this earthquake. However, the lack of published diagnostic material and the use of the *Maronite Chronicle* to frame the dating of the excavation make it difficult to confirm this restorative programme unreservedly.

³⁴¹ See the discussion in Chapter Four.

³⁴² For a discussion of the perceived decline in the number of dated inscriptions between c.610-661 see Di Segni 1999: 164-166. For Caesarea, which shows no absolute break in the seventh century, see Holum 1992 and Holum 2011. The churches of Abila also do not appear to have been substantially affected by the Sassanian occupation, see Fuller 1987:167-8 and Wineland 2001. For Tiberias: Hirschfeld 2004b. For a discussion of the Dekapolis see the bibliography cited in note 103. A general synthesis of the entire region is also offered in Peterson 2005.

decline in monumental building across the region after 610.³⁴³ But the underlying premise of a uniform wealth base across the collective Palestinian population is itself questionable in view of broader assessments of the exchange networks in the region which have emphasised the progressive regionalisation of production and exchange by the early seventh century.³⁴⁴ The coastal cities of Palestine, concentrated around Byzantine Gaza, Ashkelon and Caesarea (but also incorporating the Negev) are areas where archaeological research has contributed to the identification of a system predominantly structured around the exportation of oil and wine to the Eastern Mediterranean, but one where economic connections to the Transjordan and the Dekapolis were infrequent.³⁴⁵ The Dekapolis and the environs of Jerusalem were served by autonomous insular networks where consumption and production was restricted to more localised (though dense) spheres of distribution.³⁴⁶

For the purposes of the present discussion, such socio-economic structures provide a useful apparatus through which to contextualise the limited examples of monumental activity in the Transjordan between 610-661 at the sites of Rihab, Khirbet es-Samra and Mar Elyas.³⁴⁷ The main examples of church or monastic building in the seventh-century Transjordan emerge from socio-economic contexts in which Mediterranean exchange was unlikely to have substantially affected the main revenue sources of localised elite or prosperous rural families. All of the sites which have demonstrated evidence for continued construction of churches and cult sites in this key period 610-661 – Rihab, Khirbat al-Ṭanṭur, Samra and Mar Elyas (Fig. 2.8-2.14) – are situated within this core Transjordanian sphere. It is tempting, therefore, to view such examples of church building as products of a self contained economic

³⁴³ Thus the examples of church building in Rihab are often treated as examples which reflect broad, rather than micro-regional, stability and are not observed as products of a particular social or economic context.

³⁴⁴ Wickham 2005: 770-777. For Jerusalem see Magness 1993: 153-183.

³⁴⁵ Walmsley 200: 321-329 and Wickham 2005: 770-777.

³⁴⁶ In the case of Gerasa/Jarash, these networks were already beginning to intensify by the early seventh century and monopolise distribution: a process which would continue beyond 800. See Gawilkowski 1995 and Walmsley 2000: 306.

³⁴⁷ For the mosaics at Khirbet es Samra, dated to the 630s, see Piccirillo 1993c: 304-107. For Rihab and Mar Elyas see Piccirillo 1981: 68-71 and Piccirillo 2011.

network, where production and demand remained relatively unaffected by the turbulence within the pan-Mediterranean systems of exchange evident during the seventh century, and, were sufficiently localised to ensure stability in the wealth of the regional population.³⁴⁸ The simultaneous process of micro-regionalisation within production and elite wealth provides a tentative explanation as to why examples of structural intervention at monastic and cult site patronage around the Palestinian coast are not known following the incorporation of the region into the Sassanian (and eventually Arab) political sphere and their gradual isolation from existing trade links with the Byzantine Aegean.³⁴⁹ Furthermore, growing micro-regional economies may provide some additional insight into the apparent lack of a comparative pattern of church building in the Negev following 690, in contrast to the patterns exhibited in the Transjordan throughout the Umayyad period.³⁵⁰ The breakdown in the exportation networks of wine and oil – and the emergence of more localised distribution networks – may have had real economic implications for the urban and rural elites in these regions who provided the primary stimulus for investment in monastic and pilgrimage sites of localised devotional significance.³⁵¹

The broad correlation between the sites where patterns of church building were sustained in the period 610-640 within areas of noted stability throughout the seventh century indicate that explanations for monastic decline based on ‘external factors’ (such as territorial change or declining pilgrim rates) are, for the most, insufficient. Rather, the evidence points to importance of more localised perspectives as a way of explaining the trajectory of

³⁴⁸ Di Segni 1999: 164-166 has also noted the primarily rural context of these inscriptions which may denote a renewed emphasis on investment in rural contexts by the later sixth century.

³⁴⁹ I am aware of only one dated refurbishment of a monastic church in the period c.610-650: this is the monastic church of Khirbet Yattir where an inscription in the centre of the nave floor commemorates its commission by the *hegoumenos* Thomas and its creation by the builder Zacharias son of Yeshi in the year 631/2. For a discussion of this church, see Eshel *et al* 1999 and the later discussion in Magness 2003: 105-107.

³⁵⁰ The next renovation of a monastery appears at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata dated to 691, see Politis 1992: 283. The discussions of church building following the 690s, the most active period in terms of refurbishment, will be addressed in Chapter Three. For a discussion of all of the Greek inscriptions that were recovered during the excavation of Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata see Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikaropoulou 2012: 393-416.

³⁵¹ Wickham 2005: 714-719, 774-775.

monastic communities after 600.

However, although the Sassanian occupation may have catalysed the gradual disintegration of coastal exchange systems, the development was protracted in terms of chronology (continuing into the ninth century in some regions) and characterised by inter-regional variation.³⁵² The difficulty here is that the period 614-628 is too brief a window to measure the impact of the Sassanian occupation, either upon the structure and capacity of elite wealth (about which we know frustratingly little) or cases of rapid economic change, in quantitative archaeological terms. Diagnostic typologies in ceramics (often the only material signature available for such networks in Syria-Palestine) seldom correlate to immediate political transitions and this makes observations of the response to Sassanian rule among patrons to monastic or cult sites difficult to achieve in subtle terms. But the recovery of several coin hoards dated to 613/614 in a number of excavations— many of them in monastic contexts – provides a useful reflection of the general sentiments of localised response to the Sassanian incursion in this period: one seemingly characterised by pervasive social apprehension among elite and clerical groups, albeit within a broader context of substantial, ultimately resilient, socio-economic continuity.³⁵³

Although the perception of endemic Sassanian devastation remains questionable, occupational continuities at sites do not negate instances of loss of monetary or portable assets from communities: memories of forced tribute, looting and outbreaks of violence are a recurrent theme of the surviving written sources and one which proposes a plausible explanation for the increase of coin hoarding in this period.³⁵⁴ The impact was, nonetheless,

³⁵² See Walmsley 2000: 321, n. 97 and Wickham 2000.

³⁵³ For a discussion of these hoards and further bibliography see Walmsley 2007b: 46. Examples of hoards in monastic contexts are known from the Monastery of Kyria Maria in Scythopolis see Fitzgerald 1939. The Monastery of Martyrios at Ma'ale Adummim offers a further example: Magen 1993: 174. Further examples of hoarding, dated either to the reign of Phokas or the Sassanian occupation, are offered in Walmsley 2007: 324, no. 11.

³⁵⁴ *Chronicle 1234*: 226-227 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920). Similar sentiments are repeated in Antiochos Monachos, *Letter to Eustathios*, PG 89, 1424-1428. Theophanes, *Chronographia*: AM 6176 (ed. De Boor 1883-85: 300-301, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 432-433) suggests a similar activity of looting and ransoming among the

apparently characterised by high regional variation. The siege of Jerusalem by the Sassanians in 614 and a series of sporadic attacks on monasteries in the Judean Desert (notably in Mar Sabas) in the same year provide two examples of the short-term dislocations experienced by particular groups.³⁵⁵

Unfortunately, we are unable to determine the impact of the Sassanian incursion with respect to the fiscal organisation of the region and, consequently, whether or not the apparent reduction in structural investment at monastic sites responded to additional pressures from increased taxation, or from a (now) intangible reluctance among local communities for overt displays of surplus economic wealth. Papyrological material from Egypt presents a strong case for the maintenance of Byzantine fiscal systems by the Sassanians in this period, which may prove a useful comparative example in coming years; but the paucity of similar material does not permit more conclusive statements about the parallel situation in Syria-Palestine for the present discussion.³⁵⁶

More certain, however, is the general resilience of these fiscal systems beyond the period of Sassanian occupation. Indeed, the collective material provides no real indication of a sustained disruption to monastic or cult site activity or the stability of localised families which contributed to them (Fig. 2.20). If anything, the patterns across the region imply the opposite; many of the families which emerge from papyrological and epigraphic readings prior to 610 are also attested in the latter half of the seventh century.³⁵⁷ There are two essential and interconnected explanations for this perceived continuity. Firstly, the rapid nature of the Sassanian conquest appears to have imposed little lasting impact on the urban,

communities of Egypt. Egyptian papyri from this period, reproduced in Drescher 1944 and Altheim-Steihl 1992, indicates similar patterns of asset loss or security concerns at an individual level. Interestingly, many of these letters are addressed to bishops or holders of clerical office and provide some reflection of the developing role of such figures as intermediaries between urban administrators and local communities.

³⁵⁵ Antiochos of Mar Saba, *Letter to Eustathios*, PG 89, 1424-8 and, possibly, the *Life of George of Choziba*: 30 (ed. House 1888, tr. Vivian and Athanassakis 1993).

³⁵⁶ Foss 2003: 167-168 for a discussion of Egypt. Sängner 2011 has also suggested the maintenance of existing Byzantine systems by the Sassanians which were used to fund the militia. See also Kaegi 1978.

³⁵⁷ Nessana is most explicit in this regard. See the discussion in Kraemer 1958: 7.

rural and agrarian infrastructures of the region and, as such, arguably resulted in few cases of permanent dislocation to the wealth base of Palestinian families. Regional variations undoubtedly emerged in response to localised or wider geo-political changes, but appear to have been sufficiently protracted to minimise immediate rupture to these systems.³⁵⁸ Cases of elite and monastic migration, though a feature of this period, cannot have been prevalent on a regional scale given the continued maintenance of monastic sites beyond the 630s.³⁵⁹ In this regard, Palestine's image of stability correlates far better with Egypt than with Anatolia, where prolonged military campaigns throughout the period, which were to continue for over a century, contributed to more permanent social change.³⁶⁰

The second feature of this explanation is primarily social: monasteries and cult sites remained venues around which elite identities and practices were commonly structured after 614 and places which continued to function as primary avenues for benefaction and elite status. This is not only evident at the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery of Nessana and the continued patterns of monastic burial at Shivta and Avdat but also from the growing pattern of church refurbishments which appear in the region in the early eighth century in Kastron Mefa'a, the Madaba plateau and Jerusalem.³⁶¹

The evidence is less explicit with regards to the major elites of the main administrative centres of the region and it is possibly at this level that any changes

³⁵⁸ As with the Negev where developments across the seventh century witnessed a steadily decreasing level of production and exchange (evidenced by the declining production of LR4 and LR1 types) across the seventh century, see Wickham 2005: 774-775. This development, however, is not visible until the late-seventh century. We must be cautious then of linking these developments to the Sassanian conquest specifically. Rather they arguably represent the culmination of a protracted period of episodic political instability in the region between 610 and 661 which culminated in the permanent establishment of Arab rule. It is, with the data at hand, extremely difficult to isolate the impact of the Sassanian occupation from the wider processes of change across the seventh century. These changes, however, did not result in patterns of abrupt abandonment. Magness' re-inspection of the sites of Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Shivta propose some sustained occupation into the ninth century: Magness 2003: 185-18, 191-194. Others sites, such as Mamshit and Avdat, show signs of waning by the late seventh century: *Ibid*: 187-190, mirrored among the small sites of Tel Ira and Har Beriah: *Ibid*: 57-60.

³⁵⁹ On possible cases of elite migration in the seventh century: Kennedy 2010: 191 and Levy-Rubin 2011.

³⁶⁰ For Asia Minor see Foss 1975. See also Haldon 1990: 102-114, and for a long-term approach spanning the seventh to ninth centuries see Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 531-572

³⁶¹ For these see the discussion in Chapter Three.

administered by the Sassanian incursion were affected.³⁶² Agreement among several of the sources would suggest that the Sassanians maintained the traditional administrative structure of the region by maintaining a garrison and general stationed at Caesarea. The *Life of Anastasios the Persian*, for instance, reports that Anastasios was brought before the Sassanian governor for trial following his conversion to Christianity.³⁶³ A terse report in the work of Agapios of Manbij, also suggests that the Sassanian army was garrisoned in Caesarea.³⁶⁴

The impact of these changes on the broader apparatus of government is indeterminable; our evidence here is fairly incomplete and it is only in archaeological terms that we are able to propose a more or less stable pattern of urban dwelling throughout the period.

Whatever the case, the emerging political importance of high ranking clerical officials is a particularly acute feature of the opening decades of the seventh century. It is significant that among the accounts of the Sassanian and the later Arab sieges of the 630s, Patriarchs and monastic *hegoumenoi* are among those who routinely emerge as negotiators with Sassanian and Arab military commanders or as figureheads responsible for the reorganisation of urban communities in the wake of episodes of hostile confrontation.³⁶⁵ Similarly, the collective

³⁶² Foss 2003: 159-160. This is suggested by the mention of a *marzban* in the city of Caesarea in the *Life of Anastasios the Persian* (ed. and tr. Flusin 1992).

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ The Persian presence in Caesarea is attested in the *Life of Anastasios the Persian* and appears again in a terse page of Agapios, *Kitāb al-ʿUnwān*, 451 (ed. and tr. Vasiliev 1912: 451).

³⁶⁵ *Ps. Sebeos*: 34 (tr. Thomson 1999: 70), records that Modestos was granted jurisdiction over Jerusalem following the Sassanian siege and is likely to be interpreted as his assuming the Patriarchal duties during the captivity of the Patriarch Zachariah. Modestos' role during this period is rather obscure, although the surviving sources credit Modestos with the reconstruction and restoration of churches following the Sassanian siege. This is a noted feature of the *Letter to Eustathios*: PG 89 1428b. The tradition of Theophanes is less clear, with variant versions showing some confusion over whether the Patriarch Zacharias was restored to office following the Herakleion re-conquest of Jerusalem or if he had died in captivity and was replaced by Modestos: compare the two variant versions of Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6120 (ed. De Boor 1883-85: 328-330, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 458-460, n.3). Sa'īd ibn Baṭṭīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar*, 28 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 119-121, 99-101) preserves some indication that Modestos was linked to the reorganisation after the siege and the possible repairs to the Church of the Anastasis. Modestos' association with the restoration was subsequently incorporated into the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34): 17 December (ed. Garitte 1958: 110-111). Archaeological evidence for these repairs is more restricted in part due to the extensive redevelopment of sites following the eleventh century and because several of the churches have never been identified through excavation: Pringle 2007: 5-72 and Schick 1995: 340-350. A single inscription from the Church of the Ascension has been associated with the renovations of Modestos: Τ[όπο]ς τῆς ἀναλήψεως] ὑπὸ Μοδ[ε]στου [προνοο]υμενος ὑπ[ὸ]

actions of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Modestos (614-631)³⁶⁶ and John the Almsgiver – Ελεήμων – the Patriarch of Alexandria, in the organisation of civil resources and negotiation with Sassanian leaders, denote a similar duality in the civil and sacred authority embraced by Patriarchs and senior monastic figures by this period.³⁶⁷

This suggests, in the context of the breakdown of Byzantine imperial authority in the region, that the period was formative in instigating the emergent role of the church and its clerical retinue, as a political and administrative body within localised contexts. A series of studies, noting the role of the church in the minting of coinage during the seventh century, provides one example of these possible developments.³⁶⁸ Again papyri from Egypt illustrate a comparative role for clergy and monastic communities in the same period.³⁶⁹

Our understanding of the origins and extent of this role are, however, currently rather vague. In this respect, the sources are difficult to interpret and are not exempt from the possibility that the centralities afforded to Patriarchal figures are products of revision by subsequent authors constrained by genre (often hagiography) or influenced by their own respective social contexts.³⁷⁰ Too little is known of the concurrent civil elite of this period to

και δ'όστ᾽ XT ΩΦ κ (ύρι)ε μνήσθητι, see Milik 1960: 557-559. Antiochos Monachos' accompanying preface to the *Pandektos* records that Modestos undertook some restoration of the Church of the Ascension: *Letter to Eustathios*: PG 89, 1427-1428. The inscription provides no further information which would enable us to explicitly identify the Modestos of the inscription with the Archimandrite Modestos who served as acting Patriarch following 614. The lack of a securing dating for the inscription, or a secure archaeological context (the Byzantine levels of the church have never been excavated and have been truncated by later structures) means that its use in contemporary reconstructions must remain cautious.

³⁶⁶ Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar* 28 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 119-121, 99-101).

³⁶⁷ See the *Life of John the Almsgiver*: 6 (ed. Festugière and Rydén 1974, tr. Dawes 1948) and the related account by Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq in *Nazm al-Jawhar*: 28, 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 119-130, 99-109).

³⁶⁸ Foss 2009: 9-12, Pottier and Foss 2004 and Walmsley 2010: 27-29.

³⁶⁹ MacCoull 1986.

³⁷⁰ Of the sources we have for the Sassanian period the majority of the texts were composed within monastic literary circles, see *Life of John the Almsgiver* (ed. Festugière and Rydén 1974: 1-222) and the *Acts of Anastasios the Persian* (ed. Flusin 1992). *The Life of George of Choziba* (ed. House 1888) is attributed to his disciple Antony and survives among a collection of hagiographies preserved in Coislin Gr. 303, see *Life of George of Choziba* 33 (ed. House 1888, tr. Vivian and Athanassakis 1994). The dossier of Strategios' *Capture of Jerusalem*, preserved in cod. Sinaiticus arab. 428, fol. 438r-489v, (10th century), cod. Sinaiticus arab. 529, fol. 199r-265v, (10th century); cod. Sinai. arab, fol. 277v-340v, (1231-2 AD); Cod. Georg. 33. fol. 120r-164v; cod. Vaticanus arab. 697, fol. 59v-97v (1328 AD); Sinai MSS, no. 432, f.162 (1334 AD), were also all produced in monastic contexts and circulated concurrently with hagiographical writings. The *Letter to Eustathios* of Antiochos Monachos was also produced in a monastic context (possibly Mar Saba) and prefaced a much more extensive theological treatise (the *Pandektos*). Additional texts, such as Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq's *Nazm al-Jawhar*; the

confirm these observations and the lack of a clearly defined prosopography for the majority of Patriarchal and monastic figures limits a clearer understanding of these newer roles for clerical officials in the context of their respective social background. But the familiar inscriptions from Nessana, or the prominent role of the later Mansūr family, which reflect clear cases of transition between religious and civil duties, propose that divisions between clerical and civil elites are unhelpful in understanding the role of church officials in administrative affairs which had emerged by, or even responded to, the developments of this period.³⁷¹ In the context of a breakdown in Byzantine imperial authority, the church, interconnected with localised civil, religious and elite affairs, was well situated to oversee the continuation of administrative affairs at a localised level and recent arguments have stressed the Sassanian adoption of these existing systems in the collection of fiscal resource.³⁷²

This fluid interplay between administrative and clerical bodies integrates well with the evidence from Petra and Nessana where clerical or monastic families actively performed both roles. These examples both predate the Sassanian conquest by several decades, with the Petra papyri hoard probably closing around the 590s if we accept the most recent dating assigned by papyrologists.³⁷³ It remains likely that the emergence of the more politicised role of the church by the time of the Sassanian conquest represents the culmination of a development which had progressively emerged since the late sixth century and one which may have been consolidated by the institutional break with Constantinople.³⁷⁴

(now lost) Chronicle of Dionysos of Tel Mahre; and the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian are similarly inter-linked with clerical writers or contexts. On the biography of Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, see Simonsohn 2009. On Leontios and his life of John, see Déroche 1995.

³⁷¹ For the Nessana inscription, see Kirk and Welles 1962:173. For the Mansūr family, see Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar*, 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 107-109, 127-130). The family appears again in Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6221 (ed. De Boor 1883-85: 408, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 565). For the life of John of Damascus and his family, see Conticello 2000.

³⁷² Sānger 2011: 663-664. The structure of this system is not clear beyond the papyri of Nessana. Alan Walmsley has, however, argued for the importance of the church as a fiscal and minting authority by the mid/late seventh century see Walmsley 2010: 27-29. Numismatic evidence of church minting authorities is offered in Foss and Pottier 2007. Further discussions of the coinage appear in Goodwin 2005, Oddy 2003 and Walmsley 1999b.

³⁷³ Frösén, Arjava and Lehtinen 2002; in particular *P. Petra* Inv.6a

³⁷⁴ What is currently less clear is the extent to which the situation exhibited in the Nessana and Petra hoards can be considered representative for the administration in other regional contexts. Neither are representative of the

Estimating the impact of the Sassanian siege on both the political and economic condition of the major monastic institutions and churches of Jerusalem is less straightforward and as a result has sanctioned a perception of the city as a place disproportionately affected by the Sassanian conquest.³⁷⁵

Sustained occupation of the old city until the present day, and the more recent urban expansions of the twentieth century, has limited the opportunity to undertake more systematic archaeological investigation which may provide an alternative impression of the seventh-century transition within the city. In addition, the focus of the textual sources on the siege of Jerusalem in 614, reports which often informed the chronologies of excavations conducted in the city until the 1990s, has limited the role of archaeological research in offering a more nuanced debate about the impact of the Sassanian siege on the Christian monumental infrastructure of the city. More recent arguments have sought to readdress the problematic chronologies of a number of excavations, which identified destruction layers dated to 614, but debate regarding the nature and the transmission of the textual sources which continue to provoke these negative assessments has been far slower to emerge.³⁷⁶ The issues of the material cannot be fully addressed here, although collective examination of the texts relating to Christians in post-Byzantine Palestine – Strategios' *Capture of Jerusalem*, the *Life of George of Choziba* and the *Life of Anastasios the Persian* – reveals a number of issues relevant to this thesis. I have offered some preliminary remarks on the issues with these sources in relation to archaeological research in the appendices of this study.³⁷⁷

Some observations about their limitations are, however, necessary to stress. One characteristic of the surviving textual corpus is the general paucity of source material which securely predates the eighth century and the strong interconnection between the later –

major urban or administrative centres of the period where more clearly defined roles from civil and church authorities may have existed.

³⁷⁵ Schick 1995: 33-35.

³⁷⁶ Avni 2010 and Magness 1992.

³⁷⁷ See Appendix B.

seemingly independent – accounts composed after 800, the majority of which were products of a cultural milieu where formalised historical and liturgical conceptions of the siege were circulated and intersected in the popular consciousness of clerical audiences.³⁷⁸ The ‘siege narrative’ was also, until the ninth century, a tradition that circulated primarily in Melkite literary circles and one which emerged from the active intellectual and literary centres – Edessa, Sabas and Sinai – whose role in the shaping of the confessional and liturgical identity of Melkite communal memory by this period has been well observed.³⁷⁹ Among the major surviving ‘historical’ sources for the siege – the *Chronicle 1234*, Michael the Syrian, Sa‘īd ibn Batrīq, Strategios and Theophanes – almost all were crafted within a context where existing works or liturgical commemorations of the siege are known to have existed or relied on source material which bore close connection to this intellectual milieu.³⁸⁰

It would be disingenuous, however, to disregard totally the impact of the Sassanian occupation on the Palestinian Christian milieu and in particular upon the Chalcedonians whose role in urban and administrative life appears to have been fairly explicit by the year 600.³⁸¹ Although archaeological material does not exhibit the level of destruction presented by the literary sources, the progressive incorporation of the siege into liturgical and historical memory created a very tangible ideological impact.³⁸² The seizure of the relic of the True Cross from the Church of the Anastasis and the abduction of the Patriarch Zachariah, both potent symbols vested in political and ideological significance for Palestine and the wider Byzantine world, were critical blows to existing notions of Byzantine political and religious

³⁷⁸ See Appendix B.

³⁷⁹ On the Sabaite liturgy and Jerusalem liturgy see Baldovin 1987 with the *Jerusalem Lectionary* (ed. Taschivili 1959) and the *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)* (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958).

³⁸⁰ See Appendix B and the studies of Wilken 1992: 218-224 and Wilken 1999.

³⁸¹ For the urban role of the Melkite church see Kennedy 1986. Particularly residual motifs in the source material are cases of migration of elites to more stable parts of the Byzantine world. Examples are known from the Leontios of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 11 (ed. Festugière and Rydén 1974, tr. Dawes 1948) and possibly those of John Moschos and Sophronios if we accept the arguments of Chadwick 1974. However, the general impression of stability across the region suggests that such examples were minimal and had no permanent impact upon the functioning of monasteries and cult sites in this period.

³⁸² See Appendix B.

supremacy. The *Lamentations* composed by the Patriarch Sophronios, or even the *Pandektos* of Antiochos Monachos, exemplify the general social sentiment of the Chalcedonian community in this period – one framed by a sense of distress and attempts to systematise the explanations and responses to Sassanian successes through greater observation of orthodox practice and belief.³⁸³

Such responses were, however, formulated within a context of more generalised regional stability, where the existing social roles and the occupation of monastic communities and pilgrimage sites continued, but where evidence suggests that ongoing patterns of architectural expansion or new constructions were governed by localised socio-economic factors. This suggests that our understanding of the Sassanian impact can only be increased by more detailed scrutiny of these regional variations. Such shifts may not have been provoked by a uniform series of developments: the continued examples of church building in the Transjordan during the 620s may be attributed to the general economic stability of the region, but the explanations for a stasis in monumental activity in the Judean Desert or the Galilee are more obscure and may reflect responses to political as well as economic pressures.

Nevertheless, it appears that following the abduction of the Patriarch Zachariah, collective attempts were made by the Melkite community to reorganise and restore the damage to churches in Jerusalem. This was, as far as we can discern, organised through the agency of Modestos, probably the former *hegoumenos* of the Monastery of Theodosios near Bethlehem, who appears to have resumed the function of Patriarch – although his investiture may have been delayed until 631 – following the withdrawal of the Sassanians to Ctesiphon with Zachariah.³⁸⁴ The scale of his restorative programme is unclear, as is the timeframe in

³⁸³ Antiochos Monachos, *Pandektos*: PG 89, 1421-1849.

³⁸⁴ Modestos' activities are reports in Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar*: 28 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 119, 121, 99-101) and finds support in some of the manuscript traditions (e and m) of Theophanes' *Chronographia* which Mango and Scott claim are the closest accounts to the originals: Mango and Scott 1997: 459 n. 3. Modestos'

which it occurred. Although Modestos is widely credited for the reconstruction of the Anastasis and several churches in Jerusalem, much of this evidence derives from material composed or transmitted after the eighth century; by which time a formalised cult dedicated to Modestos— which interlocks with the liturgical commemoration of the sack of Jerusalem – had already emerged in the Melkite liturgical consciousness³⁸⁵ It was probably through Modestos’ intervention that requests for financial aid were sent to various Chalcedonian communities of Palestine and Modestos himself may have embarked on a ‘progress’ through the region aimed at securing funds and materials for the programme.³⁸⁶ The funds donated by the Patriarch John of Alexandria may reflect a response to this request.³⁸⁷ A further trip by Modestos to Mar Sabas, where Modestos appears in the aftermath of an attack on the monastery, may represent a further example of Modestos’ attempt to procure support from the wealthier monastic establishments and urban elites of the region.³⁸⁸

The dating of these activities is, however, regrettably unclear, although, accepting the traditional date of Modestos’ death around c.630/1, it is likely that they were undertaken during the 620s when Palestine remained under Sassanian rule.³⁸⁹ The general resurgence of Christian activity following the siege is a pattern also observed in Egypt, where initial – often violent – disruption was followed by a continuation of existing religious patterns and a general maintenance of the existing political and fiscal system.³⁹⁰ The swift reconsolidation of the Melkite community in Palestine was therefore both a reflection of the speed of the Sassanian military campaigns – compared to the more protracted and destructive

role as a restorer is also tentatively alluded to in the Leontios of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 20 (ed. Festugière and Rydén 1974, tr. Dawes 1948: 229).

³⁸⁵ The feast of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem was observed on the 17 May concurrently with that of the Burning of Jerusalem according to the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (Sinai Georgian 34) (ed. Garitte 1958:67). A further feast associated with Modestos appears in the Menaion for the 17 December *ibid*: 110-111.

³⁸⁶ Saʿīd ibn Baṭṭīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 28 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 119,121, 99-101).

³⁸⁷ John is credited with sending oil, wheat and money to the Jerusalem church: Leontios of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 9, 20 (ed. Festugière and Rydén 1974, tr. Dawes 1948: 229).

³⁸⁸ Antiochos Monachos, *Letter to Eustathios*: PG 89, 1424-1428.

³⁸⁹ The sources generally identify Modestos as responsible for most of the recovery: see note 384.

³⁹⁰ Sanger 2011.

confrontations in Anatolia – and evidence of resilience of the clerical apparatus of the Chalcedonian church. Modestos' ability to mobilise an effective financial resource sufficient to facilitate his restorative programme is particularly reflective in this regard. For one, it reflects the limited impact of the Sassanian administration upon the structural organisation of the Melkite church: following an initial period of hostility in 614 our source material provides us with little indication of a sustained programme of persecution of Christians or against Christian institutions in this period.³⁹¹ Secondly, it suggests that the Christian urban and monastic elite survived and remained sufficiently prosperous to provide resource for the programmes of renewal undertaken by Modestos even if such actions were directed at renovation and refurbishment rather than complete reconstruction of existing churches. Examples of Palestinian elites and clerical official seeking refuge in Egypt and in Rome are common, and not implausible, but it is clear that such exoduses were neither extensive nor prolonged across the period: the evidence from a number of sites – Nessana, Rihab, Shivta – demonstrates notable continuities with regards to the stability of local notable families and clergy. Disruptions to Christian life were probably extremely localised and largely limited to the city of Jerusalem: few other urban settlements in the region show evidence of a similar episodes of destruction or the need for substantial repairs to existing buildings.

These patterns correlate well with the broader socio-economic stabilities exhibited throughout the region. Against this wider context, it is fairly easy to accept that the economic resource base of many Christian elites were resilient to these political changes. The patron connections between local populations and monastic communities also continued without significant interruption. But this broader image of stability between 614 and 628 was also marked by significant changes to these systems. Modestos' dealings with the urban and clerical elite of Damascus, Tiberias and Alexandria appear particularly informative in this

³⁹¹ Two letters preserved in *Ps. Sebeos*, between Modestos and Komitas, which talks of resumed pilgrimage during the period of Sassanian control, provides one instance of general stability, see *Ps. Sebeos*: 35, 36 (tr. Thomson 1999: 70-73).

respect in so much as they imply that the primary economic and social support for such monasteries and churches was steadily internalised and focussed around the major Chalcedonian communities of the Syro-Palestinian region. The emperor Herakleios may have contributed some financial support to Modestos' programme, but if this was the case, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, it represented the last intervention by a Byzantine emperor in the region until the tenth century. Our source material provides no further examples of patronage from Byzantine elites after the 630s even though connections between the Patriarchates and high-ranking clerical figures were still nominally maintained.³⁹² The Sassanian occupation may be seen as marking the solidification of a process of socio-economic internalisation for monasteries and cult sites in Palestine. There is a strong argument that these developments were already underway several decades earlier and were part of a more protracted trend where the later (and permanent) political successes of the Arab armies played an equally formative role.

This process of internalisation is also apparent if we consider that the major clerical officials in the Patriarchal retinue and monastic hierarchy were increasingly drawn from the urban communities and monasteries of Syria-Palestine. Modestos, drawn from the monastery of Theodosios near Bethlehem, and his successor Sophronios, from a prominent family in Damascus, mark the beginnings of a close relationship between the elite communities of Syro-Palestinian urban centres and the largest monastic communities and cult centres of the region. As will be explored in Chapters Three and Four, this relationship between urban communities and prominent monastic and cult sites was to become a definitive feature of later centuries.

³⁹² See Sansterre 1983: 117-121.

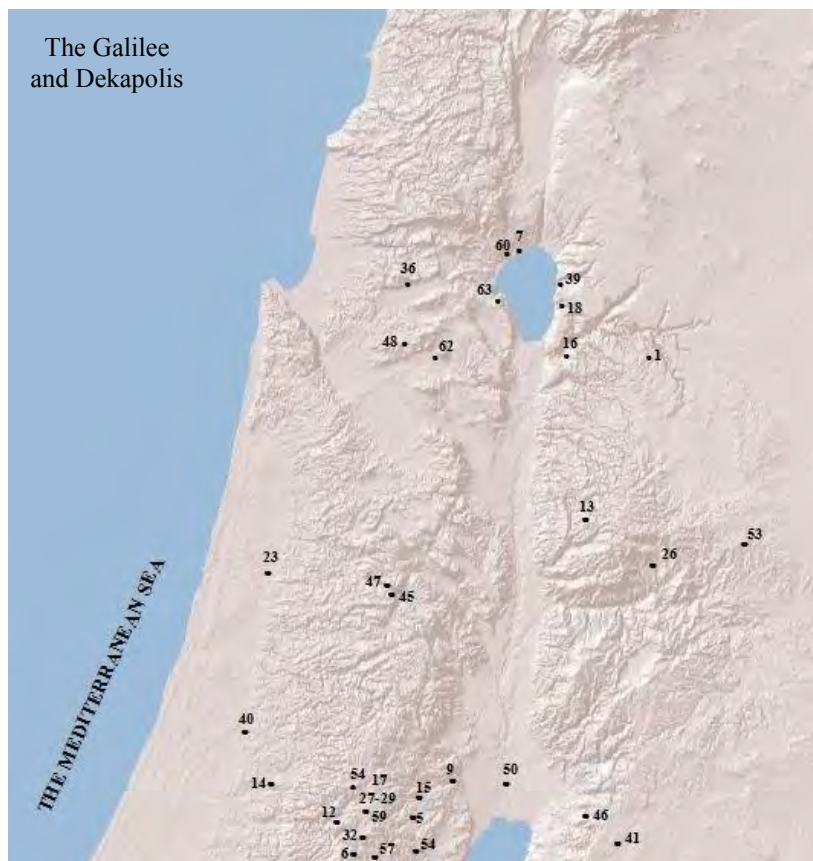
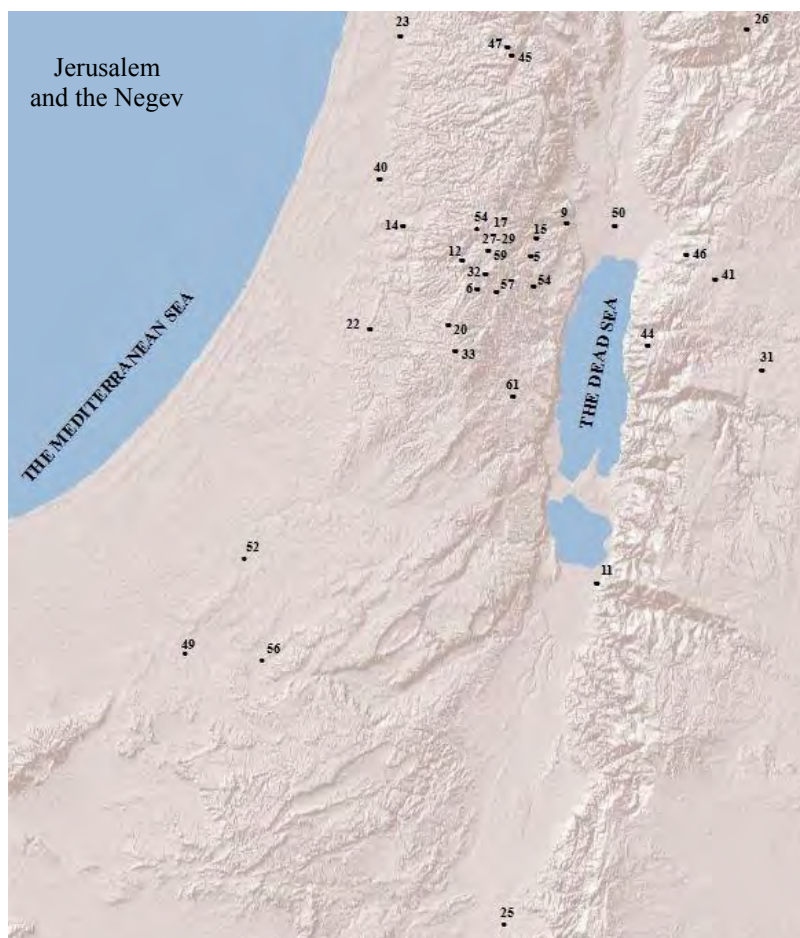


Fig. 2.21 Monasteries and cult sites active in 630.
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CHAPTER THREE

MONASTICISM IN THE FIRST ISLAMIC CENTURY

628-749

3.1 THE HERAKLEION RESTORATION AND THE ARAB CONQUEST

The counter offensive launched by the Emperor Herakleios against the Sassanians in the 620s proved remarkably successful in regaining the Palestinian territories lost in 613/4.³⁹³ The intricate details of the campaign are unknown, but the fragmentary reports that survive suggest that Herakleios launched his offensive from the north, taking Damascus before progressing to the Galilee. The campaign culminated in the official restoration of imperial control in Jerusalem in 630.³⁹⁴ The episode is invisible archaeologically,³⁹⁵ a feature that reflects the relatively rapid nature of the re-conquest and the lack of prolonged resistance to the imperial army from the local population or from the Persian garrisons in the major urban centres.³⁹⁶ The role of the Chalcedonian church in this period is elusive, although the acting Patriarch of Jerusalem, Modestos, is reported to have travelled with Herakleios to Tiberias following the re-capture of Jerusalem – an endeavour which may reflect the more politicised

³⁹³ See Haldon 1997: 31-51 and Kaegi 2003: 79-80, 205-210 for overviews of the main developments.

³⁹⁴ This event is described in *Michael the Syrian*: 11.III: 410 (ed. Chabot 1899-1910) Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 127-130, 107-109); al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*: 1561 (ed. de Goeje 1879-1901, tr. Juynboll 1989: 100) and Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6120 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 328-330, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 458-460).

³⁹⁵ The evidence from Nessana and Shivta, which record a series of burials dated to the period 628-640, reflect stable patterns of daily life in areas removed from the major urban centres. For Nessana see Kirk and Wells 1962: inscription 14 and for Shivta and Avdat/Oboda see Negev 1981: 37-39. From Shivta the burial inscriptions are as follows: Abbramios, monk and priest, (630), Stephen son of Boethos (639) Zacharias (641), Sabina, daughter of George (641), a son of Abbot Themios (643), Stephen son of George (643), Stephen son of Abramios (643), Stephen son of John the *vikarios* (646) and Salamas son of Themios (679).

³⁹⁶ Our understanding of the Sassanian defence of Palestine in 628 is unclear. Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6119 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 327-328, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 457-458) reports that Persian soldiers were allowed to peacefully depart from Palestine. For possible evidence for a Sassanian garrison in Caesarea see Flusin 1992: 233-234. The source material provides no indication of the military confrontations between Herakleios' army and the Sassanians, although *Michael the Syrian*: 11: III. 410 (ed. Chabot 1888-1910) suggests that the cities were already evacuated prior to the Herakleion re-conquest due to internal conflict in the Sassanian empire.

role of the Patriarch which had emerged during the Sassanian interim.³⁹⁷

The restoration of the city was accompanied by the official investiture of Modestos as Patriarch of Jerusalem in 630/631 following the fifteen-year period in which he had performed the role during the exile of the Patriarch Zachariah.³⁹⁸ We know little about the intricacies of these developments, but their significance to contemporaries may be charted in several works which convey the general triumphalist sentiments of the period and the relatively rapid rate in which liturgical feasts dedicated to the event emerged in Palestinian *synaxaria*.³⁹⁹ Less can be said of the impact of the Byzantine re-conquest on the physical landscape of churches and monasteries. As was discussed earlier,⁴⁰⁰ there are few credible examples of church or monastic site destruction initiated by the Sassanians in the period 614-628. The majority of sites which had existed by 610 still appear to have functioned by 630 even if we are unable to make more detailed assessments (Fig. 3.1).⁴⁰¹ The need for restorative programmes by 630 appears then, to have been minimal and may have already been addressed by the resources acquired from the networks of urban elites and clergy from within Palestine itself under the authority of Modestos in the 620s.⁴⁰²

There is some confusion in the surviving reports concerning the involvement of Herakleios in the restoration of several of the major churches in Jerusalem, including the Church of the Anastasis. Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq credits Herakleios with financing Modestos’

³⁹⁷ Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 127-130, 107-109) reports that Herakleios handed over the taxation revenues of Damascus to Modestos.

³⁹⁸ The fate of Zachariah is uncertain, although the sources indicate that he died in captivity. Compare: Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 127-130, 107-109), Strategios, *Capture of Jerusalem*: 24.1-15 (Version A) (ed. and tr. Garitte 1973) and Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6120 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 328-329, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 458-460, esp. n.3). See also the discussion in Baines 1912.

³⁹⁹ George of Pisidia, *On the Restoration of the Holy Cross* (ed. Petursi 1959: 225-230). For a discussion of George of Pisidia see Howard Johnston 2010: 16-25. The feast is listed in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34) (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 90) on 14 September. Modestos was also commemorated on the 17 May, coinciding with the feast of the Burning of Jerusalem, *Ibid*: 67.

⁴⁰⁰ Pages 117-127.

⁴⁰¹ Pages 129-133.

⁴⁰² Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 28, 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 119-121, 99-101, 127-130, 107-109), *Life of John the Almsgiver*: 20 (ed. Festugière 1974-77, tr. Dawes 1948: 229) both of which attribute restoration efforts to Modestos. All of the traditions link Modestos to renovations to the Church of the Anastasis and Calvary both of which were extensively rebuilt in the eleventh century. On the eleventh-century restorations see Pringle 2007: 5-72.

renovations to the church which may have been the only site substantially affected by Sassanian occupation.⁴⁰³ This tradition is not replicated by Sebeos or any of the dependants of Theophilos of Edessa and this raises some difficulties with attributing the entire restorative programme to imperial intervention.⁴⁰⁴ In an earlier entry of his chronicle, Sa'īd ibn Baṭṭīq credits these restorations to both Herakleios and Modestos which suggests that Herakleios' interventions are perhaps better understood as contributions to an existing effort mounted by the indigenous Palestinian church.⁴⁰⁵ Either way, the complex settlement history of the Church of the Anastasis offers no further clarification on this issue.⁴⁰⁶ Almost all of the sources agree that the restoration was accompanied by donations in gold and, in this sense, the Herakleion endowments were probably directed at restoring the existing financial resources of the church which had been confiscated under the Sassanian general Shabaraz.⁴⁰⁷ Cyril Mango has presented a case that the major Herakleion interventions in the city were largely directed at the development of the Temple Mount area as part of a broader ideological programme directed against the Jewish population.⁴⁰⁸ Although plausible, major redevelopment at the site in the 690s (with the construction of the Dome of the Rock) has destroyed all possible opportunities of determining the existence or scale of any such

⁴⁰³ Sa'īd ibn Baṭṭīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 127-130, 107-109).

⁴⁰⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6120 (ed. De Boor 1883-85: 328-328, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 458-460, esp. n.3) attributes the restorations of the Anastasis to Modestos and does not mention Herakleios. Similarly, the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34): 17 December (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 110-111) attributes the restorations at the Anastasis (and Holy Sion) to Modestos and does not refer to Herakleios. *Ps. Sebeos*: 35 (tr. Thomson 1999: 70-82) is similarly ignorant of Herakleios' interventions. Instead, *Ps. Sebeos*: 34 (tr. Thomson 1999: 70) records that Modestos was placed in charge of the city following the Sassanian siege. It is unknown if this role continued into the 620s although Modestos' negotiations with Herakleios would appear to support this suggestion.

⁴⁰⁵ Sa'īd ibn Baṭṭīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 28 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 119-121, 99-101), *Ps. Sebeos*: 41 (tr. Thompson 1999: 90) reports that Herakleios' restoration of Jerusalem was accompanied by donations and the restoration of church property rather than rebuilding.

⁴⁰⁶ Pringle 2007: 5-72 for a useful summary.

⁴⁰⁷ Sa'īd ibn Baṭṭīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar* : 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 127-130, 107-109) reports that this may have been part of a tax exemption extended to church properties. There is no way of verifying this. Such revenue may not have been required if the recent assessment of Avni 2010 and Magness 2011 are accepted. Modestos' role, however, alludes to the increasing role of church authorities in fiscal revenue by the late 620s which may be reflected in the later developments seen in the Nessana papyri: *P. Colt* 59 and *P. Colt* 60-67.

⁴⁰⁸ Mango 1992 discusses the possible renovations and building programmes in this period.

intervention.⁴⁰⁹ If such a project were initiated, the endowment to the Church of the Anastasis and the construction on the Temple Mount represent the last major structural programme commissioned by a Byzantine emperor in Palestine until the eleventh century.⁴¹⁰

These developments, although accompanied by significant ideological optimism among both Palestinian and Constantinopolitan imperial and clerical circles, proved transient.⁴¹¹ By the mid-630s, Byzantine control of the Palestinian region was again destabilised and eventually dismantled by the rapid military successes of the nascent Islamo-Arab armies which had successfully exploited the instabilities following the breakdown of Sassanian control over central Mesopotamia and the fragile Byzantine control of Syro-Palestine.⁴¹² Various explanations have been proposed to determine why the Byzantine defensive strategies were unsuccessful in maintaining imperial control over the region – a composite explanation of weakened resources and local indifference to Byzantine rule appears plausible – but, regardless of their explanation, the Arab military successes were achieved with considerable rapidity.⁴¹³ A series of decisive battles, one in 634 near Gaza, another near Pella/Tabaqat Fahl (December 634?) and one near Yarmuk (636), appear to have been decisive in consolidating Arab control in the region.⁴¹⁴ With the exception of Caesarea,

⁴⁰⁹ On the Dome of the Rock see Cresswell 1958: 17-42 and Grabar 2006.

⁴¹⁰ Ousterhout 1989 discusses the resurgence of investment under Constantine IX Monomachos. I am not aware of another Byzantine imperial donation to the Jerusalem churches between the seventh and mid-eleventh centuries which resulted in structural foundation. For the possible interventions of Charlemagne in constructions on the Mount of Olives and the Church of the Anastasis see the discussion, and accompanying notes, on pages 216-216. One possible case of monetary donations emerges in *Letter of Niketas to Constantine Porphyrogenitos on the Holy Fire* (ed. Riant 1881, 375-382).

⁴¹¹ George of Pisidia, *On the Restoration of the Holy Cross* (ed. Petursi 1959: 225-230). To Sophronios, later Patriarch of Jerusalem, is also attributed poems on the restoration of the Cross, see Sophronios, *On the Holy Cross*: 1-2 (ed. Gigante 1957: 114-117), Sophronios, *On the Exaltation of the Cross*, PG 87.3: 3301-3309.

⁴¹² The best overview of the conquests and qualifications about the Arabic material appears in Kennedy 2004: 57-69. See also Crone and Cook 1977, Donner 1981, Donner 1998, Donner 1995: 337-360, Kaegi 1992: 88-129 and Mayerson 1964: 155-199.

⁴¹³ Sophronios, *Synodical Letter to Sergios* PG 87: 3197 D provides some impression that the Arab incursion further south in Palestine had not been anticipated and, therefore, took the local population by surprise. On reactions to the Arab conquest see Griffith 2008: 23-32, Kaegi 1969 and Moorhead 1981. Moorhead 1981 has criticised the view that the Arab conquest was encouraged by the Monophysite population of the region and has drawn attention to the complexity of Byzantine forces that opposed the Arab armies.

⁴¹⁴ On the battle of Yarmuk: Agapios of Manbij, *Kitab al-'Unwan* 453-454, 470 (ed. and tr. Vasiliev 1912: 453-454, 470), Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6126 (ed. De Boor 1883: 337-338, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 469-

the majority of cities appear to have capitulated to Arab control by 640.⁴¹⁵

There is very little evidence to propose the existence of a uniform strategy among the earliest Arab conquerors towards urban centres and their resident Christian communities.⁴¹⁶ Reappraisals of the literary material have repeatedly stressed the complexities with viewing the Arab conquest as an ideologically and socially homogenous movement, drawing attention to the Arab army's diverse composition – comprised of Arabs, Monophysite Christians and Chalcedonians – and the complexity of the earliest concepts of the *ummah* community.⁴¹⁷ Consistent with the progressive nature of the conquest, terms appear to have been predominantly negotiated on an individual level – either through local administrators, as in Damascus under the leadership of Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn, or through the interventions of church authorities as with the Patriarch Sophronios in Jerusalem – and do not propose a pre-existing legal framework for Christian status in this period.⁴¹⁸ A tendency among recent evaluations of

470).

⁴¹⁵ Bostra appears to have been captured by 632: Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6125 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 337, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 468-469). On the capture of Damascus: Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6126 (ed. de Boor 1883-5: 337-338, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 469-470). The capture of Palestine, including Jerusalem and Caesarea, is reported in al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldan*: 213-214 (ed. de Goeje 1870, tr. Khuri Hitti 2002: 138-139) and Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6127 and AM 6133 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 339-340, 341-342, tr. Mango 1997: 471-472, 474-475). On the archaeological evidence for Caesarea, which may have been disproportionately affected by Arab hostility, see Holum 2011 and Patrich 2011b: 141-176. The capture of Caesarea is reported in Agapios of Manbij, *Kitāb al-'Unwan* 454 (ed. and tr. Vasiliev 1912: 454), *Chronicle 1234* (ed. Chabot 1916-1920, tr. Hoyland 2011:124), *Michael the Syrian*, 11. VIII: 422-423/ 430-431 (ed. Chabot 1899-1910.) Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6133 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 341, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 475).

⁴¹⁶ The sources suggest that in many cases terms were agreed on a more individualised basis: Sophronios' encounter with 'Umar, which subsequently became of intense interest to debates about the status of Christian communities in the Caliphate, is reported to have guaranteed the conditions for Palestine: Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6127 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 339, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 471-472), Agapios of Manbij, *Kitāb al-'Unwan* 453-454, 470 (ed. and tr. Vasiliev 1912: 453-454, 470). Theophanes also reports of similar negotiations undertaken by Patriarch of Alexandria, Cyril: Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6126 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 338-339, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 470-471).

⁴¹⁷ Sijpesteijn 2007 and Papaconstantinou 2008. Autliffe 2007 offers the most systematic study of attitudes to Christians in the Qur'ān and presents some important qualifications regarding its use for understanding attitudes Muslim towards Christian communities in the early Islamic period.

⁴¹⁸ The actual negotiations between Sophronios and Umar are extremely difficult to disentangle from the later polemical themes that were woven into the story. The most comprehensive discussion regarding the meeting is offered in Busse 1984: 73-119. On the so-called Pact of Umar see the comprehensive study in Levy Rubin 2011b. Levy Rubin has stressed the earlier Byzantine and Sassanian origins of many legislative measures against non-Muslims. Additional discussion of the theme of Sophronios and Umar's meeting in Christian apologetics is reviewed in Sahas 2006: 33-44. The chronicle entries all agree, however, that Sophronios negotiated terms with the Caliph: Agapios of Manbij, *Kitāb al-'Unwan*: 454, 475 (ed. and tr. Vasiliev 1912: 454, 475), *Chronicle 1234*: 246-248 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920), Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6127 (ed. de

Palestinian Christians in the early Islamic period to retroject later classical legal definitions of the *dhimma*,⁴¹⁹ as expressed through later recensions of texts such as the Ordinances of Umar,⁴²⁰ has resulted in an assessment of the period as one of immediate socio-political disenfranchisement for monastic communities.⁴²¹ This view is highly problematic, and has emerged from studies focussed on Syro-Palestinian Christian groups that are overwhelmingly theological in character and concerned with outlining the main features of doctrinal debate between Christian and Muslim groups.⁴²² As we have already seen, such emphasis on ‘theological’ and confessional uniformity projected through Christian apologetics has proved formative in framing contemporary debates about initial phases of Islamic rule and its impact upon monastic groups.⁴²³ It is, however, reductive and simplistic. For one, it assumes a static theological and legislative attitude to established Christian groups among the Arab conquerors which has been questioned repeatedly by a number of scholars working on broader issues of the early Islamic conquest.⁴²⁴ It also leads to an understanding of monasticism in the early seventh century viewed from the perspective of a rigid Muslim-

Boor 1883-85: 339, tr. Mango and Scott 1997).

⁴¹⁹ Papaconstantinou 2008: 129 introduces the relative problems with this term in studies such as Griffith 2008: 16 and the more polemical work of Ye’or 1996. Levy-Rubin 2003 displays a similar acceptance of this concept as a codified ideal by the seventh century. The later studies of Levy-Rubin 2005: 170-206 and Levy-Rubin 2011b:56-87 stresses the more progressive formulations of these ideas. Earlier discussions appear in Bosworth 1979 and Bosworth 1981. A discussion of the term *ahl al-dhimma*, a term which does not appear in widespread use until the tenth century, appears in Ayoud 1983. See also the discussion in Fridemann 2003: 54-86.

⁴²⁰ See Noth 1987 and Levy Rubin 2011b.

⁴²¹ Thus in the major studies of monasticism, Binns 1994, Hirschfield 1992, Hirschfield 1993a: 149 the year 638 is framed as one which automatically instigated monastic decline. This interpretation also appears in the more recent assessments of Perrone 1995 and Patrich 2011.

⁴²² For an overview of scholarship see Griffith 2008. The collected bibliography of Christian and Muslim relations, Thomas and Roggema 2009 (eds.) survey all contributions that have appeared in the past few decades.

⁴²³ Thus Ye’or 1996 surveys Christian status in Palestine purely from this perspective. Similar cases occur more casually in archaeological studies such as Schick 1995: 159-179 where examples of confrontation are often framed in terms of Christian-Muslim interaction rather than as outcomes of more complex political scenes.

⁴²⁴ On the apparent fluidity of attitudes in this early period, see Papaconstantinou 2008. On the continued use of monasteries as fiscal collectives into the early eighth century, see Silpesteijn and Clackson 2009. This is more difficult to trace in Palestine but at least one example, Nessana, shows a similar replication of this interaction in Palestine: *P. Colt* 59, 60-67. Whether or not this represents the existence of a centralised administrative apparatus in the 670s remains subject to debate, Foss 2002 argues for the existence of a more sophisticated bureaucratic system under Mu‘āwiyah. Johns 2003: 421-424, rejects this hypothesis and notes a distinct change in the later papyri dating to the reign of Abd al-Malik. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence from Egypt for the continued use of monasteries as centres for localised governance and collection into the early eighth century: Papaconstantinou 2010.

Christian confrontation without regard for more complex socio-political dynamics or progressive change⁴²⁵ Consequently, it has reduced interpretations of the initial encounters between Palestinian monastic communities and Arab political institutions to a situation of immediate antagonism and one of swift decline to the established socio-economic positions of monastic foundations.⁴²⁶

In this respect, it is common to encounter assessments of Chalcedonian communities as a social group where the impact of Arab rule resulted in socio-political disenfranchisement.⁴²⁷ Chalcedonian responses to Arab rule were, however, varied. Although Patriarch Sophronios' morose Christmas sermon of 634 points to a concern with security in the Jerusalem church,⁴²⁸ it is evident from the actions of Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn in Damascus that in other contexts Chalcedonian communities openly negotiated with the Arab conquerors.⁴²⁹

Sophronios' more negative response to Arab control may, in one respect, reflect anxieties for the threat that the Arab military successes posed to his own social position. At least from the period of Sassanian control, the pre-eminence of the Patriarchs' involvement in administrative affairs appears to have progressively reinforced patriarchal associations with political as well as religious prestige.⁴³⁰ The paucity of evidence does not permit fuller clarification of these developments but the emerging role of church networks as fiscal

⁴²⁵ See note above. This is exacerbated by the source material for Palestine comprised mostly of hagiography and other theological works. The lack of a papyrological dossier to mirror that of Egypt often makes the tension between theological construct and mundane practice less overt for discussions of Palestine than in Egypt where papyri presents a more flexible view at a localised level.

⁴²⁶ Thus Hirschfeld 1992: 16-17 and Patrich 2011.

⁴²⁷ Conversely the period is often seen as one of relative liberation for the Monophysite church. Criticism of this approach has been levied in Griffith 2008: 27-28 and Moorhead 1981. As both note, this is to de-contextualise statements in favour of Islam from their more central anti-Chalcedonian sentiments. As Griffith notes, in other contexts the Arab conquests are presented as equally negative. A broader overview appears in Hoyland 1997a: 17-26. Al-Ṭabarī reports that in many cases the Byzantine army was actively supported by the local population: al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*: 2500 (ed. de Goeje 1879-1901, tr. Juynboll 1989: 81).

⁴²⁸ Sophronios, *On the Nativity* (ed. H. Usener 1886: 500-516). On the dating see Hoyland 1997a: 69-70.

⁴²⁹ On Manṣūr: see Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 127-130, 107-109. For a discussion of John of Damascus, an apparent descendent of Manṣūr, see Louth 2002: 5-6. The most comprehensive biography of John appears in Conticello 2000. This reflects a pattern also known in other regions and contexts. Thus al-Balādhurī reports that the Christian al-Baṭrīq ibn an-Naḥa was employed to oversee the expenses of the palace and the mosque of Lydda: al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*: 144 (ed. de Goeje 1870: 143, tr. Khuri-Hitti 1966: 220-221).

⁴³⁰ See pages 138-139.

collectives (and possibly as minting authorities) by the mid-seventh century adds weight to the impression that the patriarchate and associated networks were, by the 630s, exercising some political autonomy in Palestine within this fragile and transitional political framework.⁴³¹ These roles appeared to have continued throughout the Byzantine interim 628-636; contemporary sources ascribe similar involvement in military strategy – notably during the Arab incursions – to Modestos’ successor Sophronios following his accession in 631 and would confirm that the position of the Patriarch as a central political figurehead of the region was at least consolidated by institutional stabilities which had surfaced since the 610s.⁴³² It is significant, for example, that our earliest sources for the period cite Sophronios as the principal negotiator with the Arab leader ‘Umar following the capitulation of Jerusalem to the Arabs.⁴³³

3.2 THE ARAB CONQUEST AND PALESTINIAN MONASTICISM: IMPACT

It is impossible, in view of the limited surviving material, to determine the variations of Chalcedonian response on a more localised or individual level with any precision, but the impression which emerges from a collective reading of the data, where it survives, supports a

⁴³¹ On the possible association of the church with minting authority: see Pottier and Foss 2007 and Foss 2009: 9-12 for examples of coins during this period. The emergence of the monastery of Sergios and Bakkhos as a tax collective is known from *P. Colt* 59. This mirrors the pattern known from Egypt, see Silpesteijn and Clackson 2009: 102-119. It is possible that the emergence of oil presses and other agricultural technology in atrium space in Palestine during the seventh century provides some tentative indication of this emergent role. Examples of oil presses are known from Kursi and the North-West Church of Hippos/Sussita, see Tzaferis 1983: 15-16 and Radkowska 2004: 61.

⁴³² See notes 413-416.

⁴³³ Agapios of Manjbi, *Kitāb al-‘Unwan*: 454/475 (ed. and tr. Vasiliev 1912). *Chronicle 1234*: 246-248 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920, tr. Hoyland 2011: 114-117), Dionysos of Tel Mahre: 73-74 (tr. Palmer 1993), Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6127 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 338-340, tr. Mango and Scott 1997).

broader portrait of continuity amongst local Christian groups.⁴³⁴ Aside from Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn, the re-emergence of the Sergios-Patrikos family in the papyrological archives of Nessana around the 670s provides a fairly well studied example whereby the existing administrative system was subsumed into the nascent apparatus of the earliest Arab rulers.⁴³⁵ In this particular example, the papyri indicate the continued importance of the Monastery of Sergios and Bakkhos as a focal point of localised administrative as well as devotional life with its *hegoumenos*, Sergios son of George, continuing the existing private, legal and religious activities which his grandfather had performed during the closing decade of the sixth century.⁴³⁶

An apparent innovation to the role of the Sergios-Bakkhos foundation by the 680s is its position as a tax collective for the Nessana community,⁴³⁷ and its satellite settlements, on behalf of the Arab authorities.⁴³⁸ This is reflected in a series of requisitions addressed to the *hegoumenos* George from al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Abd, requesting tax revenues from the Nessana community and a related collection of papyri which record receipts dispensed by the monastery, for tax paid by (or on behalf of) residents of Nessana in the late seventh century.⁴³⁹ It is less clear when this role was first assumed by the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery, but it is tempting to argue that it represents a component of the developing administrative role of the local church which had responded to the breakdown of centralised

⁴³⁴ This is indicated by the inscriptions of the churches of the Negev, which propose a fluid sequence of clerical succession throughout the 630s: Negev 1981: 51-59. It is a pattern similarly replicated in the Transjordan in Rihab and Khirbet es-Samra where a series of churches again support more stable clerical continuities: Piccirillo 1993c: 304-316. Comparative examples may also be observed further north in Nebha where an inscription, dated to 646, records the Bishop Michael and the *oikonomoi* Kosteos and Basianos: Donceel-Voûte 1988: 53, 395-405.

⁴³⁵ *P. Colt* 60-63, 67-66, 188-190.

⁴³⁶ On the activities, which included money-lending, see page 66. Several of these roles are paralleled in examples among the papyri relating to Egyptian monasteries see Markiewicz 2009 and Richter 2009.

⁴³⁷ *P. Colt* 59.

⁴³⁸ This is primarily because our earliest record of the role of Nessana as a collective appears in the 670s. There is no indication of the monastery performing this role in the opening decade of the seventh century. This may be due to the incomplete nature of the archive. I am agnostic about when this change occurred and hesitate to link it directly to the Arab conquest.

⁴³⁹ *P. Colt* 59, 60-67. This was also accompanied by an assessment of each of the residents of Nessana in terms of their tax liability.

Byzantine political control after 610.

This process is clearer among the better furnished archives of Egypt and northern Syria, where dated papyri confirm a similar role in fiscal collection and jurisdiction by monastic communities, whose own internal organisation offered an efficient surrogate to previous systems.⁴⁴⁰

The paucity of data from Palestine offers no further clarification on the issue, essentially because localised climatic conditions have ensured that few complete hoards have been preserved in a condition sufficient to extract the types of data required to reconstruct such networks.⁴⁴¹ Thus at Khirbat Mird, the fragmentary papyri hoard of Arabic documents relating to a monastery – possibly Kastellion – whilst evidently indicative of frequent contact between monastic communities and Arab governors, is not sufficiently preserved to facilitate more definitive conclusions about its content.⁴⁴² Frustratingly, the earlier seventh-century Syriac corpus from Kastellion, also discovered in the 1940s, has yet to be systematically appraised beyond the publication of a letter and a collection of gospel manuscripts: features which reflect how analytical approaches to Byzantine monastic communities are still weighted towards their theological and intellectual life.⁴⁴³

In view of these limitations, estimating the extent of monastic administrative or fiscal roles in the later seventh century is both problematic and restricted by the nature of the surviving material. For the region of Palestine, this material is mostly archaeological and informs us more about patterns of site occupation than the social or administrative processes which occurred within them.

⁴⁴⁰ See notes above. Excellent overviews of this system in relation to the Egyptian material are offered in Papaconstantinou 2010 and Silpesteijn 2012.

⁴⁴¹ Reports of findings of fragmentary papyri or parchment at sites such as Deir 'Ain 'Abata or Dayr al-Qaṭṭār al-Bizantī do, however, allude to the volume of data now lost from monasteries in the Palestinian region: Brock, Canby, al-Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012: 418, Homlgren and Kaliff 1997: 335.

⁴⁴² Discussions of the site are offered in Millik and Wright 1961. The fragmentary hoard is published in Grohman 1963. *P. Mird* 2 and *P. Mird* 6 provide some explicit evidence of a Muslim presence. *P. Mird* 45-46 suggests evidence of a monastic connection similar to Nessana.

⁴⁴³ See Milik 1963, Perrot 1963 and Verhelst 2003: 15-55.

3.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Following the recent rejections by modern archaeologists of the existence of destruction layers attributable to the Arab conquest, it is increasingly difficult to support the hypothesis of an immediate fracture to established monastic social and devotional roles in the early seventh century. Indeed, the results of a number of systematic excavations in the urban centres of Jarash, Hippos/Sussita, Ṭabarīyyah and Pella and increasingly nuanced ceramic typologies support the impression of general stability of daily life in Palestine in the decades following the Arab conquest.⁴⁴⁴

Interpreting the archaeology at pilgrimage sites and monastic communities is more problematic. Perceptions of monastic patronage as separate from localised socio-economic networks (and dependant on Byzantine connections), and a (perceived) immediate shift in social and political attitudes towards monasticism (either through institutional pressure or, more commonly, conversion), have underpinned a negative appraisal of monastic life in the later seventh century. These negative interpretations intersect with an essentialising approach to the Sassanian conquest, notably the traditional belief that the Arab conquest exacerbated monastic impoverishment (following the ostensible destruction waves of the period 614-628) by consolidating monastic isolation from the vital patronage links with the Byzantine Aegean.⁴⁴⁵ This approach presents an assessment of post-Byzantine monastic life which frequently contradicts the broader patterns of settlement and economic continuity advocated by more recent research in several key centres. Crudely summarised, the traditional

⁴⁴⁴ See note 112 for individual studies of Jarash. On Pella, see the important contributions in Smith 1992 and Walmsley 1992. For Hippos/Sussita, see Seagal *et al* 2004, Seagal *et al* 2006 and Seagal *et al* 2008. Important overviews of the material in Jarash appear in Gawilkowski 2004 and Wickham 2005: 451-456, 616-621. For the seventh century, see Johns 2003. Walmsley 2007: 71-112 covers the evidence for Transjordan with important reanalysis of site chronologies in modern Israel offered in Magness 2003. Walmsley 2005: 612-625, 770-777 neatly synthesises the evidence for rural populations in this period.

⁴⁴⁵ Thus Hirschfeld 1992: 16-17, Hirschfeld 1993a: 152 and Patrich 2011: 207-211. McCormick 2011: 44-48, makes a similar statement, but acknowledges the possibility of the impact of localised developments.

interpretation stresses two key points. Firstly, that the later seventh century instigated a swift process of abandonment and impoverishment for monastic communities following the (hypothetical) breakdown in their revenue base.⁴⁴⁶ Secondly, these processes of decline responded to the immediate isolation of monastic foundations from normative religious and social convention in the region.⁴⁴⁷

These assumptions, as we have seen, no longer form a convincing hypothesis. Yet, whilst the proponents of the traditional approach now recognise that key sites were not simply abandoned, the tendency to assign post-Byzantine phases to ‘Arab/Muslim’ squatter activity has limited recognition of more substantial Christian liturgical use of these sites into the eighth century.

The identification of Arabic graffito inscriptions at Christian cult sites – such as Horvat Berachot and the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev – (Fig. 3.2-3.5) as indicative of ‘post-cultic’ occupational activity remains a particularly tenacious feature of this approach and one which has potentially truncated the chronologies of Christian activity at several sites.⁴⁴⁸ Thus at the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, phases of subdivision in the church aisles and atrium, wrongly dated to the late seventh century, were automatically attributed to post-Christian squatter activity as a result of the excavator’s presumption that the Arab conquest instigated immediate and detrimental change to Christian life.⁴⁴⁹ A recent re-reading of the ceramic evidence at Rehovot and Horvat Berachot by Jodi Magness has

⁴⁴⁶Patrich 2011: 212 for the Judean Desert. Similar patterns of seventh-century decline are emphasised in Dauphin 1998 and in Hirschfeld 1992: 16-17. Patrich 2011 estimates that the monastic population of the Judean Desert had dropped from 5000 to around 500 between the sixth and mid-ninth centuries. The basis of these calculations is, however, problematic. The zenith of the population in the sixth century (5000-6000 monks) is based primarily on a loose criterion of spatial analysis and the number of monastic foundations identified in the surveys in previous projects: Patrich 1995: 67-68. Not all of these can be conclusively identified as monasteries. Furthermore, the use of Cyril of Scythopolis as a basis for this estimate is precarious given the complex relationship between this account and archaeological research: see pages 63-70.

⁴⁴⁷Hirschfeld 1992: 16-17.

⁴⁴⁸On the Arabic inscriptions at Horvat Berachot see Drori and Drori 1979: 324-326. The excavators attributed these inscriptions to squatter occupation see Tsafirir and Hirschfeld 1979: 323. The inscriptions of the North Church at Rehovot-in-the-Negev were also attributed to a post-Christian ‘squatter page’ see Tsafirir 1988a: 27-28.

⁴⁴⁹*Ibid.* The inscriptions are reproduced in Nevo 1988. Further examples are also known from the poorly published site of Mamphis, see Nevo, Cohen and Heftman 1993: 15-16.

succeeded in redefining the chronologies of these sites, both of which propose occupation into the late eighth century.⁴⁵⁰ The general understanding that these later sequences, and the graffito inscriptions associated with them, represent post-cultic ‘squatter’ phases, however, remains accepted.⁴⁵¹ This conventional explanation for the presence of Arabic graffiti at Christian cult sites underscores the limitations of archaeological phasing at a number of excavations where graffito inscriptions and ‘squatter activity’ (usually identified by the blocking of doorways or arcades) are often arbitrarily assigned to the same stratigraphic phase.⁴⁵² As with the examples of Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Horvat Berachot, the evidence, as presented by their excavators, provides no indications to support this view.

Before outlining the reasons why this requires re-inspection, it is important to understand the nature of the methodological frameworks which foster these interpretations. One is practical. The recording of Arabic graffito inscriptions and post-Byzantine structural interventions is frequently unsystematic in approach and both graffiti and post Byzantine structures are often assigned to single ‘post-Byzantine’ phases without regard for potentially more complex ‘early Islamic’ chronologies.⁴⁵³ This is not assisted by a tendency to publish Arabic graffito inscriptions without more detailed discussions of their spatial context – an approach which often perpetuates a haphazard view of these inscriptions as residues of disorganised ‘post-cultic’ occupation.⁴⁵⁴ The other issue is conceptual. Often influenced by

⁴⁵⁰ Magness 2003: 109-11, 191-194.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² In addition to the sites of Horvat Berachot and Rehovot-in-the-Negev, the descriptions of the ‘Arab farmhouse’ and south west complex at the monastery of Ma’ale Adummim, report the similar presence of Arab graffito inscriptions which were automatically interpreted as ‘Muslim’ finds: Magen 1993: 188. A similar issue also hinders a full understanding of the activities at Kursi where the construction of an oven, walls in the main church and clearing of debris were all assigned to a single phase which is not well defined. At least in terms of the blocking of the atrium (phase II), this appears to have occurred in the eighth century when the monastery still actively functioned: Tzaferis 1983: 15-17 and Stacey 2004: 15. Similar cases of blocking of atria and the re-use of parts of former church space for industrial activities can also be observed at Jabal Harūn and in the North-West Church of Hippos/Sussita: Mikkola *et al* 2008: 148-149 and Radkowska 2004: 61.

⁴⁵³ Thus the inscriptions of Horvat Berachot and Rehovot-in-the-Negev were automatically assigned to the same phases as the ‘Arab pottery’: Tsafirir and Hirschfeld 1979: 310 and Tsafirir 1988a: 27-28.

⁴⁵⁴ Thus the inscriptions of Rehovot-in-the-Negev published by Nevo 1988 do not describe the spatial context of such inscriptions. This is also mirrored in the inscriptions of Mount Nebo: Saller 1941c: 275-276. In cases such as the Martyrios monastery at Ma’ale Adummim, these inscriptions are not recorded: see Magen 1993: 188.

an interpretative model which assumed a dichotomous separation between Muslim and Christian devotional practice by the 630s, early excavators routinely related the presence of Arabic invocations or subsequent changes in the spatial organisation of Christian cult sites – notably the reuse of the atrium or narthex for domestic or industrial activity – to perceived processes of islamification and Christian decline.⁴⁵⁵

The commonly employed archaeological terminologies for post-Byzantine material culture in the region, which carry similarly religious associations – ‘early Islamic’ or ‘early Muslim’ – have continued to reinforce this approach and have contributed to a perception of Christian cult buildings as archaic Byzantine legacies rather than as components of Umayyad social frameworks.⁴⁵⁶

The results of these collective issues may be observed in Rehovot-in-the Negev and Horvat Berachot. At the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, the presence of domestic activity in the auxiliary chambers surrounding the atrium, and the discovery of Arabic inscriptions throughout the complex (although the locations are not recorded), were assumed to be indicative of post-Christian activity which terminated by 700.⁴⁵⁷ Although Magness’ re-inspection of the ceramic corpus has qualified this chronological assessment (the corpus actually suggests a date in the ninth century), the hypothesis that this activity may be attributed to a post-cultic phase remains unchallenged.⁴⁵⁸ Why such changes in spatial usage and the reuse of church materials should be seen suggestive of non-Christian activity is unclear. There are examples known in other regional contexts – Ṭabarīyyah/Tiberias, Kursi and Jabal Harūn – whereby functional changes in church space and the reuse of materials

⁴⁵⁵ Thus at Rehovot-in-the-Negev, the activities in the atrium and aisles were attributed to the post-cultic phase; Tsafir 1988: 28. Similar interpretations framed the excavation report of Kursi: Tzaferis 1983: 15-16. Stacey 2004: 15 offers a useful re-reading of the phases to suggest that they belong to a period when the church actively functions for liturgical celebration.

⁴⁵⁶ Thus at the Martyrios monasteries of Ma’ale Adummim and Kursi the evidence of Arabic inscriptions, early Islamic pottery or iconoclasm were interpreted as features of Muslim activity: Magen 1993: 184-188 and Tzaferis 1983: 18. A similar idea that a ‘Muslim’ archaeological presence negates the co-existence of a Christian one also permeates some of the interpretations of Schick’s study: Schick 1995:388-389, 392-393.

⁴⁵⁷ Tsafir 1988a: 28.

⁴⁵⁸ Magness 2003: 191-194 who noted continued occupation throughout the eighth century.

from the Byzantine structure were accompanied by the continued cultic function of the site by monastic or lay Christian communities into the ninth century.⁴⁵⁹ At Kursi, the blocking of the atrium arcades to form new domestic and industrial units was undertaken when the site was still actively used for liturgical observance.⁴⁶⁰ The process is paralleled in the North-West Church of Hippos/Sussita and the Bishop Isaiah Church where similar spatial reorganisations were undertaken concurrently to their continued use as churches.⁴⁶¹ Given this, we cannot simply assume that Christian cult use ceased at Rehovot-in-the-Negev by 700. A more contextual reading of the evidence would, instead, propose that the later features of Rehovot-in-the-Negev parallel the similar processes of spatial reorganisation (alongside continued cult function) observed in Kursi and the North West Church of Hippos/Sussita.⁴⁶² As the excavators of Rehovot noted, the ‘post-Byzantine’ structural installations were characterised by their apparent respect for the integrity of the chancel and nave, which they attributed to the collapse or robbing of material from the roof.⁴⁶³ However, no evidence that would indicate structural collapse in the nave and chancel was published and thus the report generates the impression that this explanation was largely one of convenience.⁴⁶⁴ But the careful preservation of the nave and chancel may be viewed alternatively as an indication that the

⁴⁵⁹ It is, at present, unclear why atrium spaces were reused for industrial purposes. These redevelopments may provide some tentative indications of a diversification of the churches’ role at a localised level. In the cases of Jabal Harūn, Kursi and Tiberias these spatial reorganisations appear to have responded to the Golan earthquake of 749 which damaged the existing Byzantine basilicas at the sites. On Jabal Harūn see Mikkola *et al* 2008: 147-159. On Kursi see Tzaferis 1983: 15-16 with important re-dating in Stacey 2004. On Tiberias: see Hirschfeld 2004b: 110-124.

⁴⁶⁰ Stacey 2004: 15. Stacey has noted the presence of Palestinian cream fine ware which would extend the dating of occupation into the ninth-century. This would complement the textual material; Peter of Bayt Ra’s, *Kitāb-al-Burhān*: 311 (ed. Cachia 1960: 166, tr. Watt 1960: 134-135). The best survey of Palestinian cream ware appears in Walmsley 2001b.

⁴⁶¹ Bordman 2004: 20-21 has recorded the presence of wine presses in the atrium space of the church. For the spatial reconfigurations of the Bishop Isaiah church in Jarash, where the atrium spaces reveal similar cases of blocking the colonnaded atrium, see Clark 1986: 303-341.

⁴⁶² Radkowska 2004: 61.

⁴⁶³ Tsafirir 1988a: 27.

⁴⁶⁴ There are no indications that the collapse of church buildings resulted in shifts to the communities occupying the site as suggested by Tsafirir’s ‘squatter’ hypothesis. In the example of Jabal Harūn, the post-749 phase, saw a reuse of the main chancel of the church for domestic and industrial activity, with liturgical functions concentrating on the north chapel: Mikkola *et al* 2008: 147-159. The church of Horvat Beit Loya, which was still in use in the eighth century, also contained an oil press: Frankel, Patrich and Tsafirir 1990.

church and nave continued to be used for cult worship. As we have seen, several of the features identified at Rehovot (reuse of aisles, and auxiliary chambers and the blocking of atria) all have parallels in a number of Palestinian cult sites which continued to function into the eighth century.⁴⁶⁵

Indeed we may infer from the limited information we possess for the Arabic graffito inscriptions at Rehovot that the site probably continued to be associated with intercession at least into the late seventh century.⁴⁶⁶ Although we do not know the specific location of the Arabic graffito inscriptions, the report does mention that they were inscribed on stones and architectural features within the atrium.⁴⁶⁷ One particular inscription which is important to note here in the context of proposing a longer cult function for Rehovot-in-the-Negev is that left by Ibn Abi -‘Asmā *mawla* of ‘Abd-allah ‘Amr Ibn al-Āṣ which is currently dated to the late seventh century.⁴⁶⁸ The inscription, well executed and possibly professionally scribed, was inscribed on a flag stone which was set within the atrium’s floor.⁴⁶⁹ The largely pious nature of the inscription, and the fact that the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev incorporated a reliquary crypt, are two factors which point to a prolonged cult association with this site at least into the late seventh century. The recent discovery of the Arabic inscription on the chancel arch of the basilica of al-Badr of Ayla, a figure known from an inscription in the Wadi Hajjaj near Mount Sinai, further suggests a continued religious association with this site into the eighth century (Fig. 3.6).⁴⁷⁰

There is, with the evidence available, no way to fully clarify the relationship between the graffito inscriptions and the duration of Christian use of the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev. But the evidence just surveyed cautions against viewing such inscriptions as

⁴⁶⁵ See note 452. A further example is the atrium of the Church of Hagios Theodoros in Jarash which saw the blocking of the spaces and colonnades of the church atrium: Crowfoot 1938: 242.

⁴⁶⁶ Nevo 1988. On the crypt: see Tsafirir 1988a: 50-54.

⁴⁶⁷ Tsafirir 1988: 76.

⁴⁶⁸ Nevo 1989: 18-23.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 18.

⁴⁷⁰ Sharon 1993.

indicative of sporadic squatter occupation and argues against any tendency to assume that Arabic inscriptions must represent drastic changes to the use or perception of the site following the conquest and Rehovot is not an isolated example. As explored earlier, archaeological approaches to the excavations at the ‘Martyrios Monastery’ at Ma’ale Adummim were similarly framed by ideas of post-monastic squatter occupation.⁴⁷¹

The recent discovery of a series of churches and cult sites where dated mosaic inscriptions point to post-Byzantine structural interventions, mainly in the eighth century, significantly challenge the prevalent perception that monastic communities ceased after 614, and suggests that traditional perceptions of monastic communities as entities marginalised from patronage and devotional investment following the Arab conquest must be reconsidered.⁴⁷²

The evidence from Umayyad church inscriptions has been augmented by a series of more nuanced excavations at monastic and cult sites – Umm Qays, Hippos/Sussita and the Kathisma church – where evaluation of the archaeological material has been disassociated from the constraints of political chronologies.⁴⁷³ Here, systematic excavation has pointed to the continued Christian function of these sites throughout the period of the Arab conquests and into the eighth century with no apparent occupational disruption.⁴⁷⁴ Reinterpretations of the data from Shepherd’s Fields and Kursi propose a similar pattern of stability.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ Pages 26-30.

⁴⁷² See pages 175, 184, 194-195.

⁴⁷³ On the Terrace Church of Umm Qays see Vriezen 1992, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guineé 2001. On the Mausoleum Church see Al-Daire 2001 and Weber 1998. On the Kathisma church see Avner 2006/2007. The preliminary reports of the churches of Hippos and Sussita appear in Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006 (North-West Church), Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2007 ((North-West Church), Schuler 2006 (North East Church), and Schuler 2007 (North East Church). Seagal 2006 offers a preliminary account of the soundings in the South West church. A synthesis of the results from several seasons appears in Młynarczyk 2011.

⁴⁷⁴ This picture is also supplemented by the results of excavations at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata, Jabal Harūn and at Tell Umm el ‘Amr identified by its excavators as the monastery of Hilarion: Politis 2012: 115-158, Mikkola *et al* 2008: 108-176, Elter and Hassoune 2011.

⁴⁷⁵ See Appendix A.

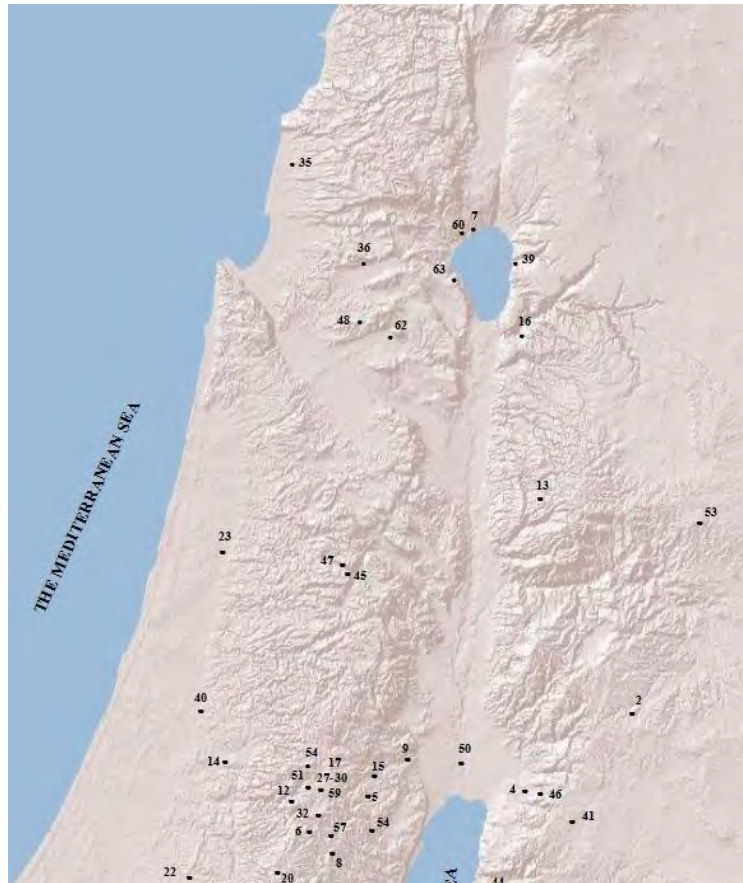


Fig. 3.1 Monastic and cult sites active in the mid-eighth century
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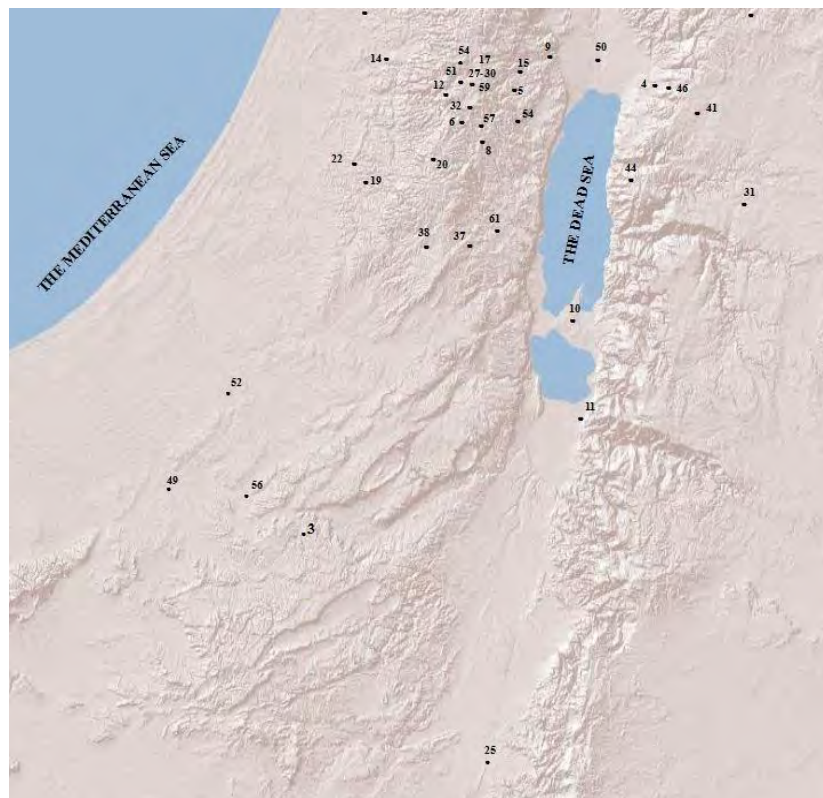




Fig. 3.2 The reliquary crypt, Horvat Berachot (facing East). Inscription 1 is located on the south wall next to the stairs (shaded area in image). Inscription 2 is located on the two imposts of the arched vault (north). Inscription 3 is located on the wall which blocks the south staircase.
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Fig. 3.3 Kufic inscription (Inscription 1) in the crypt church, Horvat Berachot (seventh/eighth century)
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Transcription and translation of Inscription 1 (Drori and Drori 1979).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
لألم اغفر خطيوسف بون
ياسين

In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate
Oh God! Grant pardon to Yusuf [son of]
Yāsīn



Fig. 3.4 A fragmentary Arabic inscription (Inscription 2) in the crypt church, Horvat Berachot (eighth century). The inscription is located on the north impost stone of the arch (facing stair entrance). The inscription is too fragmentary to decipher but invokes the *bismillah* and mentions two individuals: Abu 'A' and Yusuf.
© Israel Antiquities Authority 1993



Fig. 3.5 Arabic inscription (Inscription 3) in the crypt church, Horvat Berachot (eighth century?). The inscription is located on bottom stone of a secondary wall which blocks the stair staircase.
© Israel Antiquities Authority 1993

This impression is supplemented by the many examples of sites noted in textual record as still active following the Arab conquest, including Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Sinai and the monastic sites of Sabas, Chariton and Choziba.⁴⁷⁶ Collectively, these examples integrate well with a broader impression of the period 650-750 as one which saw no permanent disruption to regional life and indicate the continued roles of monasteries and cult sites as structuring elements to localised social and religious activity.⁴⁷⁷ The donation inventories dated to the 670s in Nessana provide one example of this trend. Here we may observe networks of local individuals collectively sponsoring the maintenance of the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery – activities paralleled in the emerging corpus of post-Byzantine mosaic dedications unearthed in modern Israel and Jordan.⁴⁷⁸

The contradictions between these two models – one which proposes an early date of abandonment and squatter occupation and another which stresses continuity – present a conflicting portrait of Palestine which makes a more nuanced inter-regional assessment difficult to achieve. This interpretive division continues to resonate in our approaches to Christian cult life in the region after 630. Although the recognition of post-Byzantine structural embellishments at Christian sites has successfully discredited traditional decline models, the emphasis on ‘continuity’ is now as equally open-ended and often as homogenously applied as its negative predecessor.⁴⁷⁹ Consequently, our understanding of post-Byzantine monasticism and evidence for Umayyad renovations at Christian sites is in its infancy and we know little about regionalised variation and change. Such variations are,

⁴⁷⁶ See Appendix A.

⁴⁷⁷ Reflected in the Nessana papyri where the monastery’s role in administrative and legal affairs is attested in *P. Colt* 55, *P. Colt* 57, *P. Colt* 75 and *P. Colt* 80. Similarly, the monastery continued with its role as a focal point for localised devotional life: *P. Colt* 80.

⁴⁷⁸ These include: the mosaic schemes of the Akropolis church of Ma’in (717/8), Piccirillo 1993c: 196-201; the Church of Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa’a (718 and 756), Piccirillo 1994h; the Church of the Theotokos in Madaba (767), Di Segni 1992 and a possible renovation at May Elyas, Piccirillo 2011:109 and Caniotis, Corsten, Stroud, Tybout 2013.

⁴⁷⁹ For the emphasis on continuity see Di Segni 2003 and Schick 1998: 74-108. What the debate currently lacks is a more long-term view of these developments which analyse the apparent hiatus of dedications after 800. McCormick 2011: 46-47 notes the similar concentration of these inscriptions in the Umayyad period.

however, apparent. There are, for instance, no examples of eighth-century renovations to the monastic or church sites currently known from the Negev;⁴⁸⁰ in sharp contrast flourishing examples of post-Byzantine church construction appear in the Transjordan and Jerusalem.⁴⁸¹ The continuities exhibited in the Transjordan are at least in part a reflection of more sensitive approaches to the stratigraphic phasing of church sites and the presence of dated inscriptions which have permitted their identification as eighth-century structures.⁴⁸² The sites of the Negev – Shivta, Oboda, Nessana – were largely excavated in the 1930s during a period when the post-Byzantine afterlives of such sites were often of marginal interest to (then) prevailing research interests.⁴⁸³ Consequently, the group of the Negev churches present a lacuna in Umayyad activity which may not adequately represent their seventh- or eighth-century occupational ‘realities’.⁴⁸⁴ Together, these collective issues add up to a rather fragmented image of monastic/pilgrim activity in the Palestinian region in terms of occupational chronologies.

3.5 CONTINUITIES

There are only a few sites where a mid-seventh century date of abandonment can be comfortably assigned: Khirbet ed-Deir, where factors surrounding the site’s abandonment were demonstrably unrelated to the broader political changes of the period 630-661, presents

⁴⁸⁰ The last dated inscription from the region appears to be the grave inscription of Salamas son of Themios dated to 679; Negev 1981: 59.

⁴⁸¹ On the Transjordanian examples see Di Segni 2003 and the earlier overview of Di Segni 1999.

⁴⁸² On the issue of re-dating see Di Segni 2003: 257-258. Issues of dating have, nonetheless, also affected interpretations of churches in the Transjordan. Thus the Church of the Theotokos of Madaba was initially assigned to the year 662, Dauphin 1975. See Di Segni 1992 for a systematic refutation of this traditional date.

⁴⁸³ On Nessana: see Colt 1962. On the issue of Shivta and Oboda see pages 20-26. The major studies of the settlement appear in Negev 1974, Negev 1986 and Seagal 1983.

⁴⁸⁴ On the reading of these phases see Magness 2003: 177-194. As Magness observes, the limited quality of the publications cannot clarify the nature of the occupation at these sites in the early Islamic period, to which we may link the continuation of Christian cult activity.

an incontestable example.⁴⁸⁵ In this instance, the collapse of the cave-church around which the monastic complex was organised appears to have permanently terminated occupation at the site.⁴⁸⁶ But it appears that the general intermission in building programmes which had occurred during the formative decade of Sassanian rule (614-628) was replicated during the initial consolidation of Arab political control following the 630s.

Fig. 3.6 The inscriptions of Al Badr and As'ad ibn Gahlid from Rehovot-in-the-Negev and the Wadi Hajjaj.

Inscription 1, eighth century

| | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|
| لألمم غفر | 1. O God! [forgive] |
| البدربن | 2. al-Badr of |
| الأيلي و | 3. Ayla |
| رضى عنه | 4. and be pleased with him. |

Inscription 2, eighth century

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| لألمم غفر | 1. O God [forgive] |
| البدربن | 2. Al-Badr b. |
| لألي و | 3. of Ayla and |
| رضى عنه | 4. [be pleased with him] |

Inscription 3, eighth century

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| وكل من يولي في الله وده غي | 1. And every friend who is not a friend in the love of God |
| كل جال وصله دلم غير | his friendship is false |
| والتيس عهن غال | 2. Superficial <and> empty, his union devoid of |
| لبوس عي | permanence. |
| | 3. wrote As'ad b. Ghalib |
| | 4. Abu Sa'id. |

Late eighth or early ninth century, Rehovot-in-the-Negev.
inscription 1. Transcription and translation from Nevo 1988

⁴⁸⁵ Hirschfeld 1999:46-49.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

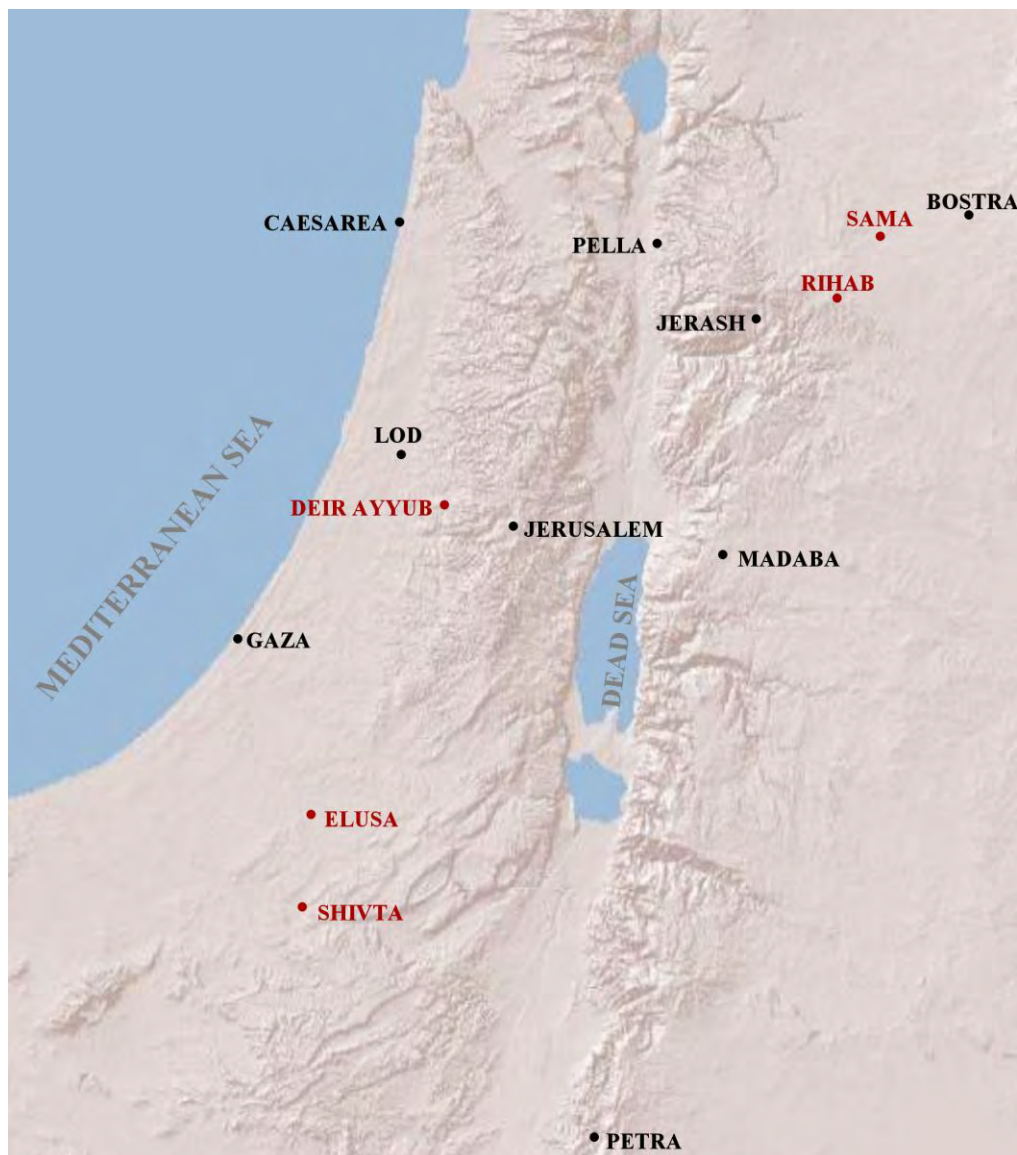


Fig. 3.7 Church or monastic inscriptions dated c.630-660 (in red).
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Only a cluster of examples at Rihab, Khirbet es-Samra and Hagios Giorgos at Sama (637), dated to the Byzantine-Arab interim, provide some indication of patronal activity between 630 and 640 in the Transjordan.⁴⁸⁷ These are supplemented by inscriptions commemorating refurbishments in the churches of Shivta (639/40) and Elusa (633) from the Negev.⁴⁸⁸ Finally, a single inscription mentioning the *hegoumenos* Elias at Deir Ayyub in the environs of Lod/Lyddā, dated to 641, provides the last dated example of patronal intervention in a monastic context until the later seventh century (Fig. 3.7).⁴⁸⁹

The sudden gap in dated inscriptions commemorating ambitious programmes of building between c.614-c.660, especially beyond the Transjordan, is striking and is not remedied by our inability to recognise cases of monastic construction not accompanied by dated epigraphic formulas. This hiatus is difficult to examine but is probably related to the issues addressed in Chapter One where we saw that problematic excavations have resulted in poor understanding of seventh-century phases and an over reliance upon dated inscriptions to confirm continued building in the region.⁴⁹⁰ Neither can the possibility that the anxieties among local populations generated by military advance and the instabilities during the first *fitnāh* be fully discounted.⁴⁹¹ A comparable break in urban investment in civic structures in this period – which may again link to the interpretational problems outlined earlier – may indicate that the hiatus in monastic building programmes simply represents part of temporary trend of limited construction in Palestinian urban centres in this period about which we

⁴⁸⁷ On the inscriptions of Rihab see Avi Yonah 1947-1948 and Piccirillo 1993c: 310-314. On Khirbet es-Samra see Piccirillo 1993c: 305-309. Further examples include the church of Nebha dated to 656 and the monastery of Hagios Giorgos at Deir el-Addas: Donceel-Voûte 1988: 53, 395-405.

⁴⁸⁸ On the inscriptions associated with Shivta and Elusa: see Negev 1981: 48-62. For Deir Ayyub see Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904-09: 359. The inscription at Sama is discussed in Schick 1995: 448 which I have been unable to consult personally.

⁴⁸⁹ For Deir Ayyub see Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904-1909: 359.

⁴⁹⁰ See pages 127-129.

⁴⁹¹ Kennedy 2004: 75-80 It is also possible that an earthquake, reported in the year 657 or 659, may also have disrupted further construction: *Maronite Chronicle*: AG 971 (tr. Palmer 1993: 31), Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6150 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 347, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 484-485). Discussions of the earthquakes in region in the early medieval period appear in Reda-Sbeinati, Ryad Darawcheh and Mikhail Mouty 2005: 360-367.

currently know little.⁴⁹² In any case, identified cases of refurbishment at monastic cult sites by the 690s would indicate that such developments were temporary and were in no way detrimental to the broader continuities of monastic life. That the lack of new dated construction cannot be seen as evidence for abandonment is clear from the fact that this apparent stasis in building went hand-in-hand with continuity of monastic life, attested by the transferral of the relics of Sophia, the mother of Sabas, to a chapel in Mar Sabas in the 650s and the continued contact between the larger Chalcedonian centres and the Byzantine world where figures such as Stephen of Dor were still able to traverse the newly formed political boundaries of the East Mediterranean and participate in the Second Lateran Council in 649.⁴⁹³

This pattern supports the impression of socio-economic stability for the majority of institutions and their primary patrons. Not until the last decade of the eighth century do the sources provide any indication of impoverishment among local Christian groups.⁴⁹⁴ The apparent stability of monastic occupation compliments the data emerging from urban excavation where levels of production and occupation appear equally stable.⁴⁹⁵ Although a decline in the level of structural investment from sixth-century levels remains plausible, the picture which emerges from the material can in no respect support an argument of deterioration.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹² Walmsley 2007:36-38.

⁴⁹³ On the continued epistolary exchange between Palestine and Rome see Pope Martin, *Letter to John of Philadelphia* ed. PL 87 153-164, Pope Martin, *Letter to the Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch*, PL 87 175-180, Pope Martin, *Letter to Theodore, Bishop of Esbus*, PL 87: 163-166. On Stephen of Dor's attendance at the Lateran council: *Mansi* X: 867.

⁴⁹⁴ See pages 215-218.

⁴⁹⁵ Thus the apparent occupational stability in the southern Dekapolis, at sites in Rihab, Khirbet es Samra and Mar Elyas are reflected in the excavations in the urban centres of Jarash, 'Ammān and Umm Qays, see Al Daire 2001, Clark 1986, Gawilkowski 1992, Gawilkowski 2004, Vriezen 1992, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001, Walmsley 2011b and Walmsley 2011c and Weber 1998. Similar correlations can be proposed further south on the Madaba plateau, where the church renovations of Kastron Mefa'a and Mount Nebo indicate ongoing patterns of prosperity also reflected in Madaba: Di Segni 1992 and Foran 2008. In the Galilee and Scythopolis, the excavations in Tiberias/ Tabariyah and Capernaum reflect similar levels of renovation and investment in urban centre: Hirschfeld 2004b, Magness 1997, Stacey 2004, Tsafirir and Foerster 1994 and Tzaferis 1989. Compare this with the continued occupation of Kursi: Tzaferis 1983: 15-16 and Stacey 2004: 15.

⁴⁹⁶ Part of the issue in discussions of Christian continuities is that our estimations of Christian prosperity are heavily interlinked with cases of 'change' in the form of re-building or structural intervention. This, regrettably, often fosters more negative assumptions about Christian life during periods of apparent stasis which may not

This suggests that the relative wealth of the Palestinian population, to which we may link the patronage of monastic communities, had proved resilient to the political fluctuations of the period. The Nessana papyri endorse this view, with rates of donation, production and property ownership reflecting similar levels among the papyri of the early seventh century and the later corpus of the 670s and 680s.⁴⁹⁷

The general survival of substantial revenue structures and monastic wealth in other regional contexts is evident from the organised response to the earthquake of 659 where damage to several sites was followed by programmes of repair.⁴⁹⁸ Two examples, that of Jabal Harūn and the three churches at Pella, are known through archaeological research; with two further cases, the Euthymios Monastery (Mishor-Adummim) and the Baptism monastery (Qasr Al-Yahud), known from an entry in the *Maronite Chronicle*.⁴⁹⁹ Excavations at all of these sites have indicated well-executed attempts to restore the monasteries to their original functional form, with no suggestions of substantial material impoverishment.⁵⁰⁰

We know nothing of the identities of their patrons – none of the restorations were accompanied by inscriptions – but the relative rapidity of the reconstructions reflects the continued centrality of the sites to local life. Equally, the reconstructions indicate that

have resulted in perceivable declines to daily life for its contemporaries. Thus the examples of Deir 'Ain 'Abata and the churches of Kastron Mefa'a were maintained throughout the seventh century with no indications of substantial structural interventions. Deir 'Ain 'Abata is addressed in Politis 2012: 115-158. For a discussion of the main church complex of Hagios Stephanos see Piccirillo and Alliata 1994 and the earlier reports in Piccirillo 1991: 327-364 and Alliata 1991: 365-422. For the Church of Hagios Paulos see Piccirillo 1997: 375-394, Sanmori and Pappalardo 1997 and Pappalardo 2002: 385-440. The Church of the Tabula Ansata see Piccirillo 2003:285-324 and the Church of the Lions see Alliata 1992: 227-250.

⁴⁹⁷ Thus the grain yields recorded in *P. Colt* 82, 83, from the early and late seventh centuries do not indicate a substantial drop in production yields following the conquest.

⁴⁹⁸ On the dating of the earthquake, see Guidoboni *et al* 1994: 355-358. See also Russell 1985: 46-47.

⁴⁹⁹ On the churches of Pella see Smith 1992. Concerning the destruction phase at Jabal Harūn, tentatively linked to the earthquake of 659 (the destruction phase is, nevertheless, dated to the 7th century): see Mikkola *et al* 2008: 135-136. *Maronite Chronicle*: AG 971 (tr. Palmer 1993: 31). Archaeological discussions of both sites are offered in Meimaris 1989 and Hirschfeld 1993: 339-371 and in Waheeb 2003. However, the reliance of the reports on textual accounts to provide the skeletal chronology of the excavations makes it difficult to verify or discredit the claims of the *Maronite Chronicle*. However, each of these sites continued to function into the eighth century, with the site of Jabal Harūn, Euthymios and the Baptism monastery remaining in use into late ninth century.

⁵⁰⁰ In the case of Jabal Harūn, the entire church was reoccupied and the roof-support system modified to improve support: Mikkola *et al* 2008: 138-139.

revenues sufficient to facilitate restorative projects were still attainable by each community in the mid-seventh century. Most notably, there is no evidence in the source material to support any institutional opposition to such reconstructions from the Arab regime; in contrast reports from Theophanes, Michael the Syrian and the *Chronicle 1234* about the earthquake of 659 suggests that Arab authorities may have actively contributed to the restorative measures in some cases.⁵⁰¹ Whatever the reasons for the paucity of evidence for church construction from the 640s-660s, following the 670s, church restoration intensified.⁵⁰² Interventions are attested at Khirbet Yattir (682) and mark the beginnings of a surge in the 680s followed by two dated inscriptions from Rabba (687) and Hagios Varos, near modern Amman (687), and the renovations at the monastery of Deir 'Ain 'Abata (691).⁵⁰³ The examples of the Transjordan are less surprising in view of the continued patterns of construction in the region throughout the transitional period.⁵⁰⁴ Jerusalem, Khirbet Yattir and Deir 'Ain 'Abata, however, provide evidence of resurgence in architectural interventions at monastic sites in regions where patterns of building appear to have been interrupted after 610.

All provide a precursor to the well-acknowledged programmes of refurbishment in the early eighth century.⁵⁰⁵ The explanations for this apparent surge in patronal activity are unclear, but Mu'āwiyah's successful establishment of Umayyad control over Syria-Palestine, and the ensuing stabilities of his nineteen-year reign (the longest period of authority by a

⁵⁰¹ This relates to the Great Church of Edessa. It is unclear if the impact of the earthquake of 659 was felt further south in Palestine and the Transjordan: Agapios, *Kitab al-'Unwan*: 493 (ed. and tr. Vasiliev 1912: 493), *Chronicle 1234*: 288 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920, tr. Hoyland 2011: 171), *Michael the Syrian*, 11.XIII, 436-437/457 (ed. Chabot 1899-1910, tr. Hoyland 2011: 171) and Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6170 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 356-357, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 496-497).

⁵⁰² Only one inscription can be attributed to the 660s. This is a renovation to the floor of the Church of Hagios Giorgos undertaken in 665/666. The renovations were made to an existing church constructed in 633/4: Chaniotis, Stroud and Strubbe 2013.

⁵⁰³ For Khirbet Yattir see Eshel, Magness and Shenhav 2000: 153-168 and the discussion of the dating in Di Segni 2003: 253-255. Rabaa see Gelzer 1892: 253. For Hagios Varos see Najjar and Sa'id 1994: 547-560. On the renovations of Deir 'Ain 'Abata: Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: 393-416.

⁵⁰⁴ Piccirillo 1993c: 304-314.

⁵⁰⁵ See pages 195-196.

single ruler for the seventh century), were likely a contributing factor.⁵⁰⁶ His reign was characterised by renewal in institutional investment in urban centres at Hammat Gader, Jerusalem, Damascus and, possibly, Tiberias – programmes which may have collectively marked the gradual emergence of favourable social and economic conditions which facilitated the church construction around Jerusalem and the Dekapolis.⁵⁰⁷

Mu‘āwiyah’s reputation among contemporary and later Christian writers for relative cordiality to Christian communities offers a partial explanation for the relative wealth directed at Christian institutions in this period.⁵⁰⁸ Whether Mu‘āwiyah actively contributed to such projects is unclear (if unlikely) but the source material gives no indication that church and monastic restorations were met by any opposition from the newly established Arab administration.⁵⁰⁹

A renewed focus on urban restoration and upkeep under Mu‘āwiyah, the tolerance of the existing and predominantly Christian administrative framework and the relative political and economic autonomy of some urban and rural centres in this period appears the most plausible explanation for the visible increase in investment at Christian cult sites by the late seventh century.⁵¹⁰

The continued ability of Christians to access positions of authority and wealth in the Arab bureaucracy throughout the seventh century is often credited with the resurgence of ecclesiastical building in the late seventh century.⁵¹¹ Yet this is part of a much broader political landscape which also saw Mu‘āwiyah’s active endorsement of established modes of

⁵⁰⁶ On the reign of Mu‘āwiyah see Foss 2002, Foss 2010, Hoyland 2006 and Humphreys 2006. Foss 2002 sees Mu‘āwiyah’s reign as the genesis of later Arab fiscal system. More critical of this approach is John 2003: 419-421.

⁵⁰⁷ On Hammat Gader see Blau 1982, Di Segni 1992b: 307-328 and Di Segni 1997: 237-240.

⁵⁰⁸ *Maronite Chronicle*: AG 971 (tr. Palmer 1993: 31).

⁵⁰⁹ *The Maronite Chronicle*: AG 971 (tr. Palmer 1993: 31).

⁵¹⁰ Thus at Hammat Gader we note the first dated case of an urban renovation since the early seventh century: Blau 1982 and Di Segni 1992b. A number of studies have noted that Mu‘āwiyah’s reign was viewed by Christian group as a period of relative prosperity: Brock 1987: 61, Hoyland 1997a: 194-200, 263 n. 14 and Robinson 2000: 47.

⁵¹¹ Humphreys 2010: 55.

expression of authority through his engagement with the established Christian topography of the region.⁵¹² A report in the *Maronite Chronicle* informs us that Mu‘āwiyah’s proclamation as Caliph in Jerusalem was accompanied by a symbolic pilgrimage to the Church of the Anastasis and the other churches interwoven with the ceremonial life of the Christians in the city.⁵¹³ This statement needs to be read with caution – such material often reflects concerted efforts by later Christian authors to secure recognition or protection of such sites from appropriation (or hostility) by Muslim communities and does not always reflect seventh-century reality.⁵¹⁴

However, as Arietta Papaconstantinou has observed, displays of religious inclusiveness by Mu‘āwiyah can also be interpreted as political gestures. Growing internal tensions within the early Muslim community in the Hijaz, which culminated in civil war shortly after Mu‘āwiyah’s death, made the consolidation of support among the politically and economically dominant Christian population of Syria-Palestine an expedient political policy.⁵¹⁵ Mu‘āwiyah’s active endorsement of the Anastasis and the Church of Edessa, two sites imbued with symbolic associations of imperial rule and Christian triumphalism, may, in one light, be seen as direct gestures to garner support through the use of existing conventions of religious and political expression.⁵¹⁶

Mu‘āwiyah’s relative tolerance of Christian sites correlates well with the general

⁵¹² *Maronite Chronicle*: AG 971 (Palmer 1993: 31). *The Maronite Chronicle* reports that Mu‘āwiyah embarked on a progress in Jerusalem to the Church of the Anastasis and the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane. Similarly, the permission granted to Christians by Mu‘āwiyah to reconstruct the Great Church of Edessa, another prominent site, may add weight to this hypothesis: see Hoyland 1997a: 646.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁴ Thus the issues surrounding the Ordinances of Umar and the meeting between the Patriarch Sophronios and Umar in the early seventh century represent two such cases which reflect much later developments and attitudes towards Christians: Busse 1986, Sahas 2006. On the gradual formalisation of the ordinances of Umar, see the most recent study in Levy Rubin 2011B: 57-81.

⁵¹⁵ Papaconstantinou 2008: 137-139. Hoyland 1997a: 551-553 contrasts this with the more explicit Islamic declarations emanating from Ibn Zubayr in the Hijaz. For an overview of tensions between the two groups in the late-seventh century: see Kennedy 2004: 82-98. See also Robinson 2005: 31-48 and Hoyland 1997a: 551-556.

⁵¹⁶ For the importance of the Church of the Anastasis as a central point of urban life in Jerusalem: see Baldovin 1982: 140-154. This is also reflected in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34) where the church is by far the most common station of the Melkite liturgy: *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34): 29. Griffith 2006 offers a useful summary of the growing importance of Jerusalem to Chalcedonian thought following the Arab conquest.

fluidity in religious practice by the 680s which can be observed with the presence of Muslim governors, their families or their *mawali* clients, at monasteries or cult centres in the late seventh century. Most explicit are two letters from the Nessana hoard of the Sergios and Bakkhos monastery which document the request from the governor of Gaza, Abū Rashīd, for two guides to accompany his wife, Ubayya, and later a client – the *mawla* Abū al-Mughīra – to Mount Sinai in the consecutive years 683 and 684.⁵¹⁷

The reactions of the various monastic communities to this additional demographic are ambiguous, though in some cases – notably Anastasios of Sinai – negative responses are clearly to be read as part of Christian anti-Muslim polemic emerging by the 690s.⁵¹⁸ The extent to which Anastasios encapsulates the broader response of the monastic population of the region is unclear and Anastasios’ hostility to Muslim rule cannot be easily disassociated from the perspective of his background as a monk of Mount Sinai: a community which maintained frequent connection to the Byzantine world and was strongly integrated with the economic and social fluctuations of the urban elite based in the cities of Syria-Palestine.⁵¹⁹ The general situation of the 690s, which saw the more ambitious construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the introduction of reformed Islamic coinage, to which scholars have linked a number of Christian apocalyptic writings, also alludes to a broader series of changes that may have underpinned Anastasios’ concerns.⁵²⁰

It is impossible to know whether the Christian-Muslim devotional boundaries carefully delineated by Anastasios reflect normative social practice between Muslims and Christians at Sinai by the later seventh century. There are a number of indications of more

⁵¹⁷ See *P. Colt* 73 (dated to December 683) for the letter relating to Ubayya and *P. Colt* 72 for that concerning Abū Mughīra.

⁵¹⁸ On this, with relevant bibliography, see Hoyland 1997a: 100-101.

⁵¹⁹ On this see pages 232-234.

⁵²⁰ The most comprehensive discussion of the Dome of the Rock, including its dating, appears in Grabar 2006. Earlier studies of the inscriptions, including a transcription, appear in Kessler 1970. The most notable proponent of this thesis is Gerrit Reinink see Reinink 1992: 149–187 and Reinink 2000: 227–24. This has been expanded to other sources, notable the account of the monk of Bet Hale: Reinink 2006. On the coinage reform: see Walker 1965.

fluid social arrangements within other cult contexts in the region in the same period, many of which derive from archaeological and epigraphic material. As explored earlier, at the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev – a site incorporating a subterranean reliquary crypt – an Arabic inscription was placed on one of the flag stones which paved the atrium of the complex by *Hakim Ibn Abi-'Asma*, a *mawlā* of Abd-Allah Ibn Amr Ibn al-Ās, alongside several similar dedications executed in Greek (Fig. 3.8).⁵²¹ Further examples in the atrium from As'ād b. Ghalīb (possibly accompanied by a companion Abū Sa'īd) and al-Badr of Ayla (later attested in the Wadi Hajjaj on the path to Mount Sinai), dated on palaeographic grounds to the late seventh and eighth centuries respectively, propose the continuation of this practice well into the Umayyad period (Fig. 3.6).⁵²² I would propose that the contemporary inscriptions of Horvat Berachot be interpreted as a further fixture of this social context;⁵²³ there are others, which remain unpublished, from monasteries such as Kastellion, Horvat Qasra and the Martyrios Monastery of Ma'ale Adummim, which indicate the extension of the practice across the region.⁵²⁴

The minimal attention paid to the physical context and content of Arabic inscriptions has obscured a more complex appreciation of their various meanings. Some broad characteristics may, however, be proposed.

The majority of the Arabic inscriptions currently identified appear to have been executed when the churches and monastic sites still functioned as venues of Christian cult worship. Deir 'Ain 'Abata remained in use until the early ninth century, Horvat Qasra into

⁵²¹Nevo 1989. A number of similar inscriptions have also been noted among churches in the Negev although their spatial contexts are not well recorded: Nevo, Cohen and Heftman 1993: 15-16.

⁵²²Sharon 1993.

⁵²³Drori and Drori 1979: 324-326.

⁵²⁴On Horvat Qasra: see Kloner 1990. On the Martyrios monastery: see Magen 1993: 188. The inscriptions of Kastellion are mentioned in Patrīch 1995: 143. The inscription of Deir 'Ain 'Abata is addressed in Brock, Canby, Al-Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012. The inscription could not be dated more securely than seventh to tenth centuries. Its location, situated adjacent to the entrance of the cave (the focal point of the cult activity of the church suggests that it was probably inscribed when the church still actively functioned. The fact that activity at Deir 'Ain 'Abata is attested until the early ninth century may support this hypothesis: Politis 2012: 115-158.

the late eighth and, as we have seen, since there is no indication in the Arab inscriptions of Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Horvat Berachot that would link these Arab inscriptions to squatter occupation either.⁵²⁵ We may assume too that these sites remained in use into the mid-eighth century.

Although we cannot determine the religious identity of those who commissioned the graffito inscriptions (it is usually assumed that the patrons were Muslim),⁵²⁶ it is significant that the majority of them are characterised by petitions and were executed at Christian cult sites with identified intercessory associations.⁵²⁷ Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Horvat Berachot both incorporated reliquary crypts, Horvat Qasra, a Second Temple-period tomb and Deir 'Ain 'Abata was another with clear associations with the Prophet Lot.⁵²⁸

Several of the Arabic inscriptions were positioned in prominent areas of church space and were executed with considerable precision. At Horvat Berachot, the inscription of Yūsuf ibn Yāsīn was inserted on the south wall of the crypt, adjacent to the relic shaft, in a position highly visible to devotees. Its size (over 50cm) and technical refinement add weight to the impression that the inscription was intended to convey an explicit association between Yūsuf ibn Yāsīn and the crypt behind the east wall (Fig. 3.2-3.6).⁵²⁹

The prominence and the significance of the spatial context of the Horvat Berachot examples raise additional considerations about the general motivations for such inscriptions

⁵²⁵ See Appendix A. Two further examples are those of Mount Nebo and Jabal Harūn which were both inscribed during periods when the monasteries actively functioned see 1147-1148.

⁵²⁶ Thus Drori and Drori 1979: 324-326 and Nevo 1988 both interpret these inscriptions as Islamic. This is likely, although for a discussion of the difficulty of identifying overtly Islamic messages in inscriptions see Hoyland 1997b. Hoyland has noted that the style of these inscriptions, which often petition for divine assistance, mirror the earlier Greek examples of the Byzantine period. For a discussion of the problems with identifying Greek graffito inscriptions dating to the post-Byzantine period see pages 357-358.

⁵²⁷ Horvat Berachot: see Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979: 310-311. Tsafrir and Hirschfeld discuss the reliquary crypt which is a feature also noted at Rehovot-in-the-Negev: see Tsafrir 1988a: 50-51. On the earlier phenomenon of redeveloping tombs of the Second Temple period see Di Segni 2006/2007.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.* On the association of Deir 'Ain 'Abata with the Prophet Lot see Meimarīs, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: inscription 13.

⁵²⁹ Drori and Drori 1979: 324-326.



1. Let Allah favour you ya-Hakim
2. Ibn Abi -'Asmā *mowla* (of)
3. 'Abd-allah
4. 'Amr Ibn al-Āṣ
5. Amen Lord of (of) Moses ' [illegible]

Fig. 3.8 Arabic inscription from the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev
© Nevo 1989



Fig. 3.9 Kastoria Mefia'a, Church of Hagios Stephanos, dedicatory inscription in front of the bema rail.
© Reynolds 2012

in church space. Although undoubtedly pious, the inscriptions may well also have been simultaneously imbued with political associations. It is tempting to view these interventions in antagonistic terms: although the church's *tabula ansata* is no longer extant, Horvat Berachot, like its contemporary structures across the region, must have owed its existence to a locally prominent Christian family. The emergence of an inscription like that of Yūsuf ibn Yāsīn in a church, which stresses the emergent political connections of *mawali*, may then have carried more overt political associations directed at established elite groups. If the Abd-ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ mentioned in the flagstone inscription of Rehovot-in-the-Negev is to be associated with the Arab general of the same name (who tradition links to land ownership in Palestine),⁵³⁰ the inscription of the church of Horvat Berachot may provide another instance of the use of church space as a platform to promote wider transitions in localised governance by the later seventh century. The characteristics of the Horvat Berachot inscription, although in some respects unique, are mirrored to a certain extent at other sites.⁵³¹ A comparative example is known from the Kufic inscription at Deir ʿAin ʿAbata which was inscribed at the entrance to the cave-crypt incorporated into the main monastic church and those of Horvat Qasra (again unpublished) which were inscribed into the cave wall.⁵³²

How the emergence of Arabic inscriptions in cult spaces compared with existing normative trends among the Christian population remains a question that warrants further consideration. By the late seventh century, however, such inscriptions existed within a more convoluted social framework where Greek inscriptions remained the predominant means through which expressions of piety or status among monastic or clerical circles were

⁵³⁰ Lecker 1989: 24-37 who surveys the evidence for ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ' landholdings in Palestine.

⁵³¹ Rehovot-in-the-Negev, the Arabic inscription of Asʿad b. Ghālib was placed on a flagstone at the entrance to the basilica complex with Al-Badr's inscription, some decades later, placed on the chancel arch of the church: Nevo 1989 and Sharon 1993.

⁵³² Kloner 1990 and Brock, Canby, al-Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012: 417.

articulated.⁵³³ The presence of Islamic formulas in graffiti conveys the impression of a still relatively fluid devotional and political situation, but equally one where the status of monasteries and Christian cult sites as venues where temporal and spiritual authority converged was occasionally recognised and negotiated by Muslims.⁵³⁴

Whilst these examples would suggest a more complex association with the Arab authorities than that proposed by more traditional perceptions of monastic social marginalisation, there is little indication in the data that these associations prompted more widespread patterns of institutionally-sponsored support for monastic communities.⁵³⁵ This did not, however, preclude the continued importance of monastic foundations within localised contexts and, in this respect, the notable occupational stabilities at monastic sites across the region confirm their continued role as central components of localised devotional life in Palestine across the seventh century.

3.6 THE EIGHTH-CENTURY TRAJECTORY: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

This stability was, however, punctuated by two notable transitions. Even with the revised epigraphic readings and diagnostic chronologies proposed by recent research, there is no evidence to suggest that the wave of new monastic foundations which had accelerated during the fifth and sixth centuries continued beyond the early seventh century.⁵³⁶ Only three examples of post-Byzantine foundation – Khirbet Yattir, Mount Skopos and Khirbet es-

⁵³³ Di Segni 2009: 352-368 offers the most comprehensive view of epigraphic trends in the region between the sixth and eighth centuries. On the continued use of Greek in Palestinian monastic life: see notes 757 and 762.

⁵³⁴ The use of the *basmala* in these earlier inscriptions, most dated to the seventh and eighth centuries, appear to support their identification as Muslim although the *basmala* itself does not contravene Christian sensibilities: see Hoyland 1997b for a discussion.

⁵³⁵ Alternatively, the churches of Rehovot and Horvat Berachot, whilst both probably continuing into the eighth century, show little indication of renovation see Appendix A. Deir 'Ain 'Abata, similarly shows no evidence for intervention either although the site was occupied until the late eighth or early ninth century. On the occupational history of the site see the preliminary discussions in Politis 1992, Politis 1994, Politis 1995 and Politis 2011. The final report appears in Politis 2012.

⁵³⁶ This is borne out in the epigraphic discussion of Di Segni 1999 who records a fairly substantial drop in dedications by the eighth century.

Shubeika – have been identified. The rural contexts of the monasteries of Khirbet Yattir and Khirbet es-Shubeika, also signal another trend, where patterns of new monastic building following 700 were increasingly linked to village contexts and communities.⁵³⁷ That the major foundations of the Byzantine period – such as Sinai or the Judean Desert foundations – continued to function is demonstrated by the significant occupational phases which have emerged from the results of continued excavation or research at these centres.⁵³⁸ But examples of patronal investment in monastic sites following the 630s point to efforts at the maintenance or expansion of existing sites rather than new building by the later seventh and early eighth century and a gradual consolidation of the existing Christianised landscape of cult sites.⁵³⁹ These renovations increasingly responded to the requirements of local devotional trends (the majority rural), and demonstrate the patronal intervention of ‘village collectives’ rather than the urban elite interventions of earlier periods.⁵⁴⁰ Christian building in Umayyad areas after the 690s is also characterised by the increasing prominence of clerical officials as the primary sponsors of restorative programmes. In the Church of Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa’a (718) and the buildings at the monastic sites of Ramot (762), Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata (691) and al-Quweisma, priests, bishops and monks are listed as the main

⁵³⁷ Walmsley 2005 and De Vries 2000 both link this to the shifts in settlement away from urban centres. The pattern is borne out with the majority of post-Byzantine church dedications. For Rihab and Khirbet es-Samra see Piccirillo 1993c: 304-314; Khirbet Yattir see Eshel, Magness and Shenhav 2000; and Khirbet es-Shubeika see Syon 2003 and Tzaferis 2003. For Mount Skopos see Amit, Seligman and Zilberbod 2003. The only known example of a renovation to an urbanised centre (although the extent of Byzantine/Umayyad Madaba remains unknown) is the Church of the Theotokos in Madaba: Di Segni 1992.

⁵³⁸ See Appendix A for individual discussions of what is known about the occupation of the sites in the Umayyad and Abbasid periods.

⁵³⁹ Mosaic floors are often the primary means of observing this trend. Thus in the examples we current know which date from the eighth century only the church of Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa’a can be securely interpreted as an eighth-century foundation. Evidence for new monastic foundations is also limited. It is unclear, for example, if the inscription of Deir el-Addas, dated to 722, commemorates a renovation phase or a new construction: see Donceel-Voutê 1988: 54-53. Other monastic sites, such as ‘Ayn al-Kanisah appear to have been renovations to pre-existing foundations: Piccirillo 1994e.

⁵⁴⁰ Thus in the example of Kastron Mefa’a, dated to 718, the figures which appear in the inscription are primarily linked to the settlement: Piccirillo 1994h: 244-246. Others, such as the inscription of Al-Quweisma (717/718) and Khirbet Yattir appear to have been commissioned by monks or clergy, whom we presume, were attached to the church: Di Segni 2003: 253-254. On al-Quweisma: see Piccirillo 1984, 329-340, Schick 1989: 264-265; Schick and Emsaytif 1991:25-340 and the discussion of the Aramaic inscription in Puech 1984: 341-346.

benefactors for the mosaic schemes.⁵⁴¹ This likely represents the culmination of the increasing role of the church as both the primary administrative body in the region by the seventh century and the institution to which elite aspirations, in terms of social status and role, were increasingly drawn. Aside from Nessana, this conflation of clerical and civic roles among the Palestinian elite also emerges in the dedicatory inscription of the Hagios Stephanos church at Kastron Mefa'a where the *archon* and *oikonomos* of the settlement, John son of Isaac, was also a deacon of the church (Fig. 3.9).⁵⁴²

The apparent disappearance in urban elite investment in Christian cult sites during the Umayyad period may have responded to more general shifts in the institutions and offices to which urban elite wealth were progressively directed. As will be explored below, the gradual emergence of mosques and *sūq* structures in a number of prominent urban contexts – Jarash, Tiberias (Ṭabariyyah) and 'Ammān – provides some tentative indications of where patron priorities were increasingly directed during the opening decades of the eighth century.⁵⁴³ Nonetheless, the more reserved nature of structural interventions at monasteries and the decreasing number of new foundations following 630 may also allude to more substantial changes in the relative wealth or priorities of Christian patrons by 700 which we cannot currently recognise.⁵⁴⁴

It is in this respect that our general inability to make anything more than broad observations about the social and economic fortunes of Palestinian Christian elite structures

⁵⁴¹ On Hagios Stephanos: see Piccirillo 1994h: 244-246. On Ramot: see Arav, Di Segni and Kloner 1990: 313-320. On the inscription of Deir 'Ain 'Abata: Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: 393-416. It is a pattern also replicated in the schemes of Deir el-Addas (dated 722): Donceel-Vouté 1988: 45-53 and in Ma'in (dated 719/720): Piccirillo 1993c: 196-201.

⁵⁴² Piccirillo 1994h: inscription 1.

⁵⁴³ On the mosque of Jarash: Walmsley and Damgaard 2005 and Damgaard 2011. On Tiberias: Cytryn-Silverman 2009. On 'Ammān: Northedge 1993.

⁵⁴⁴ Of the known cases of inscriptions which date to the Umayyad period, the many record cases of renovation or the laying of new floors in existing churches rather than the construction of new complexes. Thus the examples of Sakhad (665/666), Deir 'Ain 'Abata (691) and the Chapel of the Holy martyrs (701) represent renovations to existing churches rather than new foundations. On the inscriptions of Sakhad see Chaniotis, Stroud and Strubbe 2013. The inscriptions of Deir 'Ain 'Abata and their dating are addressed in Maimaris, Kalliope, Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012. The chapel of the Holy martyrs, possibly a private family chapel of curial church, at Beit Safafa is discussed in Di Segni 1993b.

by the later seventh century is particularly inhibiting. As was addressed previously, the impression which emerges from the collective literary and material evidence proposes that elite Christian families survived and, in some cases, continued to prosper throughout the first century of Muslim rule. We have, however, no way of contextualising this prosperity in relation to earlier Byzantine levels and thus our estimations of the relative economic standing of Christian elites by 700 needs to be handled cautiously. What we may conclude, based on the archaeological data, is that the political transitions of the seventh century instigated no immediate impoverishment to the region. Yet there are subtle indications from the general distribution pattern of church renovations which post-date 700 of more divergent trends among Palestinian Christian groups by the early eighth century.

Virtually all the sites currently identified which provide evidence of continued investment between 670 and 750 are located either in Jerusalem and its environs or in the Transjordan. Only one example, Khirbet es-Shubeika (785) can be linked to the Galilee, and no dedications which post-date 650 are known from the Negev, or the western coastal strip stretching from 'Akkā to Gaza.⁵⁴⁵

There are several ways to explain this pattern. The apparent hiatus in investment in the regions of the Negev and Gaza may prove a construct of formal research strategies.⁵⁴⁶ The intensity of recent investigation into church buildings in modern Jordan, especially in the Kastron Mefa'a and the Madaba plateau has not been replicated in recent years in the Negev and the Gaza region; further excavation may yield a comparative pattern of church construction beyond 650.⁵⁴⁷ Equally, interpretations of excavations in what is now Israel

⁵⁴⁵ See Syon 2003 and Tzaferis 2003 for a discussion of Khirbet es-Shubeika. The latest dated inscription from a church in the Negev is that of the tomb of Salamas son of Themis in Shivta dated to 679, see Negev 1981: 59.

⁵⁴⁶ As discussed earlier, pages 20-26, the relatively early date of the Negev excavations, and their lack of systematic recording, may have created an article lacuna in evidence. Modern political issues have, for obvious reasons, prevented a more systematic survey of the area around Gaza. The excavations at Tell el-'Amr, ten kilometres outside of Gaza, would, however, indicate that existing monastic sites continued to be occupied throughout the eighth century: Elter and Hassoune 2011.

⁵⁴⁷ See notes 112-113 for the bibliographies of urban and rural excavations.

were, until recently, often framed by a pre-determined conception that the period 650 witnessed a complete cessation in the construction of churches or monastic sites – a belief which is now rejected but which still carries a legacy involving a wealth of sites where occupational chronologies have been truncated and require review.⁵⁴⁸ Excavations of churches in modern Israel in recent years, which have been disassociated from this older interpretive framework, have, however, yet to yield a comparative pattern in church building beyond the Jerusalem environs.

That earlier sites were continually occupied throughout the period has been well established through excavation: ceramics, coins or additional features such as the iconoclastic interventions of the period c.720-c.750, have, in the majority of cases, confirmed site continuities until the end of the Umayyad period. Yet these continuities among Christian cult sites do not yield evidence for intervention for the later seventh or early eighth century.

The absence of dated inscriptions may, therefore, indicate an actual cessation in monumental building programmes in this period which emerged in response to broader social and economic shifts following the 630s in these regional contexts. Certainly the disruptions to the Mediterranean trade networks had obvious implications for the settlements which supplied them.⁵⁴⁹ In the Negev, the effects of economic weakening and settlement retraction were already surfacing in response to these trends by the late seventh century: Mamshit may have already been abandoned before 750.⁵⁵⁰

Although this process was protracted – settlements such as Rehovot-in-the-Negev, Elusa and Shivta were still occupied into the ninth century; Nessana into the tenth – no ambitious programmes of building appear to have been sponsored following the seventh

⁵⁴⁸ Avni 2010, Magness 1997, Magness 2003 and Magness 2011 present some of the major studies attempting to remedy this issue. All acknowledge the relative problems with poorly recorded excavations.

⁵⁴⁹ Wickham 2005: 774-775. Walmsley 2000 presents a more vibrant picture of the seventh and eighth centuries.

⁵⁵⁰ On Mamshit: see Negev 1988 and the important qualifications in Magness 2003: 188-190, who suggests continuity into the eighth century but is more ambiguous about more substantial eighth century phases.

century.⁵⁵¹

One explanation is that the Negev and the Galilee already possessed a fully-formed Christian infrastructure and therefore required no further programmes of church building after 650.⁵⁵² The sustained pattern of church building after 650 in the Transjordan, which were undertaken in environments where existing sixth-century structures still survived, however, would caution against such arguments. By way of example, Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa'a, dedicated in 718, was constructed alongside an existing network of sixth-century churches all of which continued to function into the late eighth century.⁵⁵³ Rihab similarly exhibits a spate of church constructions in the 620s and 630s in a context which saw the continued use of earlier sixth-century structures.⁵⁵⁴

A further factor is the question of conversion. As we have seen, the idea of fairly rapid religious shifts in the Negev by the late seventh century is often raised to explain the general hiatus in Christian building in the Negev after 650 and the incorrectly perceived pattern of church abandonment in the region.⁵⁵⁵ Whilst this will be addressed again in

⁵⁵¹ Magness 2003: 177-193. On this: see Gawilkowski 2004, Walmsley 2007: 76-89 and Wickham 2005: 612-620. Rural trends, which also point to more stable (if not expanding patterns) in the seventh and eighth centuries are surveyed in Walmsley 2005, Walmsley 2008 and De Vries 2000.

⁵⁵² Of the identified churches in the Negev: Avdat (two), Elusa (one), Horvat Berachot, Mamphis (two), Nessana (three), Rehovot-in-the-Negev (one), Shivta (three) all were constructed prior to the seventh century. Problems with the chronology of a number of these sites are addressed in Magness 2003: 185-190. The churches of Avdat are discussed in the study of Negev 1997. On Elusa see Negev 1989 and Negev 1993. The church of Horvat Berachot is discussed in preliminary form in Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979. The architecture of Mamphis is surveyed in Negev 1988. The full report of the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev appears in Tsafrir *et al* 1988. For Shivta see Seagal 1983. Comparison of the churches is offered in Negev 1974. The Galilee presents a far more complex picture that can only be addressed superficially. Key sites include: Capernaum (one church), Hippo/Sussita (five churches), Kursi (two churches), Tiberias (Tabariyya) (one known church) and Tabgha (one church). The site of Capernaum is addressed in Corbo 1975. The ongoing reports for Hippos/Sussita appear in: Bordman 2005, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2004, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2005, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2005, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006, Schuler 2003, Schuler 2004, Schuler 2005, Schuler 2006, Wozniack, M., Radkowska, J. 2005. On Kursi see Tzaferis 1983. Only a single church in Tiberias has been excavated: the church of Mount Berenike. The final report is discussed in Hirschfeld 2004b: 75-123. Other churches are known from literary material and are known to have survived until the early ninth century: *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 40-41 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 212-215). On the church of Tabgha: Schneider 1937.

⁵⁵³ See note 46 and 53.

⁵⁵⁴ Piccirillo 1993c: 309-914 and the earlier discussion in Avi Yonah 1934-35.

⁵⁵⁵ Thus in the examples of Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Horvat Berachot, examples of post-Byzantine activity were automatically seen as evidence of 'Muslim' activity: Tsafrir 1988a: 26-27 and Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979: 318.

Chapter Four, it is important to stress the limitations of the ‘conversion’ hypothesis in the context of explaining the region differences patterns of church renovation that emerge in Palestine after 670. Such explanations when applied to the Negev raise some considerable difficulties, in part because the apparent cessation in church building in the Negev was not accompanied by any escalation in the construction of mosques or evidence for an increasing Muslim presence in the region.⁵⁵⁶

However, in the broader political context of the period following the 690s, the more explicit emergence of Arab and Muslim governors, who increasingly maintained their own priorities of benefaction, may explain the general waning of new large scale monasteries or cult sites even during the economic upsurge of the eighth century.⁵⁵⁷

3.7 Umayyad Monuments

The construction of the Dome of Rock by the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (c.691) is commonly perceived as the centrepiece of subsequent and more rigorous assertions of Islamic political and religious triumphalism in the region.⁵⁵⁸ Constructed at a highly symbolic topographic point of the city, in an architectural plan familiar to the Christians of the city – it resembles, and may have been based on, the Rotunda of the Church of the Anastasis – and embellished with a series of Quranic inscriptions which invoke and critique orthodox Christian perceptions of Jesus, traditional interpretations of the monument have emphasised its role as a

⁵⁵⁶ Only two small mosques can be identified although their dating is uncertain. The first is the mosque adjacent to the South Church of Shivta about which see Baly 1935: 175-77. The second is another mosque at Eshtamo‘a which has been variously dated between the eighth and tenth centuries: Magness 2003: 102-103.

⁵⁵⁷ Thus by the later seventh century the two governors of Palestine and Jordan, Abd al-Malik (later Caliph) and Sulayman ibn Sa‘d were both linked to the Umayyad family: al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldan*: 193 (ed. de Goeje 1870, tr. Khuri Hitti 2002: 301).

⁵⁵⁸ See Grabar 2006 and Kessler 1970. Griffith 2008: 164, 166 interprets the Dome as one immediately antagonistic to Christian sensibilities. Qualifications to this hypothesis are offered in Hoyland 2006: 409 and Papaconstantinou 2008: 140. On the general tradition surrounding the Dome, and its changing meaning following the eighth century, see Colby 2008. Finbar-Flood 2000 offers a discussion of the mosque of Damascus in the context of other Umayyad monumental programmes including the Dome of the Rock.

symbol of an emergent antagonism to Palestinian Christian populations under the new Marwanid regime.⁵⁵⁹ The ambiguity of the inscription has provoked a number of alternative readings regarding the motivation for its construction. Robert Hoyland, in a direct challenge to traditional interpretations, has lucidly argued for a more pragmatic reading of the inscription as one which may have been aimed at the inclusivity rather than isolation of the Christian community within the emergent Umayyad political system.⁵⁶⁰ Through a close inspection of the *Life of Michael the Sabaite*, Arietta Papaconstantinou notes that Abd al-Malik's reign was remembered among later Melkite writers as a period of relative inclusiveness for Christian communities.⁵⁶¹ Whatever the case, we have very little idea of the response it generated among monastic communities in Palestine in this period.⁵⁶²

But, for the purposes of the present discussion, the construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in 691 marks a new direction in terms of institutionally sponsored programmes of benefaction. Although a series of sixteenth-century renovations to the structure around its external facade and interior ambulatory inhibit a more complete understanding of its seventh-century form,⁵⁶³ the Dome represents the most ambitious building project undertaken in Palestine for around a century by the time of its completion. Its size and embellishment, although paralleled in the earlier churches of the Anastasis or the Nea,⁵⁶⁴ are not features which are known from other contemporary examples of church building in the seventh or eighth centuries and thus mark the beginnings of a distinct contrast between the institutional programmes sponsored by the Umayyad family and those initiated

⁵⁵⁹ On the earlier architectural precedents of the Dome of the Rock see Cresswell 1924: 20-27. The inscription is reproduced in full in Kessler 1970.

⁵⁶⁰ Qualifications to Griffith's hypothesis are offered in Hoyland 2006: 409 and Papaconstantinou 2008: 140.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶² See note 520 for Reinink's arguments that the construction generated a wave of apocalyptic sentiment among insular Christian communities. This is plausible, although there is no direct evidence that would link these sentiments to communities Palestine.

⁵⁶³ On the later renovations to the Dome of the Rock under the Mamluks and the Ottomans: Grabar 2006: 159-200.

⁵⁶⁴ On the Nea Church: see Gutfeld 2012: 141-250. On the Dome of the Rock see Cresswell 1956: 17-40 and Grabar 2006.

by Christians.

The distinction was unlikely to have been felt immediately, in view of the significance of Christians and Christian cult buildings as a social and economic demographic, but the Dome does represent a definitive turning point in terms of where the strength of institutional wealth was directed over the course of the eighth century in urban contexts. It was succeeded by similar programmes throughout the early eighth century at the al-Aqṣā mosque in Jerusalem (c.705),⁵⁶⁵ the Mosque of Damascus (c.715),⁵⁶⁶ the palace complex of ‘Ammān (eighth century);⁵⁶⁷ the mosque of Sergiopolis/Ruṣafa (730s)⁵⁶⁸ and the mosque of Jarash (720s-730s)⁵⁶⁹ (Fig. 3.10) which marked an assertive expression of distinct religious practice in the later Umayyad period. Often these complexes represent the most ambitious projects of monumental building at these sites since the sixth century, albeit ones which existed within a broader context of substantial continuity among the existing Christian cult centres.⁵⁷⁰

We should be cautious, however, in assuming that the motivations which underlay mosque construction were provoked by a uniform series of political or religious objectives: an inclination which often presents itself when sites are discussed in collective terms and not within their respective social or spatial contexts.

⁵⁶⁵ See Rosen-Ayalon 1989 for a discussion of the early Islamic monumental programmes on the Haram ash-sharīf.

⁵⁶⁶ Walmsley and Damgaard 2005 and Damgaard 2011 synthesise the results of the excavations in at the mosque of Jarash in the context of other contemporary patterns of mosque construction. Further reports from the excavations season are listed in notes 112. The most comprehensive study of the Mosque of Damascus is offered in Flood 2000.

⁵⁶⁷ See Northedge 1993: 80-88 for the most comprehensive discussion of these programmes which dated to the eighth century.

⁵⁶⁸ On the mosque at Sergiopolis-Rusafa: Key-Fowden 1999: 174-183.

⁵⁶⁹ Grabar 2006: 59-120 and a study of the developing associations with Muhammad’s night journey in Colby 2008.

⁵⁷⁰ Thus the mosque of Jarash was inserted sensitively into the existing monumental core of the existing Byzantine city. The churches, discussed in Crowfoot 1938, were excavated too early to permit a more nuanced understanding of their chronology. However, the presence of iconoclastic interventions in a number of mosaic schemes, including the Church of Hagios Giorgos and the Bishop Isaiah church indicates that mosque construction did not substantially alter the urban fabric of existing cities: see Crowfoot 1938:241-246 and Clark 1986. The dating and distribution of iconoclastic intervention is discussed in Appendix D. A further example of mosque construction is that of Tiberias/Tabariyyah which was commissioned when the church on Mount Berenike remained active. For the mosque see Cytryn-Silverman 2009. The Church of Mount Berenike in Tiberias functioned throughout the period see Hirschfeld 2004b: 92-101.

Regarding the Dome of the Rock, for instance, we must be careful to separate the building's subsequent role from our understanding of its original social and devotional context and relationship to the concurrent Christian landscape of Jerusalem.⁵⁷¹ A series of glass pilgrim's vessels adorned with distinctive Umayyad iconography, seemingly connected to the site of the Dome, imply at least some attempt during the reign of Abd al-Malik to endorse its status as a pilgrimage site through the adoption of *eulogia* ampullae of a type employed by the contemporary Christian population – a gesture which correlates well with the general impression of the fluidity of religious practice during this period.⁵⁷² It is unclear whether these ampullae were intended to supplant or coexist with their Christian counterparts; in any case, their limited geographical circulation and short period of manufacture suggests that their production ceased during the more rigorous attempts to distinguish Islamic devotional practice from its Christian counterpart during the later eighth century.⁵⁷³ Irrespective of this, these collective developments mark the gradual emergence of alternative avenues for the economic and patronal activities of Palestinian elites even if the rationale does not conform with a preconceived or recognisable 'Islamic' ideological programme.

Accompanying 'Abd al-Malik's building commissions was a much broader programme of state political and fiscal reform which saw the introduction of a new coinage to the region along an attempt to reform the fiscal system including the introduction of Arabic as the primary language within the chancellory.⁵⁷⁴ The specific features of these changes are not of direct concern to the present discussion with the exception of their impact upon administrative roles performed by monastic and clerical communities which had been a

⁵⁷¹ Colby 2008: 60-65.

⁵⁷² Raby 1999.

⁵⁷³ Bashear 1991 surveys the ḥadīth traditions which caution against perceived religious syncretism between Muslims and Christians.

⁵⁷⁴ al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldan*: 193 (ed. de Goeje 1870, tr. Khuri Hitti 2002: 301). Al-Balādhurī noted that this coincided with the dismissal of Sarjun Mansūr. The impact of the reform has been much better studied in Egyptian contexts, primarily due to the surviving papyrological material see Richter 2010 who has noted that the period 690-715 sees the rising prominence of Arab administrators in more localised contexts rather than in urban centres. See also Silpesteijn 2009a: 104-106 and Silpesteijn 2009b: 127-131 who notes the replacement of Christian pagarchs with Muslim officials in the eighth century.

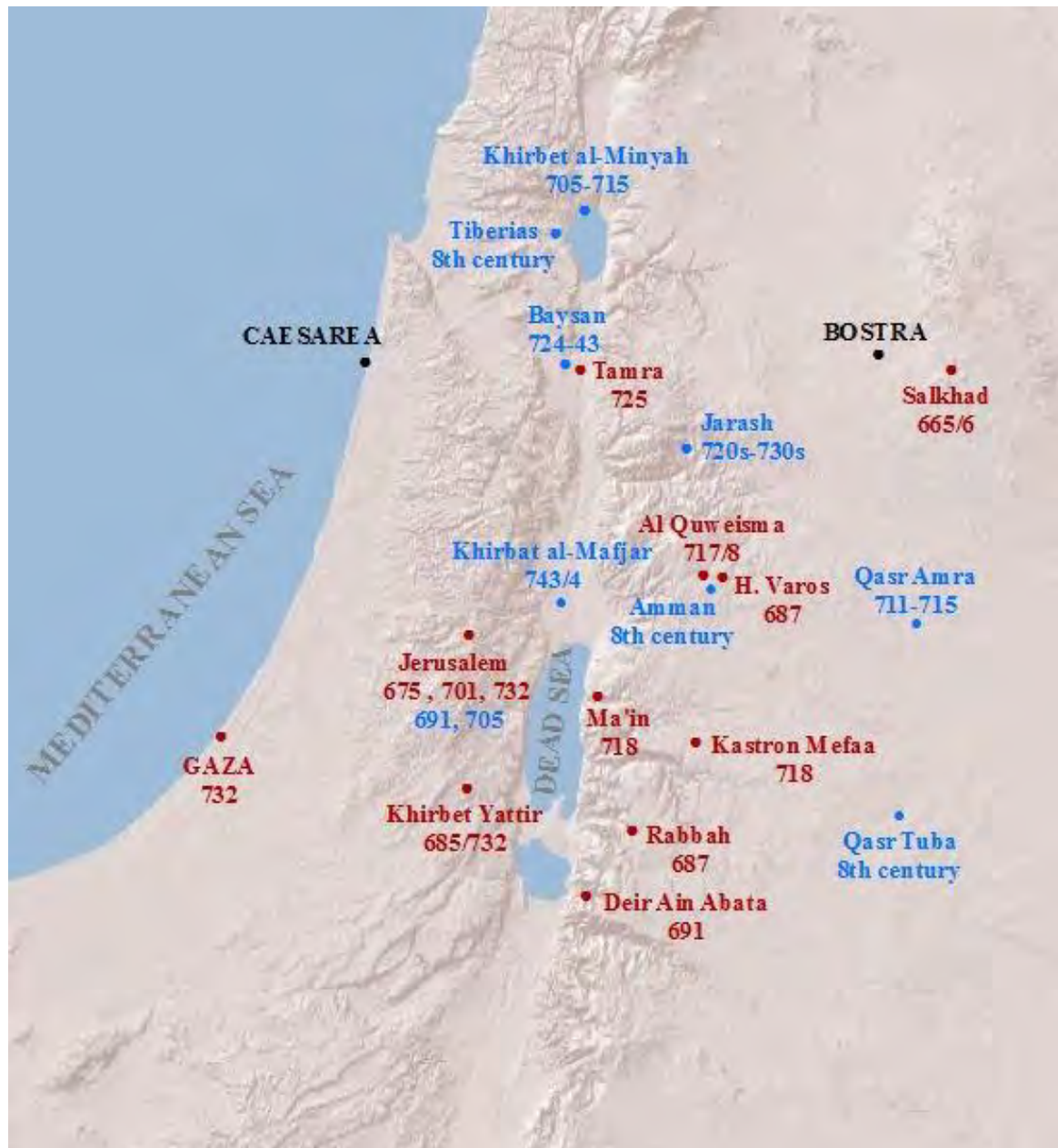


Fig. 3.10 Map of constructions or refurbishments commissioned during the Umayyad period. Those related to Christian sites are in red, with those commissioned by the Umayyad family, or with a distinctly Islamic character (such as mosques), in blue.
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feature of the earlier Arab regime.⁵⁷⁵ There are few indications that any changes were felt immediately or uniformly within the region and recent scholarship suggests that it was only during the reign of al-Walid (705-715) that these intentions came to some fruition.⁵⁷⁶ Nonetheless, a series of texts dating to the later part of Abd al-Malik's reign (685-705) suggest a clear change of mood among Christian writers and a heightened sense of eschatological expectation. Written in the 690s, the Apocalypse of the Pseudo-Methodios encapsulates the general sense of Christian anxiety which scholars have linked to the reforms of Abd al-Malik and the ensuing disruptions instigated by the second *fitnāh*.⁵⁷⁷ The context of its composition, probably in north Mesopotamia by a Monophysite,⁵⁷⁸ presents some questions of how reflective it is of localised perceptions further south in Palestine which were further removed from the disruptions generated by the internal struggles of the early Arab polity, but closer to the monumental programmes initiated during 'Abd al-Malik's reign.

But in the writings of Anastasios of Sinai we may discern the simultaneous emergence of the increasing concerns among Chalcedonians with the need to demarcate the boundaries of their own confessional identities and a renewed focus upon the questions of correct belief and orthopraxy: all likely in response to the perceived danger of religious syncretism with Arabs and Monophysites.⁵⁷⁹ Whatever the social and economic intentions of the Marwanid reforms, their impact upon the social or economic roles of monasteries or cult sites was not marked by a series of profound shifts to Christian life in the late seventh century. Programmes of Christian renovation and investment into to their own cult structures

⁵⁷⁵ There are no clear ways of exploring this regarding Palestinian contexts. However, it is notable that during the reign of al-Walid, around 715, John of Damascus left his administrative role and resumed monastic office: see the discussion of his life in Conticello 2000. The martyr Peter of Capitolias, a former civil administrator then priest who publically denounced Islam in 715 (and was subsequently executed, may also provide another example of more localised Palestinian response. For Peter of Capitolias: see Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6234 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 415-419, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 576-579). For a discussion of Theophanes conflation of Peter of Capitolias with Peter of Damascus see Hoyland 1997: 359-360.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ See the discussion by Reinink 1992.

⁵⁷⁸ On the Pseudo-Methodios, see the useful summary, with bibliography, in Greisiger 2007: 163-171.

⁵⁷⁹ Haldon 1992: 107-147.

continued throughout the early eighth century, and often in the same regional contexts, as large-scale Umayyad programmes. Among the most recently identified examples of church renovation in the eighth century is the monastic foundation of Theodoros and Kyriakos near Jerusalem, where a bathhouse and guest accommodation were added in 732.⁵⁸⁰ The execution of new mosaic schemes in the monastic churches of Deir 'Ain 'Abata (691), located near the Dead Sea, Al-Quweisma (717/8) and Tamra (725) offer further examples of these trends.⁵⁸¹ Other examples from churches which demonstrate no monastic association, such as Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a (718) and the chapel of the Holy Martyrs in Jerusalem (701) supplement this portrait of Christian renewal in the Umayyad period.⁵⁸²

These examples correlate well with a broader reflection of the later seventh and early eighth century as a period of relative economic growth in Palestine which must have responded to the stability of the Umayyad dynasty established by 'Abd al-Malik and the continued political and economic centrality of the Syro-Palestinian region.⁵⁸³

This evidence is primarily linked to the Dekapolis, at centres such as Tiberias (Ṭabariyyah), Jarash and Scythopolis (Baysān), where excavations have noted substantial eighth-century sequences, and, in the case of Jarash, clear evidence for the intensification of ceramic production which points to wider production of other commodities.⁵⁸⁴ Both Jarash and Tiberias also experienced programmes of urban renewal through the construction of mosques in the eighth century.⁵⁸⁵ This portrait of economic vibrancy in the Transjordan in the

⁵⁸⁰ See Amit 2003 for the excavation report. A further inscription, dated to 732, was uncovered at Jabaliyah near Gaza, see Saliou 2000: 405-406.

⁵⁸¹ On the schemes of Deir 'Ain 'Abata see Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012. And Politis 1992: 283. Those of Al-Quweisma are discussed in Piccirillo 1993c: 196-201. On Tamra: Chaniotis, Stroud and Strubbe 2013.

⁵⁸² On the inscription at Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa'a: Piccirillo 1994h: 244-250. Di Segni 1993c: 157-168 discusses the Beit Safafa inscription.

⁵⁸³ This has been consistently emphasised in a series of key studies. The most complete monograph is that of Walmsley 2007. Supplementary studies appear in Walmsley 2008, Walmsley 2005 and Walmsley 2000 and Wickham 2005: 612-619, 774-779.

⁵⁸⁴ On Jarash see Gawilkowski 1995, Gawilkowski 2004 and Walmsley 2000.

⁵⁸⁵ Jarash's can be more securely linked to the reign of Hisham, 723-743. On the mosque of Jarash see Walmsley and Damgaard 2005 and Damgaard 2011.

eight century has not been fully explained, but must, in part, link to the increasing regionalisation of production by the late sixth century which placed the Dekapolis (especially Jarash) at the centre of a regional network that flourished independently of the Mediterranean exchange system.⁵⁸⁶ The more explicit continuities in Christian cult building around Jarash, and further south on the Madaba plateau, may reflect the endurance of these systems (and the revenue bases that facilitated them) in the opening decades of the eighth century.⁵⁸⁷

In contrast, in parts of the Negev, the progressive collapse of the Mediterranean distribution networks of oil and grain coincided with a gradual retraction in settlement occupation by the late seventh and early eighth century.⁵⁸⁸ We cannot quantify the impact of these changes on Negev Christian communities in subtle terms, but the abrupt hiatus in church construction by the seventh century followed by the abandonment of these sites a century later, suggests a progressive strain in the ability of localised Christian groups to sustain the existing rates of church renovation and construction.⁵⁸⁹

But the general regional perspective which emerges from the Jerusalem environs, the Galilee and the Dekapolis and Transjordan, supports a general impression of the period c.690-c.749 as one of continued social and economic continuity at an urban and rural level and one of renewal in terms of institutional or monumental investment within urban cores. Besides the programmes of mosque building discussed above, the construction and refurbishment of colonnaded *sūqs* or bathhouses at several urban centres – Jarash (720s-730s), Scythopolis/Baysan (720s-730s), and Tiberias (undated but certainly Umayyad) – are the most indicative examples of this pattern (Fig. 3.11-3.12).⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁶ Walmsley 2000: 280-285, 321-328.

⁵⁸⁷ Notes of the churches in the Madaba plateau appears in note 104.

⁵⁸⁸ There are several examples of settlement retraction among the quasi-urban settlements of Mamshit and a similar pattern of abandonment among the monastic and church sites identified at these sites which link into these processes. Horvat Berachot for instance, shows little activity after the mid-eighth century, see Tsafir and Hirschfeld 1979 and the revised dating in Magness 2003: 109-111.

⁵⁸⁹ On the activity in the churches of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, Shivta and Mamphis

⁵⁹⁰ The possible mosque/bathhouse structure of Tiberias is addressed in Cytryn-Silverman 2009: 54-56 and Stacey 2004: 33-34. The *sūq* of Scythopolis/Baysān is addressed in Tsafir and Foerster 1994 with a discussion



Fig. 3.11 Jarash, Umayyad mosque aerial view.
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Fig. 3.12 Jarash, Umayyad mosque and *sūq* adjacent to the existing tetrapylon.
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of the inscription in Khamis 2001. On Jarash see Walmsley and Daamgaard 2005 and the earlier discussions in notes 112.



Fig. 3.13 Qasr Tuba complex, general view.
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Fig. 3.14 Qasr Tuba complex, general view.
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These urban programmes were accompanied by the foundation of a series of substantial palatial complexes in the region in the early eighth century at Qasr Amra (711-715), Khirbet al-Mafjar (743/4) and Khirbet al-Minyah (705-715).⁵⁹¹

The motivations for these constructions have been variously explored; in the case of the Qasr, the constructions have been interpreted as attempts to mimic the collective social and devotional functions performed by monastic institutions.⁵⁹² This hypothesis, is, however largely conceptual as we lack any contemporary sources which would indicate that established monastic roles were usurped by the construction of Qasr. The foundation of sites such as Qasr Amra and Qasr Tuba (Fig.3.13-3.14) in relatively marginal zones, often situated away from the urban and rural centres where monastic sites continued to function, also raises issues about how the establishment of these sites interrupted social dynamics between monasteries and localised populations.

Their scale and technical sophistication convey a general sense of a wider economic picture of renewal and prosperity by the early eighth century: one which was overlapped by the continued political importance of the Palestinian region to the Umayyad world. There is no evidence that the surge of monastic and church renovation in the same period and within similar regional contexts were the result of separate socio-economic trends. The intensification of local ceramic production and other artisanal activity may have resulted in substantial economic gains, as individual communities responded to the emergence of new demands and distribution networks provoked by the progressively more internalised Syro-Palestinian economy.⁵⁹³ The increase in church building among rural settlements in the hinterlands of the Dekapolis cities and on the Madaba plateau – which ceramic evidence

⁵⁹¹ On Qasr Amra see Cresswell 1989: 105-117. Khirbet al-Mafjar is addressed in Hamilton 1959 with revision to the dating in Whitcomb 1988.

⁵⁹² Tohme 2009.

⁵⁹³ On the intensification of ceramic production and Umayyad continuities, particularly in the Dekapolis, see Gawilkowski 1995, Walmsley 2000: and Wickham 2005: 775. Magness 1993, neatly surveys the similar intensification around Jerusalem contemporary with the developments in the Transjordan.

from the sites indicates links to these centres – may be seen as one indication of the relative wealth that was circulating in village contexts among groups of rural-elite families.⁵⁹⁴ The relatively localised nature of the Umayyad church construction, often linked to village collectives, supports this general impression and is apparent when we reflect on the types of individuals who emerge from the inscriptions which commemorate decorative programmes to ecclesiastical property. Among the monasteries and cult sites the majority of individuals listed are monks of the community or figures who held local clerical office. The renovations at the upper church of al-Quweisma were, by way of example, facilitated by the benefaction of the monk Tzobeos and other members of the community.⁵⁹⁵ A similar trend is reflected at Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a, where the inscription lists a complex network of local administrative figures, clergy and a monastic patron – possibly from the nearby community of Mount Nebo (Fig.3.15).⁵⁹⁶

The evidence for links with external Byzantine patrons, to which Christian continuities are often linked, is less tangible. That connections between several Palestinian monastic establishments and Constantinople were maintained throughout the Umayyad period is undeniable and it is fairly clear from the energetic response of figures such as John of Damascus and John of Jerusalem to the iconoclast policy of Constantine V and earlier during the Lateran Council of 649.⁵⁹⁷ Our evidence for sustained contact is, however, largely intellectual and there is no indication that these episodes of contact facilitated direct interventions of patronage, even among communities such as Sabas, Sinai or the Jerusalem

⁵⁹⁴ Thus the ceramic forms uncovered from the Church of the Lions in Kastron Mefa'a shows strong links to the production networks of the Dekapolis with a number of ceramic forms showing strong resemblance to Jarash wares: Alliata 1992. This also reflected in the assemblages from the churches of Hagios Stephanos and Hagios Sergios: Alliata 1991.

⁵⁹⁵ On Al-Quweisma see Piccirillo 1984, 329-340, Schick 1989: 264-265; Schick and Emsayif 1991:25-340 and the discussion of the Aramaic inscription in Puech 1984: 341-346.

⁵⁹⁶ On this see Piccirillo 1994h: 251-252. The site is called 'Phisga' in the inscription which Piccirillo links to the site of Siyagha. This is possible, as John Rufus in the *Life of Peter the Iberian* identifies the village on the slopes of Mount Nebo as 'Phisga': *Life of Peter the Iberian* : R 85 (ed. and tr. Horn and Phenix 2008: 172-173).

⁵⁹⁷ On the dialogue between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, John of Damascus and Constantinople see Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 183-188. On the earlier contacts of the seventh century see Sansterre 1983: 117-121.

Patriarchate whose broader connections to Constantinople and Rome were unparalleled among their contemporaries in the region.⁵⁹⁸ The impact of continued pilgrimage from the west, which will be considered further in Chapter Five, is also problematic in terms of its relationship to the identified renovations to monastic property after 630.

All the dated inscriptions which record embellishments in the Umayyad period emerge from sites situated on the outermost periphery of the major pilgrimage networks traversed by western pilgrims and are sites which remain invisible in contemporary Byzantine and western literary representations of the region. This is not to deny that such connections existed, but the predominantly localised nature of the networks of donors which emerges from the corpus of Umayyad Christian inscriptions raises questions about the impact that exchanges with the Byzantine and post-Roman west had on the broader Christian community beyond Jerusalem. Reports of the continued support of monastic sites by the elite networks of the larger Syro-Palestinian urban centres is far better documented and implies a continuation of the social interplay between monastic communities and the landed Christian families which still retained associations with the Caliphal court.⁵⁹⁹ The Arabic recension of Leontios' *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* records several cases of donations of inherited estates to monastic communities and examples of elite journeys from major urban centres, such as Damascus and Jerusalem, to the monasteries of the Judean Desert in order to observe some of the main calendar feasts of the Melkite church.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ The explanations for this silence cannot be surveyed in the present study, but the frequent opposition of Palestinian monks and the Jerusalem Patriarchate – particularly from among the largest and most politically engaged Judean communities and figureheads – to Byzantine imperial policy in the eighth century may be among a number of contributing factors to the apparent paucity of imperial benefaction emanating from Constantinople.

⁵⁹⁹ Thus John of Damascus is reported to have retired to the monastery of Mar Sabas in the early eighth century. This is largely based on tradition, with other scholars such as Louth preferring to link John to Mar Chariton: Louth 1998: 248. However, an earlier manuscript, Paris MS Gr. 1479, dated to 890, identifies John as a hieromonk in the Church of the Anastasis. The distinction is largely arbitrary given the frequent contact between the Judean Desert foundations and the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

⁶⁰⁰ One example of the close association between the major Judean Desert foundations and urban administrators is the Bishop of Kanākir, John, who is described as a figure who frequently maintained contact with governors and jurists in Damascus. The *Life* also intimates that he was an acquaintance of the family of Leontios of



Fig. 3.15 Dedicatory inscription from the c.718 scheme, Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a.
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The inscription reads:

ΚΕ μνησθιτη του δουλου σου Καιουμ μοναχου πρ(εσβυτερο)υ Φισγα.

Lord remember your servant Kaium monk and priest from Phisga (Siyagha).

Stephen bequeathed his own family property to the Mar Sabas monastery following the death of his parents.⁶⁰¹

A similar episode, concerning Leontios' aunt, also points to the continued role of monastic foundations as focus of elite groups within Palestine.⁶⁰² The more hostile description of the character of Patriarch Theodoros provides further valuable testimony to the growing importance of connections between the Patriarchate and the high status monasteries of Sinai and the Judean Desert and Christians interwoven within the Caliphal administrative system. Patriarch Theodoros' brother, an influential doctor to the emir of Ramlā, is largely credited in the life with colluding with Theodoros to ratify his accession as Patriarch.⁶⁰³ In this he appears to have succeeded. Theodoros reigned as Patriarch from 745 until 775. Leontios' overt endorsement of the exiled Patriarch Elias II provides clear testimony to internal divisions and factionalism among Melkite monastic and clerical groups, but the motivations are difficult to determine.⁶⁰⁴ In any case, this episode is instructive in terms of cautioning against sweeping assessments of the dynamic between Melkite monastic communities and Muslim authorities as one characterised by social and temporal homogeneity. Patriarch Theodoros' possible involvement in the construction of a monastic complex on Mount Skopos in 762 offers a useful example of monastic benefaction linked to Melkite families who cultivated associations with the Muslim ruling elite or functioned within the state bureaucracy.⁶⁰⁵ This is a feature, as we will see, which is paralleled in other contexts during the ninth and tenth centuries.⁶⁰⁶

The focus of the *Life* upon the major coenobitic complexes of the Judean Desert, and

⁶⁰¹ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 9.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999:10, 11).

⁶⁰² Little is known of Leontios' aunt beyond the confines of the life itself, although within the account she is identified as an owner of considerable property (including slaves), which she donated to the monastery of Sabas upon her death: Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 63.3 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999:109-110, 100-101).

⁶⁰³ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.1-5 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999:55, 51-52).

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid*: 33.15-17.

⁶⁰⁵ Arav, Di Segni and Kloner 1990.

⁶⁰⁶ See pages 306-309.

its understanding of the affairs of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, affords a useful view of the extent of these relationships by the mid-eighth century. It reflects the associations of a network of monasteries whose status, established through the reputation of their cult and universalised through hagiography and the church lectionaries, facilitated their ability to traverse the limitations of geographically localised patron revenues.⁶⁰⁷

Interlocked with this were associations between such communities and clerical positions within the retinue of the Patriarchate to aspiring individuals. Elite social and devotional aspirations were, therefore, intimately bound to major coenobitic centres, a position which appears to have resulted in the more prestigious ecclesiastical offices being held by former residents of these foundations.⁶⁰⁸

Of the known Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria between the seventh to tenth centuries, the majority originated from one of the major centres identified by this period: Mar Sabas, Sinai, Chariton or Theodosios.⁶⁰⁹ Likewise, many of the most active Christian figures within the Umayyad bureaucracy were formerly connected to one of these communities, were related to active members, or withdrew to them following a period of bureaucratic service.⁶¹⁰

The ubiquity of these links during the Umayyad period must not be overstated. In a landscape punctuated by monasteries and shrines of seemingly localised significance, the integration of sites such as Mar Sabas into regional and trans-regional elite circles distinguished them from sites whose associations were fixed on more immediate – perhaps

⁶⁰⁷ As with the example of Mar Sabas where a feast dedicated to the saint was actively observed by the eighth century and the monastery itself functioned as a focal point of the Melkite stationary liturgy: *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34):10 May, 5 December (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 65, 108).

⁶⁰⁸ For examples from the Abbasid period see pages 306-309. The evidence for the Umayyad period is less certain due to a paucity of information about the Patriarchs of this period. However, the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* provides some examples of former monks of Mar Sabas or other Judean Desert foundations who were subsequently appointed as bishops: Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 30.1, 35.11 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 49, 46, 57, 58).

⁶⁰⁹ See pages 306-309.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*

settlement specific – geographical relationships.⁶¹¹ By the early eighth century, the monastic milieu was punctuated by the co-existence of a network of sites whose underlying connections to local or regional power networks were characterised by variation and discrepancy. These characteristics and their causal factors are not easily definable; the attractive tendency to assume that the custodianship of a site by the Chalcedonians advanced their connections to a broader devotional demographic is, for one, undermined by the absence of many Chalcedonian sites from literary descriptions of the Palestinian landscape produced by non-Palestinian communities. Mount Nebo and Jabal Harūn, although both listed as Chalcedonian centres in the ninth-century *Kitāb al-Burhān* by Peter of Bayt Raʿs, represent two such sites excluded from broader Byzantine and later Carolingian literary conceptions of the Palestinian Holy Land.⁶¹² Awareness of such sites among more internal Palestinian works, such as the *Life of Peter the Iberian*,⁶¹³ add nuance to this picture and propose the existence of more integrated connections to Christian groups within the Syro-Palestinian sphere for these communities but do not suggest links with the Byzantine world.⁶¹⁴

As discussed earlier, there is little indication that the perpetuation of investment into Christian buildings through the Umayyad period was the results of trends separate from the

⁶¹¹ The extensive connections of Mar Sabas during the eighth century are exemplified in the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* where the monastery is placed as the centre of an extensive social network of elites from the urban centres of Palestine and the Caliphate. Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 23.9, 25.1, 30.1, 30.2, 39.2, 43.1, 49.1, 52.1, 57.3, 73.1 (ed. and tr. Lamoignon 1999). Similarly, the Sabaite monastic community of Rome proved equally influential in promoting the cult: Sansterre 1980: 27-31. The mention of the site in the *Life of Willibald* also point to a clear awareness of the monastic foundation in the west by the early eighth century: Huneberg, *Life of Willibald* 23 (ed. Tobler 1874:34-35, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 244).

⁶¹² Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 206, tr Watt 1960: 192). Both sites are missing from the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* and the surviving itineraries of western pilgrims. Sansterre 1983 surveys the evidence for the close intellectual dialogue between Palestinian monks (mostly from Jerusalem or the Judean Desert) and western communities.

⁶¹³ John Rufus, *Life of Peter the Iberian*: (ed. and tr. Horn and Phenix 2008: 172-173).

⁶¹⁴ This is supplemented by a limited corpus of archaeological material, where Mount Nebo's association with Madaba (and possibly Kastron Mefa'a) is confirmed by a series of epigraphic inscriptions dated to the later eighth century. At Deir 'Ain 'Abata, the presence of *scarus collana* among the environmental deposits of the site, proposes a similarly interregional – although not necessarily patronal – connection to the exchange networks of the Red Sea, see Beech and Prame 2012. The epigraphic evidence of the region, including Kastron Mefa'a, Madaba and Mount Nebo reflect active building activity in the seventh and eighth centuries albeit ones which appears to have its basis in localised factors rather than external ones. On the inscriptions see Piccirillo 1993c: 64-65, 116, 120-125, 150, 151 and Piccirillo 1994h.

dynamic urban and rural picture emerging from research.

Some qualifications are, however, necessary. By the early eighth century, a series of key reversals in Caliphal policy appear to have disrupted the existing status quo maintained throughout the seventh century under Mu‘āwiyah and the early period of ‘Abd al-Malik.⁶¹⁵ The ascension of Walid I (705-15) to the position of Caliph marks a turning point in this regard. Although commonly attributed to the reform programmes of Abd al-Malik, the arabicisation of chancellery and bureaucracy only reached coherency following 705 and it is certainly following this period that the use of Arabic becomes more explicit in the official proclamations of the Caliphate.⁶¹⁶ Although the use of Greek among monastic literary circles continued across the eighth century, Greek increasingly became a language of the Chalcedonian church rather than a language of administrative purpose.⁶¹⁷ It is also in the reign of Walid that we encounter reports of the introduction of the poll tax on the monastic communities of Egypt alongside the gradual eclipse of the clergy in roles associated with taxation or localised administration. In Egypt the correspondence between the Muslim governor Qurra ibn Šarīk and the Christian Pagarch of Aphrodito, Basileos, provides some indications of these developments and their impact upon existing roles.⁶¹⁸

Practical shifts across the eighth century appear to have gradually undermined the fiscal and administrative role the church had performed in the sixth and seventh centuries. The extent of these developments in Palestine is unclear although the fragmentary papyri hoard of Khirbet Mird, probably a collection spanning the eighth and ninth centuries,

⁶¹⁵ This includes the adoption of Arabic as the primary administrative language: al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān*: 144 (ed. de Goeje 1870: 193, tr. Khuri-Hitti 1966: 301). It is also in this period when the first reports of taxation levied on monasteries first appear: Papaconstantinou 2008: 141. Sijpesteijn 2009 also notes the increasing changes after 700 that can be observed in Egypt. The evidence is less explicit for Palestine due to the paucity of the papyrological material.

⁶¹⁶ See note 615 and Papaconstantinou 2010: 69-71 and Sijpesteijn 2010.

⁶¹⁷ On the continued role of Greek and the flourishing literary activity of the Chalcedonian church in Palestine see Blake 1965 and Mango 1973. Overviews of the continued importance of Greek epigraphic conventions are offered in Di Segni 2003a and Di Segni 2009.

⁶¹⁸ Papaconstantinou 2010: 69-71 and Wickham 2005: 253-255.

proposes a similar localised presence of Arab-Muslim governors by this period outside of the main urban centres.⁶¹⁹

3.8 CONEXISTENCE AND CONFRONTATION

Conspicuously, the withdrawal of John of Damascus from caliphal service (possibly resulting from his dismissal) to one of the monasteries of the Judean Desert – traditionally Mar Sabas, but very possibly Mar Chariton or the Spudeon in Jerusalem – during the reign of Walid marks a notable break with preceding arrangements of the pre-Marwinid period.⁶²⁰ The connection of John's family to the civil bureaucracy had existed for nearly a century by the time of his withdrawal from office yet subsequent information about the Mansūr family contains no connections to civic office following the early eighth century.⁶²¹ Instead, what we may discern from the evidence is the increasing presence of the family as holders of clerical positions in the Chalcedonian church.⁶²² It is precarious to extrapolate too broadly on the basis of a single family, but the frequency with which elite figures emerge in connection to the church – either as former officials or relatives of existing officials – proposes that the gradual appropriation of administrative roles by Arab-Muslims over the eighth century placed a renewed emphasis on the alternative power structure offered to elite Christian families by monastic communities or the church hierarchy.⁶²³ Evidently, such developments did not unfold uniformly or seamlessly across the region and the disenfranchisement which ensued from practical reform may have provoked sporadic episodes of confrontation between church

⁶¹⁹ The piecemeal nature of the hoard, published in Grohman 1963 does not permit us to reconstruct its content. The presence of Arabic formulas, similar to those encountered in Egypt, would, however, suggest that they were administrative. The limited publication of the Syriac corpus also restricts more detailed observations about this monastery.

⁶²⁰ The most recent biography of John of Damascus appears in Conticello 2000.

⁶²¹ Page 307.

⁶²² *Ibid.*

⁶²³ This is a pattern which can be traced more easily in Egypt: Papaconstantinou 2008: 147-148. However, in the examples of Patriarchs that we can identify in the later eighth and ninth century often joined the church following a period in the administration: see pages 306-309.

officials and the Umayyad authorities. In this light, the arrest and execution of the monk and former *charlutarior* – a position probably associated with fiscal collection – Peter of Capitolias/Bayt Raʿs, following his public denouncement of Muhammad around 715, may be interpreted as a localised objection to the reforms continued under Walid and ʿAbd al-Malik II.⁶²⁴ The nature of the source makes distinctions between historical detail and hagiographical formula rather problematic, but the continued refusal of Peter to retract his open criticisms of the Umayyad regime, and of Muhammad, implies that his imprisonment and execution stemmed from a complex series of factors involving his opposition to the regime – which needs to be read in the context of his own political position as a bishop of an important urban centre in the Dekapolis – as opposed to a more universal programme of hostility directed against monastic communities or the clerical hierarchy.⁶²⁵ A similar attempt at neutralising inflammatory figures may also be discerned from the mutilation and exile of the Metropolitan Peter of Damascus to Arabia following similar public attacks on Islam during the reign of Hisham in 741/2.⁶²⁶ These episodes must, however, be placed in a broader context where bishops and monks remained important social figureheads interconnected with the residual, but not politically insignificant, Christian elite. The successive attempts by the Umayyad Caliphs to exert influence over the election of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch are arguably a reflection of this overall recognition of their importance by the Caliphal authorities. Marwān II's nomination of the monk Stephen to the position of Patriarch of Antioch around 742-743, which does not appear to have been opposed, provides an example which proposes an attempt to consolidate the support of local Christian communities in the wake of the internal struggles within the Umayyad family and opposition from the rival

⁶²⁴ Peeters 1939. Parts of the story were conflated with another figure, Peter of Damascus, by Theophanes: Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6234 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 315-317, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 576-578). Peter is identified by Theophanes as a figure formerly involved in fiscal collection. For a discussion of Peter and the issues surrounding his identity see Hoyland 1997a: 354-360.

⁶²⁵ Peeters 1939.

⁶²⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6234 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 415-417, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 576-578).

Abbasid faction.⁶²⁷ Two years later, Marwān endorsed the election of his successor Theophylaktos.⁶²⁸ It is less certain when this role was first assumed by the Caliph, although the recorded involvement of Mu‘āwiyah I in the inter-confessional disputes between Monophysites and Chalcedonians in the 680s suggests that it had antecedents in these early attempts to negotiate with Christian subjects.⁶²⁹ Umayyad involvement within Patriarchal elections may, therefore, have been seen as one of the many political roles subject to the jurisdiction of the Caliph and not necessarily an intervention indicative of political hostility.

This is not to suggest that the political significance of such elections were unappreciated by the Caliphal authorities: the election of Patriarchs from families closely dependant on the Caliphate for their exalted political and social positions was in one sense a politically astute move – one which could potentially ensure the support from within the (still) politically influential Chalcedonian community through the opening up of office to Christian elites whilst also ensuring a degree of proximity and influence over internal Patriarchal affairs. It was a line clearly cultivated in the election of the Patriarch Stephen of Antioch (742) and Patriarch Theodoros of Jerusalem (745) where the sources detail their intimate connections to the Caliphate or local Muslim governors.⁶³⁰ But there is little evidence that such influence originated from a uniform sense of hostility against the Chalcedonian community whose roles remained interlinked with the administrative workings of Caliphal affairs beyond the Umayyad period.⁶³¹

These incidental details do, however, imply a rigorous assertion of political and judicial pressure on Christian groups by the Umayyad authorities towards the later eighth

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6236 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 421, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 576-578).

⁶²⁹ *Maronite Chronicle* AG 970 (tr. Palmer 1993: 30).

⁶³⁰ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 55, 51-52) and Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6234 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 415-416, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 577).

⁶³¹ In contrast, such politicised interventions, whether the deposition (such as Peter of Capitolias) or nomination (as with Stephen of Antioch) of a clerical figures, appear to have been largely provoked by specific and highly localised social or political contexts. On further cases of the intimate associations between Patriarchs with the Muslim authorities see the discussions in Chapter Four.

century. This appears part of a progressive trend, which began in the 690s, and marks a break with the more ambiguous and fluid situation of the mid-seventh century. These pressures appear part of a broad programme of fiscal and state reform, which again saw fairly distinct breaks with practices prior to 700. The use of Arabic in administration, fiscal reform and new monumental programmes initiated under the later Umayyads also mark distinct changes to established seventh-century systems and ones which must have impacted on monastic prerogatives in many of these arenas. There is no way of quantifying this fully, but cases of opposition among prominent urban clergy may allude to a growing awareness within urban Christian groups of the gradual erosion to their established roles. Rural monastic communities are almost invisible in this debate, a feature which reflects the restricted literary corpus for Palestine. In any case, the continued presence of a Christian archon at Kastron Mefa'a into the 750s suggests that such shifts were more gradual and, therefore, less perceivable in marginal zones further removed from urban administrations.⁶³²

These shifts unfolded across a landscape of considerable occupational stability for monastic sites in the region. Of the sites currently known to us through archaeological research, whose post-Byzantine phases are published, few exhibit evidence for abandonment or decline in this period (Fig. 3.16). Church buildings were maintained, and only a handful of cases, such as Horvat Berachot in the Negev, Mamphis and Pella, had fallen into disuse by the mid-eighth century.⁶³³

Indeed, in other contexts, notably in the Dekapolis, the period following 700 was marked by a general upsurge in renovation and building activity compared with the seventh century. This corresponds broadly with the increase in urban investment by the Umayyads after 700 and, as noted earlier, I suspect that the two are interconnected.

This continuity, however, was marked by a progressive localisation and insularity in

⁶³² Piccirillo 1994h: 242-246.

⁶³³ On the churches of Pella see Smith 1992: 187. See also Appendix A.

building activity, increasingly linked to a regional network of Christian groups and associated clergy. By the 740s there are no examples of Christian governors or institutionally sponsored programmes of renewal of church or monastic sites which parallel the activities of the sixth century. The relatively stable pattern of wealth and landholding which we may sketch both from the literary and archaeological corpus suggests that the effects of these shifts may not have been overly acute to contemporary Christian groups in view of the substantial continuities they exhibit in this period. But it meant that by the 740s, the gradual localisation of Christian patron revenues limited the ability of monastic foundations to sustain themselves according to earlier levels. Most survived through the Umayyad period, but circumstances changed following 750.

CHAPTER FOUR

MONASTICISM c.750-c.950

The period 750-950 appears to have seen a number of key changes, both to the physical landscape of Christian cult sites, as well to the role and identity of the communities occupying them. This two hundred year period is formative in a number of key respects. It witnessed the steady reduction of the number of Christian cult sites alongside a decline in patterns of structural investment and church building which had continued throughout the Umayyad period.⁶³⁴

This coincided with more general shifts in terms of the social position of monastic communities in the region, as well as with the emergence of new cultural horizons which substantially altered both the intellectual and political landscapes of monastic communities in the region. The adoption of Arabic and the emergence of systematic responses to Islam are two features of this transition,⁶³⁵ but ones which coincided with a more general political and economic reorientation of monastic communities towards the affairs of the Caliphate.⁶³⁶ Monasticism is a single component of these broader trends played out concurrently among Christian communities in the region. Judging by the archaeology and fragmentary textual accounts which survive, between 750 and 950 the monastic and cult landscape of Palestine became progressively more impoverished and retracted compared to the first century of Muslim rule.⁶³⁷ The most frequently cited explanation for this shift concerns that of conversion and declining rates of pilgrim exchange across the Mediterranean after 750.⁶³⁸ Both have some bearing on the debate but require substantial refinement. Conversion to Islam

⁶³⁴ Pages 285-302.

⁶³⁵ Pages 236-243.

⁶³⁶ Pages 224-237.

⁶³⁷ Pages 284-301.

⁶³⁸ McCormick 2011: 48.

may have underpinned loss of elite investment, but the general assumption of a rapid and regionally uniform process of conversion is problematic.⁶³⁹ Furthermore, the conspicuous lack of large-scale investment in the region by Muslim patrons after 750 suggests that the abandonment of Christian sites should be seen in a broader context.⁶⁴⁰

Discussion of regional effect and chronology is also required. Despite prevalent patterns of abandonment across the region, considerable numbers of sites remained occupied throughout this period especially in Jerusalem, the Judean Desert and in the hinterlands of a number of important urban centres.⁶⁴¹ The archaeological evidence also highlights the chronological unevenness of these processes with few indications of a regionally homogenous or sustained process of contraction across the Jund Filastīn and Jund al-Urdunn at any point between 750 and 950.⁶⁴²

These ambiguities point to a need for a more contextual reading of abandonment patterns with respect to what is known about localised contexts. This cannot be achieved in all circumstances. Our understanding of post-Umayyad phases at a number of sites – monastic as well as industrial and domestic structures – is still in its infancy.⁶⁴³ What this chapter seeks to examine, then, is not a region by region analysis of individual monastic contexts: such a synthesis cannot be currently achieved. Rather, it will sketch the general

⁶³⁹ On the problematic question of conversion in Palestine see Levy Rubin 2000: 260-265.

⁶⁴⁰ The last large-scale programme commissioned in Palestine appears to be the cisterns of Ramlā completed in 789 during the reign of Harūn al-Rashīd: Cresswell 1958: 228-230.

⁶⁴¹ Pages 284-301.

⁶⁴² The two administrative districts that now span the modern territories of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories. The territory of the Jund Filastīn with its capital at Ramlā, largely comprised of the territories which formerly made up Palaestina Prima. The Jund al-Urdunn, with its administrative centre at Tabarīyyah, incorporated the territories of Palaestina Secunda. The capital of Palaestina Secunda, Scythopolis, later known as Baysān, was transferred to Tabarīyyah (Tiberias). The territories of the former province of Palaestina Tertia were divided between the Jund Filastīn and the Jund al-Urdunn. Muqaddasī, writing in the tenth century, divides the region accordingly: 'The district of al-Urdunn. Its capital is Tabarīyya (Tiberias). Among its towns are: Qadas, Sūr (Tyre), 'Akka (acre), al Lajjūn, Kabal, Baysān, Adhri'āt. The District of Filastīn (Palestine). Its capital is al-Ramlā. Its towns: Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), Bayt Jibīl, Ghazza (Gaza), Mīmās, Asqālan (Asqālan), Yāfā (Jaffa), Arsūf, Qaysāriyyah (Caesarea), Nāblus, Arīhā (Jericho), 'Ammān.' See Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1907: 155, tr. Collins 2001: 132). Le Strange 1890: 24-43 offers a useful overview of the sources. For the purposes of this chapter, sites will be referred to by their Abbasid rather than modern names with the exception of Damascus, Jerusalem and Gaza for the sake of clarity.

⁶⁴³ Pages 285-287.

parameters of the social and economic environment which framed the changes to the monastic landscape after 750 and provide a skeletal framework through which to understand them.

4.1 PATRONAGE AND REVENUE

It is not altogether clear when the first sign of strain on the revenues of the Chalcedonian church in Palestine emerged, or the position of monastic communities as a component of this broader concern. The first cases of envoys actively soliciting funds appears in 799/800, when the *Royal Frankish Annals* reports the presence of monks sent to Charlemagne's court at Aachen by the Patriarch of Jerusalem accompanied with relics from the Church of the Anastasis.⁶⁴⁴ It subsequently reports that they returned,⁶⁴⁵ accompanied by Charlemagne's envoy, Zachariah, with presents to the holy places.⁶⁴⁶ Zachariah returned later that year accompanied by two monks – from the Mount of Olives and Mar Sabas – who arrived bearing keys to the city of Jerusalem and to the churches of Calvary and the Anastasis.⁶⁴⁷ The two monks returned in April 800 accompanied by further gifts from the emperor.⁶⁴⁸ The reports of the *Annals* offer no explicit indication that these episodes of exchange were initiated by requests for financial support for the churches of Palestine,⁶⁴⁹ but the broader context suggests that that calls for assistance underpinned these efforts. In his account of the emperor's life, Einhard notes Charlemagne's attempts to alleviate the impoverishment of the churches in Jerusalem, a concern which Michael McCormick has suggested provoked the

⁶⁴⁴ *Royal Frankish Annales: AD 799-800*, (ed. Kurze 1894: 107-110, tr. Walter-Scholtz and Rogers 1974: 78-79).

⁶⁴⁵ The *Royal Frankish Annales* indicate that this exchange occurred between December 799 and January 800: *Royal Frankish Annales: AD800-801*, (ed. Kurze 1894: 107-112, tr. Walter-Scholtz and Rogers 1974: 78-79).

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.* We are also aware of a later embassy, which took place in 807, which included two monks from the Mount of Olives sent by the newly appointed Patriarch Thomas: *Royal Frankish Annals*, AD 807 (ed. tr. Walter-Scholtz and Rogers 1974: 86-87).

⁶⁴⁹ Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*: 28 (ed. Holder Egger 1911: 31-32, tr. Ganz 2008: 37).

commissioning of the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*.⁶⁵⁰ In support of this, efforts to secure funding for the churches in Jerusalem are known during the decade that followed the production of the *Commemoratorium*.⁶⁵¹ According to his *Life*, Michael the Synkellos and his disciples, the *graptoi* brothers Theophanes and Theodoros, had been appointed by the Patriarch to travel to Rome to secure aid for the payment of a fine imposed upon the Church of the Anastasis and other churches in Jerusalem.⁶⁵² Contacts between Jerusalem and Aachen continued intermittently with the Carolingian polity into the reign of Louis the Pious and may also have been motivated by similar appeals for financial support.⁶⁵³ Responses from Pope John VIII and King Alfred of Wessex are also known from the later ninth century following the succession of Patriarch Elias III.⁶⁵⁴

The general western focus of such exchange is a peculiarity of material associated with the ninth century and one that cannot be readily explained. It is known that similar requests were voiced at the eighth oecumenical council in Constantinople but we have no

⁶⁵⁰ McCormick 2011: 180-183.

⁶⁵¹ The *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* was probably compiled around 808, see McCormick 2011: 3.

⁶⁵² This journey is dated by Mary Cunningham to 812 or 813: Cunningham 1991: 1, 11. Cunningham 1991: 11 was unable to identify the source for the Muslim tax levied on the Church of Anastasis: *Life of Michael the Synkellos*: 6.29-34 (txt and tr. Cunningham 1991: 56-59). If these events may be placed in the year 813 it is possible that they were responding to the fine levied by al-Ma'mūn against the Patriarch Thomas following the reconstruction of the dome of the Church of the Anastasis which, as Sa'īd reports, the Muslim authorities suspected was larger than the original: Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar* 33 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 148-149, 127-128). This fine was evidently substantial as Sa'īd claims that it continued to be levied until the reign of Patriarch Elias III (c.878-c.907). This fine, according to Sa'īd was levied around 813, a date which would correspond to the date of the journey proposed by Cunningham. The chronology of these events, and the fact that they were focussed on a fine levied on the Church of the Anastasis rather than Palestinian Christians generally, suggests that this is what provoked the journey of Michael the Synkellos to Constantinople and Rome. McCormick 2011: 179-180, argues that this rebuilding may have been facilitated by the donations of Charlemagne which are attested in the decade before 813.

⁶⁵³ McCormick 2001: 182. Notker the Stammerer, in an address to Charles III, also reports of a tax levied by Louis the Pious for the purposes of aiding the church in the Holy Land see Notker the Stammerer, *De Carolo Magno*: 9 (ed. Haefele 1959: 65, tr. Ganz 2008: 96-97).

⁶⁵⁴ Asser, *Vita Ælfredi*: 94 (ed. Stephenson 1904:76-77, tr. Lapidge 1983: 101). Pope John VIII, *Mansi XVII*: 116. Similar concerns may have circulated concurrently in Venice reporting events of 934, see *Gesta Berengarii Imperatoris* (ed. Dümmler 1871, 157-158). This letter, sent to Henry I from the Venetian Doge Peter II Candiano, paints a fairly graphic portrait of hardships faced by Christians in Jerusalem in 934. This may have responded to the attacks of the Church of the Anastasis and on the churches of Asqālan and Ramlā reported in Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 287-290 (ed. Cheikho 1960-1, tr. Pirone 1987: 436-437) and *Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 21 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 719). On the possible correspondence between Alfred and Elias III see Asser, *Vita Ælfredi* (ed. Stephenson 1904:76-77, tr. Lapidge 1983: 101) Accompanying a remedy for fever and delusions in the *Book of Leechdoms*, lxiv (ed. Cockayne 1864) is the following: 'all this Dominus Helias, Patriarch of Jerusalem, ordered one to say to King Alfred. The manuscript dates from around 1000.

evidence that it provoked a similar response.⁶⁵⁵ In a recent study, Konstantinos Ikonomopoulos has proposed that this silence may reflect a general imperial indifference to the fortunes of the Chalcedonian church in Palestine to which he tentatively links the Palestinian opposition to iconomachy in the reigns of Constantine V and his successor Leo V.⁶⁵⁶ This is conceivable but difficult to prove from the fragmentary material that survives. In any case, it would not readily explain the similar silence apparent in the reigns of the pro-image emperor Constantine VI (or his regent Eirene) and the later Empress Theodora nor among iconophile supporters like Theodore of the Stoudios who maintained active links with the Jerusalem Patriarchate during the reign of the Patriarch Thomas (c. 807-c. 820).⁶⁵⁷

An alternative explanation for this perceived indifference may rest on a more acute understanding of the symbolic importance of Jerusalem (and Palestine) in Byzantium following 600 which is beyond the scope of the present study. What we may concede, however, is that the active calls made by the Jerusalem Patriarchate intermittently after the 790s do not appear to have met with a systematic response from Constantinople in the early ninth century.

This situation shifted by the late 870s when Patriarch Photios, in a letter to Patriarch Elias III, promised his support for the churches in Jerusalem.⁶⁵⁸ The letter no longer survives and thus the nature of this support cannot be identified. The general negotiations of Elias III with western rulers in this same period must, however, imply a similar attempt at generating financial support in Constantinople.⁶⁵⁹ As the response from Constantinople is unknown, we cannot determine if Photios' support reflected more prevalent imperial or Byzantine interests. Photios' own personal writings on the tomb of Christ evidently denote a resurgent interest in

⁶⁵⁵ *Mansi* XVI: 313.

⁶⁵⁶ Ikonomopoulos 2009: 8-9.

⁶⁵⁷ Theodore of Stoudios, *Letters*: 276, 277, 278, 469 (ed. Fatouros 1992: 409-415).

⁶⁵⁸ Grumel 1989: No. 549 [518], *Mansi* XVII: 480-481.

⁶⁵⁹ On the encyclical letter supposedly sent by Elias III: Elias III, *Letter* (ed. d'Archery 1723: 363-364). There has been little systematic study of the tradition of the letter and, therefore, the details it preserves must be accepted cautiously.

the physical topography of Jerusalem, but one that is highly difficult to contextualise with regards to more popular sentiments in Byzantium in the late-ninth century.⁶⁶⁰ Our sources provide no indication of a growing attitude to the terrestrial Jerusalem that prompted Photios' interest, or that Photios' work generated a response among other contemporary or subsequent writers.⁶⁶¹ This concern may have been pragmatic as well as piously inspired. Photios' reinstatement as Patriarch of Constantinople in 879 had been ratified partly on the basis of his endorsement by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the general context of Photios' correspondence with Patriarch Elias III (offering support) would imply that the two issues may have been interlinked.⁶⁶²

Though difficult to contextualise, Photios' correspondence marks the beginnings of an increase in Constantinopolitan concern with the Palestinian holy places which characterises the succeeding century c.879-c.979. These concerns were often articulated as part of wider diplomatic negotiations during the reigns of Alexander, Romans I Lekapenos and Nikephoros Phokas which do not indicate whether they were accompanied by monetary donations.⁶⁶³ At least one example of benefaction, however, is known from the reign of Constantine VII in 947 when the courtier and priest Niketas Basilikos attended the feast of the Holy Fire endowed with gifts from the emperor.⁶⁶⁴ This compliments the more general interest of Constantine VII into historical cases of endowment to the churches of Palestine undertaken

⁶⁶⁰ On Photios' description of the Tomb see Photios, *Question 316 to Amphilokios* (ed. Laourdas and Westerink 1983-1988, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 258-259). See also Brubaker 1999: 206-207.

⁶⁶¹ The relative literary isolation of Photios' description may, then, have stemmed from the Patriarch's highly personalised response to the physical tomb of Christ see note above.

⁶⁶² Grumel 1989: 549 [518]. Photios also sent a letter to Theodosios, Patriarch of Antioch, requesting his support at the coming council: Grumel 1989: 548 [517]. *Mansi* XVII, 477-480 records the response.

⁶⁶³ See pages 233-235. A French translation of the text appears in Canard 1936: 195-205. I have been unable to consult the Arabic original in this instance. This tradition is rather late (the *Ṣub ḥ al-al 'shā* was not completed until the early fifteenth century) but the report complements the general surge in negotiations in the early tenth century attested by earlier sources. This study cannot offer a full discussion of the transmission or general reliability of the account. On the concerns from Patriarch Nicholas I see Nicholas I, *Letters* 102, (ed. and tr. Jenkins and Westerink 1973: 373-383) On Nikephoros see Garrood 2008: 127-140.

⁶⁶⁴ *Letter of Niketas to Constantine Porphyrogenitos on the Holy Fire*, (ed. Riant 1881, 375-382).

by previous rulers. In his *De Administrando Imperio*,⁶⁶⁵ Constantine acknowledged the donations of the Emperor Charlemagne as well as continued Georgian support for the Church of the Anastasis.⁶⁶⁶

What provoked the initial calls for aid around the year 800 are unclear, but must be understood in the context of more substantial shifts to the Christian cult landscape in Palestine after 750. The Golan Earthquake of 749, for one, instigated a rapid process of abandonment among a number of cult sites in the Transjordan which was paralleled by similar processes of contraction in the urban sites to which they were connected.⁶⁶⁷

Most of these processes are only visible archaeologically and thus warrant separate critical treatment. This will be delivered later in this chapter. It is, however, necessary to outline what we may discern about the broader political and social apparatus which framed the monastic experience after the 750s, notably in terms of the continued fiscal and legislative status of monastic communities after this period.

For Palestine such discussions are comparatively brief due to the relative paucity of material that would enable more detailed discussions to correspond with the recent dialogues concerning Christian communities in Egypt and in the Al-Jazīra.⁶⁶⁸

Conversion remains among the most pertinent issues to the debate on the trajectory of Christian population after the mid-eighth century with general processes of Christian cult site abandonment being attributed to a perceived acceleration in conversion to Islam during the Abbasid period.⁶⁶⁹ In turn, these processes are often seen as responsive to a series of

⁶⁶⁵ I have adopted the Latin title assigned by Johannes Meursius to the untitled Greek original for the sake of clarity. For a discussion of the work see the introduction to the translation and edition by Moravcsik and Jenkins 1967: 7-11.

⁶⁶⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *De Administrando Imperio*: 26: 5-10, 45.29-33. (ed. Moravcsik, tr. Jenkins 1967:108-109, 206-207).

⁶⁶⁷ Studies of the Golan Earthquake appear in Amiran, Ariei and Turcotte 1994, Reda-Sbenati, Darawcheh, Mouty 2005 and Tsafrir and Foerster 1992.

⁶⁶⁸ The most complete overview of Christian elites in the Jahzīra is Robinson 2010: 91-108. For Egypt see Papaconstantinou 2006, Sijpesteijn 2012 and Swanson 2010: 1-57. Humphreys 2010: 45-56 offers an overview of the debate about Syria-Palestine.

⁶⁶⁹ McCormick 2011: 48.

legislative measures which limited the role of Christian groups within administrative and political life over the course of the ninth century.

Whilst this impression is generally supported, there is little evidence which would enable us to trace these processes in quantitative terms within Palestine specifically. Indeed, much of the debate has centred around more general shifts in the conversion of the Palestinian population to Islam rather than on its specific impact upon particular social groups.⁶⁷⁰ We are, therefore, limited in our ability to determine whether the general hiatus in Christian cult building responded primarily to shifts in elite convention or reflected general demographic shifts across the entire population after 750.

The general impression from the source material is that by the ninth century the majority of the urban governors whom we are able to identify were predominantly Muslim, but the sources afford no detailed information about lower-ranking figures and their families or those in rural *loci*. In a number of cases, we are able to identify Christians acting as *kathīb* or as doctors who assumed some position within this lower elite stratum.⁶⁷¹

Comments by writers into the late tenth century, which note the substantial Christian populations of Jerusalem and the rural hinterlands of major urban centres, would nevertheless caution against assuming that conversion rates were characterised by regional and chronological homogeneity. We may infer from the gradual emergence of a number of key apologetics and polemics against Islam composed in Arabic by the late eighth century in Palestinian monastic centres that conversion to Islam was perceived as a sufficient threat to

⁶⁷⁰ General discussions of conversion appear in Bulliet 1979, Humphreys 2010: 51-52, Levitzon 1990: 289-31 and Morony 1990: 135-149.

⁶⁷¹ Al-Ṭabarī identifies the governors of Palestine and Jordan as close associates of the Caliph by the mid-eighth century. This includes Abadallah b. ʿAlī (governor of Damascus and Jordan) and Ṣalīh ibn ʿAlī (governor of Palestine): *Tāʾrīkh*: 46, 75, 81 (ed. de Goeje 1879-1901: 46, 75, tr. Alden Williams 1988: 170, 198, 204). There is also a single isolated case, in the ninth century, of a Christian elected as governor of Ramlā by Ibn Ṭūlūn reported by a letter of Patriarch Elias III: Elias III, *Letter* (ed. d'Archery 1723: 363-364). The authenticity of this letter is, however, not assured as there have been no systematic studies of its tradition. I have, therefore, not included it in the main body of this discussion.

warrant a systematic response from within the Melkite community.⁶⁷² Yet questions relating to the reception and audience of these texts do not clarify whether such concerns were responding to broader demographic shifts or a distinct decline in elite attachment to Christian institutions. We have no means through which to observe these processes in nuanced terms.

But at least in terms of major institutional investment, the gradual emergence of an urban Muslim elite must have contributed to the hiatus in large-scale Christian building in the region which may be observed by the later eighth century.⁶⁷³ At least in the case of the renovations at the Church of the Anastasis under Patriarch Thomas, the sources imply a general attempt by Muslim authorities to restrict the Christian cult landscape within its existing parameters.⁶⁷⁴

Whether or not we may correlate the visible decline in Christian cult sites (including monasteries and pilgrimage sites) over the course of the ninth century with the apparent acceleration in conversion to Islam is more uncertain given that such patterns coincided with a similar hiatus in mosque construction and the more protracted emergence of an identifiably Islamic hierotopy.⁶⁷⁵ This may, as will be explored below, reflect more general social shifts in elite priorities after the late eighth century, but the distinct absence of any monumental construction in the region by Muslim governors (especially during the ninth century when church abandonment appears to have accelerated) suggests that a broader series of political

⁶⁷² See note 775 below for the major studies of Melkite apologetics and polemics.

⁶⁷³ The last dated constructions of the region appear to be the repairs to the *al-Aqṣā* and the cisterns of Ramlā, see Creswell 1989: 284-285 and Rosen-Ayalon 1989: 12.

⁶⁷⁴ This can be traced across a number of similar episodes of exchange between Melkites and the Caliphal authorities where requests for the rebuilding of churches were generally denied Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 33 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 148-149, 127-128), Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 257-258 (ed. Cheikho 1960-61, tr. Pirone 1987: 431).

⁶⁷⁵ Repairs to mosques and other Muslim structures destroyed in 749, for example, also demonstrate more subdued attempts at repair similar to the patterns exhibited among Christian cult structures. The rebuilding of the *al-Aqṣā* was not undertaken until the reign of al-Mahdī (775–785). The excavations on the citadel of ʿAmmān and the mosque in Jarash similarly revealed evidence for repair but no attempt to reconstruct the buildings in their entirety: Northedge 1993: 87-88, 157-160 and Almagro and Jimenez 2000 discuss ʿAmmān. Studies of Jarash appear in Damgaard 2011, Walmsley and Blanke 2009 and Walmsley and Damgaard 2005.

and economic factors must have some bearing on explaining the processes exhibited among Christian communities in the same period.⁶⁷⁶

Legislative and fiscal pressures cannot, however, be excluded from the debate entirely. Though questions about the definition and application of legal restrictions on the *dhimmah* (including the *jizyah*)⁶⁷⁷ in the seventh and early eighth century continue to elude consensus, it is generally accepted that a codified understanding of these concepts had emerged by the ninth century.⁶⁷⁸ The restrictions placed on Christians in terms of taxation and building must have impacted upon monastic groups in Palestine, although we possess no way of determining how these restrictions were enforced.⁶⁷⁹ In Egypt, the outcomes are slightly clearer and provide cases where monasteries resorted to the selling of monastic offices to compensate for declining revenues.⁶⁸⁰ There are no indications that this pattern was replicated in Palestine. Our sources are simply too fragmentary to afford anything more than an awareness that the levying of taxes and prohibitions on building were applied by the authorities in this period.⁶⁸¹ A report of an edict dated to 795, which prohibited the construction of new churches, encapsulates more pervasive sentiments that the Christian topography should be constrained within its existing limits.⁶⁸² It remains difficult to know

⁶⁷⁶ Currently the last dated episodes on intervention in the region by the Caliph are the cisterns of Ramlāh by Harun al-Rashid: Creswell 1989: 284-285.

⁶⁷⁷ The *dhimmah* refer to non-Muslim subjects of the Caliphate and the *jizyah* the tax levied upon non-Muslim subjects. Papaconstantinou 2008: 129-130 surveys some of the problems with term *dhimmah*. A useful overview of recent scholarship is offered in Freidenreich 2009: 99-114. The major study concerning the legal status of Christian subjects in Fattal 1958. This has been augmented by the analyses of Friedman 2003. Cohen 1994 surveys legal attitudes towards Jews which have some parallels with the status of Christians in this period. See also El Fadl 1994. The exemption of women and the sick from this tax is discussed in Alshech 2003. This article focuses mostly on the later Ayyubid period. However, much of the material upon which Alshech draws, originates from jurists of the ninth and tenth centuries.

⁶⁷⁸ The most recent and systematic study of the development appears in Levy-Rubin 2011b: 99-112.

⁶⁷⁹ We know, however, of cases where the policies of unpopular figures resulted in temporary outbursts of hostility among Christians. Ṭabarī, reports a Christian riot in Homs (Emesa) in 854 which required the intervention of the Caliph: al-Ṭabarī, *Tā'rikh*: 1422 (ed. de Goeje 1897-1901: 1422, tr. Kraemer 1990: 133). This resulted in the apparent destruction of the city's monasteries.

⁶⁸⁰ Papaconstantinou 2008: 147 with further references.

⁶⁸¹ This, however, could vary. A report in al-Balādhurī, which discusses the abandonment of Palestinian estates during the reign of Harūn ar-Rashīd, mentions that the *kharāj* tax was lifted for those willing to re-populate the area: *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān*: 221 (ed. 1897: 221, tr. Khuri-Hilti 2002: 144).

⁶⁸² Abū Yūsūf, *Kitāb al-Khārāj* (tr. Ben-Shemesh 1969: 84-93). Monasteries and donors to monasteries are also among those upon whom the *jizyah* should be applied: *Ibid*: 84.

how systematically this was applied but the pressure exerted on the Patriarch Thomas following the reconstruction of the dome in the Church of the Anastasis (following accusations that it had been enlarged) in 813 provides one such instance where more general social attitudes from the Muslim elite to Christian cult construction brought the two communities into confrontation; especially in prominent urban centres.⁶⁸³

Certain caliphs and ruling figures were evidently remembered by Christian writers for the more rigorous assertion of legal and social pressures on Christian groups,⁶⁸⁴ but it is less clear whether these isolated incidents of pressure reflect a sustained policy across the period 750-950 or if Caliphal policy was felt uniformly across the region. Indeed memories of more lenient Caliphal figures, such as al-Mahdī, offer a perspective of Christian status in post-Umayyad Palestine as one closely linked to the social contexts of individual rulers.⁶⁸⁵

Equally, as Chase Robinson has observed regarding the Jazīra, the inability of the Abbasid fiscal regime to penetrate the (largely Christian) rural hinterlands of urban centres often resulted in the unsystematic levying of taxes (including the *jizyah*) on rural Christian groups.⁶⁸⁶ This cannot be traced within Palestine, but nonetheless highlights the flaws in understanding monastic (or more broadly Christian) experiences following 750 solely from the perspective of legal frameworks.

⁶⁸³ Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar* 33 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 148-149, 127-128).

⁶⁸⁴ Mutawakkil (847-861) is remembered for his more rigorous assertion of legal restrictions placed on the *dhimmah*: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*: 1389 (ed. de Goeje 1897-1901: 1389, tr. Kraemer 1990: 89). The effects of this upon monastic communities in Palestine cannot be determined. However, the restrictions were evidently of concern to Melkite monastic groups by the tenth century. The Arabic *Apocalypse of Peter* provides one example of a Melkite text which seeks to rationalise and address the issues which arose from the legal restrictions that could be applied to Christian communities: Roggema 2007.

⁶⁸⁵ Thus the Caliphs Mahdī (775-785) and al-Ma'mūn (813-833) are often characterised by their tolerant attitude to Christians in Christian polemics: Griffith 1999 and Swanson 2003.

⁶⁸⁶ Robinson 2004: 95-98.

4.2 MONASTIC STATUS

The status of monastic groups in Syria-Palestine during the Abbasid period is difficult to disentangle from broader discussions regarding the general situation for Christians after 750. This is partly due to the fragmentary nature of the surviving source material. Muslim sources which discuss monastic communities or Melkite Christians are comparatively few and the majority characterised by their terse nature; few works penned by the Melkites continued the tradition of the Byzantine *Chronographia*.⁶⁸⁷

An exception to this is the systematic interest among Muslim writers by the ninth century in outlining the Christological distinctions between individual Christian groups, which often served as a basis for Islamic polemics directed at orthodox Christian doctrine.⁶⁸⁸ Whilst the observations of Muslim writers demonstrate considerable and often subtle acquaintance with Melkite Christology, it is difficult to link the inspiration of such dialogues to known Melkite communities in Palestine.⁶⁸⁹

The apparent sensitivity of Palestinian monastic writers to these debates may be inferred from a number of apologetic treatises produced or copied in Mar Sabas and Mar Chariton in the same period which closely resemble the language and thematic focus of Islamic criticisms directed at Christianity. The anonymously composed works *On the Triune Nature of God*, produced in Mar Chariton in the third quarter of the eighth century, and the *Summary of the Ways of Faith* copied by Stephen of Ramlā in Mar Chariton in 877 offer two examples which can be securely linked to Palestinian monastic foundations.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁷ Similar sentiments expressed in Kennedy 1986: 329.

⁶⁸⁸ Thomas 1992.

⁶⁸⁹ We know, for instance, that Muslim writers were aware of the arguments employed by Theodore Abū Qurrah. For studies of this: Dick 1962 and Krackovskij 1915.

⁶⁹⁰ *On the Triune Nature of God* is the title of the anonymous manuscript edited and published by Margaret Dunlop Gibson in 1899: *On the Triune Nature of God* (ed. and tr. Dunlop-Gibson 1899). The text is preserved in Sinai Arabic 154. Griffith links this work to a monk either in the monastery of Mar Sabas or Mar Chariton: Griffith 2008: 57. There is some dispute between scholars as to the precise dating the text. Swanson 1993: 115-141, places the date of the text at 788 whereas Griffith 2008: 89-90 (especially n. 47) prefers the date 755. Both

Though we do not know whether the criticisms of Muslim writers directed at Melkite Christology were articulated with Palestinian monastic communities in mind, it is more certain that the arguments voiced by Melkite writers such as Theodore Abū Qurrah were known to Muslim *mutakallimūn* in Baghdad and Basra soon after their completion. To ‘Isā ibn Sabāh al-Mūrdar, who died some twenty years after Theodore Abū Qurrah around 840, is attributed a refutation, no longer extant, aimed at challenging Theodore’s arguments; this parallels a number of similar works aimed at prominent figures from other Christian confessional groups.⁶⁹¹ Such fluidities of exchange caution against viewing the apologies and polemics of Melkite monastic writers as abstract compositions that were not directed or inspired by particular individuals or groups. We have no way of linking these exchanges explicitly to the Palestinian monastic centres that were active in these debates by the late eighth century. What the evidence permits us to do, however, is identify cases of contact with Baghdad which may offer a framework in which to integrate these dialogues. At least for Mar Sabas, it is fairly clear both from the reports in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* and the later activities of the scribe David Anthony of Baghdad (880s) that monks maintained active links to Baghdad concurrently with the production of apologetic treatises.⁶⁹²

scholars, however, accept its composition in the early Abbasid period. For discussions of the work see Samir 1990/1991: 85-106, Samir 1994: 54-114 and Swanson 1998. On the text copied by Stephen of Ramlā: Griffith 1986c: 123-141 and Griffith 1985c: 23-45. They are paralleled by the corpus of Theodore Abū Qurrah and the extensive, though largely unexamined, *Kitāb al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra’s currently dated to the mid-ninth century, which may also be linked to the Palestinian-Melkite literary milieu. Theodore Abū Qurrah’s personal connection to these centres is unclear. For the biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah and a rejection of his associations with the monastery of Mar Sabas see Lamoreaux 2002. Earlier discussions of Theodore’s life appear in Griffith 1993: 143-170. Theodore Abū Qurrah remains the most well explored Melkite writer of the ninth century by modern scholars and accordingly the related bibliography is extensive. Useful treatment in English which surveys the bibliography is offered in Griffith 2008: 60 (especially n. 47). Peter of Bayt Ra’s, *Kitāb al-Burhān* (ed. Cachia 1960, tr. Watt 1960) was originally attributed to Sa’id ibn Baṭrīq. Samir 1990: 483-485 has made a convincing case that this work is to be linked to the Melkite Bishop Peter of Bayt Ra’s and was probably composed in the mid-ninth century. Further treatment of this work is offered in Griffith 1996: 9-28.

⁶⁹¹ On these see Griffith 2008: 100-101.

⁶⁹² Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.14 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 58, 54) which records an attempt by Sabaite monks to negotiate the return of the exiled Patriarch Elias II. Contacts between Baghdad and Mar Sabas in the 880s are known primarily through the colophons Vatican Arabic MS 71 and Strasbourg 4226 copied by David Anthony of Baghdad and the monastery at the behest of Anba Isaac of Mount Sinai. *Yayyah Ibn Yahya ibn Sa’id al-Anṭākī*: 21 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 719) provides further examples of Palestinian Melkite contact with Baghdad into the mid-tenth century. Al-Anṭākī reports of

Theological works are more limited in what it may inform us about how these foundations (and the individuals within them) were perceived and interacted with by their Muslim contemporaries. The general parameters of Melkite monastic life after 750, in terms of devotional life, legislative status and internal social organisation, remain frustratingly obscure.⁶⁹³

Much has been made in recent years of the importance of the *diyārāt* genre as a means of producing a more optimistic portrait of social intercourse between monastic communities and Muslims in this period.⁶⁹⁴ One issue with this general approach is that our understanding of the nature of the earliest works within this ‘genre’ is impeded by a lack of surviving copies which pre-date the tenth century.⁶⁹⁵ What may be inferred from the writings of the tenth-century author al-Shābushtī is an evident interest by Muslims writers in monasteries and Christian cult buildings and customs which is shared also among descriptions of writers such as al-Mas‘ūdī (c. 895-c.956) who devotes considerable attention to Christian cult buildings and associated festivals.⁶⁹⁶

The occasionally critical attitude of al-Mas‘ūdī to these customs, a characteristic also applicable to Shabushtī, intimates the problem, however, of extrapolating too broadly about general social attitudes to monasticism based on the observations of isolated writers. As Hilary Kilpatrick has observed, the views adopted by al-Mas‘ūdī and al-Shabushtī reflect the internalised attitude of their own social groups and do not adequately portray the potential

an (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt by the Bishop of Asqālan to renegotiate the repairs on the Church of Mary the Green.

⁶⁹³ The central reason for this is largely due to the paucity of surviving literary material but, in terms of devotional life, also relates to the fact that scholarly interest in Melkite recensions of earlier liturgical and hagiographical works often focuses on their deviation from Byzantine originals at the expense of understanding later copies as a legitimate reflections of their own social contexts.

⁶⁹⁴ Key studies include Kilpatrick 2003: 19–37 and Campbell 2009. Reports of Muslims (including Caliphs) enjoying the hospitality and prophylactic skills of monastic communities are two common motifs which have been used by scholars to reconstruct a more optimistic view of monastic life in the Abbasid period than commonly held: Kilpatrick 2003.

⁶⁹⁵ Only the later composition of al-Shābushtī, (d.1000) survives in a complete form and yields little information about the nature of the earlier works: al-Shābushtī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt* (ed. Kurkis 1966).

⁶⁹⁶ Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj adh-dhahab*, III: 405 (eds. Barbier de Meynard and de Courteille 1861, tr. Le Strange 1890: 202–203).

diversity of response among Muslims contemporaries.⁶⁹⁷

The descriptions of such works may, then, offer alternative avenues through which we may explore the diverse social roles of monastic institutions but there are a number of qualifications that need to be made which urge a considered, and less empirical, approach to the *diyārāt* material.

Firstly, none of the Palestinian communities addressed in this study are treated within the *diyārāt* genre and the few sites that are mentioned cannot be correlated with any site known from archaeological and literary records.⁶⁹⁸ There are a number of ways that this could be interpreted. The most straightforward is that these sites are among a number of foundations known by name which cannot be securely identified with known archaeological sites. This is possible, but a series of studies drawing attention to the more subversive roles of *diyārāt* poetry undermines positivist readings of the material.⁶⁹⁹

The *diyārāt* are, however, instructive in terms of identifying a steady deconstruction and satirising of Christian monks and holy men among particular Muslim groups by the ninth century. We cannot determine how the literary construction of monks was reconciled with the tangible experience of human confrontation between Melkite monks and Muslim groups. A number of sources for the Abbasid period offer an impression of anxiety among monastic

⁶⁹⁷ Kilpatrick 1999: 217-218

⁶⁹⁸ A survey of the sites discussed in the *diyārāt* works and related material appears in Campbell 2009:271-301.

⁶⁹⁹ As J.W Wright and Paul Sprachman have both observed, when *diyārāt* tales of Muslim encounters at monasteries are examined from the perspective of Abbasid understanding of gender construction and satire, their value in reconstructing normative social intercourse within monastic establishments becomes increasingly suspect, see Wright Jnr 1997 and Sprachman 1997. Similar observations about satire are made in Campbell 2009: 112-123. Earlier treatment of this genre also appears in Tropeau 1975. This is reflected in the works of Abū Nūwās, where the literary monastery of the *diyārāt* often served as a set piece for illicit sexual encounters between Muslims and monks or the Christian laity. For a comprehensive study of Abū Nūwās, see Kennedy 2005 and for discussion of the sexual imagery in these poems see Sprachmann 1997: 191-198. Whether or not the underlying roles of monasteries as institutions associated with hospitality or healing bears any relation to normative practice between 800 and 1000 is difficult to determine, given that the only evidence for such use largely derives from *diyārāt* traditions. The region of the Jund-Filastīn and the Jund al-Urdunn lacks any additional evidence to substantiate the claims of the *diyārāt* given the restrictions of the textual corpus and the limitations of the accompanying archaeological portfolio. Cases of hospitality, for example, cannot be identified given that few complexes have been excavated to a sufficient standard to identify such complexes. In the case of sites such as the 'Martyrios Monastery' at Ma'ale Adummim, identifications are often assigned without supporting criteria: Magen 1993: 181-182.

groups about their diminishing influence and their harassment by Muslim groups; but such reports are often counterbalanced by similar reports which identify individual monks or clerical families that cultivated more intimate and less antagonistic associations.⁷⁰⁰ This is instructive in terms of understanding the fluidity of the monastic experience concerning the Muslim authorities but also in relation to the largely invisible non-elite Muslim populations whose participation in Christian festivals are occasionally acknowledged.⁷⁰¹ A number of Arabic graffito inscriptions mentioning Muhammad which have emerged from excavations at Mount Nebo and Jabal Harūn imply that the general pretext of the *diyārāt* (that is Muslim presence at monastic sites) signals an accepted social convention which continued throughout the ninth century.⁷⁰² How these social transactions were negotiated is, however, less clear.⁷⁰³

What we may conclude about Muslim and monastic interaction at Palestinian monastic sites after the eighth century is, therefore, restricted. But a noted feature of the general period 750-950 is the rather limited evidence we have for programmes of systematic or widespread hostility directed at monks or monastic foundations by the Muslim authorities in the region.

Cases of direct persecution in Palestine are few and present only seven episodes of direct public persecution and execution of monastic figures sanctioned by the authorities.

These are ‘Abd al-Masīḥ, Anthony Rūwah, Peter of Damascus, Peter of Capitolias, Michael

⁷⁰⁰ Leontios of Damascus’ *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 23.5, 33.14 (ed. and tr. Lamoignon 1999:40, 58 and 38, 54), encapsulates the relative insecurity felt by some monks in this period regarding their access to the emir. It is paralleled, however, with claims of intimacy enjoyed by Theodore (later Patriarch Theodore) with the emir in Jerusalem. The later *Life of Christopher of Antioch* also provides some indication of more intimate associations with leading Muslim figures, see Zakhat 1952.

⁷⁰¹ The most well known example of Muslim participation in a Christian festival is the miracle of the Holy Fire: al-Mas’ūdī, *Murāj al-Dhahab* III, 405 (ed. de Meynard and de Courteille 1861-1877, tr. Le Strange 1890: 202-203). As al-Muqaddasī notes, Easter remained a major festival in the region by the late tenth century: *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1906: 182, tr. Collins 2001: 153).

⁷⁰² The inscriptions of Jabal Harūn are published in Antilla and Ohnberg 2008 and Al-Salameen and Al-Falahat 2007. Those of Mount Nebo appear in Saller 1941c: 275-276.

⁷⁰³ This is a limitation of our literary material, as mentioned earlier, but also of archaeology where focus on church buildings has impeded a more complete understanding of spatial usage and function of monastic foundations in the post-Byzantine period.

the Sabaite and an anonymous Christian Arab at Mount Sinai.⁷⁰⁴

The rather formulaic nature of these accounts – often drawing inspiration from existing passion prototypes –⁷⁰⁵ makes it difficult to extract anything more than the broadest of historical details about the context of specific periods of persecution. At their core, however, are a number of issues which may have motivated these more public episodes of suppression against Christian groups. ‘Abd al-Masīḥ’s, persecution stemmed from more obvious hostilities regarding Muslim conversion to Christianity. A recurrent theme, and one that had its origins in the public denouncement of Peter of Bayt Ra’s/Capitolias and Peter of Damascus under the Umayyads, were monks and clergy who openly criticised Islam and Muhammad within the public arena.⁷⁰⁶

Even so, the polarised social boundary between Christians and Muslims implicit within the surviving passion narratives needs to be handled cautiously in terms of understanding normative social practice. Prominent urban clergy or monks of major monastic establishments represented visible political figureheads of sizeable communities under Muslim jurisdiction, especially in its key urban centres.⁷⁰⁷ Reports of Muslim governors or Caliphs directly intervening in the election of Melkite Patriarchs and prominent monastic

⁷⁰⁴ On ‘Abd al-Masīḥ see Griffith 1985: 331-374 and Swanson 2001. For Anthony of Rūwah see Dick 1962: 108-13, Griffith 1998: 163-207 and Peeters 1912: 410-450. On Peter of Damascus and Peter of Capitolias see Theophanes, *Chronographia*: AM 6234 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 420-421, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 576-578). On Michael of Mar Sabas, which is considered to be largely apocryphal, see Blanchard 1994: 140-163 and Peeters 1930: 1930: 65-98. The anonymous Christian Arab is addressed in Hoyland 1997: 352-354.

⁷⁰⁵ Griffith 1998b.

⁷⁰⁶ On these figures see Theophanes, *Chronographia*: AM 6234 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 415-418, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 576-578). The Life of Peter of Capitolias/Bayt Ra’s is preserved in a Georgian recension published in Peeters 1939. Hoyland 1997: 354-360, surveys the problematic conflation of the two figures. Overt criticism of Muhammad was evidently a sensitive issue, as borne out by the considerable restraint exercised by monastic writers when describing Muhammad even within the context of their attempts to dismantle Islamic theological arguments. The attitudes and descriptions of Muhammad adopted by Melkite writers bear little resemblance to the more graphic invectives of writers in Byzantium and the Latin West far beyond the reach of the Abbasid authorities. See Niketas of Byzantium, *Refutation of the false letter that was written by Muhammad* (PG 104: 669-805), Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6122 (ed. de Boor 1883-1885: 332-335, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 464-465). A survey of the earliest Latin accounts of Muhammad is offered in Wolf 1990.

⁷⁰⁷ Thus Peter of Damascus in Theophanes, *Chronographia*: AM 6234 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 415-418, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 576-578), is identified as the Metropolitan of the city. Peter of Capitolias is also introduced as a figure involved in urban administration: Hoyland 1997: 360.

hegoumenoi indicate that Muslim authorities were sensitive to the importance of the role.⁷⁰⁸ Requests from the Patriarch of Jerusalem for the sultan's intervention in the election of Patriarch Isaac of Alexandria (c.941), or the election of Orestes and Arsenios as Patriarch of Jerusalem and Metropolitan of Fustat respectively, which was secured at the intervention of as-Sayyidah al-‘Azīziyyah (wife of Al-Azīz), provide instances of a practice which may have been widely replicated.⁷⁰⁹ Such points of intervention may be interpreted in a number of different ways, but it would be misguided to frame our understanding of these interventions solely in terms of anti-Christian or anti-clerical suppression. The securing of a compliant candidate to the Patriarchal thrones of the east was an expedient political gesture given the close affinity of the Patriarchal retinue to the administrative apparatus of the region as well as its diplomatic links to Byzantium and the Latin West.⁷¹⁰ From this perspective, the election of figures closely associated with Muslim rulers in terms of administrative or familial connections, as with the Patriarchs Theodoros, Orestes and Arsensios, could be seen from the perspective of consolidating internal control within the region.

The frequency of these interventions is difficult to determine and, in this respect, the passion narratives and chronicle entries provide only a shadow of what was evidently a more complex discourse of political and personal negotiations. Our understanding of cases where such negotiations often resulted in the persecution of monastic figures, therefore, needs to be set against and understood as a component of a much broader social discourse.

⁷⁰⁸ Thus we are aware that the election of Patriarch Theodore (c. 745-c.770) was sanctioned by his close association with the emir of Jerusalem: Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.1-4, 33.14 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 57-58, 54-56). Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6234 (ed. de Boor 1883: 415-418, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 576-577) alludes to the close association between the Syrian monk Stephen and the Caliph Hisham which facilitated Stephen's proclamation as Patriarch of Antioch. Kennedy 1986: 334 offers parallel examples for the Jacobite community. The Patriarch Christopher of Antioch was also a close associate of the Hamdanid ruler Sayf al-Daūla having served as his personal secretary, see Zakhat 1952.

⁷⁰⁹ *Yayah ibn Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 28 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 726) and Cortese and Calderini 2006: 52. A further example alludes to the close relationship between Patriarch Job of Antioch (c. 810-c.826) with the Caliph al-Mamūn (c. 813-c.833). According to Bar Hebraeus, Patriarch Job was present with al-Mamūn in the Abbasid defensive campaigns against Emperor Theophilos in the 830s. Bar Hebraeus credits Patriarch Job with crowning a rival successor to Theophilos for which he was subsequently excommunicated by a group of Melkite bishops: Bar Hebraeus, *Makhtēbhanūth Zabhnē*: 145 (tr. Wallis Budge 1932: 132-133).

⁷¹⁰ See pages 215-218.

This is not to say that such instances of persecution passed uneventfully or without concern by the communities involved within them. The subsequent emergence of martyr passions and feasts commemorating persecuted figures within Melkite *synaxaria* (many actively circulated in monastic contexts) offer some insights into the resonance of these events among particular groups within the Melkite community.⁷¹¹

The impression one receives from the sources, however, suggests that violence directed at monastic figures or clergy were, on the whole, focussed on individuals rather than the collective community. Cases of deliberate destruction of monastic or cult sites in the period 750-950 are limited and even fewer can be linked to Palestine. These are the supposed destruction of the Church of Theotokos on Mount Gerazim in 770;⁷¹² the massacre of the twenty Sabaite monks of Mar Sabas in 797;⁷¹³ the attack on the monasteries of Sabas, Chariton, Kyriakos and Theodosios in 808/9 (followed by another attack in 812);⁷¹⁴ and the attacks on churches of Kosmas and Kyriakos in Ramlā (c.924) and the Church of Mary the Green in Asqālan (c.934) reported by Saʿīd Ibn Baṭṭīq and Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd al-Anṭākī respectively.⁷¹⁵ All of these are known primarily through textual reports and cannot be verified archaeologically.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹¹ Thus the earliest known copy of the Passion of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ is Sinai Arabic 542: a tenth century Melkite work which now survives at Mount Sinai. Similarly, the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34), records the establishment of a feast in honour of Antony of Ruwah which was commemorated on the 19 January: *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34): 19 January (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 45).

⁷¹² Abū l-Fath, *Kitāb al-Taʾrikh*: 80-82 (ed. Vilmar 1865).

⁷¹³ This is listed in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34) as a feast observed on the 19 March (ed. Garitte 1958: 179-180), Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 77.5 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999).

⁷¹⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*: AM 6301, AM 6305 (ed. de Boor 1883-1885: 484-486, 497-503, tr. Mango and Scott 1997).

⁷¹⁵ The account of the destruction of the Churches of Kosmas and Kyriakos only survive in the Antiochene recension of Saʿīd ibn Baṭṭīq *Nazm al-Jawhar* as the entries which post date 820 no longer survive in the Alexandrine version published in Breydy 1985. On the entry see Saʿīd ibn Baṭṭīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar* (ed. Cheikho 1960-61: 257-258, tr. Pirone 1987: 431). For Asqālan: *Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd al-Anṭākī*: 21 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959, 719).

⁷¹⁶ There are a number of reasons for this. In the cases of the churches of Kosmas, Kyriakos and Mary the Green in Ramlā and Asqālan respectively, this is because these churches are known only through textual material and their location within the (still poorly understood) Ṭūlūnid urban cores of the two cities cannot currently be identified. The excavations conducted by Alfons Schneider at the Church of the Theotokos on Mt Gerazim have never been fully published and much of the phasing presented is too architectural in focus to verify the claims of the source. The absence of a report about the church's destruction in 770 within the Melkite and Islamic

In the case of the sack of Sabas and Chariton, the colophons of Vatican Arabic MS 71 and British Library Oriental MS 4950 produced at these monasteries after 850 would confirm that the destruction and abandonment of the monasteries, as reported by Theophanes, proved transient and again point to the resilience of monastic communities to changing political and social environments.⁷¹⁷

Such cases of destruction and targeted hostility, however, were enacted in a broader context of occupational stability at a number of key monastic sites into the tenth century: none of which propose evidence for destruction phases prior to their abandonment. As will be explored below, the broader archaeological corpus proposes more gradual shifts to this landscape following 750.⁷¹⁸

These enduring occupational stabilities were, on occasion, interrupted by periodic episodes of tension. In 813, during the tenure of Patriarch Thomas, the Church of the Anastasis was threatened with destruction by the local Muslim emir until its preservation was secured through the payment of a fine.⁷¹⁹ Later, in 947, the Byzantine priest Niketas Basilikos, reported the interruptions to the celebration of the feast of the Holy Fire by envoys

historiographical traditions also raises questions about the authenticity of the report. Schneider 1951:211-234. It is unclear from these excavations whether Christian use of the site continued into the ninth and tenth centuries despite the identification post-Umayyad ceramics during the excavation. Abū l-Fath, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*'s account is the first report of the destruction of this church and dates from the fourteenth century. It is interesting to note, however, that the site is not discussed within the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* or the *Kitāb al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's. The *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*, however, lists the churches in Nablus: *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 45-46 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 214-215). In the examples of the Theodosios and Mar Sabas monasteries, substantial reoccupation or refurbishment in the post-medieval period hinders more intensive archaeological investigation. On the rebuilding of the monastery of Mar Sabas under the Patriarch Dositheos (in office 1641-1707) see Vahilé 1899-900. On the monastery of Theodosios see Pringle 1998: 271-277. A preliminary investigation of Mar Chariton was conducted by Yizhar Hirschfeld and published in Hirschfeld 2000.

⁷¹⁷ On the scribe Anthony David of Bagdad and his literary activity see Griffith 1989: 7-19. On Stephen of Ramlā see British Library Oriental MS 4960 fol. 197b. Discussion of the text in Griffith 1985c: 23-45 and Griffith 1986c. Hoyland 2007: 159-172 offers a discussion of a similar text preserved in St Andrews Ms.14. Also important are the letters sent by Theodore of the Stoudios to the monasteries of Sabas and Chariton around 815 which confirms that life quickly resumed at the two monasteries after 812: Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters*: 277, 278 (ed. Fatouros 1992: 409-415).

⁷¹⁸ See pages 284-285.

⁷¹⁹ Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar* (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 148-149, 127-128). Sa'īd notes that this fine was continuously levied until the reign of Elias III (c.877-c.907).

of the emir of Baghdad, which was accompanied by further extortions for money to the sum of 7000 gold coins in order for the festival to be allowed to continue.⁷²⁰

As evident from the examples above, much of our evidence for direct hostility to Palestinian cult centres largely concerns the Church of the Anastasis whose bearing upon more prevalent attitudes to other regional cult sites is debatable. The importance of the church, in both political, symbolic and devotional terms to the Melkites (it remained a major focal point of civic and devotional life in Jerusalem until the tenth century),⁷²¹ but also to Byzantium and the early medieval west, was a feature well known to Muslim writers and a characteristic which often aroused suspicion about its association with foreign rulers.⁷²²

This complex and interlocking political, symbolic and devotional role often placed the church and its Patriarchal retinue at the forefront of Byzantine-Caliphal dispute. The issue was, however, evidently of growing interest to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate by the later ninth century. Representatives of the Patriarch of Jerusalem attending the Council of 869 urged the Patriarch's intervention in the release of Muslim prisoners which would, according to the account, have eased the hostility felt towards the Melkite church by the Muslim authorities.⁷²³ Reports from the representatives of the Patriarch of Jerusalem on the favourable conditions enjoyed by Christians in Palestine (especially Jerusalem) again reflect interest in the fate of Jerusalem as a component of Byzantine-Muslim negotiations by the late ninth century.⁷²⁴ A letter sent by Muhammad ibn Ṭughj al-Ihsīd to the Emperor Romanos Lekapenos provides one indication of the precarious position of the church in the context of broader diplomatic negotiations between Constantinople and Muslim rulers.⁷²⁵ Responding to

⁷²⁰ *Letter of Niketas to Constantine Porphyrogenitos on the Holy Fire*, (ed. Riant 1881, 375-382).

⁷²¹ *Al-Muqadassī, Aḥsan al-taqāsim fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. De Goeje 1906: 182; tr. Collins 2001: 153). Griffith 2005 discusses the importance of Jerusalem to Melkite communal identity after the eighth century.

⁷²² On this, see Walker 2009: 75.

⁷²³ *Mansi* XVI: 13-14.

⁷²⁴ *Mansi* XVI: 25-27.

⁷²⁵ See Canard 1936: 195-209.

reports of the mistreatment of Arab prisoners, the letter subtly reminded Romanos of Muhammad ibn Ṭughj al-Iḥsīd's custodianship of the holy places.⁷²⁶

The general significance of these negotiations to normative diplomatic exchange is, however, uncertain and must be viewed in the context of the wider political and military confrontations of the ninth and tenth centuries. Basil I's attacks on Melitene were viewed by both Christian and Muslim accounts as being particularly brutal;⁷²⁷ combined with reports of apparent Byzantine abuses against Muslim prisoners of war made the status of Christian communities a sensitive political issue as well as a potent negotiating tool.⁷²⁸

The concern emerges again in the correspondence between Patriarch Nicholas I and an unnamed Muslim vizier where the issue of Muslim prisoners and Christian subjects was again raised following reports of the mistreatment of Arab subjects during the reign of Emperor Alexander or the infant Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos.⁷²⁹ As in 869, these negotiations followed periods of intense conflict on the eastern frontiers of Byzantine territory.⁷³⁰

It is necessary here to stress two key points. Firstly, that the role of monasticism, as a component of the Christian community discussed in these exchanges, is unclear from the literary material. Within both Byzantine and Arabic historiographical traditions, discussions of the Palestinian Christian community are generally rather broad and do not identify the specific foundations, communities or churches over which such exchanges negotiated. Only the Church of the Anastasis presents an exception in view of its complex symbolic associations.⁷³¹ Given the close social proximity of the major monastic foundations of Sabas

⁷²⁶ *Ibid*: 198.

⁷²⁷ Genesios: 4.31 (txt and tr. Westerink 1981), Bar Hebraeus, *Makhtēbhanūth Zabhnē*: 161 (tr. Wallis-Budge 1932: 146-147). For the later campaigns of John Tzimiskes see Walker 1977.

⁷²⁸ On Muslim awareness of supposed Byzantine abuses of Arab prisoners and the treatment of both Arab and Byzantine prisoners of war see Abou Seada 2000: 190-202

⁷²⁹ Nicholas I, *Letters*: No. 102 (ed. and tr. Jenkins and Westerink 1973, 373-383). Jenkins 1953 has argued that this letter is to be associated with a tradition preserved in the *Nishwar al-Muhadarah* of Al-Tanukhi.

⁷³⁰ Tobias 1970: 200-260 surveys Basil's military campaigns on the eastern frontier.

⁷³¹ See notes 721.

and Sinai to the affairs of the Jerusalem and Alexandrine Patriarchates (often providing Patriarchs, bishop or senior clerical figures) we may assume that they were interlinked with these dialogues in some, but currently indeterminable, manner.⁷³²

Regarding the second point, the evidence proposes that such periodic attacks on churches and monastic foundations were, for the most, products of highly localised sentiment rather than a sustained Caliphal policy. As with the isolated attack on Mar Sabas in 809, violent outbursts directed at monastic establishments often occurred when centralised Caliphal control had been weakened by periods of civil conflict or political fragmentation.⁷³³

In the majority of cases, accounts of assaults against Melkite cult centres are generally less explicit in identifying their assailants. In the accounts of the attacks of 797 or 809/812, the descriptions of Theophanes offers no indication of a uniform religious or political motivation for the attacks and it would be misguided to impose a Christian-Muslim ideological dichotomy on its relatively vague descriptions.⁷³⁴

The attacks of Asqālan in the 930s and in Ramlā are more explicit in attributing these hostilities to urban Muslim populations, but in the case of Asqālan, attempts by the bishop to negotiate the rebuilding of the church in Baghdad imply that such hostilities reflect localised rather than Caliphal pressures directed at the Melkite community.⁷³⁵ Episodes of intense persecution and destruction of Christian property were, in contrast, often treated seriously by the Caliphal authorities as with the deposition of ‘Anbasah b. ‘Ishāq by Mutawakkil in the 860s and the execution of a number of rioters following attacks on Christian churches in Baghdad.⁷³⁶ The circumstances surrounding the attack on the Patriarch John VII in 966, who

⁷³² On this see pages 205-210.

⁷³³ Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6301, 6305 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 484-486, 497-503, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 681-686). On the civil war see Kennedy 2004: 148-155.

⁷³⁴ Regarding the attacks of 809 and 812, both sources place these attacks in the context of political upheaval and say little about the identity of those responsible for attacking them see Theophanes, *Chronographia*: AM 6301, 6305 (ed. De Boor 1883-1886: 484-486, 497-503, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 681-686). The implicit reading by many, which has no basis in the source material, is that the attackers were Muslim.

⁷³⁵ *Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Anṭākī*: 21 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959, 719).

⁷³⁶ Abou-Seada 2000: 170-171.

had unsuccessfully petitioned for protection against the governor of Jerusalem, again suggests that attempts were made by central authorities to curb excessive Muslim attacks against Christian populations.⁷³⁷ Reports in John Skylitzes that John VII had maintained correspondence with Nikephoros Phokas – who Skylitzes infers sought to promote a campaign against Jerusalem – encapsulate the suspicions of Melkite complicity in Byzantine military successes which may have exacerbated the hostility felt by local Muslim governors.⁷³⁸ Importantly, such episodes unfolded against a context of aggressive military confrontation between the Byzantine and Muslim spheres. No contemporary source links the attack on the Church of the Anastasis in 966 and the Patriarch John VII explicitly with this wider political context, but the success of Nikephoros II Phokas' campaigns in Cyprus and Cilicia must have underpinned the heightened aggression of the 960s as did the attacks on the Church of the Anastasis in 937 which occurred following a decade of offensives by Romanos Lekapenos.⁷³⁹ Though evidently hostile to the governor Muhammad b. Ismī'īl al-Sinii, Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī evidently did not consider the ruler Kafūr as culpable for the attack. Indeed the report provides some tentative indication that Melkite Christians still had recourse to the protection of the Ikshadids based in Fustāṭ.⁷⁴⁰

Furthermore, it proposes that our understanding of such events must also be viewed within the more complex framework of the tense dynamic between localised and centralised

⁷³⁷ According to the report of Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, John VII managed to send an envoy to the Ikshidid ruler Abū al-Misk Kafūr requesting his intervention against the persistent extortions of Muhammad b. Ismī'īl al-Sinājī the governor of Jerusalem. Kafūr's attempts to remedy the conflict, calling on the intervention of the governor of Ramlā, Hasan b. 'Ubaydallah ibn Tughj, was unsuccessful. Following the imprisonment of ibn Tughj's messenger, al-Sinājī, accompanied by a mob (which al-Anṭākī reports was mostly comprised of relatives of al-Sinājī) attacked the Church of the Anastasis (destroying the Dome) and ransacked the Church of Holy Sion. John VII, who had barricaded himself in the Church of the Anastasis, was discovered hiding in a cistern was subsequently captured by the mob and publically burned alive: *Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 101-105 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959, 799-803).

⁷³⁸ John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*: 278-279 (ed. Thurn 1973: 31-32, tr. Wortley 2010:267). This is paralleled by the murder of the Patriarch Christopher who was again believed to have incited the Byzantine conquest of the city: Ibrahim b. Yuhanna, *Life of Christopher, Patriarch of Antioch* see Zakhat 1952.

⁷³⁹ On the campaigns of Nikephoros Phokas see the study in Garrood 2008: 127-140.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

authority in which figures such as John VII and his contemporary Christopher of Antioch were inexorably entangled.

Whether or not the reported violence of Byzantine attacks has any basis in the material record is debatable, but stories of abuses against Muslim prisoners and the destruction of mosques offer some tentative indications about the reactions and concerns of Muslim contemporaries to these events.⁷⁴¹ As we have seen from the correspondence between Romanos Lekapenos and Muhammad ibn Ṭughj al-Iḥsīd, and Nicholas I with an unnamed Muslim governor, the ambiguous political position of the Melkites, often placed the community at the forefront of Byzantine-Caliphal negotiations and disputes.

4.3 LINGUISTIC TRANSITIONS 700-900

Of the major transitions in Palestinian monastic life in the mid to late eighth century, the growing role of Arabic as the principal vernacular of Melkite monastic communities has remained a predominant theme of recent research.⁷⁴² Collective analysis of these works and processes of translation has accordingly generated a vast bibliography exploring the processes of the linguistic shift and its importance in defining the apologetic response of Christians to more antagonistic Islamic precepts.⁷⁴³ Monastic communities and writers are

⁷⁴¹ For a survey of these attitudes see Abou Seada 2000: 140-143.

⁷⁴² Of the major studies of this period concerning Palestine see Griffith 1981:145-181, Griffith 1988: 1-28, Griffith 1989: 7-19 and Griffith 1990: 15-31. The role of Aramaic within this environment is offered in Griffith 1997. The most comprehensive grammatical study of the development is offered in Blau 1966/67.

⁷⁴³ The most systematic overview of this development is the recent collected edition by Thomas and Roggema 2009 (eds.). The bibliography of this subject is immense and not wholly appropriate to the present discussion. For studies focussed on Palestine, or which have direct application to developments in the region, see Bertaina 2007: 151-173, Blau 1994: 14-16, Griffith 1982: 154-190, Griffith 1985c: 23-45, Griffith 1986b: 123-141, Griffith 2004: 65-89 and Griffith 2007: 91-126. Discussions relating the appearance of the Gospel in Arabic are offered in Griffith 1985a: 126-167 and Griffith 1986b: 117-137. Further discussions of its application to Christian-Muslim debates are offered in Roggema 2009, Swanson 1998 and Swanson 2007a: 91-112.

predominant among the works for which an authorial or institutional provenance has been determined for these texts.⁷⁴⁴

The two most active centres of this development were Mar Sabas and Mar Chariton, in the Judean Desert, where a collection of dated manuscripts confirms the copying of these works, and occasionally their composition, at these communities throughout the ninth and tenth centuries.⁷⁴⁵ The community at Mount Sinai was also interwoven into these broader processes of translation though evidence for original compositions in Arabic at the Sinai monastery remains unclear.⁷⁴⁶ Sinai appears to have been particularly active in this particular ambition by the later ninth century. Anba Isaac, the *hegoumenos* of the monastery, is identified by a number of colophons as the commissioner of copies and translations, some of which were originally kept at Mar Sabas, produced by Anthony David of Baghdad in the 880s.⁷⁴⁷

A century later, one of his successors, Bishop Solomon, also actively commissioned

⁷⁴⁴ Monks and institutions identified from manuscripts include Antony David of Baghdad, active in Mar Sabas in the 880s and known from Vatican Arabic MS 71, as well as Mingana Christian Arabic 93 and Strasbourg 4226. Antony David was commissioned by Anba Isaac of Mount Sinai to produce these works. The monk Stephen of Ramlā of Mar Chariton is known from the *Summary of the Ways of Faith* preserved in British Library Oriental MS 4950, copied in 877. Stephen is also known from another manuscript, Sinai Arabic 572, copied in 897. Mark Swanson has also identified the Bishop Solomon of Mount Sinai, active in the 980s, who commissioned several works which he subsequently bequeathed to the monastery see Swanson 2004: 91-111.

⁷⁴⁵ These include the manuscript known as the *Triune Nature of God* (Sinai Arabic 154) which survives at Sinai, see Dunlop-Gibson 1899: 74-107. Further examples include the anonymous *Summary of the Ways of Faith* copied by Stephen of Ramlāh see Griffith 1986b. Also identified is Antony David of Baghdad, scribe of Vatican Arabic MS 71 see the discussion by Griffith 1989.

⁷⁴⁶ On which see Ševčenko 2010: 234. Most of the dated and provenanced manuscripts at Mount Sinai appear to have been copies of works commissioned by the monastery that were housed in other monasteries (notably Mar Sabas and Mar Chariton). For the Arabic manuscripts see note 744. Among the recent Syriac finds is a copy of Sahdon's *Book of Perfection* which was produced for Mount Sinai in 837 see Brock 2009:175-178. Among the Georgian monks known to be active as copyists after the eighth century is the monk Makarios at Mar Saba, identified in Sinai Georgian 32, 57 and 33, and the monk George, active at Mar Saba in the late ninth century, who is mentioned in Sinai Georgian 97. These connections evidently continued into the late tenth century as evidenced by the prolific activities of John Zosimos, known from Sinai Georgian 34 (*Sinai Georgian Menaion*) as well as a *Tetraevangelion* produced in 978 (Sinai Georgian 38). Further examples are also offered in Thompson 2011: 55-56. See Ševčenko 2011: 31-34 for a discussion of manuscripts produced at Sinai before the fourteenth century. Joshua Blau has proposed that the predominance of translations over original compositions in the Sinai collection which may reflect a much broader concern among Chalcedonian communities to maintain the accessibility of their existing literary heritage, see Blau 1966/7: 42-54. Syriac copies were also being produced concurrently with Arabic translations. These include the *Book of Perfection* produced in 837 see notes above. Further examples are provided in Brock 2011: 44-47 and in SP 10, SP 11, SP 12, SP 14-16, SP 24 and SP 36.

⁷⁴⁷ Vatican Arabic MS 71.

or procured copies of treatises in Arabic from workshops in Damascus.⁷⁴⁸ This appears to have been an osmotic rather than linear process, with copies of Greek and Arabic works also being undertaken by Georgian monks within this environment by mid-ninth century: John Zosimos, the redactor of the Sinai Georgian 34, being among the most energetic of the known scribes.⁷⁴⁹ The period when Arabic first entered popular usage among the Chalcedonian monastic communities is unclear.⁷⁵⁰ However, the appearance of Arabic inscriptions at church sites in the Negev by the 680s and within the bilingual *entagia* of the Sergios-Bakkhos corpus of Nessana, denote its increasing presence in monastic contexts by the later seventh century.⁷⁵¹ The mechanisms which instigated a shift toward the adoption of Arabic, and its eventual displacement of Greek, cannot be fully developed here but general consensus has largely sought explanation in the increasing prominence given to Arabic in the reforms to the

⁷⁴⁸ Swanson 2004: 91-111.

⁷⁴⁹ Sinai Georgian 34, see the discussion in Nanobashvili 2003: 269-274. The earliest dated Georgian copies appear to be Sinai Georgian 32, Sinai Georgian 57 and Sinai Georgian 33, dated to 864, produced by the monk Makarios in Mar Saba. Bilingual Arabic-Greek works, such as that of Sinai Arabic 116 (a Horologion), were still being produced in the 990s.

⁷⁵⁰ More certain, however, is that by the later seventh century monasteries were fully integrated within a fairly fluid linguistic milieu; within which Arabic, Aramaic and Greek co-existed in epigraphic and literary conventions. For the discussion of Aramaic as a literary language in Palestine: Griffith 1997. See Brock 2011: 44-45 for a discussion of Mount Sinai where many of the earlier copies of Syriac works survive as lower texts of pamplests. The predominance of Greek requires little introduction, but the emergence of Christo-Palestinian Aramaic, as both an epigraphic medium in the sixth-century churches of Al-Quweisma and Kayanos, among a series of letters and documents discovered at Khirbat Mird and a single fragment at Deir 'Ain 'Abata, conveys the relative familiarity with the language within private transactions and liturgical contexts in the Byzantine and early Islamic period. For the discussion of the Kayanos church see Piccirillo 1989: 563-586, and the useful contextual discussion in Hoyland 2010: 30-34. For the inscriptions of Al-Quweisma see Puech 2011. The Christo-Palestinian Aramaic papyri of Khirbet Mird are discussed in Perrot 1963: 506-555 and Verhelst 2003: 15-44. A small unpublished fragment, possibly part of the biblical canon, was encountered at the monastic site of Deir 'Ain 'Abata see Politis 2011: 164-166 and Brock, Canby, Al-Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012: 418. The presence of Aramaic ostraka at the Church of the Bishop Sergios in Kastron Mefa'a offers another example of the concurrent use of Greek and Syriac in a single context see Puech 1994: 289-290. A reanalysis of the mosaic panel of the Church of Hagios Giorgos at Khirbet el-Mukhayyat by Robert Hoyland has provided a further examples dated to 536: Hoyland 2010: 29-46. The evidence to identify the use of Aramaic among communities, even those where Greek constitutes the primary epigraphic language is more explicit than for Arabic. The status of Arabic prior to the Arab conquest is more ambiguous due to a relative paucity of surviving material and the relative lack of systematic analysis of graffito inscriptions, which often provide the only indication of its use in the pre-Islamic period. See Bellamy 1988: 369-378 for a discussion of two pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions. A minute fragment of carbonised wood inscribed with Arabic characters, encountered during the excavation of the Church of Hagia Maria in Petra, provides some tentative indication of its use in such contexts by the later sixth century: Al-Ghul 2004: 105-118. Another example from the Double Church in Umm el Jimal may predate the seventh century: Littman 1913: 1-3.

⁷⁵¹ This includes the church of Horvat Berachot, see Drori and Drori 1979. Rehovot-in-the-Negev also preserves some examples see Nevo 1988: 187-192 and Nevo 1989. The bilingual *entagia* of Nessana are preserved in *P. Colt* 64 and *P. Colt* 65 both dated 675/676.

chancellery and as an epigraphic medium under the Umayyads following the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik.⁷⁵² This process appears to have gathered momentum over the course of the eighth century and can be observed by the increasing use of Arabic on numismatic legends as well as inscriptions adorning public buildings.⁷⁵³ A more nuanced understanding of the growing role of Arabic among Christian communities during the Umayyad period is obscured by a lack of material, although evidently the emergence of original Arabic compositions by the 770s, at the most conservative of estimates, would confirm a growing profile for the language throughout the opening decades of the eighth century.⁷⁵⁴

The earliest of these original Arabic compositions is an apology preserved in Sinai Arabic 154, variously dated between 755 and 778, known by the name assigned by its nineteenth-century editor Margaret Dunlop Gibson, ‘*On the Triune Nature of God*’.⁷⁵⁵ This eighth-century work was evidently part of a more complex linguistic setting which also saw the continued production of Greek literary works by monastic writers.⁷⁵⁶ A chronology of John of Damascus’ compositions remains elusive, but confirms the continued importance of Greek at least until the mid-eighth century: more or less contemporary with the treatise of Sinai Arabic 154.⁷⁵⁷ This apparent co-existence between Greek and Arabic is still attested in

⁷⁵² Sijpesteijn 2007: 450 surveys the evidence for these reforms.

⁷⁵³ On the reforms of coinage see Walker 1965.

⁷⁵⁴ This date is based on the continued disagreement over the dating of the oldest known Arabic apologetic preserved in Sinai Arabic 154. Griffith 2008: 54 advocates a date of 755 for its composition. Swanson 1993 places the date in the 770s. Both scholars, however, agree that its date should be placed in the period 750-780. For a discussion of the text see Samir 1994: 57-114. No examples of Arabic translations of the Gospels survive before the ninth century, but their existence by the late eighth century may also be inferred from the scriptural quotations employed in Arabic apologetic works produced after 750. The earliest Arabic copy of the Gospels currently known is a ninth century copy dated to 869: Sinai Arabic. 151. This work was produced in Damascus and now survives at Mount Sinai.

⁷⁵⁵ The work addresses a series of themes relating to the Christian orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation and anticipates two central themes of later Christian apologetics composed in the Caliphate. Thus the *Summary of the Ways of Faith* dedicates a chapter to answer Muslim objections to the Trinity and the Incarnation see Griffith 1986c: 12-141 and Griffith 2008: 81-81. For further examples see the discussions in Griffith 2006: 277-310. For examples of Muslim objections to the Trinity see Dunlop-Gibson 1899 and Thomas 2004: 272-313. Further discussion appears in Swanson 2007b.

⁷⁵⁶ See Blake 1965.

⁷⁵⁷ This is in part due to the general lack of chronological parameters for John’s life beyond a broad estimation of the period c.710-c.750. According to Theophanes, John (here named as John Chrysorrhoas) delivered a eulogy to Peter, bishop of Maiouma, who was martyred in 741/2, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6234(ed. de Boor 1883: 415-418, tr. Mango and Scott 1997). Louth 2002: 8-9 remains ambiguous on the dating

the late eighth-century works of Leontios of Damascus and, as will be explored below, corroborates well with the broader material landscape where Greek inscriptions continued to be executed in churches into the later eighth century.⁷⁵⁸

The later ninth century marks the culmination of these processes as Arabic steadily eclipsed Greek as the predominant vernacular among Palestinian Christian groups. One of the earliest proponents of this trend, whose identity is well known, was the Bishop of Harrān, Theodore Abū Qurrah, who composed several apologetic treatises in Arabic and Syriac – the latter of which have not survived.⁷⁵⁹ The apparent decline in the rate of original works composed in Greek by the later ninth century corresponds to a general shift in the rising prominence of the Christian Arab writers or scribes of whom we are aware. Among the most prominent of these, Anthony David of Baghdad, Stephen of Ramlā and Peter of Bay Ra's – and contemporary writers of the other major Christian denominations, the Jacobite Abū-Rā'īṭa and the Nestorian 'Ammār al-Baṣrī – collectively represent the first generation of writers working within a predominantly Arabic tradition that we may comfortably identify.⁷⁶⁰ Arabic never entirely displaced the use of Greek in Melkite contexts prior to the

of the event. Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 183-186 proposes his continued activity in the 750s. Sahas 1972: 47-48 though rejecting traditional dating of his death to 749/750, based on the acts of the Council of Hieria, finds support for this earlier date in the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*. A collection of Greek hymns ascribed to his associate, Kosmas the Hieropolite provide a further, though more tentative, body of Greek literary production for the later eighth century. For this collection see *PG* 98: 459-524.

⁷⁵⁸ The original Greek text no longer survives. The earliest copy is a tenth century Arabic version, possibly produced in Mount Sinai, see Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* (ed. Lamoreaux 1999, tr. Lamoreaux 1999). The later Greek version, based on an eleventh/twelfth century copy, is available *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* (tr. Carta 1983).

⁷⁵⁹ On Theodore Abū Qurrah's biography see the discussion in Lamoreaux 2002: 25-40. Lamoreaux has convincingly refuted his association with Mar Sabas. A recent summary of contemporary scholarship on Theodore is offered in Lamoreaux 2009: 417-60. See also Griffith 1985b and the translation of the treatise *On the Veneration of the Holy Icons* (tr. Griffith 1997). A collective translation of other works attributed to Theodore is offered in Lamoreaux 2005. See also the earlier articles in Dick 1962: 209-223, 317-332 and Dick 1963:114-129 who places Theodore in the intellectual tradition of John of Damascus. Careful scrutiny of Theodore's works has indicated its close association with the Greek Patristic tradition and Theodore's apparent ability to access the language but do not indicate that Theodore himself ever wrote in Greek: Griffith 2008: 60-61. The Greek works of Theodore Abū Qurrah appear in *PG* 97: 1445-1610. Translations of some of the works appear in Lamoreaux 2005: 211-254. A number of studies have consistently demonstrated that the Greek corpus of Theodore Abū Qurrah is comprised predominantly of translations from Arabic originals or are false attributions to the author of possibly Byzantine provenance. Lamoreaux 2005: xxv-xxx, surveys the Greek works and possible works falsely attributed to Theodore

⁷⁶⁰ Antony David of Baghdad is a scribe responsible for the redaction of Vatican Arabic MS 71 and Mingana

eleventh century: Greek works were still actively produced among Palestinian Melkites into the 990s if only as bi-lingual compositions.⁷⁶¹ Yet the growing use of Arabic as the primary literary vernacular among Melkites, accompanied by Christo-Palestinian Aramaic, suggests that it did succeed in a gradual – through never fully complete – restriction of its role to liturgical contexts.⁷⁶²

This process may be observed not only among the declining use of Greek in literary production, and as an epigraphic convention,⁷⁶³ but also from its declining accessibility to Melkite monastic writers by the tenth century.

Whereas Theodore Abū Qurrah (died c.829) could recourse to the use of existing

Christian Arabic 93. A discussion of his works and relationship to Anba Isaac of Sinai is offered in Griffith 1989:7-19. Stephen of Ramlā is another scribe active in Mar Chariton in the 870s. We are aware of his existence primarily through British Library Oriental MS 4950, a copy of a work now known as the *Summary of the Wars of Faith* copied in 877. Peter of Bayt Ra's, author of the *Kitāb al-Burhān* (formerly attributed to Sa'id Ibn Batriq, Patriarch of Alexandria) is attested in the late ninth century. See Samir 1990, for a discussion which identified the author as Peter rather than Sa'id ibn Baṭṭīq. On Ammār al-Baṣṣī see Beaumont 2007: 241-257.

⁷⁶¹ Thus Sinai Arabic 116 (dated to 995/96) offers some evidence for the continued use of Greek into the late tenth century. There are other ninth century Greek manuscripts surviving from the monastery of Sinai which may provide some indication of its continued use. This is Sinai Greek 863: a *horologion*. The palaeography would suggest that the copy dates from the ninth century although without a colophon the origin of the text is difficult to determine. See Mateos 1963 for a discussion of the text. No Greek manuscript can be attributed to Mar Sabas with certainty before 1099: these are Sinai Greek 741 and Sinai Greek 742. Further discoveries may qualify this in future years but will not detract from the little that is known about the general provenance of the Sinai collections.

⁷⁶² It is still unclear the extent to which Arabic fully succeeded the use of Greek in liturgical celebration primarily due to the limited studies presently available. Leeming 2003: 242-243 provides evidence that homilies and troparia were translated as early as the later ninth century. One manuscript from Sinai, Vellum Codex 35, appears to have been commissioned by Anba Isaac and copied by the scribe Anthony David of Baghdad (active in Mar Sabas) known from Vatican MS Arabic 71 and Strasbourg Oriental 4226 dated to 885. This attribution is based largely on palaeographic analysis but would appear to suggest that elements of the liturgy were translated into Arabic at Mar Sabas earlier than the 880s. The 12 troparia preserved in Vellum Codex 35 form part of the morning service for Good Friday. I am more agnostic than Leeming as to whether this suggests that this represents separate liturgical arrangements for each linguistic community in Sabas or Sinai especially given the high degree of bilingualism among our most notable monastic figures of the period. John Zosimos, the translator and copyist of Sinai Georgian 34, was evidently competent in both languages. Sa'id ibn Baṭṭīq, Patriarch of Alexandria, was also clearly able to access both Arabic and Syriac, see Breydy 1983: 1, n.1. The gradual dominance of Arabic hagiographies and liturgical works by the later ninth century probably does not, as Leeming argues, represent an attempt to meet the requirements of 'Arab' worshippers. Rather, it probably represents modifications to liturgical practice that reflect the needs of the majority.

⁷⁶³ Our last dated Greek inscription from a Christian cult site in the region is possibly that of Khirbet es-Shubeika dated to 785/786 or 801 depending on the reading of the indiction see Tzaferis 2003: 85. Tzaferis prefers to read the date as 785/786 in accordance with the proto-Byzantine system. This appears to complement the existing corpus of eighth-century inscriptions from Palestine and the Transjordan which utilises the same dating system see Di Segni 1993b: 156-168. Di Segni 2003: 249 provides another which may date to the Patriarchate of Basilios (reigned c.820-c.838) located in the Kathisma Church. This, however, must remain tentative given that the Basilios identified in the inscription is not accompanied by an epithet that would identify him as the Patriarch. Similarly, the inscription is undated and, in the context of the Kathisma church, which may have been abandoned peacefully by the mid-ninth century, a renovation phase during the 820s appears unlikely.

Greek works for his own compositions, around a century later, Saʿīd Ibn Baṭrīq, the Patriarch of Alexandria, could only rely on the use of existing Syriac or Arabic translations in the creation of his *Nazm al-Jawhar*.⁷⁶⁴ These developments are generally interpreted as evidence for the progressive re-orientation of Melkite intellectual horizons toward the internal affairs of the Caliphate by the later ninth century. This appears broadly correct in the context of literary activity but should not be overstated. The use of Syriac is known as early as the fifth century among Palestinian monastic communities and indicates that Palestinian intellectual life had always been characterised by the complex co-existence of localised and external literary traditions or vernaculars.⁷⁶⁵

The continued use of Christo-Palestinian Aramaic into the tenth century denotes the general stability of these conventions beyond the Arab conquest.⁷⁶⁶ Yet the extent of networks established by several Palestinian centres with communities in Baghdad, Damascus and Nineveh cautions against viewing these shifts as one of growing insularity after 750; rather they reflect the emergence of new associations and horizons – no less extensive than their Byzantine precursors – which focussed on the major urban centres of the Abbasid Caliphate. This reorientation did not necessarily preclude the continued association with Constantinople and the Latin West.⁷⁶⁷ In this respect, we must be cautious of compartmentalising Melkite associations into rigid territorial or linguistic boundaries.

⁷⁶⁴ Breydy 1983: 1, n.1.

⁷⁶⁵ Hoyland 2010 further shows the continued co-existence of Christo-Palestinian Aramaic with Greek in epigraphic mediums (whether mosaic or graffiti) throughout the sixth-century.

⁷⁶⁶ Examples of Christo-Palestinian Aramaic works produced between the ninth and tenth centuries include: SP 10, SP. 11, SP. 12, SP. 14-16, SP. 24 and SP. 36.

⁷⁶⁷ The mention or appearance of Melkite representatives at a number of ecumenical councils adds weight to this impression. John of Damascus was anathematised in the proceedings of the Council of Hieria in 754 see *Mansi* XIII: 356 and provides some indication of a sustained connection between the two centres. It is unclear if a representative from the Patriarchate of Jerusalem attended the council see Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 189-190. A later representative, Thomas of Tyre, also appears at the Photian Synod in 869 see *Mansi* XVI, 41-42, 77-79, 94-95, 144, 146, 149-150. Besides ecumenical councils, epistolary exchange also supplements this picture. Theodore of the Stoudios is known to have sent a number of letters to the monastic centres of the Judean Desert in the early ninth-century, soliciting their support see Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters*: 274-276 (ed. Fatoulous 1992: 409-415). From the Latin West, we are aware of a series of diplomatic missions led by monks from Jerusalem and Mar Sabas to Aachen during the reigns of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: pages 215-216.

Against a broader intellectual background, where Arabic literary traditions and Islamic pressures increasingly occupied the concerns of Melkite writers, representatives of the Patriarch of Jerusalem were still among those who attended the formal condemnation of Photios in 869 and his official reinstatement at the Photian Synod a decade later.⁷⁶⁸

How widely the effects of this broader linguistic and cultural reorientation were felt across the broader Chalcedonian population of the region may never be fully determined. This is a limitation which simply reflects how little is known about the broader demographic of monastic communities beyond its most high status institutions (Sinai and the Judean Desert) and the perspectives of a handful of identified monks closely interlinked with the affairs of church governance. This is not exclusive to the early Islamic period (indeed it characterises our understanding of monastic communities prior to 600 as well) but does have implications for our ability to determine the general regional impact of these changes among communities and sites whose social and intellectual concerns had always been characterised by a high degree of localisation.

4.4 THE GOLAN EARTHQUAKE

The sustained pattern of urban and economic continuity outlined in the previous chapter, was violently disrupted by the Golan Earthquake of the 740s whose impact was to have permanent effect on the existing monumental topographies (which included churches and cult sites) of a number of urban centres in the region.

The dating of the Golan earthquake is difficult to determine with precision; with

⁷⁶⁸ Elias the Synkellos, representative of the Patriarch Theodosios, reported the good condition of Christians in Jerusalem in this period: *Mansi* XVI: 77-79, 146, 149-150. This, however, was apparently followed by a report from Theodosios requesting Photios to intervene with the emperor Basil to assist the churches in Jerusalem. *Mansi* XVII: 441-443. This letter presumably dates between 869 and 878 after which the Patriarchal throne was occupied by Elias III. Elias III, Theodosios' successor, sent a representative to the Synod which reinstated Photios see *Mansi* XVI, 441-443.

recent reviews of the evidence favouring either a date between 747 and 749 or proposing the possibility that the destruction levels exhibited across the region may be attributed to episodic seismic activity during the late 740s.⁷⁶⁹ The approximate extent of its impact is more certain due to the relative intensity of archaeological research in the region. Destruction levels datable to the late 740s are attested throughout the southern Dekapolis at Pella, Jarash, Baysān alongside Ṭabarīyyah and among individual sites such as Khirbat Mafjar and Jabal Harūn.⁷⁷⁰ The pattern of site destruction corresponds closely to the trajectory of the Dead Sea Transform which runs from the east of the Galilee to the Gulf of Aqāba (Fig. 4.1).⁷⁷¹ The full extent of the negative impact of the earthquake on a macro-regional level is not easily determined. Sites where substantial modern occupation overlies early Islamic phases – including Jerusalem, Ramlā, Gaza, Aqāba, Qaysārīya, Madaba and ‘Ammān – prohibit more detailed archaeological appraisals of their eighth-century phases and thus do not permit a full understanding of the impact of the earthquake in their urban cores.⁷⁷² Estimating the scale of

⁷⁶⁹ The most systematic studies of the source material covering the earthquake are offered in Tsafirir and Foerster 1992: 231–235. See related discussion in Amiran, Ariei and Turcotte 1994, Reda-Sbeinati et al 2005: 362–363. It is possible that an earlier earthquake in 746/747 was responsible for the destruction in Pella, although it appears its churches may have been damaged already in 717, see Walmsley and Smith 1992: 187. A collective discussion of the Byzantine churches is offered in Smith 1992.

⁷⁷⁰ The destruction levels at Pella are addressed in Smith 1992. Those of Jarash have been less systematically handled on a collective basis, but in individual contexts are discussed in Clark 1986, Crowfoot 1938: 244 and Gawilkowski and Ali Musa 1986: 137–161. Scythopolis/Baysān, though without final publication, is discussed in Tsafirir and Foerster 1997: 135–138. For Tiberias see Hirschfeld 2004b: 101 and Stacey 2004: 36. For discussions of Jabal Harūn see the chronological discussion of the site in Mikkola *et al* 2008: 99–176. At Hippos/Sussita, the preliminary reports of the excavations at the North West Church complex have identified a destruction phase attributed to 749: Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2007: 73. The recovery of several human remains beneath debris may also support this attribution: Deutsch 2007: 97. See the earlier discussions in Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006: 47–48. The recovery of the remains of a young woman trapped beneath a column shaft in the North West Church may provide another example similar to cases studies in Pella. The preliminary reports of the South West Church, however, suggests that it may already have ceased to function by the early eighth century and may have been destroyed by fire, see Bordmann 2005: 17–19.

⁷⁷¹ Marco *et al* 2003.

⁷⁷² It is possible to discern some cases where the earthquake probably did damage existing structures. The Nea church in Jerusalem was probably heavily damaged in the mid-eighth century but reoccupied by the Christian community. The church is still listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: 11 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 202–203). Saʿīd Ibn Baṭrīq reported that the church was no longer in use by the tenth century following its destruction by an earthquake: Saʿīd Ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 27 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 118–119, 99). The excavation at the site, though limited in scope, suggests that the church was still in the ninth century (though a tenth-century phase is less clear). A discussion by Oren Gutfeld, based on the excavations by Avigad, appears in Gutfeld 2012: 495–496. This discussion could not clarify an abandonment date for the church based on excavation. This, in part, reflects the limitations of the earlier project of the 1970s and its phasing. Based on textual data, the church would appear to have continued in use until the mid-ninth century, see appendix A.

damage to these centres which resulted from the earthquake is consequently impossible. More certain, however, is that these centres remained in use as political and economic centres and were subject to later building programmes following 749; we need only add Tabarīyyah where more extensive excavations have been possible, to demonstrate continuity into the ninth and tenth centuries.⁷⁷³

The contrasting impression within urban centres of the Dekapolis is striking, with a series of excavations at the larger urban centres of Baysān, Jarash, Umm Qays, Pella and Hippos indicating the dramatic effect of the earthquake on their urban and monumental cores and the subsequent abandonment of many of these features.

Complete abandonment or an absolute collapse in localised social and economic activity in these centres is unproven and sensitive archaeological evaluations (particularly of post-749 levels) have determined several examples of rebuilding in these contexts in the later eighth century.⁷⁷⁴ At Jarash, the mosque and *suq* complexes were repaired (the former continuing in use until the eleventh century) and the ‘house’ opposite the mosque on the southern *dekumanos* continued in use until at least the ninth century; a similar process

Reinterpretations of earlier excavations by Magness in the Tyropoeon Valley have also identified possible destruction phases coinciding with 749. The case of Madaba is unclear, a matter which reflects the poor level of publication rather than lack of evidence of destruction phases. The refurbishment of the Church of the Theotokos in 767 would, however, propose that Madaba was less affected than cult centres further north in the southern Dekapolis, see Di Segni 1992.

773 Excavations by Hirschfeld 2004b: 3-18, in the ‘Sewage Plant Area’ demonstrated continued occupation into the eleventh century. The excavations noted a destruction layer, probably attributable to the 749 earthquake, which was followed by a redevelopment of the area in the ninth and tenth centuries. This development was also mirrored in the church on Mount Berenike: *ibid*: 101-113. A similar study by Harrison 1992: 51-57 also identified occupation into the 11th century. An inscription, dated to 979, also confirms the continued presence of Jewish populations into the tenth century: *ibid*: 54.

774 For Baysān, and its post 749 occupation, see Hirschfeld and Foerster 1997: 135-140. The colonnaded *sūq* complex does not appear to have been reused. The activity that has been identified points to a less ambitious programme of repair following 749. This is equally true of Pella where settlement appears to have shifted onto the hill see Walmsley and Smith 1992. In Jarash several of the churches do not appear to have been reclaimed. The Bishop Isaiah church was damaged in this in this period, see Clark 1986. The report was not accompanied by a discussion about the blocking of the colonnaded portico and whether or not it relates to a post-749 repair phase. Clark prefers to date the abandonment of the church to 749. This may also be true of the Church of Hagios Theodoros further up on the hill in the settlement. The *sūq* and mosque complex, however, appear to have been reclaimed and continued in use. For a discussion of the mosque see Blanke 2007: 177-197 and Walmsley, et al. 2008: 109-29. A comparative review of the sites of Pella, Jarash and Amman and offered in Walmsley 2011: 135-152, see the discussion on Pella, *Ibid*: 137-141. For Hippos: Mlynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006: 47-48. See also the synthesis by Wickham 2005: 623-624.

involving the construction of houses over the destruction debris is also known from excavations in Baysān.⁷⁷⁵ Even if the earthquake did not instigate a collapse in settlement profiles, it is evident from such excavations that the mid-eighth century witnessed the culmination of ambitious Christian building programmes in these particular cities and the emergence of more limited patterns of rebuilding and maintenance.⁷⁷⁶ Evidence of Muslim monumental investment following this period in Palestinian urban centres also becomes conspicuously less clear. The construction of the cisterns of Ramlā in 789 under Harūn al-Rashīd provides the last dated evidence for Caliphal investment in the general region.⁷⁷⁷ This may not provide a full profile of patronage in this period and must be considered in the context of the limited scope of excavations in urban centres where such investments are more likely to be found.⁷⁷⁸ The description of Al-Muqadassī from the 980s, for example, mentions a number of mosques and monumental features in Palestinian urban centres whose dating and location cannot be determined.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁵ Gawilkowski 1992 and Tsafrir and Foerster 1997.

⁷⁷⁶ Examples of rebuilding are known from Pella where a series of domestic/industrial units were constructed next to the Central Church after 749 and which remained in use until the ninth century. Occupation also continued on the Tell overlooking the former late Roman core, see Walmsley 1992. These represent the most ambitious structures currently identified in Pella after the mid-eighth century. The case of Baysān is less clear although it has been suggested that occupation was largely limited to the citadel which probably contained the pre-existing mosque, church (possibly destroyed in 749) and governor's house which have not been excavated, see Walmsley 2011: 147-149.

⁷⁷⁷ See the discussion in Cresswell 1958: 228-239 and Rosen Ayalon 2006: 68-69.

⁷⁷⁸ As at Jerusalem, Aqāba, Asqālan and Tabarīyyah, which all demonstrate fairly notable continuities into the tenth century. For Aqāba, see the preliminary discussions in Khouri and Whitcomb 1988. Power 2012: 146-148, stresses the importance of Aqaba as an important entrepot on the Red-Sea exchange network.

⁷⁷⁹ Following Muqadassī's order: Tabarīyyah possessed a mosque and market place by the 980s *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālī*, (ed. de Goje 1906: 161, tr. Collins 2001: 137). The possible identification of the Umayyad mosque in Tabarīyyah is surveyed in Cytryn-Silverman 2009: 37-62. Early indications suggest that this mosque was still in use in the tenth century. Qadas is listed as possessing both a mosque and a market: *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālī*, (ed. de Goje 1906: 162, tr. Collins, 138). Akka and Baysan also both possessed mosques and marketplaces: *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālī*, (ed. de Goje 1906: 162-163, tr. Collins 2001: 138). Muqadassī notes the white mosque in Ramlāh (described as the finest in Islam): *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālī*, (ed. de Goje 1906: 164-165, tr. Collins 2001: 137-138). Besides Jerusalem (discussed *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālī*, (ed. de Goje 1906: 166-171, tr. Collins 2001: 140-144), mosques and marketplaces are also described in Hebrn, Gaza, Jaffa Arsuf, Qaysariyyah, 'Ammān, Asqalān, Kafr Sābā and Kafr Sallām, see *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālī*, (ed. de Goje 1906: 172-177, tr. Collins 2001: 144-148).

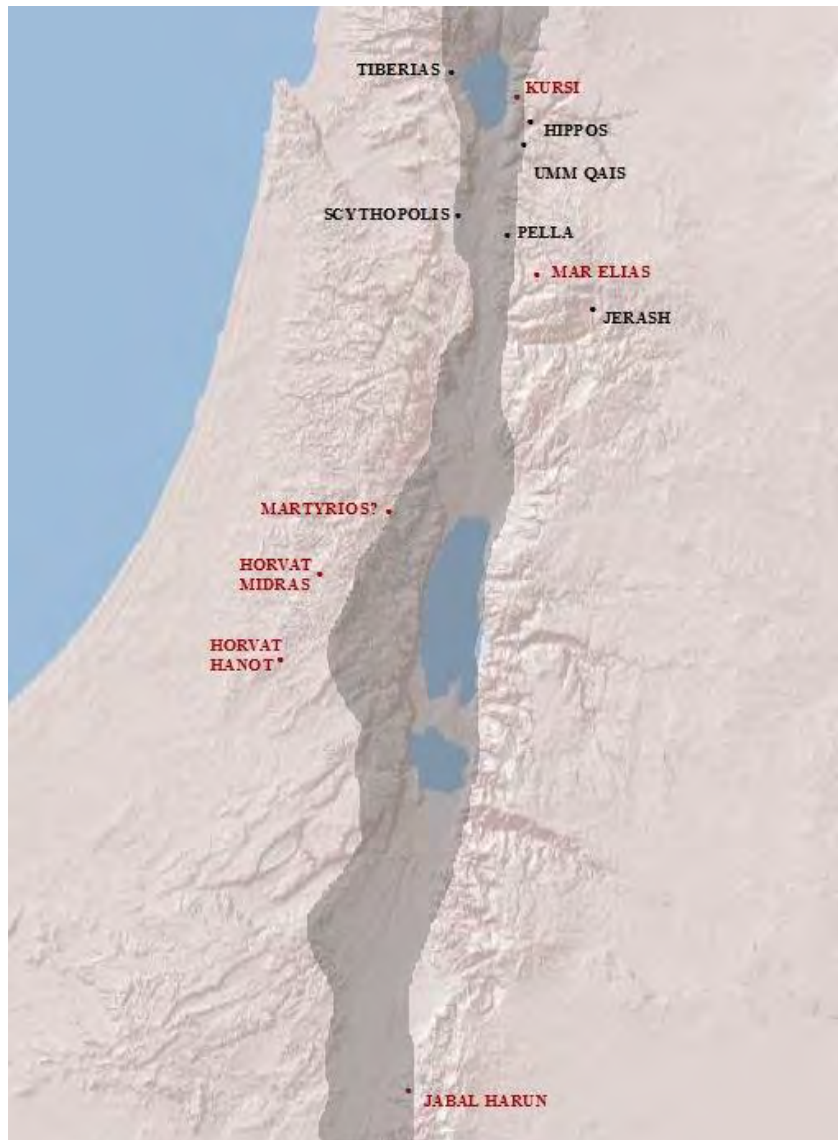


Fig.4.1 Map of monastic and cult sites destroyed or damaged in the 749 earthquake.
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Key

(In black) Urban centres with cult sites or monasteries destroyed or damaged in 749.

(In red) Monasteries or cult sites in rural contexts that exhibit destruction/damage layers attributed to 749.

(In shaded grey) The Dead Sea Transform

These provide some nominal indication of sustained investment, but such examples generally belong to the cities where modern urban layers limit any possible understanding of their post-Umayyad phases.⁷⁸⁰

What they do indicate, however, is that there are few cases where the earthquake of the 740s caused an immediate cessation to the occupation of established cities. This is notable among the centres situated in the Golan Heights and northern Transjordan, where the impact of the Golan earthquake was particularly acute, but where excavations have provided evidence for continued, but more muted, activity into the tenth century.⁷⁸¹

A shift in the focus of localised renewal and recovery, focussed on domestic and industrial structures, rather than absolute collapse in urban activity, appears to have characterised several of Dekapolis centres after the 740s.⁷⁸²

Such limited attempts to reclaim much of the monumental cores of these cities may be interpreted both as the culmination of more general shifts in urban organisation alongside the declining political significance of urban centres in the southern Dekapolis.⁷⁸³

On the latter point, Scythopolis/Baysān's loss of status as a provincial capital to Tabarīyyah in the Umayyad period may explain why programmes of investment were more subdued in the city following this period.⁷⁸⁴ Certainly centres such as Jarash, 'Ammān and Tabarīyyah retained important regional status as district capitals or economic centres but, from a broader perspective, the gradual shift of political and economic centrality towards Baghdad by the 760s may have excluded such centres from the focus of institutionally funded

⁷⁸⁰ See notes 772-773.

⁷⁸¹ At Pella, occupation continued on the main Tell overlooking the earlier Byzantine city at least until the ninth century, see Walmsley 1992. In Baysān the area of the lower city, and around Hisham's *sūq*, was reoccupied following the earthquake by a series of possible domestic structures overlying the earthquake fill: Tsafirir and Foerster 1997: 136-137 and Tsafirir and Foerster 1994. The situation on the acropolis of the city is less certain. At Umm Qays the Mausoleum church appears to have continued into the twelfth century: Weber 1998 and Al Daire 1998: 560.

⁷⁸² This is apparent in Scythopolis/Baysān and Pella where post-749 levels appear to have been primarily domestic in nature: Tsafirir and Foerster 1994 and Walmsley 1992.

⁷⁸³ Kennedy 1985: 3-27 and also Walmsley 2000: 274-283.

⁷⁸⁴ The status of Tabarīyyah as the provincial capital of Jund al-Urdunn is mentioned in the descriptions of the region by Muqadassī: *Aḥsan al-taqāsim fī ma'rifat al-aqālī*, (ed. de Goje 1906: 161, tr. Collins 2001: 137).

programmes of urban renewal.⁷⁸⁵ That many elements of the former late-Roman and Byzantine monumental cores were not subsequently reclaimed is a pattern which fits in well with more general urban trends in the region in the Byzantine and early Islamic period.⁷⁸⁶ The limited attempts at reclaiming these features after 749 represent the culmination of a general trend in urban organisation in the region which had emerged in the late-sixth century with the continued maintenance of the mosque and *sūq* complex into the Fatimid period in Jarash providing one example of shifts in urban priorities by the eighth century.⁷⁸⁷

One feature which does not accord with the general focus of post 749 programmes of renewal is the apparent rate of abandonment among churches. As was addressed in the previous two chapters, the collective archaeological and literary evidence does not support an impression of endemic weakening in Christian life prior to this period; particularly in the Transjordan from where most of our evidence for structural intervention in the post-Byzantine period, and up until 750, emerges.⁷⁸⁸

Nonetheless, there are clear examples where attempts to reclaim churches were not undertaken despite the well observed presence of substantial Christian communities into the mid-eighth century.

⁷⁸⁵ For Muqadassī's description of Amman and Tiberias see *Ahsan al Taqāsim fī Marifat alAqālim*, (de Goeje 1906: 155, tr. Collins 2001: 132).

⁷⁸⁶ Already by c.600 several of these elements – a steady de-monumentalisation of civic space and a reorientation of civic and political life towards the church and commercial buildings – had prompted changes in the way in which urban space was utilised and structured and had relegated many of these former features to the periphery of public life. For a discussion of this in relation to rural settlements, see De Vries 2000 who addresses the situation in Umm el-Jimal. A parallel development in *Kastron Mefa'a*, which saw similar process of nucleated domestic structures centred around a church, can be observed but is currently less well explored. At Jarash, this process is clear by the early seventh century. The Temple of Artemis, the North Theatre and the Oval Forum by the 600s exhibit distinct cases of the reuse of former monumental structures which were, nonetheless, no less active than earlier Roman phases and certainly not indicative of economic weakening, see Walmsley 2000: 274-282.

⁷⁸⁷ See the preliminary reports in Blanke and Walmsley 2010 and Walmsley 2009. A full discussion of the mosque and its architectural phases between the eighth and eleventh centuries appears in Damgaard 2011.

⁷⁸⁸ See pages 117-118, 176, 196 for an overview of church building which post-dates 600.



Fig.4.2 Umm Qays, Octagonal Terrace Church, aerial view of octagonal apse with ambulatory. The small south church can be seen to the right of the photograph.
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Fig.4.3 Umm Qays, one of the tombs in the south church adjacent to the ambulatory in the Octagonal Terrace Church. This tomb was one of a series which was also accompanied by reliquary caskets.
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Fig.4.4 Umm Qays, the ambulatory in the Octagonal Terrace Church. The recess inside the octagonal chamber housed an altar and a stone-lined tomb.
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Fig.4.5 Umm Qays, the crypt and tomb beneath the altar of the 'Mausoleum Church'. The tomb is located beneath arch.
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Fig.4.6 Jabal Harūn, view of the monastery (centre right) and tomb of Aaron (top left).
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Fig.4.7 Jabal Harūn, view of the monastery (centre) and tomb of Aaron (top left).
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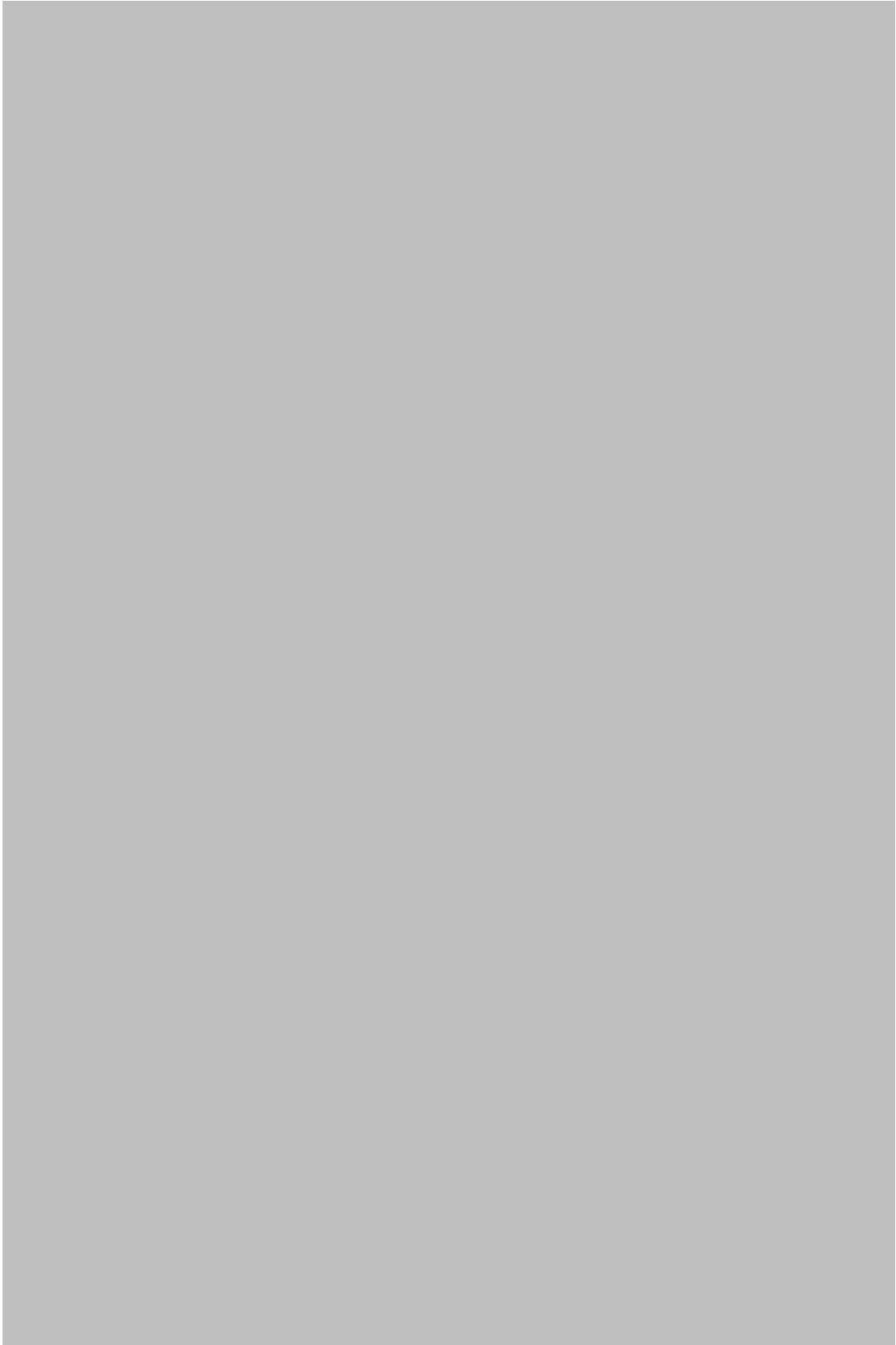


Fig.4.8 Jabal Harūn, Monastery of Aaron, aerial view.
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Fig.4.9 Jabal Harūn monastic church (facing south east)
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Fig.4.10 Jabal Harūn, fourteenth century *weli* on the summit of the mountain incorporating the traditional tomb of Aaron.
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The final occupation of many church sites beyond 749 cannot be easily determined: an issue which stems from the largely architectural focus of early excavations at number of sites.⁷⁸⁹ Patterns following 749 in the Transjordan are clearer than those to the west of the Dead Sea, due to more sensitive excavation, but are not devoid of similar concerns about dating in many cases.⁷⁹⁰

The subsequent fate of the sixteen identified churches in Jarash, the majority of which are considered to have been destroyed during the Golan Earthquake, presents one urban context where our understanding of post-Umayyad Christian life remains limited. Nonetheless, descriptions of earthquake damage at the Church of Hagios Theodoros, provides one possible example of limited reclamation following 749.⁷⁹¹

Whether or not the larger ‘Cathedral’ Church was subsequently reclaimed, mirroring the response evident among a number of larger churches in Umm Qays and Jabal Harūn, is unclear.⁷⁹² Few of these churches have yielded explicit evidence which would associate them with monastic communities: a lacuna which generally characterises our understanding of monastic life in the Dekapolis urban archipelago.⁷⁹³ Literary sources provide some indication that a monastic presence was maintained in these cities even if their material presence cannot be presently identified within the archaeological record. The mention of the monk Martyrios of Jarash in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* offers one example of a sustained monastic presence in the Dekapolis into the late 770s with the unpublished inscription from Mar Elyas,

⁷⁸⁹ See pages 20-29.

⁷⁹⁰ The clearest evidence we have for the destruction of the earthquake derives from Pella/Tabaqat Fahl, see Smith 1992: 163 and Walmsley 1992: 187 and the excavations of Hippos/Sussita see note 770. The evidence from Jarash is more ambiguous. The Bishop Isaiah church does not appear to have been reclaimed: Clark 1986. The other churches, discussion in Crowfoot 1938, were excavated too early to be of use. The churches of Abila demonstrate similar abandonment after the mid-eighth century: Chapman and Schick 2009:525 and Wineland 2001: 39.

⁷⁹¹ Clark 1986: 313-316, Crowfoot 1938: 223-225 and Gawilkowski and Ali Musa 1986: 137-161.

⁷⁹² On the Mausoleum Church see Weber 1998 and Al-Daire 2001. For the rebuilding of Jabal Harūn consult Mikkola *et al* 2008: 148-159.

⁷⁹³ This is primarily due to our reliance on mosaic inscriptions to identify a monastic presence. The fairly prevalent use of marble and other slab flooring (as opposed to mosaic), therefore, often inhibits our ability to identify monastic figures.

currently dated to 775, offering another possible example within the hinterlands of the city.⁷⁹⁴

The general pattern among possible cult sites, incorporating prominent burials or crypt-tombs, is clearer in a number of cases. With the exception of the Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays (the fate of Scythopolis is unclear) which has yielded evidence for post-Umayyad phases; all of the main churches of Hippos/Sussita, Pella and the Octagonal Church of Umm Qays were destroyed in 749 and provide little evidence for reclamation or resumed liturgical celebration (Fig. 4.3-4.5).

In the example of Hippos/Sussita, the North-West Church, North East Church and South West Church were left undisturbed and sealed by the earthquake debris prior to its excavation in the recent decade.⁷⁹⁵ Human and animal remains, trapped beneath earthquake debris in churches in Pella and Hippos appear to confirm this impression of abandonment and mark a general trend among Christian sites in the Dekapolis where no systematic attempt to reoccupy these buildings was attempted after 749.⁷⁹⁶

This pattern of site abandonment is not consistent on a macro-regional level; examples of repair or reoccupation of sites which exhibit comparable phases of destruction in 747/749 are known beyond the southern Dekapolis. At Jabal Harūn, excavations have confirmed that the earthquake initiated the collapse of the roof covering the nave and chancel of the fifth-century central basilica as well as causing damage to the nave and portico which was not subsequently repaired.⁷⁹⁷ The site was continuously occupied until the tenth century, but in a form which indicates significant shifts in the general economic strength of the

⁷⁹⁴ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* 17.1 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 26, 25). The *Life* recalls a meeting between Martyrios of Jarash and Stephen in the fifty-third year of Stephen's life. The current consensus about Stephen's life suggests that he was born around 725. This can be inferred from comparative readings of passages contained within the life: *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* 6.1, 80.3 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 8, 144 and 25, 129).

⁷⁹⁵ On the South West Church see Bordman 2005: 19-20 where the reliquaries do not appear to have been retrieved. Preliminary discussions of the North-West Church are presented in Mlynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2002: 15-28. For the North East Church see the discussion by Schuler 2003: 38-50.

⁷⁹⁶ See Smith 1992: for the discussion of Pella. Further discussion of the earthquake also offered in Walmsley 1992 and Walmsley 2011: 137-193. For Hippos/Sussita see Wozniak 2004: 68-75.

⁷⁹⁷ Mikkola *et al* 2008: 99-176.

monastery and a substantial reduction in the functional cultic space of the site (Fig. 4.6-4.10).⁷⁹⁸ Reoccupation following the 749 earthquake was limited to the north chapel and aisle – the central nave was turned over to industrial activity – with repairs executed primarily from *spolia* acquired from disused features of the fifth-century complex.⁷⁹⁹ This limited programme of rebuilding at Jabal Harūn is notable for its contrast to the response provoked by a seventh-century destruction phase (possibly linked to earthquake of 659), where more ambitious renovations were undertaken to retrieve the entire tri-apsidal basilica complex.⁸⁰⁰

Less is known about the structure situated on the summit of Jabal Harūn where the construction of a *weli* in the thirteenth century restricts more detailed observations of its pre-Crusader phases (Fig.4.10).⁸⁰¹

The substantial reduction of the site and its apparent state of disrepair following 749 do hint at more significant underlying impacts to the general strength of the monastic community which emerged in the later eighth century. Beyond Jabal Harūn, a similar process of internal contraction and a reduction in cult space characterises the post-Umayyad phases of the Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays.⁸⁰² Here, post-Umayyad phases appear to have largely

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁹ The excavations at the monastic site suggested a ninth- or tenth-century final phase: Mikkola *et al* 2008: 147-169. This does not negate a continued presence at the site of the tomb situated at the summit of the mountain. The possible continuation of the tomb as a Christian cult site is suggested by the literary evidence (see Appendix A).

⁸⁰⁰ Mikkola *et al* 2008: 135-147. Preliminary discussions also available in Fiema 2003: 347-352. See also Frösen *et al* 2004: 97-116.

⁸⁰¹ Nonetheless, descriptions of the tomb in the regional descriptions of al-Mas‘ūdī and Peter of Bayt Ra‘s suggest that the tomb was maintained following this period in some form. A discussion of the traditions concerning the site, and its connections to Aaron, is offered in Frösén and Päivi Miettunen 2008. The site is briefly mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 383 (ed. Cachia 1960: 207, tr. Watt 1960: 162), where the tomb of Aaron is described as being in the land of Sharāh. This identification, that Aaron was buried in land of Sharāh on the road to Mount Sinai, appears in the later descriptions of the Muslim writer al-Mas‘ūdī (d.943). This link is probably confirmed by a number of pilgrim inscriptions that survive on Mount Sinai which identify the pilgrims as inhabitants of Zadakathon: a military fortress located some 25 km southeast of Petra. For discussion of Zadakathon see Kennedy 2008 and Kennedy and Falahat 2008. The fortress also appears frequently in the Petra papyri hoard recovered from the Hagia Maria church in Petra, which spans the 530s-570s see Nasarat *et al* 2012: 110-112. Pilgrims traffic was probably facilitated by the continued maintenance of the Via Nova Triana between Petra and Aqaba on the Red Sea. Evidently from the inscriptions of Al Badr of Ayla, which survives in the Wadi Hajjaj, the Petra-Aqaba-Sinai route was fully established by the eighth century: Graf 1995. For the Al Badr inscriptions, see the discussion and bibliography in Sharon 1993.

⁸⁰² Discussions of these sites appear in Mikkola *et al* 2008 and Weber 1998: 449. In the case of the Weber excavations at Umm Qays, there is no adequate description of this phase which describes how the space was

concentrated on the chancel and central nave and may have resulted in the abandonment of the former aisles and narthex.⁸⁰³

The developments apparent at Jabal Harūn are exceptional in terms of their modest attempts at reclaiming the former monastic site. As will be outlined below, it is unlikely that this apparent deterioration can be fully disassociated from the contemporary developments in the nearby settlement of Petra, where abandonment rates and lack of diagnostic Umayyad material imply that the settlement may have already been under strain by the later seventh century.⁸⁰⁴

The comparative trends indicated by excavations in other regions, where the earthquake caused similar patterns of damage, propose that approaches to the 749 earthquake, and its impact on monastic communities, need to be substantially nuanced and analysed systematically from the perspective of individual, localised, contexts. Excavations on the Church of Mount Berenike – which may also have been a monastery – have produced an additional example of a damage phase attributed to the 749 earthquake which reflects more concerted efforts to restore the church according to its pre-749 dimensions (Fig. 4.11-4.14).⁸⁰⁵ Here, the restoration of the tri-apsidal basilica facilitated the continued function of the church into the eleventh century – albeit with some modification to the colonnades (replaced by more substantial, though less technically refined, piers) and a progressive reduction in the liturgical space within the church during the ninth and tenth centuries.⁸⁰⁶ Nonetheless, the impression which emerges from the excavation reports is of a community which remained

negotiated in the Abbasid period.

⁸⁰³ Weber 1998: 449. This phasing has never been fully published and was partially disrupted during the 1967 conflict.

⁸⁰⁴ Scholars have yet to come to a consensus about the general fate of Petra after the Byzantine period. For a rather negative impression, which suggest virtual abandonment by the seventh century, see Fiema 2002: 191-252. Walmsley 2007: 90 expresses some concerns with this argument. The Petra papyri archive, which closes in the 590s, indicates a fairly active phase by the late decades of the sixth century. It is uncertain if occupation of the site continued into the Umayyad period, but the source material provides no evidence that it was a substantial settlement by the ninth century which can be compared to those of Ramlā, Qaysāriya, Tabarīyya or Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis).

⁸⁰⁵ Hirschfeld 2004b: 100-123.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*: 120.

sufficiently wealthy to ensure the continued maintenance of the site and where post-Umayyad continuities were less diminished than in contemporary Jabal Harūn. A similar process of reoccupation and repair is also known from the revised dating of the monastery of Kursi which saw the subsequent blocking of the atrium and aisles of the main church.⁸⁰⁷ These attempts at the reclamation of existing sites were accompanied by contemporary cases of abandonment in other regional contexts. Aside from the urban churches of the Dekapolis, excavations at the sites of Horvat Midras and Horvat Hanot have proposed similar cases of abandonment in the southern hinterlands of Jerusalem.⁸⁰⁸

This is not a complete list of the number of sites affected in the mid-eighth century but does provide a general impression of substantial variation between individual regional contexts. There is currently little indication to propose that the drastic effects of the earthquake experienced in the Dekapolis were replicated in areas further removed from the northern Transjordan. To some extent, this is due to the level of archaeological exploration in the Dekapolis which remains unique in terms of its extent and intensity: further settlements which remain un-excavated, or beneath modern urban sprawl, may supplement this picture considerably in the coming decades and provide a clearer understanding of post-749 occupation.

⁸⁰⁷ For a description of the phase see Tzaferis 1983: 15-17. This was attributed originally to the Sassanian incursion of 614. Stacey 2004: 15-17 offers an alternative date of 749 for the destruction and eighth and ninth centuries for phase II. It is also possible, but beyond certainty, to enlist the Martyrios Monastery of Ma'ale Adummim, situated in the environs of Jericho, among the sites subsequently restored following the 749 earthquake. For a brief discussion see Magen 1993a: 188. The discovery of a coin dated to 750 and mention of Khirbet Mefjer ware would suggest a continued occupation beyond the Umayyad period: Magness 2011: 87. See the discussion in Appendix A. The pattern would correlate with the source material and recent studies of the earthquake which suggests that Jerusalem and Jericho were particularly affected by this earthquake: Marco *et al.* Ma'ale Adummim is located around ten kilometres from the city and is situated within the Dead Sea Transform.

⁸⁰⁸ For Horvat Hanot see Shenav 2003: 269-72. For Horvat Midras: Ganor *et al* 2012. Both sites are, as yet, only published in preliminary form.



Fig.4.11 Tiberias, Church of Tiberias on Mount Berenike, general view of site. This layout of the church reflects a composite of periods ranging from the fifth to twelfth centuries.
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Fig.4.12 Tiberias, Mount Berenike, chancel area with altar platform and relic stone inserted into chancel floor.
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Fig.4.13 Tiberias, Church of Mount Berenike facing east.
©Bukvoed 2011, Creative Commons Licence 3.0



Fig.4.14 Plan of the church on Mount Berenike showing the later post-Byzantine modifications to the basilica.
© Hirschfeld 2004b

Much of our understanding of the earthquake is also largely urban in focus. How village communities in the Dekapolis hinterlands were affected and responded to the events of 749 remains unclear: obscurities which reflect the limited understanding of rural landscapes in the northern Transjordan beyond church buildings and the broader landscape which supported these cities.

Nevertheless, excavations at sites situated at the east-west extremities of the region – Horvat Hani, Kastron Mefa'a and Mount Nebo – provide no indication of destruction levels which may be attributed to the 740s.⁸⁰⁹ An inscription at Mar Elyas, in the hinterlands of Aljoun, dated to 775, offers further confirmation of the highly varied impact of the earthquake even in regional contexts of urban destruction.⁸¹⁰ Continued refurbishment of sites in the Madaba plateau and around Mount Nebo offer further parallels to the divergent trajectories of sites after 750.⁸¹¹

An explanation for this regional clustering may be proposed from the perspective of localised geological patterns. All of the sites which have yielded unambiguous evidence for

⁸⁰⁹ For the chronology of Horvat Hani see the very preliminary discussion by Dahari 2003 (in Hebrew) who suggests an abandonment date in the ninth century. Madaba's continued occupation, and apparent vitality, is suggested by the monumental construction of the Church of the Theotokos, see Dauphin 1975: 155-157 and Di Segni 1992. The site of the church of Hagios Elianos, on the opposite side of the *dekumanos* is uncertain, due to the early date of its excavation by Séjourné 1897: 648-656. Excavations in the vicinity of the church have indicated occupation until the ninth century: Piccirillo 1994d: 381-403. A large urban residence in Madaba appears also to have continued in use until the ninth century: Foran 2004: 113-122. Similarly, excavations place the majority of the abandonment dates for the churches in Kastron Mefa'a in the ninth century. The Church of Hagios Paulos continued beyond 750, although Piccirillo dates its final use as a church to the late eighth century: Piccirillo 1997: 375-394. The Church of the Lions shows ceramic forms of the eighth to ninth century although the preliminary report does not offer much indication of whether the church was still active in this period see Piccirillo 1992b: 199-225 and Alliata 1992: 227-250. The fate of the Church of the Tabula Ansata is less clear. Pappalardo 2003: 303-323 identifies a continued ceramic profile until the 10th century but it is difficult to determine if the church still functioned for liturgical use in this period. For a discussion see Piccirillo 2003: 285-303. The large church complex of Hagios Stephanos is only partially published (in terms of ceramic sequences relating to individual features) but Alliata's analysis again indicates occupation into the ninth century see Alliata 1991: 418-420.

⁸¹⁰ Piccirillo 2009: 109. This inscription is only discussed in Piccirillo's publication and has not been reproduced in transcription. Therefore, the dating of the inscription is difficult to verify.

⁸¹¹ See below pages 283-284. An additional issue, which requires further consideration, is the relative response (and resilience) of particular architectural features and buildings plans to seismic activity. A series of studies conducted on the seismic response of drum columns and architraves has indicated their susceptibility to ground tremors, see Psycharis *et al* 2000: 1093-1109 and Manos *et al* 2001. The predominance of basilical plans in the major urban churches of the Dekapolis may explain the concentrated effect of the devastation in this urban zone when view in conjunction with the proximity of these cities of the Jordan Rift Valley.

destruction phases are situated within the Dead Sea Transform, with the pattern becoming less explicit towards the coastal zones of the Mediterranean, the Negev and Sinai Peninsula.⁸¹² This distribution correlates well with the repertoire of textual sources with the urban centres reported to have been considerably affected by the earthquake – Damascus, Jericho and Tabarīyyah – all being situated within this lateral tectonic zone.⁸¹³

The long-term impact of the earthquake appears to have been its initiation of distinct regional trends in terms of monastic and cult-site continuity following the mid-eighth century with its chief characteristics being the steady nucleation of patron investment into confined regional clusters. The Dekapolis, marked by a gradual retraction in the number of cult sites demonstrates was, however, exceptional in terms of the speed of these processes and by the nature of their severity. Other regions, including the Madaba plateau and the environs of Jerusalem in contrast, exhibit a more stable pattern of investment and occupation into the later eighth century.

4.5 POST 749 TRAJECTORIES

As was briefly addressed in the opening chapter of this study, a collective analysis of occupational trends in the Abbasid period is hampered by the focus of early excavation at Christian sites towards the discussion of the church floor plans or their initial foundation phase.⁸¹⁴ This has culminated in the assembly of a corpus of sites where our understanding of post-Byzantine settlement profiles remain incomplete and volunteer no detailed description of early Islamic phases. For discussions of the Umayyad period, this constraint has been alleviated by more sensitive dating of a phenomenon, termed recently by Susana Ognibene as

⁸¹² For a discussion of the Dead Sea Transform and its relationship to the historical earthquakes see El Isa 1983: 230-231 and Marco 2003.

⁸¹³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6238 (ed. se Boor 1883-1885: 422-424, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 585). See also *Chron 1234*: 325-328 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920).

⁸¹⁴ See pages 20-27.

‘Iconophobia’, which saw the systematic removal of figural and zoomorphic motifs from mosaic decorative schemes (see Appendix D).⁸¹⁵ The apparent culmination of this activity around the 760s, however, means that its value is limited for understanding the post-Umayyad phases of sites. There is no indication in the surviving literary material, however, or from churches where excavations are better published, that the events of 749/50 – environmental and political – resulted in any region-wide disruption.

Although the 749 Golan Earthquake may have instigated the abandonment of some cult sites within the Dekapolis urban network, this pattern, as we have seen, was not regionally uniform. But the Dekapolis pattern was anticipated to a lesser extent in the Negev where a more progressive process of contraction among monastic and cult sites – components of wider processes of settlement abatement – had emerged by the early eighth century in the smaller settlements of Rehovot-in-the-Negev and, possibly, Mamshit.⁸¹⁶ The trends of the Dekapolis are nonetheless unique in terms of their abruptness – an environmental rather than socio-economic driven development – and their relatively restricted geographical extent: with only the churches of the devastated urban centres of Hippos, Umm Qays and Abila – reflecting more extensive cases of abandonment in 749.

A contraction in the number of active cult sites within individual cities remains a plausible, if poorly understood, trend of the later eighth century. It can be observed clearly in Umm Qays, where Christian activity in the ninth century was limited to the Mausoleum church. The situation in Jarash by the 750s is less clear, but the possible abandonment of the

⁸¹⁵ On the discussions of iconophobia in Palestine see the studies by Ognibene 1998: 372-90 and Ognibene 2002: 115-116. See also the discussion by Brubaker and Haldon 2001: 30-36 and Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 105-114. See also Schick 1995: 190-224. The most recent gazetteer of sites is offered in Shiyab 2006: 38-160. The corpus continues to expand however. See the recent excavations at Ya’amun, Nassar and Turshan 2011: 41-62.

⁸¹⁶ See the discussions by Magness 2003: 188-192.

Bishop Isaiah Church and the Triple Church Complex after the Golan earthquake may imply a similar process of intra-site contraction.⁸¹⁷

The inclination to interpret such patterns of contraction among urban churches following the 740s as indicative of substantial decline in the Christian demographic the mid-eighth century needs to be handled cautiously. The tendency to impose modern conceptions of church construction (as exemplified by the nineteenth-century notion of demographic stimulus) upon processes of church building in the Byzantine-Umayyad period are potentially misleading in understanding the factors which stimulated either the foundation or abandonment of an individual monastic or church site.

The correlation between church construction and demographic demands is largely a construct of early modern social priorities, fostered by a series of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century legislative measures in Britain targeted at addressing the demands of urban expansion which emerged in the wake of industrialisation.⁸¹⁸ The Church Building Acts of 1818 and 1822, which legislated for the construction of churches in the expanding suburban districts of London, are two such measures which have proved formative in shaping our understanding of the factors which promote church construction.⁸¹⁹

The assumption (often by scholars of European or North American origin responsible for processing archaeological material) that Byzantine/Umayyad sponsorship of churches responded to similar demographic pressures is a retrojection of this basic cultural

⁸¹⁷ In the latter case, the lack of detailed discussion or publication of its phases does not permit a fuller clarification of the issue. Kraeling discusses the presence of human and animal skeletal remains trapped between the debris which would imply a collapse. It remains difficult to correlate the developments directly with the earthquake of 749 and such readings of the material are largely contextual in view of what is understood of the wider settlement in the Umayyad and Abbasid periods.

⁸¹⁸ Port 2006: 1-9. Port emphasises demographic pressures as well as concerns about declining morality as crucial factors in the instigation of the Church Commission. Neither of these concerns to my knowledge is paralleled in the material of the fifth to tenth centuries. With regards to the problems with correlating church construction with growing religious sentiment in the nineteenth century, see Medhurst and Moyster 1988 who observe that the boom in nineteenth-century church construction emerged at a time of increasing secularisation in Britain.

⁸¹⁹ The term Church Building Acts encompasses a range of legislation from 1818-1884.

preconception and one that has duly ensured that fluctuations in church occupational patterns in Palestine following 749 are often seen as indications of Christian demographic decline.⁸²⁰

The pertinence of the demographic argument to Byzantine and Umayyad contexts is, however, less assured. This correlation between demographic stimulus and church construction has essentially emerged from a cultural context defined by post-Enlightenment anxieties where formalised church attendance and the centrality of lay participation in corporate worship makes the construction of new churches essential to meet the demands of urban growth and concerns about declining lay morality.⁸²¹

Does this accord well with patterns in Byzantine and Umayyad Palestine? It is here that an inadequate knowledge of lay devotion and experience of church life in the Levant prior to 1000 remains an obstacle to understanding the factors that stimulated church building in the region – especially in rural contexts. Modern sentiments, which equate church foundation as part of a centralised institutional concern about demographic pressures, must be exercised with restraint. There are a number of cases where demographic arguments do not complement the archaeological data which has emerged from systematic excavation in the Levant in the last century. The number and close proximity of churches in rural or quasi-urban settlements such as Rihab, Umm el-Jimal and Kastron Mefa'a offer three examples (Fig. 4.15).⁸²²

⁸²⁰ Thus Magness 2003, often attributes the abandonment of churches in Shivta, Horvat Berachot and Rehovot-in-the-Negev to demographic changes such as conversion to Islam.

⁸²¹ For a discussion of nineteenth-century church construction and its response to concerns about declining morality and demographic pressures see Port 2006: 1-9. See, for example, Clark 2007 whose study, though invaluable, presupposes that lay visibility of the liturgy was a central feature of spatial negotiation. Furthermore, Clark's study does not account for the possibility that the internal space of the basilica could be partitioned through the use of textiles or portable screening. Clark's hypothesis largely estimates visibility of the basis of the skeletal framework of archaeological remains.

⁸²² Only more systematic excavation of these centres will offer a fuller understanding of the patterns of church foundation and concurrent processes of settlement growth in these settlements. Kastron Mefa'a presents one example where the sudden surge in church building outside of the original walled complex is difficult to contextualise in respect to the dating of their surrounding features. The churches in Rihab and Umm el-Jimal have yet to receive a full study. For preliminary discussions see Avi Yonah 1933; Piccirillo 1981b. The main basilica of the Bishop Sergios and Hagios Stephanos complex in Kastron Mefa'a is discussed in the collected volume of Piccirillo and Alliata 1994 (eds.) and in the earlier reports of Alliata 1991: 365-422. Discussions of the other churches may be found in the following: Hagios Paulos and the Chapel of the Peacocks in Piccirillo



Fig.4.15 Aerial plan, Kastron Mefa'a, churches in the settlement.
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1. H. Stephanos (718)
H. Sergios (587)
Church of the Aedicula
Church of the Courtyard
2. Church of St Paul (570s-590s)
3. Chapel of the Peacocks (570s-590s)
4. Church of the Lions 574/589
5. Church of the Tabula Ansata
6. Church of the Priest Wa'il (586)
7. Church of the Reliquary (586)
8. Church of the Rivers (578/579 or 593/594)
Church of the Palm Tree (late sixth century)

1997: 375-395 and Piccirillo 2002: 535-559. For the church of the Lions see Piccirillo 1992: 199-225 and a discussion of the ceramics in Alliata 1992: 227-250. The Church of the Reliquary is addressed in Pappalardo 2006: 389-398 and Piccirillo 2006: 375-388. The Church of the Rivers and Church of the Palm Tree are discussed in Bujard *et al* 1992: 291-306. For the church of the Tabula Ansata see Piccirillo 2003: 285-324. For the Church of the Priest Wa'il see Piccirillo 1993b: 313-333. For a partial discussion about the relative cost of the churches at Umm el-Jimal see De Vries 1985: 250-253. Further discussion of Umm el-Jimal is offered in De Vries 2000: 39-45. On the churches of Rihab see Piccirillo 1981. There is the possibility that one church in Rihab was refurbished in 832 although the dating remains tentative: Michel 2001: 221-222.

Little is known about the populations of these settlements, but the number of such churches – in the case of Rihab (seven churches) and Kastron Mefa‘a (thirteen churches) the majority constructed during the course of a single decade – comparative to settlement size (approximately 1.5 kilometers) proposes that demographic pressures were not predominant among the factors which facilitated their construction.⁸²³

The commemoration of local notables and elite family units in the dedicatory inscriptions of these buildings may, however, alternatively propose that the construction of churches represented a more conventional medium of elite display which did not necessarily respond to actual demands of corporate worship (see Appendix C).

The evidence in itself is not sufficient to propose that all church construction in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods responded exclusively to patron demands over demographic stimulus: the fragmentary nature of the evidence make all sweeping generalisations about monastic/church patron economies precarious and a feature that will elude secure definition until the corpus of church dedications is collated and appraised.

Simply, the use of church construction as an avenue through which familial status and piety was publicly promoted undermines the credibility of simplistic explanations, based on diminishing lay congregations, for church site abandonment in the post-Byzantine period. Equally, it proposes that our understanding of subsequent trends in church building and maintenance in Palestine following the 740s must intersect with wider questions about the changing focus of elite patronage (whether in terms of institution or medium) as well as the continued economic capacity of patron families to perpetuate established patterns of construction. It is from these perspectives that we might seek an explanation for the patterns of church building and foundation which emerged in the aftermath of the Golan Earthquake. We do not yet know the extent to which the earthquake affected the elite infrastructures of the

⁸²³ On Rihab's churches see Piccirillo 1981 and Piccirillo 1993c: 316-319.

Dekapolis network, but its impact must have been felt among urban based families in the cities where the earthquake caused substantial damage to urban properties.⁸²⁴

The consolidation of Christian activity and repair efforts into the larger churches of settlements (as with Umm Qays and possibly Jarash) does, in any case, suggest that the dramatic effects of the 749 earthquake catalysed a shift in the priorities of Christian patrons towards the central elements and buildings of local Christian life and, possibly, a weakening in their ability to perpetuate the construction of newer churches in the most affected centres of the Dekapolis. After 750, those churches which provide the most certain evidence of Abbasid occupation or occasional investment in the Dekapolis region and Transjordan – the Mausoleum Church in Umm Qays and Mount Berenike in Tabariyyah – are those which appear to have functioned as the major points of Christian cult activity or were established within urban centres characterised by more pervasive levels of rebuilding after 749.⁸²⁵ The Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays was not only the largest church of the city, but it also appears to have incorporated a tomb that served as a focal point of veneration.⁸²⁶ Though its cultic associations are unclear, the church of Mount Berenike in Tabariyyah was nonetheless maintained until the eleventh century and replicates the situation in the lower town where a number of excavations have identified several phases of construction and renewal to domestic and commercial structures during the ninth and tenth centuries.⁸²⁷

⁸²⁴ Only further research, focussing beyond the monumental cores of these cities into domestic quarters and urban hinterlands, will be able to clarify the long-term effects of the destruction. It is possible, in view of the limited level of church building in Jarash after the early seventh century, that the earthquake of 749 accelerated an already established trend in the northern Transjordan where much of the expansion after 610 was focussed on rural settlements. The last identified church constructed in Jarash is that of the Bishop Genesios dated to 611: Crowfoot 1938: 249-250. In contrast, much of the evidence for church construction in the region by the early seventh century emerges from surrounding rural settlements of Rihab and Mar Elyas. For the construction of Rihab, see Piccirillo 1993c: 310-314 and Mar Elyas see Piccirillo 2011:106-108. Walmsley 2005 surveys the evidence for this later sixth/early seventh century expansion. Overviews of epigraphic trends (based primarily on churches) are offered in Di Segni 1999.

⁸²⁵ For the Mausoleum Church, which appears to have been maintained in a reduced form after 749, see Weber 1998. For Mount Berenike see Hirschfeld 2004b: 75-130.

⁸²⁶ Weber 1998.

⁸²⁷ See the collected studies in Hirschfeld 2004b and Stacey 2004. Cytrn-Silverman 2009 surveys the evidence for the mosque. Harrison 1992: 51-59 also offers further insights. These studies have noted an increase in building activity in the ninth and tenth centuries. A similar pattern, derived mostly from texts, may also be

The pattern is less certain in monastic contexts partly because much of the archaeological corpus is devoted to studies of rural coenobitic complexes (many of which were not located in the region most affected by the earthquake) and because our understanding of monastic life in the urban Dekapolis remains poorly defined.⁸²⁸

Nonetheless, in several of the key centres situated in this region, including Kursi and Mar Elyas, these larger communities (the former certainly known to the wider Melkite community) were subject to continued occupation and repair.⁸²⁹ At Kursi, this resulted in the blocking of the side aisles and atrium spaces to create separate spatial units within the complex which were turned over to the industrial or domestic functions of the monastic community.⁸³⁰ Again, the pattern would endorse the view that such sites were maintained partly as a result of their status. The site of Kursi was associated with at least two miracles of Christ's ministry (the miracle of the swine and the multiplication of the loaves and fishes) and appears as a destination for pilgrims across the region in a number of texts ranging from the sixth to eighth centuries.⁸³¹

The selective recovery of churches in particular urban centres, such as Pella and Hippos, suggests then that the continued use of such buildings was largely determined by

proposed for Asqālan. Hoffman 2004, reports of the continued occupation of the city into the tenth century and its important connection to Egyptian trade networks. The survival of the Churches of Kosmas and Kyriakos in Asqālan, until their destruction during a riot (see pages 231), provides another case of occupational stability of a Melkite church in a context of similar urban continuity.

⁸²⁸ There are examples of monastic figures in literary accounts from the urban centres of the Dekapolis. The monk Martyrios from Jarash is mentioned in the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 17.1 (ed. Lamoreaux 1999, tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 26, 25). Excavations have not revealed anything within the city which proposes a monastic association. Nonetheless, the attachment of monastic figures to larger civic churches (see page 68-70) does not negate the possibility that a monastic presence continued in the city after 750.

⁸²⁹ The report of Mar Elias remains unpublished. I am grateful for conversations with one of the excavators, Mohammed Atoom, formerly of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

⁸³⁰ On this phase (wrongly dated to the seventh century), see Tzaferis 1983: 15-17. See the revised dating in Stacey 2004: 15-16. For the awareness of Kursi within the Melkite community see Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 321 (ed. Cachia 1960, tr. Watt 1960).

⁸³¹ These are Huneberc, *Life of Willibald*: 14 (ed. Tobler 1874: 26, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 239-240), *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 321 (ed. Cachia 1960: 170, tr. Watt 1960: 137). It is possible that the site named Chorsia in the *Life of Sabas* is also to be identified as Kursi. Cyril of Scythopolis records a 'pilgrimage' made by Sabas to Chorisa alongside Tiberias and 'Heptapegos' the latter which we may identify as the Church of the Multiplication now known as Tagbha: Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas* 108.10-108.15 (ed. Schwartz 1939: 108, tr. Price 1991: 117).

highly localised conditions that were not universally replicated across Palestine.

The general lack of any ambitious reconstruction in a number of the Dekapolis centres by the later eighth century, including the active centre of Jarash, must also qualify explanations church site abandonment based solely on religious change.⁸³²

Estimating the extent of Muslim populations in the Dekapolis is impossible, but we have clear indications from the construction of a mosque/*sūq* complex in Jarash (probably during the reign of Hisham) and the renovation of the *sūq* in Baysān (also during the reign of Hisham) of a Muslim presence in these cities by the 730s. The subsequent reclamation of these structures was nonetheless characterised by similar variation. The mosque/*sūq* complex of Jarash was reclaimed (the mosque continued in use until the eleventh century) but shows little evidence of substantial investment after the earthquake.⁸³³ The *sūq* is still in the process of excavation but preliminary soundings identify a similar pattern to the adjacent mosque: of reoccupation and use beyond the eighth century but one within the confines of existing pre-Abbasid structures.⁸³⁴ At Baysān the *sūq* was abandoned and subsequently occupied by a series of domestic units and provides a further example of sustained continuity in urban centres, but one not characterised by programmes of formal monumental investment.⁸³⁵ The only major example of renovation, the al-Aqṣā, in Jerusalem was not undertaken until the 780s, decades following the earthquake.⁸³⁶

It remains difficult to identify the particular factors which provoked the rather visible gaps in Christian monumental building after 749. But in the context of the more limited rebuilding at urban centres outlined above, a composite effect of political and economic

⁸³² An overview of Jarash in the early Islamic period is offered in Gawilkowski 2004.

⁸³³ See Walmsley 2010 and Gawilkowski 2004. Another examples is that of the *sūq* of Capitolias/Bayt Ra's which may also have been refurbished in the ninth or tenth century: Walmsley 2000: 280.

⁸³⁴ For preliminary reports see Blanke and Walmsley 2010 and Walmsley 2009.

⁸³⁵ Tsafirir and Foerster 1994. This pattern is also reflected at 'Ammān, where the results from excavations at the Umayyad complex also demonstrate more subdued reclamation following the Golan Earthquake: Northedge 1993: 87-88, 157-160.

⁸³⁶ Rosen Ayalon 2006: 68-69.

pressures appear as plausible explanations to these processes. In political terms, the reforms instituted by the Umayyads by the 740s had clear impacts on the political standing of such cities; after 749 only Tabarīyyah, Jarash, Baysān and ʿAmmān appear to have retained their status as fiscal authorities or important economic centres.⁸³⁷ This process was exacerbated rather than provoked by the environmental developments of the 740s; even prior to the official transferral of the centre of the Caliphate from Damascus to Baghdad in 762 it is evident that political and economic centralities were progressively drawn further east into the Mesopotamian heartlands away from the Palestinian urban networks.⁸³⁸

How this impacted on the centres of Umm Qays, Abila and Hippos and their elite populations is uncertain, although in institutional terms such restructuring probably had clear implications for their status within the broader urban and political structure of the region and Caliphal superstructure. The collective impact of these political and economic shifts evidently did not provoke an automatic or sustained socio-economic deterioration for Christian communities across Palestine as once assumed.⁸³⁹ Yet, based on the limited level of reconstruction after 750, the Golan earthquake appears to have undermined the stability of existing systems and accelerated its deterioration.⁸⁴⁰

The more muted attempts at urban regeneration following this period provide some indication that the recovery of these centres was functional rather than ambitious – that churches were reclaimed is irrefutable,⁸⁴¹ but cases of investment comparable with those of the early eighth century were not replicated following this period and, where they did occur, were not directed at the recovery of the Christian cult topography.

⁸³⁷ A general overview of Jarash is offered in Gawilkowski 2004, with additional discussion in note 3. Muqadassi, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1906: 161, tr. Collins 2011: 137) notes the status of Tabarīyyah as the capital of the province of Urdunn.

⁸³⁸ Kennedy 2004: 130-140, Kennedy 2011b and Lassner 1980: 139-162.

⁸³⁹ For qualifications to this hypothesis see Walmsley 2000: 281-296.

⁸⁴⁰ The continuation of production in Jarash into the ninth century is discussed in Wickham 2005: 616.

⁸⁴¹ As with the Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays, see Weber 1998.

The implications of political marginalisation for the Christian community are again uncertain but, as we have seen, a series of high profile persecutions of bishops and monks who launched vocal oppositions to the Caliphate in the 730s already suggests a gradual weakening of their political prominence.⁸⁴²

Whilst the role of localised and private revenue had always comprised a substantial component of monastic or cult site patronage, the gradual inability of Christian institutions to access centralised resource (or the benefaction of elite figures) may have underscored this reliance upon the private donations and revenues generated by Christian elites from among their own property or steadily localised administrative positions.⁸⁴³ Such a hypothesis remains impressionistic but is borne out by the increasing prominence of clerical figures as donors to monastic or cult centres and the incidental references in textual sources of donations in land or money bequeathed by Christian notables in the eighth century.⁸⁴⁴ The continued ability of Christian clergy to sustain patron activities into the late eighth century, must, therefore, indicate the existence of alternative, private, revenue sources that were not directly associated with office holding.⁸⁴⁵

But such revenue may not have been sustained indefinitely. Changes in ownership and cases of forced acquisition, which can be detected in some cases by the 670s with the transferral of properties to Muslim governors and *mawali*, must have affected particular

⁸⁴² In the case of Peter of Capitolias, this opposition may have stemmed directly from perceived infringements of the church's control over centralised public revenue and the transferral of fiscal and legal jurisdiction to Muslim governors installed in these larger urban centres: Peeters 1930 and Walmsley 2010: 29.

⁸⁴³ Such an argument would correlate well with that proposed for northern Syria see Humphreys 2010: 52-3 and Egypt for which see Arietta Papaconstantinou 2008: 146-147.

⁸⁴⁴ Thus the Theotokos Chapel in 'Ayn al-Kanisah see Piccirillo 1994e: 521-38, the Church of the Theotokos at Madaba, see Di Segni 1992 and Khirbet es-Shubeika, see Tzaferis 2003, all appear to have been commissioned or sponsored by monastic or clerical donors. In the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*, a similar impression emerges from the network of private donors and inheritances bequeathed to monastic establishments: Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 9.3-9.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoignon 1999:11, 10-11).

⁸⁴⁵ Land and property are the most likely candidates; both of the papyri hoards of Nessana and Petra indicate that prominent rural families retained sizeable portions of land where revenues could be extracted and occasionally directed to sustaining monastic houses. See the discussion, page 98.

families and the foundations which were supported by them.⁸⁴⁶ Such systems are also susceptible to fluctuations in land exploitation and the continued economic vitality of particular land holdings. Thus reports of the abandonment of Palestinian rural estates in the reign of Harūn al-Rashīd, provide some indication of changes to the intensity of land exploitation by the later eighth century.⁸⁴⁷

We have, at present, no means of determining this fully. In this respect, poorly defined dating criteria for Abbasid phases limits a more nuanced understanding of these processes in Palestine between 750 and 950 although a number of excavations in the Transjordan do propose that these trends were more protracted than previously recognised.⁸⁴⁸ Nonetheless, in cases such as the Negev, the gradual abatement in settlement (possibly fostered by the gradual decline in wine and oil exchange) by the mid-ninth century must have had implications on landlords and tenants, whether Muslim or Christian.⁸⁴⁹

What happened to these communities and the prominent patron families remains open to question. Hugh Kennedy has made a convincing case for the gradual disappearance of the Hellenised urban elite over the course of the Umayyad period but the fate of more localised rural families is less certain and probably irretrievable.⁸⁵⁰ Families closely linked to a

⁸⁴⁶ On this see the discussion by Nevo 1989 which may point to Arab land ownership in Palestine by the 670s. Johns 2003: 271 also points to the tensions between Arab governors and the residents of Nessana with regards to Arab requisition of commodities.

⁸⁴⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān*: 144 (ed. de Goeje 1861: 144, tr. Khuri-Hilti 2002: 221).

⁸⁴⁸ For Jarash see Gawilkowski 1992 and Gawilkowski 2004. Walmsley 1992 stresses continued occupation at Pella into the ninth century. For Umm Qays see Weber 1998 and Al Daire 2001. Tabarīyyah shows fairly substantial evidence of continuity into the eleventh century; see the collected reports in Hirschfeld 2004b and Stacey 2004b. The sites of Abila and Hippos, in any case, have not yet yielded evidence for post-749 activity, although this may change with ongoing excavation. See note 3 for the bibliography relating to the excavation projects.

⁸⁴⁹ On the gradual abatement see the study of Magness 2003 especially the concluding summary: 215-216. The trajectory of the churches at Madaba and Kastron Mefa'a mirror wider patterns within the settlement: these too show little activity by the late ninth century. This is based, at present, on the results of the excavation of the churches given the limited interventions within the wider settlement. These churches, with the possible exception of Hagios Stephanos (possibly still active in the late-ninth/early tenth century), were all abandoned in the ninth century; see notes 3 and 822 for bibliography.

⁸⁵⁰ Kennedy 2010: 181-200. From a Christian perspective, this is borne out by the increasing role of Arabic and gradual isolation of Melkites from Constantinople by the ninth century. Griffith 1998a surveys the limited contact between Constantinople and Jerusalem must of which centred on the Patriarchate. In an earlier study, Griffith 1982: 154-190, has pointed to confusion about Byzantine rulers among writers at Mount Sinai and the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

particular locale may have fallen into obscurity; others who possessed property in more prosperous regions within Palestine may have moved to the cities that sustained social and economic importance.⁸⁵¹ Regional variation was undoubtedly a feature of this milieu. At least among the larger urban centres of Jerusalem, Ramlā and Qaysarīyah, Christians could still aspire to positions within the retinue of local Muslim governors as doctors or as *kathib*. Several of the Patriarchs and other prominent Melkite figures whom we can identify in the ninth and tenth centuries appear to have performed such roles prior to their investiture. Though inherently hostile to his office, reports about the Patriarch Theodoros (c.745-c.770) in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* attribute his position in part to the influence of his brother, a respected doctor with close connections to the emir of Ramlā.⁸⁵² Cases from the ninth and tenth century are also known from the examples of Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq (later Patriarch of Alexandria (933-940)) and Christopher, Patriarch of Antioch, both of whom served as doctors or secretaries before holding ecclesiastical office.⁸⁵³

Our evidence for Christians holding these offices, however, is only explicit in urban centres which retained important political and economic status into the tenth century, which suggests that such opportunities for Christians were determined by the social and economic status of the cities they occupied and their relationship with resident Muslim governors.

In the Dekapolis, the impact of the earthquake on the social and economic stability of the city may have contributed to a premature unravelling of localised elite positions by the

⁸⁵¹ This is, admittedly, immeasurable. It is, however, worth stressing that the relative density of Palestinian urbanism in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods, as stressed by Wickham 2005: 623, would not have prohibited the migration of urban families to more prosperous and nearby locations. There is, in any case, firm evidence from manuscript colophons and hagiography of the relative fluidity of movement between the urban centres of the region, see pages 305-307. Equally, as in the case of the Obodianos family of Petra, the patchwork landowning patterns of some families also cautions against assuming that destructions to urban property in one location would have undermined all elite revenue.

⁸⁵² Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 55, 51).

⁸⁵³ On Saʿīd see Griffith 2004: 66-67. On Christopher see Zakkat 1952. A further example is offered by the Patriarch of Antioch, Elias, who is described by Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq as a *kathib*: Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar* (ed. Cheikho 1960-61: 208, tr. Prione 1987: 424). A further examples is Patriarch Thomas (807-821) who was also a physician: Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 64.6 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 111-112, 101).

later eighth century. Certainly after 800 few of these cities, with the exception of Tabarīyyah and ‘Akkā, provide much evidence for major phases of Muslim elite investment either, although clearly, as in the case of Jarash, mosques were still maintained.⁸⁵⁴ The muted response of the Christian community in this region may then reflect more prevalent trends whose effects were not limited to a single religious community.

The economic insularity of the Dekapolis network may have exacerbated this weakening.⁸⁵⁵ The relative economic separation of the region from networks on the Mediterranean coast, or in Mesopotamia, appears to have undermined its importance to a Caliphate where broader political and economic interests were progressively reoriented towards the Abbasid political centre in Baghdad.⁸⁵⁶ In this respect, although the high degree of localisation in both production and demand may have facilitated the relative prosperity in the Dekapolis until 740s,⁸⁵⁷ this process of economic internalisation in the Transjordan may have left the region more susceptible to any disruptions within its immediate sphere.

The implications of this development on settlements in the urban hinterlands of cities are uncertain (and will only be remedied by closer comparison of the two) but the possibility that the earthquake and subsequent marginalisation of the Dekapolis instigated deterioration in the wealth of rural – often Christian – communities who supplied such centres warrants further reflection.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁴ On ‘Ammān, see Northedge 1993. On the rebuilding phases in Tiberias; see Hirschfeld 2004b who notes repairs to the church of Mount Berenike and a series of domestic and industrial structures in the lower town.

⁸⁵⁵ See Wickham 2005: 772-773; Walmsley 2000: 322-324.

⁸⁵⁶ Whitcomb 1989, for example, has pointed to the increasing presence of Samarra wares in ninth-century contexts in the Bilad al-Sham. On the appearance of cream ware see Walmsley 2000: 328-332 and Walmsley 2001: 305-313. On the transferral of political power to Baghdad see Kennedy 2004: 130-140 for an overview with additional references.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.* The discussion of the high degree of localisation of ceramic production in the Dekapolis and in Jerusalem is discussed in Wickham 2005: 770-775 and Magness 1993.

⁸⁵⁸ There is, unfortunately, little surviving material that would provide us with an adequate portrait of elite and rural landholding or property in this period for the northern Transjordan. If patterns of elite or rural ownership and revenue bases in the Dekapolis were consistent with those of Petra and Nessana, and derived predominantly from local networks and nearby urban centres, the impact of the earthquake must have been considerable upon the families whose wealth derived from this exchange. On landowning in Petra and Nessana see the earlier discussions in Chapter One, pages 87-88.

In this respect, the limited repairs of sites within monastic communities and pilgrim cult sites, integrated with elite structures, may reflect the ensuing strain in localised Christian elite revenues which the earthquake had initiated in the southern Transjordan by the 750s.

At Petra, we may observe a process of declining strength of monastic revenue bases in the repairs of Jabal Harūn: a monastic-pilgrimage site which continued to function but within a localised landscape where the nearest settlement, Petra, shows little substantial activity towards the later eighth century.⁸⁵⁹

The production networks of the Dekapolis survived (at least into the ninth century) this tumultuous upheaval but within a much retracted urban landscape. Of the cluster of well excavated cities in the region – Baysān, Abila, Tabarīyyah, Jarash, Umm Qays – only those of Tabarīyyah and Jarash indicate more substantial economic continuity towards the later eighth century.⁸⁶⁰ Most importantly, it is these two centres and their hinterlands which demonstrate the strongest evidence for the continued maintenance of the Christian cult buildings (including pilgrimage and monasticism) into the later Abbasid period (see Appendix A).⁸⁶¹

What became of the networks of Christian families which had underpinned the cult and monastic networks of the region cannot be fully determined. References in the *Life of Stephen of the Mar Sabas* suggest that they survived but, beyond incidental references, the sources provide no complete reflection of their subsequent social or economic status.

⁸⁵⁹ On Jabal Harūn, see the discussion Mikkola *et al* 2008: 147-159. The final phase of the church appears to have been restricted to the north aisle. It appears that the central chancel and south aisles were reused for domestic and occupational activity. Excavations indicate that the phase following 750 was characterised by the recovery of materials from the former Byzantine basilica that were reused in the reconstruction of the complex.

⁸⁶⁰ Harrison 1992, Stacey 2004 and Hirschfeld 2004b, all point to the continued occupation of Tiberias into the tenth century. Both Stacey 2004: 33-35 and Harrison 1992 have identified particular prosperity in the ninth century. A series of shops (possibly part of a *sūq*) was constructed at some point in the ninth century. Stacey suggests this may be approximately contemporary with the harbour restorations and expansion at Qaysāriyya in the ninth century see Whitcomb 2011: 78-80.

⁸⁶¹ The level of research at Umm Qays does not permit more detailed discussion of its post-Umayyad phases yet. Although the Mausoleum church survived into the ninth century (See appendix A), it is difficult to contextualise such continuities in relation to the wider urbanscape.

The rising prominence of Tabarīyyah, closely situated near the former centres of Hippos and Abila and Umm Qays, does not discredit the likelihood that it formed a new focal point for the Melkite Dekapolis community; certainly after 800 it was one of few centres in the region which appears to have continued producing highly literate monastic writers whom were later attached to the high status monasteries of the Judean Desert (Fig. 4.16).⁸⁶²

4.6 CONTINUITIES BEYOND THE DEKAPOLIS

From a broader regional perspective, particularly in regions further removed from the Jordan Rift Valley, patterns of monastic and cult activity appear consistent with those of the later Umayyad period, with sites confirming prolonged continuity.

Around Jerusalem and the Judean Desert, the Galilee and central Transjordan (notably in the Madaba Plateau) monastic continuities are more explicit, with a series of dated inscriptions at monastic sites and some cult churches indicating a prolonged pattern of investment beyond the 740s (Fig. 4.17). The first of these, dated to 756, records the renovation of the apse floor at the church of Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa'a followed in 762 by renovations attested at the monastic 'chapel' of the Theotokos in 'Ayn al-Kanisah in the environs of Mount Nebo (Fig. 4.18).⁸⁶³

⁸⁶² As was discussed earlier, Palestinian elite ownership was very likely a localised phenomenon but one not always immediate to where such families were based. One example is the family of Obodianos. Although resident in Petra, the family also possessed land and property in Gaza. Monastic patrons appearing in the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* proposes a similar pattern of inheritances and property acquisition among many of the major urban centres of the region. Such examples cannot be identified in the Dekapolis to the same extent, but, as with the case of the Abbot Martyrios of Jarash, the existence of Christian groups whose interests extended beyond the Dekapolis propose a similar case of elite interconnections with other cities. Phases of migration of elites from the Dekapolis to other urban cities where individuals they retained family connections or property remains a plausible issue for Christian elite structures after 750 which warrants further consideration. For the writers of whom we are aware: Anthony David of Baghdad scribe of MS Vatican 71 and Mingana Christian Arabic 93, resident in Mar Saba, Stephen of Ramlā in British Library Oriental MS 4950, Abraham of Tabarīyyah is discussed in Griffith 2008: 138.

⁸⁶³ On the Church of Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a, see Piccirillo 1991: 327-64 and Piccirillo 1994h: 231-240. The Theotokos chapel is addressed in Piccirillo 1994e: 521-38.

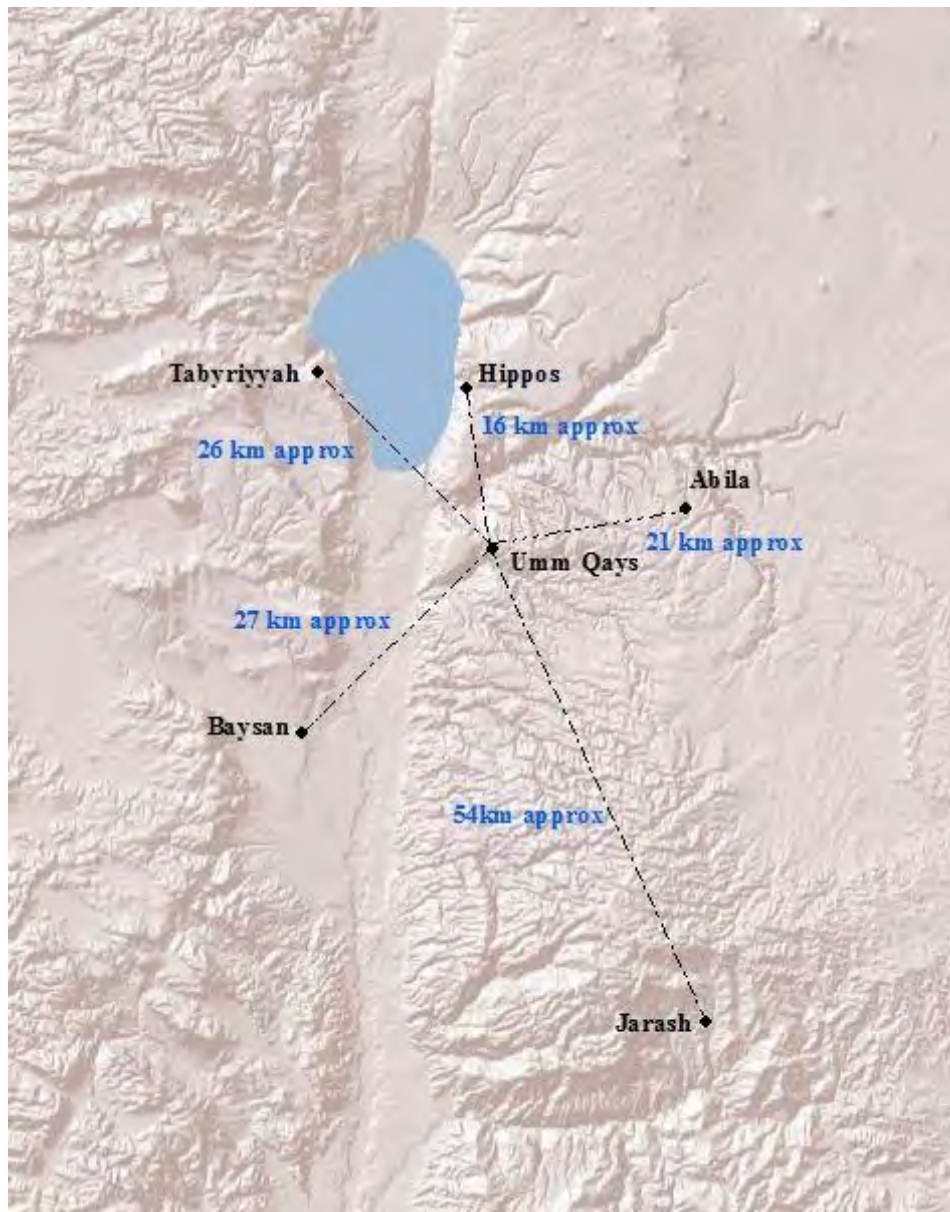


Fig.4.16 Map of approximate distances between major urban centres of the northern Transjordan and the Galilee by 740.
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Fig.4.17 Map of monastic/cult-site or church dedicatory inscriptions which post-date c.749
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Fig.4.18 Kastroun Mefa'a, Church of Hagios Stephanos, apse mosaic dated to 756.
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Fig.4.19 Madaba, Church of the Theotokos, central mosaic panel dated to 767.
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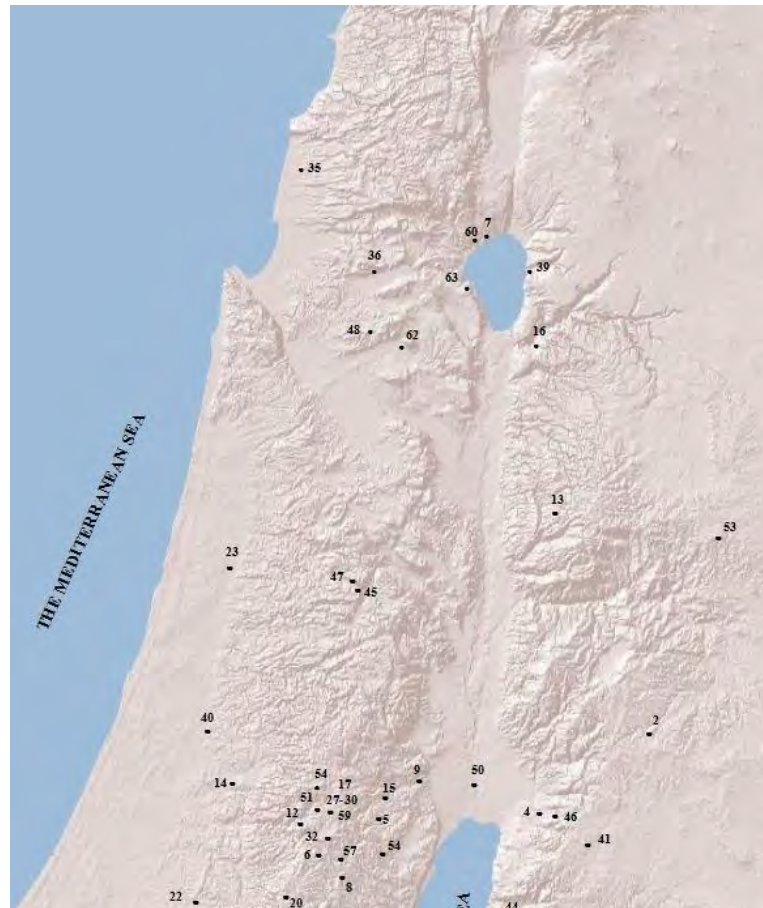


Fig.4.20 Monastic and cult sites in the Galilee and Samaria region c.750.
© Reynolds 2012

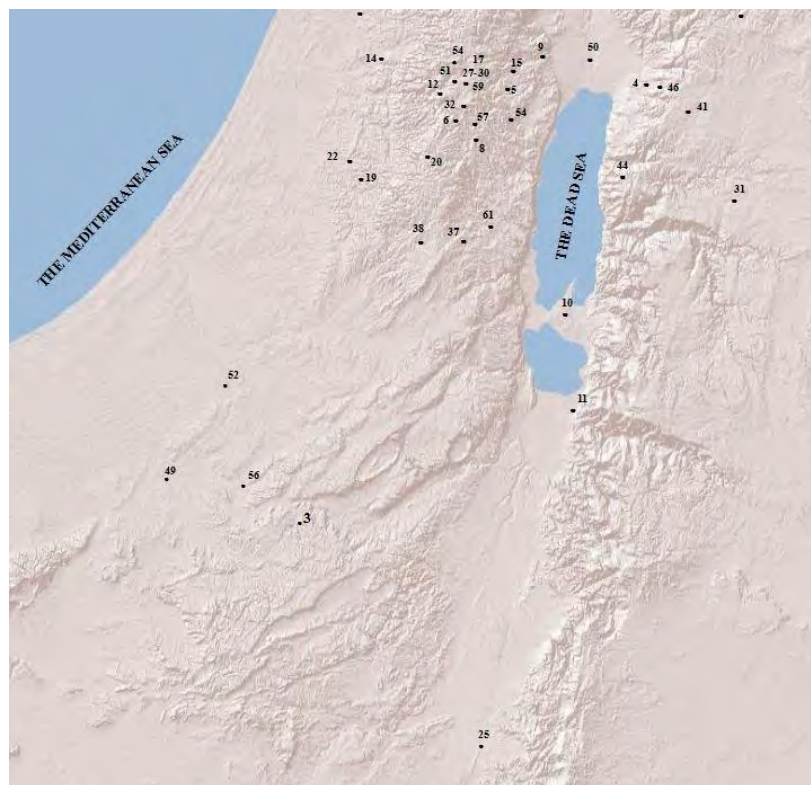


Fig.4.21 Monastic and cult sites in Jerusalem and the Negev region c.750.
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A contemporary development at another monastic site is also known from Ramot in the hinterlands of Jerusalem (762) followed five years later by the refurbishment of the mosaic floor at the Church of the Theotokos at Madaba (Fig. 4.19).⁸⁶⁴ In a posthumously published study, Michele Piccirillo has also presented a previously unpublished inscription dated to 776 from Mar Elyas.⁸⁶⁵ Further north, in the year 785 (or possibly 801), renovations were made to the monastic church of Khirbet es-Shubeika; with a final undated inscription (possibly dating to the 740s or the 820s) identified at the Church of the Kathisma which accompanied the insertion of a mihrab into the church ambulatory.⁸⁶⁶

Such programmes of renovation and embellishment were commissioned in a broader environment of considerable occupational continuity of existing monastic or cult sites across the first decades of the Abbasid period (Fig. 4.20-4.21). For sites in the Galilee and on the Madaba plains, this is known primarily through archaeological research where more refined ceramic typologies and stratigraphic phases have confirmed continuous occupation of sites even if such sequences are not always adequately published.⁸⁶⁷ In the Jerusalem and Judean Desert, textual evidence is of more assistance in clarifying the picture and conveys a similar impression to the archaeological data of continued site occupation among the major sites in Jerusalem, the Judean Desert and the satellite sites including Emmaus/Nikopolis, Mar Samwil and Shepherd's Fields.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁴ On Ramot see Arav, Di Segni and Kloner 1990: 313-20. The Church of the Theotokos and its dating is discussed fully in Di Segni 1992.

⁸⁶⁵ Piccirillo 2011: 109.

⁸⁶⁶ For Khirbet es-Shubeika see the preliminary excavation report by Syon 2003: 75-82 and the inscriptions in Tzaferis 2003: 83-86. On the excavations at the Kathisma church, see Avner 1998: 101-102. For a discussion of the site and its cultic function, see Avner 2006/7: 541-57. The inscription of the Kathisma and issue with its dating are discussed in Di Segni 2003: 248-250.

⁸⁶⁷ On the Galilee, especially Tabariyyah see Magness 1997, Stacey 2004, Hirschfeld 2004b and Whitcomb 2011. The situation in the Madaba plains is less certain due to the focus on churches. Soundings in Madaba, however, indicate occupation until the ninth century, see Foran 2007: 116-118.

⁸⁶⁸ The fate of the smaller foundations such as Khirbet Mird, Martyrios and Theoktistos is less clear. See Appendix A.

4.7 A POST 750 DECLINE?

As was discussed in Chapter Two, dated inscriptions do not always provide the best means of estimating the continuation of patron transactions. However, excavations beyond the central Transjordan and Jerusalem have yet to produce additional examples of later eighth-century monastic or church site construction beyond the corpus presented above.

This would suggest that following the 760s, the trends of investment into Christian cult sites characteristic of the early eighth century were beginning to lose momentum with the collective data currently suggesting the culmination of church building and renovation around c.790-c.830 at the most liberal of estimates.⁸⁶⁹ The pattern varies according to region – the shifts had already occurred in the Negev, Sinai and parts of the Dekapolis by the 740s – and by the 760s dated epigraphic programmes appear to have been concentrated around Jerusalem and the Madaba plateau (Fig. 4.17). In the case of the latter, the interventions at Madaba, Kastron Mefa'a and 'Ayn al-Kanisah appear to have been the result of connections between the Chalcedonian communities of the three centres supervised under the auspices of the Bishops Job and his successor Theophanes.⁸⁷⁰ In Ramot, the restorations to the monastic complex were sanctioned by the Patriarch Theodoros.⁸⁷¹ These may be part of a highly localised initiative whose relevance to broader intra-regional patterns is uncertain. Until the occupational histories of Kastron Mefa'a and Madaba are better understood, it remains difficult to place these constructions in the framework of their social and economic

⁸⁶⁹ This is entirely based on Leah Di Segni's identification of the Basilios mentioned in the medallion mosaic of the Kathisma with the Patriarch Basilios incumbent from 821 until 839 or from a Patriarch Basilios which Di Segni postulates reigned at some point in the eighth century. Nonetheless, the evidence is insufficient to support either argument fully. At present, only the pottery finds described by Di Segni, which suggest a dating to the Umayyad period, indicate that the inscription post-dates the eighth century.

⁸⁷⁰ Di Segni 1992, Piccirillo 1991: 328 and Piccirillo 1994e: 528.

⁸⁷¹ See Arav, Di Segni and Kloner 1990: 313-320. This is likely the Patriarch Theodoros identified in the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*, 33.1-33.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 55, 51) whom Stephen and the community of Mar Sabas may have opposed. The life gives some impression that Mar Sabas was supportive of Theodore's predecessor John who may have been overthrown by Theodoros. Evidently, the life is hostile to the strong association Theodoros and his family may have had with the emir of Jerusalem: Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 55, 51).

environment.⁸⁷² Evidently they imply a continuation of Christian life in terms of patron transactions and clerical structure in rural and quasi-urban contexts in the opening decades of the Abbasid period. The predominance of clergy in such dedications also correlates well with what is known from literary material, where monastic retention of property is presented as fairly normative social practice beyond the 750s.⁸⁷³ If the declining Christian presence in the upper echelons of late Umayyad and Abbasid bureaucracy placed more emphasis on the church as an alternative avenue for elite social position, as argued by Arietta Papaconstantinou, the pre-eminence of clerical and monastic figures as the primary patrons of these interventions may provide material testament to these emerging trends.⁸⁷⁴

Further examples of embellishment beyond 800 are possible but among the major centres currently identified excavations have not confirmed any examples of major structural programmes at these sites in the ninth or tenth centuries. Continued production and bequest of books for the Judean Desert monasteries and Mount Sinai into the 980s provide clearer indication of some sustained patron transactions.⁸⁷⁵ The production and donation of icons is another possibility, but one that remains difficult to clarify in view of the limited surviving examples which pre-date the tenth century.⁸⁷⁶

This rather negative impression may prove an interpretive rather than data driven position. Those sites which have permitted the most intensive archaeological scrutiny are

⁸⁷²It would appear from the excavation reports that the churches were abandoned in the ninth century. In Madaba, the ceramic evidence from the Church of Elianos implies that it went out of use in this century, see Alliaia 1994: 392-403. Two houses in the vicinity of the church also show little indication of activity after the ninth century: Foran 2004: 116-118. Kastron Mefa'a, the churches imply similar phases of abandonments between the late eighth and tenth centuries although not all are clear on the length of liturgical activity at the site. See note 3.

⁸⁷³ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 9.5 (ed. and tr. Lamoereaux 1999: 11, 11).

⁸⁷⁴ Papaconstantinou 2008: 146-148.

⁸⁷⁵ The most explicit case we have for this from among insular communities is the library of Bishop Solomon of Mount Sinai, see Swanson 2004 who surveys the surviving manuscripts from this library. There are clear indications in this library of books commissioned by Solomon and those he inherited from family members. We may also recall the commissioning of books by Anba Isaac of Sinai in the 880s who may reflect similar cases sustained patron links see Vatican Arabic MS 71.

⁸⁷⁶ On the problems with the dating of the icons at Sinai see Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 320-336. One may be tied to a monastic patron more securely. This is Sinai B.39 which features Hagia Irene and a prostrating figure identified as Nicholas of Mar Sabas: Brubaker and Haldon 2001: 66, Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 329-330.

often those which did not survive the transformative processes of the ninth and tenth centuries and thus perpetuate an image of decline which may have been less acute beyond these specific micro-regions.⁸⁷⁷ Conversely, sites which demonstrate the strongest evidence for later Abbasid continuity (and evidence for sustained maintenance beyond 800) are those which remained occupied throughout the period and which were subject to redevelopment following the establishment of the Latin Kingdoms and during the nineteenth century. Among this particular group the sites of Mar Saba, Choziba, Theoktistos, Emmaus/Nikopolis, Mar Samwil, the Tomb of the Theotokos and Hagios Giorgos at Lydda form the most prominent examples where Crusader or early modern redevelopment has inhibited an understanding of post-Umayyad phases (Fig. 4.22-4.24).⁸⁷⁸ The relatively modest nature of many of the post 750 schemes indicates that distinctions in investment scale at monastic sites were beginning to emerge in the opening decades of the Abbasid period.⁸⁷⁹ Interventions at many of the sites appear far smaller and more selective than their earlier counterparts.

After 750, a more modest pattern of patron intervention may also be observed among the programmes of refurbishment. At Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a, only the apse and *diakonion* were refurbished in the 756 programme (Fig. 4.18).⁸⁸⁰ A corresponding example in the monastic chapel of the Theotokos at 'Ayn al-Kanisah involved limited refurbishment to the western entrance of the site, leaving the central mosaic panel intact.⁸⁸¹

⁸⁷⁷ This is particularly the case with regards to the Dekapolis centres which remain the most intensively excavated urban settlements in the region.

⁸⁷⁸ (See Appendix A) The redevelopment of Mar Saba occurred in two episodes under Patriarch Dositheos (1669-1707) and Patriarch Chrysanthos (1707-1731), see Meinardus 1966: 46-49. The *kouvouklion* of Sabas was redressed in 1929 see *Ibid*: 48. On Choziba see Pringle 1993: 183-190. The situation at Mar Theoktistos is less clear due to the predominance of textual frameworks in determining the occupational sequences of the site see Goldfus, Arubas and Alliata 1995. Kühnel 1988: 181-191 discusses the fresco schemes which date to the Latin Kingdom. The most complete discussion of the Crusader remains at Mar Samwil, which synthesises the findings of earlier studies is Pringle 1998: 85-94. Earlier discussions about the site, which imply occupation throughout the eighth century, offered in Magen 2003. The most comprehensive account of the Tomb of the Theotokos appears in Baggatti, Piccirillo and Prodomo 1975. Hagios Giorgos of Lydda is addressed in Pringle 1998: 9-27.

⁸⁷⁹ Thus at Kastron Mefa'a and 'Ayn al-Kanisah the renovations were often only partial reconstructions of the floor see Piccirillo 1994h and Piccirillo 1995b. The only major large-scale renovation appears to have been that of the Church of the Theotokos in Madaba dated 767: Di Segni 1992.

⁸⁸⁰ Dating discussed in Piccirillo 1994h.

⁸⁸¹ See Piccirillo 1994e: 527-529.



Fig.4.22 Sites active c.800-1000 and redeveloped in the twelfth century.
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Fig.4.23 Emmaus/Nikopolis, Byzantine basilica with twelfth-century renovations.
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Fig.4.24 Gethsemane, Tomb of the Theotokos, twelfth-century façade.
© Steven Conger 2008



Fig.4.25 Madaba, the *dekumanos* now incorporated into the Madaba Archaeological Park. The modern building on the left encases the Church of the Theotokos. The staircase and mezzanine level to the viewer's right is the Church of Elianos.
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The trend is also reflected at Jerusalem, again with more modest and selective programmes of renewal occurring to individual sites such as the monastery of Hagios Giorgos in Ramot.⁸⁸²

Indeed the most ambitious programme of the period is that of the Church of the Theotokos at Madaba (767) – the seat of a bishop (and thus at the apex of local Christian life) and possibly part of a larger ecclesiastical core in the city which also included the church and crypt dedicated to Elianos located on the opposite side of the *decumanos* (Fig. 4.25).⁸⁸³ With the possible exception of fresco schemes in the Church of Mount Berenike and the monastery of Theoktisos in the Judean Desert, the Church of the Theotokos in Madaba is also the last case of refurbishment which involved the construction of a complete and technically refined decorative scheme.⁸⁸⁴

In the example of Khirbet es-Shubeika, the latest dated scheme in the region (dated to 785/801), the mosaic exhibits a far more modest level of technical refinement.⁸⁸⁵ With the possible exception of the Kathisma (assigned a possible, but by no means secure, date of the c.820s) and Charlemagne's programmes on the Mount of Olives (which appear to have had no association with indigenous populations) it also represents the last example of major structural investment in a monastic or pilgrimage site, which does not appear to have responded to destruction phases, until the later eleventh century.⁸⁸⁶ Two episodes of rebuilding the dome of the rotunda in the Anastasis around 813 under the Patriarch Thomas and later in the 970s under Christodoulos II and Thomas II offer additional examples but ones that are difficult to verify in archaeological terms.⁸⁸⁷ In any case, these episodes of rebuilding

⁸⁸² Arav, Di Segni and Kloner 1990.

⁸⁸³ Discussion of the Church of Hagios Elianos, excavated in the late nineteenth century, is offered in Séjourné 1897: 648-656. See also Piccirillo 1989: 67-75 and Piccirillo 1994d.

⁸⁸⁴ The dating of these schemes in these monastic contexts is uncertain. For a discussion see Hirschfeld 2004b: 123-124. For Theoktisos see Goldfus, Arabus and Alliata 1995: 265-267 and Kühnel 1988: 187 who suggests that the layer beneath the eleventh century scheme may date to the tenth century.

⁸⁸⁵ It is composed of much cruder limestone tesserae and less carefully executed epigraphic and iconographic programmes, see Syon 2003.

⁸⁸⁶ Nothing is known about the archaeological profile of the site. For the most recent survey of the evidence (with bibliography) see McCormick 2011: 76-91.

⁸⁸⁷ Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 33 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 148-149, 127-128) reports the controversy

responded to periods of collapse or hostile destruction and do not mirror earlier patterns of refurbishment.

The diminishing evidence for continued renovation of churches after the 760s may be unique to Palestine; further north in the Tur Abdin and around Damascus a continuation of renovations into the 770s and 780s is more explicit although perhaps indicative of the continued importance of the region to the Abbasid caliphate compared to the increasingly marginal region of the southern *Bilad al-Sham*.⁸⁸⁸ The apparent decline in epigraphic inscriptions by the later eighth century need not indicate widespread abatement to monastic occupation throughout the region.⁸⁸⁹

Among a number of sites, including those of Umm Qays, Kursi and Jabal Harūn fairly stable Abbasid phases can be detected albeit in a context where indications of epigraphic dedications are unknown for post-Byzantine phases.⁸⁹⁰ This general pattern of silent stasis, where occupation continued at a number of monastic and cult sites into the ninth century, characterises a number of sites in the region (Fig. 4.26). Towards the later eighth century and into the early ninth, however, the trends of peaceful abandonment of monasteries and cult sites observed in the Dekapolis and Negev were beginning to emerge on a broader regional scale. This process appears to have accelerated in the ninth century, but the limitations of current approaches to Abbasid archaeological phases do not permit more nuanced observation of these trends on anything more refined than a century-by-century basis.

surrounding the repairs to the church during the reign of Patriarch Thomas. On Christodoulos and John II: *Yayāh Ibn Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 101-105 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 799-803).

⁸⁸⁸ Bell 1982: 118-127.

⁸⁸⁹ Michael McCormick's observes a similar clustering of this activity in the early eighth century: McCormick 2011: 46, n.70. McCormick sees this as evidence of more prevalent decline by 800: McCormick 2011: 46-49. This is based on the testament of the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*, whose focus on a more limited range of monastic sites would endorse this impression. I am more agnostic as to the overall value of the text in informing us about regional trends given its omission of a number of key sites (such as Jabal Harūn, the Kathisma, Kursi and Mar Elyas) which were still active at the turn of the ninth century.

⁸⁹⁰ See Al-Daire 2001 and Weber 1998 for Umm Qays, Tzaferis 1983 and Stacey 2004:15-17 for Kursi and Mikkola *et al* 2008: 147-159.

Patterns of abandonment in the ninth century were in any case not uniformly replicated across the region. Rural cult sites and small coenobitic complexes, most likely those interconnected with more localised Christian networks, are predominant among those which were abandoned following c.800. On the Dead Sea, Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata and Dayr al-Qaṭṭār al Byzantīnī show no evidence of activity beyond the mid-ninth century; neither do several sites in the Madaba steppe (with the exception of Hagios Stephanos most of the churches of Kastron Mefa‘a appear to have ceased to function) and those further north in the Transjordan (Mar Elyas and Al-Quweisma) are also considered to have been abandoned.⁸⁹¹ Only Mount Nebo provides evidence of a ninth and possible tenth-century phase.⁸⁹²

In the Galilee and Samaria, notwithstanding the limited level of publication of sites, a similar pattern of retraction is observable: Horvat Hani and Horvat Hanot were similarly abandoned in the late eighth or ninth century.⁸⁹³ At least one church in Tabarīyyah survived into the eleventh century, though the subsequent fate of the other sites listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* is unknown.⁸⁹⁴ The site of Hagia Maria on Mount Gerazim may have already been destroyed in the 770s during a Samaritan revolt, but the continued use of at least one church in Nazareth is more assured.⁸⁹⁵

The trajectories of the larger sites associated with the miracles of Christ – Kursi, Mount Tabor, the ‘Church of the Multiplication’ and Cana – are less certain as a result of

⁸⁹¹ On Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata see Politis 2012: 115-158, Politis 1997 and Politis 1995. For Dayr al-Qaṭṭār al Byzantī: Holmgren and Kaliff 1997: 321-40. For Madaba see Séjourné 1897. The church of Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa‘a is discussed in Piccirillo 1991:365-422. For the bibliography relating to the other church sites, note 822.

⁸⁹² See appendix for further discussion. This is proposed in Piccirillo 1998a: 218, but the ceramic portfolio presented in Schneider 1950: 96-102, 110-118, 193 would appear to support a continuation of the site into the ninth century. Saller’s excavations published in Saller 1941a, suggested a final phase around the eighth century.

⁸⁹³ Horvat Hani is preliminarily discussed in Dahari 2003. I am grateful for conversations with Uzi Dahari about the final occupational phases of the site which he dates to the ninth century. For Horvat Qasra see Kloner 1990 and Di Segni and Patrich 1990.

⁸⁹⁴ This is the church of Mount Berenike see Hirschfeld 2004b: 109-111. Five churches and a convent are listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 40-41 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 212-215).

⁸⁹⁵ For Nazareth see the report by Bagatti 1969 which offers some limited discussion of Byzantine and early Islamic phases. Textual evidence provides consistent evidence of sustained occupation between the ninth and tenth centuries although this mostly relates to the Church of the Annunciation. The church is listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line 35 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 212-213), in the *Kitāb al-Burhān* 311 (ed. Cachia 1960:166, tr. Watt 1960: 134) in the ninth century. Occupation into the tenth century is confirmed by al-Mas‘ūdī, *Al-Tanbīh wa-l-Ashrāf*: 133-134 (de Goeje 1894: 133-134).

modern occupation or flawed excavations, but the textual evidence proposes that these sites also continued in use for most of the ninth century despite the seventh-century abandonment dates assigned by their excavators.⁸⁹⁶ In the case of Kursi, the presence of ninth-century ceramic forms would appear to confirm Peter of Bayt Ra's testimony.⁸⁹⁷ A recent re-appraisal of the ceramic corpus from Capernaum suggests activity at the site into the ninth century – far longer than previously assumed – and this is also supported by collective appraisal of the textual evidence.⁸⁹⁸

Processes of site contraction in the Negev and Sinai, already underway by the early eighth century, also appear to have culminated in this period with the abandonment of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, Horvat Berachot and the consolidation of the cult topography into a more restricted number of sites.⁸⁹⁹ Mount Sinai is the only example of a survival which can be confidently enlisted, although recent reviews of the ceramic corpus from the Colt excavations in Nessana may propose that the monastery of Sergios and Bakkhos also survived until the late ninth century.⁹⁰⁰

The Kathisma Church although part of the Melkite stational liturgy and a possible

⁸⁹⁶ Mount Tabor, the Church of the Multiplication and Cana are all included in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* of around 808. Kursi is excluded from this account but reappears in the *Kitāb al-Burhān* composed by Peter of Bayt Ra's (c.850-c.875) which also reports that the churches of Tabor, Cana and the Multiplication still continued in use: *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 37-42 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 212-215). *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 316, 318, 321, 323 (ed. Cachia 1960: 167-161, tr. Watt 1960: 135-138).

⁸⁹⁷ Stacey 2004: 15-16.

⁸⁹⁸ Magness 1997 reappraises the ceramic sequences in Tzaferis 1989. A church dedicated to Christ's healing of Jarios' daughter appears as part of the ninth-century descriptions of Peter of Bayt Ra's but cannot yet be identified, Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 319 (ed. Cachia 1960: 169, tr. Watt 1960: 136). The limitations of the excavation of the 'Peter's House' church by Virgilio Corbo offer no material to substantiate this claim beyond confirming the use of the site beyond 800. Corbo 1975: 56 dates the abandonment of the church to 700. The ceramic material published in Loffreda 2008 also suggests a much later date but the largely architectural focus of Corbo's excavations makes it difficult to determine if the church still functioned. It is likely, however, accepting the testimony of Peter of Bayt Ra's that a church did continue to function here until the mid-ninth century.

⁸⁹⁹ Ceramic sequences at the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev suggest its continued occupation until the early ninth century: Magness 2003: 191-191. Tsafrir saw this later activity as indicative of Arab squatters. On the problems with this approach see the discussion in Appendix A. The situation in Shivta and Elusa is less certain: Magness 2003: 174-194. On Horvat Berachot see Hirschfeld and Tsafrir 1979 and the revised chronology in Magness 2003: 109-111. For my reservations about the interpretation of these phases see Appendix A. On Horvat Qasra, see Kloner 1990 and Di Segni and Patrich 1990.

⁹⁰⁰ On Nessana; see Magness 2003: 180-184.

focus of Muslim veneration,⁹⁰¹ also appears to have been abandoned before the tenth century.⁹⁰² Rates of abandonment appear less explicit in the Jerusalem and Judean Desert cluster although a general paucity of textual evidence has often endorsed a more negative portrait of settlement decline in this region before the eighth century which probably did not occur.⁹⁰³ Continuities among the larger or more prominent monastic and cult site were, it appears, generally more stable. Among the Judean Desert network, Sabas, Chariton, Euthymios, Hagia Maria in Choziba and Theodosios are all attested in the late ninth century or tenth centuries.⁹⁰⁴ Cult sites within Jerusalem, Bethlehem and their environs exhibit the most stable patterns of occupation albeit one visible primarily through textual reports. The continued function of the Church of the Nativity and Shepherd's Fields are both confirmed into the late ninth century although little can be determined of their material characteristics by this later period.⁹⁰⁵ At Mar Samwil, located around four kilometres to the north of Jerusalem, the presence of eighth or ninth-century pottery types, some of which bear by the inscription 'Dayr Samwil' also suggests continued occupation (Fig. 4.27-4.28).⁹⁰⁶

⁹⁰¹ A *mihrāb* was constructed in the church in the Umayyad period, see Avner 2007.

⁹⁰² Discussions of the dual importance of the Kathisma to Christians and Muslims see Avner 2007: 541-557. I am grateful to Rina Avner for her email correspondence with me regarding the final phases of the complex which she dates to the ninth century (see Appendix A).

⁹⁰³ Patrich 2011 presents a more negative portrait of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods in the Judean Desert. However, it should be noted the high number of Judean Desert sites identified by Hirschfeld 1990b is largely a result of his use of textual material to calculate the number of monasteries active in the Byzantine period, few of which have been identified. Therefore, their disappearance from the literary record is often seen as indicative of their abandonment. As yet, there has been little additional attempt to verify the existence of some of these monasteries (some of which are known only from problematic sources such as the *Leimonarion*) or more critical reflection on the limitations of the post-Byzantine source material.

⁹⁰⁴ See Appendix A. Mar Theoktistos is another monastery whose occupation probably exceeds the chronology currently proposed in recent studies.

⁹⁰⁵ The identification of the site known as Shepherd's fields is subject to conflicting interpretation. Corbo argues that the tradition site is to be identified with Khirbet Siyar el-Ghanam where excavations suggest continued use into the ninth century. For the alternative site, at Keniset er Rawat, see Tzaferis 1975:15-16. This is the only, but problematic discussion of the site's history. As discussed earlier, Tzaferis identified a 614 destruction level at the site which is not supported by the published material. Tzaferis notes the presence of wares that suggest a continued occupation into the tenth century. Textual material would confirm that a site known as 'Shepherd's Fields' continued in use the ninth century: *Kitāb al-Burhān* : 314 (ed. Cachia 1960: 167, tr. Watt 1960:135) and *Bernard the Monk*: 18 (ed. Tobler 1874:95-96 tr. Wilkinson 2002: 267-268).

⁹⁰⁶ The identification of the site as a monastery may be confirmed by the presence of pottery stamps with the epithet 'Dayr Samwil' (Monastery of Samuel). See Magen and Dadon 2003: 128-131. The monastery is also mentioned in the description of al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsim fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1906:188, tr. Collins 2001: 158).



Fig.4.26 Monastic and cult sites in the Jerusalem-Judean Desert region approximately c.800-c.950.
© Reynolds 2012

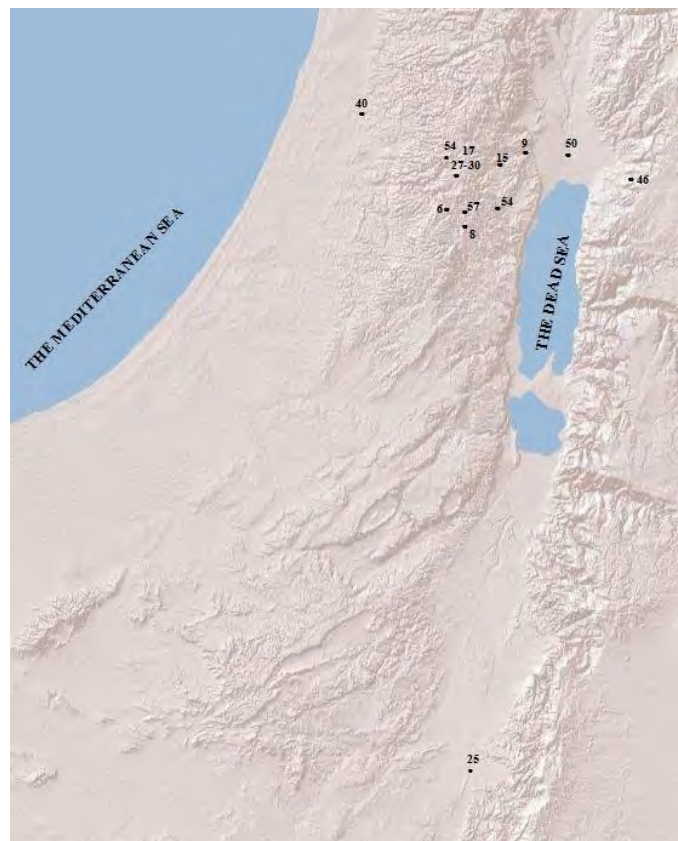




Fig.4.27 Nebi Samwil, the current mosque of Nebi Samwil which incorporates the remains of the Crusader structure. Excavations suggest that this was also the site of the Monastery of Mar Samwil in the Byzantine period.
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Fig.4.28 Umayyad/Abbasid pottery stamped with 'Dayr Samwil' recovered from the excavation of the kilns at Nebi Samwil.
©Magen 2008

The internal situation in Jerusalem is more obscure, partly due to limited excavation but equally, as addressed previously, due the tendency of current studies to arbitrarily assign destruction dates to 614. The main topographic points of the city were nonetheless preserved. The Sepulchre-Anastasis complex is attested through the ninth and early tenth century (the survival of the Spoudeon after the ninth century is less clear) but may have been partially destroyed during the civil uprising which culminated in the public murder of the Patriarch John VII in 966.⁹⁰⁷ The Tomb of the Theotokos is also attested throughout the period by both Muslim and Christian sources; remaining an important part of the Melkite celebrations of the Dormition and a focal point for Melkite as well as western pilgrims.⁹⁰⁸ The Church of Holy Sion and the Eleona Church on the Mount of Olives were both known to Peter of Bayt Ra's in the ninth century although the subsequent trajectories of these sites in the tenth century are less certain.⁹⁰⁹

From a broader archaeological perspective the ninth century shows two principle developments with regards to the monastic landscape. Firstly, the gradual patterns of settlement abatement that is visible in the Negev and the Dekapolis by the later eighth century become more visible in other regions of Palestine and the Transjordan.

Secondly, the period shows the beginnings of a nucleation of monastic activity into a core network surrounding Jerusalem or urban centres which exhibit the most substantial evidence for socio-economic continuity beyond 800.

⁹⁰⁷ *Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 101-104 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 799-802). The death of the Patriarch is also attested in John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Chronicon*: 31-32 (ed. Thurn 1973: 31-32, tr. Wortley 2000: 267).

⁹⁰⁸ The fullest archaeological report (though limited on the period 600-1000) appears in Bagatti, Prodrómo and Piccirillo 1975.

⁹⁰⁹ *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 332, 334 (ed. Cachia 1960: 176, tr. Watt 1960: 141-142). For a discussion of the Nea: Gutfeld 2012: 141-250. See also *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 332, 349 (ed. Cachia 1960: 176, 187, tr. Watt 1960: 141, 148). The Eleona Church was subject to an early excavation by Louis Vincent which focussed predominantly on the architectural layout of the complex: Vincent 1911: 219-265. We have, therefore, little archaeological material to verify its continued use into the tenth century. Textual material would suggest continued (though indeterminable) use throughout the ninth century: *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 17-21 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 204-207), *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 332 (ed. Cachia 1960: 176, tr. Watt 1960: 141), *Bernard the Monk*: 14 (ed. Tobler 1874: 94-95, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 267).

As explained earlier, there is little indication that these regional trends were the product of sustained institutional hostilities directed at Christian communities by, or on behalf of, the Muslim authorities. Cases of direct destruction endorsed by Muslim governors are occasional, notably at the Church of Hagia Maria on Mount Gerazim in the 770s and more tentatively the Sepulchre-Anastasis complex.⁹¹⁰ These examples, however, were often responses to highly localised political or social tensions which do not hint at the existence of a wider policy directed at the destruction of Christian sites. At the monastery of Sabas and Chariton, in contrast, reports of damage occurred during episodes where centralised Caliphal control of the region had deteriorated into sporadic periods of civil conflict.⁹¹¹

4.8 FACTORS OF SURVIVAL

It is possible to observe some elements of commonality among those sites which appear to have faltered after c.800 and similarly cohesive features among those that exhibit the strongest evidence of sustained occupation into the tenth or eleventh centuries. These elements occur most vividly in the apparent connections such communities and sites maintained to Christian communities outside of their immediate social and economic contexts.

⁹¹⁰ The destruction of the Golgotha-Anastasis complex reported in *Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 101-105 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 799-802) was provoked by ongoing disagreements between Patriarch John and the Muslim governor of Jerusalem identified as Muhammad ibn-Isma'īl Sinājī. Nonetheless, both this report, and the earlier one relating to the Church of Mary the Green at Asqālan, *Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 21 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 719), imply that this was not the result of centralised legislation. In both cases the local clergy appear to have attempted to seek the intercession and assistance of the Caliphal authorities in Baghdad or Ramlā.

⁹¹¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6301 (ed. de Boor 1883-1885: 484-486 and tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 664-665) which reports attacks against Chariton, Kyriakos, Sabas, Euthymios and Theodosios in 809. The survival of Chariton, Sabas and Euthymios beyond 850 proposes that such its effects were not permanent see Appendix A.

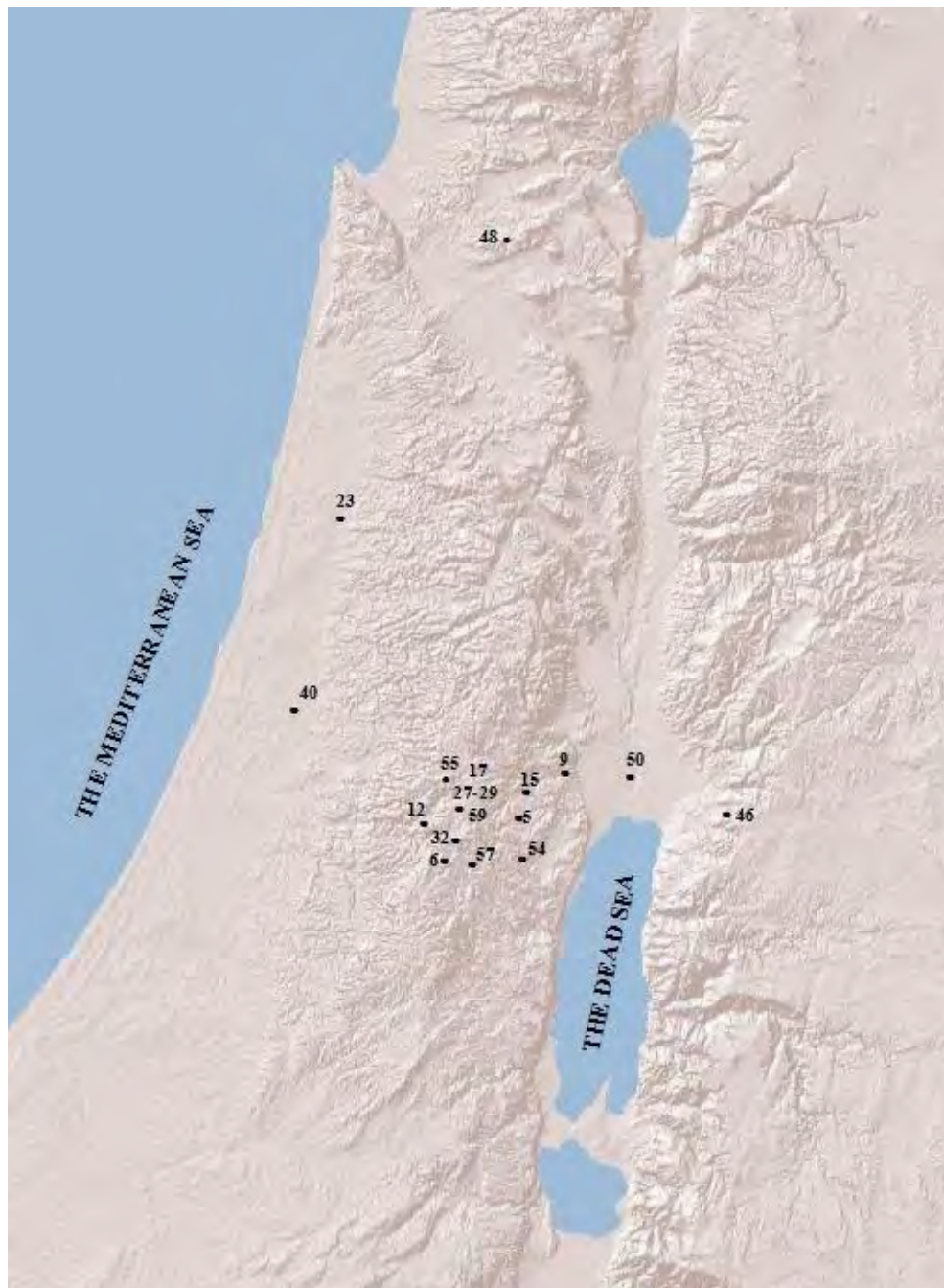


Fig.4.29 Map of sites that continued into the tenth century and were linked to liturgical celebration or known to western travellers.
©Reynolds 2013



Fig.4.30 Rome, Santa Maria Antiqua Rome. Fresco of Euthymios, façade of the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs, commissioned by Pope John VII.
© Svetlana Tomekovic



Fig.4.31 Rome, Santa Maria Antiqua. Fresco scheme of Sabas and Euthymios, north wall.
© Svetlana Tomekovic



Fig.4.32 Rome, Santa Maria Antiqua , close view of Euthymios with *titulus*.
© Svetlana Tomekovic

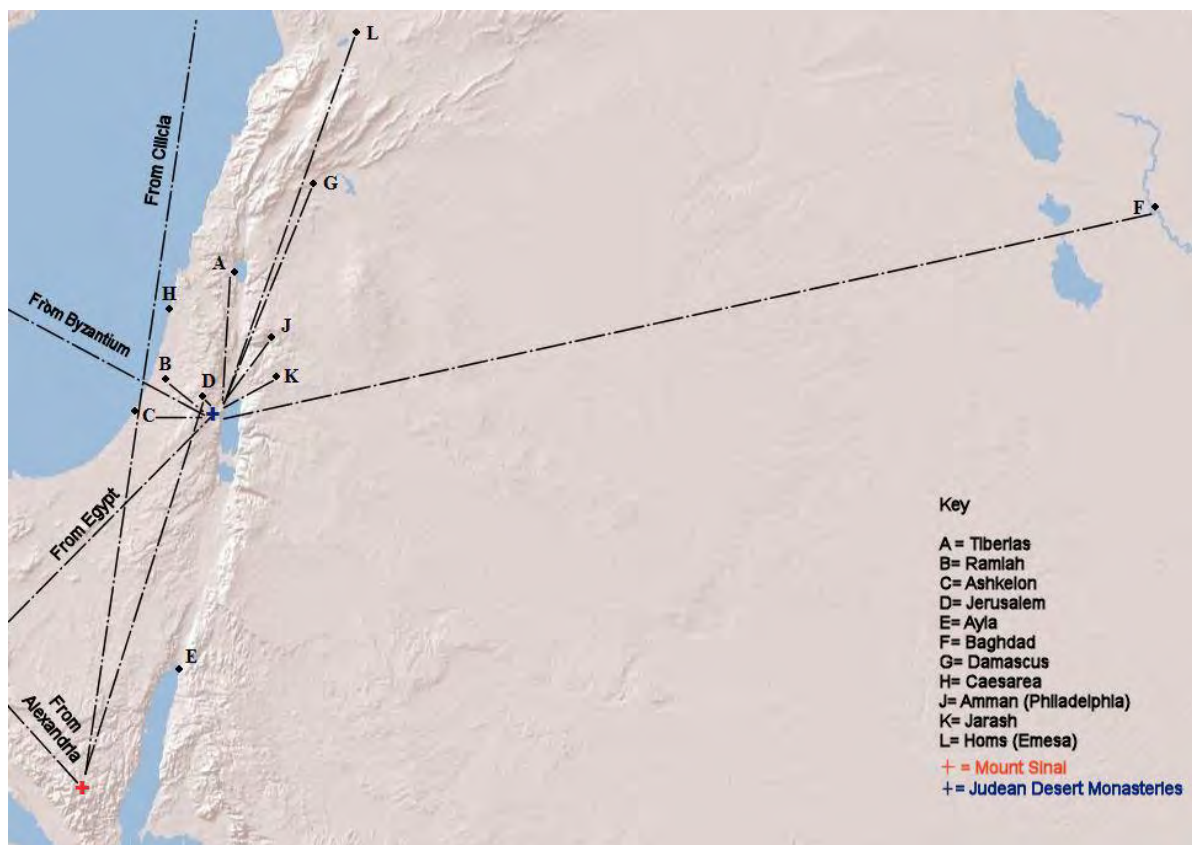


Fig.4.33 The origins of monks resident in the monasteries of Mount Sinai, Jerusalem and the Judean Desert c. 750-970.
©Reynolds 2012

The first trends of abandonment in the mid-eighth or early ninth century appear primarily to have affected sites rarely visited by the urban elite communities of Palestine (or further afield) and which we may assume were predominantly dependent upon localised devotional networks and sensibilities.⁹¹² This does not prove that such sites were unknown beyond their regional contexts but their omission from the descriptions of Palestine produced among the networks of Melkite writers, or those of Byzantium and the post-Roman west, indicate that such sites were evidently not part of a broader oecumenical conception of the Palestinian hierotopy. For example, at least four sites – Jabal Harūn, Mar Samwil, Umm Qays and Kursi – known to have been in use by 800 are missing from the description presented in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* commissioned by Charlemagne.⁹¹³ These lacunae do not diminish the intrinsic value of the source, but provide clear indication that its creator's perception of the region was preconditioned by a particular series of determinants, whether intentional or culturally determined.

Peter of Bayt Ra's description in the *Kitāb al-Burhān* is similarly defined by social context.⁹¹⁴ For Peter, the litany of biblical sites described in the *Kitāb al-Burhān* offered irrefutable material proof of the truth of biblical revelation; and provided him with a useful polemical tool through which to counteract the criticism of Christian doctrine prevalent among his Muslim contemporaries.⁹¹⁵

Neither text offers a complete vision of a ninth-century Palestinian 'reality' that can be used by archaeologists or historians in isolation from other material. They are hegemonic rather than cartographic constructs which provide, above all, an indication of how the

⁹¹² Certainly in cases such as Horvat Qasra, Horvat Berachot and Mar Elias, the identities of their cults remain invisible in the predominantly elite textual record of the Melkite church and among contemporary Byzantine or Latin sources.

⁹¹³ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011).

⁹¹⁴ Little is known about the writer Peter of Bayt Ra's. A brief synopsis of Peter is offered in Samir 1990: 483-485. However, his work is a characteristic example of Christian apologetics produced in Palestine between the eighth and ninth centuries. The most systematic study of this milieu is Griffith 2008a.

⁹¹⁵ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 310 (ed. Cachia: 1960: 165, tr. Watt 1960: 134).

landscape of cult sites or monasteries were conceived and defined by particular social groups – many far removed from Palestine – whose understanding of its topography was often framed by existing literary precedents.⁹¹⁶

Nonetheless, it is the sites where such descriptions and priorities converge which offer the clearest indication of activity and occupational stability beyond the ninth century. The sites of Jerusalem, the Judean Desert, Bethlehem and Mount Sinai are the most prominent among these (Fig. 5.34) with others – Nazareth, Shepherd’s Fields and Hagios Giorgos at Lydda – offering further examples frequently mentioned in written description of the region or in the well traversed corpus of Greek and Latin pilgrimage accounts which post-date the Arab conquest.⁹¹⁷

It is not coincidental that the majority of these sites or monasteries already formed important components of a wider devotional consciousness of the ‘Holy Land’ topography beyond their immediate regional contexts. In several cases, this status was fully established by the ninth century by a number of liturgical observances where celebrations of major feasts (whether biblical or connected to saints) were often linked to particular monastic or pilgrimage churches (Fig. 4.29). The importance of Jerusalem or Bethlehem requires little explanation and will be more extensively explored in Chapter Five, but for a site such as Mar Sabas, whose protagonist had no direct association with the biblical past, the successful promotion of the Sabaite cult appears to have proved formative in generating interest in the monastery which incorporated his tomb.⁹¹⁸

Celebrations associated with Sabas, or his disciples, feature prominently among the Georgian *Jerusalem Lectionary* and *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (both translations from Melkite

⁹¹⁶ This interplay has yet to be fully examined in the context of the early medieval material. Only that of Arculf has been considered in the context of wider literary precedents see O’Loughlin 1992 and O’Loughlin 2007.

⁹¹⁷ See Appendix A.

⁹¹⁸ On the role of Greek monks and their promotion of the cult of Saba see Sansterre 1983: 110, 147, 149. Theodore of the Stoudios also speaks about a desire to venerate the tomb of Sabas: Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters* 278 (ed. Fatouros 1992: 413). The tomb of Sabas is also reported in the *Life of Willibald*: Huneberg, *Life of Willibald*: 23 (ed. Tobler 1987: 34-35, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 244).

Arabic texts) which confirm the importance of the monastery as a component of the annual stationary liturgy.⁹¹⁹ An Arabic version of his life was already circulating in the Melkite milieu by the 880s with recent finds in the Sinai archive also confirming the existence of an earlier Syriac recension.⁹²⁰ Outside of urban contexts, the discovery of a dedicatory lamp, which invokes the intercession of Sabas, at the monastery of Khirbet es-Shubeika also alludes to the attractiveness of his cult to Christians in the rural hinterlands of the major cities of the region.⁹²¹

Awareness of the Sabaite cult appears to have transcended regional political boundaries at a fairly early stage – a cult is attested in Rome from the late seventh century (likely as a result of a monastery dedicated to him being established there) and a possible representation of him appears in the fresco schemes commissioned by Pope John VII (705-707), adorning the façade of the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs at Santa Maria Antiqua (Fig. 4.30-4.31).⁹²² A representation of Euthymios, a figure frequently associated with Sabas, survives in more substantial form in this scheme and provides additional confirmation of an awareness of Palestinian monastic cults beyond the political confines of the Bilad al-Sham (Fig. 4.32).⁹²³

The interest of the cult to Byzantine, notably Constantinopolitan, sources provides the most frequent and explicit example of contact and exchange between Byzantium and Palestine in the eighth and ninth centuries. The influence (whether real or perceived) of Sabaite customs in the reforms of Theodore of Studios are one example of the broader

⁹¹⁹ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)* (ed. Garitte 1958). The feast associated with Sabas was observed on the 5 December. Further feasts held in the monastery of Mar Sabas were observed on the 10 May and 12 December.

⁹²⁰ This is Vatican Arabic MS 71. Leeming 1997 offers a full discussion of the manuscript. Brock 2010: 45 discusses the Aramaic versions of the Lives of Sabas and Euthymios recently identified in SP. 36.

⁹²¹ See Avshalom-Gorni, Tatcher and Tzaferis 2001.

⁹²² See Nordhagen 1968: Plate CV.

⁹²³ How an awareness of the cult developed at the Frankish Court is more obscure but the inclusion of the monastery along with Chariton, Euthymios and Choziba in the Commemoratorium confirm its apparent importance to Carolingian imperial concerns by the early ninth century see *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 29-31 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 208-211).

recognition of the monastery and its cult outside of a Palestinian context as is a letter penned by Theodore, condemning the iconoclastic policies and ostensible persecutions of Leo V, addressed to the monastery.⁹²⁴ Visits to the monastery by aspirant monks also become a frequent theme in hagiographies towards the later ninth century.⁹²⁵

Sabas provides an important though not isolated example of the extent to which the devotional and patronal networks of some monasteries could extend.⁹²⁶ It also suggests that one of the key factors which facilitated the resilience of such communities to more immediate social and economic pressures in the Bilad al-Sham were the connections of such communities to patron networks beyond the localised sphere.

4.9 MONASTIC NETWORKS

As was discussed earlier, developments following the year 800 were marked by an increase in attempts by the Jerusalem Patriarchate to solicit financial support for the churches of Jerusalem from Byzantium and the early medieval west. The response of the Carolingians provides more explicit evidence of sustained contacts throughout the ninth century, although evidence for exchange between Wessex, Byzantium and Venice becomes more visible following the 870s.⁹²⁷ These episodes of contact were, however, characterised by their restriction to monks and clergy drawn from the Patriarchate or monasteries such as Sabas, Sinai or the Mount of Olives from which clergy attached to the Church of the Anastasis were often drawn. There is no indication that monastic sites or churches situated on the margins of these activities, in rural sites or in the Dekapolis, were sustained by these episodes of

⁹²⁴ Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters*, 276-278, 456-457 (ed. Fatorous 1992).

⁹²⁵ Stephen of Chennolakkos, spent a period in the monastery of Euthymios, *Synax CP*: 392. *Germanos of Konsinitza*, AASS May III: 6*-10*, Lat. tr. 160-166. For the Elias the Younger, who spent three years in Sinai which he interrupted with pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the River Jordan and Mount Tabor, see *Life of Elias the Younger*, 16-19 (ed. and tr. Rossi Taibbi 1962: 24-29).

⁹²⁶ For further examples see Appendix A.

⁹²⁷ See notes 620.

‘western’ patronage. The results from excavations at monastic sites such as the Kathisma, Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata or Kursi would support the opposite impression. All three sites were abandoned before 900 and were not subsequently reclaimed.⁹²⁸ This supports the impression that examples of western intervention, although important to sustaining the material wealth of the Jerusalem churches, was limited in terms of its impact upon the survival of the broader monastic landscape of the Palestinian region.

But these examples of direct contact between Jerusalem with patrons beyond the confines of the Caliphate provide a window into the broader networks developed and maintained by the Melkite church from its most high profile institutions. Such instances of contact should not, however, be de-contextualised from the more complex local connections among monasteries and Christian communities within the Caliphate itself. Consistent with dialogues with the West, the associations of several prestigious monasteries with particular cults appears to have facilitated their connections to patrons and revenue networks beyond their immediate locales.⁹²⁹ These evidently involved a more complex network of sites which retained particular support among elites on an intra-regional level but again were largely drawn towards the main coenobitic complexes situated in the Judean Desert, Jerusalem or Mount Sinai. The colophons of manuscripts produced or copied in Palestinian monasteries in this period provide several clear indications that such monasteries were able to draw monastic novitiates and members from a broad geographical spectrum. The monk Stephen, a native of

⁹²⁸ The results from the Kathisma are not yet published. I am grateful to the excavator Rina Aver for correspondence. For Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata, see the final report in Politis 2012: 115-158. The original phasing of Kursi appears in Tzaferis 1983: 5-18 with revised dating proposed in Stacey 2004: 15-16.

⁹²⁹ Thus the monastery of Mar Saba was included in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (Sinai Georgian 34): 5 December (ed. Garitte 1958: 108). It was also known to Theodore of Stoudios in Constantinople: Theodore of Stoudios, *Letters* 277 (ed. Fatouros 1992: 412-414) and in Rome, see Sansterre 1983:155 and Knipp 2002. The monastic inhabitants and contacts of Mar Sabas reflects a corresponding diversity. A monk of Mar Sabas was involved in the diplomatic exchange with Charlemagne: *Royal Frankish Annales*: AD 800-801, (ed. Kurze 1894: 107-112, tr. Walter-Scholtz and Rogers 1974: 78-79). Lazaros of Galesion spent six years in the monastery during the tenth century: *Life of Lazaros of Galesion* 16 (ed. BHG 979, AASS, Nov. 3:508-88, tr. Greenfield 2000: 94-07). A similarly diverse network from across the Caliphate can also be observed with figures such as Antony David of Baghdad see Griffith 1989. Manuscripts such as Sinai Georgian 34 also confirm the extent of these links.

Ramlā, is attested at the Monastery of Chariton in the 870s;⁹³⁰ from Mar Sabas I am aware of at least one, Abraham of Tabarīyyah,⁹³¹ and Mount Sinai, aside from its well studied connection to Georgian monks, maintained some nominal contact with the Christian community of Baghdad (880s)⁹³² and in Damascus (980s) where some of the surviving manuscripts of the Sinai Arabic collection were first obtained by the bishop of Sinai, Solomon, in the late tenth century.⁹³³ Sinai Arabic 309 also preserves the mention of a scribe named David of Asqālan who served at the Church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem in the 920s (Fig. 4.33).⁹³⁴ This supplements a further corpus of hagiographical literature which includes the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* which places the Judean Desert monasteries at the centre of a similarly diverse network of urban connections.⁹³⁵

Represented among these colophons is evidence of a series of connections between the major coenobitic complexes and urban Christian communities across the Caliphate. Strikingly the Syro-Palestinian cities represented in this list – Ramlā, Tabariyya, Jerusalem, Damascus and Asqālan– are those which provide the strongest evidence for social and economic continuity between 800 and 950.⁹³⁶

Little is known about the underlying social background of the monastic scribes known from the Sinai collections. Nonetheless, it is evident from their writings that they originated from within a social group of highly educated Arabic-speaking Christians who remained

⁹³⁰ British Library Oriental MS4950, f.197v and Sinai Arabic MS 72.

⁹³¹ Griffith 1989: 11.

⁹³² Vatican Arabic MS 71. A discussion of David of Baghdad's scribal activities is offered by Griffith 1989.

⁹³³ Sinai Arabic 2 fol.1v. For a discussion of Bishop Solomon's donations to the monastery of Sinai see the discussion by Swanson 2004.

⁹³⁴ Sinai Arabic 309, f.236r.

⁹³⁵ The *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* reports Mar Sabas' connections to urban communities in Jarash (17.1), Baghdad (23.1-2), Jericho (25.1), Damascus (30.1), Moab (39.2, 49.1) and Gaza (43.1) (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999).

⁹³⁶ See the reports in Stacey 2004: 34-25. See also Hirschfeld 2004b: 75-220. On Ramlā and Jerusalem: Avni 2011a. Whitcomb surveys the evidence for Qaysāriyyah.

relatively prosperous and who had emerged from well connected families.⁹³⁷

This wealth appears to have derived from a mixture of private familial property (often inherited) and the occupations performed by monks prior to their investiture. Many monks appear to have acted as physicians or scribes to local Muslim governors or were relatives of similar individuals. The Alexandrine Patriarch Saʿīd Ibn Baṭrīq, Thomas, Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Melkite Patriarch of Antioch, Christopher, all appear to have performed similar roles during their lifetime.⁹³⁸ This integration between families involved in civic administration and those whose members assumed monastic office is consistent with the earlier example of the Mansūr family and the family of the Patriarch Theodoros.⁹³⁹

What we currently lack are the names or identities of specific families in Palestine who were part of this urban Melkite milieu after John of Damascus' death (at some point after 754). Only a family identified as Mansūr – of uncertain connection to the family of John of Damascus – is named in the Christian sources of the ninth and tenth centuries; primarily because this family produced at least two Patriarchs from among its kin.⁹⁴⁰ Comparative examples, which include the family of Theodore Bar Koni, propose that the situation in Palestine was similar to the trend in other regions of the Caliphate – although how Palestinian elite families compare with similar networks in Egypt and in the Al-Jazīra is uncertain.⁹⁴¹

⁹³⁷ Bishop Solomon's family were at least sufficiently wealthy to commission a series of books in Damascus which were bequeathed to the monastery as donations. See Swanson 2004 for a discussion of the library of Bishop Solomon which includes his inherited works.

⁹³⁸ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoignon 1999: 55, 51-52). An additional study of the role of Christian scribes in the Muslim world appears in Holmberg 1993. The exceptional level of Arabic literacy among Christians was at least well acknowledged by their Muslim contemporaries albeit within a context of criticism directed at their Muslim contemporaries for their comparative lack of discipline: Al-Muqadassi, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1906: 183; tr. Collins 2001: 153). Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoignon 1999: 55, 51-52). An additional study of the role of Christian scribes in the Muslim world appears in Holmberg 1993: 103-114. Holmberg identifies patterns elsewhere in the Abbasid Caliphate which support the pattern seen in Palestine. The Patriarch Thomas is described as a doctor in the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 64.6 (ed. and tr. Lamoignon 1999: 111-112, 101).

⁹³⁹ On the Mansūr family see note 371.

⁹⁴⁰ Sergios I (reigned c.842-c.844) is identified as a descendent of Ibn Mansūr who negotiated with the Muslims in the conquest of Damascus see Saʿīd Ibn Baṭrīq, *Naẓm al-Jawhar* (Antiochene recension) (ed. Cheiko 1960-61: 120-122, tr. Pirone 1987: 408) Elias who later became Patriarch Elias III (c.879-c.907) is also identified as 'ibn Mansūr' and may also be linked to this family: *Ibid*: 422.

⁹⁴¹ Robinson 2009: 90-108 surveys the evidence for Christian families in the Al-Jazīra.

Certainly the archaeological evidence from Palestine would caution against assuming that Christian wealth remained homogenously stable across the Caliphate although this will require a more comprehensive synthesis of all material from within the Caliphate which is beyond the scope of this study.

Proximity and connection to the Muslim urban elite appears have been factor which facilitated the rise of prominent Melkite families to the Patriarchal retinue and complements examples such as the election of Patriarch Theodoros from the Umayyad period.⁹⁴² This particular episode cannot be confirmed beyond the tradition of the *Life* itself, but the scenario is a familiar one with similar roles performed by the Patriarch Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq.⁹⁴³ As we have seen, it is possible that the involvement of Muslim administrations in the Patriarchal elections had its origins in the Umayyad period as part of an attempt to limit Christian hostility against Muslim rule.⁹⁴⁴

This interplay between the residual Christian elite families, the clerical hierarchy and Muslim administration continued into the tenth century.⁹⁴⁵ By the 970s, it is likely that as-Sayyidah al-ʿAzīziyyah, the Melkite consort of the Fatimid caliph al-Aẓīz, had secured the roles of Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria for her brothers Orestes and Arsenios respectively.⁹⁴⁶

Accordingly, monasteries which were interwoven with this broader political environment were those where such urban elite priorities were drawn. To turn once more to the monastic establishment in Jerusalem, the Judean Desert and Mount Sinai, it is from among the monastic ranks of this core group where the majority of the Melkite Patriarchs of

⁹⁴² Around 745, the brother of the Spoudite monk Theodoros played a crucial role in his elevation to the Patriarchal throne according to the notably hostile *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoignon 1999: 55, 51).

⁹⁴³ The details of his life are offered in Griffith 1998: 77-78.

⁹⁴⁴ See page 208-210.

⁹⁴⁵ Brett 2001: 385-388.

⁹⁴⁶ *Yahya ibn Saʿīd al-Anṭākī*: 101-105 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 799-802) and Cortese 2007: 52.

Jerusalem and Alexandria, their high ranking associates (such as the *synkelloi*) and the urban bishops of the region originated between c.750-c.950.⁹⁴⁷ These associations were, as argued in Chapter Two, likely established during the seventh century in response to the broader geopolitical shifts of the Sassanian conquest, but proved formative to the continued connections of such communities to a wider elite framework which provided a significant component of their revenue basis and personnel.

4.10 MONASTICISM c.750-c.950: A PROFILE

The factors which ensured the survival of this core network were the product of three interconnected developments. The first relates to the appeal of a monastic site to a social demographic beyond the confines of highly localised devotional frameworks; in the case of monasteries such as Mount Sinai and Mar Sabas, the broader appeal of the site and cult across the Christian *oikoumene* was promoted through liturgical celebration and hagiography.⁹⁴⁸

Secondly, this devotional appeal ensured the establishment of a patronage base which included, but was not dependent upon, localised social or political frameworks. From a regional perspective, following the mid-eighth century, which witnessed a progressive contraction in the number and relative wealth of many urban centres and their rural hinterlands, this feature may have proved key to shielding the communities of the Judean Desert and Sinai from the effects of localised collapse in elite wealth and the ensuing effects

⁹⁴⁷ Thus Ishāq, later Patriarch of Alexandria, appears to have been a monk of Mount Sinai, see *Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 28-29 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 726-727).

⁹⁴⁸ The monastery was included on the Melkite stationary liturgy by the eighth century: *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 3 October (ed. Garitte 1958: 95). Similar attempts at generating interest in the monastic sites can be seen from the *Life of Michael of Mar Sabas* which promotes Mar Sabas as the primary monastic centre of the region: 'Just as Jerusalem is the queen of all cities, so too the Lavra of Sabas is the prince of all deserts. And if Jerusalem is the point of all comparison for other cities, so too St Sabas is the likeness for all other monasteries': Blanchard 1994: 158. It is important to note that this life, which concerns a heroic Sabaite martyr, was copied from Arabic into Georgian and provides a very explicit case of a translation of a Sabaite cult to other monastic and Christian groups.

of taxation. The connections to the West are the most well explored of these connections, but provide only the veneer to a more complex network which involved elites from the major urban centres of the region at Ramlā, Damascus, Tabarīyyah and Asqālan. The sustained social and economic state of these cities throughout the ninth century (evident through archaeology and textual reportage) may have secured the wealth and social position of the residual Melkite elite families above those of their contemporaries in the Dekapolis or Transjordan. We have no way of quantifying this in actual or comparative terms, but evidently such revenues were sufficient to ensure the maintenance of monastic structures and liturgical life at an essential level.

The final element, closely related to the previous two points, was that such monastic institutions, interwoven with the workings of Jerusalem Patriarchate and providing several members of its retinue, remained places to which Christian elite priorities were drawn. Such factors are impressionistic, but gain credence when applied to the patterns seen among the series of sites which do not share many of these characteristics. The smaller, anonymous sites, commissioned by single families or supported at a collective local level are those which did not survive the shifts which emerged in the ninth century.⁹⁴⁹ As was discussed in the opening chapter, these discrepancies were exacerbated, but not created, by the establishment of Arab political hegemony. By 600 the landscape of co-existing monastic or cult sites was fully formed. The sites were incorporated into a wider hierarchical structure which determined their access and association with patronage networks. In the seventh and early eighth century, the geo-political focus on the Levant under the Umayyads continued to sustain the stability of localised wealth and served to secure the continuation of patron relationships according to established convention. Following c.749 a progressive shift in arrangements gradually undermined this situation through a composite series of social and

⁹⁴⁹ Such as Horvat Qasra, Horvat Hanot or Horvat Berachot (see appendix A).

economic factors. Gradual reorientation away from the Levant and towards the Euphrates basin provoked the gradual withdrawal of major institutional investment on a collective level. The few examples from the ninth and tenth centuries of intervention in Palestinian cities were largely programmes of refurbishment and throughout the Abbasid period were directed towards urban features which met the requirements of these increasingly Muslim institutions; monasteries and Christian cult sites do not appear to have been among them even if our sources propose still fairly ambiguous and fluid cult practice at in the later eighth century.

This gradual withdrawal of political focus did not initiate a collapse in urban and rural life in these regions, but the collective effects of environmental and economic factors appear to have instigated a gradual retraction in both the occupation of the Palestinian landscape and the scale to which it was subsequently exploited for economic purposes. The sensitivity of localised monastic institutions interwoven with the communities associated with these networks, through patronage, personnel or landholding, may well have instigated a concurrent strain in their own ability to endure these developments. Many were abandoned; others such as Mount Nebo, Sinai and Mar Sabas, may have withdrawn to the central coenobitic nucleus centred on the core devotional site. A reduction in the relative size of monastic communities as seen at Kursi and Jabal Harūn, is a plausible (but a currently indeterminable) phenomenon on a regional scale. Nonetheless, the more easily determined occupational phases of such sites indicates that by 950 the monastic presence on the Palestinian landscape was much diminished from its level in 600 and consisted of a handful of large coenobitic centres. Many of these had contracted and were in an evident state of disrepair.

These more prevalent environmental and economic effects were accompanied, if not exacerbated, by a series of progressive social trends which saw a progressive reorientation of traditional elite social and devotional associations with monastic communities and Christian

cult sites. A frequently emphasised aspect of recent research has been the protracted rate of this conversion and the sizeable Christian demographic in rural communities and in the urban centres of Jerusalem and the Galilee.⁹⁵⁰ This remains broadly acceptable but does risk intertwining the concept of demographic majorities with political ones. Although the evidence to propose that Muslims overtook Christians as the dominant religious demographic is uncertain, the eighth to tenth centuries experienced a demonstrable rise in the predominance of Muslims in the highest positions of institutional authority in the region. Too little is known about conventions of patronage among these emerging Muslim elite to permit more nuanced analysis. It would appear, however, as in the case of Jarash, Ramlā and Jerusalem, that elite priorities were largely focussed on preservation of the civic and Muslim religious infrastructure. At least by the tenth century almost every major urban centre of the region possessed a mosque.⁹⁵¹

Christians continued to function within this administrative framework although in a more restricted capacity. Exceptions occur towards the Fatimid period, but appear as exceptional rather than normative social practice. Invariably relationships between monks and clergy with Muslim groups were more complex at a localised level where it would appear that connections via kinship groups or political allegiance often blurred the boundaries of religious confession in terms of relationships and access to power.⁹⁵²

The gradual emergence of new Islamic hierarchies or administration also provoked restrictions aimed at limiting the monastic (and more broadly Christian) life within its existing confines. Legislative messages, which involved increased taxation and prohibitions against public expressions of Christianity, are more explicit in the Abbasid period than in earlier centuries and emerged in a context where the legal status of Christians was actively

⁹⁵⁰ On this see Bulliet 1979, Humphreys 2010: 51-52, Levitzon 1990: 289-31 and Morony 1990: 135-149.

⁹⁵¹ See note 774.

⁹⁵² Pages 308-309.

being codified and systematised by Islamic jurists: if only on a conceptual level.⁹⁵³ Even so, the evidence to suggest that such measures were continuously or systematically enforced across the region is limited and indicates that prohibitions were often restricted to specific regional contexts.

Similarly, the persecution of monastic figures remained an intermittent but not continuous feature of the Palestinian Abbasid milieu. Although often subjected to ridicule in court literature,⁹⁵⁴ there is little evidence to suggest a more prevalent attitude to monks as legitimate figures for repression or persecution. Actual cases of the oppression of monks and bishops – some of which have little historical basis –⁹⁵⁵ are rare for this period and appear only to have extended to individuals or groups who voiced overt opposition to Muslim authority.⁹⁵⁶ The persecution of Peter of Damascus in the 740s and the Patriarch John VII in the 960s, often stemmed from the threat such figures posed as political rather than religious figures.⁹⁵⁷ Even in this latter case the source material suggests that the severity of his persecution were as result of localised unrest and not institutionally sponsored oppression.⁹⁵⁸

It is exceedingly difficult to observe monasticism beyond the Christian-Muslim dichotomy which the surviving monastic sources present. Nonetheless, as figures strongly integrated into the elite networks of the region and components of a power structure which was not dependent upon Muslim intervention, monks retained a powerful position from which to critique the religious or political stance of the Caliphate. It is notable that the most

⁹⁵³ Levy-Rubin 2011b: 63-98.

⁹⁵⁴ See note 694.

⁹⁵⁵ As with case of Michael of Mar Sabas which draws extensively on themes from biblical story of Joseph in the House of Potiphar: Blanchard 1994. This does not, however, undermine the importance of the text and the motif of the hero martyrs as a means of promoting the monastery. Treatment of the evidence relating to Palestinian neo-martyrs from the early Islamic period appears in Griffith 1998b. Similar developments among Coptic communities in Egypt have been explored in Papaconstantinou 2006.

⁹⁵⁶ Pages 229-230.

⁹⁵⁷ John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Chronicon* 31-32 (ed. Thurn 1973: 31-32, tr. Wortley 2010: 267). John Skylitzes reports that the Patriarch John actively encouraged a Byzantine offensive against Jerusalem. Therefore, the attack of John may have been partly motivated by John's more political role and connections with the Byzantine emperor.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

sophisticated responses to Islamic doctrine emerged from the cluster of monasteries closely associated with the rhythms of the Patriarchate and the bishoprics of the major urban centres.⁹⁵⁹ The general acceptance of these works, if not the actual engagement by Muslim scholars with their arguments, denotes the general – occasionally antagonistic – tolerance of monastic communities in the ninth century: albeit one which witnessed sporadic outbreaks of hostility and oppression.

In concluding this chapter I would propose that our understanding of cases of hostility directed against monastic figures must be achieved by a more forensic consideration of the immediate social and political context in which such persecutions unfolded. The actual examples of persecution of monastic or Christian groups in the period 750-950 are surprisingly few. There are perhaps five separate cases of martyrdoms in the two hundred year Abbasid period which can be linked directly to Muslim authorities. In each case these appear to have been initiated by a complex series of factors beyond a simple Muslim-Christian dichotomy, often interwoven with the antagonistic stance of such figures or their contravention of Muslim law and the risks such figures presented as figureheads among the non-Muslim population. This does not suggest that Christian status in this period was unaffected by the series of progressive restrictions against them (the wealth of apologetic and hagiography proposes the opposite) but that our understanding of their status beneath Muslim rule needs to move beyond a simple perception of a regional or temporal homogeneity.

The monastic and pilgrim milieu which emerges by the tenth century was radically altered from its seventh century predecessor – far smaller, more nucleated and increasingly focussed on the cultural trajectories of the Caliphate than on the Mediterranean. This development had, however, materialised in a broader environment which witnessed the concurrent breakdown of the social and economic systems of the late Roman world – a

⁹⁵⁹ This includes Mar Sabas, Mar Chariton and the copying at Mount Sinai. On this see note 744.

decline in their relationship to the Mediterranean but equally changes to the more immediate landscape in which monastic intuitions and their patrons existed. Its impact was inconsistent and regionally accented but nonetheless influential in defining the landscape in which monastic communities were to exist until the foundation of the Latin Kingdom. After c.800 this landscape retracted drastically into a core network of sites. The general nadir of the early to mid-ninth century was not permanent and appears to have stabilised following the renewed importance of the region under the Tulundis. This instigated no further cases of foundation but may have curbed preceding trends and assisted in the consolidation of the network into its core landscape in Jerusalem, the Judean Desert and the Galilee. This provides, albeit crudely, a sense of Melkite Christian landscape within the region of Palestine which still retained elements of its former administrative and economic importance. It is less effective in the former regions of the Dekapolis, Negev and southern Transjordan which are invisible in the record.

Nonetheless, as stated earlier, whilst such social and economic distinctions may have influenced the trajectory of this landscape following 750, they were not innovations to this network. The factors which facilitated their survival arguably had their origins in the late Roman world.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE c.600-c.950

Approaches to post-Byzantine Christian pilgrimage in Palestine and the Transjordan remain enveloped by the idea of an abrupt decline in its social and material presence following the seventh century.⁹⁶⁰ This remains an accepted premise of contemporary approaches to Christian cult life in the post-Byzantine Levant and a position reinforced by the trend in current studies to situate discussions of Christian pilgrimage within a framework of regional political change.⁹⁶¹ The general paucity of studies devoted to an analysis of pilgrimage following the 630s have served to fortify this traditional assessment of the period as one of swift deterioration to the Christian cult landscape and a decline in Christian pilgrims as a social demographic in the region.

Invariably, the predominant focus by scholars on a literary corpus comprised of non-insular material – e.g. that produced outside of Palestine – has framed recent observations of post-Byzantine pilgrimage exclusively in terms of practices, communities and societies external to the region.⁹⁶² Recent synthetic approaches, tracing the trajectory of pilgrimage following 600, expose the restrictions of this scope. Even cursory observations of the material

⁹⁶⁰ Examples of this approach may be sought in Christodoupolos 2008: 57-59, Kislinger 2008: 120, Maraval 2002, Olster 1993: 317-318, Re 2008: 171 and Schick 1995: 109. All are given as broad statements but are not accompanied by a study to verify this post-Byzantine decline. In several examples, this has been exacerbated by acceptance of Avi Yonah's claim that the economy of such institutions, and Palestine as a region, remained dependent upon external pilgrim links: see Avi Yonah 1958: 39-51. More qualified observations about the impact of the Arab conquest are offered in Limor 2006: 331-339.

⁹⁶¹ Thus Maraval's study discusses only the fourth to early seventh centuries: Maraval 2004 and Maraval 2008: 27-36. So too do the contributions by Elad 2008 and Re 2008 whose discussions assume the broader political frameworks of Byzantine or 'early Muslim'. Kuelzer 2002, in contrast, emphasises no such break. However, his argument is characterised by the tendency to identify all textual evidence as essentially reflective of early examples of the much later development of post-medieval *proskynetaria*.

⁹⁶² Thus, Kislinger 2007, Kuelzer 1994, Kuelzer 2002, Wilkinson 1976 and Wilkinson 2002 all present a discussion of Byzantine and post-Byzantine pilgrimage based on the corpus of non-Palestinian material. Dietz 2005: 189-212, reflects a similarly western emphasis on the discussion of post-conquest pilgrimage. Limor 2006: 335-337, follows a similar approach but acknowledges the imbalance of western material in sources which survive. An exception to this trend is the article by Jacoby 2006 which acknowledges material from Palestinian and Transjordanian contexts.

upon which such studies are based yield a collective dependence upon a familiar body of Anglo-Saxon, Frankish and Byzantine textual accounts; among which the *De Locis Sanctis* of Adomnán, the *Hodepoerican* of Willibald of Eichstätt and the anonymous composition (known as the *Hagiopolita*) of Epiphanius Hagiopolites predominate.⁹⁶³

In one respect, this is a legacy cultivated by the reluctance of existing studies to integrate the wider corpus of archaeological and epigraphic material which would support the existence of a more complex landscape of sites and pilgrimage networks by 600.⁹⁶⁴ This exclusion of archaeological material hinders a full comparison of post-Byzantine pilgrimage convention with established practices prior to the 630s. This is not only because archaeological material alludes to practices, sites and regional connections which existed outside of the textual tradition, but because material, rather than literary, data offer more explicit cases of continuity beyond the seventh century. Equally, the lack of a foundational study of the period 300-600 that fully reflects the diversity of published data complicates our ability to observe developments and fluctuations in pilgrimage following the Arab conquest. Simply put, we lack the types of studies necessary to identify and compare conventions of pilgrimage following the 630s with practices that preceded it.

It is the isolation of the broader archaeological and epigraphic corpus from studies of post-Byzantine pilgrimage that have shaped popular conceptions of the Sassanian and Arab conquests as periods of detrimental change for Christian pilgrimage practice. This correlates well with the issues that were outlined earlier for monasticism and may be broadly summarised as follows: Sassanian/Arab political authority over the Levant prompted a rapid decline in the number of pilgrims from Byzantium and the post-Roman west and instigated a

⁹⁶³ Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis* (ed. Meehan 1983, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 167-296). Hugeburc, *Life of Willibald* (ed. Holder-Egger 1887: 80-106, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 167-215). Epiphanius the Monk, *Hagiopolita* (ed. Donner 1971: 42-91, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 207-215).

⁹⁶⁴ Thus the majority of studies of Byzantine and post-Byzantine pilgrimage in the region focus predominantly on the repertoire of literary sources: Bitton-Askelony and Kofsky 2006: 257-291, Hunt 1982, Maraval 2004 and Perrone 1998.

progressive collapse in the number, and relative wealth, of Christian cult sites following the 630s.⁹⁶⁵

Underpinning this residual theory are two interrelated concepts. Firstly, that pilgrimage to Palestine, from its inception, was characterised by its overtly extra-regional nature (involving figures and communities drawn from non-Palestinian social/geographical contexts) with only a marginal role for indigenous practices or groups within this framework.⁹⁶⁶ Secondly, that this external pilgrim demographic constituted the primary social and economic support for the network of sites established in the region both before and after the Arab conquest.⁹⁶⁷ As with approaches to monasticism, our understanding of the trajectories of cult sites (in terms of revenue structures, social use and occupational phases) is habitually linked to wider fluctuations in institutional and territorial control in the early medieval Levant and isolated from more immediate socio-economic trends.⁹⁶⁸

The main limitations of this model were addressed earlier in this study but have parallel implications for our understanding of the general character of pilgrimage in the Byzantine period and its trajectory following 630.⁹⁶⁹

The most pertinent among these issues concerns the relative number of non-Palestinian pilgrims and their broader significance to the social character of pilgrimage in the Palestinian region in the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. Despite widespread consensus

⁹⁶⁵ This runs closely to the arguments advocated for monasticism in Hirschfeld 1992: 236-237, which collectively equate monastic/pilgrimage decline to a broad political template of Islamic expansion. This is also repeated in Christodoulou 2008: 57-59 and Kislinger 2007: 120-124.

⁹⁶⁶ Avi Yonah 1958: 46-49 who advocates a Palestinian economic system based around 'empty mouths' in the form of monastic figures and pilgrims: Hatlie 2007: 32 (following Binns 1994). The strong association between monasticism and economic growth in Palestine is also repeated in Mayerson 1985: 75-76 and Mayerson 1987: 232-237. See also Dietz 2005: 107-188, whose discussion of pilgrimage in the late antique Mediterranean, notably from the Iberian Peninsula, also deviates little from the repertoire of patristics or hagiography.

⁹⁶⁷ Olster 1993: 317-318 and Kofsky 1997: 209-210.

⁹⁶⁸ The two are often considered concurrently. Thus Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2006: 257-291, offer an outline of the development of monasticism and pilgrimage in the region which follows the chronology and accounts of the literary sources. The study therefore strongly (though perhaps unintentionally) associates the development and patronage of both phenomena with exchange from the west (cf. Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2006: 262). This is despite observations of more localised practices with evidence from Nessana introduced within the discussion.

⁹⁶⁹ See pages 46-47.

of the ubiquity of pilgrim exchange from the Aegean, the Anatolia heartlands or the post-Roman west, this supposition is not yet endorsed by a study which confirms this interpretation in quantitative terms. Rather, the general ‘western’ focus of pilgrimage in the period 300-600 and the idea that the Arab conquest instigated an abrupt decline in the general number of pilgrims are largely hypothetical positions: widely replicated but currently lacking substantive evidence.⁹⁷⁰

The emphasis placed on the close connection between pilgrimage sites and the external contact to the Mediterranean is a distortion cultivated by the source material employed in recent debate and a series of frameworks defined by earlier studies. Avi Yonah’s article on the Byzantine-Palestinian economy, which stressed the dependency of Palestinian economic systems on the (now discredited) ‘empty-mouths’ hypothesis (in which monasteries and cult sites were integral), remains an unacknowledged influence on the perception of cult sites as dependent upon external revenue.⁹⁷¹ This perception of monastic communities and cult sites has resisted more systematic criticisms, which have been levied by scholars working in most other regions of the former Roman world (since the late 1960s), largely as a result of recent scholarly approaches to the question of Late Antique pilgrimage in Palestine after the

⁹⁷⁰ Thus Christodoupolos 2008: 57-59, Hirschfeld 1992: 236-237, Kislinger 2008: 120, Maraval 2002, Re 2008: 171 and Schick 1995: 109 all support a decline in the number of pilgrims following the Arab conquest. Importantly, none of these studies provides evidence or a study to endorse this claim.

⁹⁷¹ Thus Cameron, 1993: 178-179, Patrich 1995: 470 and Wilken 1992: 178-183 all offer the same perspective of an economic boom fostered by Christianisation based on Avi Yonah’s article. Avi Yonah’s article has stressed the Palestinian economy’s main dependence upon monasticism and pilgrimage revenues. It is a hypothesis also continued in Mayerson 1987: 232-237. Such a model has obvious implications on understanding the trajectory of pilgrimage sites after 630 because it fosters the creation of an economic model for Palestine (and major donors to such institutions) that could not sustain itself following the Arab conquest. Equally, the view of the Palestinian economy as one dominated by ‘empty-mouths’ overlooks the evidence for monastic involvement in agricultural production. As I have already noted (note 301), this impression of monastic and pilgrim economies has largely been sustained by current archaeological approaches. One particular reason for the continued use of Avi Yonah’s hypothesis, I suspect, is that discussions of Palestinian economic growth and its relationship to the Christianisation of the region are often detached from studies of previous trends from the second and third centuries. This may, to some extent, perpetuate an impression of an economic boom fostered by Christianity that may have earlier precedents. For discussion of Palestine in the Roman period: see Safrai 1994. For alternative perspectives on the Palestinian economy, which stress the importance of agricultural production and other forms of exchange for the region’s wealth: see Kingsley 2001b and Wickham 2005: 451-454. Decker 2011 discusses the impact of the oil trade in northern Syria. Walmsley 2000 also surveys the evidence for the eighth century. For criticism of the Avi Yonah hypothesis see Bar 2004: 307-320 and Kingsley 2001b. Bar offers the most systematic rejection of Avi Yonah’s hypothesis and proposes that the rising number of churches in the region may be attributed to more general economic trends in the late Roman period.

fourth century. Whether implicit or consciously intended, the prevailing focus in critical approaches to pilgrimage on the Patristic writings of the Church Fathers – notably Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine and Jerome – or the series of pre-conquest (often highly detailed) pilgrims accounts – including Egeria, the Piacenza pilgrim and Theodosios – have proved formative to how Byzantine pilgrimage practice in Syria-Palestine is conceptualised by modern audiences.⁹⁷²

The relative availability of this material in modern editions, translations and source collections has sustained this trend by ensuring its wide dissemination and accessibility to a broad audience of scholars.⁹⁷³ A comparative appraisal of the material implemented in the major studies of pilgrimage often reflects little deviation from the standard repertoire of Patristic sources and ‘pilgrimage accounts’.⁹⁷⁴

Although the continued emphasis upon the compilation and publication of the core literary sources is a welcome trend (which has facilitated valuable debate),⁹⁷⁵ this material needs to be handled cautiously. Whilst this study would not discredit the contribution made by source compilations, a propensity to assemble such accounts together, irrespective of their chronological or contextual distinctions (e.g. geographical or social origins), has nurtured the more problematic tendency to assume that such works reflect a homogenous literary collection. This issue is not assisted by the common arrangement of these accounts into a

⁹⁷² For example: Bitton-Ashkelony 2006, Frank 1995: 787-791, Frank 2008: 828-831, Hunt 1984, Maraval 2002, Wilkinson 1977 and Wilkinson 2002 who also introduced hagiography. This, however, is not necessarily replicated in other regions of the former Roman world. Frankfurter 1998 has drawn particular attention to the resilience and importance of indigenous practise within Egypt. For discussions of this beyond the Arab conquest: see Papaconstantinou 2001 who has emphasised a similar portrait of localised resilience.

⁹⁷³ Characterised by the well circulated collection of Wilkinson 2002 following an approach established earlier by the Palestine Pilgrims’ Text Society see, *Of the places visited by Antoninus Martyr (Circa 510-530)* (tr. Stewart 1887), *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem*; (tr. Stewart 1887) and *The Letter of Paula and Eustochium to Marcella about the Holy Places (386. A. D.)* (tr. Stewart 1889).

⁹⁷⁴ Thus, Hunt 1984, Kuelzer 1994, Maraval 2004 and Schick 1995: 109. McCormick 2001: 197-210 also bases a substantial part of his analysis on these accounts. Admittedly, McCormick 2001: 303-304 also incorporates other material, including relics and ‘authentics’ as evidence for continued exchange. Whilst possible, McCormick’s study does not provide evidence to support a Palestinian provenance for these relics, simply that the accompanying authentics are dated by palaeography to the ninth or tenth centuries. Understandably, McCormick was unable to verify the authenticity of the relics via a more intrusive technique such as isotope analysis. Nonetheless, given the lack of analysis on these objects, their use to reconstruct potential pilgrimage or other physical links with Palestine must remain reserved and will not be factored into this discussion.

⁹⁷⁵ See Bitton-Ashkelony 2006 and Wilken 1992.

linear chronological sequence which has served to endorse a perception of these texts as indicative of a static, essentially universal, early medieval interest in the Palestinian Holy Land.⁹⁷⁶

Even rudimentary observations of these texts urge a more considered approach. The narrative description of Willibald's travels to the 'Holy Land' in Huneberc's *Hodepoericon*, by way of example, constitutes a fraction of a more extensive hagiography whose relationship to the travel narrative has yet to be fully determined.⁹⁷⁷

The basic supposition that these texts are essentially representative of a homogenous genre has, nonetheless, remained unquestioned and has served to nurture a series of formulaic critical approaches to such texts where fluctuations in itineraries, or occupational phases of sites, are often determined by basic comparative readings between them.⁹⁷⁸

This focus on the descriptions of the Palestinian cult topography has encouraged the creation of an essentially artificial genre of 'pilgrimage literature' which fails to situate these individual texts within the late Roman, Frankish and Hiberno-Saxon cultural environments which conditioned their internal qualities.⁹⁷⁹ Among the repertoire of sources identified and published, only three – the early accounts of the Bordeaux pilgrim, the account of Egeria and

⁹⁷⁶ Thus Wilkinson's 2002 compilation of the collection of pilgrimage accounts remains the most iconic example of this approach. Whilst not inherently problematic, the structure remains widely replicated in approaches to Byzantine pilgrimage where such texts are often compared or enlisted together to form a seamless chronology: see Dietz 2005: 194-212 and Kuelzer 2002: 146-161 for such an approach. Limor 2006: 331, though acknowledging the western bias of the sources, also considers each of these accounts as part of a defined genre.

⁹⁷⁷ Huneberc, *Life of Willibald*, (ed. O. Holder-Egger, 1897, 86-106). An English translation may be found in Noble and Head 1995: 141-164.

⁹⁷⁸ For example, Aist 2010 compares the descriptions of the pilgrim Willibald with those of Arculf, Epiphanius Hagiopolites and Strategios' *Capture of Jerusalem*: the latter two of which are not well analysed. A similar approach is also offered in Kuelzer 1994. Dietz 2005: 194-212, similarly utilises the *De Locis Sanctis* of Adomnán and the *Hodepoericon* without acknowledging the core literary and contextual differences between them. This is notable with the *De Locis Sanctis* where a series of published studies by Thomas O'Loughlin (see note 154), have indicated the liturgical influences on the literary topography presented in the text.

⁹⁷⁹ An exception to this is the *De Locis Sanctis* of Adomnán: see O' Loughlin 1992 with additional discussions in O' Loughlin 2000a; O' Loughlin 2000b; O' Loughlin 2004; O' Loughlin 2007; O' Loughlin 2010. The lack of systematic engagement of these texts is notable with the *Life of Willibald* of Huneberc. This was noted by the last systematic study of the source by Aist 2010: 27-28. For a further discussion of the discrepancies between scholars working on Anglo-Saxon material and Byzantinists in their use of the manuscript tradition, see Aist 2010: 11-14. Halevi 1998, discusses the social and economic material that may be extracted from Bernard the Monk's *Itinerarium*. The material associated with the late Roman tradition is better surveyed. Discussions of the very early *Itinerarium Burdigalense* appear in Elsner 2000 and Jacobs 2004. On Epiphanius see the overview in *ODB*: 714. A similar critique was also levied by Grabar 1996: 10.

the *De Locis Sanctis* of Adomnán – have been analysed with the intent of situating them within their original intellectual and social frameworks.⁹⁸⁰ In the case of the *De Locis Sanctis* closer inspection of the text within the wider context of Hiberno-Saxon literary activity has critical implications on the perceived value of its topographic descriptions to modern research interests.⁹⁸¹

These qualifications have not generated a series of more forensic examinations of the later corpus of the sixth to ninth centuries; nor, fundamentally, whether the corpus of later texts were provoked by similar social or devotional motives to their late Roman counterparts. Rather, the essential accuracy of such descriptions has remained universally accepted in discussions of Byzantine pilgrimage in the Palestinian region; all that has occurred since are a series of studies based essentially on comparisons between their descriptions of the biblical terrain.⁹⁸² This is, as we shall see, problematic.

5.1 PALESTINIAN PILGRIMAGE AND THE BIBLICAL HIEROTOPY

The textually-driven approach of recent methodologies has negative implications. The modern deference to the topographic descriptions encountered in ‘pilgrimage accounts’, which focus primarily on the familiar itinerary of biblical sites, has reinforced a perception of the Palestinian cult landscape as one solely interlinked and defined by biblical association.⁹⁸³

This concept has proved highly influential – particularly among archaeologists eager to correlate material remains and church sites with biblical/pseudo-canonical or

⁹⁸⁰ See note 979 above.

⁹⁸¹ For qualifications about the role of this text in describing the topography of the region: see O’ Loughlin 1992 with additional studies in O’ Loughlin 2000a, O’ Loughlin 2000b, O’ Loughlin 2004, O’ Loughlin 2007 and O’ Loughlin 2010.

⁹⁸² Thus Aist 2010 analyses Willibald’s description in relation to other pilgrims’ texts, notably *the De Locis Sanctis* and the Strategios’ *Capture of Jerusalem*, Arabic Versions A and B (ed. and tr. Garitte 1973), Arabic C and V (ed. and tr. Garitte 1974), Georgian (ed. and tr. Garitte 1960).

⁹⁸³ Thus Kuelzer 2002: 152-154 and Maraval 2008: 29.

hagiographical episodes known from the surviving literary corpus.⁹⁸⁴ Mar Elyas in the Transjordan and Horvat Midras, associated with Elijah and Zechariah respectively, are two examples of sites associated with biblical figures by modern observers which have produced little textual or material data during excavation to verify these correlations.⁹⁸⁵

The importance of the biblical canon as a formative inspiration to the identification and definition of sacred space in the Byzantine Levant is an accepted principle which will not be systematically refuted here.⁹⁸⁶ Indeed there are several examples – including the sites of Sinai, Bethlehem and the complex network of Jerusalem – whose commemoration of biblical events were central to their existence and recognition as holy sites by their Byzantine contemporaries.⁹⁸⁷ This intimate association between cult site and biblical topography continued beyond the seventh century and proved formative to the definition of the Christian sacroscape among indigenous Christian groups into the ninth century.⁹⁸⁸ Later descriptions, such as those of the ninth-century Melkite bishop Peter of Bayt Raʿs, also point to the importance of biblically defined topographies as central to the Chalcedonian-Melkite

⁹⁸⁴ The most recent of this approach is MacDonald 2010: 37-45: 70-74, which presents a list of sites such as Umm Qays (see MacDonald 2010: 37-51) and Mar Elyas (see MacDonald 2010: 69-81) which are identified with biblical episodes. This is plausible, but in the case of Umm Qays and Mar Elyas neither site is discussed in Byzantine sources and the association with these figures is not explicit in the material assemblages of either site. This is also the case for the site of Kursi, Tzaferis 1983: 43-48, where attempts were made to identify the site with miracle of the swine. This is plausible, although a later text, the *Kitāb al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Raʿs, identifies the site with that of Jesus' miracle of the seven loaves in Mark 8: 1-9 and Matthew 15: 32-39: see *Kitāb al-Burhān*, 321 (ed. Cachia 1960: 170 and tr. Watt 1960: 137). This interpretation is suggested by the iconographic sequences within the church which depict a series of fish and small lozenge-shaped loaves in the mosaic scheme of the basilica. Furthermore, the two-handled basket motifs in the mosaic scheme may be plausibly identified as provision baskets 'Σπυρίδας'. If this can be accepted, this may further support the association of the church with the miracle given the use of the term in the gospel account of Mark 8.8: καὶ ἔφαγον καὶ ἐχορτάσθησαν, καὶ ἦσαν περισσεύματα κλασμάτων ἐπὶ σπυρίδας. This raises the possibility that the site had a dual association with the Miracle of the Multiplication associated with the main basilica (see Tzaferis 1983: 5-18) and the Miracle of the Swine-herd associated with the upper church integrated into the side of the nearby hill: see Tzaferis and Glick 1983: 49-51.

⁹⁸⁵ Most recently, Horvat Midras has been identified as the Tomb of Zechariah, based on its approximate correlation to the Madaba map: Resig 2011. Again, though plausible, this is not supported by any internal evidence from within the church itself, nor from any Byzantine or early Islamic source: see Ganor, Klein, Abenu and Zissu. 2012. Resig 2011 presents one example of the identification of the site of Horvat Midras in popular literature. For Mar Elyas, the association of the site with Elijah is repeated in MacDonald 2010: 69-81. A dedicatory inscription at the site may confirm some association of Elijah with the site, but the lack of surviving literary traditions surrounding the site make this a speculative association: see Piccirillo 2011: 107.

⁹⁸⁶ For the importance of this: see Sivan 1990, Holum 1990 and Hunt 2007.

⁹⁸⁷ See the descriptions in Appendix A which list the churches with biblical associations.

⁹⁸⁸ Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān* (ed. Cachia 1960: 164-207, tr. Watt 1960: 134-162).

definition of this terrain into the Abbasid period and complements the sustained important of Jerusalem to Melkite confessional identity into the tenth century.⁹⁸⁹

Nonetheless, the exclusivity the biblical topography is assigned in modern critical approaches of pilgrimage, which has resulted in the dubious correlation of several sites with biblical figures or episodes, requires considered reflection.⁹⁹⁰ Such biblical centralities, I suspect, are not detached from a broader tissue of post-Reformation pre-conceptions, with the more recent Protestant (increasingly Evangelical) emphasis on the empirical historicity of the biblical narrative proving particularly influential in the definition of the Palestinian hierotopy and related archaeological strategies. The major excavations conducted by the Franciscan Institute or other religious organisations during the twentieth century at Capernaum, 'Ein Karem, the Church of the Multiplication and Mount Nebo were characteristic of such

⁹⁸⁹ *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 310-356, 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 165-207, tr. Watt 1960: 134-162). For a discussion of Jerusalem's importance to the Melkites, see Griffith 2006b: 178-185.

⁹⁹⁰ See note 18. Other debatable identifications include the church identified at St Peter's House at Capernaum. The church site itself produced little information which would confirm a cultic association with St Peter. Corbo's excavations (see Corbo 1969: 18-34 and Corbo 1975), produced no epigraphic evidence from within the church to confirm its association with St Peter. Corbo's identification of the site with the House of Peter appears to have been based on an existing tradition established in the nineteenth century: Corbo 1975: 26. Similarly, the published graffito inscriptions appear in Testa 1972. The majority of these inscriptions, which were inscribed onto plaster, present no strong evidence for this association either. Only one inscription (No. 47) mentions the name Peter although its fragmentary nature (the final letter of the inscription is missing) does not clarify whether this represents an invocation or the name of the supplicant, see Testa 1972: 60. No other inscription identified at Capernaum invokes Peter. Alternatively, the majority conform to the fairly standard convention of invoking Christ: Testa 1969: 71-72, 78-79, 104. Loffreda 1993, surveys the ongoing dispute between scholars regarding the identification of the site. The mention of a church, identified as the House of St Peter, appears in western sources, notably the *Piacenza Pilgrim*: 7 (ed. Geyer, 1965, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 129-151). Nonetheless, there is little indication in the Byzantine tradition for a similar association with St Peter. The later redaction of the account of *Hagiopolita* of Epiphanius Hagiopolites, which shares strong similarities with the tenth-century version of the *Life of Constantine*: see *Un Bios di Constantino*, (ed. Guidi 1908, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 387-392) associates the site with the house of John the Theologian and, more importantly, with the healing of the paralytic recounted in Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, *Hagiopolita*: 32 (ed. Donner 1971: tr. Wilkinson 2002). A further association of the site, which also appears in the *Hagiopolita* is the raising of the daughter of Jarios recounted in Mark 5:21-43, Matthew 9:18-26, Luke 8:40-56, *ibid*. This identification also appears in the *Life of Willibald*: 14 (ed. Tobler 1874: 26-27, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 233-251), albeit with no indication that an awareness of a church in Capernaum dedicated to the event circulated within western literary circles. Palestinian material which mentions the site is limited. However, the ninth-century *Kitāb al-Burhān* associates the site with the healing of the paralytic and with the raising of the daughter of Jarios: see *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 319 (ed. Cachia 1960:168-169, tr. Watt 1960:136). There is no direct evidence to link the miracle to the church currently identified as St Peter's House. A tentative association with the resurrection of Jarios' daughter may, however, be proposed by the surviving iconography of the church where a representation of the peacock covers the central medallion of the octagonal church. This interpretation must remain preliminary. Nonetheless, the paucity of evidence confirming the association of the site with St Peter raises important concerns about the imposition of modern religious topographies upon interpretations of Byzantine and post-Byzantine cult landscapes in the Levant.

excavation projects: biblically focussed in their aims and fuelled by a broader series of European colonial and academic rivalries.⁹⁹¹

Neither are the more contemporary economic incentives of competitive tourism and international pilgrimage (neither mutually exclusive), which have rapidly expanded since the 1960s, an entirely neutral party within these processes of site identification.⁹⁹²

Though invaluable, the collective number of excavations, mostly driven by textual agendas, has ensured that contemporary perceptions of the Byzantine Palestinian hierotopy and its accompanying literature remain weighted in favour of biblically-centred topographies and landscapes. Site distribution maps offer some illustration of this biblically centred construct. Whilst a concentration of holy sites around Jerusalem, the Judean Desert and the Galilee may reflect Late Antique settlement processes, we cannot yet, with the data at hand, discredit the possibility that this impression is partly a distortion cultivated by the nucleation of excavation into areas with perceived biblical associations.

Such a perception of Palestinian pilgrimage as a development rigidly entrenched within biblical cult requires reframing. Whilst biblical sites were essential to the Palestinian hierotopy, they were not the only important cult *foci*, and to focus exclusively on them imposes a series of essentially post-medieval constructs upon a Byzantine devotional framework where monastic and non-biblical cults formed equally integral components of how that landscape was conceptualised and experienced.⁹⁹³

⁹⁹¹ See Jones 1997: 53-61. Jones also notes the importance of imperialistic rivalry between Britain, America, France and Germany to be associated with the discovery of biblical sites.

⁹⁹² Thus, the sites of Deir 'Ain 'Abata, Mount Nebo and the Baptism site are three notable components of the tourism strategy of Jordan see, The International Press Office, 'Touristic Sites', <http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/tourism.html> (accessed 25/11/12). See also the discussion of Kastron Mefa'a by Piccirillo 2004: 757-766. A more recent example, which may be added to this trend, is the site of Mar Elyas associated with the Prophet Elijah: see The Jordan Tourism Board, 'Religion and Faith' <http://www.visitjordan.com/default.aspx?tabid=175> (accessed 15th January 2011) and MacDonald 2010: 72-64. No evidence from the site itself, or literary descriptions in the Byzantine or early Islamic material, would confirm the identification of the site of Mar Elyas with the currently accepted association with the Prophet Elijah. Nonetheless, the excavation of the site was also accompanied by the construction of an infrastructure designed to accommodate modern visitors and pilgrims.

⁹⁹³ For the varied experience of Orthodox pilgrims, albeit after the tenth century, see the considerations in Jotischky 2000: 110-122 which indicates orthodox interest in non-biblical sites.

Biblically proscribed models of Levantine pilgrimage also contradict the complexity of the archaeological data: a series of excavations and reports supply a catalogue of sites which exhibit little substantive association with the biblically-defined itineraries familiar from textual description. The crypt of Hagios Elianos in Madaba, which reflects an architectural layout paralleled within other cult churches, is but one example of a church possibly connected to a now ephemeral, but essentially non-biblical, cult.⁹⁹⁴

Understanding how this highly stratified landscape of sites was negotiated by 600 will require further exploration of the diverse social backgrounds of particular pilgrim groups.⁹⁹⁵ In this respect, the recent tendency to homogenise and conflate the identities of pilgrims into a single category has cultivated the problematic tendency to assume that their perceptions and actual negotiations of the Palestinian landscape were characterised by a parallel uniformity.⁹⁹⁶

Theology also remains a key issue, approaches to pilgrims' texts which focus only upon topographic descriptions, rather than the distinctions between them in terms of purpose or authorial context, have served to foster an impression that attitudes towards the Holy Land were underpinned by a coherent theological framework.⁹⁹⁷ This position is tenuous. Recent studies of pilgrimage, which have focussed primarily on the corpus of writings which pre-date the seventh century, have noted the ambiguous position of writers prior to 600 regarding

⁹⁹⁴ See Séjourné 1897: 648- 657. The inscription of the crypt is dedicated to the unidentified Hagios Elianos. It is unclear, however, if the site was associated with him.

⁹⁹⁵ For a preliminary discussion of pilgrim identity in this period: see Maraval 2004: 105-136. The basic approaches to Late Antique pilgrimage often (unintentionally) reinforce this perception by the tendency to collate pilgrimage accounts together. Thus Kuelzer 2000 and Limor 2004 introduce an array of pilgrims of varying social origins without considering variations between particular social groups. Caution against the tendency to homogenise pilgrim responses is offered in Elsner 2005: 423-426. The varying responses of Monophysite and other non-Chalcedonian groups to pilgrimage to the region are discussed in Kofsky 1997 and Perrone 1998. Brief discussions of Armenian pilgrimage are offered in Stone 1983:173-178 and Stone 1986: 93-110. Jones 2007: 101-104, 116-117 surveys the symbolic importance of Jerusalem and the Church of the Anastasis in Armenia. Studies of pilgrimage have been less successful in facilitating debate about pilgrimage beyond the elite scope of the literary material.

⁹⁹⁶ Jotischky 2000 has noted the difference response from Orthodox pilgrimages to the Holy Land topography compared with pilgrims from the west. The emphasis on monastic establishments is also reflected in the earlier pilgrimages discussed in the *Life Theodore of Sykeon*: 50-51, 63. (ed. Festugiere 1970: 44-45, 52-53, tr. Elizabeth Dawes 1977). Stephen of Chennolakkos, spent a period in the monastery of Euthymios, *Synax CP*: 392. Lazaros of Galesion: 16-17 (ed. Delehay 1910 and tr. Greenfield 2000: 94-100), also spent time at the monasteries of Sabas and Euthymios.

⁹⁹⁷ This is not assisted by the tendency to enlist all cases of travel or writings about the Holy Land in studies of the region regardless of any distinctions between such accounts in terms of chronology or context.

the veneration of biblical sites and the absence of a clearly defined position about 'Palestine' as a landscape distinct from other sacred topographies.⁹⁹⁸

As Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony has observed, though early writings about the Palestinian holy land were often couched in theological terms, the majority of discussions responded to internal political affairs of the church and were only indirectly concerned with systematising a theology about the status of biblical sites.⁹⁹⁹ Indeed, prior to the seventh century the most active individuals engaged with the issue of cult veneration within the east Mediterranean are noted for their consistent emphasis on the veneration of localised cults (often linked to martyrs) as opposed to pilgrimage to Jerusalem.¹⁰⁰⁰

The attitudes of Palestinian or non-Chalcedonian groups and populations is less certain – partly due to a lack of evidence, but equally because our understanding of Late Antique pilgrimage convention and theology is often conditioned by the debates and concerns of writers drawn from the Patriarchal retinue and prominent urban clergy. This is a pattern borne out by the examples of the early medieval pilgrims whom we can presently identify, the majority of whom emanated from among the ranks of the senatorial elite or the clerical and monastic hierarchy.¹⁰⁰¹ How widely pilgrimage to Palestine was replicated among non-elite groups and the laity from the Aegean and Anatolia is also largely unknown despite widespread consensus regarding its frequency prior to 600 in recent studies. Social, temporal and economic factors must have constrained large sections of the population of these regions from undertaking this journey, but such issues (and indeed general socio-economic profiles of pilgrims) remain too poorly defined at present to enable further analysis.

⁹⁹⁸ Bitton-Ashkelony 200 and Hunt 1993.

⁹⁹⁹ Bitton-Ashkelony 2006: 184-206. Similar sentiments, which have also noted the conflicting views of individual writers, have been voiced in Wilken 1992: 102-125, Walker 1990 and Pullan 2005.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Bitton-Ashkelony 2006: 3-64. It should also be noted that attempts by writers such as Cyril of Jerusalem and Jerome to outline a position on the importance of the Holy Land largely failed to precipitate a sustained debate among later Byzantine writers or later attempts to systematise a theological position on the issue.

¹⁰⁰¹ See Hen 1998.

Such theological ambiguity about the importance of pilgrimage to the Holy Land did not always preclude cases of imperial or elite intervention at biblically associated sites: as the programmes of Constantine/Helena and Justinian and a stream of elite donors between the fourth and seventh centuries attest.¹⁰⁰² Yet the lack of a clearly defined position about the status of Jerusalem and the Palestinian hierotopy may have contributed to the creation of a conceptual framework of devotional practice, particularly in the eastern Church, which did not privilege or elevate travel to the Holy Land or biblically-associated sites above localised cult centres.¹⁰⁰³

Known travellers from the Byzantine Aegean and the medieval west to the Levant prior to the Arab conquest would caution against an understanding of pilgrimage as one determined by doctrinal absolutes. Peter the Iberian, Theodore of Sykeon and Licinius, Bishop of Tours provide three examples of pilgrimage to Jerusalem (rather than ‘Palestine’)

¹⁰⁰² For the programmes of Constantine and Helena at the Church of the Holy Golgotha/Anastasis: Hunt 1997: 405-442, Krautheimer 1967: 117-140, Krautheimer 1986: 59-67 and Wilkinson 1993: 23-27. The main study of the Church of the Nativity is that of Harvey 1935, Richmond 1937: 63-66 and Richmond 1937b: 67-72. For a critique of Justinian’s supposed interventions at the Church of the Nativity, which appear to have little historical basis, see Pickett 2011. Further imperial foundations include those of Eudoxia in the cathedral church of Gaza; Mark of the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 75 (ed. and tr. Gregoire and Kugener, 1930: 73-74). A translation of the relevant passage is reproduced in Mango 1972: 30-32. The Church of the Theotokos of Mount Gerazim is attributed to Emperor Zeno: see Prokopios, *On Buildings*, V. 7. 1-17. (ed. and tr. Dewing 1940: 349-351). This report is supported in John Malalas *Chronographia* 9. 6-9.45 (ed. Thurn 1997: 306-307, tr. Jeffreys, Jeffreys and Scott 1986: 212-213) and in the *Chronicon Paschale* (ed. Dindorf 1832: 604, tr. Whitby and Whitby 1990: 94-96) which both report that the church was dedicated by Zeno after a Samaritan revolt. Archaeological studies of the church are offered in Magen 1990: 333-342, Magen 1993: 83-89 and Schneider 1951. The use of literary sources to frame the chronology of the site offers no material evidence to verify the claims of the textual reports. For Justinian: Prokopios, *On Buildings* V. 8.1-9, (ed. and tr. Dewing 1940: 255, 257). See Forsyth 1968: 1-19 and Forsyth and Weitzmann 1970 for discussions of the monastic complex at Sinai. For an additional study that focuses on recent archaeological finds on the summit: see Kalopissi-Verti and Panayotidi 2010: 72-105. The classic study of pilgrimage to Sinai is that of Coleman and Elsner 1994: 73-89. The compilation of sources relating to the monastery, including its construction, is offered in Caner 2010. More minor episodes of Justinian’s building programmes in Palestine are reported in Prokopios, *On Buildings*, V. 9.1-19, (ed. and tr. Dewing 1940: 357-359). Maurice’s interventions at the Tomb of the Theotokos, possibly the construction of the upper church, are less certain. The report only survives in the later commemorations of the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34): 23rd October (ed. Garitte 1958: 99). An archaeological/architectural study is offered in Baggatti, Piccirillo and Prodomo 1975. This study, which was reliant on literary accounts for the Byzantine phases of the site, could not verify the association with Emperor Maurice mentioned in the Georgian Lectionary or the Sinai Georgian Menaion.

¹⁰⁰³ See note 1000, for Bitton-Askhelony’s discussion of the Patristic view of localised pilgrimage. Frank 1993: 267-274 similarly surveys the ambivalent attitude of Frankish writers to the geographical space of the Holy Land. A number of studies have pointed to the importance of localised cult centres in both the Byzantine East and the early medieval West which provide more explicit evidence for pilgrimage and veneration in this period. On Egypt: see Papconstantinou 2001: 232-233 for discussion of localised practices. On localised pilgrimage in Gaul, especially to the Tomb of St Martin, see Van Dam 1993. Within Italy, see the overview in Christie 2007: 157-164 and the earlier study based on Rome in Fiocchi Nicolai 1995 and Fiocchi Nicolai 2000.

which reflect the complexity of attitudes to the region within individual social and temporal contexts.¹⁰⁰⁴

Whether journeys such as Theodore's or Licinius' represent normative social practice for pilgrimage is, however, debatable. Given that much of the evidence for pilgrimage from the Byzantine Aegean to Jerusalem derives from hagiography, issues of biographical modelling and *mimesis* caution against straightforward statistical approaches to these sources.¹⁰⁰⁵

Whilst these examples may point to a more widespread practice and more extensive numbers of pilgrims prior to 600 the evidence for them within Palestine is markedly ephemeral. The simple existence of monumental pilgrimage churches in the Levant are surely an insufficient basis upon which to hypothesise estimations of external exchange and, in any case, offer no concrete solutions to these issues. None of the major sites now survive in their original form and cannot yield sufficient evidence about donors or lay/clerical demographics that are required to identify the origins of individual pilgrim groups.

A particular characteristic of Greek hagiographical descriptions is the apparent disregard for the physical topography of holy sites in Palestine in contrast to the concurrent writings produced in the Latin west which offer more meticulous perspectives. Cases of pilgrimage are noted, but are generally characterised by their incidental nature and indifference to the experiences of their protagonists at these sites. In the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, Theodore's sojourn to the region is restricted to two terse chapters in his hagiography and relates little of his responses to these sites.¹⁰⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*: 50-51, 63. (ed. Festugiere, 1970: 44-45, 52-53, tr. Dawes and Baynes 1977: 124-126, 132). On Peter the Iberian's journey: John Rufus, *Life of Peter the Iberian*, 104, 118 (ed. and tr. Horn and Fenix 2008: 159, 171-173). On Licinius: see Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 2.39 (ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison 1951: 89, tr. Thorpe 1974: 154-155).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Krueger 2004: 1-32.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 50-51, 63 (ed. Festugiere, 1970: 44-45, 53, tr. Dawes and Baynes 1977: 124-126, 132).

Theodore's subsequent visits to the River Jordan and a number of monastic establishments in the desert, however, indicate the complexity of Byzantine responses to the sacred landscape of the region beyond biblical itineraries.¹⁰⁰⁷ Several of Theodore's journeys were made to monastic establishments and were motivated by his desire to hone his ascetical skills in the monasteries of Mar Sabas and Choziba.¹⁰⁰⁸

This emphasis upon monasteries as central topographic points within the Palestinian hierotopy compliments the later accounts of journeys to the region of the eighth to tenth centuries where individuals were similarly drawn to the region for the purposes of ascetic training.¹⁰⁰⁹

Rather than vivid description of the Palestinian sacroscape, what emerges within the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* is the repeated emphasis upon Theodore's role as a conduit of blessing and healing within his immediate social landscape.¹⁰¹⁰ Theodore's hagiography is not exceptional in this respect but is notable for being populated by a number of afflicted rural and urban figures who emerge throughout his life to seek his intercession.¹⁰¹¹

Importantly, it is these individuals, rather than the Palestinian Holy Land, which texts place at the centre of the devotional landscapes of localised communities. Theodore's example is not unique, but compliments a much broader array of Byzantine attitudes which had emerged prior to the seventh century which consistently advocate the mimetic role of martyrs, monks and holy persons as figures engaged within the perpetuation of Christian

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 24, 63 (ed. Festugiere 1970: 20, 53, tr. Dawes and Baynes 1977: 104-105, 132).

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 63 (ed. Festugiere 1970, tr. Dawes and Baunes 1977: 132).

¹⁰⁰⁹ This point has been observed by Jotitschky 2000: 113-114 who has noted the importance placed on monastic foundations in the later reports of Daniel the Abbot and John Phokas. Hunt 1993 has also noted the importance of monastic foundations to western pilgrims.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 33-50 (ed. Festugiere 1970: 29-44, tr. Dawes and Baynes 1977).

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid*, 65, 67 and 72 to name three examples of a common occurrence in the *Life* (ed. Festugiere 1970: 29-44, tr. Dawes and Baynes 1977: 108-120). The lives of Sabas and Euthymios narrate similar cases where their intercession is sought by communities and individuals within Palestine itself. Sabas, as his life relates, was frequently visited by the inhabitants of Madaba for the spiritual benefits he was believed to confer: *Life of Sabas*, 136-136.5 (ed. Schwartz 1939: 136-136.5, tr. Price 1991: 145). Similar interactions are reported in the *Life of Euthymios* 22.12-23.3 (ed. Schwartz 1939: 22.12-23, tr. Price 1991: 18).

salvation beyond biblical figures.¹⁰¹² Acknowledging these qualifications is crucial to an analysis of Byzantine and post-Byzantine pilgrimage in Palestine for three key reasons.

Firstly, whilst travel to the Holy Land from the Aegean was conceivable, Byzantine attitudes to its status were neither universally defined nor systematically codified by the early seventh century. Conversely, that the recognition of the intermediary role of relics and holy men by 600 had contributed to the creation of a devotional framework which effectively negated its centrality – at least conceptually – as a pilgrimage destination. This attitude may not have been universal, as the later Latin accounts of the post-Roman west, which present a more concerted interest in the physical topography of biblical sites, testify.¹⁰¹³ Nonetheless, the absence of a consensus about the role of Palestinian pilgrimage prior to the seventh-century casts doubt on the perceived ubiquity of such pilgrim exchange and indicates that the involvement of Aegean/Anatolian pilgrims in underpinning the Palestinian cult landscape is subjected to more critical review.

Secondly, recognition of the importance of non-biblical figures within this framework suggests that the modern emphasis on the biblical landscape of Palestine, which reflects many of our own post-Reformation priorities, is reconsidered and substantially nuanced.

Thirdly, this means that we require an alternative understanding of Christian pilgrimage in Palestine (Byzantine and early Islamic) which accommodates the co-existence of a number of sites known to have existed beyond the exegetical scope of the surviving (mostly western) literary sources: sites and relics which must have been accompanied by localised traditions which no longer survive. The monastic church of Sergios and Bakkhos in

¹⁰¹² The bibliography of this subject is immense and can only be offered here in impressionistic terms. The following citations are a selection of the general consensus on the rise of the cult of saints: Ashbrook-Harvey 1990, Brown 1971, Brown 1981: 69-105, Brown 1995, Krueger 2004: 27-32 and Patlagean 1968. A challenge to the universal acceptance of the cult of saints by the sixth century is offered in Dal Santo 2012. Whilst I accept Dal Santo's qualifications, the ubiquity of reliquaries in Palestinian church space and the incorporation of burials and tombs into church structures throughout the Levant, would indicate that these issues were seemingly less pertinent among the communities addressed in this study.

¹⁰¹³ These are, the *Piacenza Pilgrim* (ed. Geyer 1965, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 129-151), Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis* (ed. Meehan 1958, tr. 167-206), Huneberg, *Life of Willibald* (ed. Tobler 1874, tr. Talbot 1994) and Bernard the Monk (ed. Tobler 1874, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 261-269).

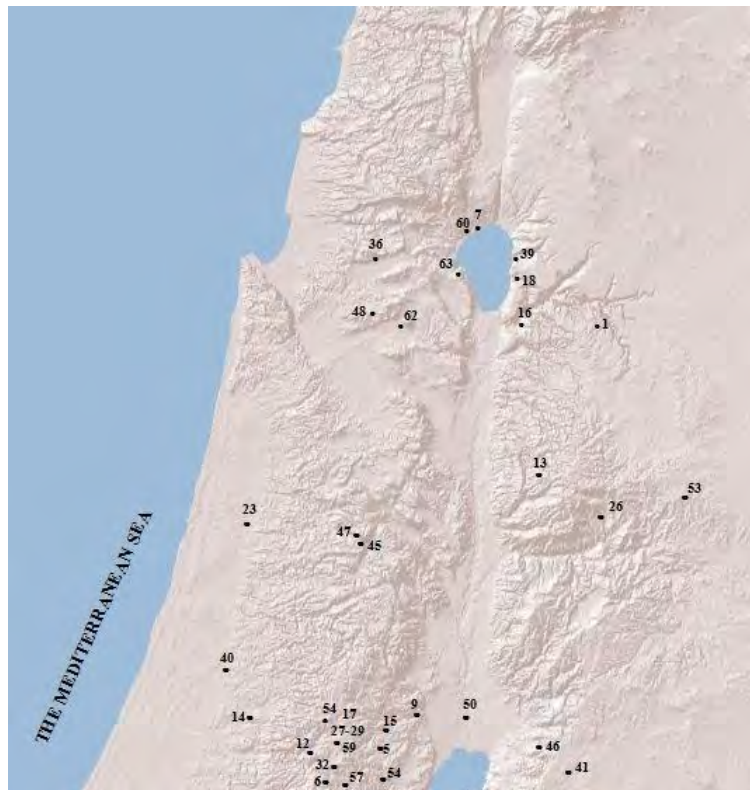


Fig.5.1 Map of cult sites c.600 (not including monasteries or churches with reliquary boxes beneath the altar).The map does not depict the Monastery of the Theotokos which was occupied in this period.
©Reynolds 2013

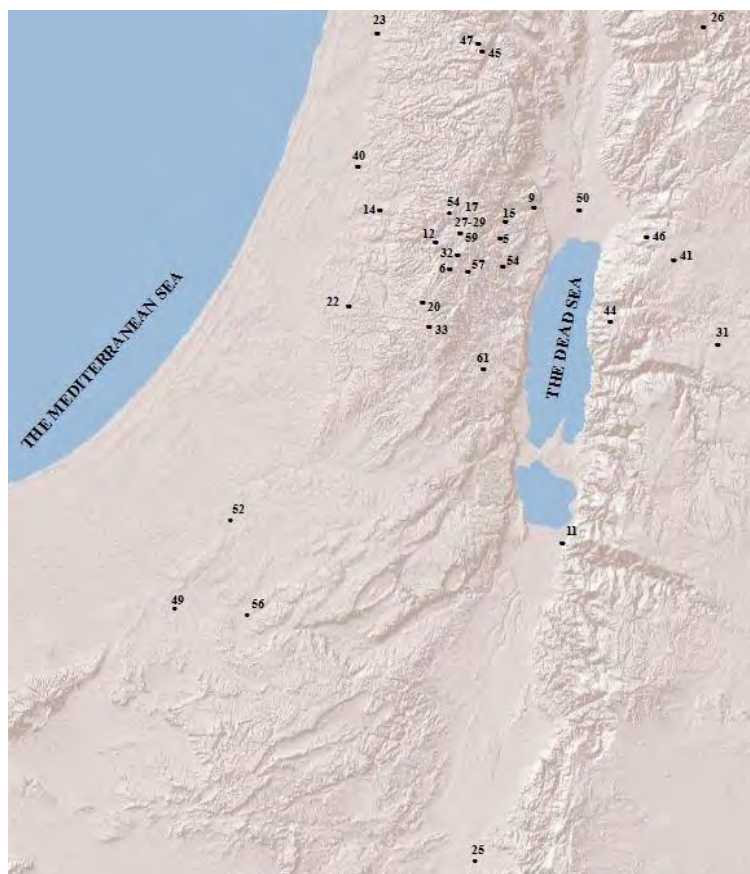




Fig.5.2 Jarash, the Cathedral Church, Fountain Court and Church of Hagios Theodoros complex.
© APAAME 2013, APAAME_20130428_REB-0129.jpg



Fig.5.3 Jarash, the Fountain Court.
© Reynolds 2010



Fig.5.4 Umm Qays, the Mausoleum Church, aerial view.
© APAAME 1998, APAAME_19980516_DLK-0046.tif



Fig.5.5 Umm Qays, the Mausoleum Church, crypt beneath the apse. The central tomb is located beneath the arch with the semi-circular piers, encouraging a fluid movement around this central space. Originally the piers supported the chancel space of the upper church.
© Reynolds 2012

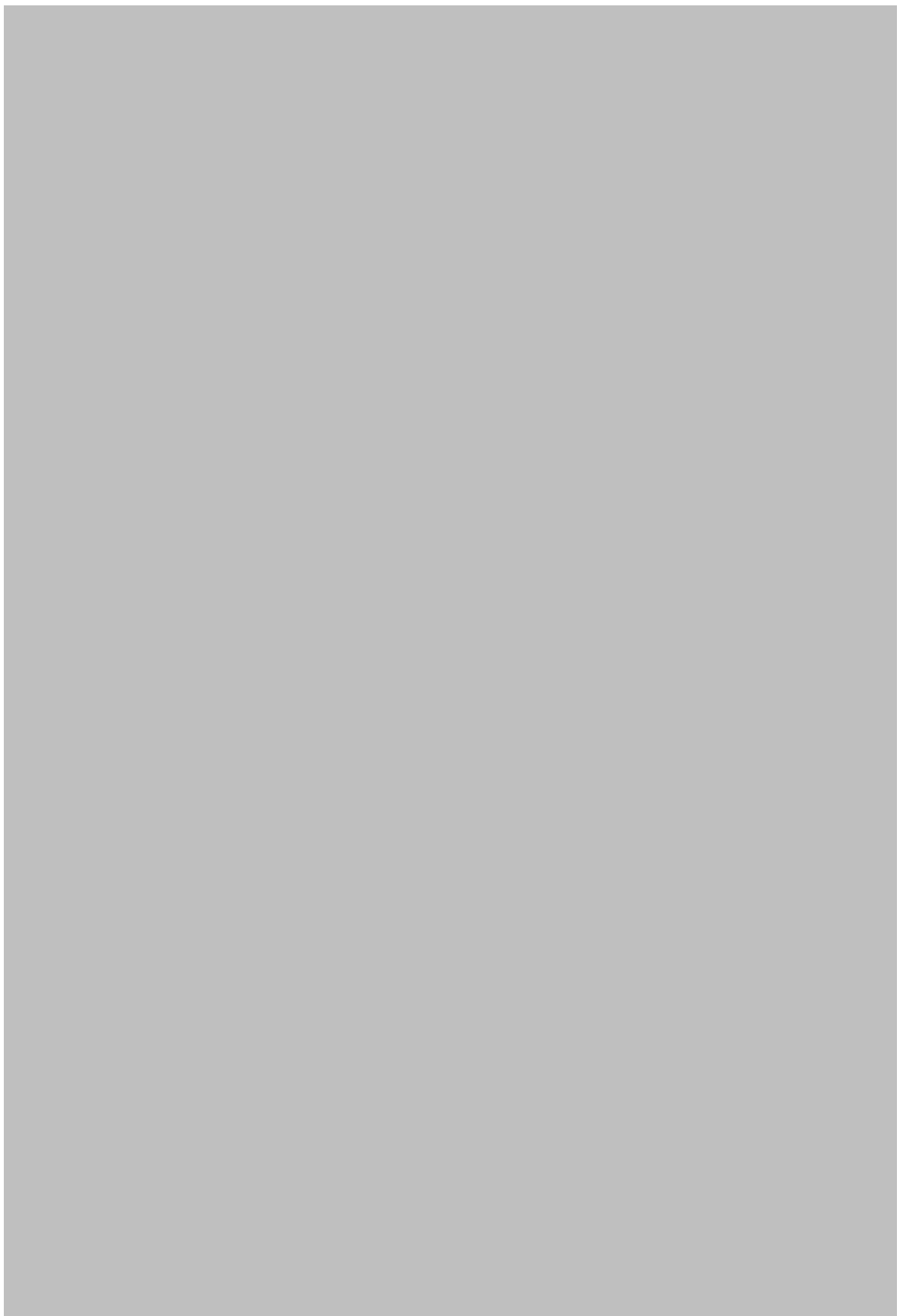


Fig.5.6 Horvat Hesheq, Church of Hagios Giorgos, apse. The altar platform and reliquary niche can be seen in the centre of the apse.
© Rotem Hoffman 2010



Fig.5.7 Deir 'Ain 'Abata, cave entrance in the north aisle.
© Alan Aplin 2010. Creative Commons Licence 3.0



Fig 5.8 Madaba, the church of Hagios Lot on the Madaba mosaic map.
© Reynolds 2010



Fig. 5.9 Mar Elyas, the cave and chancel space of the original church (facing East).
© Reynolds 2012



Fig.5.10 Mar Elyas, hypogeum entrance.
© Reynolds 2012



Fig.5.11 Horvat Qasra, the cave church.
© Tsafir 1989



Fig.5.12 Mar Elyas, aerial view showing the relationship between the main basilica and the hypogeum.
© APAAME 2006, Apaame_20060911_dlk-0139.Jpg

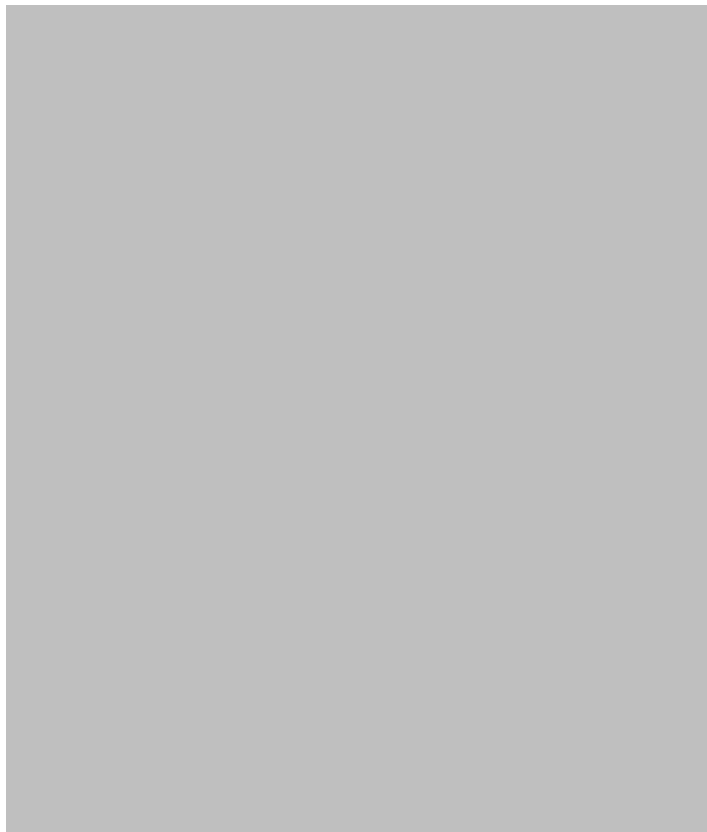


Fig.5.13 Stairway leading into the crypt of the North Church, Rehovot-in-the-Negev.
© Tsafir 1988



Fig.5.14 Madaba, Church of the Theotokos and Church of Hagios Elias and Crypt of Elianos.
© APAAME 2010: APAAME_20100516_DLK-0150.dng



Fig.5.15 Madaba, Crypt of Hagios Elianos beneath the Church of Hagios Elias.
© Reynolds 2012



Fig.5.16 Madaba, Crypt of the Hagios Elianos.
Entrance and stairway leading to upper church of Hagios Elias.
© Rozwadowski 2010

Nessana offers an example of a site where inscriptions and a papyri fragment demonstrates its association with Sergios and a festival dedicated in his honour.¹⁰¹⁴ It is not, however, an isolated example: the practice of relic veneration or the incorporation of *loca sancta* into church space was a fairly common social convention by 600 and involved a diverse network of sites throughout Palestine and the Transjordan (Fig. 5.1).

The Mausoleum Church at Umm Qays and a church in Jarash which formed the focal point of a festival by the fourth century,¹⁰¹⁵ are two, though not isolated, examples of the origins of this trend in the late fourth century in urban contexts (Fig 5.2-5.5).¹⁰¹⁶

The process continued to gather momentum throughout the fifth, sixth and early seventh centuries; both within these particular urban contexts and in other regions.¹⁰¹⁷ These earliest phases of elite investment in the Christian hierotopy focussed predominantly upon biblically associated sites with excavations at the Kathisma, Kursi, Jabal Harūn all proposing fifth century foundation dates for these churches.¹⁰¹⁸

¹⁰¹⁴ *P. Colt* 50 and *P. Colt* 79: lines 56-57.

¹⁰¹⁵ The church is traditionally identified as that of the Fountain Court which formed part of the integrated Cathedral/Hagios Theodoros complex. Steps and vaulting constructed around the fountain in the fifth century, which effectively attached the fountain structure to the apse of the Cathedral Church, may confirm this identification: see Crowfoot 1938: 186. This festival, reported by Epiphanius of Salamis, occurred on the 6th January which Epiphanius associates as the festival of the Epiphany and that of the miracle of the Wedding Feast of Cana. Epiphanius identifies a number of holy springs whose waters turned to wine on this feast day Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*: 51.30.1-2 (*PG* 41: 939-942, tr. Amidon 1990: 187): 'so it is that in many places even today this occurs because of the miracle which occurred then as a sign to the unbelievers, as in many places springs and rivers attest which turn into wine. An example is the spring of the city of Cybria in Caria, at the very hour when the waiters drew the water and he said "Give it to the head steward" (Jn. 2.8). The spring of Gerasa in Arabia offers the same evidence. <For we> ourselves have drunk from the spring in Cibrya, and our brothers from the spring in Gerasa, which is in the martyrs shrine.' Coins from the recent excavations at the Cathedral would appear to support the existence of a church at this site prior to 378: see Jäggi, Meier, Brenk and Kehrberg 1997: 314.

¹⁰¹⁶ Al-Daire 2001: 553-560, Jäggi 1997: 311-320 and Jäggi 1998: 435-432. Earlier studies of Gerasa offered in Crowfoot 1932 and Crowfoot 1929. The full study of the churches of Jarash appears in Crowfoot 1938: 201-225. Descriptions of both sites are reproduced in MacDonald 2010: 48-51, 61-66. The church is also discussed in Chambers 2009: 187-192.

¹⁰¹⁷ At Jarash, thirteen churches have been identified and published, the latest of which is the Bishop Genesios church dated to 611: Crowfoot 1938: 249. For a discussion of the excavated churches see Crowfoot 1938. A further Octagonal church, located outside of the surviving urban core, has also been identified but has not been published. On the churches of Umm Qays see Al Daire, Vriezen 1992, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guineé 2001: 543- 545 2001 and Weber 1988. Rehovot-in-the-Negev's northern church was also dated to the fifth century by its excavators see Tsafir 1988a: 26.

¹⁰¹⁸ For the Kathisma, and its association with the cult of the Virgin, see Avner 2011: 9-29. For discussions of the Kathisma's importance to Christians and Muslims see Avner 2006/7. For Kursi see Tzaferis 1983: 3, 43-47. The identification of Jabal Harūn as the burial place of Aaron is discussed in Frösén and Miettunen 2008: 10-13. The presence of inscriptions at the site would appear to support this identification, see Frösén, Sironen and

These were accompanied, however, by a profusion of site foundations after 400, such as Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Horvat Berachot, which incorporated crypts and relics, where excavation has produced little evidence that would link them to the biblical landscape familiarised by literary descriptions of the region.¹⁰¹⁹

After 500, this trend also appears steadily within rural or quasi-urban contexts at sites and landmarks which exhibit no direct association with established biblical hierotopies.¹⁰²⁰ Excavations at a number of churches also suggest that the incorporation of relics beneath altars was increasing commonplace by the sixth century; even among churches that yield no distinguishing architectural features to indicate that such relics were placed to facilitate physical interaction among lay devotees (Fig. 5.6).¹⁰²¹

These processes frequently involved the re-appropriation of existing topographical landmarks (whether natural or monumental) and the use of pre-existing tombs. The basilica of Hagios Lot at Deir 'Ain 'Abata was structured to incorporate a natural cave accessed through the north aisle (Fig. 5.7).¹⁰²² In this example, the church's association with the Prophet Lot is confirmed by a series of pilgrim votives and donor inscriptions which invoke his intercession.¹⁰²³ A representation of the church, and the mountain into which it is built,

Fiema 2008: 274, inscription 1. For a discussion of the Petra papyri which mention the site see page 88 of this study.

¹⁰¹⁹ Rehovot-in-the-Negev's North Church was probably a mid-fifth century construction, see Tsafrir 1988a: 26. For Horvat Berachot see Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979: 291-323.

¹⁰²⁰ This has not been fully explored on an intra-regional level. Nonetheless, a series of churches of this nature have been explored in the Negev by Margalit 1990: 321-334 with some qualifications to Margalit's hypothesis proposed by Patrich 2005: 341-393. A series of churches incorporating caves and tombs were explored in Di Segni 2006/2007 all of which dated to the sixth and sixth centuries. A fifth or early-sixth century dates for the churches in Pella, Jarash, Umm Qays and Tiberias are also generally proposed by archaeologists: Hirschfeld 2004: 92, Kraeling 1938: 241-261, McNicoll *et al* 1992: 147-149 and Weber 1998: 445.

¹⁰²¹ The corpus of such sites are too numerous to discuss here. General case studies, which represent the broader corpus, may be found in Horvat Hesheq (see Aviam 1993: 58-59) and the earlier discussion in Aviam 1990: 359-360. The excavator reports that this reliquary contained a hole through which oil could be passed. This convention is also known from similar arrangements at Khirbet Beit Sila and the Church of Mount Berenike in Tiberias, see Batz 2002 and Hirschfeld 2004b: 130. Further examples of reliquaries are also known from the East Church of Pella, see Smith 1992: 158-159. The churches of Hagios Giorgos and Hagios Petros in Jarash similarly contained reliquaries, see Crowfoot 1938: 183, 245-246 as did the churches of Hagios Basilios in Rihab: see Piccirillo 1981b: 65 and Piccirillo 1993c: 316. Bagatti 1971: 252-253 presents a list of other churches known by the 1970s.

¹⁰²² Politis 2011: 11-21.

¹⁰²³ *Ibid*: 4-5.

also appears in the depiction of the region on the sixth-century Madaba mosaic map (Fig. 5.8).¹⁰²⁴ The earliest church at Mar Elyas, dated to the early sixth century, also appears to have utilised a natural cave and may find a tentative parallel in the Hagios Giorgos church in Rihab (dated 530) and the former cave-church of Khirbat Qana (Fig. 5.9- 5.10).¹⁰²⁵

At the churches of Horvath Qasra, Horvat Midras and Horvat Hani, the incorporation of rock-cut tombs dated to the Second Temple Period (here roughly taken as 530 BCE to 70 CE) provide three examples of a widespread practice which may also have included the sites of Bayt ‘Anūn, ‘Ein Karem and Bayt Jala (Fig. 5.11).¹⁰²⁶

At Mar Elyas, the secondary church (possibly dated either to the late-sixth or early-seventh century) was also constructed over a subterranean crypt which may be identified as a pre-existing (but undated) hypogeum (Fig. 5.12).¹⁰²⁷ Whilst its role as a focal point of veneration is uncertain, the construction of a connecting entrance chamber between the basilica and the hypogeum would support its intentional incorporation into the Mar Elyas

¹⁰²⁴ Politis 1999: 225-227.

¹⁰²⁵ Only the site of Khirbat Qana has been published in a preliminary form, see Edwards 2002: 101-132. The church of Hagios Giorgos has never been fully published and the presence of a cave and surrounding cist burials are based purely on my own observations at the site during a visit made in May 2012. The cist tombs located in a chamber opposite the basilica entrance are probably to be identified as Christian judging by the appearance of cross inscribed onto the cover stone. It is uncertain if the graves (and grave covers) represent a phase contemporary with the church and I remain agnostic as to their overall relationship to the basilica. However, the construction of a staircase leading into the cave (accessed from the north of the basilica) and to a series of tombs constructed in a cave neighbouring the main ‘cave-church’ would imply that they were intentionally incorporated into the complex. The upper church, dedicated to Hagios Giorgos was constructed above a natural cave that may have been artificially extended at one phase of its occupation. The general shape of the underground cave would appear to have been fashioned to form an apse shape: again observations that must remain tentative. More certain, however, is the dating of the church which may now be assigned to 530, see Blumell and Cianca 2008: 5. Blumell and Cianca’s discussions convincingly refute the claim made by the excavators that this site represents the world’s earliest church: a claim which has received widespread media coverage:

‘The Oldest Church’, *Guardian* (Manchester), June 11 2008,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/gallery/2008/jun/11/religion.archaeology?picture=334758825#/?picture=334758822&index=7> (accessed 10.10.12).

¹⁰²⁶ Discussion of Horvat Qasra in Di Segni 2006/7: 388-389, Di Segni and Patrich 1990: 141-154 and Kloner 1990: 129-130. For ‘Ein Kārem see Saller 1946. For Bayt ‘Anūn see Magen 1990, Magen and Baruch 1997 and Tzaferis 1997: 355-358. The site of Horvat Midras is discussed in Ganor, Klein, Avner and Zissu 2012. The crypt of Bayt ‘Anūn is discussed in Magen 1990b: 282-284. Its status as a cult site is unclear from the evidence presented in the publication. Nonetheless, it seems to fit a general rural pattern visible in the sixth century of constructing churches over existing tombs. On Bayt Jala see Abel 1923:261-272 and Abel 1924: 583-604. On this phenomenon see Di Segni 2006/7: 381-401.

¹⁰²⁷ For a description of the site see Macdonald 2010: 78-80.

complex and offers a further example of a familiar spatial arrangement at other cult sites in the region.

The incorporation of tombs and reliquaries presents a further example of the replication of this practice in other regional contexts within Palestine and the Transjordan. At Horvat Berachot, the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev and the Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays, access to tombs/relics was facilitated through the construction of a subterranean crypt with stairways constructed to the north and south of the apse to enable the fluid movement of devotees around the relic or centrally placed tomb (Fig. 5.4, 5.5, 5.13).¹⁰²⁸ The crypt of the Hagios Elianos church at Madaba, possibly a late sixth-century construction, the North East Church of Hippos, Horvat Midras and the church of Horvat Hanot (dated 594/609) may provide further, as yet poorly understood, examples of this practice (Fig. 5.14, 5.15, 5.16).¹⁰²⁹ In the Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays, contact with the burial was achieved by a defined course which enabled supplicants to move around the piers which supported the upper church and then exit via the entrance stair way (Fig. 5.4).¹⁰³⁰ The burial was subsequently accompanied by the construction of a series of catacombs situated beneath the main church (Fig. 5.5).

¹⁰²⁸ For Horvat Berachot see Tsafir and Hirschfeld 1979: 310-319. For the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev see Tzaferis 1988a: 50-59 and Umm Qays see Al-Daire 2001.

¹⁰²⁹ This church, excavated in the 1890s, has never been fully published. For a preliminary discussion, mostly architectural in focus, see Séjourné 1897: 648-656. The inscriptions, which mention the Bishops Sergios and Leontios (active between the 570s and 610) would imply a late-sixth or early-seventh century date for the foundation or refurbishment of the church, see Séjourné 1897: 490-491. A brief description is available in MacDonald 2010:141-143. The upper church is now destroyed but the crypt was accessed via a stairway (now inaccessible to modern visitors). Discussions of excavations conducted in the vicinity of the church are offered in Piccirillo 1994: 381-404. Regarding the South-West Church of Hippos/Sussita, see Bordmann 2005: 19-20 and Radziekowska 2005: 79. A discussion of Horvat Midras, which incorporated a subterranean tomb accessed from a chamber behind the apse, is offered in Ganor, Klein, Avner and Zissu 2012.

¹⁰³⁰ See the discussion in Al-Daire 2001: 553.



Fig.5.17 Umm Qays, apse of the secondary 'Umayyad chapel' in the Octagonal Terrace Church. The cavity to the south was a reliquary burial inserted into the chancel space.
© Reynolds 2012



Fig.5.18 Umm Qays, ambulatory in the Octagonal Church. The impression in the centre is a burial which appears to have been overlain by an altar table. The space appears to have been partitioned through the use of bema screens of which only the joists survive.
© Reynolds 2012

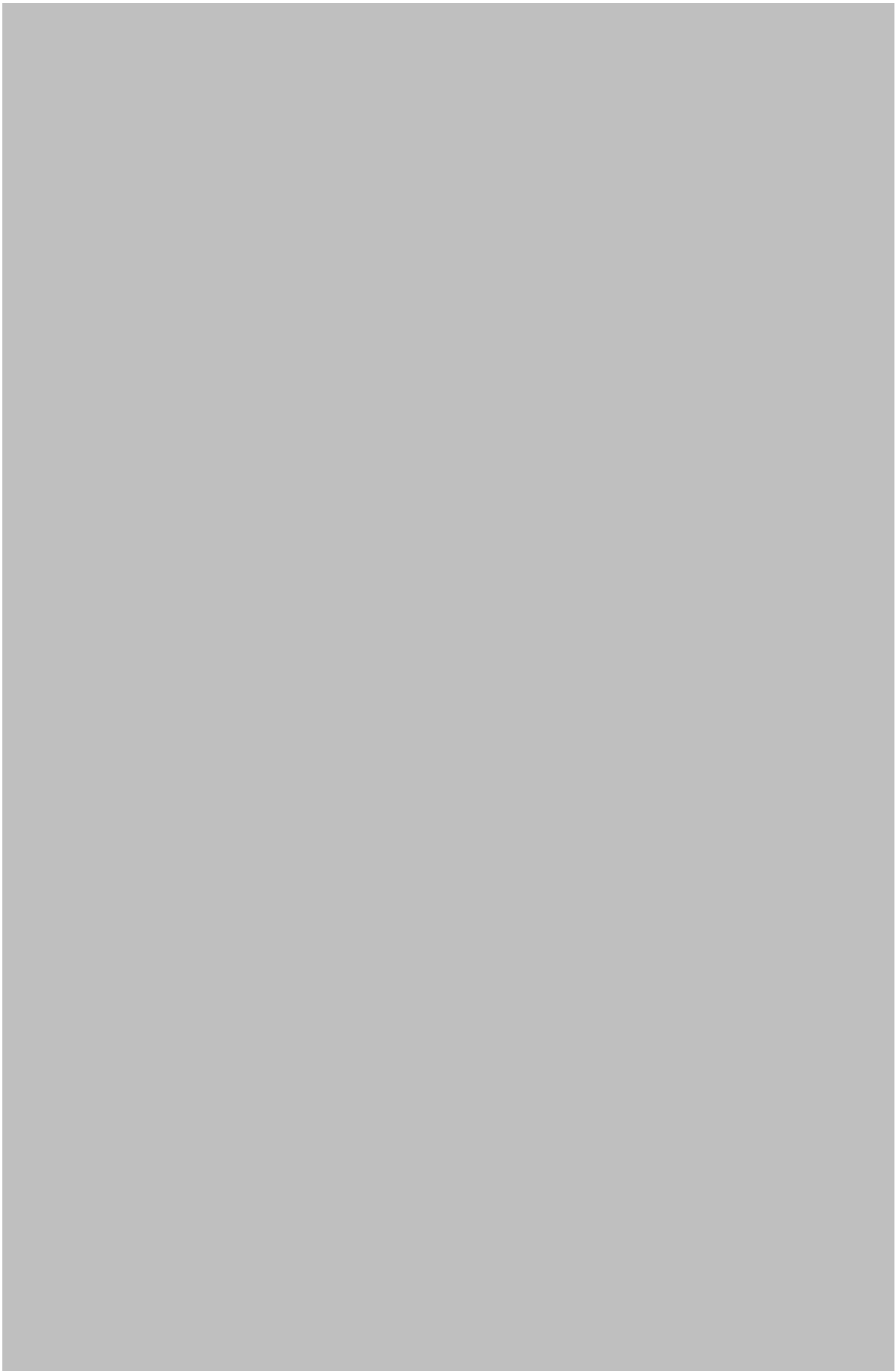


Fig.5.19 Kastron Mefa'a, the 'Stylite Church', aerial view facing northwest.
© APAAME 2004, APAAME_20040531_DLK-0065.tif

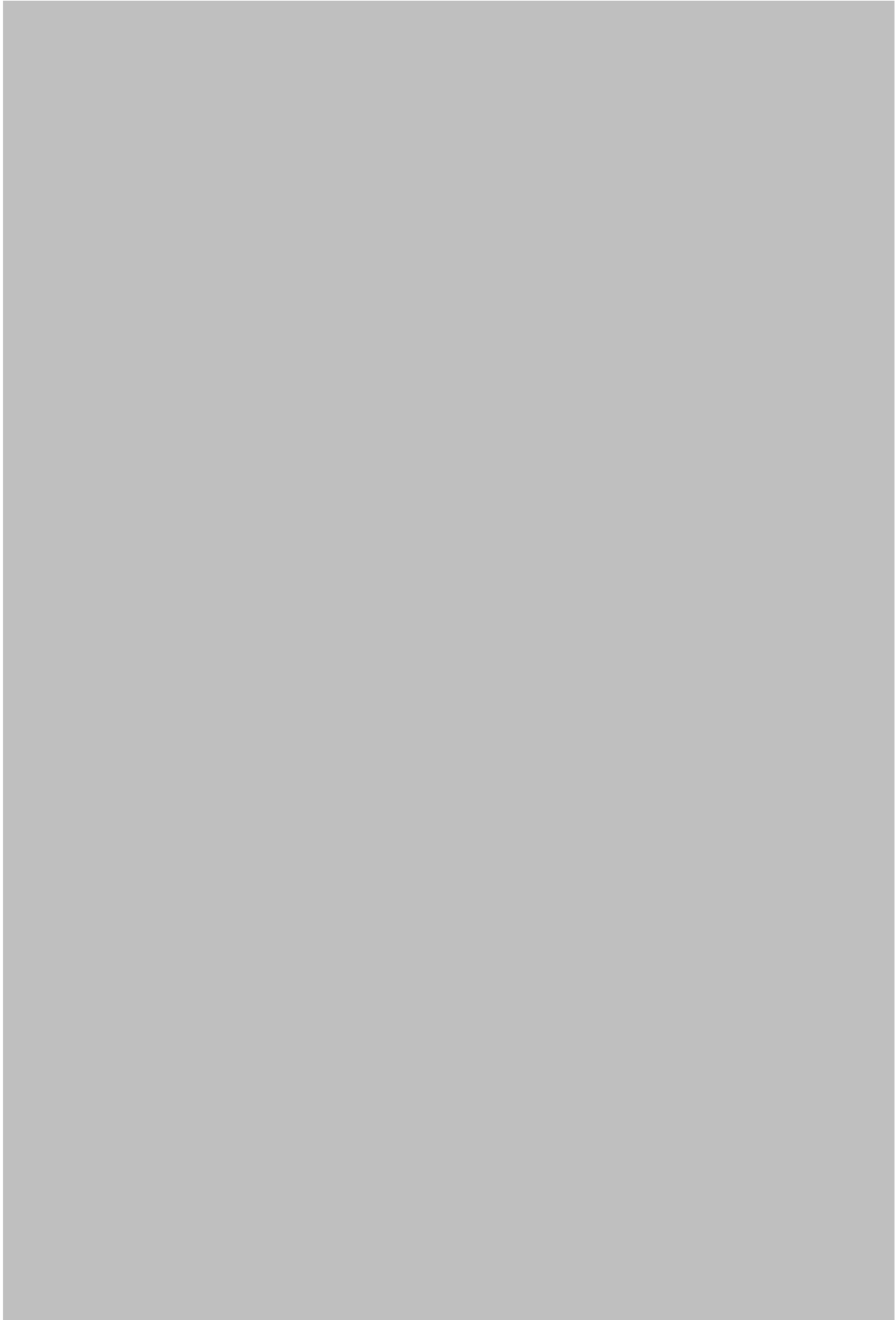


Fig.5.20 Kastron Mefa'a, the 'Stylite Church', aerial view facing north.
© APAAME 2004, APAAME_20040531_DLK-0067.tif



Fig.5.21 Kastron Mefa'a, the 'Stylite Church', central nave with cist burial.
© Reynolds 2012



Fig.5.22 Kastron Mefa'a, the 'Stylite Church', general view of site.
© Reynolds 2012



Fig.5.23 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of Hagios Stephanos. The representation of Kastron Mefa'a in Hagios Stephanos dated 718. The Tower Church is possibly the complex depicted at the bottom of the panel (the church with hanging lanterns).
© Reynolds 2012

This pattern is replicated in Umm Qays in the Octagonal Terrace Church, where the positioning of a grave within the central space of the octagonal bema – beneath an altar and accompanied by several reliquary boxes within the church – would appear to support an intercessory function rather than its identification as a lay burial (Fig 5.17-5.18).¹⁰³¹ A comparative example is known in the ‘Stylite Church’ at Kastron Mefa’a situated around a kilometre outside of the walled settlement.¹⁰³² The results of its excavation have yet to be fully published, although aerial photographs reveal a self-contained walled complex which incorporated a basilical church and a tower (Fig. 5.19-5.20). It is uncertain if the tower’s association with a stylite has a basis in Byzantine and post-Byzantine traditions concerning the site or if it represents a modern misidentification,¹⁰³³ but the insertion of a burial into the central nave of the church – accompanied by reliquary boxes – proposes a cult function (Fig. 5.21-5.22).¹⁰³⁴ If the Tower Church complex is to be identified with the structure depicted on the image of Kastron Mefa’a in the mosaic scheme of the Church of Hagios Stephanos (dated 718) and the Church of the Lions, this image would endorse a more central role of this church into local cult life than has been recognised (Fig. 5.23).¹⁰³⁵

This is not a complete profile of the corpus but it is broadly representative of a number of sites which appear to have emerged in rural contexts by 600 away from more familiar biblical itineraries. All of these examples conform closely to existing architectural

¹⁰³¹ See Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001:543- 545 who consider the tomb the focal point of the church.

¹⁰³² The results of excavation have yet to be published beyond a preliminary discussion in Piccirillo 1993a: 1493. Piccirillo dates the church to the early sixth century and advocates an abandonment date in the ninth around the same period as the church of Hagios Stephanos. The lack of published diagnostic material makes this dating difficult to determine either way and for the purposes of this present discussion, cannot be avoided.

¹⁰³³ Piccirillo 1994a: 13-35 surveys the early modern legends associated with the site. See Macdonald 2010: 168-171.

¹⁰³⁴ I concede that subsequent analysis/publication of the church may discredit this hypothesis. Only further research into burial practice within churches in Syria-Palestine will offer further clarification of this issue.

¹⁰³⁵ The lack of a detailed published discussion about this site restricts a more comprehensive analysis beyond these preliminary points. A slightly different interpretation is offered in De Vries 2000: plate 2.1 who identifies the church as that of Hagios Stephanos (the church in which the image appears). This is possible, although the convention for representing the town of Kastron Mefa’a with a pillar and a number of churches appears in the earlier scheme of the Church of the Lions dated to 574/589, at least 129 years before the church of Hagios Stephanos was constructed, see Piccirillo 1992: 222.

prototypes of *loca sancta* through their incorporation of pre-existing natural or monumental features which characterises many of the larger sites situated in Bethlehem, Nazareth or individual churches such as the Kathisma.¹⁰³⁶

The presence of inscriptions at a number of these sites adds weight to the impression that a number of these rural sites were associated with relics or tombs offering intercessory abilities by their contemporaries. Hagios Lot, at Deir 'Ain 'Abata, provides one example where a series of inscriptions in Arabic and Greek were inscribed onto a plaster layer on the south wall of the cave entrance (Fig. 5.24).¹⁰³⁷ The practice is also known from a series of Greek, Arabic and Syriac votives (not all published) from the cave church of Horvat Qasra¹⁰³⁸ with other examples emerging from 'Peter's House' in Capernaum, Mar Theoktisos, Choziba and from an unidentified cave in Bethany (Fig.5. 25-5.26).¹⁰³⁹

Much of our general understanding of pilgrim inscriptions emerges from sites which incorporated natural geological features. Rock formations situated along pilgrims' routes are a common example of this phenomenon, with the Wadi Hajjaj in the Sinai Peninsula providing one well-surveyed example.¹⁰⁴⁰

¹⁰³⁶ On the Church of the Nativity see Harvey 1935. The Church of the Annunciation at Nazareth see Bagatti 1969. Dark 2012 offers some discussion of natural cave formations beneath the modern convent of the Sisters of Nazareth which he identifies as the Church of the Nutrition. This identification is uncertain but the site preserves further examples of Byzantine appropriation of cave structures for liturgical or devotional use. On the Kathisma see the earlier bibliography in note 1018.

¹⁰³⁷ Politis 2011: 167. The Arabic inscriptions are published in Brock, Canby, al-Ghul and Hoyland 2012: 417-419. For the Greek inscriptions see Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: 414-415.

¹⁰³⁸ Di Segni and Patrich 1990 and Kloner 1990.

¹⁰³⁹ For Horvat Qasra see Di Segni and Tsafirir 1990. For Capernaum see Testa 1972. A survey of the inscriptions at Mar Theoktisos is offered in Goldfus, Arubas and Alliata 1995: 283-292. This study, however only concentrates on Greek inscriptions and offers no study of the Syriac and Arabic inscriptions that were noted during the survey, *Ibid*: 282 and Chitty 1928: 151. For Bethany see the discussion in Benoit and Boismard 1951: 200-251. For a supporting view of this site as a Byzantine cult site, rather than an early Judeo-Christian centre, see Taylor 1987: 120-123 and Taylor 1990: 453-465. The possibility that many other sites were adorned with similar votives remains likely but ultimately indeterminable. In cases such as Umm Qays and Mar Elyas, only the foundation or lower courses of the walls survive and often without the plaster layers into which such inscriptions were routinely inserted. Traces of painted inscriptions, for example, were encountered at the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev: see Tsafirir 1988: 192. Neither can we overlook that renovation to walls, which included the plastering over of older layers, obscure a full demographic profile of pilgrim across several centuries. In the case of Bethany (see above), the surviving inscriptions were incised into a plaster layer than belonged to a secondary, probably sixth-century, phase.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Negev 1977.

Fig.5.24 Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata, Arabic inscription¹⁰⁴¹

- 1) In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. O God forgive Ġarir his sin.
- 2) [this which] is past and is to come.... And {provide sustenance for him?} out of your bounty.
- 3) Lo, you are the best of sustainers.

Fig. 5.25 Inscriptions from Hagia Salome, Horvat Qasra.¹⁰⁴²

| | |
|---|---|
| X(ριστ)[έ Βοή]Θει... | Christ help... |
| XA + Κ(ύρι)ε, ἐλέ σων τὸν δουλόν σου Ζαχαρήα | Christ or H Lord, have mercy on your servant Zacharias |
| +Κ(υρι)ε ἐλέσον | Lord, have mercy |
| Κ(ύρι)ε, ἐλέ ησον τ(ὸν) ‘Ραντη | Lord have mercy on Rantes |
| +Μνήστητη, Κ(ύρι)έ, τοῦ δούλου σου Οσο μεν κὲ όμοῦ | Remember, Lord your servant Osomen and Omon. |

¹⁰⁴¹ Brock, Canby, Al-Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012: 417.

¹⁰⁴² Transcription and translation Di Segni and Patrich 1990.

Fig.5.26

Fragmentary Greek inscriptions from ‘Peter’s House’, Capernaum.

ΥΨΙCΤ (Ω)

Χριστ(ο) Cωτ(ηρι) ...

The most high Christ save...

No. 94¹⁰⁴³

(ΧΡΙ)CΤΕ ΕΛΕΗC(ΟΝ)...

Christ have mercy...

No. 88¹⁰⁴⁴

Greek inscriptions from a cave in Bethany.

ΚΕ Ο ΟΘ ΕΓΙΡΑC ΤΟΝ ΛΑΖΑΡΙΟΝ Ε[Κ] ΝΕΚΤΩΝ ΜΝΗCΘΗΤΙ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΝ CΟΥ
ΑCΚΛΗΠΙΟΥ ΚΕ ΧΙΟΝΙΟΥ ΤΗC [CΟ]Υ.

Lord God, that resurrected Lazaros from the dead, remember your servant Asklepios and your servant Chionion.¹⁰⁴⁵

ΘΕΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΧΡΗCΤΙΑΝΩΝ ΕΛΕΗCΟΝ ΑΝΑΜΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΑΜΑΡΤ[ΩΛ]ΟΝ ΚΕ ΕΞΑΦΕC ΑΥΤΩ
ΤΑC ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑC [ΑΜ]ΗΝ.

God of the Christians have mercy on the sinner Anamos and forgive him his sins.¹⁰⁴⁶

ΚΥ ΙΕ ΧΡ ΒΟΗΘΗCΟΝ ΤΩ ΔΟΥΛΩ ΠΕΤΡΩ ΑΜΗΝ.

Lord Jesus Christ help your servant Peter Amen.¹⁰⁴⁷

¹⁰⁴³ Testa 1972: 78.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Testa 1972: 71-72.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Benoit and Boismard 1951: 216.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Benoit and Boismard 1951: 226.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Benoit and Boismard 1951: 232.

Nonetheless, plaster fragments inscribed or painted with votive messages are known from sites where climatic conditions, or more sensitive excavation strategies, have permitted their recovery. Such examples are known from ‘Peter’s House’ at Capernaum in the Galilee and the small monastic site of Al-Quweisma in the suburbs of modern ‘Ammān; with sites such as Nazareth, Shivta, Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Nessana collectively proposing the ubiquity of the practice on a regional level.¹⁰⁴⁸ A general estimation of their extent is, however, elusive. A lack of systematic recording of inscriptions, and their routine absence from excavation reports, has restricted a more comprehensive statistical analysis of their number and distribution.¹⁰⁴⁹

The limited level of systematic engagement of this material has meant that broader issues of their dating, convention, or purpose, are still poorly defined in Palestinian and Transjordanian contexts.¹⁰⁵⁰ In respect of dating, the lack of a secure chronology for Greek votive inscriptions in particular has encouraged their common attribution to pre-seventh century activity.¹⁰⁵¹ This remains one of a series of features which serve to reinforce the

¹⁰⁴⁸ The inscriptions of ‘Peter’s House’ were collectively published in Testa 1972. For those of Al-Quweisma see Puech 2011. A further possibility is that such invocations were inscribed on papyri or other writing materials similar to practices in Egypt see Papini 1998 and Papaconstantinou 2001: 336-337. As Papaconstantinou has noted, several of these invocations relate to the veneration of local saints: *Ibid*: 232-233. Marble or other stone tablets, which preserve similar intercessory pleas, are also known from Nessana, Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata and Kastron Mefa’a. The marble tablet of Kastron Mefa’a was discovered during the excavations of the Hagios Sergios-Stephanos complex. The inscription asks for protection on behalf of the donors whose name the Lord knows, see Piccirillo 1994h: inscr. 24, 265, 323. Those of Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata are discussed (with images) in Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: 412-415. The votives of Nessana were never published but are mentioned in Kirk and Welles 1962: 139.

¹⁰⁴⁹ This is notably true of Arabic and Syriac inscriptions, but also of the more common Greek formulas for which only the Wadi Hajjaj has received a dedicated synthetic survey: Negev 1977. The Arabic inscriptions the southern Sinai peninsula have been recently surveyed by Kawatoko and Tokunaga 2006: 217-227. These have not yet been published in transcription. However, Kawatoko and Tokunaga have noted that reflect substantial activity in the peninsula during the ninth- and tenth-centuries and the relative dominance of Arabo-phone Christians in this material.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Negev 1977, for example, was unable to date the inscriptions beyond a broad bracket of the fifth to seventh centuries. An understanding of their purpose is not assisted by the tendency to discuss this material in isolation of their spatial context. Thus in the cases of the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, it is now impossible to relate the inscriptions to their eighth- or ninth-century spatial environment and determine how the church was used by these visitors. The report vaguely mentions that these inscriptions were found primarily in the atrium of the church. This apparent respect for the integrity of the basilica space itself may confirm that the church remained in use when these votives were inscribed despite the rejection of this hypothesis by the excavators, see Appendix A.

¹⁰⁵¹ Thus in Negev’s study none of the inscriptions were assigned dates but were all attributed to a broad post-5th century phase: Negev 1977: 76-79.

perception of a post-seventh century pilgrim hiatus by limiting the identification of post-Byzantine activity. Such correlations are, however, problematic: not only is the use of Greek among local Palestinian communities a well accepted principle of the Byzantine period, but its continued use as a devotional idiom and epigraphic convention in Palestine until the ninth century contradicts the prevailing tendency to assume that its use among pilgrims/devotees is emblematic of Byzantine rather than post-Byzantine activity.¹⁰⁵²

Greek inscriptions accompanied by toponyms, such as those in the Wadi Hajjaj which mention the Zadakathon fortress in the Transjordan, or that of Stephen of Ayla, inscribed on a (now destroyed) limestone block in the narthex of the South Church of Shivta, also presents important qualifications to the correlation of Greek invocations with the presence of pilgrims from outside of Palestine (Fig.5.27-5.29). Greek inscriptions left by local pilgrims were executed concurrently with examples in Aramaic and, in a number of cases, the two conventions may be observed within single venerative contexts. The sites of the 'Firminos Laura', Horvat Qasra and Mar Theoktisos are characteristic of this pattern (Fig. 5.30).¹⁰⁵³

A forensic examination of this material is necessary before more secure conclusions can be drawn about this material concerning the social origins of its creators. The published Arabic and Aramaic inscriptions from Horvat Qasra, Mount Nebo, Mamphis, Al-Quweisma and the Firminos Laura, suggest the integration of many sites into local devotional networks and spheres (Fig.5.31-5.32).¹⁰⁵⁴

¹⁰⁵² Blake 1965 and Mango 1974, see also Hoyland 2010: 29-46.

¹⁰⁵³ On the Firminos Laura: see Rubin 2003: 81-86. Di Segni and Tsafirir 1990 discuss Horvat Qasra. The inscriptions of Mar Theoktisos are not published but are mentioned in the survey conducted by Derwas Chitty: see Chitty 1920: 151. For Mount Nebo see Saller 1941c: 275-276 and fig.5.54. The appearance of a votive ostraka, written in Syriac, in the church of Hagios Sergios (dated 586) in Kastron Mefa'a, where the epigraphic corpus is otherwise exclusively Greek, offers an additional example: Puech 1994: 289-290.

¹⁰⁵⁴ For Al-Quweisma and Horvat Hanot see notes 1048 and 1064. The inscriptions of the Laura of Firminos are published in Rubin 2003. Rubin interprets such inscriptions as indicative of latent tension between two opposing confessional groups. I would conjecture, however, that such interpretations wrongly create social and religious dichotomies between groups based on a language which was commonly in use among Chalcedonian Christians in this period. Evidence from Arabic and Aramaic texts, which existed alongside Greek formulas and literary

These examples of non-Greek votives necessitate a shift in our understanding of the role and ratio of localised practice within the broader pilgrim demographic in the region and as a component of the patron networks which underpinned the broader Christian cult topography of the region between 300-1000.

There are examples, addressed earlier, for which more complex associations with extra-regional pilgrims and devotional networks can be proposed. Mount Sinai remains an illustrative example, with a composite group of textual, epigraphic and artisanal material indicating the complex interplay between local, regional and extra-regional communities in this single cult context.¹⁰⁵⁵ By the seventh century, it is possible to identify pilgrims from the Latin west, the Aegean, Egypt, Armenia and Georgia among its visitors.¹⁰⁵⁶ There are other sites, notably the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Jerusalem itinerary and the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth for which similar associations and complexities can be recognised. This is confirmed by a series of Georgian and Armenian inscriptions which have been identified among the pre-Crusader phases of the Church of the Annunciation (Fig. 5.33).¹⁰⁵⁷ These inscriptions provide some indication of more extensive connections but are less illustrative in terms of establishing whether such relationships were continuously maintained into the early Islamic period.

mediums, are known from Khirbet Mird (see Milik 1961), Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata (see Brock, Canby, Al-Ghul and Hoyland 2012: 418); and Mount Sinai, see Brock 2012, Negev 1977 and Sharon 1993.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Pilgrimages to Mount Sinai from within local networks are attested in *P. Colt* 72 and 73, those of Al Badr of Elusa: see Sharon 1993. More recent discussion, which notes the presence of 966 Arabic inscriptions and the presence of some Coptic invocations in the Sinai peninsula appears in Kawatoko and Tokunaga 2006: 217-226. Further examples of pilgrims, whose origins are less well identified, may be found in Negev 1977. Evidence for Georgian and Armenian pilgrims have been surveyed in Stone 1986 and Stone 1979. The number of journeys appears to have to have increased after the eighth century and coincide with a general rise in Georgian manuscript production at Sinai and Sabas between the ninth and eleventh centuries: see Nanobashvili 2002. From the Byzantine Aegean and the post-Roman west we have the examples of the *Piacenza Pilgrim*: 37 (ed. Geyer, 1965, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 129-151), *Epiphanius Hagiopolites*: 21 (ed. Donner 1971, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 207-215); *Commematorium*: 47-49 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 214-215). From the post Byzantine period, Bernard the Monk (ed. Tobler 1874, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 261-269) and Lazaros of Galeison: 16 (ed. *BHG* 979, *AASS*, Nov. 3:508-88, tr. Greenfield 2000) are both discussed as having made the journey to Sinai. Further connections may also be proposed by the presence of Latin manuscripts in the Sinai archive: see Lowe 1955 and Lowe 1965. Brown 2011: 27-28 discusses the evidence for a Latin presence at Sinai by the sixth century.

¹⁰⁵⁶ See Mayerson 1982: 44-57 and note 1060.

¹⁰⁵⁷ The Georgian inscriptions of Nazareth are reproduced in Tchekhanovets 2011: 459.

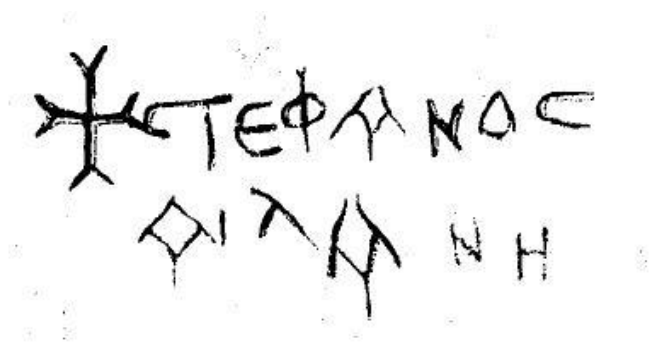


Fig.5.27 Inscription 4.

+ Στέφανος Αιλανή[της]

Stephen of Ayla

© Figueras 1996



Fig.5.28 Shivta, the South Church.

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Fig.5.29 Greek Inscriptions from the Wadi Hajjaj.¹⁰⁵⁸

No. 72 (date unknown)

+ κ(ύρι)ε βοηθι των δολῶ σου Λέωνος καλλινίκου Ζαδακάθων κ(αι) τοὺς φίλους αὐτοῦ. Ἀμήν
κ(ύρι)ε.

Lord! Help your servant Leon son of Kallinikos from Zadakatha* and his companions. Amen, Lord.

* Zadakatha is a military fortress located 23km west of Ma'an

No.104 (date unknown)

+ Κάστρου Ζαδάκαθα ++

Κ(ύρι)ε σοσον τόν δοῦλόν σου Σεργίος Στεφανου και Κυριακος διακονου και Θεόδωρος Σεργίης.

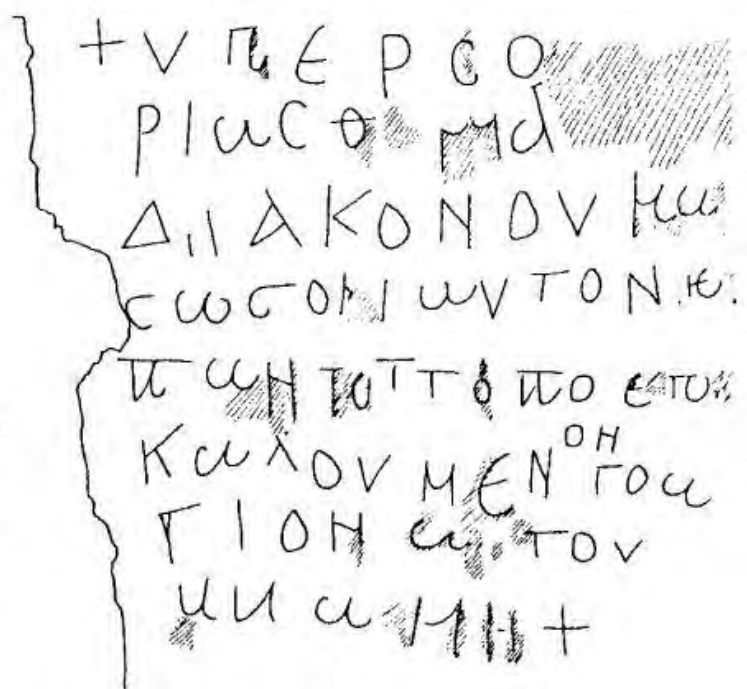
+Fortress of Zadakatha++

Lord! Save your servant Sergios son of Stephen and Kyriakos the Deacon and Theodore son of Sergine.

Fig. 5.30 Mar Theoktistos, graffiti.¹⁰⁵⁹

1. † Ὑπὲρ σο[τη]
2. ρίας Θωμᾶ
3. δηακόνου. κα(ι)
4. σωσον αὐτόν κ(αι)
5. πάντα τ(ον) τόπο(ν) ἐπ[ι]-
6. καλούμενον τὸ(ν) ἁ-
7. γιον αὐτοῦ
8. Α Α ἁμή(ν) †

† For the salvation of
Thomas, the deacon. Save
him and all this place, which
is called "His holy place".
Amen †



¹⁰⁵⁸ Transliteration and translation Negev 1977.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Goldfus, Arubas and Allia 1995: 285.



Fig.5.31 Map of sites with published graffito inscriptions.
© Reynolds 2012

Fig. 5.32
Mamphis, inscription from the apse of the East Church

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| غفر الله | 1. Forgive! Allah |
| حاب ن | 2. Ḥā bn |
| ، به وت م ن مم [] تـك | 3. His transgression and bestow fully [Your] favour (upon him) |

Fig. 5.33¹⁰⁶⁰
Georgian inscriptions from Nazareth and Mount Sinai

ქ(რისტე) ნოსიძე შ(ეიწყალ)ე

Christ, have mercy on Zosime!
M. George 1.

[პა] კლე
[მოციქუ]ლი

“Apostle Paul”
Nazareth Kart.1

შ(ეიწყალ)ე ი(ეს)უ ქ(რისტე)ე გ[იორგი]

“Jesus Christ, have mercy on Giorgi”
Nazareth Kart. 3.2

წ (მიდა) ოსინა შ (ეიწყალ) ემეწ
(მიდა) ო

...

ა

...“Holy Sinai, have mercy on me, o holy”

4.HGeorg 10

¹⁰⁶⁰ Transcription and translation from Tchekhanovets 2011.

Fig. 5.34 Chart of sites known to Byzantine, western and Melkite writers.

| Site | References |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Anastasis | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Elias the Younger, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Lazaros of Galeison , Niketas Basilikos, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Stephen the Sabaite, Theodore of Sykeon, Theodore of Stoudion, Willibald. |
| Baptism Monastery | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Elias the Younger, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Lazaros of Galeison, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Cana | Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Capernaum | Adomnán, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Choziba | Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Theodore of Sykeon. |
| Church of the Annunciation | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Church of the Nativity | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Willibald. |
| Emmaus | Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Euthymios Monastery | Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Lazaros of Galeison, Willibald. |
| Hagios Giorgos, Lydda | Bernard the Monk, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Willibald. |
| Heptagon | Adomnán, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Kursi | Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Mar Sabas | Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Elias the Younger Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Lazaros of Galeison, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Stephen the Sabaite, Theodore of Sykeon, Theodore of Stoudion, Willibald. |
| Mount Nebo | Peter of Bayt Ra's, Peter the Iberian, |
| Mount of Olives | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Willibald. |
| Mount Sinai | Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Elias the Younger Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Willibald. |
| Mount Sion | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Mount Tabor | Adomnán, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Elias the Younger Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Rachel's Tomb | Adomnán, , Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Willibald. |
| Sebastia | Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |
| Shepherd's Fields | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Willibald. |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Theodosios Monastery | Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanios Hagiopolites. |
| Tomb of Lazaros | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanios Hagiopolites, Lazaros of Galeison, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Willibald. |
| Tomb of the Thetokos | Adomnán, Bernard the Monk, Commemoratorium de Casis Dei, Epiphanios Hagiopolites, Peter of Bayt Ra's, Sinai Georgian Menaion, Willibald. |



Fig.5.35 Horvat Midras, aerial view of chancel and subterranean crypt accessed from the north aisle.
© Israel Antiquities Authority 2012



Fig. 5.36. Horvat Midras, the church (facing north).
©Igor Svobodin 2011



Fig. 5.37. Horvat Midras, entrance to the burial chamber.
©Igor Svobodin 2011

These were, however, exceptional examples – unique as products of imperial or extensive institutional investment and unique in terms of their centrality to the devotional concerns of the Late Antique Christian oikoumene.

It is in this regard that the literary corpus preserved in Greek and Latin is most effective – offering insights into the ways in which the landscape of Palestinian cult sites was conceptualised in the broadest terms across the early medieval world. Points of variation are inevitable; texts circulated internally among Palestinian Christians invariably discuss sites unknown to authors in the west with Kursi, Mount Nebo and Jabal Harūn providing three examples invisible to the Latin tradition.¹⁰⁶¹

Understanding how this layered landscape of sites was negotiated by 600 requires further exploration of the diverse social backgrounds of particular pilgrim groups. The recent tendency to homogenise and conflate the identities of pilgrims into a single category has cultivated a problematic tendency to assume that their perceptions and actual negotiations of the Palestinian landscape were characterised by a parallel uniformity.

Nonetheless, it is at sites where such conceptual topographies intersect which provides the key indication of a core topographic itinerary upon which universal Christian interests converged: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Sinai and a network of sites associated with the events of the Gospel (Fig. 5.34).

Co-existing with this topography was a more complex landscape of sites incorporating tombs and relics known from the material record but invisible in the literary material. If literature associated with such sites existed at all, it is evident by its lack of survival that such material could never have been circulated as widely as its counterparts

¹⁰⁶¹ Mount Nebo is mentioned in *Life of Peter the Iberian*: R 85 (ed. and tr. Horn and Phenix 2008: 172-173). Mount Nebo, Jabal Harūn and Kursi are also listed in Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 321, 382 (ed. Cachia 1960:170, 205-206, tr. Watt 1960: 137, 162).

connected to the list of major sites outlined above, whose transmission, as discussed in Chapter Four, transcended linguistic and political boundaries.¹⁰⁶²

Several of these cult sites without a literary trace were introduced earlier – Umm Qays, Horvath Qasra, Horvat Berachot and Rehovot-in-the-Negev – to illustrate the diversity of this environment. But there are others which reflect a similar complexity of potentially local co-existence alongside the network of cult sites interlinked with trans-regional pilgrims and episcopal elites: Horvat Midras (Fig. 5.35-5.37), Horvat Hani and Horvat Beit Sila, provide a series of supplementary examples.¹⁰⁶³ No explicit evidence survives concerning the identity of these sites – a characteristic which has led to the widespread tendency to correlate such site with biblical episodes in an attempt to integrate them with the model proscribed by the biblical scope of the residual literary corpus.¹⁰⁶⁴ Yet the absence of a corresponding literary corpus may provide an indication that their significance as *loca sancta* were likely interlinked with localised tradition and not necessarily one which overlapped with biblical topographies.¹⁰⁶⁵

The church of Sergios and Bakkhos at Nessana – described in one inscription as a martyrion – proposes one example of a particularly local devotional memory. At least one annual festival was held at the church in honour of the saint which was supported and attended by the bishop of Elusa and other regional clergy.¹⁰⁶⁶

¹⁰⁶² See appendix discussion for individual cases and the discussion on pages 304-309.

¹⁰⁶³ A discussion of the recently excavated sites is offered in Ganor, Klein, Abenu and Zissu 2012. Khirbet Abū Rish is discussed in Magen and Baruch 1997.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Thus Horvat Hanot has been identified as the burial place of Goliath: see Shenhav 2003 and Horvat Midras as that of the Burial site of Zechariah: Ganor, Klein, Abenu and Zissu 2012. A further example is that of Horvat Qasra identified by Di Segni as a church associated with Salome from the *Protoevangelion of James*: Di Segni 2006/7: 389.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Connections to Gaza are attested in *P. Colt* 72 and *P. Colt* 73. Kirk and Welles 1962: inscription 94 confirms a connection to Emesa.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *P. Colt* 50 and *P. Colt* 79 lines 56-57. The festival of Epiphany, celebrated in Jarash by the late fourth century, offers another example of localised religious festival likely interlined with local civic and devotional activity: see note 1015.

Fig. 5.38 Inscriptions relating to the journey of Al-Badr of Ayla through Rehovot-in-the-Negev to Mount Sinai.¹⁰⁶⁷

1. I, al Badr b. Hāshim of Ayla
2. Ask the forgiveness of God whose mercy is extensive
3. And I beseech him (to grant) pardon and health
4. in this world and the world to come, to me and my family.

ان ال بدرب ن ر هاشم
ل ستغفر الله ول سعال م غفر
ة واس ةال مفو ول ط ي ف
ن يلا ر ولا اخر ط و ط ب ي ت

Hadbat Hajjaj, north east Mount Sinai, inscription two.
8th century (same hand as Rehovot inscriptions)

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| 1. O God [forgive] | ل م [غفر] |
| 2. Al-Badr b. | ل برب ن |
| 3. of Ayla and | ا و ا |
| 4. [be pleased with him] | ر [ضى عنه] |

Rehovot-in-the-Negev, church inscriptions two
8th century (dated by palaeography)

1. O God! Forgive al-Badr b. Hashim of Ayla and (forgive)
2. His two parents and the men and women believers.

ل م اغفر ل بدرب ن هاشم ا
ل ل ر ه (sic.) ل موو من ت

Al-Badr of Elusa Inscription 3.
Hadbat Hajjaj- NE of Mount Sinai.
C8th century (same hand as Rehovoth inscriptions)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. And wrote Sulayman | ولك تب س يمان |
| 2. Ibn. Ubayd of Ayla | ل بن عبيد ا |

¹⁰⁶⁷ Transcription and translation Sharon 1993.

Epigraphic and papyrological material also indicates several cases of the church's connection to Gaza and Emesa (modern Homs).¹⁰⁶⁸ Nessana's geographical position, situated on a popular route between Mount Sinai and Jerusalem, may have proved a key factor in facilitating these connections. The inscriptions of Al-Badr ibn Hāshim of Ayla and his approximate contemporary Sulāyman ibn Ubayd at Rehovot-in-the Negev, offers a further example of the use of such churches along established routes into the Umayyad period (Fig. 5.38).¹⁰⁶⁹ Mamphis may provide another example of a church situated along an established route, although the general issues of dating at the church make examples of graffiti (which may post-date the use of the church) difficult to integrate into current debate (Fig. 5.32).¹⁰⁷⁰

Collectively, such examples propose a more cautious approach in assuming that rural shrines only administered to local worshippers.

However, as in the case of Nessana, the evidence for the importance of localised patron intervention to such sites is certainly more explicit than those represented by its wider extra-regional connections.¹⁰⁷¹

At Nessana, the surviving donation inventories reveal a highly localised network of connections to the nearby settlements of Beersheba and Elusa but exhibit little association with more extended networks.¹⁰⁷² This may reflect the limited survival of the corpus but the pattern is borne out, with one exception, by the church's epigraphic corpus where many of the figures or family units recorded in the papyri are commemorated in inscriptions accompanying phases of renovation or embellishment to the churches of the town.¹⁰⁷³

This trend is also familiar from the Petra papyri, where cases of property donation to the monastery on Jabal Harūn (the custodians of the Tomb of Aaron) provide further

¹⁰⁶⁸ Colt 1962: 173, inscr. 94.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Sharon 1993.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See Figueras 1995a, Figueras 1995b and Stroumsa 2008: 38-39. The inscription is also discussed in *P. Colt* 72 and *P. Colt* 73.

¹⁰⁷¹ *P. Colt* 79.

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid* and *P. Colt* 80.

¹⁰⁷³ See the discussion pages 87-89.

indication of its centrality to immediate patronal and devotional activity probably financed by wealth derived from the extensive regional landholdings of donors like the Obodianos family identified in the archive of the Hagia Maria church.¹⁰⁷⁴

This evident integration of pilgrimage into local socio-devotional networks has obvious implications for the trajectory of such sites in the early Islamic period. If we relate such patterns to the broader consensus that the Arab conquest instigated no serious rupture to localised Christian life or Christian patronage, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, this creates inherent problems with established interpretations of the seventh century as a period of widespread collapse to these systems.

5.2 POST-BYZANTINE DEVELOPMENTS

The rejection of the traditional perception of pilgrimage as development interwoven with broader political developments creates obvious tensions with the ideals encapsulated by the contemporary terminologies employed in recent debate. It is in this respect that the use of modern terms such as ‘pilgrimage’ to describe Byzantine and social conventions are particularly ill-suited. Among scholars of western European or America origin, the term ‘pilgrimage’ is a highly evocative concept framed by the underlying associations with travel and, moreover, of travel for the express purpose of veneration.¹⁰⁷⁵ In this regard the modern English term succinctly conveys the sentiments of its Latin origins – *peregrinus* and *peregrinatio* – which carry overt associations with the notion of travel and its later synonymy

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Petra Papryi* Inv.6a. On the family see Koenen 2003.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Thus the introduction to pilgrimage in the Oxford handbook of early Christian studies begins with a basic definition of this term: Frank 2008: 826. The tendency to discuss pilgrimage in the Holy Land in terms of extra-regional travel (or travellers) is, however, pervasive: Dietz 2005, Hunt 1984, Kuelzer 1994, Kuelzer 2000, Maraval 2004, Talbot 2001 and Wilkinson 1977. This idea also frames the basic definition of pilgrimage provided in the Oxford dictionary of Byzantium, which focuses solely on cases of travel to the Holy Land: *ODB*: 1676-1677.

with religious experience.¹⁰⁷⁶ This perception, though formative to modern research strategies, has no Byzantine parallel in the period 600-950.¹⁰⁷⁷

This ambiguity is widely acknowledged in recent studies, but has not provoked a more systematic reconsideration of our basic understanding of Palestinian pilgrimage in terms of the sites and demographic.¹⁰⁷⁸

Xenos, which may be applied fluidly to any concept of a traveller or foreigner, does not carry the overt associations with a pilgrimage in its familiar modern sense. As Cyril Mango has noted, the now common term *χατζής* – derived from the Arabic *hajji* (حاجي) – is likely a post-Byzantine construct (probably sixteenth century) which bears no direct association with Byzantine (or Melkite) conceptions of veneration of the fourth to tenth centuries.¹⁰⁷⁹

The earliest Christian Arabic accounts of pilgrimage, all of which post date the mid-eighth century, equally make no suggestion that exposure to the Islamic concept of the *hajj* impacted significantly on the linguistic definition of such practice among Christian groups during their first centuries of confrontation. The significance of this has not been widely explored but is pertinent to the debate considering the conscious exploitation of Islamic devotional language and concepts among Arabic speaking Christians within their own literary works after 750.¹⁰⁸⁰ In the Arabic version of the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*, the journey of Leontios' aunt to Jerusalem during Holy Week makes no attempt to define this episode as a distinct social practice. The Arabic version simply notes of his aunt's intention to pray.

I have an aunt on my father's side who is very pious and God-fearing. As was her custom she went to Jerusalem to pray (لما صلا). With her was the virtuous slave girl whom she had manumitted. They

¹⁰⁷⁶ Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 110-115, Dietz 2005: 27-28 and Kotting 1950: 7-11. The similar ambiguity of the Latin terms for pilgrimage is addressed in Wilkinson 2002: 56.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Mango 1995. Further discussion appears in Pullan 2005.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See the discussion by Mango 1995. A similar argument has also been made by Ousterhout 2006: 106 and Vikan 2010: 3.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Mango 1995: 1-3.

¹⁰⁸⁰ On the exploitation of Arabic and Islamic concepts in Melkite literature and those of other Christian Arabic writers see Griffith 2008: 75-105.

celebrated the festival in Jerusalem, there keeping Holy Easter. Then they went to Mount Sinai to pray there as well.

Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas, 64.1¹⁰⁸¹

A similar lack of definition also characterises a description of an apparent journey to Jerusalem made by Theodore Abū Qurrah – like Leontios’ aunt for the purposes of visiting the Church of the Anastasis during Holy week.¹⁰⁸²

The closest Greek equivalent to the term pilgrimage, προσκύνησις (‘bowing down’), one widely employed in recent discussion, also carries no explicit associations with travel or a pilgrimage as it is understood in recent western tradition.¹⁰⁸³

Although the action of *proskynesis* at shrines was closely associated with the concept of *eulogia* (blessing), neither term evokes or is used by contemporary writers of the period 600-1000 to indicate that these concepts necessitated the removal of an individual from their familiar social or physical surroundings.¹⁰⁸⁴ That the goal of *proskynesis* was subtly framed by the desire to receive *eulogia* is a fairly established principle and one borne out by the many surviving graffito inscriptions on the walls of shrines which appeal for divine agency on behalf of the supplicant, their families or communities.¹⁰⁸⁵

The concept of *eulogia* was therefore linked, but not dependent upon, the idea of travel, with the well noted examples of ‘pilgrim’ (sic) *eulogiae* – ampullae and tokens – providing some indication of the various media which responded in fulfilment of this social need but one, despite its modern epithet, which was not directly linked to travel.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸¹ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 64.1 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 110, 100).

¹⁰⁸² Theodore Abu Qurrah, *Letter to David the Monophysite* (ed. al-Basha 1904:104-139).

¹⁰⁸³ *ODB*: 1738-1739. Further discussion in Barone 2006/7: 463-467.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Maraval 2004: 145-147 notes the growing association of these terms with Christian cult practice by the fourth century. These terms, however, do not appear to have applied exclusively to notions of travel to the Holy Land.

¹⁰⁸⁵ See the examples above for the Palestinian material. On the practice of ex-voto offerings (including inscriptions) in other regions of the Byzantine world see Talbot 2002: 161-162 and an overview in *ODB* 2186-2187.

¹⁰⁸⁶ See the discussion by Hahn 1990, Vikan 1988, Vikan 1990, Vikan 1995 and Vikan 2010. See also Frank 2006 and the collected studies by Rahmani 1966, Rahmani 1979 and Rahamani1993. Grabar 1958 surveys the Monza Bobbio ampullae.

Local shrines, which incorporated relics or tombs, compliment this existing conceptual framework: providing a means through which *eulogia* could be sought and acquired within a supplicant's immediate social environment. Byzantine descriptions of the effectiveness of 'contact' relics or less prominent *loca sancta* provide no indication that the efficacy of such objects was conceived in hierarchical terms. Writing in the late ninth century, Peter, the Melkite bishop of Bayt Ra's, encapsulates this broader view in his description of a list of Palestinian holy sites.¹⁰⁸⁷ For Peter such sites provided physical and corporeal testimony to the promise of Christian salvation.

Christ has given us too, the relics of Himself and the places of His sanctification in this world as a heritage and a pledge of the kingdom of heaven and the delights of the world to come which he promised us. Wherever there is a place that God glorified and hallowed by the appearance in it of His Christ and the presence of His holy spirit, be it plain or mountain, wherever there is a place in which God spoke to any of His prophets before that or in which his wonders were seen, He has set all these places in the hands of those who believe in Christ...¹⁰⁸⁸

But the work, known as the *Kitāb al-Burhān* (Book of Demonstration), makes no allusion to a sense of privilege or hierarchy among the sites, which are all presented as bearing equal witness to his argument of Christian sovereignty over the counter-claims of his Muslim opponents.

Yet the relics of the dead martyrs and the memory of them remain in honour, increasing and being magnified. Their tombs are touched [to gain blessing] and from them blessings and benefits are sought. They make intercession for men with their Lord, through their living souls which abide with him and which join the angels in praising him; they make intercession through the greatness of their love of God.

Kitāb al-Burhān, 364¹⁰⁸⁹

The sites described by Peter, which included Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Sinai and the Judean Desert network, are all sites interwoven with the perceptions of the elite social group from which he originated.¹⁰⁹⁰ As I have stressed earlier, the connection of these sites to the

¹⁰⁸⁷ On Peter and his association with this work see Samir 1990: 483-485 and Griffith 1996.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 310 (ed. Cachia 1960: 165, tr. Watt 1961: 134).

¹⁰⁸⁹ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān* (ed. Cachia 1960: 196, tr. Watt 1960: 155).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Little is known about Peter of Bayt Ra's beyond his status as bishop of Capitolias/Bayt Ra's. Our awareness of his activity comes predominantly from the descriptions of the Muslim writers (notably Ibn Taymīyyah) aware

devotions of the urban elite and Melkite clergy of the region were probably crucial factors in ensuring their resilience to the socio-economic shifts of the ninth and tenth centuries: factors which are indicative of some form of hierarchy, whether intended or implicit.¹⁰⁹¹ Sidney Griffith's observation of the increasing centrality of Jerusalem to Melkite confessional identity adds weight to this broader impression.¹⁰⁹²

Yet I would propose that whilst such hierarchies existed, the conceptual ubiquity of *eulogia*, not limited or constrained by site or medium, proposes that 'pilgrimage' to Palestinian sites was not conceived as a phenomenon which carried the necessity of the prolonged or distant travel consistently emphasised in modern studies.

Evidently, there are a series of exceptions which require integration into this argument. The importance of the city of Jerusalem and the network of sites addressed earlier to a stream of travellers from the west and Byzantium convey a more complex pattern than a straightforward local/extra-regional dichotomy.¹⁰⁹³ Literary reports and pilgrimage inscriptions contradict the premise that journeys to sites such the Sepulchre-Anastasis church or Mount Sinai were only undertaken by groups of Christians in the vicinity of the sites themselves. The celebration of Holy Week, which involved a complex series of liturgical performances at the major churches of the city, appears to have been a particular attraction to groups from other urban centres within the Caliphate.¹⁰⁹⁴ Leontios of Damascus' aunt represents one such figure in the eighth century whose journey is clearly paralleled in the more ephemeral activities of figures such as al-Badr of Ayla, Jaber son of Moses or Stephen

of his work. For a discussion of this see Samir 1990: 483-485. The text, however, preserved in Sinai Arabic 75, fols.102v-222r (dated to 1002) compliments the existing corpus of known Arabic apologetics written within the monasteries of Palestine, see Griffith 1996: 9-28. Samir 1990: 484 dates the work to the second half of the ninth-century. Swanson 2009: 903 prefers a date of the late-ninth or early tenth century.

¹⁰⁹¹ See pages 304-310.

¹⁰⁹² Griffith 2006.

¹⁰⁹³ See Fig. 5.34.

¹⁰⁹⁴ On the festivals in Jerusalem during Holy Week see the discussion in Baldovin 1987: 90-95.

of Ayla now visible only by their inscriptions.¹⁰⁹⁵ A ninth-century papyrus from a *hegoumene* to an acquaintance in Fustāt provides a further illustrative example of exchange from within the Caliphate (Fig. 5.39).¹⁰⁹⁶

I would argue that it was individuals such as these, drawn from among the urban and rural networks within Palestine, who constituted the main demographic of pilgrims to many sites in the post-Byzantine period. A more sophisticated understanding of the impact of the Arab conquest upon pilgrimage will only be achieved by more considered integration of the material and literary data.

Though central to understanding post-Byzantine pilgrimage, the network of churches commemorating biblical events was interspersed with an equal number of sites with more immediate associations and where the popular conventions of devotion from sites such as Jerusalem were seemingly replicated in localised contexts. At the ‘Stylite Church’, Kastron Mefa‘a the central nave burial appears to have been designed to facilitate the immersion of the relics in oil – residues of which were apparently identified during the (still unpublished) excavations of the church in the 1980s.¹⁰⁹⁷ A similar use of oil immersion for the anchor stone in the church of Mount Berenike in Ṭabariyyah, and the burial in the North East Church of Hippos, were also tentatively proposed by their excavators (Fig. 5.40-5.42).¹⁰⁹⁸

As with many sites in the region, the lack of systematic publication prohibits a more forensic analysis of these claims. But if they are to be accepted, these examples conform to what appears to have been a fairly prevalent practice among Palestinian Christians until the tenth century.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Mar Sabas*: 64.1 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 110, 100), Theodore Abū Qurrah, *Letter to David the Monophysite* (ed. al-Basha 1904: 104-139).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Anawati and Jomier 1954.

¹⁰⁹⁷ See Piccirillo 1993a: 1492.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Hirschfeld 2004b: 109-111.

Fig. 5.39 Excerpt from a letter sent by Maryam, hegoumene, to an unnamed acquaintance
Text: Anawati and Jomier 1954, tr. Reynolds and Al-Nafra 2013.

1. In the name of God, the clement, the merciful.
 2. May God keep you and protect you, and fill you (with) his grace, and increase his charity and favour for you. Here is my letter to you [that] is intended [to thee my daughter]. As for me and those around me, we are in good health,
 3. thanks be to God. By God, my daughter, you should have written to me when you had been in Ramlā to [tell me] about your health
 4. or when you arrived at Fustat, and you should know, my daughter, that my heart was in suspense for you and your news. It also had been a duty for you
 5. to send me your news, to [inform me] of your state, and [to tell me] how you found your way. Now if you have this letter of mine, do not let it leave your hands before
 6. you have written to me and [told me of] your condition and how you and how Abo Ali – may God protect him – received you, so that I may make thanksgiving
 7. to Christ, and ask for an increase in his favours and the completion of his benefits to you. The person who brings you my letter that I sent (through?) Dayr Eliya..(I sent my letter through Dayr Eliya and it is my need and deposit for you and Abo Ali).
 8. I have attached: my deposit for you and for Abu Ali.....
-
13. ...Amen and Amen. And it gives me (pleasure) to see your face in this holy place for your soul to rejoice by seeing Christ your
 14. confidence becomes stronger and the welcome graces of the Mountain of Jerusalem are always with you. Amen. I pray that the peace of God be upon you in abundance and
 15. your children and neighbours and those who care for His commandments, that with my prayer come peace in abundance. Send greetings to the neighbours
 16. on my behalf; to Irene, to Dennis and all your community: Greetings of the peace of Christ. May God bless you and grant you life.

Address:

The venerable scholar and pious Mar Abu Ali, may God prolong his life. Sahl, customer of Qays, may God have mercy on him.
Sent by the sinful Maryam, superior of the monastery of Hindah



Fig. 5.40 Tiberias, the Church of Mount Berenike, anchor stone in-situ beneath altar.
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Fig.5.41 Tiberias, Church of Mount Berenike, anchor stone.
©Bukvoed 2011, Creative Commons License 3.0



Fig. 5.42 Horvat Berachot, the reliquary crypt, (facing east). Inscription 1 is located on the south wall next to the stairs (shaded area in image). Inscription 2 is located on the two imposts of the arched vault (north). Inscription 3 is located on the wall which blocks the south staircase.
© Israel Antiquities Authority 1993



Fig.5.43 Horvat Berachot, Kufic inscription (Inscription 1) in the crypt church (seventh/eighth century).
© Israel Antiquities Authority 1993

Transcription and translation of Inscription 1 (Drori and Drori 1979).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
للهم غفرل يوسف بن
ياسين

In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate
Oh God! Grant pardon to Yusuf [son of]
Yāsīn.



Fig.5.44 Horvat Berachot, a fragmentary Arabic inscription (Inscription 2) in the crypt church, Horvat Berachot (eighth century). The inscription is located on the north impost stone of the arch (facing stair entrance). The inscription is too fragmentary to decipher but invokes the *bismillah* and mentions two individuals: Abu 'A' and Yusuf.



Fig. 5.45. Horvat Berachot, Arabic inscription (Inscription 3) in the crypt church , Horvat Berachot (eighth century?). The inscription is located on bottom stone of a secondary wall which blocks the stair staircase.

A series of unpublished flasks inscribed with blessings, which survive from Mar Samwil, provides a more explicit case of their continued production beyond the seventh century.¹⁰⁹⁹ Whilst the material legacy of such artefacts beyond Mar Samwil is less substantial, the practice is attested in literary sources. Writing around 943, al-Mas'ūdī describes the familiar practice in the Church of Nazareth which often inspired interest or disdain from contemporary Muslim observers.¹¹⁰⁰

5.3 CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE IN EARLY ISLAMIC PALESTINE

The lack of evidence for sustained suppression of Christian cults by the Caliphal authorities and the stability in Christian life and patron networks until the mid-eighth century proposes that the impact of the Arab conquest was less influential in determining the trajectory of this landscape than presently accepted.¹¹⁰¹

However, despite the inherent flaws with the 'extra-regional' definition of pilgrimage, it has proved formative in shaping interpretations of material evidence associated with post-Byzantine pilgrimage. Poorly established site chronologies – terminated either at 614 or within fifty years of the Arab conquest – is one such difficulty requiring systematic review and which has been raised earlier in this study.¹¹⁰² The sites of Shepherd's Fields, the North Church at Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Kursi are among a catalogue of possible cult sites subjected to an artificial truncation of their occupational sequences or assigned to a post-

¹⁰⁹⁹ Magen and Dadon 2003.

¹¹⁰⁰ 'It is said that the Messiah lived at a village called Nasirah, which is in the district of Al-Lajjun of the Jordan Province; also that the Christians are called so from this place. I myself have seen in this village a church greatly venerated by the Christians. There are here sarcophagi of stone, in which are dead men's bones, and from these flows a thick oil, like syrup, with which the Christians anoint themselves for blessing.' al-Mas'ūdī, *Muruj al-Dhahab* I. 23 (ed. Barbier de Meynard 1861: 94, tr. Le Strange 1890: 301).

¹¹⁰¹ Pages 228-229.

¹¹⁰² Pages 35-37.

cultic squatter phase which artificially correlates ‘Islamic’ political chronologies with drastic change to established devotional conventions.¹¹⁰³

The influence of this model on reconstructions of post-Byzantine pilgrimage is all too apparent: in the example of Horvat Berachot (Fig.5.42-5.45), the presence of Arabic graffito inscriptions was automatically interpreted by its excavators as an indication of a post-cultic phase connected with ‘Arab’ squatter occupation.¹¹⁰⁴ Yet, as was suggested earlier, a more contextual reading of the votive with respect to its architectural context, and the assumptions made by the site's excavators, raises concerns about the validity of this interpretation.¹¹⁰⁵ Inserted on the wall adjacent to the relic niche and exhibiting the same thematic features as its Greek counterparts (both seeking divine agency) the inscription suggests an evident identification of the site as a venue in which an individual – Greek or Arabic speaking – could seek *eulogia*.

But a misguided assumption that the use of Arabic formulas denotes a Muslim presence – misguided in the sense that Arabic appears to have been in usage among Palestinian Christians contemporary to this late-seventh/eighth century inscription – has meant that several further examples known at cult sites in the region have been similarly credited to squatter activity.¹¹⁰⁶ There are inherent problems with this approach; not least that it assumes a separation between Christian and early Muslim devotional practice in this period

¹¹⁰³ Shepherd's Fields see Tzaferis 1975. The site was apparently rebuilt on a reduce scale which the excavators attributed to a declining number of pilgrims from the west. However, the church appears to have continued into use until the late ninth or early tenth century. See the discussion in Appendix A. The late eighth or ninth century phases of Rehovot-in-the-Negev were automatically attributed to Arab squarer occupation. Tsafirir 1988: 26. This position was also accepted by Magness 2003: 193-194 is problematic given the excavators' assumption that the blocking of the stairway and Arabic inscription represent are developments contemporary of one another: see pages 178-182. Kursi was assigned a 614 destruction date see Tsafirir 1983: 15. This has been challenged in Stacey 2004: 15 who suggests continuity into the tenth century. In the examples of Shepherd's Fields and Kursi this continuity appears endorsed by textual reports: Appendix A.

¹¹⁰⁴ Drori and Drori 1979. Tsafirir and Hirschfeld 1979: 310. This phasing was also replicated in Magness 2003: 109-111 albeit within different chronological parameters.

¹¹⁰⁵ See pages 178-182.

¹¹⁰⁶ Besides Rehovot-in-the-Negev, the unpublished inscriptions of the Martyrios monastery Magen 1993: 188 were also attributed to squatter layers.

which is less evident within contemporary sources than commonly presumed.¹¹⁰⁷ As will be explored below, the Arabic inscriptions correlate well with what may have been a fairly fluid devotional environment in which the Muslims were also frequent visitors to established Christian sites.

The influence of the ‘invented’ seventh-century fracture extends beyond the essential issue of site chronologies and continues to shape interpretations of auxiliary material which could produce further evidence of pilgrim continuities beyond the 630s.

Pilgrim ampullae and eulogia tokens are among the material frequently assigned a pre-seventh century date without supporting explanation.¹¹⁰⁸ Partly, this remains an outcome of modern research interests directed at such material where focus has largely concentrated on their iconographic formulas and social function.¹¹⁰⁹ Approaches to such material in terms of style and iconography rather than as components of the broader archaeological corpus have hampered a more refined understanding of the production chronologies and distribution patterns of this material. This is not essentially true for the entire category (tokens and ampullae in Anatolia and those of Abu Menas are better understood) but generally characterises the collection associated with sites in Palestine and the Transjordan.¹¹¹⁰

The predominance of this material in museum collections offers a partial explanation for this issue – many of these tokens are poorly provenanced and long removed from their original stratigraphic contexts. In addition, their survival in European or American museum collections or European monastic treasuries has endorsed an impression of eulogia tokens as

¹¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of ḥadīth literature, which points to prevalent concerns among Muslims writers about Muslim veneration in churches see Bashear 1991: 267-282. Archaeological evidence for Muslim recognition and use of existing Christian cult sites include the Church of the Kathisma see Avner 2006/7, and the mosque *ṣūq* complex of Sergiopolis/Rusafa, see Key Fowden 1999: 174-191.

¹¹⁰⁸ Discussion of the ampullae is offered in Grabar 1958. See also Rahmani 1966, Rahmani 1979 and Rahmani 1993. See also Barag and Wilkinson 1974 and Franks 2000: 11-12, 107.

¹¹⁰⁹ See Vikan 1988, Vikan 1989, Vikan 1990, Vikan 1995, Vikan 1998 and Vikan 2010. See also Frank 2000.

¹¹¹⁰ Anderson 2004 discusses this issue in Anatolian contexts. Anderson 2007: 221-243, also raises some points in his discussion of the Abu Minas flasks and introduces crucial issues of chronology and distribution.

objects interlinked with external pilgrimage networks and exchange rather than as a medium which may have experienced equally wide distribution in localised Palestinian contexts.¹¹¹¹

Examples of inter-regional exchange of eulogia objects are known but were not characterised by a simplistic process of Palestinian export. Excavations in a post-conquest layer at Qaysariyah, probably dated after 640, revealed four examples of Abu Minas flasks which would indicate some connection between the Egyptian site of Abu Mina with communities on the Palestinian coast.¹¹¹² How or why they reached their destination is uncertain, but the status of Caesarea as a conduit for commercial exchange in the Aegean and with Egypt (a relationship which continued into the tenth century) must caution against the inclination to view their distribution solely in terms of individualised human exchange.¹¹¹³

Nevertheless, the association between tokens/ampullae and ‘western’ pilgrimage has fostered a direct correlation between the production chronologies of eulogia souvenirs with patterns of broad political or territorial change in the seventh century.

Consequently, it remains common to encounter a *terminus ante quem* of the seventh century for this material which lacks any substantive archaeological basis.¹¹¹⁴ The basic chronological parameter for this material has remained so widely accepted that examples

¹¹¹¹ Thus the tokens encountered in Baysān and published in Rahmani 1993 all appear to relate to Palestinian sites. Examples of the exchange of *eulogia* tokens and relics are known from the sixth century. Gregory the Great sent the Frankish Queen Brunhild a number of relics: Gregory the Great, *Letters* 6.58 (*PL* 77: 842-843). Gregory also sent a relic of the True Cross to Queen Theodelinda: Gregory the Great *Letters*, 14.12 (*PL* 77: 1314-1317). Avitus of Vienne similarly records episodes of indirect epistolary exchange between Gaul and Jerusalem. Similar contacts between Radegund of Poitiers and Jerusalem, which involved petitions for relics, see Moreira 1993: 285-305. See also, Baudovinia, *Life of Radegund*: 14 (tr. McNamara, Halborg and Whatley 1992). Avitus wrote two letters to Pope requesting his intervention in securing relics from Elias, Patriarch of Jerusalem. This is important in as much as it raises caution with assuming that the presence of relics in the early medieval West can confirm cases of direct contact with Palestine. In the case of Avitus, even in the sixth century contacts may have been facilitated primarily through the Rome: Avitus of Vienne, *Letters* 20, 25, (*PL* 59: 235-238, 241-242, tr. Shanzer and Wood 2002: 154-155). For discussion of relic and eulogiae exchange as part of diplomatic efforts in the reign of Justin II and Sophia: see Cameron 1976. The Monza Bobbio ampullae are more difficult to integrate into this debate. Although widely held as an example of a gift to Theodelinda, the major studies provide no supporting evidence beyond the tradition itself. Later examples of relics endowed as gifts in the ninth century are offered in Hen 1998:300. Hen also discusses the relatively elite nature of these exchanges and pilgrimages: *Ibid*: 301-302.

¹¹¹² Patrich 2011b: 249-258 discusses the ampullae, one presumably from the shrine of Abu Mina and another from Symeon the Stylite, encountered during the excavations in Caesarea.

¹¹¹³ On the connections of Qaysariyah with Egyptian exchange networks: Whitcomb 2011: 78.

¹¹¹⁴ The majority are still attributed to the sixth century or compared with sixth-century examples. Thus two tokens depicting the Magi acquired by Rahmani in Istanbul were dated to the sixth century: Rahmani 1979: 34-36. A similar dating is proposed for the tokens depicting the Annunciation see Rahmani 1966.

encountered in-situ during excavations are still routinely assigned a pre-630 (or more often pre-614) date without consideration of their relationship to their immediate stratigraphic contexts.

A series of *eulogia* tokens published by Levi Rahmani serves to illustrate this point. All six were encountered during an excavation of Baysān during the 1980s in varying stratigraphic contexts dating from the Byzantine (fourth to seventh centuries) to the Mamluk (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries)¹¹¹⁵ but automatically assigned a pre-614 date and explained as out of contexts finds.¹¹¹⁶ Beyond a tacit acceptance that 614 represented a seismic shift in existing social and devotional conventions, little explanation was provided by Rahmani to justify this chronology.¹¹¹⁷ Several of these tokens are a possible redeposit although there is evidence for the production of similar material in the thirteenth century.¹¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the attribution of these tokens to a pre-614 phase is inadequately supported: not only is the dating of the sequence layer disputable, but there is little evidence to propose that the period 614-630 instigated a pattern of social change sufficiently drastic as to interrupt their production.¹¹¹⁹

¹¹¹⁵ I have adopted Rahmani's dating criteria of the archaeological sequences where these tokens were found.

¹¹¹⁶ Rahmani 1993: 114-115.

¹¹¹⁷ Rahmani 1993: 114-115, offers some discussion of the tokens which he dates between the sixth century and 614. The token of the Magi he dates to seventh century (rejecting the earlier date of the eighth to twelfth centuries) based on a comparison with another similar token in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts which the institute dates between the 8th and 12th centuries: see Rahmani 1979: 34-35. This comparison, however, is problematic. Rahmani's dating for the Detroit token is largely based on generic comparisons of 'space filler' motifs from other media (such as jewellery and ampullae) and in itself cannot be accepted uncritically. Rahmani's dating of these tokens derives to some extent from a legend which associates the miraculous preservation of the Church of the Nativity during the Sassanian occupation of 614 due to the depiction of the three magi on a mosaic within the Church of the Nativity: Rahmani 1979: 35-36. This legend first appears in the *Letter of the three patriarchs to Emperor Theophilus* 7.8a (ed. and tr. Munitiz, Chrysostomides, Harvalia-Crook and Dendrinou 1997: 42-32). For issues with the authenticity of this account, which was widely used in the iconomachy debates of the eighth and ninth centuries, which brings the whole question of dating into question, see Griffith 1982: 176-177 and Brubaker and Haldon 2001: 279-280. The use of this legend, or supposed Sassanian devastation of churches, still dominates the dating criteria for these objects. Similar use of the Sassanian occupation as a *terminus ante quem* for these tokens appears in the Dumbarton Oaks catalogue compiled by Marvin Ross, see Ross 1962: 71.

¹¹¹⁸ For a discussion of the production of ampullae and tokens in the Latin Kingdom, see Syon 1999.

¹¹¹⁹ For earlier comments about Palestine see pages 106-118.



Fig. 5.46 Ma'ale Adummim, Martyrios Monastery, cave-crypt entrance. The cave was partially redeveloped at a later phase to incorporate burials.
©Rotem Hoffman 2010



Fig. 5.47 Euthymios Monastery, cave-crypt stairway.
©Rotem Hoffman 2010

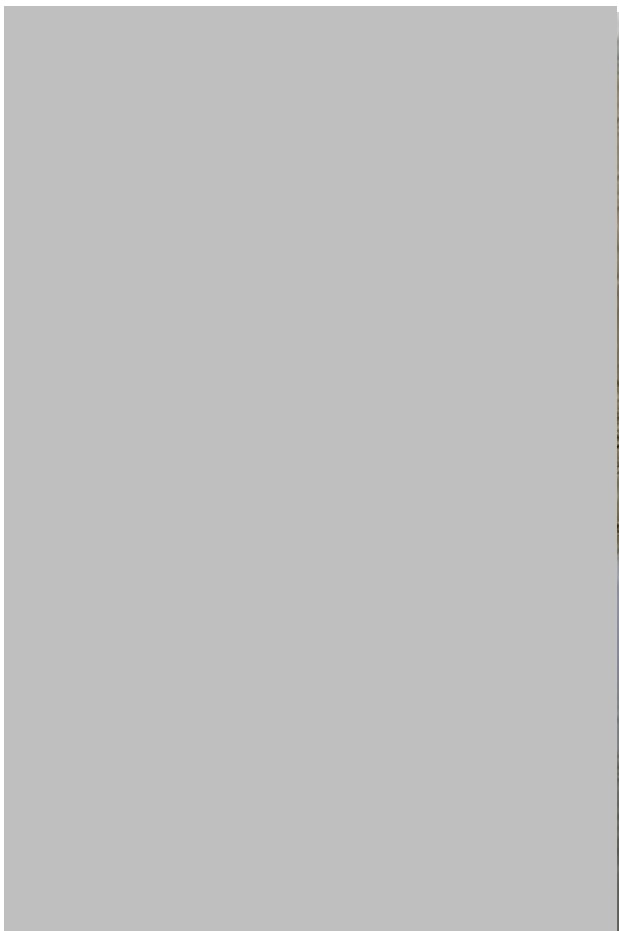
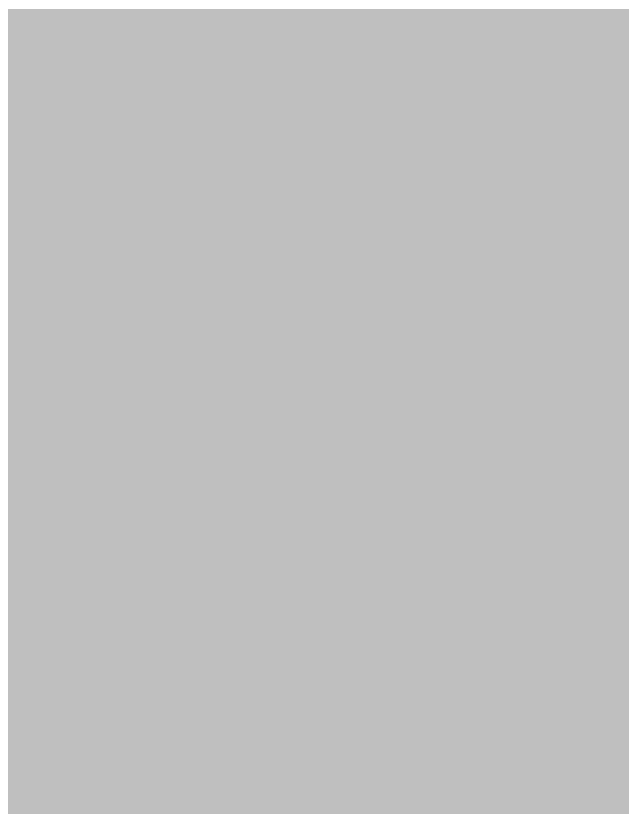


Fig.5.48 Mar Sabas, the tomb of Sabas, now encased a later modern structure.

© See the Holy Land 2011

Fig.5.49 Kursi, cave-crypt entrance.

© See the Holy Land 2011



Our ability to appraise this situation further depends on a more secure understanding of the chronology and distribution of this material before a more rigorous critique can be proposed. Nevertheless, in terms of the broader social environment of Christian cult in the Umayyad period, there is little reason to suggest that the continued production of such material was hampered by either the Sassanian or Arab invasions. The eulogia tokens at Baysān all appear to derive from cults where the main church is known to have continued throughout the Umayyad period and several beyond the ninth century. A token of the Magi excavated in an Abbasid layer provides one example; a token depicting a scene of the Dormition (from the Mamluk layer) another.¹¹²⁰ In these instances the churches from where we presume their provenance derives – Shepherd’s Fields, the Church of the Nativity and the Tomb of the Virgin – were all still active in the tenth century at a time when the Muslim writer al-Mas‘ūdī could still report of the continuation of similar venerative practices among Melkite Christians whose custody of these sites is still attested in the ninth century.¹¹²¹

In the context of the cult of the Dormition, an Umayyad or Abbasid dating is also highly plausible in a context which saw a proliferation of works about the Dormition during the eighth and ninth centuries, many by writers with direct associations to the Chalcedonian church in Palestine.¹¹²²

The dating of Greek pilgrim inscriptions may warrant a comparable revision. The continued use of Greek as a formal epigraphic convention in churches until the late eighth century suggests a similar continuation of Greek in votive graffito expressions beyond the

¹¹²⁰ Rahmani 1993: 109, 112-113.

¹¹²¹ For discussions of the chronologies of the two churches see Appendix A. al-Mas‘ūdī, *Muruj al-Dhahab* I.23 (ed. Meynard de Barbier 1861: 94, tr. Le Strange 1890, 301).

¹¹²² Of those produced during the seventh and eighth centuries see Pseudo Modestos, *Encomium on the Dormition of the Mother of God and ever Virgin, our lady the most holy Mary*, PG 86. II: 3277-3314; John of Damascus, *Homily on the Dormition of Mary I, Homily on the Dormition of Mary II, Homily on the Dormition of Mary III*, PG 96: 699-754; Andrew of Crete, *Homily on the Dormition of Mary*, PG 97: 1052c-1056D, 1068B-1069c; 1080C-D; Andrew of Crete PG 97: 1046-1110. Translations of these sources are available in Cunningham 2008 and Daley 1997.

mid-seventh century.¹¹²³ Invocations on oil lamps are another example of this formula that continued into the ninth century.¹¹²⁴

If extended dates for this material can be secured, the continuation of *eulogia* souvenirs and Greek votive inscriptions would complement the broader archaeological canvas which has emerged in recent decades – which essentially supports considerable continuity for Christian cult centres beyond 700.

All of the issues which surround the ‘614’ chronology in monastic contexts have direct application to the discussion of post-conquest pilgrimage and its material sites. This is not wholly unsurprising given that monastic tombs were themselves often focal points of veneration and monastic custodianship of holy sites was a fairly common social convention; even, as demonstrated by the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*, at sites which were not incorporated into a monastic complex.¹¹²⁵

Among the major coenobitic complexes of the Judean Desert at least four incorporated the tombs of founders or prominent *hegoumenoi*: Sabas, Theodosios, Euthymios and Martyrios.¹¹²⁶ Kursi, in the Galilee, may represent another although is also associated with the Miracle of the Multiplication and Miracle of the Swineherd (Fig. 5.46-5.49).¹¹²⁷

In the case of Sabas, it is evident from ninth-century reports in the letters of Theodore of Stoudios that this tomb was considered a focal point of veneration even if substantial twentieth-century reconstruction inhibits our understanding of the tomb in its early medieval

¹¹²³ The continued use of Greek remains a well noted feature of contemporary research. For the most recent systematic surveys see Di Segni 2009: 352-73, Di Segni 2003 and Di Segni 1999.

¹¹²⁴ Gawilkowski 1995.

¹¹²⁵ Thus as the Tomb of the Theotokos, the presence of monks is attested in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line 13-15 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 202-203), although the church does not appear to have formed part of a monastery. On pilgrimages to monastic sites or the importance of monks as receptacles of *eulogia* see Jotitschky 2000.

¹¹²⁶ On the tomb of Sabas see Patrich 2001: 19-20. Cyril of Scythopolis describes the blessings that emanated from Euthymios’ tomb: *Life of Euthymios* 34.25-35, 59.16-61.3 (ed. Schwartz 1959:35, 59, tr. Price 1991, 56-57). On the tomb of Paul at the ‘Martyrios Monastery’ see Magen 1993: 178.

¹¹²⁷ Only the monasteries of Kursi and Martyrios remain in their pre-Crusader form and are thus conducive for further archaeological study see Tzaferis 1983: 13 and Magen 1993: 180-181.

structural form.¹¹²⁸ Parallel cases of veneration at the tombs of Euthymios and Theoktistos are also known by the eighth century.¹¹²⁹

Within this broader picture, the majority of sites appear to have continued in use, with no apparent interruption to their occupational sequences, into the early eighth century. Neither, it appears, does the ostensible decline in the number of pilgrims appear to have instigated widespread deterioration to pilgrimage sites: Kursi, Jabal Harūn and Umm Qays, show no shift in occupational arrangements (or suggestions of material impoverishment) until the devastating effect of the Golan earthquake in the 740s.¹¹³⁰

This pattern of stability is replicated throughout the region (Fig.5.50) – a pattern which, I would speculate, indicates the essential continuity of pilgrim practice on a local level well beyond the Arab conquest.

As with monasticism, it is not until the ninth century that visible regional changes to this situation occurred and, like its monastic counterpart, pilgrimage was characterised by highly regionalised variations. The period between c.750-c.900 was the most drastic in terms of this change and saw progressive patterns of cult site retraction and nucleation. Sites in the Dekapolis appear to have been affected first: the churches of Umm Qays have already been discussed but additional examples of centrally placed relics or burials at Hippos and Abila provide additional examples not subsequently reclaimed after 750.¹¹³¹ Horvat Midras and

¹¹²⁸ Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters* 276-278 and 457-457 (ed. Fatouros 1992: 409-418). Patrich 2001: 20 discusses the sources for the earlier tomb of Sabas which predates the current construction of 1927.

¹¹²⁹ For Theoktistos: see Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 26.2 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999:43-44, 41).

¹¹³⁰ Stacey 2004: 15 and compare with Tzaferis 1983: 15-16. Mikkola *et al* 2008: 147-157 and Weber 1998. In the example of the Octagonal Terrace Church at Umm Qays, it is possible that an auxiliary church was added to the main structure in the early eighth century and would, therefore, provide another indication of investment in an existing site beyond 630: Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001: 543-545.

¹¹³¹ Młynarczyk 2011. The Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays is discussed in Al-Daire 2001: 553-560 and Weber 1998. The church was severely damaged, presumably in the Golan earthquake and only partially reoccupied in the ninth century. The Octagonal Terrace Church shows little evidence for later eighth century occupation; see Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001:545. For Abila see Chapman and Smith 2009: 525, 532 and the synthesis in Wineland 2001.

Horvat Hanot were similarly abandoned by the mid-eighth century following the Golan Earthquake, according to their excavators.¹¹³²

A similar retraction involving the churches of the Negev and the Galilee appears to have occurred in the late eighth and early ninth century. Rehovot-in-the-Negev shows little substantial late-ninth century occupation, a pattern also reflected at Horvat Berachot.¹¹³³ East of the Dead Sea, the church of Hagios Lot also appears to have been abandoned before the mid-ninth century as was the Mar Elyas site at some point between 800 and 900.¹¹³⁴

Other sites appear to have survived these overall processes but show little evidence for substantial structural renovation over the ninth and tenth century. Jabal Harūn, Kursi and the Mausoleum Church of Umm Qays, all continued to function but saw fairly dramatic changes to the spatial usage of their sites following the Golan earthquake of the 740s.¹¹³⁵

There is no evidence to indicate that these developments were detached from the broader social and economic shifts which impacted on the establishments of their monastic contemporaries. If anything, the factors which determined their trajectories closely resemble the patterns known among the major coenobitic sites of the region. These, as explored in Chapter Four, were often located in sites where archaeological soundings propose a corresponding wane in activity by the ninth century (Fig.5. 51).¹¹³⁶

The regional pattern of retraction of into a core network of *loca sancta*, which were interwoven into the regional networks of pilgrims and the Melkite stational liturgy, parallel the processes exhibited by monastic establishments.¹¹³⁷ Jerusalem appears to have maintained its attraction to a broader demographic of pilgrims. The diversity of its monastic and pilgrim presence, which incorporated Latin and Georgian foundations and pilgrims, has already been noted, but this milieu was characterised by a considerable number of journeys made by

¹¹³² Ganor, Klein, Avner and Zissu 2012. The church of Horvat Hanot is discussed in Shenhav 2003.

¹¹³³ See Appendix A. The situation at the Hagios Sergios-Bakkhos church in Nessana is less clearly defined.

¹¹³⁴ Politis 2012: 115-158.

¹¹³⁵ See pages 255-259.

¹¹³⁶ See pages 263-278.

¹¹³⁷ See pages 304-308.

Christians from within Muslim held territories. The festival of Easter, especially the miracle of the Holy Fire, appears to have attracted annual pilgrimage from within the *Jund Filastīn* and Egypt and with the earliest mention of the festival emerging in the ninth-century work of al-Jāhiz.¹¹³⁸

Al-Masʿūdī's description of the miracle in the 940s suggests that this activity had continued uninterrupted beyond 900 and by the early eleventh century, according to the later al-Marqīzī (c.1364-c.1442), its popularity among Christians was beginning to antagonise the Fatimid authorities.¹¹³⁹

It remains difficult to determine whether pilgrimages to Jerusalem and other major sites were undertaken continuously by Christians throughout the year or if pilgrimage activity concentrated around specific calendar festivals. al-Muqdasī's report of the 980s confirms the continued observance of a number of calendar festivals, which we know from the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* often involved stational liturgies closely linked with particular urban centres.¹¹⁴⁰

The complexity of the pilgrimage milieu beyond Jerusalem and, to a lesser extent, Mount Sinai, is less clear but the material data would suggest a similar correlation between the sustained use of a site and the diversity of its pilgrim demographic.¹¹⁴¹ The other major

¹¹³⁸ The earliest mention of the festival emerging in the ninth-century work of al-Jāhiz: see Gil 1992: 466. Reports in the account of Bernard the monk from the 860s, and the Byzantine courtier Niketas Basilikos in the 940s, offer additional examples of the growing interest in the event to Christians outside of the Dar al-Islam: *Bernard the Monk* 10 (ed. Tobler 1874: 92-93, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 266), *Letter of Niketas to Constantine Porphyrogenitos on the Holy Fire*, (ed. Riant 1881, 375-382).

¹¹³⁹ Walker 2009: 210-212: 'That year Christian went from Egypt to Jerusalem to be present at Easter in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (al-Qumama), as was customary every year, bringing with them important adornments, much as the Muslims do in going out with the pilgrimage caravan. So al-Hakim asked Khatkin the Dayf al-Adudi, one of his commanders, about that because of the latter's familiarity about this church. He responded, "The Christian greatly revere this church and make pilgrimages to it from every country. Kings come to visit, carrying to it great wealth, vestments, curtains furnishing, candle stands, crosses finely wrought in gold and silver, and vessels of the same. There are in it many things of that type. On the day of Easter, Christians assemble at the church, setting up crosses and suspending candlesticks on the altar. They attempt to have fire transferred to it by means of elder oil mixed with mercury. It produces for the purpose a bright light that those who see this happen suppose has descended from the heavens.'

¹¹⁴⁰ *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34) (ed. Garitte 1958). For a discussion of the stational liturgy in Palestine in the Byzantine period, which the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* suggests continued into the ninth century see Baldovin 1982: 132-154.

¹¹⁴¹ See Appendix A.

sites which continued beyond 900 are located in the environs of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, although additional examples including the church of Hagios Giorgos at Lydda, the basilica of Emmaus and Mount Tabor are also among those attested into the tenth century and, in the examples of Hagios Giorgos and Emmaus, were restored during the twelfth (Fig.5.52).¹¹⁴² There are many sites where poorly realised excavations inhibit further appraisal: Kastellion and Theoktistos provide two examples where fragmentary data may posit their continued occupation beyond 900 but where the limitations of the excavation reports do not provide explicit confirmation of their occupation.¹¹⁴³

These general changes to the landscape of cult sites in the ninth century appear to have occurred during periods of relative stability in Byzantine-Arab frontiers and, moreover, during a period when Byzantine economic and military stabilities were beginning to promote a renewed emphasis of elite patronage into churches and monastic structures within the Aegean.¹¹⁴⁴ Neither of these developments is paralleled in the material from within Palestinian contexts where the ninth century emerges as one of regional retraction and a period when the first requests for financial assistance to Frankish and Anglo-Saxon rulers appear from the Jerusalem Patriarchate.¹¹⁴⁵ If the social and economic pre-dominance of external pilgrims to Palestinian cult networks is to be accepted, further research is required to identify the factors which initiated the abandonment of cult sites in Palestine in the ninth century at a point when such exchanges with the West visibly increase in the literary source material.¹¹⁴⁶

¹¹⁴² On the Church of Hagios Giorgos and its structural history, see Pringle 1998: 9-27. The site appears to have continued as a major focal point for the cult of St George into the tenth century observed on the 23rd April' *Sinai Georgian Menaion*: April 23 (ed. Garitte 1958). Muqadassī reports that the festival was widely observed in the 980s: Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsim fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1906: 182-183, tr. Collins 2001: 153). On the basilica of Emmaus see Vincent and Abel 1932.

¹¹⁴³ See Appendix A.

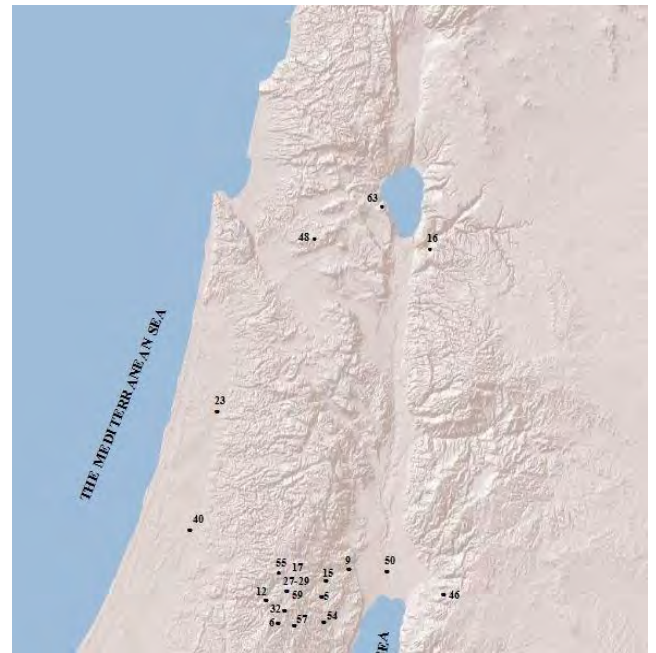
¹¹⁴⁴ See page 51 with notes.

¹¹⁴⁵ See pages 214-222.

¹¹⁴⁶ This perception of Palestinian pilgrimage, whilst enduring among Byzantinists, is not matched among western medievalists who stress the rather restricted nature of Holy Land pilgrimage even in the sixth century: Hen 1999: 302. Hunt 1993 also notes the rather ambivalent attitude to the Holy Land among Frankish writers.



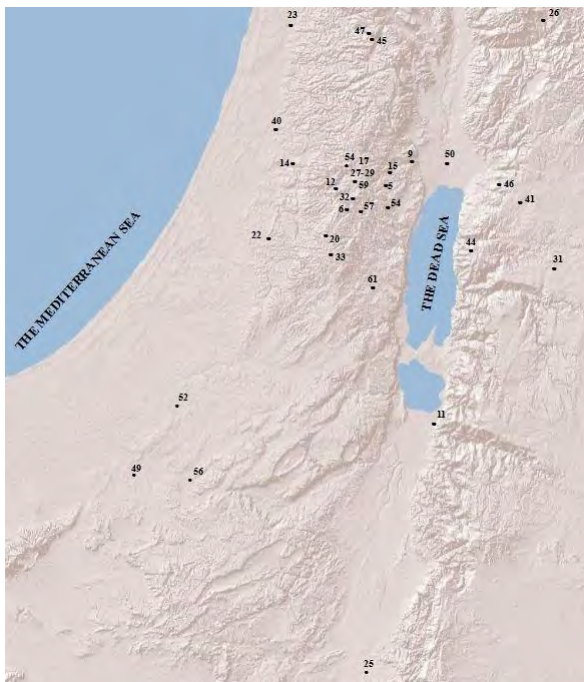
Seventh Century



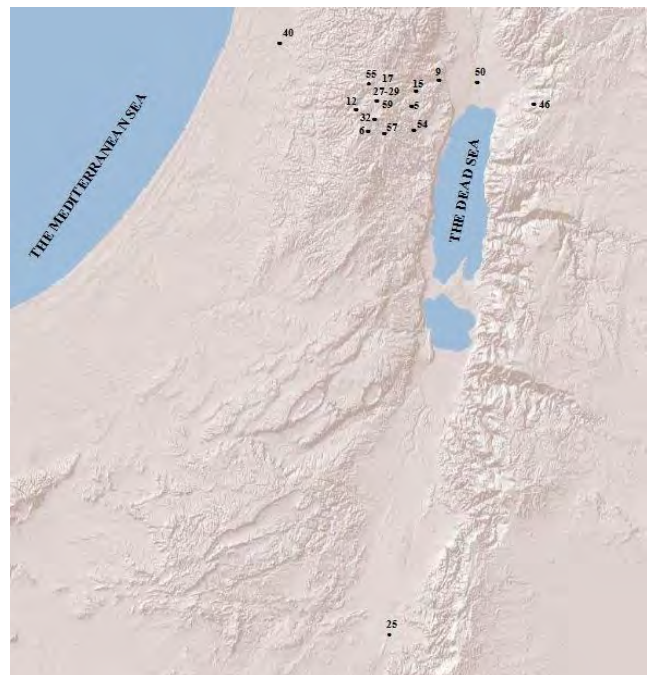
Tenth Century

Fig. 5.50 Map of sites in the Dekapolis and the Galilee active in the seventh century and those where tenth-century phases are currently identified.

© Reynolds 2012



Seventh Century



Tenth Century

Fig. 5.51 Map of sites in the Jerusalem area and the Negev active in the seventh century and those where tenth-century phases are currently identified.

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Fig.5.52 Emmaus, the basilica showing the later twelfth-century renovations.
© Emmaus 2008



Fig.5.54 Kathisma, view of the octagonal basilica.
© Emmaus 2008

Fig. 5.54 Mount Nebo Arabic inscriptions¹¹⁴⁷

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Inscription A: [And he who doubts] is an unbeliever Based on a modern saying (9th century?)</p> | <p>Inscription A: [و من شك في الله كفر Based on a modern saying (9th century?)</p> |
| <p>He who believes in Allah, exalted be he!</p> | <p>Inscription B و من آل قت غل ي Islamic formula. (10th century)</p> |
| <p>Kufic Arabic (8th century)</p> | <p>Inscription C Indecipherable inscription لا قل عن آل ر ا xxx صى ة xxx صا</p> |

Fig. 5.55 Arabic inscription, Jabal Harūn¹¹⁴⁸

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------|
| <p>Inscription A Inscribed onto altar plaster. The formula Jumada 133 confirms a date of 750/51 for the inscription.</p> | <table> <tr> <td>1. xxx the son of Hasan</td><td>(illegible traces) ن [xxx]</td></tr> <tr> <td>2. xxx</td><td>Illegible وم آل سبت [xx] من جمادي اف ل سنة</td></tr> <tr> <td>3. xx xxxx Saturday</td><td>[xx] وث آل ثين وث آل ث مية</td></tr> <tr> <td>4. xx of Jumada 1, year</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>5. xx 33 <and> 100.</td><td></td></tr> </table> | 1. xxx the son of Hasan | (illegible traces) ن [xxx] | 2. xxx | Illegible وم آل سبت [xx] من جمادي اف ل سنة | 3. xx xxxx Saturday | [xx] وث آل ثين وث آل ث مية | 4. xx of Jumada 1, year | | 5. xx 33 <and> 100. | |
| 1. xxx the son of Hasan | (illegible traces) ن [xxx] | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. xxx | Illegible وم آل سبت [xx] من جمادي اف ل سنة | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. xx xxxx Saturday | [xx] وث آل ثين وث آل ث مية | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. xx of Jumada 1, year | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. xx 33 <and> 100. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Inscription B (ninth century?) Found in a ninth century archaeological context.</p> | <table> <tr> <td>1. O God!</td><td>xx ا</td></tr> <tr> <td>2. Forgive Atā-</td><td>اطاغفرا</td></tr> <tr> <td>3. -Allah the son of Shija</td><td>ال قب ن ش اع</td></tr> <tr> <td>4. ?</td><td>ا <faint></td></tr> <tr> <td>5. ?</td><td><faint> اد</td></tr> </table> | 1. O God! | xx ا | 2. Forgive Atā- | اطاغفرا | 3. -Allah the son of Shija | ال قب ن ش اع | 4. ? | ا <faint> | 5. ? | <faint> اد |
| 1. O God! | xx ا | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Forgive Atā- | اطاغفرا | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. -Allah the son of Shija | ال قب ن ش اع | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. ? | ا <faint> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. ? | <faint> اد | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Inscription C (late eighth to ninth century) An inscription found in close proximity to the monastic complex.</p> | <table> <tr> <td>1. O God! Forgive</td><td>(ال ل) م غفر ل....</td></tr> <tr> <td>2. Mahmoud bin Abd al-Malik</td><td>م موهب ن عبدل م ك</td></tr> </table> | 1. O God! Forgive | (ال ل) م غفر ل.... | 2. Mahmoud bin Abd al-Malik | م موهب ن عبدل م ك | | | | | | |
| 1. O God! Forgive | (ال ل) م غفر ل.... | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Mahmoud bin Abd al-Malik | م موهب ن عبدل م ك | | | | | | | | | | |

¹¹⁴⁷ Transcription and translation from Saller 1941: 275-276.

¹¹⁴⁸ For Inscriptions A and B see Hämeen-Antilla and Ohrnberg 2008. For Inscription C see Al-Salameen and Al-Falahat 2007.



Fig. 5.56 Votive inscription asking Hagios Lot to bless Sozomenos, Ulpios and another individual whose name cannot be deciphered. The votive was encountered during excavations at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata.
©Politis 2011

[سلا م] لى ج اب ر ب ل ن م س ب ل ن م ط ئ ي ل
[ووال] د ه و ل م ي ع ا د ر ل ن ص ر ل ية
[خ م س ن ه] س و س ب ع ي ن ي ث ث ا ة

Peace on Jaber son of Mousa son of Michael
And his parents and to all Christian monasteries,
The year three hundred and seventy five (984 CE).



Fig. 5.57 Marble slab inscription from the Tomb of the Theotokos at Gethsemane dated to 984.
The inscription appears in part of a mosaic floor in the Crusader church dated to the 12/13th century but which reused material from the earlier Byzantine structure.
© Katsimbinis 1976
Transcription and translation Katsimbinis 1976 with the assistance of Yiannis Memaris and George Kamar.



Fig.5.58
Locations of inscriptions attributed to al-Badr
© Reynolds 2012

Local travel to such sites is, however, better attested throughout the period and into the tenth century. Much of the evidence for this derives from a series of pilgrim graffiti inscriptions encountered during excavation. Regrettably, a lack of systematic engagement with such material (including some fairly key sites such as Choziba and Mar Theoktistos) has restricted understanding of its extent and regional distribution.¹¹⁴⁹

This is not assisted by the problems presented by poorly refined chronologies for sites and the inattention placed upon the spatial context of such inscriptions which often obscure the relationship between votive graffiti and the liturgical activities of the site.¹¹⁵⁰ Arabic inscriptions, as noted earlier, are particularly affected by this trend.¹¹⁵¹ Collectively, these limitations have probably resulted in scholarly underestimation the level of pilgrim activity in Umayyad and Abbasid contexts and a more detailed understanding of the conventions and formulas of such inscriptions. Equally, a lack of clearly defined stylistic criteria for votive palaeography, partly due to the lack of research, does not permit more refined dating beyond a two or three century range.

Nonetheless, by observing such inscriptions in the context of the site chronology, it is apparent that the majority were executed during a period when the sites continued to function as *foci* of Christian cult activity. The examples of Horvat Berachot, Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Deir 'Ain 'Abata have already been noted; these, however, are examples of a much broader convention which appears to have continued into the tenth century and reveals a network of cult sites still actively negotiated by local Christian communities throughout the

¹¹⁴⁹ Chitty 1928: 151. This is especially true of the Arabic graffiti, see Goldfus, Arabus and Alliata 1995: 285-292. See Patrich 1995: 142-144, for a similar acknowledgment of graffiti inscriptions in Greek, Arabic and Syriac at Khirbat Mird. The presence of Syriac inscriptions was also noted in the pre-Crusader phases of the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth: Bagatti 1969: 127-128.

¹¹⁵⁰ As we have seen with regards to Horvat Berachot and Rehovot-in-the-Negev see pages 163, 179-180.

¹¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Abbasid period.¹¹⁵² At Mount Nebo, the excavations of Sylvester Saller yielded several examples (only three of which could be deciphered) dated by him to the ninth and tenth centuries situated in the monastic establishment or upon stones within the vicinity of the complex (Fig.5.54).¹¹⁵³ Similarly, at Jabal Harūn, a series of votives inscribed in plaster and on small marble tablets provides further examples executed between the eighth and tenth centuries (Fig.5.55).¹¹⁵⁴ The use of marble tablets for votives appears to follow a fairly established convention known from the excavations on the cardo in Jarash and from earlier examples in Greek at the Church of Sergios and Bakkhos at Nessana and Hagios Lot at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata (Fig.5.56).¹¹⁵⁵ This practice may have continued into the tenth century, but currently is attested only by a fragmentary votive, dated to the 980s, from the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane, which is not well provenanced (Fig. 5.57).¹¹⁵⁶

There are cases where established Byzantine routes to major sites were similarly maintained. A series of inscriptions by Al-Badr of Ayla, dated to the eighth or ninth century, is particularly informative in this regard (Fig. 5.58).¹¹⁵⁷ Al-Badr is attested in an inscription at the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev but appears again in the Wadi Hajjaj – a well established route to Sinai in the Byzantine period – and finally on the slopes of Mount Sinai.¹¹⁵⁸ An approximate contemporary of Al-Badr, Sulayman Ibn Ubayd of Ayla, is also attested in an inscription in the vicinity of Al-Badr’s own invocation.¹¹⁵⁹ It is uncertain how Al-Badr negotiated this route, although the possibility that his sojourn at Rehovot-in-the-

¹¹⁵² *Ibid* and Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012: 417-418.

¹¹⁵³ For the reports see Saller 1941c :275-276. Saller dates the abandonment of the monastery to the late eighth or early ninth century. Piccirillo 1998: 218 appears to favour a century later. The presence of Abbasid wares in the ceramic report of Hilary Schneider would suggest more substantial eighth and ninth-century phases see Schneider 1951: 96-102, 110-118, plate 152.

¹¹⁵⁴ Hämeen-Anttila and Öhrnberg 2008.

¹¹⁵⁵ Examples inscribed with Greek were encountered at Nessana but have not been systematically published, see Kirk and Welles 1962: 139. For the inscription of Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata: Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: 414-415. One of the inscriptions of Mount Nebo, attributed to Ata, was also inscribed on a marble tablet, see Saller 1941c: 275-276.

¹¹⁵⁶ Katsimbini 1974: 278-279.

¹¹⁵⁷ Sharon 1993.

¹¹⁵⁸ Sharon 1993.

¹¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*. There is also another attributed to Shabib b. Saluīh which dates to the late eighth or early ninth century, see Sharon 1997: 178.

Negev preceded or followed a visit to Jerusalem is one explanation for the location these inscriptions.¹¹⁶⁰ Certainly the use of the Negev as a transitory space which facilitated the journeys of pilgrims to Mount Sinai is attested elsewhere and appears to have been an established practice which continued throughout the seventh century.¹¹⁶¹ The Nessana hoard provides two papyri fragments from the governor of Gaza, tentatively dated to the 680s, which record earlier requests for guides to accompany his wife and his client (*mawla*) to the mountain.¹¹⁶² The recent study of Mutsuo Kawatoko and Risa Tokunaga has, in addition, identified a further 966 Arabic inscriptions (the majority Christian) in the Wadi al-Mukāttāb in the Sinai peninsula which collectively indicate a peak in activity between the ninth and tenth centuries.¹¹⁶³

The paucity of further examples in other regions may, in part, be attributed to the nature of their environmental contexts. Both Jabal Harūn and Sinai are located in regions where the common occurrence along the established route of natural sandstone formations permits the creation of graffiti. These geographical characteristics find no parallels in regions further to the north, or in the Dekapolis, where environmental limitations mean that such inscriptions are far rarer and, where they do survive, are commonly executed on fabricated media.¹¹⁶⁴

Whilst inscriptions provide an insight into the continued use of pre-existing Christian sites and landscapes, the identities of those who left the surviving votives are usually unknown. In a handful of examples general observations can be made of their place of origin

¹¹⁶⁰ Figueras 1995 explores the pilgrimage routes between Sinai and Jerusalem which passed through the Negev. Graf 1995: 257-265, notes that the Via Nova Triana, linked to Ayla, was a popular pilgrim route.

¹¹⁶¹ See Figueras 1995.

¹¹⁶² *P. Colt* 72 and *P. Colt* 73.

¹¹⁶³ These have not yet been collectively published but an overview of the results from the survey appears in Kawatoko and Tokunaga 2006. This peak in activity mirrors the pattern also observed in the Georgian and Armenian inscriptions in Stone 1982.

¹¹⁶⁴ This includes worked stone material such as the votives encountered at Deir Ain Abata: Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: 413. Earlier, but still illustrative, is the example of Capernaum where the inscriptions were predominantly executed on plaster: Testa 1972. Examples of painted inscriptions, which cannot be deciphered, are known from the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev: Tsafir 1988: 192.

(residential rather than ethnic) and, more rarely, of their religious affiliation.¹¹⁶⁵ There are some inscriptions which exhibit a more overt association with Islamic devotees than others: those that mention Muhammad and early seventh-century inscriptions which mention Moses are two examples.¹¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the use of the *basmillah* is not wholly indicative of Islamic practice and, particularly after the eighth century, its appearance in churches may indicate the common vernacular among Christians rather than a strong Islamic presence.¹¹⁶⁷ Muslim veneration at existing Christian cult sites is not, however, an unknown phenomenon of the period; if anything it may have been an accepted social convention with Muslim attitudes to such sites characterised by deep ambiguity at a localised level. Beyond a handful of monumental projects (including the *miḥrāb* of the Kathisma church and the mosque of Sergiopolis) material examples of the cooperative use of cult space between Christians and Muslims are fairly ephemeral (Fig. 5.53).¹¹⁶⁸ Inscriptions provide some indication of Muslim use of Christian sites with the more overtly Islamic formulas of Deir 'Ain 'Abata and Rehovot-in-the-Negev offering two examples.¹¹⁶⁹ These cases correlate with the more frequent mention of such practice in the textual material, where a series of ḥadith of the ninth and tenth centuries draw attention to the erroneous practice among Muslims of worshipping in Christian cult sites.¹¹⁷⁰ Such stances were, however, characterised by deep divisions and ambiguities, and should caution us against assuming that Islamic attitudes to the Levantine Christian landscape were at any point in the period 650-950 systematically defined. The constant need to redraw the boundaries of Muslim orthodox practice would imply a more

¹¹⁶⁵ Examples such as Al-Badr and Sulyman who both identify themselves as natives of Ayla: Sharon 1993. The Zadakathon fortress is another group where individuals can be identified: see page 355.

¹¹⁶⁶ Hoyland 1997: 77-102 surveys the evidence for the earliest Muslim inscriptions. No explanation has yet been proposed to explain the invocation of Moses and Aaron in these inscriptions. However, it should be noted that the use of the title Lord (رب), to refer to Aaron and Moses has its origins in the Qur'ān: Hoyland 1997: 78-79.

¹¹⁶⁷ Thus the ninth century papyrus written by a monastic *hegoumene* to an acquaintance in Fustāt opens with the *basmillah* see Anawati and Jomier 1954: 92.

¹¹⁶⁸ On the *mihrab* of the Kathisma see Avner 2006/7. The discussion of Sergiopolis/Rusafa is offered in Key-Fowden 1999: 174-189.

¹¹⁶⁹ For Rehovot-in-the-Negev: see Nevo 1988: 187-192. The inscription is reproduced in Brock, Canby, Al-Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012: 417-418.

¹¹⁷⁰ See Bashear 1991 and Kister 1979:173-96.

fluid arrangement of early Muslim veneration that previously recognised. The tendency to use ḥadīth declarations as reflective of normative Muslim practice is partly responsible for the present ambiguity of our understanding, but it interlocks with broader issues relating to the obscurity of Muslim devotional life beyond the elite scope of the surviving material and literary corpus.

Muslim negotiation of the existing Christian landscape (at least as far as the sources permit us to observe) appears to have been predominantly centred on sites of biblical significance and, more narrowly, those associated with the major figures interwoven in Quranic revelation.¹¹⁷¹ Muslim interest in Mount Sinai is among the most important of these connections, but several traditions provide further indications of Muslim veneration at the Tomb of the Theotokos at Gethsemane and the Church of the Nativity; both of which were held in considerable esteem.¹¹⁷²

Occasionally, this may also have resulted in Muslim participation in festivals whose celebration contradicted central Islamic theological precepts. Thus al-Masʿūdī, commenting on a Christian practice he witnessed in the 940s, notes Muslim participation in the miracle of the Holy Fire during the orthodox celebration of Easter in the Church of the Anastasis.

‘On the fifth day of the (Syrian) month of Tishrin 1 (October), is the festival of the Kanisah al-Kumamah (the Church of the Sepulchre) at Jerusalem. The Christians assemble for this festival from out of all lands. For on it the fire from heaven doth descend among them, and they kindle there from the candles. The Muslims are also want to see this festival. It is the custom at this time to pluck olive-leaves. The Christians hold many legends there besides; but the fire is produced by artifice, which is kept a great secret.’

Muruj al-Dhahab III, 405.

¹¹⁷¹ Kister 1996 has also surveyed the growing debates of the ninth and tenth centuries regarding the authenticity of sites associated with the Prophets. Avner 2006/7 has noted the importance of the site of the Kathisma, to some Muslim groups.

¹¹⁷² For a discussion and references see Bashear 1991: 274-276. Bashear identifies particular Muslim interest in the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives. Bashear notes two writers active in the eighth century in Syria-Palestine, Thawr b. Yazīd (from Hims, died in Jerusalem, 153 A.H.) and Muhammad b. Mansūr b. Thābit, who argued against Muslim veneration at the two sites.

Muslim presence at these festivals alludes to a more ambiguous pattern of cult veneration than previously assumed but evidently one which had basis in popular practice rather than the social conventions of Muslim religious or elite writers. Mas'ūdī's disparaging comments are indicative of the more rigid approach to this practice emerging among elite writers and correlate well with the general emphasis on the definition of confessional boundaries in the ninth and tenth century.¹¹⁷³ General observations on the declining rate of church investment (and processes of abandonment) between 750 and 950, however, propose that the contribution of Muslims as an additional demographic to Christian pilgrimage landscapes was probably minimal and highly selective in terms of its emphasis. The prevalent abandonment patterns among smaller regional shrines, whose significance appears highly localised, suggests that the Muslim use of Christian sites was not uniformly replicated across the region and contributed little to underpinning such sites in terms of revenue structure.¹¹⁷⁴

More complex factors involving settlement distribution and change arguably contributed to these processes, as wider processes urban and rural retraction instigated a fracture in existing devotional associations with *loci* in these former settlements and urban cores. The strongly localised association with these sites is suggested by the limited evidence for the subsequent redevelopment of these sites by Muslims or following the establishment of the Latin Kingdom by which point such associations, we may presume, had disappeared from local devotional memory.

By way of example, Horvat Midras, Horvat Qasra, Mar Elyas or the Terrace Church at Umm Qays all appear to have been abandoned during the late eighth or ninth centuries.¹¹⁷⁵

Although not implicitly linked to cult practice, the churches of Kastron Mefa'a and Madaba

¹¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁴ Thus in sites such as Horvat Berachot, accepting that it was not occupied by squatters, shows little indication of substantial occupation beyond the ninth century: Hirschfeld and Tsafir 1979 and Magness 2003: 109-111. Deir 'Ain 'Abata was similarly abandoned in the ninth century, see Politis 2012:115-158, as was the Kathisma, Aver 2010: pers. comm.

¹¹⁷⁵ The abandonment of Horvat Midras is attributed to the Golan earthquake of 749 as it that of the Terrace Church in Umm Qays, see Ganor, Klein, Avner and Zissu 2012, and Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guineé 2001: 545 and the earlier study in Vriezen 1992: 375.

propose similar patterns of ninth century abatement, with preliminary soundings in other parts of the Umayyad town mirroring similar trends in domestic and industrial structures.¹¹⁷⁶

Even in examples such as the Kathisma, where the construction of a *mihrāb* provides substantial evidence of Muslim interest, these cases of abandonment also occurred. Although excavations have identified substantial eighth-century renovation sequences in the church, it yielded no material which would support an occupation date beyond the late ninth century.¹¹⁷⁷

Sites that maintained a more complex relationship with groups further afield in the Caliphate and from the west exhibit a more uniform pattern of redevelopment after the eleventh century.¹¹⁷⁸ These programmes were not regionally consistent in terms of scale but the sites in which they occur broadly conform to the list of sites which maintained strong associations with Christian communities beyond Palestine or which were situated in more stable urban environments. The monumental rebuilding programmes of Jerusalem (including the Sepulchre/Anastasis complex, the Probatica and the Tomb of the Theotokos), Bethlehem and Nazareth demonstrate intensive restoration; this is paralleled on more modest scales at Tiberias, Emmaus/Nikopolis, Mar Samwil, Mar Saba and Choziba.¹¹⁷⁹

5.4 BYZANTINE AND WESTERN PILGRIMAGE

Contemporary with the continuities proposed within local networks was a continuation of pilgrimage from the Byzantine Aegean and the post-Roman west. Of the two, pilgrimage from the west has received more considered attention primarily due to the predominance of

¹¹⁷⁶ See references in note 3.

¹¹⁷⁷ The results of the excavation have not been published in final form. I am grateful to the excavator, Rina Avner, for her email correspondence with me about the final dating of the site.

¹¹⁷⁸ These are too numerous to address here. The main sites included, however, the Church of the Anastasis, see Pringle 2007: 5-72, Nazareth, see Pringle 1998: 116-140, Hagios Giorgos in Lod/Lyddā, see Pringle 1998: 9-27 and the Church of the Theotokos in Gethsemane, see Pringle 2007: 287-305.

¹¹⁷⁹ On Tiberias see Hirschfeld 2004b and Pringle 1998: 229-237; Mar Samwil, see Pringle 1998: 85-94; Mar Sabas: see and Choziba, see Pringle 1993: 183-192.

the Latin pilgrims' accounts in published source collections.¹¹⁸⁰ The earliest of these, the *De Locis Sanctis* of Adomnán, which narrates an apparent pilgrimage undertaken by a certain Arculf during the 680s, has experienced the most attention in terms of modern analytical interest.¹¹⁸¹ Through a series of studies, Thomas O'Loughlin has carefully sought to understand the text with respect to the more immediate intellectual concerns of Adomnán's community in Iona, and its relationship to existing literary forms.¹¹⁸² This has essentially qualified several of the details commonly used in studies of Palestinian pilgrimage following the Arab conquest, by drawing attention to Adomnán's exploitation of existing literary motifs and the role of the text as an exegetical tool. O'Loughlin presents reservations about the actual historical existence of Arculf as a pilgrim, emphasising instead his role as a literary tool for exegetical exploration.¹¹⁸³ This is possible, although the text has not yet been subjected to alternative critical appraisals which may qualify his hypothesis. Nonetheless, Arculf's journey complements the general impression of later sources of the eighth and ninth century and suggests that such practice was conceivable if infrequent. The *Hodepoerican* of Huneberc, which relates the experience of Willibald (later bishop of Eichstätt) in the Holy Land around the 720s is a further example whose relationship to typical Anglo-Saxon pilgrim conventions has yet to be fully appraised.¹¹⁸⁴ Further reports of two pilgrimages to the east by Bishop Silvinus (720s) and Bishop Magdalevus of Verdun (750) provide supplementary, though poorly understood, examples.¹¹⁸⁵

Additional sources which mention pilgrims or journeys to Palestine from the Latin West are problematic. The supposed journey of Thomas of Maurienne is one such example.

¹¹⁸⁰ Exemplified in Wilkinson 2002.

¹¹⁸¹ An exception to this is the *De Locis Sanctis* of Adomnán about which see O' Loughlin 1992 with additional discussions in O' Loughlin 2000a, O' Loughlin 2000b, O' Loughlin 2004, O' Loughlin 2007 and O' Loughlin 2010.

¹¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸³ Most explicit in O'Loughlin 1992.

¹¹⁸⁴ The main study of the text is that of Aist 2010. Aist 2010: 263-264 recognises the need for a better understanding of the social and intellectual context of Willibald's work in his conclusion but does not develop this concern further.

¹¹⁸⁵ *Gesta Episcoporum Virdunensium*, MGH 4: 43-44.

This narrates a late seventh-century journey to the Church of the Anastasis, but survives only in a much later (highly legendary) twelfth-century account.¹¹⁸⁶ Michael McCormick's identification of 109 cases of contact between Palestine and the west (mainly by pilgrims) is also undermined by similar concerns about the dating or reliability of individual accounts or the authenticity of the extant collections of *eulogiae*.¹¹⁸⁷ The issues presented by such material, whilst not of concern in this discussion, exemplify the problems when sources or material which report cases of early medieval contact with the Levant are de-contextualised from their own literary and methodological frameworks.

The collective evidence identified by McCormick and other scholars would, however, propose a crescendo in exchange activity between the Carolingian polities and Palestine by the early ninth century. Contacts between the court of Charlemagne and the Jerusalem patriarchate are known, but are not explicit in identifying such journeys for the purposes of pilgrimage.¹¹⁸⁸ Several of the exchanges were diplomatic rather than piously motivated and must be set within the broader context of Charlemagne's active attempt to establish diplomatic negotiations with the Abbasid court around the year 800.¹¹⁸⁹

¹¹⁸⁶ On the issues of the *Libellus constructionis Farfensis* used by McCormick see Costambeys 2007: 13-14.

¹¹⁸⁷ Thus McCormick's use of authenticics to identify cases of contact between Palestine and the west needs to be handled reservedly in terms of reconstructing cases of pilgrimage: McCormick 2001: 281-318. The authenticics which accompany the relics are to be dated between the eighth and tenth centuries based on palaeography. This, however, does not clarify the provenance of the relics themselves which cannot be analysed. Further still, these collections may not represent direct cases of contact with the Levant but collections that may have been received upon imperial endowments or diplomatic exchange. For this see Cameron 1979 and Hen 1998: 299-300.

¹¹⁸⁸ The *Royal Frankish Annales* indicate that this exchange occurred between December 799 and January 800 (ed. Kurze 1895: 107-112, tr. Walter-Scholtz and Rogers 1974: 78-79).

¹¹⁸⁹ There is further indication that such correspondences were actively promoted by the Patriarch Thomas to generate financial support for the Jerusalem church. Representatives of the Patriarch are attested at Aachen by 799 for the purpose of soliciting aid; they stayed for some months before returning (with donations from the court) to Palestine: *Royal Frankish Annales* (ed. Kurze 1895: 107-112, tr. Walter-Scholtz and Rogers 1974: 78-79). There is also evidence to propose that such attempts to solicit aid resulted in the commissioning of buildings works by western rulers in Jerusalem. The establishment of a Latin monastery on the church of the Mount of Olives in one example, but of more central concern for the Melkites may have been Charlemagne's possible contribution to a restorative programme undertaken at the Church of the Anastasis around 813. On the Carolingian establishments in Jerusalem see the extensive treatment in McCormick 2011: 76-91. *Ibid*: 179-180 also discusses the possibility that the repairs to the dome of the Anastasis, undertaken during the reign of Patriarch Thomas (with whom Charlemagne was in contact), were facilitated by the support of Charlemagne. Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, around a century later, records this episodes but attributes the financing of the restoration to an Egyptian Christian *Naẓm al-Jawhar*: 33 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 148-149, 127-128). The issue may never be fully rectified, but the evidence proposed by McCormick of Charlemagne's possible contribution is convincing. Evidently by the tenth century Charlemagne's reputation as a builder remained prevalent among the Byzantine

These examples of exchange are complemented by the accounts of Bernard a monk, whose journey from Rome to the Holy Land in 870 is attested in a descriptive account of the journey.¹¹⁹⁰

Later in the 940s the western pilgrim Dounale-Stephen's journey to Palestine was ostensibly reported to Constantine VII and Romanos II.¹¹⁹¹ The report is now lost and is discussed only in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, which makes questions of its authenticity difficult to assess. Nonetheless, a similar report in a letter to Constantine VII from Niketas Basilikos dated to 947, which narrates the miracle of the Holy Fire, supports the impression of a Byzantine imperial interest in the holy places and its pilgrims by the tenth century.¹¹⁹² A similar peak in activity by the tenth century, notably from within the Ottonian imperial family, appears after 900. Countess Adelinda of Swabia is reported to have made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 900 following the death of her sons, after which she resumed life in a nunnery.¹¹⁹³ Judith, the grandmother of Henry II, made a similar journey around 970 accompanied by a group of women from the imperial court.¹¹⁹⁴ These journeys were paralleled by a number of similar pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the 920s the 990s and into the eleventh century.¹¹⁹⁵ Such examples of travel were characterised by their restriction to individuals from within the royal court or high ranking clerical figures (familial groups that were often, as in the case of Hidda, sister of Gero, bishop of Cologne, indistinguishable) and their punctuated nature.¹¹⁹⁶

imperial family; Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *De Administrando Imperio* 26 (ed. and tr. Moravcsik and Jenkins 1967: 108-109).

¹¹⁹⁰ Bernard the Monk, *Itinerary* (ed. Tobler 1874: 85-99, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 261-271).

¹¹⁹¹ *Synax CP* 317-22.

¹¹⁹² *Letter of Niketas to Constantine Porphyrogenitos on the Holy Fire*, (ed. Riant 1881, 375-382).

¹¹⁹³ Gil 1992: 485-486. Conrad of Constance (c.900-c.975), an approximate contemporary of Adelina, is also reported to have made three journeys to Jerusalem in his lifetime, see Udalschalk, *Life of Conrad of Constance*, PL 865-870. However, the date of this work (written about 1120), and its link to Bishop Ulrich I of Dillingen (a proponent of the cult) means that the example must be treated with caution.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Acta Sanctorum*, Jan I: 539.

¹¹⁹⁵ Bréhier 1921: 32-33.

¹¹⁹⁶ This example and additional cases of exchange are addressed in Gil 1992: 485-486. It is important to note that these examples of exchange are characterised by their rather periodic nature: limited to specific periods and individuals. Thus, early ninth century interest and connection with Palestine is predominantly confined to the

Evidence of exchange from Byzantium is better furnished in this regard but characterised by the distinct absence of detailed pilgrims' accounts familiar from the Latin tradition. Only one text, the description of the holy places attributed to the hieromonk Epiphánios, has survived and it is not yet clear to what extent the genre enjoyed wide circulation in Byzantium in this period.¹¹⁹⁷

Evidence for contact between Byzantium and Palestine following the seventh century is predominantly consigned to mentions in hagiography and *synaxaria* and, with the exception of Epiphánios, is characterised by brevity. This evidence furnishes a small, if fairly regular, pattern of exchange between the seventh and tenth centuries. A striking characteristic of these reports, however, is the evident integration of the 'pilgrim' experience with monastic life. The journeys of all individuals known between the eighth and tenth centuries, Stephen of Chennolakkos (780s), the Stoudite monk Dionysius (d.818), Germanos of Kosinitza and Elias the Younger, their journeys to the Holy Land included periods of noviciature in the coenobitic institutions of the Judean Desert.¹¹⁹⁸ Only the journey of Niketas Basilikos in 947 provides an example of a pilgrimage where monasteries did not form part of the itinerary.¹¹⁹⁹ In such reports, the desire to experience or venerate the holy places of Jerusalem are subsidiary factors to the wider literary narrative which emphasises the rigorous ascetical

rule of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. Tenth-century exchange is attested mainly from the reign of Otto I. Such crescendos in activity may, on the one hand, reflect the imbalance of source material. Alternatively, they may propose that interest in the Palestinian Holy Land may have been characterised by spasmodic interest linked to particular social contexts. The issue cannot be explored here, but may qualify the tendency to view patterns of pilgrimage to Jerusalem in terms of a sustained and universal ambition.

¹¹⁹⁷ *Epiphánios Hagiopolites* (ed. Donner 1971:42-91, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 207-215). The dating of the text remains a matter of conjecture, with various estimates placing its earliest version in the mid-seventh century and others proposing a ninth-century date for its composition: see the discussion in Wilkinson 2002: 19-20 and Donner 1971. Its use in determining how the landscape was negotiated between the seventh and ninth century, therefore, must remain tentative. On the discussion of *proskynetaria* see Kuelzer 1994. Beside the account of Epiphánios Hagiopolites, there is little indication of widespread production of *proskynetaria* prior to the eleventh century. The term itself is not used widely until the sixteenth century before which the term often carried pejorative associations with Muslim cult sites: *ODB* 714-715.

¹¹⁹⁸ Stephen of Chennolakkos, spent a period in the monastery of Euthymios, *Synax CP*: 392. See also Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters*, 276-278, 456-457 (ed. Fatorous 1992: 409-418) and *Germanos of Kosinitza*, AASS May III: 6*-10*, Lat. tr. 160-166. For the Elias the Younger, who spent three years in Sinai which he interrupted with pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the River Jordan and Mount Tabor: see *Life of Elias the Younger*, 16-19 (ed. and tr. Rossi Taibbi 1962: 24-29).

¹¹⁹⁹ *Letter of Niketas to Constantine Porphyrogenitos on the Holy Fire*, (ed. Riant 1881, 375-382).

training acquired there.¹²⁰⁰ The group of monastic sites is also fairly familiar: Mar Sabas, Mar Euthymios, Mar Chariton, Sinai and the Baptism Monastery of the Jordan constitute the common destinations of these figures.

The focus, however, had earlier origins. Stephen of Chenolakkos, besides a journey to Jerusalem, appears only to have extended his journey to Mar Sabas, Mar Euthymios and the Theodosios monastery.¹²⁰¹ A later account, the *Life of Lazaros of Galeision* (eleventh century), also devotes considerable attention to the description of the monastic regime; noting only briefly that Lazaros had also visited the sites of Jerusalem.¹²⁰²

These journeys bear little resemblance to the negotiation of the region by western pilgrims, where emphasis on a more complex network of sites, interlinked with biblical narratives, is more explicit in the accounts.¹²⁰³

There are several explanations for this which have yet to be fully explored and cannot be extensively addressed here. The first, suggested earlier, is that contrary to the Latin west Byzantine concepts of pilgrimage did not distinguish and exalt Jerusalem or biblical cult sites above more localised counterparts or monastic figures.¹²⁰⁴ This may not have been a static position; by the tenth century the enquiries of Constantine Porphyrogenitos allude to a developing imperial interest in both the activities and physical presence of the holy sites themselves.¹²⁰⁵ Nonetheless, between the seventh and ninth centuries there is little indication of a wider importance attached to the Holy Land in conventional Byzantine devotion. Aside from the poorly dated Epiphanius only the description provided by Photios provides any indication of a forensic interest in the physical space of the region. An exceptional figure in

¹²⁰⁰ Talbot 2001: 291, who introduced much of the same material, also notes the emphasis on stays in monastic establishments.

¹²⁰¹ *Synax CP*: 392.

¹²⁰² *Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion*: 16-18 (ed. BHG 979, AASS, Nov. 3:508-88, tr. Greenfield 2000: 93-100).

¹²⁰³ Pages 403-404.

¹²⁰⁴ Pages 327-328.

¹²⁰⁵ See notes 664.

his lifetime, the value of Photios in reflecting more normative Byzantine concerns about the Holy Land is debatable.¹²⁰⁶

A second explanation for differing Latin and Greek attitudes towards the Holy Land feature is that whilst an interest in the Holy Land remained a constant (though tacit) position in the Latin West, broader cultural and military developments had instigated a general shift in its perceived importance to the Byzantine world in this formative three hundred year period.

Iconomachy was one development where such ideological emphasis was valued. The importance placed by Theodore of Studios and the hagiographer of Michael Synkellos on the Palestinian monastic endorsement of icon veneration,¹²⁰⁷ suggests that the emphasis on such physical and intellectual associations with Palestine were underpinned by a conscious desire to legitimise their personal theological positions by establishing such views in line with the customs of the Jerusalem church (whose primacy Theodore explicitly emphasises).¹²⁰⁸ It is, in several respects, evidence for a continued interest in both Palestinian holy sites and monasteries within the Byzantine world, but perhaps simultaneously reflective of a renegotiated set of perceptions regarding the importance of such contact and exchange and one framed by the agenda of Byzantine theological debate between the seventh and tenth centuries.

In connection to this, Theodore's apparent attempt to introduce the monastic customs of the Sabaite Laura within his own monastic programme necessitates our consideration of the symbolic significance of the Palestinian monastic custom and individual monastic protagonists – Sabas, Chariton and Theodosios – both to Theodore and his contemporaries in

¹²⁰⁶ On Photios' description of the Tomb, see Photios, *Question 316 to Amphilokios* (ed. Laourdas and Westerink 1983-1988, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 258-259) and Brubaker 1999: 206-207.

¹²⁰⁷ Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters* 276-278 (ed. Fatorous 1992: 408-419). For the emphasis placed on Michael's connection to Palestine and endorsement of icon veneration, see *the Life of Michael the Synkellos* 8:13-30, (ed. and tr. Cunningham 1991: 60-61).

¹²⁰⁸ As with the above, further examples is the apparent need for the Patriarch of Constantinople to sanction the marriage of Leo VI to Zoe Karbonopsina see *Life of the Patriarch Euthymios CP*: 78-79 (ed. and tr. Karlin-Hayree 1970). Further examples of the use of the sporadic contact of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to sanction imperial policies are discussed in Ikonopoulos 2009.

Constantinople and the wider Byzantine world.¹²⁰⁹ Theodore's conscious attempt to replicate their practice and underscore their mutual theological position suggests that the emphasis placed on the frequency of contact between his associates and Palestine is neither entirely coincidental nor necessary reflective of normative social practice in the ninth century.¹²¹⁰ Fundamental to our understanding of Theodore's emphasis on the Holy Land is a more considered approach to Holy Land's symbolic value as a social and theological construct to his ninth-century audience – quite simply, what such associations meant and why they mattered.

It is in view of these considerations that the later hagiographies of Lazaros of Galesion, or the Synaxaria entries for Stephen of Chenolakkos or Elias the Younger are re-approached from a similar perspective. In the *Life of Lazaros of Galeison*, we do not observe a rigorous description of the holy places which characterises the literature of the medieval west.¹²¹¹ Lazaros' position in the monastery and his ascetic training receive more attention, although this still comprises only a fraction of the total narrative. Indeed, far more emphasis is directed not at Lazaros' activities within Palestine, but upon his mimetic replication of its customs within a Byzantine geographical setting – Mount Galeison – following his foundation of a monastery.¹²¹² In the opening narratives of the *Life*, the motivation for Lazaros' sojourn in Palestine is articulated in specific reference to contemporary Byzantine concerns – surrounded by the endemic corruption of his Byzantine monastic peers, Lazaros journeys to Palestine to train within the Sabaite tradition.¹²¹³ Palestine's role in the *Life* therefore becomes not one of physical – essentially topographical – concern but a question of orthodox and historical pedigree.

¹²⁰⁹ On the influence of the Sabaite custom on Constantinopolitan monasticism, which has its origins in the early ninth century, see Egender 2001 and Hannick 2001.

¹²¹⁰ The complex relationship regarding the precedent established to Jerusalem between the ninth and tenth centuries has been surveyed by Ikononopoulos 2009: 7-26.

¹²¹¹ *Life of Lazaros of Galeison*: 16-17 (ed. BHG 979, AASS, Nov. 3:508-88, tr. Greenfield 2000: 80-101).

¹²¹² *Life of Lazaros of Galeison*: 4-19 (ed. BHG 979, AASS, Nov. 3:508-88, tr. Greenfield 2000: 80-101).

¹²¹³ *Ibid.*

These observations reveal the real problems with the scholarly tendency to compile sources concerning Holy Land travellers, without regard for their individual textual or social contexts. The *Life of Lazaros of Galeison* may indeed encapsulate a memory of a real historical journey, but the manner in which such contact was subsequently moulded proposes little explicit concern with the terrestrial hierotopy of Palestine and urges that modern critical appraisals devote more attention to the individual contexts of such narratives and the image that such texts were formulated to project. Such instances of travel may have been enlisted by hagiographers precisely because they were atypical of normative Byzantine practice and, in the context of cult competition, a hallmark of their distinguishing orthodox credentials. These comments and texts, however, require detailed critical appraisal beyond these preliminary observations.

Nevertheless, the complexity of the issues that such material presents serves as a caution against the inclination to use more incidental references to pilgrimage as straight forward evidence of its continued fluidity following the Islamic conquest.¹²¹⁴ Before we can assess and quantify the impact and frequency of Palestinian pilgrimage we first need to understand the wider cultural frameworks in which our surviving sources were produced and intended to respond.

These collective issues mean that the scale and impact of pilgrimage between 650 and 950 is difficult to determine and estimate. It has been well acknowledged that such movement was possible but its frequency across the period of study is unclear and only further analysis will determine its correlation to patterns of Palestinian monastic/pilgrim site survival. What we may say about the pilgrimage experience to Palestine between the seventh and tenth century is, therefore, relatively minimal but can be characterised by a number of key patterns.

¹²¹⁴ Approaches to Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis* are perhaps the most developed. For the most recent study of this text and its exegetical purpose see O'Loughlin 2008. For Willibald see Aist 2010.

Firstly, the seventh century, though perhaps disruptive to western contacts with region, did not instigate the dramatic fracture in pilgrimage conventions suggested in recent studies.¹²¹⁵ Localised veneration, which probably always constituted the main focus of cult sites in Palestine and the Transjordan, shows little evidence of substantial change until the ninth century when more regionalised and highly punctuated patterns of site abandonment and retraction emerge.

Like its monastic counterpart, from which pilgrimage site cannot readily be distinguished, cult survival was heavily interlinked with regional socio-economic rhythms and was, consequently, accented by considerable variation in terms of site survival. Our evidence for sites which continued to function into the tenth century suggests a gradual nucleation of activity into a core geographical network around Jerusalem and the Judean Desert, but which also included Sinai and the Galilee. Biblical sites are where continuities are most visible: a characteristic which may link into the broader appeal of such sites to more diverse pilgrimage demographics beyond highly localised contexts. This is an impressionistic explanation and needs to be advanced cautiously. Indeed the legacy of biblical archaeology, which has resulted in intensive survey in areas of perceived biblical association, has, in a number of cases, skewed our understanding of the region in favour of these particular regional zones and thus reinforces the biblical perception of early medieval pilgrimage. Nonetheless, though activity undoubtedly continued on some level at other sites of limited biblical association (as with Umm Qays), the gradual retraction of the landscape in regions more peripheral to the biblical itinerary (as in the Negev and the Transjordan) indicates that the nucleation of pilgrimage into the larger biblical cult centres must have responded to broader ideological interest. As discussed earlier, the clear hegemonic approaches to the Palestine hierotopy adopted by writers such as Theodore Abū Qurrah and Peter of Bayt Raʿs clearly point to an established series of priorities among the Melkite urban elite (many of

¹²¹⁵ See note 392 for examples.

them monks or clergy) by the ninth century, the Christian groups who facilitated the continued maintenance and survival of particular cult centres. We should not, therefore, discredit the role of these perceptions of Melkite sacred topography in defining the social and economic horizons of the churches and foundations extant in Palestine prior to the Arab conquest.

As discussed frequently throughout this chapter, we have little indication of the material and archaeological properties of cult survival. Only in a handful of cases, such as Mount Nebo, Jabal Harūn and Kursi may we determine specific cases of material impoverishment, albeit within a broader framework of cult continuity. However, there are a number of sites, notably the high status churches of Jerusalem (especially the Church of the Anastasis) and Mount Sinai, where cases of continued patronage are known, but where subsequent redevelopments have hindered our recognition of their post-Byzantine phases. These, regrettably, are sites which are likely to have produced more explicit evidence of occupation consistent with earlier levels. Nonetheless, though the indications are that a number of cult sites gradual diminished in terms of size and material wealth, there are no indications that such processes responded to prolonged or systemic institutional persecution. A broader series of economic and social factors may have underpinned the gradual retraction in cult activity which occurred following the Arab conquest, and which appears to have accelerated in the ninth century. We have no way of quantifying this change in numerative terms, but, as with the case of the notable continuities of Mount Sinai, the evidence is sufficient to caution against simplistic models of collapse which resulted from Palestine's gradual (though not total) isolation from the west. Localised pilgrimage to cult centres undoubtedly continued until the eleventh century and was clearly punctuated by periods of activity from the Frankish and Ottonian polities as well as from Byzantium and Georgia; much of which appears to have increased in the ninth century when processes of abandonment are more visible among Palestinian cult sites. This apparent contradiction

reflects the highly focussed nature of these 'external' exchanges with the west with much of our evidence pointing to Jerusalem as the central focus of western pilgrimage. Cases of further contact with Sinai, the River Jordan, the Judean Desert and major urban shrines supplement this pattern but are not mirrored among the rural sites of the region where much of this contraction appears to have occurred.

This raises an important contradiction in current models which routinely stress their role in underpinning the core Christian network into the tenth century. This inherent contradiction confirms that this perception is no longer sustainable in its current form but will only be resolved by a more nuanced understanding of the processes that preceded it.

CONCLUSION

CONTOURS OF A COMMUNITY

MONASTICISM AND PILGRIMAGE 600-950

The original intent of this study was to offer a broad overview of developments in the social configuration of the Palestinian church following the consolidation of Arab control (c.640) until the close of the Abbasid period (c.950). This has remained a broad aim of the study but has had to be substantially modified over the course of the past four years. The timeframe of this study has had to be revised – first to incorporate the Sassanian conquest of 614 and then to address issues arising from contemporary understanding of developments in the Late Antique period around 600. This was necessitated by my constant encounter with a series of established assumptions about events in the period 300-600 and their relationship to trends which emerged following the Arab conquest. The problematic nature of the archaeological chronologies necessitated immediate appraisal; so too did the complex role of literary material within this interpretive framework. More invidious were a series of preconceptions about the role of monasticism and pilgrimage as components of the Palestinian social fabric and their associations with the broader Late Antique world of the Mediterranean. The notion of Palestinian monasticism as an essentially diasporal entity, comprised predominantly of figures and patrons drawn from non-Palestinian origins, was among the most embedded of these influential precepts. But there is little supporting data for this model. Rather, the weight of data emerging annually from archaeological investigation and occasionally from papyri, continues to underscore the inherent problems with such a reductionist approach to understanding monasticism within Byzantine and post-Byzantine social landscapes. Hagiography has remained the driving force of the traditional ‘diasporal’ impression of this monastic milieu and the main scope of all studies of the phenomenon – a methodology not

only in contradiction with more critical approaches to monastic groups in other regions of the Byzantine world,¹²¹⁶ but equally, an approach which is undermined when such texts are considered in terms of their own complex afterlives (where cases of interpolation or modification have a pronounced impact on the Byzantine monastic debate) and when they are analysed with respect to the wider archaeological corpus.

I have primarily emphasised archaeological and economic patterns within this study but could not offer a fuller investigation of the theological or social roles performed by monastic communities. Our understanding of the response of monastic writers to Islam is already well developed and requires little further explanation; excepting the fact that our understanding of the material world in which such intellectual discussions were articulated remains poorly defined. I have acknowledged the theological debates primarily in the interests of outlining their role as a component of a much wider social and economic tapestry which saw drastic shifts in the nature of monasticism and its social environment between 640 and 950.

This study was designed to sketch the broader physical as well as political and economic contours in which these theological dialogues and ideas unfolded: tracing the archaeological trajectories of monastic communities and cult sites and their relationship to the shifts in the regional landscape – social, physical, political and economic – in which they existed. This study provides the skeletal framework in which to contextualise monastic theology and will, I hope, facilitate future observations of their changing social roles. Throughout the course of this study I have stressed the importance of viewing monastic communities as components of a more complex social framework – places closely intertwined with the rhythms of localised economic networks and, most importantly, the

¹²¹⁶ Thus the problems of hagiography for understanding Egyptian monastic life, in terms of origins and social role, are discussed in Bagnall 2001: 7-24, Gohering 1999 and Goehring 2003. One example from Italy is that of San Vincenzo al Volturno. A discussion focussing on land ownership is offered in Wickham 1995. See also the discussion in Costambeys 2007: 164-208 regarding similarly approaches to monasticism in Italy. Anglo Saxon monasticism is discussed in Foot 2009. These approaches to monastic sites and patron economies reflect the inherent limitations of archaeological research concerning comparative sites in Palestine and the Transjordan.

social and patronal priorities of the communities which contributed to them.

This study has emphasised economic factors as a main motivator in instigating change, but has aimed to introduce the more complex social factors of religious conversion and elite change (as well as fiscal or legislative shifts as well). The focus on economies was largely necessitated by the lack of attention patronage has received with regards to understanding monastic trends following the seventh century. Nonetheless, I have no intention of stressing its exclusivity: a reductionist approach to understanding these developments would overlook the substantial legislative and social changes that occurred in this period and would risk imposing an equally crude simplification of these trends and their contributing factors. Instead I would stress that the changes to the monastic landscape evident by 950 cannot be reduced to a single casual factor, but must be observed as an outcome of a progressive process of social and economic transformation – the steady islamicisation of the institutional elite but also huge shifts in the urban structure of the region and the wealth of the communities which inhabited them. This, I would propose, occurred progressively in a key number of developments following the breakdown of Byzantine control in the 610s. The following case studies will develop this theme.

PROGRESSIVE CHANGE: 600-960

The monastic and cult landscape of Palestine was largely consolidated by 610 in the major urban centres of the region, although it continued to expand in the rural hinterlands of cities in the Dekapolis and the Madaba plateau.¹²¹⁷ There is little evidence either within the literary or epigraphic dossier to suggest that the social or economic motivators of this expansion were extra-regional in origin. Over the duration of the sixth century, the presence of local networks

¹²¹⁷ On this see the material presented in Di Segni 1999:177, Piccirillo 1981: 68-71, Piccirillo 1981b: 62-69 and Piccirillo 2011: 107-109.

of elites or communities (both as patrons and devotees) becomes more overt at monastic and cult sites – whether through a more defined sense of regional identity or the emergence of technological innovations which permitted their expression.¹²¹⁸

Although the mode of articulation may have been a relatively late newcomer to this environment, the relationships between local families and monastic establishments were not later innovations: the patron families of whom we are aware were, it appears, closely associated with Palestine and Arabia and had been so for a generation (at the most conservative of estimates) by the close of the Byzantine period.¹²¹⁹

This study placed emphasis on this point primarily in the interests of re-addressing the perception that the monastic or cult landscape of the region can be casually disengaged from these localised networks and the families interwoven within them. One particularly important feature of these families was their evident endorsement of monastic institutions in both human and economic terms. By 600, besides material patronage, elite trajectories were also steadily drawn into the clerical ranks of the church.¹²²⁰

This impression of social support for monasticism unfolded in a more complex system; where the wealth of such units was closely intertwined with the rhythms of local administrative and economic life.

Palestine and Arabia was not a homogenous environmental or geological unit;

¹²¹⁸ This is most visible in the use of Syriac in church dedications by the sixth-century: Di Segni 2009, Hoyland 2010: 30-34; 352-358 and Piccirillo 1989: 563-586 surveys the evidence from across Palestine. However, as is demonstrated in the epigraphic corpus of the Sergios-Bakkhos monastery of Nessana or Horvat Hesheq, the use of Greek as the main epigraphic idiom among indigenous communities identifies many more cases where localised involvement with monastic institutions or cult sites is more explicit. The epigraphic corpus of the North Church at Rehovot-in-the-Negev presents another example: Tsafir 1988b. For Nessana, see Kirk and Welles 1962: inscription 12, 30. The epigraphic evidence of Horvat Hesheq is discussed in Di Segni 1993: 66-70.

¹²¹⁹ Thus the inscriptions of Horvat Hesheq or the papyri of Nessana and Petra provide three examples of familial connections to monastic or cult establishments. For Horvat Hesheq see pages 99-103. Discussion of the Sergios-Patrikos family appears in the notes accompanying *P. Colt* 44. The evidence for the family of Obodianos of Petra is surveyed in Koenen 2003: 202-208. Further discussions of later familial connections at Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Kastron Mefa'a appears in Appendix D.

¹²²⁰ See Kirk and Welles 1962: 173, inscription 94. For the monastery at Nessana's role in tax collection: *P. Colt* 55; regarding monetary lending, *P. Colt* 45 and *P. Colt* 46; in legal proceedings *P. Colt* 57; and in the feast of Sergios *P. Colt* 50. For the Petra papyri, see the edited publication by Frösén, Arjava and Lehtinen 2002.

accordingly, neither were the economic mechanisms which exploited its terrain by 600.¹²²¹ The urban-rural networks of the Galilee, the Dekapolis, the Negev or the southern Sinai were all collectively prosperous but underpinned by substantial variation in terms of distribution – a factor which hints at the variation within the economic landscape of the region.¹²²² The Negev and western coast, closely associated with exports to the Mediterranean, bear little resemblance to the more internalised and autonomous networks around Jarash which were beginning to emerge by the close of the sixth century.¹²²³ Monasticism and local patron economies across the region must have been closely associated with such variations in so much as the wealth of the elite and ‘peasant’ patrons largely derived from these networks and were presumably interconnected with these regional distinctions.¹²²⁴

Monasteries are not, however, exclusively economic entities. This study has attempted to demonstrate that religious associations should not be underestimated as a factor which permitted such local restrictions to be transcended. Cultic associations were always an important factor in facilitating broader patron diversity and the social fabric of individual

¹²²¹ These variances are not yet fully explored, especially with regards to the landscapes around the cities of the Dekapolis. Variations in exchange networks, which point to concurrent but independent exchange systems in the region is proposed by Wickham 2005: 453-455, 770-778. Walmsley 2000: 309-329 surveys the evidence relating to exchange and production. At Pella, Walmsley and Smith 1992 notes the localised nature of production by the eighth century an observation also made in Da Costa 2007. On the coastal ports in Late Antiquity, see Kingsley 2001a and Kingsley 2001b.

¹²²² Discussions of ceramics are offered in Magness 1993 (focussed on Jerusalem) and Watson 1989 regarding Jarash. Discussion of the seventh-century transition appears in Sodini and Villeneuve 1992. General overviews of ceramic production in the region are offered in Walmsley 2007: 49-58, Walmsley 2000: 321-329 and Sauer and Magness 1997.

¹²²³ See notes 346.

¹²²⁴ This is for the most visible only from within the corpus of the Nessana papyri which reveals a number of family networks engaged within agricultural production who are also attested as donors to the church of Sergios and Bakkhos. For examples of agricultural yields see *P. Colt* 82, *P. Colt* 83, *P. Colt* 90 and *P. Colt* 91. There is little indication, however, in these texts for extensive external trading beyond Gaza. Those relating to *P. Colt* 82-83 and 90-91 provide some tentative indication of the sale of dates. We know less about the broader economic picture of villages in the Transjordan or their relationship to neighbouring urban centres. The rapid rate of settlement expansion, especially in settlements such as Kastron Mefa'a and Umm el-Jimal, which are unparalleled further west in the Negev, would propose that such expansions were promoted by local factors. For discussions of rural life, with particular focus in the Transjordan, see De Vries 2000 and Walmsley 2005: 511-521. Wickham 2005: 452-454 surveys the evidence for the Negev which probably experienced earlier phases of expansion. For a review of the chronologies of sites in the Negev see Magness 2003. The large numbers of wine and oil presses at these sites may indicate some connection with the exchange systems of the Mediterranean coasts or settlements connected to sustaining other areas engaged in more specialised production, see Mayerson 1985 and Mayerson 1962. An initial study of recent excavations in the Negev is offered in Shereshevski 1991. Magness 2003: 91-92. Critical qualifications about the lack of an integrated social and economic study of these villages are offered in Foss 1995: 225-231.

communities, but were evidently characterised by the co-existence of a landscape of sites which responded to different social impulses.

Yet distinctions in the established social or patron base of monastic foundations and cult sites were a component of this milieu by 600 and often in dialogue with the successes of the cults with which they were associated. Mount Sinai, for example, which retained a complex appeal to imperial benefactors and Christians from across the broader Christian oikoumene (a status reflected within the material properties of the site itself and the diversity of its monastic and pilgrim community), bears little resemblance to the communities and sites of Hagios Theodoros at Shivta or the Theotokos monastery of 'Ayn al-Kanisah whose own communities nonetheless identified themselves as legitimately 'monastic'.¹²²⁵ This study could only offer an impressionistic portrait of these regional distinctions.¹²²⁶ They must, however, be developed further if a more nuanced and micro-regional reconstruction of monastic life, both in the Byzantine and early Islamic centuries, is to be established. What we can currently say is that such hierarchies do not appear to have been formalised in dogmatic terms but nonetheless existed as a result of more complex social factors and priorities on patron agendas. Emerging from this complex social environment of monasteries and cult sites was a landscape of complexity and variation; comprising of a network of sites in Jerusalem, the Judean Desert and Sinai (as well as few scattered in the Galilee) whose associations with local, as well as extra-regional, communities facilitated the creation of more diverse patron bases.¹²²⁷ Co-existing with this was a core of smaller sites, now only visible archaeologically, whose epigraphic evidence and scale proposes their connection and

¹²²⁵ For Sinai see pages 86-87. For the Hagios Theodoros monastery at Shivta, see Negev 1981: 49-57. On the inscription of the Theotokos church at 'Ayn al-Kanisah see the discussion in Piccirillo 1994e: 521-538. Both the inscriptions of Shivta and 'Ayn al-Kanisah identify a monastic presence although the limited nature of publication relating to these sites does not enable us to determine the size or nature of these communities.

¹²²⁶ See pages 86-87.

¹²²⁷ As we observe at Mount Sinai, a fortified monastery, commissioned by Justinian; Prokopios, *On Buildings* V. 8. 1-9 (ed. Dewing 1940: 354-357 tr. Caner 2010: 275-276) Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, in contrast to Prokopios, emphasised the role of the monastery as a fort: *Naẓm al-Jawhar* 24 (ed. Breydy 1985: 107-109, tr. Van Bladel in Caner 2010: 280-282). *P. Colt* 89 provides an example of localised benefaction to Sinai.

interdependence on more localised developments.¹²²⁸ Regional sites add nuance to this picture (especially in the urban centres) but do not substantially modify the impression of hierarchical co-existence.¹²²⁹ This integrated landscape, however, was underpinned by two core components. Firstly, the continued importance of monastic institutions to localised social convention; secondly, the continued capacity for aristocratic or peasant-elite networks to sustain this landscape.¹²³⁰ Let us look briefly at each in turn.

The Sassanian occupation represented the first shift in this established status quo in the early seventh century. A close re-examination of the archaeological data does little to endorse the facile impression of catastrophic fracture which once characterised approaches to the period. The general parameters of daily life remained characteristically stable in Palestine (as in Egypt) in contrast to the more decisive shifts in Anatolia which I suspect have coloured comparative approaches to the Sassanians in the Levant.¹²³¹ The pattern was, nonetheless, accented by regional variation at least in Jerusalem and Caesarea where the focus of Sassanian military and political activities may have had more perceivable impacts on the upper echelons of the urban elite.¹²³² Nevertheless, such shifts had little demonstrable impact on the more insular and internal networks of the regional where local administrative structures appear to have remained comparatively stable: as did the frameworks of urban/rural life and production which sustained these continuities. Once their archaeological chronologies are reviewed, monastic and cult sites integrate well with this overall pattern. The monastery of Kursi, once widely cited to endorse the impression of a catastrophic 614

¹²²⁸ As with Nessana *P. Colt* 79, with discussion 227-229, Horvat Hesheq see Di Segni 1993a: 66-70 and Rehovot-in-the-Negev, see Tsafir 1988b: 157-158, 171.

¹²²⁹ As with the sites of Jabal Harūn and Mount Nebo: see pages 87-88. For a discussion of the papyri associated with Jabal Harūn see Gagos and Frösén 1998: 477. A further reference to a monastery is suggested in *P. Petra* inv.86, see *ibid*: 480-481. Mount Nebo in the Transjordan is another site which is mentioned primarily in local material but would suggest its importance to both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian groups, see John Rufus, *Life of Peter the Iberian* 118 (ed. and tr. Horn and Phenix 2008: 171-177). The site of Moses' death, which is described as being east of the Dead Sea, is also numbered among the holy sites listed in Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 206 and tr. Watt 1960:162).

¹²³⁰ On this see pages 117-127.

¹²³¹ Foss 1975: 721-747. Further evidence also surveyed in Haldon 1997: 102-113.

¹²³² This is suggested by the garrisoning of a Sassanian governor in Caesarea; see page 138. For a discussion of the growing predominance of clergy in this period see pages 144-146.

fracture, presents one example where re-analysis of diagnostic material and sequences indicates sustained occupation into the eighth century.¹²³³ Kursi, like a number of other sites assigned seventh-century abandonment dates now since disproven, Horvat Berachot, Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Martyrios at Ma'ale Adummim, complements the general patterns known from more recent excavations in the Transjordan which exhibit no substantial variation in occupational activity between the sixth and late-seventh centuries.¹²³⁴

There are nuances to this portrait of stability which require further introduction. The decades of the early seventh century (600-630) appear to have instigated a regional cessation for the establishment of the ambitious monumental complexes which had characterised the preceding two centuries.¹²³⁵ This occurred concurrently with a general end to the expansion of the Christian cult landscape by 650 in the region. Exceptions occur and are perhaps to be expected from the complex picture of micro-regionalisation which characterised Palestine following the sixth century.¹²³⁶ Rural settlements in the Dekapolis hinterlands (especially in the environs of Jarash: after 600 a large commercial centre) and further south in the environs of Madaba exhibit a prolonged expansion into the eighth century.¹²³⁷ These examples are well studied but do not currently modify what appears to have been a subsequent emphasis on the maintenance and renovation of the existing infrastructure following the 630s.

¹²³³ Original dating phases offered in Tzaferis 1983: 15-16 and revised in Stacey 2004: 15.

¹²³⁴ See Magness 2003: 109-111, 191-194 for a revised chronology of Horvat Berachot and the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev. Original reports offered in Tsafirir and Hirschfeld 1979 and Tsafirir 1988 (ed.). On the examples of sustained occupation throughout the seventh century, see the results from the cult site of Deir 'Ain 'Abata in Politis 2012:115-158 and Jabal Harūn in Mikkola *et al* 2008: 103-136. Further cases of sustained church building, especially in Rihab and Khirbet es-Samra are addressed in Avi Yonah 1948: 68-73, Piccirillo 1981: 62-69 and Piccirillo 1993: 304-309. An additional, through unpublished example, is a small church at Khirbat al-Ṭanṭur dated to 625, see Piccirillo 2011: 110.

¹²³⁵ The last case of an imperial intervention in a church structure until the eleventh century is probably that of Maurice's at the Tomb of the Theotokos: *Sinai Georgian Menaion*: 6 and 13 June, 14 July (ed. Garitte, 1958: 30). A tentative example, as discussed earlier (note 114) is that of Mar Elyas where an inscription is dated to 622. It is unclear, however, if this commemorates the construction of the entire building or the refurbishment of the floor: Piccirillo 2011:107-109.

¹²³⁶ See note 487.

¹²³⁷ On the growing role of Jarash as a commercial centre after 600, see Walmsley 2000: 305-306, Wickham 2005: 770-776. On the early evidence for the 630s at Khirbet es Samra see Piccirillo 1993c:304-309. Later evidence, as we have seen, emerges in the Umayyad period from Kastron Mefa'a (dated 718 and 756 respectively) see Piccirillo 1994h: 241-270. Further examples have been identified in Ma'in and Al-Quweisma (dated 717/718), see Piccirillo 199c: 196-201 and Schick and Suleiman 1991: 325-340.

There are currently few explanations for this which do not equate such patterns with the Sassanian presence in 614, despite the more recent trends which underplay the material impact of the Sassanian invasion.¹²³⁸ I would propose, however, that the stasis in church building, both in the Negev and on the western coast (though, as we have seen less in the Transjordan), should be observed in the broader context of economic fragmentation and regionalisation in the Levant and its ensuing strains on communities more interwoven with long distance networks.¹²³⁹ This appears true of the coast and some centres in the Negev, where the hiatus in church embellishment appears to have emerged by the eighth century.¹²⁴⁰

The disruption to this trade instigated stasis rather than crisis and there is little indication that its effects were immediate.¹²⁴¹ Rather, the progressive diminishing of trade networks in the Negev throughout the eighth century is paralleled in the comparatively slow abandonment rate among monastic sites in the area, much of which did not culminate until the late eighth or early ninth century.¹²⁴² I would reject any assertion of a regional uniformity to these patterns. Certainly the economic autonomy of the Dekapolis may have underpinned the more explicit monastic and cult-site constructions (contemporary with a number of rural church constructions) apparent in the seventh and eighth centuries.¹²⁴³

This question of economic insularity resonates in the social as well as physical structuring of monastic communities following the 630s.¹²⁴⁴ One of the more overt characteristics of the post-Byzantine material is the impression of the progressive dominance

¹²³⁸ See Chapter Two.

¹²³⁹ Wickham 2005: 452-453, 774. Walmsley 2000: 298.

¹²⁴⁰ Magness 2003: 177-194.

¹²⁴¹ As evident by the protracted rate of abandonment among the Negev settlements especially at Nessana and Shivta: see Magness 2003: 177-186. Nonetheless, there are clear cases where activity continued into the ninth century. The continued (though perhaps modest) role of Qaysāriyah as a centre of exchange is emphasised in Walmsley 2000: 292. On early Islamic settlement in Qaysāriyah see Whitcomb 2011 and Holum 2011.

¹²⁴² The North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev was seemingly abandoned in the late eighth or early ninth century, see Tsafirir 1988b: 22-27 with a re-inspection of the ceramic corpus in Magness 2003: 191-194. Horvat Berachot shows little evidence for late eighth century activity: Magness 2003: 109-111.

¹²⁴³ See pages 195-196.

¹²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

and autonomy of church authorities in the fiscal and civil apparatus.¹²⁴⁵ Monastic and clerical fiscal collection and coin minting appear as two components of a general focus on the church as the political and social apex of Palestinian life.¹²⁴⁶ The origins of this trend are unclear but had clear antecedents in a number of functions performed by monastic communities in the opening decade of the seventh century as with Nessana, by 605 a prominent money lender and a centre for the collection of the village's agricultural yields.¹²⁴⁷

As we have seen, there is little indication that the Arab conquest disrupted this pattern. Monastic communities and clergy appear to have retained their existing social status in a broader social environment characterised by a sustained continuity with Christian modes of devotional expression.¹²⁴⁸ But this situation did not remain static, and the steady formalisation of more overt expressions of Arab political power by the early eighth century appears to have undermined many established monastic prerogatives.¹²⁴⁹ Over the course of the Umayyad period patron priorities were steadily redrawn as the Umayyads formulated and embarked upon their own monumental ambitions: programmes that inspired a series of commentaries from among the networks of Christian writers whose social positions may have made the effects of such targeted messages particularly acute.¹²⁵⁰ Monastic and, more broadly, clerical hierarchies were inevitably reconfigured within this broader scheme – although only the family of John of Damascus provides us with any complete indication of

¹²⁴⁵ Evident by the role assumed by Patriarchs in the capitulations and other urban organisation undertaken by Patriarchs Sophronios and Modestos in the seventh century, see pages 144-146.

¹²⁴⁶ *P. Colt* 56, 57, 59, 60-67 offers perspectives of the role of monastic establishments in localised legal and fiscal administration.

¹²⁴⁷ *P. Colt* 40, 45, 46, 90.

¹²⁴⁸ *P. Colt* 60-67, 79, 80 offer evidence of the sustained administrative role of monastic establishments and evidence for their continued importance to localised communities. Patterns of investment in the seventh and eighth century (see pages 195-196) offer material evidence for the continuity of these trends.

¹²⁴⁹ Kennedy 1985: 15-17 and Tohme 2009 stress the additional social, administrative and political roles of mosques in Syria Palestine many of which must have conflicted with established role for monastic communities.

¹²⁵⁰ On the Dome of the Rock see Grabar 2006 and the Al-Aqsa complex in Rosen-Ayalon 1989: 68-69. A discussion of Jarash's mosque and its relationship to other mosques constructed in the same period is offered in Walmsley and Damgaard 2005: 362-378. For the mosque of Tabariyyah see Cytryn-Silverman 2009. On the small mosque of Shivta see Magness 2003: 185-186 and Baly 1935.

this change for Palestine itself.¹²⁵¹ Yet by the close of the Umayyad period in 749/750 the role of clergy and Patriarchs in the administrative apparatus of the region is less overt than it had been a century earlier.¹²⁵² This change was neither regionally nor chronologically uniform and, as is clear from the continued investment into monastic buildings, monastic communities retained significant influence at a micro-regional level in the Transjordan and other centres further removed from the major political centres.¹²⁵³ Yet the overall impression is that by the mid-eighth century these roles were steadily (but not uniformly) contracting into localised spheres and private networks of support.¹²⁵⁴

This effective isolation had several implications for the trajectory of these communities. Firstly, as the potential for Christians to attain major roles within the administrative apparatus of government were gradually restricted (though not barred), monastic and church hierarchies gained focus as an avenue for the ambitions of Christian elites which was not dependent upon (although often overlapped with) Caliphal institutional endorsement.¹²⁵⁵ Secondly, this marginalisation from institutional support may have placed increasing emphasis upon the stability of private and local revenues to perpetuate established

¹²⁵¹ On John of Damascus' Life see Louth 2002: 6 and Conticello 2000: 989–1003.

¹²⁵² Certainly, as in the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*, the mid-late eighth century was characterised by concerns among monastic groups of the lack of access to Caliphs and Muslim administrators, Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 23.4 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999:39, 37).

¹²⁵³ As suggested by the inscriptions of Kastron Mefa'a, Piccirillo 1994h: 242-243. The exception appears to have been the region around Jerusalem which demonstrates sustained investment into the mid-eighth century. This is the structure dedicated to Hagios Giorgos dated to 762 in Ramot, see Arav, Di Segni and Kloner 1990: 313-320. This is surely to be identified with the Patriarch Theodoros discussed in the *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* 22.14, 33.14-33, 17 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999). At the site of Kastron Mefa'a, the inscription dated to 756, lists the *oikonomos* and archon of the settlement: see Piccirillo 1994h. This is exceptional for its mention of the administrative family among the mosaic dedications of the eighth century which otherwise all appear to have been commissioned by clergy.

¹²⁵⁴ Thus the dedications of Hagios Stephanos dated to 756 at Kastron Mefa'a was commissioned by a family attested in the earlier 718 scheme see Piccirillo 1994h: 241-270. The dedication of Hagios Giorgos at Ramot was similarly commissioned by a priest and (we may presume) his comparisons within the monastery: Arav, Di Segni and Kloner 1990: 316-317. The Church of the Theotokos in Madaba was, as suggested by the inscription, facilitated by local donations from the people of Madaba: Di Segni 1992. The Church of the Theotokos at 'Ayn al-Kanisah reflects similar inter-linking with local clergy and monastic figures; Piccirillo 1994e: 528.

¹²⁵⁵ This argument has also been stressed by Papaconstantinou 2008: 146-148. As discussed earlier, the close proximity of Patriarchs to Caliphs or local Muslim governors either through kinship (as with the case of Arsenios and Orestes brothers to a Melkite consort of Al-Aziz) or through political position (as with Patriarch Theodoros), mean that such distinctions need to be stressed lightly. As in the case of Stephen and Theophylaktos, both successive Patriarchs of Antioch between c.741-c.749/50 Caliphs and Muslim leaders would intervene in the election of Melkite Patriarchs and elect candidates close to them: Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6234, 6236 (De Boor 1883-85: 421, tr. Mango and Scott 1997, 576-583).

social conventions involving monastic and cult sites. Certainly after 700, our only evidence for investment into monastic and cult sites derives from the activities of rurally-based families or clergy attached to the establishment which received endowments.¹²⁵⁶

This hypothesis is broad and needs to be advanced delicately. The relative fragmentation of Umayyad political and fiscal structures instigated equally diverse responses to these trends which were neither regionally nor chronologically uniform.¹²⁵⁷ The prolonged importance of monastic and clerical roles in rural contexts, as with Isaac the *oikonomos* of Kastron Mefaa (dated 756), provides one example of the continued interplay between the church and localised administration on the margins of the Umayyad/Abbasid sphere into the mid-eighth century.¹²⁵⁸

These developments, where they did occur, unfolded in a broader environment where the political and economic centralities of the Palestinian region remained sufficient to sustain the established network of monastic/cult sites and the wealth of the communities which supported them: a pattern evident in the concurrent patterns of monumental building undertaken by Umayyad patrons across the region.¹²⁵⁹ It is in this respect that the flourishing patterns of church construction or building in the Transjordan, as well as in Jerusalem, are best explained.

Following 700, these continuities were, it appears, closely interwoven with the stability of these local systems. This stability remained until approximately 750 when a series of environmental and political disruptions undermined this system.

The earthquake of 749 was formative in instigating this change even if (perplexingly) studies of monasticism and pilgrimage have failed to fully integrate it as a factor within the

¹²⁵⁶ See Piccirillo 1994h: 242-243. Further examples include the church of Khirbet es-Shubeika which also appears to have been commissioned at the behest of the hegoumenos: Tzaferis 2003 and the short report in Syon 2003: 75-82.

¹²⁵⁷ On the divergent trends in urban investment after the mid-eighth century see the recent overview in Avni 2011b.

¹²⁵⁸ See Piccirillo 1994h: 242-243.

¹²⁵⁹ See page 196.

broader debate. Besides its quantifiable impact on the material infrastructure of monasteries and cult sites in the region, the earthquake permanently reshaped the urban character of the region.¹²⁶⁰ Several of the urban centres damaged in 749 survived but few appear to have regained their former vigour.¹²⁶¹ The pattern by the later eighth century points to a contracted landscape increasingly focussed on a core group of surviving cities.¹²⁶²

In contrast to the prevailing view, which sees the earthquake of 749 as a culmination of these reorientations, I would argue that this event marks the beginnings of the patterns of contraction and nucleation that characterise the monastic landscape of the ninth and tenth centuries. There is little indication in the Dekapolis prior to the earthquake of diminished levels of occupation or reuse at the majority of these sites. Rather, the general impression which emerges is of their sustained use as focal points of localised Christian worship, and of the continued maintenance of the established buildings.

We cannot yet produce a nuanced estimation of the impact of the Golan Earthquake in terms of fiscal, administrative or economic infrastructures but such ecological disasters had evident implications on the local revenue systems and the monastic communities interwoven with them. The subdued attempts at the reclamation of the sites damaged by the earthquake and equally prevalent patterns of abandonment in the Transjordan parallel the trends within the urban centres and underscore the permanent impact this event had upon the post Umayyad phases of these settlements.¹²⁶³

¹²⁶⁰ See pages 243-262.

¹²⁶¹ See the overview by Avni 2011b and earlier comments in Walmsley 1992: 349-351.

¹²⁶² See pages 263-272.

¹²⁶³ The destruction levels at Pella are addressed in Walmsley and Smith 1992. Those of Jarash have been less systematically handled on a collective basis but in individual contexts are discussed in Ali Musa and Gawilkowski 1986, Clark 1986 and Gawilkowski 2004. For discussions of Jabal Harūn see Mikkola *et al* 2008: 99-176. At Hippos/Sussita, the preliminary reports of the excavations at the North West church complex has identified a destruction phase attributed to 749: Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2007: 73. Młynarczyk 2011 summarises the results from these excavations. The recovery of several human remains beneath debris may also support this attribution: Deutsch 2007: 97. See the earlier discussions in Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006: 47-48. The recovery of the remains of a young woman trapped beneath a column shaft in the North West Church may provide another example similar to cases studies in Pella. The preliminary reports of the South West Church, however, suggests that it may already have ceased to function by the early eighth century and may have been destroyed by fire: see Segal 2005: 17-19.

As earlier, the pattern was characterised by strong regional variation and inconsistencies. Beyond the Dekapolis, in the Madaba plateau and in the Galilee, monastic sites exhibit a sustained pattern of building and renovation into the third quarter of the eighth century. Examples of refurbishment to monastic sites continued sporadically for another three decades but, with a single exception – Khirbet es-Shubeika – appear to have culminated around the 780s.¹²⁶⁴ A more prevalent pattern of regional abatement characterised the period thereafter. The ninth century seems to have witnessed the most change to this landscape (particularly in the rural hinterlands of cities in the Dekapolis or among the quasi-urban sites and Negev) but the process continued into the tenth century.¹²⁶⁵ By the year 950 the Christianised landscape of Late Antique Palestine had effectively unravelled.

The declining rate of pilgrims and the processes of islamisation are normally cited to explain this dissolution.¹²⁶⁶ Both have some bearing upon the debate but are inconsistent in a number of key areas. Firstly, there is little indication that the majority of the affected sites

¹²⁶⁴ For the Church of the Theotokos in Madaba see Di Segni 1992. *Kastron Mefa'a* is addressed in Piccirillo 1994g and Piccirillo 1994h. For 'Ayn al-Kanisah see Piccirillo 1994e: 527-530. The last church for which we have a secure date is the monastic site of Khirbet es-Shubeika dated to 785, see Hoyland 2011, Syon 2003 and Tzaferis 2003.

¹²⁶⁵ The Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev shows little evidence for substantial ninth-century phases: Magness 2003: 191-194. Horvat Berachot has yielded some possible ninth-century activity but it remains difficult to confirm if the church was still occupied in this period: Magness 2003: 109-111. Magness 2003: 215-216 in her conclusions identifies continued but more muted into the ninth century but evidently one that had resulted in the abandonment of many former settlements. Evidently, however, the region saw no prevalent patterns of building (either domestic, industrial or religious) after the eighth century. On Deir 'Ain 'Abata see Politis 2012: 115-158. For the preliminary report of Dayr al-Qaṭṭār al-Byzantinī see Holmgren and Kaliff 1997: 321-340. For Madaba see Séjourné 1897. The collective results for *Kastron Mefa'a* appear in note 3. The ceramic corpus of the church of the Theotokos at 'Ayn al-Kanisah provides less clear evidence for a ninth-century phase: Piccirillo 1994e: 535-538. Mar Elyas has never been published, and this interpretation is based on my conversations with the excavator' Mohamamed Atoom pers.comm 2012. Al-Quweisma is discussed in Suleiman and Schick 1991: 325-340 and Piccirillo 1984: 329-340. Schick 1995: 433-434, suggests a ninth-century phase but the report does not provide a discussion of material assemblages to verify this claim.

¹²⁶⁵ This is proposed in Piccirillo 1998a: 218. Saller's Excavations 1941a suggested an abandonment date around the eighth century. The pottery from Saller's excavations, however, offer possible evidence for a sustained presence in the ninth century: Schneider 1950: plate 152, p. 193. Peter of Bayt Ra's, writing around 820 evidently considered the site still under the control of Melkite Christians: *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 206 and tr. Watt 1960: 162).

¹²⁶⁵ Neither site is sufficiently published to offer a more extensive overview of these sites. The site of Horvat Hani is discussed in Dahari 2003 and in Di Segni 2003. I am grateful to Uzi Dahari for his correspondence with me about the abandonment date of the Horvat Hani site which he places in the ninth century. For Horvat Hanot: see Shenhav 2003.

¹²⁶⁶ Schick 1995: 139-158 and McCormick 2001: 44, 48. Both, however, have drawn attention to the inconsistencies with the debate. On the processes and rates of conversion in Palestine, which are not well studied, see Levitson 1990 and Levy Rubin 2000: 261-263 and the broader study by Bulliet 1979.

were ever destinations for pilgrims: a term itself weighted in erroneous modern suppositions. Secondly, such sites were not reclaimed by Muslim communities (presumably descendents of former monastic patrons) nor, it would appear, does the ninth century provide any evidence that mosque construction counterbalanced the rates of church abandonment in the *Jund Filastīn* and the *Jund al-Urdunn*. Conversely, cities and regions where mosque construction and maintenance is most explicit for the period 700-1000 correspond to those where churches also continued to function.¹²⁶⁷ Conversion and elite re-orientation are components of monastic trends following the seventh century but require situating within a much broader economic view of the region during the ninth and tenth centuries.

For one, the period c.750-c.950 appears to have overseen the declining importance of the highly localised production and distribution networks in the region which had been a predominant source of income and, presumably, the wealth base which underpinned monastic patron networks.¹²⁶⁸ Political and fiscal restructuring focussed on Baghdad after the 760s may have exacerbated this trend further.¹²⁶⁹ Fiscal revenue was steadily more centralised and increasingly directed away from the Syro-Palestinian region as were the general rhythms of Caliphal court politics from which Palestinian Christians (and occasionally Christians altogether) were steadily isolated.¹²⁷⁰ This was not broadly true for the entire region: individual cities (Jerusalem, Ramlā, Aqaba, Asqālan and Tabāriyyah) appear to have retained prominent political scenes and equally complex and prosperous economies.¹²⁷¹ In the 980s,

¹²⁶⁷ This reflects, in part, the difficulty of identifying early mosques and evidence for Muslims: see Johns 2003: 11-21. On the mosque in Jarash see the discussion in Damgaard 2011, Walmsley and Damgaard 2005: 362-378, Blanke 2007: 177-197, Walmsley *et al.* 2008: 109-29 and Walmsley and Blanke 2010. For the Mosque of Tiberias discussed; see Cytryn-Silverman 2009. For 'Ammān see Almagro and Jimenez 2000. On the small mosque of Shivta: Magness 2003: 185-186. This probably continued in use into the Abbasid period although the poorly published results of the excavations do not permit fuller appraisal of its dating. An inscription dates the small mosque, which was attached to the South Church, to the ninth century. There is little indication, however, that this structure was subsequently expanded. Whether or not the mosque continued to function concurrently with the church is uncertain due to the brevity of publication.

¹²⁶⁸ Evidence of exchange with Egypt, mainly in the ports of Aylah must however, caution against sweeping assessments of its impact: Power 2012: 146-148.

¹²⁶⁹ See pages 272. On the investment in Mesopotamia in this period see Kennedy 2011b.

¹²⁷⁰ Kennedy 2004: 130-140.

¹²⁷¹ Pages 294-299.

al-Muqadassī could report the predominance of Christian scribes within the administration and the importance of Tabāriyyah as a major city which produced them.¹²⁷² The clear survival of an educated and highly articulate Melkite Christian population – perhaps not scribes themselves but certainly indicative of similarly trained individuals – in the surviving urban network is epitomised by the colophons of a number of manuscripts produced in the region in the ninth and tenth centuries.¹²⁷³

This gradual marginalisation of the region in political/economic terms and the decline of local autonomies appear to have instigated a breakdown in the general wealth base of parts of the population and particular regions. We possess no current means of detailing this fully. But the abandonment or contraction of a number of rural sites which occurred concurrently with the abandonment of the churches within them – Umm al-Jimal, Rehovot-in-the-Negev and Mamphis – evidently indicates an underlying strain which did not necessarily have its basis in religious confrontation or change. Christian cult sites and monasteries, interconnected with these fluctuations, were dramatically affected by the dissolving regional base, as the private revenue bases of localised elites, upon which they were increasingly dependent by 750, appear to have gradually diminished.¹²⁷⁴ I would not downplay the effects that the conversion of former aristocratic Christian families had on eroding these relationships further; evidently by the mid-ninth century the trend was strong enough to warrant a systemic apologetic response from within the Chalcedonian community.¹²⁷⁵ The shift from Christian to Muslim patronage is also borne out in the cases of investment beyond the eighth century, where monumental programmes of restoration or repair were steadily drawn towards the preservation of the Muslim religious infrastructure or urban elements

¹²⁷² al-Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsim fī maʿrifat al-aqālī*, (ed. de Goje 1906, 183, tr. Collins 2001, 153).

¹²⁷³ Anthony David of Baghdad, active in Mar Sabas in the 880s and known from Vatican Arabic 71, Mingana Christian Arabic 93 and Strassbourg 4226. The monk Stephen of Ramlā of Mar Chariton is known from the *Summary of the Ways of Faith* in British Library Oriental MS 4950 copied in 877.

¹²⁷⁴ Pages 294-297.

¹²⁷⁵ This has been well surveyed in Griffith 2008. Specific texts, written within the monastic milieu in Palestine, are discussed in Griffith 1989, Griffith 2006, Griffith 1987, Swanson 1988 and Swanson 2007.

which retained a role within this framework.¹²⁷⁶

As I have stressed, the complexity of individual monastic or cult site patron economies produced differing impacts across regions. This is demonstrated by the core group of sites, interwoven with communities beyond their immediate social/physical contexts, which exhibit the strongest resilience to these trends. Mar Sabas and Mount Sinai are the two where such connections are most explicit, but others such as the Hagia Maria monastery of Choziba, the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, or Mar Samwil were clearly able to retain income in order to support sustained use into the eleventh century.¹²⁷⁷ What we are unable to do at present is offer anything more than an impressionistic sense of the activity from where much of this wealth derived. Landownership and exploitation is one area which will require considerable elaboration in any future studies given that in the mid-eleventh century the Andalusian writer, Ibn al-ʿArabi, could still report of the dominance of Christians and Christian monasteries in Palestinian rural life.¹²⁷⁸

Other sites such as Mount Nebo or Aaron's Monastery on Jabāl Harūn, both of which reveal ninth-century phases, caution against the tendency to assume that this continuity only related to sites which retained more complex extra-regional associations.¹²⁷⁹ Regional connections, attested by graffiti inscriptions left by pious visitors, point to the importance of such centres on an inter-regional level which, we may presume, facilitated a continued (though much diminished) monastic presence.¹²⁸⁰

The majority of the surviving monasteries maintained some connection with the Christian families connected to the main urban centres which had emerged in the ninth century. We know nothing about these families beyond the fact that still in the 950s they

¹²⁷⁶ See the synthesis in Avni 2011b and individual studies in Almagro and Jimenez 2000 and Damgaard 2011.

¹²⁷⁷ See pages 294-307.

¹²⁷⁸ See Gil 1992: 171 with references and further discussion.

¹²⁷⁹ On the continued survival of Jabal Harūn into the ninth century see Mikkola *et al* 2008: 159-164. The site is also described in the tenth century work of Al-Masʿūdī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa al-ishrāf*: 143 (ed. De Goeje 1894). On Mount Nebo see the excavation reports in Saller 1941a, Saller 1941b and Saller 1941c. Piccirillo and Alliata 1998: 218 propose continuity into the late ninth century.

¹²⁸⁰ See pages 351-356, 396-397.

were able to produce a class of highly literature bureaucrats or doctors functioning within the urban administrative apparatus. A number of the later Patriarchs of whom we are aware, Theodoros (c.745–c.770) and Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq (c.933–c.940), for example, had either performed the role of physicians or were closely related to individuals who retained this position.¹²⁸¹ The survival of the Mansūr family, which produced two Patriarchs in the ninth and tenth centuries Sergios I (c.842–c.844) and Elias III (c.878–c.907), provides one indication of a Melkite family whose status was underpinned by a close proximity to the urban network of Palestine and its Muslim governing families.¹²⁸²

The colophons of a number of Arabic manuscripts now preserved at Mount Sinai offer further cases where such connections may be extended further. David Anthony of Baghdad, Stephen of Ramlā or David of Asqālan all provide testimony to the continued ability of urbanised Melkite families to produce highly educated and eloquent writers whose lives were inexorably linked to the major monastic centres of Palestine.¹²⁸³ Further consideration of the urban origins of these writers – Baghdad, Ramlā and Asqālan – yields unsurprising results: all three originated from urban centres which retained important political and economic roles in the region into the tenth century.¹²⁸⁴

We cannot say much more about these individuals. Nonetheless, I would propose that it was writers such as these and their family groups whose wealth base had arguably remained the most resilient to the shifts of the ninth century – given that they were situated within urban regions where continuities (urban, administrative and economic) are the most explicit for the period 800–950. They may not have been as comparatively wealthy or

¹²⁸¹ On the biography of Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq see the recent discussion in Simonsohn 2011.

¹²⁸² The familial connection of Sergios and Elias to the Mansūr family is stressed by Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq in his *Nazm al-Jawhar* 120–122, 182 (ed. Cheikho 1960–61: 120–122, 182, tr. Pirone 1987, 408, 418). Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq both reports that these men were descendants of Sergios ibn Mansūr involved in the capitulation of Damascus in the 630s.

¹²⁸³ Anthony David of Baghdad, active in Mar Sabas in the 880s and known from Vatican Arabic 71, Mingana Christian Arabic 93 and Strassbourg 4226. The monk Stephen of Ramlā of Mar Chariton is known from the Summary of the Ways of Faith in British Library Oriental MS 4950 copied in 877. David of Asqālan, active in the 920s, is known from Sinai Arabic 309, f.236r.

¹²⁸⁴ On Ramlā and the archaeological activity for the ninth century see Avni 2011.

numerous as their Byzantine counterparts. The post eighth-century phases of the church at Mount Berenike in Tabarīyyah (one the major urban centres of the region by the later ninth century) exhibits a far more restrained pattern of maintenance and embellishment than earlier local examples.¹²⁸⁵ Yet revenues were evidently sufficient to maintain the church into the eleventh century and I am cautious about over-emphasising economic factors as the sole motivating cause behind material shifts. Too little is known about the social or patronage conventions of Melkite life at present to assert exclusively economic motives with any conviction.

THE YEAR 950

If this study has aimed to challenge one prevalent mode of thinking it is that of homogeneity. After nearly a century of research, approaches to Palestinian monasticism and pilgrimage are still characterised by the sanitised perception of these communities as entities which responded uniformly to Muslim rule. Traditional research strategies have been formative in cultivating this image: hagiography still remains the definitive interpretive force for our understanding of these communities (before and after the seventh century) and archaeology still retains its fixation on the architectural at the expense of recognising monastic and cult institutions as social and political bodies integrated within a complex interlocking landscape of production, exchange and devotional memory.

However, a core series of shared characteristics appear to have defined this milieu by 950 and provide some impression of the impact of Islamic rule over the course of the period c.640-c.950.

Firstly, the network of cult sites interspersed in the landscape was physically diminished from its Byzantine counterpart. By 950 this milieu was characterised by its more

¹²⁸⁵ Hirschfeld 2004b: 75-132.

nucleated nature, focussed on a core network of sites associated with major cults; the majority of which were situated within the core geographical belt of Jerusalem and the Judean Desert.¹²⁸⁶ In this regard the developments of the ninth century – economic and social – instigated a redefinition of the sacred topography of the region and a gradual eradication of localised religious associations with the landscape which had characterised Late Antiquity. Secondly, this milieu was more introverted than it had been in 600: less overt in its associations with institutional power but also increasingly orientated to the cultural and political rhythms of the Caliphate in linguistic as well as intellectual terms.¹²⁸⁷ Contact with Byzantium never fully disappeared, but the general indication is that by the ninth century much of the monastic retinue was drawn from elite groups whose own status depended upon their associations with the Abbasid administrative structure.¹²⁸⁸ I am agnostic about whether the overt localisation of the monastic demographic was a development instigated by Arab rule. It would appear that the role and integration of monastic establishments with local affairs was more significant by 600 than previously acknowledged, but the matter can only be fully resolved once the evidence associated with the Byzantine period is subjected to further scrutiny. Nonetheless, even if extra-regional figures had featured prominently in the early seventh century at some of the high status establishments (such as Sabas and Sinai), by 900 these were a minority and those emerging from the indigenous Melkite communities were steadily more focussed on the major urban centres of the Caliphate for the recognition of their social status. Thirdly, this environment was less wealthy than it had been three centuries earlier, at least in terms of the material world in which monks and pilgrims inhabited. There is no way of quantifying this wealth at present, but such studies may be possible in future in the context of more detailed examinations of Palestinian elite life beyond the Umayyad period. Even so, the fairly rapid involution of this landscape and recurrent requests for

¹²⁸⁶ See pages 285-297.

¹²⁸⁷ See pages 307-308.

¹²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

financial aid convey the impression of a church network that was progressively incapable of maintaining its infrastructure at earlier levels.¹²⁸⁹ There are a composite of factors which I have raised here which undermined this ability: social change, fiscal reorganisation and localised economic shifts. Processes of conversion instigated drastic change in elite associations with monasticism as a social expression.¹²⁹⁰ Fiscal restructuring determined the trajectory of monastic wealth in terms of taxation and the institutions which benefitted from these revenues (increasingly not Christian ones).¹²⁹¹ Lastly, shifts in the way the Palestinian landscape was exploited and prioritised, in terms of its declining status as a region which experienced sustained institutional investment, undermined the basic structures from where that wealth derived.

Though episodes of sporadic violence and persecution directed at Christians were features of this milieu by the ninth century, I have been keen to play down its impact in terms of understanding the wider regional shifts of change. As I have stressed, these examples, though devastating to individual establishments or figures, appear to have been instigated as a result of highly localised social or political situations rather than as broader trends of centralised or institutionally sanctioned oppression.¹²⁹² As in the example of Patriarch Christodoulos in 966, or the correspondence between the Ikhshidids and the Byzantine emperor Romanos II, such punctuated violence cannot be de-contextualised from the broader political, military and diplomatic backdrop against which such tensions unfolded.

As the report of Christodoulos' attempts to gain the protection and reassurance of the Ikhshidid ruler Abū al-Misk Kāfūr from the governor of Jerusalem attests, violence directed at Melkite Christians often stemmed from highly localised (often personal) rivalries rather than uniform Caliphal attitudes or, as with the cases of the 960s and following the death of Harūn

¹²⁸⁹ Pages 214-217.

¹²⁹⁰ Pages 223-236.

¹²⁹¹ Pages 195-197.

¹²⁹² Pages 228-237.

al-Rashīd, when caliphal control was less rigidly maintained in outlying regions of the Caliphate.¹²⁹³ As with the example of the deposition of Patriarch Elias II in favour of Theodoros, a close associate of the emir of Ramlā, cases of familial rivalry or the political stance of individual clergy caution against the tendency to frame the Melkite experience of the period c.650-c.950 solely in terms of a simplistic Christian-Muslim divide.¹²⁹⁴

The year 950 following the fragmentation of the Abbasid world offers a useful termination for this study. There are elements of continuity beyond this period which could be stressed within monastic communities. Patterns of abandonment and contraction continued, as did the interwoven interest of the Melkites in local administrative life.

Nonetheless, it offers a useful point of departure from developments in the 960s which instigated more profound shifts in the geo-political organisation of the East Mediterranean and attitudes towards Melkite Christians. The resurgence of Byzantine military offenses in the 960s under Nikephoros II saw a renewal of hostility which was to result in substantial gains for the Byzantine polity.¹²⁹⁵ Attitudes towards Melkite Christians invariably hardened in this environment given their associations with Constantinople: whether real or conceptual.¹²⁹⁶ This was to culminate some decades later in the more systematic persecutions and destructions under al-Ḥākim during the opening decades of the eleventh century.¹²⁹⁷ These developments, though transformative to the physical and social fabric of the Melkite milieu, reflect the culmination of a progressive military and social interest in Palestine in the Byzantine world which appears to have little precedent prior to the year 900. This study is not concerned with the development of this ideology or its role in the genesis of the Crusades. Rather, it is a portrait of the context that preceded it and an attempt

¹²⁹³ Page 234.

¹²⁹⁴ Page 275.

¹²⁹⁵ See Garood 2008. The earlier offensives of Romanos Lekapenos are addressed in Runicman 1929: 137-150.

¹²⁹⁶ Page 234-235.

¹²⁹⁷ Walker 2009: 205-214 provides an overview of these developments.

to trace the contours of changes to that world from Late Antiquity until the establishment of the Latin Kingdom which eventually transformed it.

APPENDIX A

GAZETTEER OF SITES

This gazetteer only lists sites which can be identified as monasteries or cult centres. I have omitted discussions of churches that may only have functioned as centres of lay worship. This is principally due to their number (now numbering into the hundreds) and because the focus of this study is primarily on monastic communities and pilgrimage churches. Furthermore, the distribution maps which accompany the main discussion only include monastic and pilgrimage sites and I have chosen to omit non-monastic churches and major cities for the sake of clarity.

Additional references for individual non-monastic churches may be found in the footnotes of the main discussion. The sites are organised alphabetically and are numbered accordingly. The number assigned to a site in the gazetteer is also used to identify individual sites in the distribution maps accompanying the main discussion. I am aware of the sensitive issues regarding the naming of sites and settlements especially with sites now incorporated into modern Israel or the Palestinian territories. In the gazetteer and main discussion I have adopted the names by which these sites are most commonly known from publication and modern debate in order to facilitate easier reference and clarity.

NO: 1

NAME: Abila

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

CRUCIFORM CHURCH

The church has been fully excavated but the results are not yet available in final form. As with the church in Area D, the excavators of the Cruciform date its destruction and final occupation to the Golan Earthquake of 747/749.¹²⁹⁸

AREA D

The church was excavated in the 1980s but has not been fully published in a final report. The excavators dated the construction of the basilica to the later sixth century and suggested that the basilica was destroyed in the Golan Earthquake of 747/749.¹²⁹⁹

NO: 2

NAME: Al-Quweisma

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The double church of Al-Quweisma has been fully excavated, although the results have only been published in preliminary form.¹³⁰⁰ Activity in the lower church can be identified for the year 717/718 due to a dated inscription which commemorates the refurbishments and partial rebuilding of the church.¹³⁰¹ Iconoclastic interventions in both the lower church and upper

¹²⁹⁸ Wineland 2001: 38-40.

¹²⁹⁹ Winter 1985, Winter 1987 and Wineland 2001: 30-35.

¹³⁰⁰ Saller 1948 and Schick and Suleiman 1991.

¹³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

church of Hagios Kyriakos would support the continued use of the church into the mid-eighth century. The report does not provide a detailed discussion of the finds although the presence of red on cream ware and Abassid lamps would potentially support the continued function of both churches throughout the eighth century and into the early ninth.¹³⁰² Evidence for a later ninth century phase was less substantial and the excavators propose that the church fell out of use in this period.¹³⁰³

NO: 3

NAME: Avdat/Oboda

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was fully excavated between the 1970s and 1980s although no publications have dealt with the Byzantine and early Islamic phases of the site.¹³⁰⁴ Available reports are mostly architectural in focus and present no discussion of the stratigraphy or the finds encountered during excavation.¹³⁰⁵ A single inscription in the martyrion of Hagios Theodoros, dated to 617, would confirm continued occupation throughout the Sassanian interim c.614-c.628.¹³⁰⁶ Negev attributes all of the destruction at the site to the aftermath of the Arab conquest without providing any supporting material or criteria.¹³⁰⁷ Magness has raised serious concerns with this hypothesis in view of the evidence for more substantial Umayyad phases in the material assemblages of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, Nessana and Shivta.¹³⁰⁸ The lack of published finds means that any systematic rejection of Avraham Negev's interpretation is impossible.

¹³⁰² *Ibid.*

¹³⁰³ Schick 1995: 434.

¹³⁰⁴ Negev 1997.

¹³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰⁶ Negev 1982: 37 (Inscription 27).

¹³⁰⁷ Negev 1997: 150-151.

¹³⁰⁸ Magness 2003: 187-188.

NO: 4

NAME: ‘Ayn al-Kanisah

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The small monastic chapel at the foot of Tell al-Mukhayyat, in the environs of Mount Nebo, was fully excavated by the Franciscans in 1994 although a final report was never published.¹³⁰⁹ Published discussions of the site have focussed predominantly around the dating of the mosaic schemes.¹³¹⁰ Two schemes were identified during the excavation of the site. The first, an undated inscription, which mentions the *hegoumenos* Abraham and the stylite Longinos and another, which mentions the recluse George, dated to 762.¹³¹¹

The excavators propose a later sixth-century date for the foundation of the church based on the style of mosaic and ceramic finds.¹³¹² The preliminary report offered by Piccirillo does not offer a full stratigraphic discussion of the site, although the mention of monastic figures in the sixth- and mid-eighth century schemes would suggest that the use of the site remained unchanged in this period.

The human and zoomorphic subjects of the mosaic scheme were later subject to iconoclastic intervention.¹³¹³ The subsequent renovation of the mosaic scheme in 762, which occurred following a fire in the church, provides a *terminus ante quem* for this activity. Using the example of ‘Ayn al-Kanisah, Susana Ognibene posits that the major phase of iconophobic activity occurred in Palestine between 720 and 760.¹³¹⁴ The ceramic assemblage of the church would, however, propose a stable pattern of occupation into the ninth century although

¹³⁰⁹ A preliminary report of the findings is published in Piccirillo 1994e.

¹³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹¹ *Ibid.* 525-530.

¹³¹² *Ibid.* 524.

¹³¹³ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁴ Ognibene 2002: 109-116.

evidence for a tenth-century phase is less clear.¹³¹⁵ The report provides no indication of a major change in the use of the site. Only a later Muslim burial, probably post-medieval, provides evidence of post-Abassid activity.¹³¹⁶

NO: 5

NAME: Bethany

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Excavations at the site by Sylvester Saller identified the existence of a Byzantine church which is now identified as the site of the Tomb of Lazaros. This identification is possible but difficult to confirm from the material published in Saller's excavations.¹³¹⁷ Little information about the phasing and stratigraphy of the site appears in Saller's report although the excavations yielded considerable amounts of Byzantine and Umayyad ceramic forms which may support the continued occupation of this cult site into the Abassid period.¹³¹⁸ Saller supports the continued activity at the tomb from the seventh century until its redevelopment following the establishment of the Latin Kingdoms.¹³¹⁹ If it is to be identified as the site of the Tomb of Lazaros known to Byzantine writers, textual accounts may provide additional support to confirm the use of the site into the late ninth century. The church is listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* where a single priest is reported to have resided.¹³²⁰ Peter of Bayt Ra's also considered the church still active in the mid-ninth century.¹³²¹

¹³¹⁵ Piccirillo 1994e: 535-538.

¹³¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 522.

¹³¹⁷ Saller 1957.

¹³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³²⁰ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line 24 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 207-207).

¹³²¹ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 330 (ed. Cachia 1960: 175, tr. Watt 1960: 141).

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The tomb of Lazaros is mentioned in the accounts of Epiphanios and Bernard the Monk which provides one tentative indication of an awareness of the site outside of Palestine.¹³²²

The *Sinai Georgian Menaion* also lists the tomb as part of the stational liturgy on the feast of Lazaros, the Virgin Mary, Phokas and Sozontis (7 September).¹³²³

NO: 6

NAME: Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church still survives in its Constantinian form and remains occupied until the present day. A full structural survey of the site was undertaken by William Harvey although the survey was unable to provide much information about the post-Byzantine phases of the basilica.¹³²⁴ The continuous occupation of the site and major phases of renovation in the eleventh and nineteenth centuries means that our understanding of its use in the early Islamic period is limited.¹³²⁵ More recent doubts about the rebuilding of the church in the reign of Justinian, first proposed by the early structural surveys of William Harvey, have also recently been raised.¹³²⁶

Textual sources confirm the continued use of the site between the seventh and tenth centuries. The church is described in the *Commematorium de Casis Dei*, the *Kitāb al-Burhān* and the description of Bethlehem by Al-Muqaddasī.¹³²⁷ The separate reports of

¹³²² Epiphanios Hagiopolites, *Hagiopolita*: 35 (ed. Donner 1971: tr. Wilkinson 2002: 214) and *Bernard the Monk* 16 (ed. Tobler 1874: 95, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 267).

¹³²³ *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34): 7 September (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 89).

¹³²⁴ Harvey 1935 and Harvey 1936.

¹³²⁵ Pringle 1993: 137-156.

¹³²⁶ Pickett (forthcoming).

¹³²⁷ *Commematorium de Casis Dei*: line 26 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 208-209). This entry also reports the existence of monks and stylites at the church by the early ninth century. See also Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-*

Anastasios of Sinai and Peter of Bayt Ra's would also appear to confirm that the church remained under Chalcedonian control following the seventh century.¹³²⁸

Additional reports in the itineraries of Epiphanius Hagiopolites, Willibald and Bernard the Monk provide some indication of the importance of the church in the thoughts of western writers after the seventh century.¹³²⁹

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Bethlehem is listed in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)* as the site of a *synaxis* on the 31 May and 18 September.¹³³⁰

NO: 7

NAME: Capernaum 'Peter's House'

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church was fully excavated under the supervision of Virgilio Corbo and appeared in a final report in 1975.¹³³¹ The report, however, was largely architectural in focus and paid little attention to the phasing of the site. In addition, much of the excavation was focused on recovering the *domus ekklesia* believed to lie underneath the Byzantine structure.¹³³² Consequently, our understanding of the church in its post-Byzantine phases is limited. Corbo dated the final abandonment of the site to 700 which he attributed to the declining

Burhān: 313 (ed. Cachia 1960: 167, tr. Watt 1960: 135) and Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1906: 172, tr. Collins 2001: 144).

¹³²⁸ Anastasios of Sinai, *Questions and Answers*: 117 (PG 89:767-770), Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 313 (ed. Cachia 1960: 167, tr. Watt 1960: 135).

¹³²⁹ Huneberg, *Life of Willibald*: 22 (ed. Tobler 1874: 33-34, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 244), Epiphanius Hagiopolites, *Hagiopolita*: 11 (ed. Donner 1971, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 209), *Bernard the Monk*: 17 (ed. Tobler 1974: 96, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 267-268).

¹³³⁰ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 31 May, 15 September (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 69, 90).

¹³³¹ Corbo 1975.

¹³³² Corbo 1993.

significance of churches following the Arab conquest.¹³³³ These findings were initially complemented by the excavations at Capernaum conducted by Vasilios Tzaferis who also identified more subdued occupation in the eighth century.¹³³⁴ A recent challenge to his phasing and the dating of the ceramic assemblages by Jodi Magness (who has argued for more substantial eighth and ninth century occupation) also brings Corbo's phasing into doubt.¹³³⁵

Corbo's problematic chronology is not wholly endorsed by the material assemblages that are published which actually show clear evidence for more substantial activity than previously acknowledged. Textual evidence may support the existence of at least one church – associated with the miracle of Jairos' daughter – in Capernaum into the ninth century. Peter of Bayt Ra's considered at least one church still active in the ninth century. Whether or not this relates to the church currently known as 'Peter's House' is unclear.¹³³⁶

NO: 8

NAME: Chariton (Mar)

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The monastery of Chariton was subject to limited archaeological investigations by Yizhar Hirschfeld.¹³³⁷ This survey and its subsequent publication were heavily informed by the textual accounts and do not present a full description of the material encountered during the survey. Consequently, little is known about the material phases or occupational extent of the monastery during the early Islamic period. Textual evidence and scribal activity is, therefore, the primary means through which the extent of monastic occupation at the site can be

¹³³³ Corbo 1975: 56.

¹³³⁴ Tzaferis 1989.

¹³³⁵ Magness 1997.

¹³³⁶ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 319 (ed. Cachia 1960: 168-169, tr. Watt 1960: 136).

¹³³⁷ Hirschfeld 2000: 315-362.

determined. This is less complete than that of neighbouring Mar Sabas but sufficient to suggest sustained occupation into the tenth century (although its characteristics cannot be determined).

The monastery is listed in Charlemagne's *Commemoratorium* (dated c.808) but there is a lacuna in the manuscript where the number of monks was once listed.¹³³⁸ It is possible, as with Mar Sabas, that the site was sacked in 813 following the death of Harūn al-Rashīd.¹³³⁹ The survey conducted by Hirschfeld was, however, inconclusive. Evidently, as with Mar Sabas, monastic activity was resumed fairly quickly. Later ninth-century activity is suggested by the scribal activities of the monk Stephen of Ramlā whose redaction of an anonymous Christian apologetic in the year 877 is attested in British Library Oriental MS4950, f.197v.¹³⁴⁰ The nature of its occupation after 877 is difficult to determine, but the mention of a Georgian monk named Paul in the colophons of a series of manuscript produced at Chariton in the tenth century appear to support its continued occupation into the tenth century.¹³⁴¹

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The listing of the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34) confirms the incorporation of a feast of Chariton in Melkite liturgical celebration by the ninth or tenth century.¹³⁴² Theodore of Stoudios' letter to the monastery (c.817-c.819) indicates an awareness of the monastery in Constantinople by the early ninth century.¹³⁴³ George, the *synkellos* of Patriarch Tarasios, may also have been a monk of the monastery prior to his career in Constantinople.¹³⁴⁴

¹³³⁸ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line 30-31 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 208-211).

¹³³⁹ Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6301 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 484-486, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 664-665).

¹³⁴⁰ On Stephen of Ramlā: see Griffith 1985.

¹³⁴¹ Pringle 1993: 221.

¹³⁴² *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34): 29 September (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 93).

¹³⁴³ Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters* 278 (ed. Fatouros 1992: 415-416).

¹³⁴⁴ See the comments, with accompanying bibliography, in Mango and Scott's translation of Theophanes: Mango and Scott 1997: lxiii, n. 2.

NO: 9

NAME: Choziba, (Monastery of the Theotokos)

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Substantial reconstruction in the early twentieth century restricts a complete understanding of the early medieval phases of the site.¹³⁴⁵ An inscription, dated to the twelfth century, records a renovation phase in the Crusader period. The limited opportunity for intensive archaeological research means that we are reliant on textual sources to confirm the continued occupation of the monastery after the seventh century.

The monastery is listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*, which identifies the *hegoumenos* Theophylaktos.¹³⁴⁶ Although this would confirm its use until the early ninth century, evidence for later occupation is limited. Although the renovation of the monastery in the twelfth century would suggest that the site remained occupied, this cannot be confirmed with the available material.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The *Sinai Georgian Menaion* records that the monastery formed part of the stationary liturgy of the Melkite church where it was associated with the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin on the 16 January and 18 January.¹³⁴⁷

¹³⁴⁵ On these phases: see Pringle 1993: 185-188.

¹³⁴⁶ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 31 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 210-211).

¹³⁴⁷ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 16-18 January (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 45).

NO: 10

NAME: Dayr al-Qaṭṭār al-Byzantinī and Qaṣr aṭ Ṭūba

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was excavated as part of the Swedish Dead Sea Expedition and has been published in a preliminary report.¹³⁴⁸ Excavations at the site of Dayr al-Qaṭṭār al-Byzantinī revealed a multi-phase site where activity can be identified during the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. In the Byzantine period a church stood on the site which appears to have functioned until 749 when the excavators suggest that the site may have been destroyed by a fire linked to the Golan Earthquake.¹³⁴⁹ Parts of the church were, however, subsequently reclaimed and continued in use after the mid-eighth century.¹³⁵⁰ The excavators do not date the final occupation of the site but the tentative dating of the later non-ecclesiastical structure to the period 960 to 1030 (based on Carbon 14 dating) would tentatively suggest a ninth or early tenth-century date for the final occupation of the site.¹³⁵¹ It is difficult to know if the site was continuously occupied after the 780s (the date of the latest coin find) until the tenth century or if the later rebuilding represents the reuse of the site after a period of disuse.¹³⁵² The lack of evidence for substantial ninth-century occupation in the report may support the latter of these interpretations.

The presence of pilgrims or possible hermitic individuals at Qaṣr aṭ Ṭūba is suggested by a number of Greek inscriptions inscribed on a wall. No further discussion of the site is offered in the report.¹³⁵³

¹³⁴⁸ Holmgren and Kaliff 1997.

¹³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 324.

¹³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 324.

¹³⁵² *Ibid.*: 332.

¹³⁵³ *Ibid.*: 333-339.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The excavators attempt to link this site to the tradition of Hagios Lot also known from Deir 'Ain 'Abata. The excavations yielded no evidence to support this hypothesis and such an association needs to be treated with reservation.¹³⁵⁴

NO: 11

NAME: Deir 'Ain 'Abata

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was fully excavated by Konstantinos Politis and is available in a final report.¹³⁵⁵ The excavations identified a large three-aisled basilica which was constructed at the entrance of a natural cave.¹³⁵⁶ The main apse of the basilica was set into the mountain. The natural cave was accessed via a doorway in the north aisle.¹³⁵⁷ The mention of a *hegoumenos* in a dedicatory inscription dated 572/573 would appear to suggest a monastic presence at the site by the late-sixth century or that the complex itself was serviced by a monastic community.¹³⁵⁸

The excavations suggested a late-fifth or early sixth-century date for the construction of the basilica although inscriptions dated to 572/573, 606 and 691 indicate three phases of

¹³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁵ Politis *et al* 2012. Preliminary reports of the site appear in Politis 1988, Politis 1989, Politis 1990, Politis 1992, Politis 1993, Politis 1995, Politis 1997 and Politis 2011.

¹³⁵⁶ Politis 2012: 132-137.

¹³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁸ Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: 393.

renovation to the floor of the church in the sixth and seventh centuries.¹³⁵⁹ The excavators identified no major changes to spatial use in the site between the sixth and eighth centuries either in the church or the accompanying complex identified as the living quarters of the monastic community.¹³⁶⁰ During the late Umayyad or early Abassid period, an oven was constructed in the domestic complex and a door was opened in the north aisle to facilitate additional access to the cave.¹³⁶¹ A burial cist, containing a number of individuals (men, women and infants) also relates to this later phase.¹³⁶² The excavations yielded no evidence to propose any major phases of destruction or damage to the site and date its final – seemingly peaceful – abandonment to the late eighth or early ninth century.¹³⁶³

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The site has been identified as a cult site associated with the Prophet Lot and, more specifically, the site recorded in Gen 19.30-36.¹³⁶⁴ The first appears more certain as votive inscriptions recovered from the site petition Hagios Lot for assistance and blessing.¹³⁶⁵ The presence of graffito inscriptions in Greek and Arabic confirm the continued use of the site as a destination for pilgrimage into the eighth century.¹³⁶⁶ Michele Piccirillo has also made a convincing case that the church is to be identified with the Hagios Lot church identified on the Madaba Mosaic Map.¹³⁶⁷ Little can be said about the monastic community present at the site. However, residues of *scarus collana* indicate the extensive economic connections of the

¹³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 393-416.

¹³⁶⁰ Politis 2012: 115-158.

¹³⁶¹ Politis 1995: 486.

¹³⁶² Politis 2011.

¹³⁶³ Politis 2012: 115-158.

¹³⁶⁴ Politis 2011.

¹³⁶⁵ Meimaris, Kalliope and Kritikahou-Nikolaropoulou 2012: 412-413. The Arabic inscription is reproduced in Brock, Canby, Al-Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012.

¹³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶⁷ Piccirillo 1993c: 89.

community with the Rea Sea.¹³⁶⁸ The discovery of fragments of biblical texts, written in Christo-Palestinian Aramaic, suggests that the community used Greek and Aramaic concurrently.¹³⁶⁹

NO: 12

NAME: 'Ein Kārem

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

'ST JOHN'

Substantial rebuilding of the church of St John in the nineteenth century restricts a full scale archaeological appraisal of the site's early Islamic phases.¹³⁷⁰ The presence of the Crusader church also presents the possibility that the layers relating to the original Byzantine church have been truncated.¹³⁷¹ Small scale excavations by Sylvester Saller were unable to shed additional light on the church. Saller's excavations in the modern Chapel of the Holy Martyrs revealed a small panel of mosaic possibly relating to the earlier Byzantine structure.¹³⁷² This was based on broad stylistic criteria which are not described by Saller.¹³⁷³ Saller also proposes a possible tenth or eleventh century renovation phase to the church but provides little material to confirm this statement. Similarly, his identification of possible Umayyad

¹³⁶⁸ Beech and Prame 2012: 479-489.

¹³⁶⁹ Brock, Canby, Al-Ghul, Hoyland and MacDonald 2012: 418.

¹³⁷⁰ Saller 1946: 17.

¹³⁷¹ *Ibid*: 17, 42-45.

¹³⁷² *Ibid*: 118-123.

¹³⁷³ *Ibid*: 123.

phases is difficult to verify from the published report.¹³⁷⁴ Textual evidence offers little additional clarification although Peter of Bayt Raʿs considered the Church of the Visitation still active in the ninth century. Currently, there is no evidence to link this report with the material remains unearthed by Saller.¹³⁷⁵

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Peter of Bayt Raʿs identifies Bayt Zakariyā as the site of the visitation reported in Luke 1: 39-59.¹³⁷⁶ Peter also links the site to Elizabeth and John the Baptist. The association of Bayt Zakariyā with ʿEin Kārem appears to be confirmed by the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* which lists ʿEin Kārem as a point on the stational liturgy on the feast commemorating John and Elizabeth on 28 August.¹³⁷⁷

NO: 13

NAME: Elyas (Mar)

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was fully excavated by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan although a report has never been published. Much of the available discussion of the site is largely architectural in focus and approximate chronologies are currently determined by the presence of epigraphic inscriptions. The original church (possibly a sixth-century construction) was a small tri-conch basilica which utilised a natural cave on Tel Mar Elyas to form the semi dome of the church

¹³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: 185-186.

¹³⁷⁵ Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 312 (ed. Cachia 1960: 167, tr. Watt 1960: 135).

¹³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷⁷ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 28 August (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 86-87).

apse.¹³⁷⁸ A larger tri-conch basilica was subsequently constructed on the summit of the Tell. This tri conch basilica was flanked by a baptistery chamber to the north and to the south incorporated a hypogeum accessed via a chamber in the south aisle.¹³⁷⁹ The limited level of publication does not clarify if the hypogeum pre-dates the church. Similarly, it is unclear if the smaller tri-conch basilica remained in use following the construction of the larger complex.

It is unclear if the inscription in the nave of the basilica, dated to 622, relates to a foundation or renovation phase.¹³⁸⁰ In any case, the example complements a number of similar dedications of the 620s known from Rihab.¹³⁸¹ Another inscription, dated to 776, which mentions a hegoumenos, confirms a monastic presence at the site into the later eighth century.¹³⁸² Possible iconoclastic interventions in some mosaic panels also suggest an active eighth century phase. Published details on the final phases of the site are few although the dating proposed by the excavators suggests that the site went out of use in the ninth century.¹³⁸³

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The site has been linked to the Prophet Elijah although this dedication is uncertain. The inscription in the nave, dated to 622, invokes the saint although evidence at the site for further associations with Elijah is limited. No surviving sources mention the site.

¹³⁷⁸ A description of the site appears in MacDonald 2010: 74-81.

¹³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸⁰ Piccirillo 2011: 107-109.

¹³⁸¹ Piccirillo 1981b.

¹³⁸² *Ibid.*

¹³⁸³ Atoom 2012 pers.comm.

NO: 14

NAME: Emmaus-Nikopolis

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Two churches (identified as the North Church and South Church) have been identified at Emmaus/Nikopolis and were subject to an early series of excavation projects directed by Vincent and Abel.¹³⁸⁴ Detailed discussions of the finds (including ceramics) remain unpublished.

Subsequent rebuilding of the churches during the twelfth century restricts a full understanding of the Byzantine and early Islamic phases of the church although Abel and Vincent suggest in their structural survey that the twelfth-century programmes of rebuilding utilised parts of the existing basilica.¹³⁸⁵

The description of Arab glazed wares in the report, dated by Vincent and Abel between the eighth and tenth centuries, proposes a possible continuation of occupation into the Abassid period.¹³⁸⁶ Given that descriptions or photographs of the ceramics are not reproduced in the report their use to confirm a more extensive Abassid presence and the continuation of Christian activity must remain tentative. The blocking of entrance ways and construction of partition walls, identified by Vincent and Abel as ‘Islamic remains’, points to a more complex post-Byzantine phase than previously recognised.¹³⁸⁷ Vincent and Abel’s own conclusions led them to suggest that the site was abandoned at some point between the

¹³⁸⁴ Vincent and Abel 1932.

¹³⁸⁵ *Ibid*: 356-371.

¹³⁸⁶ *Ibid*: 269.

¹³⁸⁷ *Ibid*: 360-361.

eighth and tenth centuries although the limitations of the report cannot test this claim in any substantive way.¹³⁸⁸

However, the presence of iconoclastic intervention in the South Church may suggest that the church continued in use until the mid-eighth century.¹³⁸⁹

Textual reports of the site during the early Islamic period are limited. Both the accounts of Epiphanius Hagiopolites and Bernard the Monk include Emmaus in the itineraries of their protagonists.¹³⁹⁰ The fact that neither reports the existence of a church means that the value of these accounts is limited in confirming potential post-Byzantine phases at these sites. Peter of Bayt Raʿs considered at least one church active in the ninth century which is identified as the site where Cleopas encountered the risen Christ.¹³⁹¹

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The town of Emmaus/Nikopolis is associated by a number of writers as the site where Cleopas encountered the risen Christ in Luke 24:13-32.¹³⁹² Only Peter of Bayt Raʿs explicitly mentions the existence of a church commemorating this event.¹³⁹³

¹³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*: 249.

¹³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹⁰ Epiphanius Hagiopolites, *Hagiopolita*: 14 (ed. Donner 1971, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 209), *Bernard the Monk*: 10 (ed. Tobler 1874: 91, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 265).

¹³⁹¹ Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 347 (ed. Cachia 1960: 183, tr. Watt 1960: 146-147).

¹³⁹² Wilkinson 2002: 300 surveys the evidence for this association prior to the seventh century.

¹³⁹³ Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 347 (ed. Cachia 1960: 183, tr. Watt 1960: 146-147).

NO: 15

NAME: Euthymios (Mar)

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The monastery, known as Khan el-Ahmar, was initially excavated and surveyed by Derwas Chitty and A. H. M. Jones.¹³⁹⁴ The results of these projects were never fully published with only two preliminary reports recording the finds of the 1920s excavations. The monastery was subject to a later excavation and survey by Yiannis Meimaris in the 1970s of which only a preliminary report has been published.¹³⁹⁵ The phasing of the monastery by Meimaris (and that of the later survey by Hirschfeld) was heavily informed by the textual dossier and thus inhibits an independent archaeological assessment of the site. Later excavations have also been conducted by the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem with a synthesis discussion of these excavations being offered by Yizhar Hirschfeld.¹³⁹⁶

Little attention was paid to the discussion of the post-Byzantine phases of the site, much of which was likely disturbed during the eleventh century rebuilding of the site.¹³⁹⁷ Meimaris records the presence of tenth-century ceramic forms but these were not systematically published or discussed in terms of their stratigraphic contexts.

A rebuilding phase attributed to the mid-seventh century, for example, was largely informed by the Maronite Chronicle which records that the monastery was damaged during an earthquake in 659.¹³⁹⁸ A phase of rebuilding remains possible, but there is no comparative archaeological material to support its reconstruction after 659.

Literary evidence remains the primary means through which the occupational history of the site may be determined. The monastery is mentioned among the writings of John of

¹³⁹⁴ Chitty and Jones 1928, Chitty 1929, Chitty 1930 and Chitty 1932.

¹³⁹⁵ Meimaris 1989.

¹³⁹⁶ Hirschfeld 1993: 339-371.

¹³⁹⁷ Hirschfeld 1993: 356 and Pringle 1998: 237-239.

¹³⁹⁸ *Maronite Chronicle*: AG 971 (tr. Palmer 1993: 31).

Damascus which would propose an eighth-century phase.¹³⁹⁹ For the ninth century, the Euthymios monastery is also mentioned in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*.¹⁴⁰⁰ Theophanes records that the monastery was sacked around 809.¹⁴⁰¹ The eleventh-century *Life of Lazaros of Galeison* also records a period where Lazaros resided in the monastery around 990-1000.¹⁴⁰²

The monastery, therefore, was probably continuously occupied throughout the period 650-950, although little can be said of the characteristics of this phase.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The reports of the *Commemoratorium* and the *Life of Lazaros of Galesion* discussed above point to an awareness of the site and cult in Byzantium and Frankish circles following the Arab conquest. This is possibly supplemented by the mention of the monastery in the account of Willibald if the Monastery of Eustochios is to be considered a misunderstanding of Euthymios.¹⁴⁰³ In any case, the appearance of Euthymios in a fresco scheme in Santa Maria Antiqua, on the façade of the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs, confirms a further awareness of the cult in Rome by the early eighth century.¹⁴⁰⁴ Evidence for the cult in Palestinian contexts is less clear during the early Islamic period, although Euthymios' feasts is listed in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*) which provides some tentative indication of its continued observance until the tenth century.¹⁴⁰⁵

¹³⁹⁹ Chitty 1928: 137-138 and Chitty 1932: 188-190.

¹⁴⁰⁰ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* : lines 30-31 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 210-211).

¹⁴⁰¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*: AM 6301 (ed. and tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 664-665).

¹⁴⁰² *Life of Lazaros of Galesion*: 17 (ed. BHG 979; AASS, Nov. 3:508-88, tr. Greenfield 2000).

¹⁴⁰³ Huneberc, *Life of Willibald*: 17 (ed. Tobler 1874: 28-29 and tr. Wilkinson 2002: 241).

¹⁴⁰⁴ Knipp 2002: 8-9.

¹⁴⁰⁵ *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*) (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 45).

NO: 16

NAME: Gadara/Umm Qays

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

To date, two sites have been identified and excavated in Umm Qays.¹⁴⁰⁶ The results of both excavations have appeared in preliminary reports although the final reports have not been published. A third church, located adjacent to the *dekumanos* has also been excavated although no published report of the site exists.

Neither site has yielded material to suggest a monastic presence. However, the Mausoleum Church, which was constructed over an existing tomb, and the Octagonal Terrace Church, which was structured around a centralised burial in the bema, may both have served as cult centres within the city.¹⁴⁰⁷

TERRACE CHURCH

The Octagonal Terrace Church has been subjected to full excavation but has never been published in a final report.¹⁴⁰⁸ The first phase of the church is dated by the excavators to the period 500-550 based primarily on architectural criteria rather than material assemblages. The centralised church was built over a pre-existing Roman public structure and was accessed via a colonnaded courtyard to the north.¹⁴⁰⁹ The main altar of the church was set in a depression in the centre of the church within an octagonal stylobate and was partitioned from the main space of the church by marble chancel screens.¹⁴¹⁰ Excavations in this depression also revealed the presence of a stone-line tomb accompanied by reliquary boxes over which the

¹⁴⁰⁶ See Al-Daire 2001, Vriezen 1992, Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001 and Weber 1998.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Vriezen, Wagner-Lux, Mulder and Guinée 2001: 543, 545 and Al Daire 2001: 553.

¹⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*: 537.

¹⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid*: 543.

¹⁴¹⁰ *Ibid*: 543-544.

altar was situated.¹⁴¹¹ A small adjacent basilica was added to the complex in the seventh century (possibly in the late seventh century), which possessed a *synthronon* and *cathedra*. A burial, accompanied by several reliquary boxes, was located in the bema of this subsidiary church. The excavators identified no major phases of disruption to the site in the seventh century and noted the continued use and expansion of the site until the eighth century. The final occupation of the site occurred in the mid-eighth century and was terminated, according to the excavators' suggestion, by the Golan Earthquake of 749.¹⁴¹² Some accumulated debris and alluvium in some eighth-century deposits may, however, suggest that the church was abandoned in the first half of the eighth century prior to the earthquake. The lack of a detailed report makes a firm conclusion difficult to draw.¹⁴¹³

MAUSOLEUM CHURCH

The large monumental church located adjacent to the *dekumanos* and outside of the Tiberias Gate has been fully excavated although a final report of the site has never been published.¹⁴¹⁴ The site was constructed over a pre-existing Roman mausoleum which was subsequently redeveloped to form the crypt of the Byzantine church.¹⁴¹⁵ The crypt was accessed via a stairway in the north aisle located next to the altar.¹⁴¹⁶ The apse of the main basilica was constructed directly over a tomb which presumably formed the main focal point of the commemorative cult associated with the site.¹⁴¹⁷ The excavation yielded no evidence that would confirm the identity of the incumbent holy figure. The excavator dates the construction

¹⁴¹¹ *Ibid*: 543-545.

¹⁴¹² *Ibid*: 545.

¹⁴¹³ *Ibid*: 544-545.

¹⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*: 544-545.

¹⁴¹⁵ Al-Daire 2001: 553 and Weber 1998: 443.

¹⁴¹⁶ *Ibid*: 1998: 447-449.

¹⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*: 1998: 447-448 and Al-Daire 2001: 553.

of the three-aisled basilica to the late fourth century.¹⁴¹⁸ The preliminary report provides little information about the phases of the site between the fourth and eighth centuries although it provides no indication that the function of the site as a church was interrupted during this period.¹⁴¹⁹ A major destruction phase, linked by the excavators to the Golan Earthquake of 749, marks the first dramatic break in the use of the site. The period following 749 saw the partial reclamation of the church with activity concentrated on the main apse and nave and the abandonment of the narthex and side aisles of the earlier Byzantine structure.¹⁴²⁰ Weber suggests that the site continued to function until its replacement with a mosque either in the eleventh or twelfth century.¹⁴²¹

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Al-Daire associates the crypt with the cult of Zacharias an early Christian martyred under Diocletian.

There is currently no evidence from the site itself to support this association.¹⁴²²

NO: 17

NAME: Gethsemane, Tomb of the Theotokos

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Substantial re-development of the tomb and lower church in the twelfth century has inhibited a full-scale archaeological appraisal of the site's Byzantine and early Islamic phases. Archaeological investigations by Bagatti, Piccirillo and Prodromo were unable to produce a stratigraphic history of the site. Buildings phases attributed to the reign of Theodosios and

¹⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*: 445-446.

¹⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*: 449-450.

¹⁴²⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁴²¹ *Ibid*: 449 and Al-Daire 2001: 560.

¹⁴²² Weber 1998: 449.

Maurice (the upper church) were proposed by Bagatti *et al*, but are based primarily on the testament of Pulcheria and a Georgian copy of the Sinai Menaion which survives in Sinai Georgian 34.¹⁴²³ We are, therefore, dependent upon textual evidence to sketch a broad chronological history for the site in the post-Byzantine period. This is sufficient to propose the continued function of the tomb until the late ninth century although the fate of the upper church (attributed to Emperor Maurice) is less certain.¹⁴²⁴ An Arabic pilgrim inscription recovered from excavations in the twelfth-century layers, dated to 984, would suggest that the church remained in continuous occupation beyond 950.¹⁴²⁵ The church is listed in the itineraries of Willibald and Bernard the Monk and in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*. These confirm an awareness of the site among western writers in the eighth and ninth centuries.¹⁴²⁶

The Melkite writer Peter of Bayt Ra's also notes the continued importance of the hollow rock which housed her tomb as a focus for veneration to Christians following the removal of her relics to Constantinople.¹⁴²⁷

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The continued importance of the site as a destination to pilgrims may be confirmed by the recovery of an *eulogia* token from an Abassid context in excavation of Beit She'an and by the prohibition of Muslim pilgrimage to the site in a collection of Hadith dating to the ninth

¹⁴²³ Bagatti, Prodomo and Piccirillo 1975: 15-18.

¹⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴²⁵ Katsimbini 1976.

¹⁴²⁶ Huneberg, *Life of Willibald*: 21 (ed. Tobler 1874: 32-33, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 243), *Bernard the Monk*: 13 (ed. Tobler 1874: 94, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 266-267), *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 13-14 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 202-203).

¹⁴²⁷ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 354-356 (ed. Cachia 1960: 189-190, tr. Watt 1960: 150-152).

century.¹⁴²⁸ The tomb was also a focal point of the Melkite stational liturgy for the feast of the Dormition on the 15 August.¹⁴²⁹

NO: 18

NAME: Hippos/Sussita

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Two churches have been excavated by the Hippos-Sussita project undertaken by the University of Haifa. Full annual reports of the excavations have been published although, given that the project is ongoing, a final report has not yet been published.¹⁴³⁰

NORTH WEST CHURCH

Excavations at the church have revealed a large basilica church which was constructed in the centre of Hippos/Sussita in the late fifth or sixth century.¹⁴³¹ The current excavations, which have mostly focussed on the later occupational phases of the church, have been unable to confirm the original foundation date of the church. A martyrion chapel, which incorporated a reliquary and several burials, was also identified during excavation.¹⁴³²

The excavations have demonstrated a stable pattern of occupation throughout the sixth and seventh centuries. However, the seventh century phase was marked by substantial changes to the space of the church. The atrium and porticoes were blocked and sub-divided in this phase and the construction of a large water cistern would suggest that the atrium was

¹⁴²⁸ Bashear 1991: 274-276 and Rahmani 1993.

¹⁴²⁹ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 15th August (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 84).

¹⁴³⁰ For the Northwest Church: see Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2005, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2007, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2008 and Radkowska 2004. For the Northeast Church: see Schuler 2003, Schuler 2004, Schuler 2005, Schuler 2006, Schuler 2007 and Schuler 2008.

¹⁴³¹ Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006: 59.

¹⁴³² Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006: 47 and Radkowska 2004: 61.

turned over to industrial activity.¹⁴³³ Changes to chambers which flanked the main church were also made in this period and saw further cases of subdivision and the use of the chambers for storage.¹⁴³⁴ The church, however, continued to function during this period. The excavators date the final occupation phase to the Golan Earthquake of 749 and indicate that the church was not subsequently reclaimed.¹⁴³⁵ The recovery of the remains of a female skeleton beneath the debris of the church would also support the abandonment of the church after the mid-eighth century.¹⁴³⁶

NORTH EAST CHURCH

Similar to the excavations at the Northwest Church the focus on the northeast complex has been primarily on the later phases of the church as opposed to the dating of its foundation. The excavator proposes a sixth-century date for the construction of the North East complex.¹⁴³⁷ A similar basilica plan, with a chancel integrated into the main nave, was revealed by the excavations. A distinct feature of the North East Church was the placing of a burial in the chancel.¹⁴³⁸ Excavations revealed a sarcophagus, containing a single skeleton, connected to a pipe in order to facilitate the immersion of the skeletal remains in water or oil.¹⁴³⁹ This would suggest that the tomb functioned as the focal point of a now unidentified cult.

The excavations of the church also confirmed continuous occupation of the site throughout the seventh century. Phases of remodelling and changes to spatial use, similar to those of the Northwest Church were also identified. The *diakonion* of the church was reduced

¹⁴³³ Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006: 48 and Radkowska 2004.

¹⁴³⁴ Radkowska 2004: 61.

¹⁴³⁵ Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2008: 66.

¹⁴³⁶ Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2006: 58.

¹⁴³⁷ Schuler 2004: 92-93.

¹⁴³⁸ Schuler 2003: 45.

¹⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

in size and repairs to the mosaic floor were made in this phase; possibly in response to an earlier destruction level.¹⁴⁴⁰ The excavators propose that the church was also destroyed in the Golan Earthquake of 749 and was not subsequently reclaimed.¹⁴⁴¹

NO: 19

NAME: Horvat Beit Loya

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church of Horvat Beit Loya was fully excavated by Joseph Patrich and Yoram Tsafrir but only a preliminary architectural report of the site has been published.¹⁴⁴² The excavations identified a mono-apsidal basilical church and a paved atrium which was flanked by a number of auxiliary units.¹⁴⁴³ The presence of a nearby burial cave, as well as a winepress, led the excavators to believe that the site is to be identified as a monastery.¹⁴⁴⁴ No evidence from the epigraphic corpus of the church confirms this supposition. Patrich and Tsafrir posit that the church was constructed around 500 although provide no evidence to support this hypothesis. Similarly discussion of the post-Byzantine phases at the site is missing.¹⁴⁴⁵ The presence of iconoclastic interventions would support the continued use of the church into the mid-eighth century although evidence for later phases is difficult to confirm.¹⁴⁴⁶ Based on the presence of later structures built over the mosaic, Jodi Magness suggests that the church probably went out of use in the ninth century.¹⁴⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴⁰ Schuler 2004: 87-90.

¹⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 93.

¹⁴⁴² Patrich and Tsafrir 1993: 265-272.

¹⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*: 266.

¹⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 265.

¹⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 265-271.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Magness 2003: 109.

NO: 20

NAME: Horvat Berachot

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church was fully excavated in the 1970s with an extended preliminary report published by Yoram Tsafrir and Yizhar Hirschfeld (1979).¹⁴⁴⁸ The basilica also incorporated a subterranean crypt accessed via stairways either side of the chancel. The foundation date of the church is uncertain due to the excavator's reliance on coins, inscriptions and architectural typologies to determine a foundation date. Stylistic comparisons with the mosaic scheme led Tsafrir and Hirschfeld to propose a sixth-century date for the construction of the church.¹⁴⁴⁹ From a contextual perspective this date is possible but must be accepted with reservation. The excavators proposed that the church went out of use following the Arab conquest with later seventh-century activity limited primarily to squatter activity and the reuse of the crypt as a storeroom.¹⁴⁵⁰ The lack of stratified finds make such an interpretation difficult to review, but the general reliance of the excavators on the presence of glazed ware to confirm later eighth century occupation is problematic.

Jodi Magness, in a re-analysis of the limited ceramic corpus, proposes the continued occupation of the site throughout the eighth century (but with no indication of a ninth-century activity) but does not challenge the assertion that the later occupational phases were probably linked to squatters.¹⁴⁵¹ This is based primarily on the blocking of one of the stairways to the crypt, a secondary stamped earth floor layer above the crypt mosaic and the presence of three Arabic inscriptions on the walls of the crypt.¹⁴⁵² One of the inherent limitations of Tsafrir and

¹⁴⁴⁸ Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979.

¹⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid*: 300-301. Some pottery fragments encountered during excavation may support this date.

¹⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid*: 317-318.

¹⁴⁵¹ Magness 2003: 109-111.

¹⁴⁵² *Ibid*: 318. On the inscriptions: see Drory and Drory 1979 who posit the continued association of the site with intercessory abilities.

Hirschfeld's phasing is that all three features can be attributed to a single phase. The presence of Kufic graffiti inscriptions, for example, does not necessarily indicate a post-cultic function. The inscriptions are situated in highly visible spaces within the crypt, the largest on the south wall, adjacent to the crypt window, and the others on the springer of the vault arch and by the main entrance respectively.¹⁴⁵³ The intercessory nature of the inscriptions also proposes a full recognition of the function of the site. The well-executed nature of the inscriptions, especially inscription 1, also caution against arbitrary attribution to squatter occupation. At present, an abandonment date for the site cannot be determined with precision, although Magness was unable to identify much evidence for activity after the late eighth century. The excavators noted the presence of ruined houses in the vicinity of the complex which suggests that it may have been connected to a settlement. Aerial photographs of the site would confirm this impression.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The excavators noted the presence of ruined houses in the vicinity of the complex which suggests that it may have been connected to a settlement.¹⁴⁵⁴ Aerial photographs of the site would confirm this impression.¹⁴⁵⁵

¹⁴⁵³ Drory and Drory 1979: 324-326.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Tsafirir and Hirschfeld 1979: 293.

¹⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*: plate 1.

NO: 21

NAME: Horvat Hanot

COORDINATES: 31.424474 N, 35.015920 E

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site is situated by the former Roman road linking Jerusalem and Eleutheropolis. The church was subject to a rescue excavation between 1985 and 1986, but has never been fully published.¹⁴⁵⁶ It is uncertain whether the site was associated with a monastic community, but the mosaic inscription attributes the work to the priest and *hegoumenos* Theodore. The dating of the inscription is uncertain. The indiction date of the inscription renders the dates 563/4, 578/579, 593/595 and 608/609 possible. Leah Di Segni prefers the later of these dates.¹⁴⁵⁷ Di Segni also proposes that the site functioned as a way station for pilgrims as opposed to a monastery.¹⁴⁵⁸

The church may have incorporated a subterranean crypt located under the eastern wall of the church. This identification is uncertain and the feature may have alternatively functioned as a reservoir.

The phasing of the site has never been fully published. The dated mosaic scheme proposes a *terminus ante quem* of the later sixth century, but whether this represents a foundation date or a renovation phase is less certain. The presence of iconoclastic intervention to the main scheme of the church would propose its use continued into the mid-eighth century.¹⁴⁵⁹ Shenhav dates the final phase of the site to Golan Earthquake of 749 although fuller discussion of this dating is not offered in the report.¹⁴⁶⁰

¹⁴⁵⁶ Shenhav 2003.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Di Segni 2003: 275.

¹⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵⁹ Shenhav 2003: 270.

¹⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 272.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Shenav identified the site as the resting place as Goliath based on the presence of a perceived artificial mound (made up of small pebbles) which corresponds to a description in the *Piacenza Pilgrim*.¹⁴⁶¹ Di Segni is more reserved about his identification.¹⁴⁶² Such a correlation is possible, but no evidence emerged from the church which would support its association with Goliath. No textual descriptions of the church survive. Shenav's acknowledgement of later Ayyubid and Ottoman phases (probably the remains of a *Khan*) at the site proposes that the mound may represent a later depositional phase. The existence of the mound was already noted by Guérin in the 1860s and provides the first written description of the feature.¹⁴⁶³

NO: 22

NAME: Horvat Qasra

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site of Horvat Qasra has been excavated by Amos Kloner but has not been fully published. A preliminary report of the site appeared in 1990.¹⁴⁶⁴ The site reused an existing rock-cut burial cave which appears to have been enlarged at a later date to create a chapel structure within the existing space. The bema screen of the church appears to have been carved directly from the natural stone. This reuse of earlier burial sites or natural caves appears to follow a convention also known from Horvat Midras, 'Ein Kārem and Horvat

¹⁴⁶¹ Shenav 2003 and *Piacenza Pilgrim*: 31 (ed. Geyer 1965, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 143).

¹⁴⁶² Di Segni 2003: 275.

¹⁴⁶³ Shenav 2003: 272.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Kloner 1990.

Berachot.¹⁴⁶⁵ The discovery of a series of Greek, Arabic and Aramaic graffiti, appear to endorse its association with cult practice. Although not fully published, the excavator has suggested a late eighth- or early ninth-century abandonment date.¹⁴⁶⁶

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The site is not mentioned in any textual sources from the Byzantine and early Islamic period. Di Segni proposed its association with Salome from the *Protoevangelium* based on a hypothetical inscription preserved which Di Segni hypothesises would have read ‘Shalom’.¹⁴⁶⁷ Although the reason for this identification is uncertain, a series of graffiti inscriptions invoking Hagia Salome would confirm the association of the site with a Salome by this period.¹⁴⁶⁸ Whether this is to be identified as the Salome of the *Protoevangelion* is uncertain and must remain tentative.

NO: 23

NAME: Horvat Hani

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was discovered during a road widening project and subject to a rescue excavation following damage to the west side of the complex.¹⁴⁶⁹ A full preliminary report was published in 2003.¹⁴⁷⁰ The excavations revealed a small complex consisting of two main

¹⁴⁶⁵ On Horvat Midras see Ganor, Klein Avner and Zissu 2012. On Horvat Berachot see Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979. The general phenomenon is discussed in Di Segni 2006/7.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Kloner 1990.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Di Segni 2006/7: 388-389.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Di Segni and Patrich 1990: 141-154, 31*-35*.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Dahari and Yechiel 2013.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Lass 2003 and Dahari 2003.

buildings units identified by the excavators as A and B.¹⁴⁷¹ Building A incorporated a basilica church, the crypt and a series of rooms which the excavators identify as the residential spaces of the monastic residents. Building B appears to have been used primarily for storage as a possible refectory for the monastic community.¹⁴⁷² The *tabula ansata*, which mentions a *hegoumene*, suggests that the monastery probably housed a women's monastic community.¹⁴⁷³ Although the results are not published in full, the excavators' report that a large proportion of the individuals interred within the monastic crypt were women or infant girls.¹⁴⁷⁴ This may add weight to the suggestion that the site of Horvat Hani housed a women's monastic community.

The church was constructed over a pre-existing series of natural caves which incorporated *arcsoia*.¹⁴⁷⁵ The construction of the church was deliberately placed over the cave/*arcsoia* complex in the fifth century so that the cave complex could be accessed via the monastery. Excavations yielded material that would indicate the continued use of the cave throughout the Byzantine and Umayyad period and would suggest that the cave complex was the focal point of a cult.¹⁴⁷⁶ The spatial arrangement of Horvat Hani conforms to an existing trend of establishing churches over pre-existing tombs or caves known from other examples in the region.¹⁴⁷⁷

The excavators date the foundation of the complex to the fifth century but note a substantial renovation phase to the floor at some point in the sixth century.¹⁴⁷⁸ The identification of iconoclastic interventions in the mosaic also hints at another renovation phase in the eighth century which the excavators link to an inscription invoking the

¹⁴⁷¹ Dahari and Yechiel 2013.

¹⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷⁷ Di Segni 2006/7.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Dahari and Yechiel 2013.

hegoumene of the monastic community.¹⁴⁷⁹ Published details about the phasing of the site are brief, but the excavators provide no indication of disruption to the occupation of the site until its abandonment at some point in the ninth century.¹⁴⁸⁰ A later series of burials at the site do, however, indicate longer use of the site, following the abandonment of the monastic complex.¹⁴⁸¹

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The excavators tentatively link the site to the Prophetess Hannah from Luke 2:36-38. This is based solely on the modern name of the site (Burj el-Haniya). No material was recovered in the excavation to confirm this identification. As such, this association must remain tentative.

NO: 24

NAME: Horvat Midras

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church, possibly part of a monastic complex, was excavated as part of a rescue project in 2011 in order to prevent further vandalism and looting. It has only been partially published in a preliminary report.¹⁴⁸² The basilica church was constructed in sixth century, possibly above a pre-existing basilica (whose function is not discussed in the report) dating from the fourth century. Like the church, the earlier basilica also incorporated a natural cave which was accessed via the north chapel of the basilica and later via a new entrance constructed to allow access to the tomb without entering the church.

¹⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸² Ganor, Klein, Avner and Zissu 2012.

The church was decorated with a mosaic scheme, featuring zoomorphic features which were not subjected to iconoclastic censoring. The excavators propose that the site was destroyed in the Golan Earthquake of 749 and was, according to the excavators, not subsequently re-occupied for cultic use.¹⁴⁸³ The excavators identify some reuse of the atrium into the ninth century. The report is not clear as to whether the tomb remained in use in this period.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The site has been associated with the Tomb of Zechariah based on its approximate geographical conformity to the image which appears on the Madaba map. This identification is not supported from evidence within the church itself and must remain tentative.¹⁴⁸⁴

NO: 25

NAME: Jabal Harūn

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The monastery was subject to full archaeological appraisal between 2002 and 2008 although only the results from the church and the chapel are currently published in a final report.¹⁴⁸⁵ Excavations suggest that the tri-apsidal basilica has its origins in the mid-late fifth century.¹⁴⁸⁶ Excavations suggest that the church underwent substantial modifications in the late sixth and mid-seventh century, possibly in response to two earthquakes in the region

¹⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸⁴ Resig 2011.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Fiema and Frösén *et al* 2008.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Mikkola *et al* 2008: 103- 118.

which damaged the church (Phases 5-7).¹⁴⁸⁷ In Phase 7, although the church was reclaimed in its entirety, this resulted in the construction of pilasters around the existing columns to reinforce the integrity of the roof.¹⁴⁸⁸

The basilica was substantially damaged by the Golan Earthquake of 749, which resulted in the collapse of the semi-dome of the Byzantine basilica.¹⁴⁸⁹ Following 749, the liturgical activities of the monastery was restricted to the north chapel.¹⁴⁹⁰ The main nave and south chapels continued in use after 749 but may have been turned over to industrial and domestic activity.¹⁴⁹¹

The excavators have suggested that the basilica church continued in use until the ninth century although evidence for a substantial tenth-century phase proved more ephemeral.¹⁴⁹² The construction of a *weli* at the site in the fourteenth century, limits a fuller appraisal of the chapel constructed over Aaron's tomb.¹⁴⁹³ It is possible that tenth century activity was concentrated around the tomb on the summit of Jabal Harūn.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The site is traditionally considered to be the burial place of Aaron brother of Moses. The evidence from the site itself is not overly explicit, although the recovery of a fragmentary inscription would appear to confirm this association.¹⁴⁹⁴ The mention of the 'House of Aaron' in two papyri from the Hagia Maria Church in Petra adds weight to this impression.¹⁴⁹⁵ Connections between the monastery and elite families in Petra associated with

¹⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 118-136.

¹⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 137-147.

¹⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 147-148.

¹⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 147-150.

¹⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹² *Ibid.* 159.

¹⁴⁹³ Miettunen 2008: 27-38.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Frösén *et al* 2008: Inscription 1: 273.

¹⁴⁹⁵ *P. Petra* Inv.6a II.5-16.

the Church of Hagia Maria are confirmed in several carbonised papyri documents dating from the 570s Petra Papyri.¹⁴⁹⁶

Awareness of the site beyond these more localised networks is less clear although the text does not appear in any Latin or Greek sources of the eighth to tenth centuries with the tentative exception that the church is to be identified with the site of Mar Aaron in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*.¹⁴⁹⁷ Arabic texts offer some indication that the site remained in the custody of the Melkites until the tenth century. It is alluded to in the *Kitāb al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's and also in the tenth-century works *Murūj adh-dhahab* and *al-tanbīh wa-l-Ashraf* of al-Mas'ūdī: both of which refer to situation in the 940s.¹⁴⁹⁸

Pilgrims inscriptions, dated on palaeographic grounds to the ninth century, confirms the continued presence of local pilgrims until the mid-ninth century.¹⁴⁹⁹ The church narthex also exhibits evidence of iconoclastic intervention in a pattern similar to that observed at sites on the Madaba plateau.¹⁵⁰⁰

NO: 26

NAME: Jarash, Hagios Theodoros/Fountain Court

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was fully excavated by Crowfoot in the early twentieth century with the results appearing in the accounts of the joint excavation of Yale University, the American School of Oriental Research and the British School of Archaeology in Athens.¹⁵⁰¹ The published results, consistent with archaeological approaches of the early twentieth century, paid little attention

¹⁴⁹⁶ Koenen 2003 and Lehtinen 2002: 9-10.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 16.1 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 24, 25).

¹⁴⁹⁸ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 205-206, tr. Watt 1960: 162).

¹⁴⁹⁹ Al-Salameen and Al-Falaha 2007 and Hämeen-Anttila and Öhrnberg 2008.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Hamarneh and Hinkkanen 2008.

¹⁵⁰¹ Crowfoot 1938.

to the post-Byzantine phases of the site and presented a mostly architectural report. More recent soundings in the Hagios Theodoros and Cathedral church complex have sort to determine the foundation date of the church which is placed in the late fourth century.¹⁵⁰² The Church of Hagios Theodoros is later construction dated to 494/496.¹⁵⁰³ Its construction involved the redevelopment of the Fountain Court and saw the incorporation of the fountain into the east wall of the apse of Hagios Theodoros.¹⁵⁰⁴ No information about the post-Byzantine phases of the report appear in Crowfoot's discussion. However, incidental mentions of earthquake damages and Umayyad coins may suggest that the church was damaged in the 749 Golan earthquake: a pattern visible among a number of structures on the cardo and other churches in the city.¹⁵⁰⁵ This is a tentative assertion which, in any case, cannot confirm the survival of church after this date.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

A report in the *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis links a fountain in Jarash to a festival held in commemoration of the wedding feast of Cana. This has been identified at the fountain now incorporated in the Cathedral/Hagios Theodoros complex. The festival is not mentioned in any later sources. Consequently we cannot trace the trajectory of the celebration beyond the late fourth century.

NO: 27

NAME: Jerusalem, Church of the Anastasis

¹⁵⁰² Brenk, Jäggi Carola and Meier 1994.

¹⁵⁰³ Crowfoot 1938: 220.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Brenk, Jäggi Carola and Meier 1994.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Crowfoot 1929: 19 and Crowfoot 1938: 223-224.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Substantial rebuilding of the Church of the Anastasis during the eleventh century limits a more comprehensive understanding of the church in its Byzantine form and has also limited archaeological investigations at the site. We are, therefore, completely reliant on textual material to trace the occupational history of the church. This is sufficient to confirm the continued use of the church until the mid-tenth century although determining the condition of the church in this period is impossible.

Possible episodes of attacks on the Church of the Anastasis are reported for the Sassanian occupation of 614, in the 930s and during the reign of Patriarch John VII – none of which can be verified archaeologically.¹⁵⁰⁶ It is known from subsequent reports that each of these episodes of destruction were followed by restoration and that the church was occupied continuously. A renovation phase in the early ninth century to the dome of the Church of the Anastasis is also reported.¹⁵⁰⁷

Besides the reports of the western travellers, the church is listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* and is also mentioned in the descriptions of the region by al-Mas'ūdī writing in the mid-tenth century.¹⁵⁰⁸ A monastic presence was also maintained throughout this period as suggested by the colophon of the monk David of Ashkelon, dated to the 920s, which survives in Sinai Arabic 309, f.236r.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

¹⁵⁰⁶ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 3-8 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 200-201), *Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī*: 101-105 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959, 799-803).

¹⁵⁰⁷ Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar* (Alexandrian recension): 33 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 148-149, 127-128).

¹⁵⁰⁸ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Muruj adh-dhahab*, III: 405 (eds. Barbier de Meynard and de Courteille 1861, tr. Le Strange 1890: 202-203).

The Church is listed a number of times in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* as the focal point of stational liturgies held throughout the liturgical year.¹⁵⁰⁹

The literary sources would suggest that the church remained under Chalcedonian control throughout the early Islamic period. Anastasios of Sinai and Peter of Bayt Raʿs both considered the church as under the possession of the Chalcedonians.¹⁵¹⁰

NO: 28

NAME: Jerusalem, Church of the Holy Sion

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Substantial redevelopment in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and in the twentieth century has limited the opportunities for detailed archaeological investigation of the Byzantine and early Islamic phases of the Church of Holy Sion. Consequently, the remains of the church known from literary sources as the church of Holy Sion have never been identified. Textual reports would, however, confirm the continued use of the church into the late tenth century when the church was apparently destroyed in a riot.¹⁵¹¹ Anastasios of Sinai lists the church as a possession of the Chalcedonians and this association appears to have continued throughout the ninth century and into the 960s. The church is listed in the *Commematorium de Casis Dei* where it reports the presence of nuns at the church.¹⁵¹²

¹⁵⁰⁹ Garitte 1958: 218-219.

¹⁵¹⁰ Anastasios of Sinai, *Questions and Answers*, PG 89: 767-780 and Peter of Bayt Raʿs and *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 339-343 (ed. Cachia 1960: 181-182, tr. Watt 1980: 144-145).

¹⁵¹¹ *Yahya ibn Saʿīd al-Anṭākī*: 103 (ed. and tr. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959, 801).

¹⁵¹² *Commematorium de Casis Dei*: lines 9-10 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 200-201).

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The church is listed in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* on 17 March and the 14 and 16 September.¹⁵¹³

NO: 29

NAME: Jerusalem, Mount of Olives (Eleona Church)

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church was subject to a full excavation in the early twentieth century although only an architectural report was subsequently published.¹⁵¹⁴ Consequently, textual reports are the only means through which a broad chronology for the church may be sketched. The church is listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* where it reports the presence of three monks and a priest.¹⁵¹⁵ The church also appears in the descriptions of Peter of Bayt Raʿs which may testify to its continuation into the mid-ninth century.¹⁵¹⁶ Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, writing in the tenth century, considered the church abandoned and attributed this to the Sassanian conquest of 614.¹⁵¹⁷ Saʿīd's report cannot be verified archaeologically although it is possible that the church was abandoned by the mid-tenth century and Saʿīd was confused regarding the date of its abandonment.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

¹⁵¹³ *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*), (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 31).

¹⁵¹⁴ Vincent 1911.

¹⁵¹⁵ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line 18 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 204-207).

¹⁵¹⁶ Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 332 (ed. Cachia 1960, tr. Watt 1960: 141).

¹⁵¹⁷ Saʿīd Ibn Baṭrīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar* 27 (ed. and tr Breydy 1985: 115-119, 95-99).

The Church is listed in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* on 18 March, 13 April, 29 April, 9 May, 12 May, 1 July, 11 September, 27 October, 26 November and 17 December.¹⁵¹⁸

NO: 30

NAME: Jerusalem, the Nea Church

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church was fully excavated by Nahman Avigad between 1969 and 1982 with a full report appearing in 2012.¹⁵¹⁹ The excavation successfully identified the remains of the Nea church and a dedicatory inscription, dated to the mid-sixth century, which records renovations undertaken during the time of the *hegoumenos* Konstantine.¹⁵²⁰ The results of the excavations yielded no evidence to suggest that the church was substantially damaged during the Sassanian sack of Jerusalem in 614.

Excavations, however, suggested that the church was substantially damaged during the Golan Earthquake of 749 after which the church was re-occupied on a reduced level.¹⁵²¹ The *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* lists the church and reports the presence of 12 clergy.¹⁵²² The excavations confirm the continued existence of the church into the ninth century although concluded that the church may have been finally destroyed during an earthquake in the mid-ninth century and not subsequently re-occupied.¹⁵²³

¹⁵¹⁸ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)* (ed. Garritte 1958: 55, 60, 63, 65, 66, 75-76, 89, 100, 106, 110-111).

¹⁵¹⁹ Gutfeld 2012: 141-251.

¹⁵²⁰ Di Segni 2012.

¹⁵²¹ Gutfeld 2012: 494-496.

¹⁵²² *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line11 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 202-203).

¹⁵²³ Gutfeld 2012: 494-496.

NO: 31

NAME: Kastron Mefa'a, the Stylite Church.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The 'Stylite Church' is the modern name for the complex situated around 1km north of the walled settlement of Kastron Mefa'a.¹⁵²⁴ Excavations have revealed a small church situated within a walled complex (much of which remains unexcavated) with a freestanding tower at its centre.¹⁵²⁵ Only the church has been excavated in its entirety but the results of this excavation have not been published beyond short encyclopaedic entry.¹⁵²⁶ It is uncertain if the tower or walls predate the construction of the church or if they represent a single foundation phase.¹⁵²⁷ The association of the site with a Stylite is also a hypothetical position based on the existence of the freestanding tower.¹⁵²⁸ The original purpose of the tower is unknown. However, the recovery of a centralised burial in the church, accompanied by a number of reliquary boxes and designed to be immersed in oil, may indicate a later role for the site as a focal point of veneration.¹⁵²⁹ The preliminary discussion of the church offered by Piccirillo suggests that the church was founded in the sixth-century and continued to function until the ninth century. This would complement the pattern observed among the other cult sites of Kastron Mefa'a, which continued to be used until the ninth century.¹⁵³⁰ The lack of a complete discussion of the diagnostic material inhibits further analysis of this phasing.

¹⁵²⁴ Piccirillo1994b.

¹⁵²⁵ Piccirillo 1993a: 1493.

¹⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

NO: 32

NAME: Kathisma

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

There is some disagreement over the identification of the monastic church known as the Kathisma. Excavations by Aharoni identified the church Ramat Rahel as the Kathisma. This church produced evidence for continued occupation into the later-eighth century.¹⁵³¹ This identification had been systematically rejected by Rina Avner who has presented a convincing case for an alternative location near Giv'at Hamatos.¹⁵³²

Excavations conducted by Avner, which have not yet been published in a final report (although one is planned),¹⁵³³ revealed a substantial octagonal church which was constructed to incorporate an existing natural rock formation.¹⁵³⁴ Avner has argued that the site is to be identified as one of the locations associated with the Nativity story recounted in the *Protoevangelion of James*.¹⁵³⁵ No full discussion of the excavations at the site is currently published and little of the original structure, excepting its foundation courses, survives. Avner suggests a fifth-century foundation date for the church: a date currently secured in the available publications by the separate testaments of Cyril of Scythopolis and Theodore of Petra rather than material assemblages.¹⁵³⁶

The results of the excavation have reported no substantial interruption in the seventh century but have identified a more substantial and active eighth-century phase. In the eighth

¹⁵³¹ Aharoni *et al* 1962 and Aharoni *et al* 1964.

¹⁵³² Avner 2011: 9-13.

¹⁵³³ Avner 2011: 12, n. 21.

¹⁵³⁴ The preliminary reports appear in Avner 1993: 89-92, Avner 1998: 101*-103* and Avner 2005. More detailed discussions of the church, mostly focussed on its architecture or the cult of the Virgin appear in Avner 2003, Avner 2006/7 and Avner 2011.

¹⁵³⁵ Avner 2011: 14-15.

¹⁵³⁶ *Ibid*: 12-14.

century the church was partially refurbished and this phase also saw the incorporation of a *mihrāb* and Muslim prayer space in one of the south chambers leading off of the main ambulatory of the church.¹⁵³⁷ One of the inscriptions, dated on palaeographic grounds by Leah Di Segni to the eighth or ninth century, also indicates a renovation of the floor in this period. Di Segni suggests that the figure ‘Basilios’ identified in the inscription is possibly to be identified with the Patriarch of Jerusalem Basilios (c. 820-c.838).¹⁵³⁸ However, the inscription itself does not explicitly identify the donor as Patriarch and such an interpretation needs to be advanced delicately. Given that Avner currently dates the final occupation of the church to the ninth century a substantial ninth-century renovation phase seems doubtful.¹⁵³⁹ Without the full report, all discussions of the site history must remain preliminary.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Rina Avner has made a convincing argument that links the church of the Kathisma to the site where the Virgin is believed to have rested on her journey to Bethlehem prior to the birth of Christ.¹⁵⁴⁰ The function of the site as a cult centre appears to be confirmed by both archaeological and literary material. Excavations at the site unearthed a pipe connected to the rock which appears to have functioned to facilitate the immersion of the rock in water – a practice which suggests the use of the water as a form of *eulogia*.¹⁵⁴¹ Further support for this identification comes from the discovery of a small hexagonal glass bottle similar to those used for holy water at other sites.¹⁵⁴² The Sinai Georgian Menaion indicates that the feast observed at the church had been moved to the 13th August by the mid-eighth century.¹⁵⁴³

¹⁵³⁷ Avner 2006/7: 550-551.

¹⁵³⁸ Di Segni 2003: 248-250.

¹⁵³⁹ Avner 2011: pers. comm.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Avner 2011.

¹⁵⁴¹ Avner 2006/7: 546-547.

¹⁵⁴² *Ibid*: 547.

¹⁵⁴³ *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34:13 August (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 84).

NO: 33

NAME: Khirbet Abu Rish

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Three churches are known in Khirbet Abu Rish although only the results of one are published.¹⁵⁴⁴ Excavations have focussed on a complex of rooms that were constructed adjacent to a courtyard, a winepress and a water cistern.¹⁵⁴⁵ The complex was also constructed over a series of rock-cut tombs that were accessed via a stairway to the west of the complex.¹⁵⁴⁶ A rock-cut cave was also discovered 40 metres north of the structure.¹⁵⁴⁷ The original purpose of the site is unknown. Magen and Baruch propose that the site may have functioned as a monastery. This cannot be confirmed from the published material but the presence of a dedicatory inscription in Room A which mentions the ‘προσκυνούντων’ adds weight to the impression that this site may have functioned as a focal point for veneration.¹⁵⁴⁸

No occupational history of the site is offered in the published reports. The ceramic finds which appear in the preliminary reports demonstrate occupation throughout the sixth and seventh centuries and possibly into the early eighth. No evidence for more substantial eighth-century phases is provided in the report.¹⁵⁴⁹

¹⁵⁴⁴ Magen 1990.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Magen and Baruch 1997: 339-358.

¹⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid*: 345-346.

¹⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid*: 347.

¹⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid*: 355-356.

¹⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid*: 349-352.

NO: 34

NAME: Khirbet ed-Deir

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was excavated by Yizhar Hirschfeld and the final report was published in 1999.¹⁵⁵⁰

The excavations revealed a small laura complex which utilised a cave for the main church of the site.¹⁵⁵¹

The excavators propose a fifth century date for the construction of the complex. The occupational history of the site was relatively short with ceramic data proposing that the monastery was abandoned shortly after the Arab conquest in the mid-seventh century.¹⁵⁵² However, the excavators attribute this to the collapse of the roof of the cave-church rather than the broader political changes of the period.¹⁵⁵³

NO: 35

NAME: Khirbet el-Shubeika

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church of Khirbet el-Shubeika was recovered during the widening of the Nahariya-Ma'alot road and was subject to a rescue excavation.¹⁵⁵⁴ A preliminary report appeared in 2003 although a final report is not yet published. The excavations were conducted on the only surviving portion of the church. This was sufficient, however, to reveal a small single-apsed basilica with a simple mosaic carpet.¹⁵⁵⁵ The excavations were unable to identify the date for

¹⁵⁵⁰ Hirschfeld 1999.

¹⁵⁵¹ Hirschfeld 1999: 46-49.

¹⁵⁵² Hirschfeld 1993c:244.

¹⁵⁵³ Hirschfeld 1999: 46-49.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Syon 2003: 75.

¹⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*: 76-78.

the foundation of the church although an inscription dated to 785, which commemorates a repair phase, provides a *terminus ante quem*.¹⁵⁵⁶ The renovation phase in 785 involved the re-plastering of the bema and the laying of a new mosaic floor. The bema was subsequently extended at some point in the later eighth century as well (Phase III).¹⁵⁵⁷

The excavators noted that the poor quality of the substrate upon which the 785 mosaic scheme was laid caused the mosaic floor to collapse in places.¹⁵⁵⁸ The pottery finds unearthed at the site indicate that the site was occupied during the sixth to eighth centuries although were unable to determine the final occupation of the church.¹⁵⁵⁹ Some pottery fragments suggest some residual occupation between the ninth and thirteenth centuries although the excavators suggest that the church had already ceased to function some time prior to its reoccupation in the thirteenth century.¹⁵⁶⁰ The limited evidence for ninth and tenth century wares may indicate an early ninth century date of abandonment for the church.

NO: 36

NAME: Khirbet Qana

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

There is some disagreement over the identification of the biblical site of Cana. The descriptions of the *Piacenza pilgrim* and the *Life of Willibald*, however, would propose that the Byzantine tradition located the site in the modern town of Khirbet Qana in the Galilee.¹⁵⁶¹

¹⁵⁵⁶ Tzaferis 2003: 84-85.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Syon 2003: 78.

¹⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 80-82.

¹⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶¹ Piacenza Pilgrim: 4 (ed. Geyer 1965, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 131), Huneberc, *Life of Willibald*: 13 (ed. Tobler 1874: 25, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 239).

Later sources from the twelfth and thirteenth century have proposed that this association was transferred to Kafr Qana.¹⁵⁶²

At Khirbet Qana a series of caves, which may have been associated with a cult site, have been identified and analysed since the 1950s. The presence of graffito inscriptions (currently unpublished) may propose its identification as the crypt/cave mentioned in reports of the twelfth-century.¹⁵⁶³ The cave produced material which identifies Byzantine and Umayyad phases.¹⁵⁶⁴ The presence of the church described in source has not been identified at present. Textual accounts would propose a continued monastic or cult presence at ‘Cana’ (which presumably is to be identified with Khirbet Qana) throughout the eighth and ninth centuries. The site is described in the account of Willibald and also in *the Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* where the presence of a church and monastery is attested (the record is, however, not completely preserved).¹⁵⁶⁵ The site is also among those described in the *Kitāb al Burhān* which would tentatively propose a later ninth century phase.¹⁵⁶⁶

NO: 37

NAME: Khirbet Mird (Kastellion)

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was subject to a full archaeological investigation in the 1950s by George Wright and Joseph Milik but has not been fully published beyond a preliminary survey of the material. The investigation concentrated on architectural and spatial plans rather than stratigraphic phases and, therefore, is of limited value in determining the occupational history of the site.

¹⁵⁶² Edwards 2002: 121.

¹⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*: 121-126.

¹⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶⁵ Huneberc, *Life of Willibald*: 13 (ed. Tobler 1874: 25, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 239), *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 37-38 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 212-213).

¹⁵⁶⁶ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al Burhān*: 316 (ed. Cachia 1960: 168, tr. Watt 1960: 136).

We are, therefore, restricted primarily to textual evidence to outline the occupational history of the site.

A series of Greek, Arabic and Syriac documents comprised of letters, biblical passages and liturgical writing, dated on palaeographic grounds from the seventh to tenth centuries, propose the continued occupation of the site although a monastic connection is less explicit.¹⁵⁶⁷

One of the Arabic papyri mentions a monastic figure¹⁵⁶⁸ and this may complement the examples from the published Syriac hoard.¹⁵⁶⁹ The identification of the site with Kastellion is based primarily on its approximate geographical location and is not supported by evidence from the site itself. Accepting this identification, the mention of the monastery of Kastellion in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* may support the dating proposed by the papyri hoard.¹⁵⁷⁰ A series of wall paintings at the site may, in addition, support the occupation of the site beyond 900. The dating of the scheme is problematic but has been seen by Joseph Patrich as evidence of a fresco commissioned between the Persian and Arab conquests (c. 614-c.636).¹⁵⁷¹ This is problematic based for a number of reasons. Firstly, this dating appears to have been established on a chronology determined by the figures depicted in the scheme – the latest of which was identified as George of Choziba.¹⁵⁷²

The identifications of the figures in the scheme appear to correlate broadly to the series of hagiographies known to excavators at the time of excavation and find little support from the frescos themselves.¹⁵⁷³ The scheme has subsequently been destroyed and thus cannot be reanalysed. Based on an examination of the photographs, Gustav Kühnel proposed on stylistic grounds that the scheme probably dates to the late-eleventh or twelfth century and

¹⁵⁶⁷ Grohmann 1963 and Verhelst 2003.

¹⁵⁶⁸ *P. Mird*: 45-46.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Milik 1953.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 9.1 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 11, 10).

¹⁵⁷¹ Patrich 1995: 141-143.

¹⁵⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷³ See Mader 1929 and Mader 1937.

thus conforms to a broader pattern of renewal at monastic sites in this period.¹⁵⁷⁴ This dating was also proposed by Evagrios Mader in his earlier analysis of the scheme: a dating which was rejected by Joseph Patrich.¹⁵⁷⁵ It is unclear as to whether these were executed after a period of abandonment at the monastery between the eighth and eleventh centuries. If this is the case, it would be a unique example where renovations to a Byzantine site in the Crusader period followed a prolonged abandonment phase. Other sites, including Tiberias and the Church of the Nativity, were, by way of example, all continuously occupied until the eleventh century prior to their renovation.¹⁵⁷⁶

A later icon, preserved at Sabas and dated to the fourteenth century, is attributed by an inscription to the monastery of Kastellion.¹⁵⁷⁷ Joseph Patrich considers the icon much earlier (presumably pre-Arab conquest) and proposes that it may have been found in the debris of the monastery and subsequently transferred to the monastery of Mar Sabas.¹⁵⁷⁸ This hypothesis appears unlikely and is not borne out by the evidence of the icon itself which bears stronger resemblance to other fourteenth century examples.¹⁵⁷⁹

The collective impression of the papyrological evidence with that of the fresco would imply a continued occupation beyond 900 but such a conclusion must remain tentative.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Kühnel 1988: 90, n. 50.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Mader 1929, Mader 1927 and Patrich 1995: 143.

¹⁵⁷⁶ On Tiberias: see Hirschfeld 2004b:124.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Patrich 1995: 142.

¹⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

NO: 38

NAME: Khirbet Yattir

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site has been fully excavated and the results published in a series of preliminary reports.¹⁵⁸⁰ A final publication has yet to appear. The excavations have mostly concentrated on the church and no details about the auxiliary structures are yet published.¹⁵⁸¹ The excavations revealed a small three-aisled basilica which was constructed utilising existing *spolia*. A plain white mosaic carpet interrupted by some floral motifs decorated the floor.¹⁵⁸² An inscription dated to 631/632 dates the floor more precisely although this appears to have replaced an earlier scheme featuring zoomorphic motifs.¹⁵⁸³

A further inscription in the atrium, dated to 588/9 provides evidence of an earlier sixth-century phase.¹⁵⁸⁴ No information about the monastic community appears in the report although the mention of the *hegoumenoi* Thomas and John in the two inscriptions would confirm a continued monastic presence between the sixth and seventh centuries.¹⁵⁸⁵ The final phasing of the site was not clear to the excavators, although Jodi Magness posits that the church was probably abandoned in the late eighth or ninth century.¹⁵⁸⁶

¹⁵⁸⁰ Eshel, Magness, Shenhav and Besonen 1999: 411-422.

¹⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

NO: 39

NAME: Kursi

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was excavated by Tzaferis over a four year period between 1970 and 1974 and a final report was published in 1983.¹⁵⁸⁷

The excavators suggest that the original basilica is predominantly a later fifth-century construction. Tzaferis identified two major phases of redevelopment at this site.¹⁵⁸⁸ A destruction phase (Phase II) was identified by Tzaferis and linked to the Sassanian conquest of 614.¹⁵⁸⁹ In the atrium, Phase II saw the sealing off of the porticoes which were subsequently reused for oil production and domestic activity.¹⁵⁹⁰ Whilst the phasing may prove broadly correct the dating is more uncertain. Tzaferis' organisation of the ceramic corpus by typology (which is not discussed in reference to the stratigraphy) encouraged an early eighth century date for abandonment.¹⁵⁹¹

This dating is now disputed by David Stacey, who assigns Phase II to the rebuilding phase following the Golan Earthquake of 749.¹⁵⁹² This would correlate well with the geographical distribution of sites affected by the Golan Earthquake (mostly the Galilee and the Dekapolis). The ceramic evidence, mostly Palestine Cream Ware, encountered in the main basilica would propose its continuation into the ninth century.¹⁵⁹³ This is also indicated by the textual material. The evidence from the associated chapel of the Swine, integrated in to the hill, proposes a similar chronological pattern with the main basilica. Nonetheless, there

¹⁵⁸⁷ Tzaferis 1983.

¹⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid*: 3-4.

¹⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid*: 15-16.

¹⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁹¹ Tzaferis 1983: 30-36.

¹⁵⁹² Stacey 2004: 15-17.

¹⁵⁹³ *Ibid*: 15-16.

is little evidence presented in the report, or by Stacey's re-analysis, to suggest that occupation at the site continued into the eleventh century.¹⁵⁹⁴

A post-700 cult phase also finds support in the iconoclastic interventions to the mosaic panels in the basilica aisles which saw the removal of fish motifs.¹⁵⁹⁵ The apparent lack of repair to this scheme led Tzaferis to attribute this activity to Arab squatters.¹⁵⁹⁶ This is unlikely but difficult to refute on the apparent absence of repairs according to the conventions seen in Madaba, Jarash and Kastron Mefa'a. There are several possibilities which may account for this. The treatment of the site's pre-Byzantine phases may not have been sufficiently detailed to yield any evidence for their repair. Alternatively, plaster or lime mortar may have been used as a replacement to the tesserae which may not have survived processes of erosion. A possible repair using lime mortar may be visible in Plate XI.1 of the original excavation report if it depicts an Umayyad rather than modern repair (this is not clear from the report).¹⁵⁹⁷

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The site, the largest surviving monastic complex in the region, has been identified by its excavators as the site associated with the miracle of Gaderene swine.¹⁵⁹⁸

This is partially correct, but overlooks additional evidence which would propose two distinct associations for the site by the sixth century.

The site is enlisted in the ninth-century *Kitāb al-Burhān* where it is associated with two miracles, that of the Feeding of the 4000 and the healing of the man possessed by the

¹⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Similar wares, dating the ninth century, were also encountered in the nearby site of Capernaum see Magness 1997: 484.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Tzaferis 1983: 23-27.

¹⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 23.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Tzaferis 1983: plate XI.1.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Matthew 8.28-33; Tzaferis 1983: 43-48.

demon Legion.¹⁵⁹⁹ The floor mosaic scheme of the main basilica at Kursi, decorated with interlacing panels of fish and bread loaves, would appear to support this identification.¹⁶⁰⁰

NO: 40

NAME: Lod/Lyddā, Church of Hagios Giorgos

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Substantial redevelopment in the fifteenth and nineteenth century limits the opportunity for a full-scale appraisal of the Byzantine and early Islamic phases of the church.¹⁶⁰¹ Textual sources supplement this lacuna and indicate that the church remained in use until the 980s. It is unclear, however, if the original Byzantine structure remained fully in use by this period. Al-Muqaddasī still considered the church active in the late-tenth century.¹⁶⁰² Additional reports of the church in the itineraries of Willibald and Bernard the Monk offer evidence for an awareness of the cult in the medieval west.¹⁶⁰³ Interestingly, the church is omitted from the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*.¹⁶⁰⁴

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*) dates the feast of St George to the 23 April.¹⁶⁰⁵ Although it does not indicate that a stational liturgy was held at the church in

¹⁵⁹⁹ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 321 (ed. Cachia 1960: 170, tr. Watt 1960: 137). Mt 15:32-38 and Mark 8:1-9.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Tzaferis and Glick 1983.

¹⁶⁰¹ Pringle 1998: 9-27 surveys the Crusader and post-medieval phases of the site.

¹⁶⁰² Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1907: 176, tr. Collins 2001: 148).

¹⁶⁰³ Huneberg, *Life of Willibald*: 25 (ed. Tobler 1874: 36, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 245), *Bernard the Monk*: 10 (ed. Tobler 1874: 91-93, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 265).

¹⁶⁰⁴ Discussions in McCormick 2011: 27-28.

¹⁶⁰⁵ *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*): 23 April (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 62).

Lydda, the reports of a feast in Lydda by Muqaddasī , which was observed in April, may indicate the continuation of a major festival dedicated to the saint into the tenth century.¹⁶⁰⁶

NO: 41

NAME: Madaba, Hagios Elias and Elianos

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was excavated in the late nineteenth century but has only been published in a preliminary report.¹⁶⁰⁷ The excavation, mostly architectural in focus, also paid little attention to the post-Byzantine phases of the site and, therefore, it remains impossible to determine the extent of occupation after the seventh century. In the late nineteenth century the church was located beneath two early modern buildings. It is therefore possible that phases associated with the later occupation of the church may have already been truncated before the 1890s.¹⁶⁰⁸ In any case, the inscriptions unearthed in the upper and the lower churches inform us that they were constructed or refurbished in 607/8 and 595/96 respectively during the episcopates of Bishops Sergios and Leontios who are attested in other inscriptions at Mount Nebo and in Kastron Mefa'a.¹⁶⁰⁹

The lower church, dedicated to Hagios Elianos, functioned as a crypt to the upper church and it is tempting to identify the niche of the wall as the site of a former relic: similar to the arrangement seen in Horvat Berachot and Rehovot-in-the-Negev.¹⁶¹⁰ There are no indications in the report published by Sejourné to enable us to estimate the extent of occupation at the site. However, soundings in the vicinity of the upper church of Hagios

¹⁶⁰⁶ Muqaddasī , *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1907: 183, tr. Collins 2001: 153).

¹⁶⁰⁷ Sejourné 1897.

¹⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*: 648-649.

¹⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*: 651. English translations of the inscriptions are reproduced in MacDonald 2010: 141-143.

¹⁶¹⁰ On the crypt of Horvat Berachot see Tsafirir and Hirschfeld 1979: 310-311. On Rehovot-in-the-Negev see Tsafirir 1988a.

Elias, by Michele Piccirillo identified fairly substantial activity into the early ninth century.¹⁶¹¹ This pattern of stable eighth-century occupation mirrors the activity on the opposite side of the *dekumanos* where the renovations to the Church of the Theotokos in 767 are attested by an inscription.¹⁶¹² An late eighth-century phase to the church is possible, given the continued function of the Church of the Theotokos, the Cathedral Church and the Church of the Mosaic Map into the mid-eighth century, but cannot be demonstrated through the remaining archaeological material.¹⁶¹³

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The inscription in the crypt of the church, dated to 595/6, is dedicated to Hagios Elianos who cannot be identified. It is unclear, however, if the crypt of the church had any association with the saint.

NO: 42

NAME: Ma'ale Adummim, Martyrios Monastery

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The complex was excavated by Yitzhak Magen but has not been published in a final report.¹⁶¹⁴

Magen's reliance on the chronological framework provided by Cyril of Scythopolis' hagiographies meant that little attention was paid to the archaeological phasing of the site. An

¹⁶¹¹ Piccirillo 1994d: 392-395.

¹⁶¹² Di Segni 1992.

¹⁶¹³ Piccirillo 1981: 21-40 and Piccirillo 1993c: 94-95, 120-125, 151.

¹⁶¹⁴ Preliminary reports offered in Magen 1990 and Magen 1993.

approximate fifth-sixth century date was proposed but cannot be verified from the published material.¹⁶¹⁵

Excavations revealed a large coenobitic complex (approximately 500 square metres within the walled area), featuring a large basilica church and a number of auxiliary units. The criteria through which the functions of these rooms were identified are uncertain.¹⁶¹⁶ The complex appears to have incorporated a natural cave which was subsequently redeveloped to house burials.¹⁶¹⁷

Magen's excavations proposed that the complex was damaged in the Sassanian invasion of 614 and only temporarily re-occupied by monks before a final Arab squatter stage in the later seventh century.¹⁶¹⁸ This was based on the discovery of a coin hoard in a jug in one of the auxiliary rooms of the church. The majority of these coins dated to 612/3 and were thus considered conclusion of the destruction of the church during the Sassanian occupation.¹⁶¹⁹ However, the presence of another coin dated between 750-760 raises questions about the legitimacy of this dating.¹⁶²⁰

The ceramic assemblages of the site have not been published, but Magness' inspection of a series of photographs of ceramics from the complex, has proposed no substantial disruption throughout the seventh century.¹⁶²¹ The destruction date of the monastery must, therefore, post-date the seventh century.

A date of 749 is plausible, but the lack of published assemblages makes it impossible to verify. Nonetheless, the interpretation of the later eighth/ninth century structures as an Arab farmhouse requires some revision. This later complex may instead have been part of a later monastic phase which reused material from the ruined complex. Locus 106 and 108

¹⁶¹⁵ Magen and Talgam 1990: 91-93, Magen 1993: 171-172.

¹⁶¹⁶ The various identities of the rooms are discussed in Magen 1993: 183-188.

¹⁶¹⁷ Magen 1993: 180-181.

¹⁶¹⁸ Magen 1993: 164.

¹⁶¹⁹ Magen 1993: 174.

¹⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶²¹ Magness 2011: 87.

formed part of a small chapel entered via a small mosaic portico (Locus 107).¹⁶²² Although no finds were published from this area, the identification of Khirbet Mefjer ware and Arabic inscriptions would propose a much longer history for monastic occupation at the site than previously recognised.¹⁶²³ A post-749 occupation seems likely though determining its extent and characteristics is impossible.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Its identification with the monastery of Martyrios depends primarily on the description of Cyril of Scythopolis. This may find some support if the gravestone of Paul ‘priest and archimandrite’, recovered during excavations is to be identified with the Paul discussed by Cyril of Scythopolis.¹⁶²⁴

NO: 43

NAME: Mamphis

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Two churches (known as the East and West Church) have been fully excavated but have only been partially published.¹⁶²⁵ Much of the published material is focussed on architecture and the chronological framework proposed by Avraham Negev appears to be largely hypothetical and based on circumstantial understanding of Byzantine and early Islamic political history in the region.¹⁶²⁶ Negev dates the final occupation of the site before 636 based on a loosely defined criterion of numismatics and epigraphy.¹⁶²⁷ The final abandonment of the site was

¹⁶²² Magen 1993: 185.

¹⁶²³ *Ibid.*: 188.

¹⁶²⁴ Magen and Talgam 1990: 91-92 and Magen 1993:177-179.

¹⁶²⁵ Negev 1988.

¹⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*: 7

¹⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

attributed to Arab hostility. Jodi Magness has raised concerns about the validity of this dating but, given the limitations of the published finds, could not propose a longer occupational phase.¹⁶²⁸ Her discussions with Peter Fabian may, however, indicate that the site was not occupied on any extensive scale in the early Islamic period.¹⁶²⁹

NO: 44

NAME: Mukawir

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The church was excavated in 1965 by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan but has never been fully published.

The dedicatory inscription of the church mentions the names of Sergios and George, if the reading of the inscription is correct, the *hegoumenos* Theodoros. This would confirm a monastic presence in the church although the published material is less explicit as in suggesting that the site should be associated with a monastic foundation.¹⁶³⁰ The dedicatory inscription is dated to 602/603.

Information about the occupation of the site is unavailable but the presence of iconoclastic intervention would propose that the site continued in use as a church until the eighth century accepting the dating proposed by Susana Ognibene.¹⁶³¹ Nothing is known about the final phase of the site and it is unclear if a monastic presence was maintained throughout the duration of the church's use.

¹⁶²⁸ Magness 2003: 188-190.

¹⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*: 188 n.112.

¹⁶³⁰ Piccirillo 1993c: 243.

¹⁶³¹ Ognibene 1994: 383.

NO: 45

NAME: Mount Gerazim, Church of the Theotokos

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The Church of the Theotokos has been subject to a full excavation although a final report of the excavations from the church has never been published.¹⁶³² Published reports of the site have focussed predominantly on the earlier Samaritan structure.¹⁶³³ Consequently, detailed discussions of the Church of the Theotokos are limited. The reports of John Malalas and the *Chronicon Paschale* attribute the construction of the church to Emperor Zeno following a Samaritan revolt.¹⁶³⁴ This dating is possible, although the use of the textual reports to determine the phasing of the site means that archaeology is of limited value in verifying these reports.¹⁶³⁵

Details about the site during the early Islamic period are limited. A report in the *Kitāb al-Ta'riḫ* reports that the church of the Theotokos was destroyed during the reign of al-Mansūr.¹⁶³⁶ The excavations of Schneider accepted this phase but noted the reoccupation of the church in the later eighth century and identified its continued use into the ninth century. The extent of this ninth-century phase is, however, unclear.¹⁶³⁷

¹⁶³² Schneider 1951: 211-234. See also Di Segni 1990, Magen 1990c and Magen 1993b.

¹⁶³³ Thus Magen 1993b and Magen 2004.

¹⁶³⁴ John Malalas *Chronographia* 9. 6-9.45 (ed. Thurn 1997: 306-307, tr. Jeffreys, Jeffreys and Scott 1986: 212-213) and *Chronicon Paschale*: 604 (ed. Dindorf 1832: 603, tr. Whitby and Whitby 1989: 96).

¹⁶³⁵ Schneider 1951 and Magen 1990c.

¹⁶³⁶ Abu l-Fath, *Kitāb al-Ta'riḫ*: 181-182 (ed. Vilmar 1865).

¹⁶³⁷ Schneider 1951.

NO: 46

NAME: Mount Nebo, 'Memorial of Moses'

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Excavations conducted by Sylvester Saller and later by Michele Piccirillo have confirmed continuous occupation at the site throughout the period.¹⁶³⁸ The focus on the Byzantine phases of the site hinder a full appraisal of the post-Byzantine material sequences, although the descriptions of Saller give some indication of the diminishing scale of the complex in its later phases.

The last evidence for substantial investment emerges from the Theotokos chapel which was completed in the early seventh century under the Bishop Leontios of Madaba.¹⁶³⁹

Saller suggests that parts of the monastic complex fell into disuse in the late sixth century but pottery and numismatic evidence confirms the continued occupation of the main basilica and buildings beyond the mid-eighth century. Iconoclastic interventions in the baptistery commissioned by the Bishop Sergios and the Theotokos chapel, generally dated to the mid-eighth century, would support the continued use of the basilica church beyond 700.¹⁶⁴⁰

The excavations identified reuse of the narthex and the presence of an oven in Room 23. These features were automatically attributed to squatters, although activities such as these are paralleled at Jabal Harūn alongside a continued cult function.

Saller advocated a late eighth century date for the final occupational of the site, which he partially attributed to Arab squatters. Piccirillo and Alliata suggest that the last major phase of activity occurred in the tenth century although offer no archaeological basis for this assertion.¹⁶⁴¹ The ceramic reports which are admittedly not fully stratified appear to support

¹⁶³⁸ Saller 1941a, Saller 1941b, Saller 1941c and Schneider 1950.

¹⁶³⁹ Piccirillo 1993c: 151.

¹⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid*: 150-151.

¹⁶⁴¹ Piccirillo 1998a: 219-220.

continuity until the late ninth century.¹⁶⁴² The presence of Arabic graffito inscriptions, vaguely dated on paleographic grounds to the ninth century, supports this position also.¹⁶⁴³

Textual references to the monastery are limited, both in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine period. The dedication of a chapel to the Theotokos (c.600-c610) confirms that the site was under the custodianship of the Chalcedonians and under the jurisdiction of the episcopal see of Madaba.¹⁶⁴⁴

An allusion to the tomb of Moses in the ninth-century *Kitāb al-Burhān* by the Chalcedonian bishop Peter of Bayt Raʿs may provide further support to the ninth-century occupation proposed by Piccirillo.¹⁶⁴⁵

NO: 47

NAME: Nablus/Neapolis

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The complex history of the site obscures a fuller understanding of the church in its Byzantine phases. The church appears to have been redeveloped during the period of the Latin Kingdom and now forms the Great Mosque of Nablus.¹⁶⁴⁶ Consequently, archaeological interventions at the site have remained limited. It is possible that the church of Nablus was replaced by a mosque at some point between the tenth and eleventh centuries although this hypothesis remains difficult to verify.¹⁶⁴⁷ The church and a monastic presence in the settlement are attested by literary sources until the early ninth century after which the fate of the church is

¹⁶⁴² Schneider 1950: 146-152, 193.

¹⁶⁴³ Saller 1941c: 276-278.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Piccirillo 1993c: 150-151.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 206, tr. Watt 1960: 162).

¹⁶⁴⁶ Pringle 1998: 94-108.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Pringle 1998: 97-101.

unknown. The *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* lists the presence of a bishop, clerics and a stylite at the church in the early ninth century.¹⁶⁴⁸

NO: 48

NAME: Nazareth, Church of the Annunciation

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Substantial reconstruction of the church during the twelfth century and the destruction of the medieval church in the 1950s to make way for the current church limit a full understanding of the original basilica.¹⁶⁴⁹ The excavations by Bellarmino Bagatti in Nazareth, which were largely architectural in focus, offer no clarification of the material properties of the church following the seventh century.¹⁶⁵⁰ Al-Mas'ūdī reports the existence of a church in Nazareth around 943 which contained a sarcophagus from which Christian extracted oil for blessing.¹⁶⁵¹ The report does not explicitly identify the church as that of the Annunciation although this appears to be the most likely.

The ninth-century Melkite writer, Peter of Bayt Ra's, evidently considered the church still active around the mid-ninth century and earlier levels of occupation, around 808, are also separately attested in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*.¹⁶⁵² Although the lines concerning Nazareth are partially obscured by a lacuna, the text suggests that the church also maintained a monastic presence in the early ninth century.¹⁶⁵³ A stable pattern of occupation can be confirmed through the period but little can be said of the material characteristics of that continuity.

¹⁶⁴⁸ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line 45-46 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 215).

¹⁶⁴⁹ Pringle 1998: 116-149.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Bagatti 1969.

¹⁶⁵¹ Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab* I. 23 (ed. Barbier de Meynard 1861: 94, tr. Le Strange 1890: 301).

¹⁶⁵² Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 311 (ed. Watt 1960: 166, tr. Watt 1960: 134), *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line 35 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 212-213).

¹⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*

The itineraries of Willibald and Epiphanius Hagiopolites confirm an awareness of the church to writers in Byzantium and the early medieval West.¹⁶⁵⁴

NO: 49

NAME: Nessana, Hagios Sergios and Bakkhos Monastery

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The monastic church of Hagios Sergios and Bakkhos was fully excavated during the Colt expedition although subsequent publication and analysis of the site has remained largely devoted to the papyrological archive of the church and its accompanying epigraphic dossier.¹⁶⁵⁵ This material is sufficient to demonstrate a stable pattern of occupation at the monastery from the late-sixth century until the 680s (the latest dated papyri in the cache).¹⁶⁵⁶ No full discussion of the church, in relation to its phasing or ceramics, was offered in the report. A review of the ceramic sequences by Jodi Magness, some of which were recovered from the monastery, would propose a longer occupational range than originally proposed.¹⁶⁵⁷ Magness identifies more substantial eighth century activity with occupation extending into the ninth or possibly tenth centuries.¹⁶⁵⁸ It is unclear, however, in the report if the monastic church of Hagios Sergios and Bakkhos continued to function although the report provides no indication of substantial changes to the use of space in the church.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Huneberg, *Life of Willibald*: 13 (ed. Tobler 1874: 34-35, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 239), Epiphanius Hagiopolites, *Hagiopolita*: 32 (ed. Donner 1971, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 214). The entry for Nazareth in Epiphanius only survives in a later recension.

¹⁶⁵⁵ The inscriptions appear in the discussion by Colt 1962 and the papyri in Kraemer 1958.

¹⁶⁵⁶ *P. Colt* 80.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Magness 2003: 180-185.

¹⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid*: 185.

NO: 50

NAME: Qasr Yahud, Baptism Monastery

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Modern redevelopment of the site has hampered a full understanding of the material phases of the church in its early Islamic phases. An additional site, now in modern Jordan, has also been proposed as the rival site by archaeologists.¹⁶⁵⁹ The chronology of a monastery/cult site known as the Baptism Monastery is, as a result, largely dependent upon textual reports. This would confirm the continued occupation of at least one site into the ninth century. The co-existence of other monastic sites in the region is possible but examples are limited primarily due to the energy directed at identifying the biblical site of Jesus' baptism.

The Maronite Chronicle records that the site of Qasr Yahud was destroyed in an earthquake in the year 659 and subsequently rebuilt.¹⁶⁶⁰ The excavations conducted by Mohammed Waheeb also identified a similar phase at the site of 'Bethany beyond the Jordan' although the use of textual chronologies to date this activity urges caution.¹⁶⁶¹ The monastery is listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* and is also among the churches described by Peter of Bayt Ra's and the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*.¹⁶⁶²

The site also appears in the In the *Life of Willibald* and the reports of Bernard the Monk and Epiphanius Hagiopolites. These provide some indication of an awareness of the site in Byzantium and the medieval West in the period 700-900.¹⁶⁶³

¹⁶⁵⁹ Waheeb 2002 and Waheeb 2003.

¹⁶⁶⁰ *Maronite Chronicle*: AG 971 (tr. Palmer 1993:31).

¹⁶⁶¹ Waheeb 2003.

¹⁶⁶² *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: 33 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 210-211), Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 315 (ed. Watt 1960: 168, tr. Watt 1960: 135-136), Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 37.1 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 60, 64-65).

¹⁶⁶³ *Bernard the Monk*: 17 (ed. Tobler 1874: 96, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 268), Epiphanius Hagiopolites, *Hagiopolita*: 39-40 (ed. Donner 1971, Wilkinson 2002: 215) and Huneberc, *Life of Willibald*: 16 (ed. Tobler 1874: 37, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 240).

NO: 51

NAME: Ramot

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site, located in the suburb of Ramot, Jerusalem, has not been preserved in its entirety due to extensive looting. It was subject to a rescue excavation on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority though the results have not been reproduced in a full publication. A preliminary discussion of the mosaic programme was published in 1990.¹⁶⁶⁴ The full extent and organisation of the complex could not be determined (including the church) due to prior destruction.¹⁶⁶⁵ Therefore, a full profile of its occupation in terms of chronology and spatial use cannot be determined. Its association with a monastic institution or community is suggested by the survival of the dedicatory inscription.¹⁶⁶⁶ The inscription informs us that the building was dedicated to St George and that the scheme was laid in 762 during the days of the Patriarch Theodore and *chorepiskopos* Theodore. The Patriarch Theodore is probably to be identified with the same Patriarch described in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*.¹⁶⁶⁷ The presence of Umayyad pottery at the site and the inscription confirms monastic occupation into the 760s. No further discussion about its occupation after this date is given.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Arav, Di Segni and Kloner 1990.

¹⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶⁷ Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*: 33-34 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 55-59, 51-55).

NO: 52

NAME: Rehovot-in-the-Negev, North Church

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was fully excavated in the 1970s and published in a final report in 1988.¹⁶⁶⁸ The excavations revealed a large tri-apsidal basilica which was constructed over a crypt accessed by a stairway from the north aisle.¹⁶⁶⁹ Although published in full the presentation of the material is limited in terms of understanding the stratigraphic history of the site. Tsafrir considers the church a fifth-century foundation whose final occupation he dated to the late-seventh century.¹⁶⁷⁰ A subsequent 'squatter phase', which saw the blocking of atrium spaces and subdivision of the aisles within the church was also identified and dated to the early eighth century after which Tsafrir considers the site to have been abandoned.¹⁶⁷¹ The apparent respect of these later subdivisions for the church nave and chancel is attributed by Tsafrir to the collapse of the roof of the nave: a hypothesis which is not supported by the material presented or discussed in the report.¹⁶⁷² The identification of a number of Arabic votive graffiti inscriptions, whose spatial contexts are not discussed but also appear to respect the integrity of the church, are also assigned to this 'squatter phase'.¹⁶⁷³

A recent re-inspection of the ceramic corpus by Jodi Magness has suggested a more substantial eighth-century occupational phase and suggests that the site remained in use until the early ninth century.¹⁶⁷⁴ The view that these later phases may be attributed to 'squatter' activity is largely unchallenged. The material presented in the report offers no conclusive solutions to the issue although it should be noted that several of the features described by

¹⁶⁶⁸ Tsafrir 1988a.

¹⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid*: 26-27.

¹⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid*: 27-28.

¹⁶⁷¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁷² *Ibid*: 27.

¹⁶⁷³ Nevo 1988.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Magness 2003: 191-192.

Tsafrir (the blocking of atrium spaces and partitioning of the aisles with spolia) are known in other churches such as Jabal Harūn and Hippos which remained in use as churches alongside this activity.¹⁶⁷⁵ The subsequent stripping of the church of marble revetments is also undated.¹⁶⁷⁶ Similarly, the excavation could not fully determine the chronology of this post-cultic phase which they attribute to any period between the eighth and twentieth century.¹⁶⁷⁷ The discovery of an Umayyad coin dated 716-750, ovens and Arab pottery in one of the side rooms of the church is not conclusive evidence that the church no longer functioned.¹⁶⁷⁸ Alternatively, the apparent respect for the integrity of the nave and chancel may not reflect the collapse of the roof but the continued occupation of the site as a church into the eighth century.¹⁶⁷⁹

NO: 53

NAME: Rihab, Hagia Sophia

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

A monastic association with the site is only identified through the dedicatory inscription of the church which dates the construction of the basilica to 605.¹⁶⁸⁰ The church was fully excavated in the early twentieth century although reports were never published. As with the other churches of Rihab, published discussions have only focussed on the dated dedicatory inscriptions.¹⁶⁸¹ The excavations identified a small tri-apsidal basilica similar to the other churches of the settlement. Although a *hegoumenos* is mentioned in the dedicatory inscription it is unclear if the church was linked to a small monastic community or if monks were simply

¹⁶⁷⁵ See Nos. 18 and 25 in this appendix.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Tsafrir 1988a: 27-28.

¹⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸⁰ Piccirillo 1993c: 310-313.

¹⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*

linked to the church.¹⁶⁸² No published information about the phasing of the site survives. However, iconoclastic interventions to the figural motifs of the mosaic scheme suggest that the site remained in use until the mid-eighth century.¹⁶⁸³

NO: 54

NAME: Mar Sabas

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The redevelopment of the site in the Ottoman period (under Patriarch Dositheos II) inhibits a full archaeological appraisal of the monastery between 500 and 1000.¹⁶⁸⁴ We are, therefore, primarily reliant on textual evidence to sketch the occupational chronology of the site in the post-Byzantine period. This is sufficient to propose a fairly stable pattern of occupation of the site until the mid-tenth century even though little can be said of the material characteristics of the site during these centuries. It is possible that the monastery was affected by the instabilities following the death of Harūn al-Rashīd when it may have been sacked and temporarily abandoned.¹⁶⁸⁵ Nonetheless, the continued occupation of the monastery throughout the ninth century is suggested by a reference in the *Commematorium de Casis Dei* (c.808) and later from the scribal activities of Stephen of Ramlā (in 877 and 897),¹⁶⁸⁶ and Anthony David of Baghdad who made several copies of manuscripts preserved in the Mar Saba archives for Anba Isaac of Mount Sinai in the 880s.¹⁶⁸⁷

¹⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸³ Schick 1995: 442.

¹⁶⁸⁴ On the post-eleventh century phasing of the site see Pringle 1998:261-268.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6301 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 484-485, tr. Mango and Scott 1997:664-665)

¹⁶⁸⁶ *Commematorium de Casis Dei*: line 29 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 208-209). On Stephen of Ramlā see British Library Oriental MS 4950 (dated 877) and Sinai Arabic MS 72 (dated 897).

¹⁶⁸⁷ On David Anthony of Baghdad see Vatican Arabic MS 71, Mingana Christian Arabic 98 and the collective discussions in Griffith 1989.

Tenth-century occupation is confirmed by a similar combination of scribal activity and textual reportage. In the 970s, John Zosimos, known from Sinai Georgian 34 (dated 970), appears to have translated several works into Georgian from Arabic originals acquired from the monastery of Sabas.¹⁶⁸⁸ Sinai Georgian 34 was likely a product of the Mar Sabas monastery. The monastic site also appears in the *Life of Lazaros of Galesion*, which narrates a series of events in Palestine between 990-1009, as one of the monastic institutions Lazaros resided during his sojourn in Palestine.¹⁶⁸⁹

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The *Jerusalem Lectionary* and the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* suggests that the cult of Sabas had been firmly integrated into Palestinian liturgical calendars by the eighth century (5 December).¹⁶⁹⁰ The development of the cult outside of Palestinian urban contexts may also be confirmed by the discovery of a small dedicatory lamp, with an invocation to Sabas, at the monastic church of Khirbet es-Shubeika dated to 785.¹⁶⁹¹

The collective evidence would propose an awareness of the cult and the foundation both within Palestinian and further afield. The monastery forms the focal point of the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*, and provides a number of cases of contact between the monastery and Palestinian clergy or landowners from Al-Quweisma, Baghdad, Damascus, Gaza, Jarash, Jericho and Jerusalem.¹⁶⁹² The importance of Sabas' tomb as a focal point of veneration is discussed in a letter sent by Theodore of the Stoudion in the early ninth century.¹⁶⁹³

¹⁶⁸⁸ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)* (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958). Further examples include Sinai Georgian 36 (copied in 925) and Sinai Georgian 97 (copied by the monk George in the late ninth or early tenth century).

¹⁶⁸⁹ *Life of Lazaros of Galeison*: 17 (ed. BHG 979; AASS, Nov. 3:508–88 and tr. Greenfield 2000).

¹⁶⁹⁰ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 5 December (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958:108). The calendar also includes feasts dedicated to number of other Sabaite monks.

¹⁶⁹¹ Avashalom-Gorni, Thatcher and Tzaferis 2001.

¹⁶⁹² Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999). On Al-Quweisma see *ibid*: 8.1, Baghdad, *ibid*: 22.5, Damascus, *ibid*: 30.1, Gaza, *ibid*: 43.1, Jarash, *ibid*: 17.1, Jericho, *ibid*: 25.1 and Jerusalem, *ibid*: 33.1–4.

¹⁶⁹³ Theodore of the Stoudios, *Letters*: 277 and 278 (ed. Fatouros 1992:409–418).

Awareness of a Sabaite cult in Rome was likely propagated by the establishment of a monastery and Sabaite community there probably in the seventh century.¹⁶⁹⁴ The appearance of Sabas and Euthymios in the fresco schemes of Santa Maria Antiqua, and another of Sabas in the monastery of San Sabas in Rome (dated to the ninth century), provide some indication of the recognition of his cult prior to 1000.¹⁶⁹⁵ The monastery was also sufficiently well known to be included on the itinerary (whether real or fictitious) of Willibald.¹⁶⁹⁶

NO: 55

NAME: Mar Samwil (Nebi Samwil)

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Limited archaeological investigations by Magen and Dadon have identified early Islamic phases at the monastery.¹⁶⁹⁷ This is confirmed by the recovery of ceramic material stamped with the impression ‘Dayr Samwil’ (Monastery of Samuel) which was dated to Magen and Dadon to the eighth century.¹⁶⁹⁸

Major redevelopment of the site during the 12th century, which appears to have truncated the early Islamic layers, restricts a better understanding of the monastery in its early medieval phases. Textual evidence would, however, support the continued existence of a monastery identified as Mar Samwil into the tenth century. The pottery encountered by Magen and Dadon and the later Crusader association of the site with Samuel would support this association.¹⁶⁹⁹

¹⁶⁹⁴ A discussion of the monastery and the sources relating to it is offered in Ferrari 1957: 281-290.

¹⁶⁹⁵ On the schemes of Santa Maria Antiqua: see Knipp 2002. That of the monastery of San Saba is discussed with accompanying bibliography in Kühnel 2001: 355.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Huneberc, *Life of Willibald*: 23 (ed. Tobler 1874: 34-35, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 244).

¹⁶⁹⁷ Magen and Dadon 2003.

¹⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid* and Pringle 1998: 85-93.

The site is mentioned in the description of the region by Muqadassī which would support a monastic presence into the late-tenth century.¹⁷⁰⁰ Peter of Bayt Raʿs reports that the tomb of Samuel in the church of Ramlā – now identified as Nebi Samwil – was under Melkite control in the ninth century.¹⁷⁰¹

NO: 56

NAME: Shivta

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

HAGIOS GIORGOS (NORTH CHURCH) AND SOUTH CHURCH

The churches of Shivta were fully excavated during the Colt expedition of the 1930s but the results were never fully published.¹⁷⁰² Publications about the site of Shivta/Sobata have generally focussed on architecture and the Nabataean/Byzantine phases of the site.¹⁷⁰³ Consequently, the material which would confirm a more extensive early Islamic phase is limited. The burial inscriptions of the north and south churches both provide evidence for the continued occupation of the church throughout the period of Arab conquest until 679.¹⁷⁰⁴ The gravestone of the monk Abramos in the North Church, which is dated to 630, identifies a monastic presence although it is unclear if the church itself housed a resident monastic community.¹⁷⁰⁵ Published discussions of the pottery of Shivta are limited and come primarily from the Colt expedition.¹⁷⁰⁶ Jodi Magness' recent re-inspection of these sequences indicates

¹⁷⁰⁰ Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeke 1906: 188, tr. Collins 2001: 158).

¹⁷⁰¹ Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 205-206, tr. Watt 1960: 162).

¹⁷⁰² Magness 2003: 185 with further references.

¹⁷⁰³ Seagal 1983.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Negev 1981: 37-59. Inscription 65 is dated to 679.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Negev 1981: 57 (Inscription 60).

¹⁷⁰⁶ Crowfoot 1936.

that occupation at Shivta continued into the Abassid period although it remains unclear if liturgical activity was maintained at the North Church in this period.¹⁷⁰⁷

At some point in the early Islamic period, a mosque was constructed to the north of the baptistery of the South Church.¹⁷⁰⁸ The *mihrāb* of the mosque projects into the baptistery and involved the blocking of the north door.¹⁷⁰⁹ However, the construction of the mosque appears to respect the integrity of the baptistery which would have remained usable.¹⁷¹⁰ The lack of published material cannot confirm the co-existence of the church and mosque although the scenario appears likely. Colin Baly dated the construction of the mosque to the ninth century based on an unpublished Arabic dedicatory inscription.¹⁷¹¹ Baly's report does not discuss the dating criteria for this inscription. Further examples of Arabic graffiti in the atrium of the church were also noted by Baly but have never been published.¹⁷¹²

NO: 57

NAME: Shepherd's Fields

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

There are two sites currently identified as the site of 'Shepherd's Fields': Keniset er-Ra'wat and Khirbat Siyar el-Ghanam both in the vicinity of the modern town of Bayt Saihour.¹⁷¹³ Corbo believes that the association with events of Luke 8: 2-20 was transferred from Khirbat Siyar el-Ghanam to Keniset er-Ra'wat at a later date.¹⁷¹⁴ Evidence from both excavations yielded little material to support these identifications explicitly and as such these correlations

¹⁷⁰⁷ Magness 203: 185-186.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Baly 1935: 176-177.

¹⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹² *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹³ Corbo 1955 and Tzaferis 1975.

¹⁷¹⁴ Corbo 1955: 95-99.

must remain tentative. Wilkinson prefers to identify the site as Keniset er-Raʿwat due to the presence of a cave at the site – a feature which may relate to the tomb of the Shepherds reported in the sources.¹⁷¹⁵

The excavations of Khirbat Siyar el-Ghanam were published by Virgilio Corbo in a final report although much of the discussion was devoted to the layout of the site.¹⁷¹⁶ The ceramics presented in the report demonstrate a stable pattern of occupation at Khirbat Siyar el-Ghanam throughout the seventh century.¹⁷¹⁷ Corbo suggests that occupation at the site came to an end in the eighth century.¹⁷¹⁸ The presence of a number of fine wares types in the ceramic report may, however, point to a more substantial eighth-century phase and abandonment in the ninth century.¹⁷¹⁹

Keniset er-Raʿwat was also fully excavated by Vasilios Tzaferis in the 1970s but is less fully published.¹⁷²⁰ Tzaferis attributed the first destruction of the site to the Sassanian occupation 614. According to the report, this was followed by a subsequent (though more modest) phase of rebuilding and the continued occupation of the site until the tenth century.¹⁷²¹ The report is not sufficiently detailed to confirm this dating and the identification of a 614 destruction phase appears to be circumstantial.

A site known as Shepherd's Fields is reported in textual sources into the late ninth century. Peter of Bayt Raʿs considered the church still active.¹⁷²² Awareness of a church dedicated to the Shepherds appears in the itineraries of Willibald, Bernard the Monk and Epiphanius Hagiopolites.¹⁷²³

¹⁷¹⁵ Wilkinson 2002: 348-349.

¹⁷¹⁶ Corbo 1955: 12-56.

¹⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 57-84.

¹⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 56.

¹⁷¹⁹ Corbo 1955: 60, 65, 73.

¹⁷²⁰ Tzaferis 1975.

¹⁷²¹ *Ibid.*: 14.

¹⁷²² Peter of Bayt Raʿs, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 314 (ed. Cachia 1960: 167; tr. Watt 1960: 135).

¹⁷²³ Huneberg, *Life of Willibald*: 22 (ed. Tobler 1874: 33-34, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 244), Epiphanius Hagiopolites, *Hagiopolita*: 12 (ed. Donner 1971, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 209), *Bernard the Monk*: 17 (ed. Tobler 1874: 96, tr. Wilkinson 2002: 267-268).

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The *Sinai Georgian Menaion* lists two stational liturgies observed at the church on the 18 and 24 of December.¹⁷²⁴

NO: 58

NAME: Sinai, St Katherine's Monastery (Formerly dedicated to the Theotokos)

COORDINATES: 28.3320' E, 33.5834 E

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

Continued occupation of the site in the present day, alongside substantial reconstruction in the nineteenth century, has inhibited full scale archaeological appraisal of the monastery's early Islamic phases.¹⁷²⁵ Whilst the evidence confirms the continued use of the site into the tenth century, the physical state or use of the monastery in the Umayyad and Abassid periods cannot be determined.

The main Justinianic basilica was evidently utilised throughout the period and, presumably, maintained. Excavations on the summit of Jabal Mūsa, where a small early modern chapel sits above a former medieval structure, also produced ceramic evidence to propose continued occupation throughout the period 600-1000.¹⁷²⁶ Studies in the region by Dahari have identified progressive phases of site retraction and nucleation after the seventh century, with monastic activity steadily focussed around the Monastery of the Theotokos.¹⁷²⁷

¹⁷²⁴ *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34): 18, 24 December (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 111-112).

¹⁷²⁵ Pringle 1998: 49-53.

¹⁷²⁶ *Kalopissi-Verti and Panayotidi* 2011: 98-99.

¹⁷²⁷ Dahari 2000.

It is unclear, however, whether many of these sites were monasteries.¹⁷²⁸ Estimations of monastic continuity beyond the Theotokos monastery must, therefore, remain tentative.

The main monastery of Sinai is listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* and among the sites in the *Kitāb al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's and would suggest continued ninth-century occupational phases.¹⁷²⁹ This is confirmed by the scribal activities of the monastery. Late ninth-century activity (around 880) is attested by the monk David Anthony of Baghdad, a resident of Mt. Sinai, sent by the *hegoumenos* Isaac to Mar Sabas for the purpose of copying several works from the Sabaite library, one of which survives (Vatican Arabic MS 71).¹⁷³⁰

Identifying occupational continuity post 900 is predominantly reliant on the testimony of manuscript colophons which appear to confirm the continued monastic presence at Sinai in the tenth century. Later scribal activities are known from the donations of the Bishop Solomon (980s-1002).¹⁷³¹ Manuscripts also attest to the presence of Georgian monks at the community in the tenth century of which Sinai Georgian 34 of John Zozimos (active around the 970s) is the most well known.¹⁷³² Separate testament is also provided by discussions of the monastery, in Muqadassī and Mas'ūdī.¹⁷³³

¹⁷²⁸ Dahari 2000.

¹⁷²⁹ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 47-49 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 215). The *Commemoratorium* lists four churches. Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 106-107, tr. Watt 1960: 162).

¹⁷³⁰ On David Anthony see Griffith 1989.

¹⁷³¹ Sinai Arabic 2, f. 1v, Sinai Arabic 75, f. 223r and Sinai Arabic 436, f. 383v.

¹⁷³² See the discussion in Garitte's edition, *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 15-19 (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958).

¹⁷³³ Al-Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje 1907: 209, tr. Collins 2001: 177-178). Al-Mas'ūdī, *Al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf* (ed. de Goeje 1894, 143).

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The monastery was evidently drawing patrons from among local communities in the 680s during the earliest years of the Umayyad caliphate.¹⁷³⁴ *P. Colt* 72 and 73 (tentatively dated to 684 and 683, but possibly 669 or 699), both mention pilgrimages undertaken by Abu 'l-Mughīra, *mawlā* of the governor of Gaza, and Ubāyya, the wife of the governor.¹⁷³⁵ This complements an existing association from the seventh century.¹⁷³⁶ A consistent pilgrim presence is attested primarily through graffito inscriptions which are not uniformly published. The Greek inscriptions, surveyed by Avraham Negev are not accompanied by dating and thus do not permit more nuanced appraisal of post-conquest pilgrimage.¹⁷³⁷ Nonetheless, Armenian and Georgian inscriptions published in the collected study of Michael Stone indicate the continuation (and possible increase) of Georgian pilgrimage to Sinai in the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁷³⁸ This has recently been supplemented by the study of Yana Tchekhanovets.¹⁷³⁹ Some preliminary publications of Arabic inscriptions have also appeared and propose a similar continuation of pilgrimage between the eighth and tenth centuries.¹⁷⁴⁰ This may, in part, have been facilitated by the inclusion of the site into the Melkite stational liturgy.¹⁷⁴¹

Literary reports also indicate a strong interlinking of the monastic community with the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Alexandria. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, suggests that the

¹⁷³⁴ *P. Colt* 79.

¹⁷³⁵ *P. Colt* 72 and *P. Colt* 73.

¹⁷³⁶ *P. Colt* 89.

¹⁷³⁷ Negev 1977.

¹⁷³⁸ Stone 1979.

¹⁷³⁹ Tchekhanovets 2011.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Sharon 1993 and Kawatoko and Tokunaga 2006.

¹⁷⁴¹ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 3 October (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 95).

Melkite patriarch of Alexandria Ishāq (incumbent 941-54) was a former monk of the Sinai community.¹⁷⁴²

NO: 59

NAME: Mount Skopos

COORDINATES: 31.4733 N, 35.1439 E

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was subject to a salvage excavation between 1999 and 2000, although the results of the excavation have not been published in a final report.¹⁷⁴³ The site covers around 1.125 acres and was situated on the eastern slope of Mount Skopos near Jerusalem. The excavators suggest that the monastery may have functioned as a way station on the Jerusalem-Jericho road).¹⁷⁴⁴ The excavators identified the remains of a large complex which included a church and other auxiliary units which included a bathhouse.¹⁷⁴⁵ The recovery of an inscription which records the names of the priest and *hegoumenos*, Theodoros and the monk Kyriakos would appear to confirm the site's association with a monastic community.¹⁷⁴⁶ A detailed discussion of the site's phasing has yet to appear, but the excavators propose, based on the ceramic evidence, that the site was founded in the sixth-century. The excavators suggest that the site was maintained throughout the seventh century and continued into the Abassid period

¹⁷⁴² Yahya ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, 27-28 (Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1959: 725-726).

¹⁷⁴³ Amit, Seligman and Zilberod 2003.

¹⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid*: 147.

¹⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid*: 139.

¹⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid*: 143.

(around the ninth century). The final occupational phase of the monastery has not been published.¹⁷⁴⁷

NO: 60

NAME: Tabgha, Church of the Multiplication

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was fully excavated by Alfons Schneider and the results were published in a final report.¹⁷⁴⁸ The architectural rather than stratigraphic focus of the report, however, limits a full understanding of the church's occupational history.¹⁷⁴⁹ What survives of the original complex (now integrated into the modern structure) suggests the existence of a tri-apsidal basilica similar to those encountered throughout the region.¹⁷⁵⁰

We are, therefore, dependant on textual sources to determine a broad chronology for the use of the site. The excavators suggest that the church was destroyed by the Sassanians around 614 and only partially reoccupied until its abandonment in the Umayyad period.¹⁷⁵¹ The published report is not sufficiently detailed to verify this claim which appears, like those of Kursi, to be a textually-based rather than archaeologically-driven conclusion.¹⁷⁵² Textual evidence assists in supplementing the limitations of the archaeological corpus and would suggest that the cult site of the Miracle of the Multiplication continued to function throughout the eighth and ninth centuries.

¹⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 146-147.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Schneider 1937.

¹⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

The church is listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* where a monastic presence is also noted.¹⁷⁵³ The extent of the monastic occupation at the site is unclear although the *Life of Sabas* would suggest that a monastic association with the church had been maintained since the sixth century.¹⁷⁵⁴ The site also appears in the *Kitāb al-Burhān*.¹⁷⁵⁵ From these we may infer a continued cult presence at the site in the ninth century, although the material characteristics of these phases remain unknown. Currently, there is no evidence to confirm a tenth-century phase although the survival of the church into the late-ninth century would suggest that the continued functioning of the church is highly plausible.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The church is identified as the site of the Feeding of the Multitude recounted in Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:5-15. This association is based largely on tradition. The recovery of a mosaic panel in the bema, which features two fish and a two-handled basket (‘σφουριδας’) may, however, support this association.¹⁷⁵⁶ It is a motif also known from Kursi, associated with the miracle of the 4000, where the mosaics of the aisles feature fish, loaves and baskets.¹⁷⁵⁷

NO: 61

NAME: Mar Theoktistos

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site has been subjected to a full survey in 1991 but remains unexcavated. Diagnostic finds recovered during the survey were limited and could not offer a full profile of the site's

¹⁷⁵³ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: line 38 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 212-213).

¹⁷⁵⁴ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas*: 108. 10-108.15 (ed. Schwartz 1959: 108, tr. Price 1991: 117).

¹⁷⁵⁵ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 321 (ed. Cachia 1960: 170, tr. Watt 1960: 137).

¹⁷⁵⁶ Schneider 1937.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Tzaferis 1983: 23-27.

potential occupational chronology.¹⁷⁵⁸ Textual evidence was used primarily to secure a foundation date for the site and to outline its subsequent chronology in the early Islamic period. This chronology is, however, based on the assumption that the site current known as Mar Theoktistos can be identified as that known from the literary sources.¹⁷⁵⁹ This is not assured. The survey itself recovered no material than would explicitly confirm this association and much of the chronological phasing of the site is based primarily on textual material.¹⁷⁶⁰

If the association is correct, there are also grounds to question the phasing proposed by the survey. An abandonment date of the eighth century was determined primarily on the basis of a report in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* which mentions a journey undertaken by Stephen to the Monastery of Mar Theoktistos.¹⁷⁶¹ The *Life*, however, does not explicitly state that the monastery no longer functioned and the text is not explicit regarding the number of monks that still resided at the site. If the monastery of Mar Theoktistos is to be identified with the site surveyed in 1991, this may propose a long occupational phase than previously accepted. The phasing of the wall painting may offer some additional confirmation of this. The upper scheme was dated by Gustav Kühnel to the twelfth century – a dating which has been questioned in the results of the 1991 survey.¹⁷⁶² The identification of lower layers of wall painting, which were considered by Kühnel to pre-date the ‘Macedonian renaissance’, may point to a more substantial early Islamic phase than previously recognised.¹⁷⁶³

Textual evidence for the monastery is limited. The next text which points to awareness of a monastery known as Mar Theoktistos is the itinerary of the Russian Abbot Daniel who reports that the monastery was abandoned by the early twelfth century. This

¹⁷⁵⁸ Goldfus, Arubas and Alliata 1995: 249-251.

¹⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 285-292.

¹⁷⁶¹ *Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas* 26.1-26.7 (ed. and tr. Lamoreaux 1999: 41-42, 43-44).

¹⁷⁶² Kühnel 1988: 185-191, Goldfus, Arubas and Alliata 1996: 275 query Kühnel’s dating but do not explore the reasons for their disagreement with a twelfth-century date for the scheme.

¹⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*

would contradict the dating for the wall paintings at the cave laura currently known as Mar Theoktistos and suggests that a more forensic examination of the site is necessary before conclusions regarding its identification and dating can be proposed.

NO: 62

NAME: Mount Tabor

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

No material remains associated with a monastic presence have been identified although textual evidence confirms a monastic presence at Mount Tabor into the tenth century. Anastasios of Sinai noted that the site was under the control of the Chalcedonian Christians in the late seventh century.¹⁷⁶⁴ Al-Mas'ūdī, writing in 943, also reports that the site was under Chalcedonian control.¹⁷⁶⁵ A report in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei* lists four churches and eighteen monks.¹⁷⁶⁶ These separate accounts would confirm the continued Christian presence throughout the eighth and ninth centuries although little can be said about the nature of these communities.

NO: 63

NAME: Tiberias, Mount Berenike

SITE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY

The site was subject to a full excavation by Yizhar Hirschfeld and published in a final report in 2004.¹⁷⁶⁷ Excavations unearthed a large tri-apsidal basilica on the summit of Mount

¹⁷⁶⁴ Anastasios of Sinai, *Questions and Answers*: 177, PG 89-767-770.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Al-Tanbīh wa-l-Ashraf*: 144 (ed. de Goeje 1894).

¹⁷⁶⁶ *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: lines 42-43 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 214-215).

¹⁷⁶⁷ Hirschfeld 2004b.

Berenike which overlooked the Byzantine and Umayyad city.¹⁷⁶⁸ The church was surrounded by a number of domestic units which the excavators linked to a monastic presence.¹⁷⁶⁹ No additional evidence was recovered that would support the identification of the site as a monastery. However, the incorporation of an anchor stone which was designed to be immersed in oil or water, suggests that the site may have been the focal point of a local cult.¹⁷⁷⁰ Hirschfeld dates the foundation of the site to the sixth century.¹⁷⁷¹ This initial phase involved the construction of a large three-aisled basilica.¹⁷⁷² The material assemblages of the site demonstrate a stable pattern of occupation at the church throughout the sixth and seventh centuries and provide no indication of drastic changes to the use of the site in this period.¹⁷⁷³ Hirschfeld suggests that the Sassanian occupation of the city in 614 may have led to the abandonment of monastic cells situated in the periphery of the site.¹⁷⁷⁴ This hypothesis was not, however, supported by any diagnostic material and must be accepted reservedly. The first major change to the arrangement of the site occurred in the mid-eighth century and was linked by the excavators to the Golan Earthquake of 749.¹⁷⁷⁵ This destruction phase is also paralleled among a number of domestic and industrial units in the lower town.¹⁷⁷⁶ The church was subsequently reclaimed by the community although with some modifications. The former colonnades of the basilica were reinforced by the construction of pilasters which replaced the columns as the main support for the church roof.¹⁷⁷⁷ The repairs at the site also witnessed a substantial reduction in the liturgical space of the complex which was characterised by the steady concentration of worship around the main apse and the reuse of

¹⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 75-220.

¹⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 75.

¹⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 109, 130.

¹⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*: 92.

¹⁷⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*: 101-130.

¹⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: 131.

¹⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: 101, 112-113.

¹⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 13-14.

¹⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 111-123.

the northern wing and narthex for non-liturgical activity.¹⁷⁷⁸ Other minor repairs, using *spolia* from the original Byzantine complex, are attested at the site throughout the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁷⁷⁹ A renovation phase at the church, which involved the execution of a number of fresco schemes inside the main church, may be dated to the late tenth or early eleventh century.¹⁷⁸⁰ The material assemblages of the site suggest that the final occupation of the church occurred in the late-twelfth century.¹⁷⁸¹

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The dedication of the church is unknown. However, it is possible that the church is to be identified one of the five churches listed in the *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*.¹⁷⁸²

¹⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: 121-123.

¹⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: 114-119.

¹⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: 124.

¹⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸² *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei*: 40-41 (ed. and tr. McCormick 2011: 215-216). Hirschfeld also suggests that the church is to be identified with the church of Hagios Giorgos reported in later Crusader sources, see Hirschfeld 2004b: 123.

APPENDIX B

ISSUES WITH THE 614 SOURCE MATERIAL

Jerusalem is widely regarded as exceptional to the broader pattern of urban and administrative continuity, remaining the one urban centre where the impact of the Sassanian conquest is popularly perceived to have had catastrophic implications for the Christian population and Christian hierotopy of the city. Even the more reserved archaeological assessments of Robert Schick have emphasised the disproportionate impact of the Sassanian siege on the city compared to the occupational stabilities exhibited among churches across the region; Schick lists the Church complex of the Anastasis-Golgotha, the Eleona Church, the Nea Church of Justinian and Sion among the most prominent cult sites ransacked and destroyed during the Sassanian siege.¹⁷⁸³ This ominous portrait has largely been provoked by the construct of the surviving textual sources, where descriptions of events in Jerusalem, outweigh material for other urban centres. Whilst archaeological approaches to the Sassanian siege have begun to provoke more systematic questioning of traditional interpretive models, comparative approaches to the textual material have remained more muted. In what follows I will outline a series of observations with this material and its implications on the debate about monastic communities in the early seventh century.

Agreement regarding the basic developments of the Sassanian siege in 614 is fairly unanimous in modern assessments of post-Byzantine Christian communities; following their breach of the city's defensive circuit, the Sassanians systematically targeted Christian churches and shrines for destruction; with the assistance of Jewish allies, massacred and

¹⁷⁸³ Schick 1995:33-39.

enslaved the resident Christian population (figures vary between traditions but are numbered in the thousands); and, following the capture of the relic of the True Cross and the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Zachariah, returned to Ctesiphon with their captives.¹⁷⁸⁴

This broad template represents the main thematic components of the surviving narrative tradition of the siege and thus heavily informs contemporary historiographical approaches and general assessments of the city following this period.¹⁷⁸⁵ Needless to say, despite the proscriptive role of the literary material, detailed accounts of the episode are fairly restricted in number, with the mainstream corpus comprised of brief chronicle entries which deviate little from the standardised formula outlined above. Supplementing these narratives is a small corpus of hagiography, and related theological literature, which directly addresses the circumstances of Palestine and Jerusalem: a prefacing letter penned by Antiochos of Mar Saba, which accompanied his seminal work the *Pandektos*; the *Life of Anastasios the Persian*; the *Life of George of Choziba*; and, lastly, an account of the *Capture of Jerusalem* commonly identified as the work of the monk Strategios of Mar Saba.¹⁷⁸⁶

Despite their ubiquitous role in contemporary historical appraisals a systematic critique of the collective literary material has yet to emerge.¹⁷⁸⁷ The dating of the texts, for the most part, remains largely authenticated by contextual theme and discussions regarding the transmission and development of the tradition have received little critical scrutiny.

¹⁷⁸⁴ These similarities have already been highlighted in Hoyland 2011: 64-65. Compare the accounts of *Chron 1234*: 226 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920), *Chronicle Paschale*: 704-705 (ed. Dindorf 1832: 704-705, tr. Whitby and Whitby 1989), *Ps. Sebeos*: 34 (tr. Thomson 1999: 69); Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar*: 27-28 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 115-120, 95-101), Michael the Syrian *Chronicle* 11: 1-403/400 (ed. Chabot 1899-1910) and Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6106 (ed. de Boor 1883-85: 300-301, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 431-432).

¹⁷⁸⁵ For examples where these accounts are used collectively to form a basic chronology of the event see Dauphin 1998, 352-358, Flusin 1992 and Foss 2003: 152-153.

¹⁷⁸⁶ Antiochos of Mar Saba, *Letter to Eustathios*, PG 89, 1424-1428, Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba* (ed. House 1888, tr. Vivian and Athanassakis 1994). The *Capture of Jerusalem* is the modern title given to the anonymous work. Henceforth it will be referred to as *Capture*. The various versions of the *Capture of Jerusalem* by Strategios of Mar Saba are published in *Expugnatio Hierosolymae A.D. 614* (I: A+B.) (ed. Garitte. 1973, tr. Garitte 1973), *Expugnatio Hierosolymae A.D. 614* (II: C+V) (ed. Garitte 1974, tr. Garitte 1974), *La Prise de Jerusalem par les Perses en 614* (ed. and tr. Garitte. 1960). A much abridged translation from the Georgian is published in Conybeare 1910.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Individual studies of the *Life of Anastasios the Persian* appear in Flusin 1992 and Speck 1997b. On the Georgian version of Strategios: see Speck 1997a. Additional comments are offered in Wilken 1992: 216-232.

This latter point is particularly crucial, given the paucity of accounts which we can comfortably date to the early seventh century. Among the chronographic traditions only two, a work erroneously attributed to the Armenian Bishop Sebeos and the anonymously compiled *Paschal Chronicle*, are accepted as seventh-century compositions by present-day commentators.¹⁷⁸⁸ The accounts read as follows:

...In this year in about the month of June, we suffered a calamity which deserves unceasing lamentations. For, together with the many cities of the east, Jerusalem too was captured by the Persians, and in it were slain many thousands of clerics, monks and virgin nuns. The Lord's tomb was burnt and the far-famed temples of God, and, in short, all the precious things were destroyed. The venerated wood of the Cross, together with the holy vessels that were beyond enumeration, was taken by the Persians and the Patriarch Zacharias also became a prisoner...

*Chronicon Paschale*¹⁷⁸⁹

On the 19th day [of the siege], in the month Margats', which was the 28th of the month, in the 25th year 'of the reign of Apruēz Khosrov, ten days after Easter, the Persian army captured Jerusalem. For three days they put to the sword and slew all the populace of the city. . And they stayed within the city for 21 days. Then they came out and camped outside the city and burnt the city with fire. They added up the number of fallen corpses, and the total killed was 17,000 people' and the living whom they captured was 35,000 people... They also arrested the patriarch, whose name was Zak'aria, and the custodian of the cross. In their search for the Life-bearing cross, they began to torture them; and many clergy they decapitated at that time/. Then they showed them the place where it lay hidden, and they took it away into captivity. The silver and gold of the city they melted down and brought to the king's court.

*Sebeos*¹⁷⁹⁰

Reports in the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, the *Nazm al-Jawhar* of Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq Patriarch of Alexandria, the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian and finally the anonymous *Chronicle of 1234* provide an auxiliary and much referenced body of material – albeit one reflective of later ninth- to thirteenth-century literary endeavours.¹⁷⁹¹

Further comments on these reports are necessary here. Whilst not inherently detrimental to their value, the lateness of this material is a characteristic which necessitates further reflection

¹⁷⁸⁸ The discussion of the author of the chronicle attributed to Sebeos appears in Thompson and Howard Johnston 1999: xxxi-ixxvii. On the *Chronicon Paschale*: see Whitby and Whitby 1989.

¹⁷⁸⁹ *Chronicon Paschale*: 704-705 (ed. Dindorf 1832: 704-705, tr. Whitby and Whitby 1989: 156).

¹⁷⁹⁰ *Ps. Sebeos*: 34, (tr. Thomson, 1999: 71).

¹⁷⁹¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6106 (ed. De Boor 1883-85-1885, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 431-432). For the additional passages concerning the 614 sack: Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar*: 28, 29, 30 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 119-130, 99-110), Michael the Syrian *Chronicle* 11: 1-403/400 (ed. Chabot 1899-1910) and *Chron 1234*: 226 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920).

in view of its formative role in methodological approaches to the siege in recent decades. In addition, it is the Chalcedonian tradition of this history enshrined in almost every surviving source, through which our understanding of these events, and its significance to the Palestinian Christian population in the early seventh century, is circumscribed to the present day.

The inclination to approach this selection of accounts as a self-authenticating body – by which the account of one source is endorsed by the collective testament of the others – without more considered scrutiny of inter-textual relationships and inter-dependency, has impeded more critical observation of their limitations and individual context.¹⁷⁹²

These brief chronicle entries are collectively enlisted to underpin the authority of the hagiographical and theological sources whose narratives provide more detail than the laconic chronicle tradition.¹⁷⁹³ The current consensus that the theological and chronicle traditions are sufficiently independent of one another to sanction their respective claims is a supposition which remains largely unexplored. As will be addressed below, closer comparison between each text and their respective contexts reveals this presumption to be critically flawed.

Among the core collection of supporting source material enlisted to reinforce these assessments at least two – the lost *Chronicle of Dionysos of Tel Mahre* (upon which Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle* draws) and the *Chronicle 1234* – drew upon a single source for earlier material: a now lost chronicle attributed to Theophilos of Edessa, a Chalcedonian astrologer active in Baghdad in the eighth century.¹⁷⁹⁴ It has also been tentatively suggested that the material of George the Synkellos, which underpins much of the Palestinian material presented in Theophanes' *Chronographia*, also drew on Theophilos for information about

¹⁷⁹² For examples, compare the accompanying notes in the translations of Theophanes, *Chronographia*: 6106 (ed. De Boor 1883-85: 300-301, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 431-432) which all collectively cite the remaining source traditions to underpin the authenticity of the entry.

¹⁷⁹³ For example, see Foss 2003: 151-154 where chronicle entries and hagiographical sources are interwoven to produce a seamless narrative of the period.

¹⁷⁹⁴ For a discussion of this inter-textual relationship and the literary output of Theophilos see Hoyland 2011: 6-19.

events prior to the ninth century or a similar source produced within the same historiographical tradition.¹⁷⁹⁵ A comparative reading of the traditions in Theophanes, Dionysos of Tel Mahre via Michael the Syrian and the *Chronicle 1234* would appear to endorse this view.

The Persians took the Jordan, Palestine and the Holy City (of Jerusalem) by force of arms and killed many people therein through the agency of the Jews; some say it was 90,000. For the Jews bought the Christians, each man according to his means, and killed them. As for Zacharias, patriarch of Jerusalem, and the holy and life-giving cross the Persians took them, along with many captives, and carried them off to Persia.

*Theophanes*¹⁷⁹⁶

In the year 6 of Heraclius, Shabaraz attacked Jerusalem, subdued it and killed 90,000 persons. The Jews, because of their hatred for them, were buying Christians for a low price and killing them. They (the Persians) captured Zacharias, the Chalcedonian bishop of Jerusalem and sent him to Persia with the revered wood of the Cross. They also exiled the Jews who had been killing the Christians and left no Jews in Jerusalem and its environs.

*Michael the Syrian*¹⁷⁹⁷

In the year 6 of Heraclius and 27 of Khusrau, Shahrbaraz struck against the city of Jerusalem, subdued it by war and killed in it 90,000 Christian persons. The Jews because of their enmity for them, were buying them for a small price and killing (them). Shahrbaraz captured Zacharias, the Chalcedonian bishop of Jerusalem, and sent him to Persia, to Khusrau, with the revered wood of the crucifixion, and with him treasure of gold and silver. He also exiled from Jerusalem the Jews.

*Chronicle 1234*¹⁷⁹⁸

A Syro-Palestinian provenance for this tradition appears likely in view of the relative paucity of early witnesses regarding the siege in material produced in Constantinople and in Greek prior to the ninth century. Details of the siege of Jerusalem are absent from the *Short History* compiled by the Patriarch Nikephoros, leaving Theophanes, with the exception of the

¹⁷⁹⁵ This appears primary based on the identification of the main author of the work as George the Synkellos; for which see the introductory discussion in the translation by Mango and Scott 1997: lii-ixiv and Hoyland 2011:7-10.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6106, (ed. de Boor 1883-85-1885, tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 431-432)

¹⁷⁹⁷ Michael the Syrian *Chronicle* 11: 1-403/400 (ed. Chabot 1899-1910).

¹⁷⁹⁸ *Chron 1234*: 226 (ed. Chabot 1916-1920).

Paschal Chronicle (a distinct tradition from Theophanes) as the earliest surviving witness to this tradition outside of the Syro-Palestinian sources and their dependant works.¹⁷⁹⁹

The collective reliance on Theophilus of Edessa by our later sources indicates that the main features of the subsequent historiographical tradition of the siege of Jerusalem had already fully emerged by the later eighth century within Chalcedonian/Melkite circles. Whilst this does not identify a provenance for the *Capture* narrative, or for the formalisation of the historiographical tradition, these observations qualify the routine assumption that the surviving chronicle narratives can be considered as autonomous and mutually authenticating bodies of material. Those of Michael the Syrian (Dionysos of Tel Mahre), the Chronicle 1234 and Theophanes are essentially derived from the single account of Theophilus of Edessa and provide the only testament to this specific tradition.

Although the *Nazm al-Jawhar* of Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq of Alexandria is exceptional in its apparent independence from *Theophilus* of Edessa, a similar interconnection can be observed when the work is examined within its broader intellectual and social context.

The first thing (Khazrawayh) devastated in the holy city, were the churches of Gethsemane, and al-Nea. Both are deserted up to the present time. He ravaged the church and the Constantinian Cranion and the grave (of Christ). He set fire to the tomb and the Cranion and destroyed most of the city. Together with the Persians, the Jews killed a lot of Christians which are beyond count. Those that were murdered are buried in Maquella.¹⁸⁰⁰ And the Persians withdrew after they devastated, burnt, killed and had led the people into captivity. Among the distributors was also Zakariya, the patriarch of the holy city, with a group of his followers. (The Persians) also took the wood of the cross to Persia.

Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq¹⁸⁰¹

Critical examination of the earliest Alexandrian recension of Saʿīd's account of the *Life of John the Almsgiver* (dated to the tenth century) by its modern editor has highlighted the close parallels between the *Nazm al-Jawhar* and a tenth-century copy of the *Life* preserved in Sinai Arabic 428: a codex roughly contemporary with Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq and a volume which also

¹⁷⁹⁹ Nikephoros, *Short History* : 12 (ed. and tr. Mango 1990 : 55-56).

¹⁸⁰⁰ For a discussion of the use of the term *maqella*, which was subsequently transliterated as *mamilla*, see Breydy 1981.

¹⁸⁰¹ Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, *Nazm al-Jawhar*: 27 (ed. and tr. Breydy 1985: 118-119, 98-99).

includes one of the two oldest surviving copies of the *Capture* by Strategios of Mar Saba.¹⁸⁰² Discrepancies between the text of the *Capture* transmitted in Sinai Arabic 428 and the account of the 614 siege in the *Nazm al-Jawhar* implies that Saʿīd either revised its details or worked from an alternative, though related, account.¹⁸⁰³ But the proximity of the tradition concerning the way the siege of Jerusalem is presented in the *Nazm al-Jawhar*, with that of the *Capture* narrative, in both literary and chronological terms, has implications on its value as a source which is sufficiently independent to legitimise the authority of the *Capture* narrative. Irrespective of its variances with other traditions, Saʿīd ibn Baṭṭīq's account of the sack of Jerusalem was crafted in a social and intellectual context where the skeletal narrative of the 614 siege was already formalised; was circulating concurrently with copies of the *Capture*; and which had imposed itself upon the wider devotional and intellectual consciousness of the Melkite church and its clerical officials.

The emergence of a liturgical feast dedicated to the siege by the mid-eighth century provides some indication of how this formalised recollection was transmitted; particularly among the monastic groups responsible for composition of the available source material which survives from the early Islamic period.¹⁸⁰⁴

¹⁸⁰² See the comments by Michel Breydy, his edition and translation of the *Nazm al Jawhar*: 269 note 1. The life of John the Almsgiver is found in Sinai Arabic 428 of which the close parallels with Saʿīd may be observed in Sinai Arabic 428 ff.18r; 33c-34r and 68r-v. The *Capture of Jerusalem* appears fol. 238r-289v. Current scholarly consensus considers the codex a tenth century compilation. It is less clear where the existing copies were produced: a matter which reflects the limited discussion of the text. For a general discussion of problems with the attribution of manuscripts to Sinai: see Ševčenko 2010: 234. The only other two monastic centres active in manuscript production, of which we are aware, are Mar Chariton (known from *British Library Oriental MS 4950*) and Mar Sabas see Griffith 1989.

¹⁸⁰³ See the comments by Breydy 1983: 23. Given that Saʿīd was unable to read Greek, see Breydy 1983:1, n.1, his informant on the sack of Jerusalem must have been available in either Syriac or Arabic.

¹⁸⁰⁴ For the incorporation of the feast into the *Jerusalem Lectionary* see the entry 978 dated to May 17 (ed. Tarnnischvili 1959-1960: 979). Comparisons with the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*) (ed. Garitte 1958) suggest that the feast was extended to incorporate another date (20 May) between the eighth and the late tenth century when the Menaion was produced: *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*): 20 May (ed. Garitte 1958: 67). It is unclear exactly when this Menaion was copied, but the colophon and palaeography of Sinai Georgian 34 links it to the copyist John Zosimos active in Sinai between 973 and 986 and in Sabas before 973. This manuscript, like many of John Zosimos' works, was copied from an Arabic original. Tarnnischvili 1959-1960: V-VII and 11 also links the early tenth century copy of the *Jerusalem Lectionary* (Lathal Georgian) to John Zosimos. This version reports that the feast of the Burning of Jerusalem (17 May) was accompanied by a *synaxis* in the Church of the Anastasis. This would suggest therefore, that the original Melkite

The importance of the siege of Jerusalem as a recurrent historical motif in the Melkite liturgy is apparent in the Sinai Georgian Menaion – again a product of the tenth-century Melkite milieu – which lists two feasts connected to the capture of the True Cross, the sack of Jerusalem by the Sassanians and the captivity of the Patriarch Zachariah.¹⁸⁰⁵ Accompanying these were further days dedicated to the figures John the Almsgiver and Modestos the Patriarch of Jerusalem whose biographies intersected with the historical events addressed by the liturgy.¹⁸⁰⁶ Comparison observations with the *Jerusalem Lectionary* confirm the incorporation of several elements of this feast, and the commemoration of several of its major historical protagonists, into the Melkite calendar by the mid-eighth century with the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* likely reflecting the culmination of these developments by the 970s, at the very latest.¹⁸⁰⁷

The emergence of a formalised historiographical tradition for the sack of Jerusalem in the period c.750-c.970, as represented by Theophilos of Edessa and his subsequent dependants, is of critical significance to understanding the broader social context of available source material for the Sassanian siege for two key reasons. First, the historical tradition shaped the evolving historiographical tradition of the Sassanian siege of Jerusalem. Second, this tradition moulded the response and understanding of these events among subsequent communities and writers.

The *Capture* narrative is central to these complex issues, partly due to the lateness of the manuscript tradition, but equally because its status as a formative influence on the remaining

observations of this feast involved a stational liturgy and was closely associated with the Church of the Anastasis.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Besides the feasts dedicated to the Burning of Jerusalem (17 May) and the Devastation of Jerusalem (20 May) further feasts commemorating the Patriarch Zachariah (31 January, 27 and 28 October) are listed in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*) (ed. Garitte 1958:47, 100).

¹⁸⁰⁶ The rebuilding by the Patriarch Modestos on the December 17 and feasts of John the Almsgiver (12, 13 and 30 November) are listed as feasts in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion*: *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*) (ed. Garitte 1958: 103,108).

¹⁸⁰⁷ Here, the *Capture of Jerusalem* is listed as May 17. This is accompanied by a feast dedicated to Modestos observed on March 29: *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian 34*) (ed. Garitte 1958: 57, 67).

sources (or in contrast its reliance upon existing historiographical models) is currently indeterminable.¹⁸⁰⁸

The significance of this convergence for the present discussion largely derives from the authority the text has acquired over the past century in critical appraisals of the Sassanian capture of Jerusalem and its related impact on the Palestinian Christian population.¹⁸⁰⁹ Its influence upon synthetic appraisals of the period 614-28, alongside its role in determining archaeological agendas, is unparalleled among the additional surviving material for this period.¹⁸¹⁰ This monopolisation is largely a reflection of the absence of comparative material for the siege: the *Capture*, in its variant forms, constitutes the most descriptive surviving source for the siege of 614 and one which is widely perceived as contemporary to the events it purports to describe.¹⁸¹¹ The meticulous topographic descriptions of Jerusalem enshrined in the work have lent additional weight to its authority as a narrative which presents the most accurate portrait of the city in the Byzantine period and the ensuing impact of the Sassanian siege: a supposition which has facilitated the text's ubiquitous role in archaeological research.¹⁸¹² The extent to which the text has exercised a profound role in shaping modern research strategies can be observed clearly in several astute archaeological challenges to the 614 devastation theory. For example, although scholars such as Gideon Avni reject the idea of widespread destruction instigated by the Sassanian siege, his counter analysis still adopts the topography outlined in the original literary source as a template for exploring the

¹⁸⁰⁸ The earliest Arabic versions, dated to the tenth century, are preserved in Sinai Arabic 428, fol. 438r-489v and Sinai Arabic 520, fol. 199r-265v. The later Greek and Arabic versions, dated between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries are preserved in Sinai MSS, no. 448 f. 355 and no. 432, f.162. Cod. Vaticanus arab. 697, fol. 59v-97v. For a discussion that the text represents a compilation of various literary forms see Howard-Johnston 2010: 164-167

¹⁸⁰⁹ For examples of this approach see Dauphin 1998: 357-359, Flusin 1992, Foss 2003: 152-153, McCormick 2011: 40-41 and Schick 1995: 33-39.

¹⁸¹⁰ For a criticism of this approach and the general problems with his eye-witness status see Speck 1997a.

¹⁸¹¹ See Bowersock 1997, Conrad 1999: 100, McCormick 2011: 40 n. 43, Wilken 1992, 353.

¹⁸¹² Thus the benchmark discussions of the Jerusalem in Milik 1960a: 354-367 and Milik 1960b: 550-591 are based on the internal details of the narrative.

devastation of the city.¹⁸¹³ Whilst re-evaluative approaches such as Avni's have admirably qualified the traditional archaeological model, they have, most perplexing, failed to generate a concurrent critical examination of the textual source upon which these assessments are founded. Despite the publication of the variant linguistic versions in the 1970s, an individual study dedicated to the transmission and central rhetorical strategies of Strategios' narrative has yet to emerge.¹⁸¹⁴ This has resulted in a rather tokenistic integration of the source in contemporary interdisciplinary studies where it is habitually enlisted as a supporting text for the siege of 614 – largely due to its perceived value as a detailed, albeit hyperbolic, source – but where detailed commentary of its literary and intellectual context remains minimal. This isolation has engendered a litany of assumptions about the text which remain enshrined in critical approaches to the Sassanian siege and which collectively endorse the authority with which the text is credited.

Basic agreement among the major studies is fairly unanimous in this regard: the *Capture of Jerusalem* – the modern title ascribed to the original untitled work – represents a contemporary eyewitness account of the Sassanian siege of 614 written originally in Greek by Strategios, a monk in the monastery of Mar Saba, during the period of the Sassanian occupation (614-28) or in the aftermath of the Herakleion re-conquest (628-32).¹⁸¹⁵ Furthermore, whilst the literary intersection of the *Capture* with biblical formulas is well recognised, assessments of the text as an exaggerated narrative historical account, from which

¹⁸¹³ See, for example, the excellent refutation by Avni 2010 which uses the narrative of Strategios as the topographic template for assessing the impact of the Sassanian siege.

¹⁸¹⁴ To date, the major studies on Strategios, which have drawn attention to the use of biblical motifs, are Wilken 1992: 216-231 and Wilken 1999. An additional, though largely overlooked, study by Paul Speck also presents critical qualifications to the problems with this source, see Speck 1997a: 37-129.

¹⁸¹⁵ See Conrad 1999: 100, Conybeare 1910: 502, Jacobs 2003: 116, note. 67, McCormick 2011: 40, note. 43 and Wilken 1992: 206-207. There is, however, no indication that the earliest Arabic recensions in Sinai Arabic 428 and 520 were translations from Greek. The hypothetical nature of the Greek text was raised by Breydy 1981: 74-75. Nicholas Marr, whose edition was published in 1900, argued that the Georgian version of this text was translated directly from Arabic and not from a Greek original Nanobashvili 2003: 271. This was rejected by Conybeare 1910: 502, although not supported by counter evidence. In the broader context of Melkite literary activity a translation from Arabic to Georgian is very plausible. See Nanobashvili 2003: 269-74 for a discussion of literary contact between Arabic speaking monastic communities and Georgian speaking monks in the 8th to 10th century. Nanobashvili has argued that many Georgian monastic communities may have been fluent in Arabic by this period.

valuable empirical data can be clearly extracted amid its theological flourishes, remains common.¹⁸¹⁶ Critically, neither of these assumptions has been substantiated by a systematic programme of research.¹⁸¹⁷

An immediate, though largely unrecognised, problem with the source lies in its process of transmission. Although seven versions survive, none present an identical version of the account. The two earliest Arabic recensions – both dated to the tenth century– demonstrate considerable variance with the later Georgian redactions (eleventh to fourteenth centuries) which are also notably different in length from the later Arabic versions – one dated to 1231/2 and another to 1328 – and the two fragmentary Greek copies of the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.¹⁸¹⁸

The common inclination to refer to the *Capture of Jerusalem* as a critically edited source is propelled by the underlying assumption that each of these recensions was intended for identical social contexts and functional purposes. Modern assessments of the siege have routinely prioritised one of the surviving versions and consigned the remaining recensions to the footnotes as interesting, but ultimately supplementary, bibliographical addenda.¹⁸¹⁹ Most commonly, it is the eleventh-century Georgian copy edited and translated by Gerard Garitte which is brought to the forefront of modern analyses, apparently based on the more complete narrative detail this account offers comparative to that of its more laconic Arabic counterparts in Sinai Arabic 428 and 520.¹⁸²⁰

¹⁸¹⁶ Thus Schick 1995: 33-38 and Wilken 1992: 206.

¹⁸¹⁷ Only Speck 1997a and Howard Johnston 2010: 164-167 have sort to question the historical value of the text. The process of transmission between the Arabic, Georgian and later Greek narratives have not been subjected to philological analysis to verify the claims that the Arabic texts are translations. Neither has there been any research aimed at analysing the literary context in which this text was translated, compiled or used.

¹⁸¹⁸ The earliest Arabic recensions are reproduced in *Expugnationis Hierosolymae A.D. 614: recensiones arabicae. I, A et B* (ed. and tr. Garitte 1973). The later Arabic versions of the 13-14th centuries are reproduced in *Expugnationis Hierosolymae A.D. 614: Recensiones Arabicae. II, C et V* (ed. and tr. Garitte 1974). For the Georgian version see *La Prise de Jerusalem par les Perses en 614* (ed. and tr. G. Garitte, 1960). The Greek versions of the eleventh and thirteenth century have not been edited or published.

¹⁸¹⁹ Thus Schick 1995:33-40, especially p.39 note. 41, acknowledges the existence of Arabic versions but uses the Georgian version and the translations of Conybeare to form the main body of his argument.

¹⁸²⁰ See the references in note 94. For examples of this approach see Schick 1995: 33-40.

Why the narrative details, rather than the theological motifs of the text, are afforded more attention in modern analysis is not, for the most, readily explained. Arguably, it has its origins in the selective early twentieth century approaches to the text in its variant forms. Frederick Conybeare's English translation of a Georgian version edited by Nikolas Marr has proved notably influential in this regard.¹⁸²¹ Although its ruthless omissions are fully acknowledged, Conybeare's central critical principle, that empirical historical detail could be extracted from beneath the *Capture's* theological gloss, has formulated the basic methodological approach to the text for over a century.¹⁸²² Consequently, attempts to demarcate historical detail from pious embellishment are still commonly encountered and now routinely directed at the increasingly more accessible (and chronologically earlier) Arabic and Georgian recensions of the tenth century.¹⁸²³

This attitude appears grounded in two key, though generally unproblematised, assumptions about the source. The first assumption is that the *Capture* is sufficiently contemporary to the 614 siege that its narration of events can be assumed to derive from firsthand experience and that its independence and primacy over the other surviving material is assured. Both of these features rest on its status as a seventh-century composition. The second assumption is that the underlying purpose for the Melkite and later Georgian transmitters of Strategios' narrative was as a 'historical' work – thereby assuming a historical/theological literary dichotomy implicit for western scholars in the nineteenth century – equivalent to the Chronicle entries with which it is listed in modern syntheses.

As was discussed earlier, the attribution of the source to the seventh century largely derives from the claims of the text itself. This attribution is unsupported by the manuscript tradition where the earliest known versions, and indeed awareness of such a text, are the

¹⁸²¹ Thus Conybeare 1910: 502 states 'I have much reduced its bulk by omitting pious ejaculations and other passages devoid of historical interest.'

¹⁸²² Conybeare 1910: 506-508.

¹⁸²³ Thus Schick 1995: 37-43.

tenth-century Arabic copies preserved at Mount Sinai.¹⁸²⁴ In addition, the recurrent argument that these are based on a Greek original is not assured: the early texts have not been subject to a study sufficiently systematic to verify this claim and the widely held Greek ‘proof-text’ is largely a hypothetical assumption based on the context of the internal seventh-century narrative.¹⁸²⁵ A Syriac provenance of the text, first proposed by Bartolomeo Pirone (based on preliminary observations of the Arabic) remains an alternative possibility, given that no awareness of Strategios’ narrative in Greek exists before the early eleventh century.¹⁸²⁶ That a version similar to the surviving Strategios narratives was circulating in Syriac or Arabic by the early tenth century is suggested by the appearance of a narrative similar to the surviving Capture recensions in the *Nazm al-Jawhar* of Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq, Patriarch of Alexandria. Recent arguments, based on the earliest version preserved in Sinai Arabic 582, have pointed to Saʿīd Ibn Baṭrīq’s inability to read Greek and his reliance upon Syriac/Arabic translations for his material.¹⁸²⁷

Whilst the identification of a Syriac provenance is beyond the limitations of the present study, the transmission of the Strategios’ narrative tradition, interlinked with the monastic centres of Mar Sabas and Sinai and with Jerusalem and Alexandria does not negate this possibility: the fluid linguistic margins between Greek, Georgian, Syriac and Arabic are already a well-observed feature of monastic literary activity as are the connections between these monastic centres, even if only in intellectual terms, by the early ninth century.¹⁸²⁸

¹⁸²⁴ See the references in note 1802.

¹⁸²⁵ Only Breydy 1981: 75 has acknowledged that this early date is not yet substantiated by any research outside of the text itself.

¹⁸²⁶ The earliest Greek account, dated to 1004 is preserved in Sinai MSS, no. 448 f. 355 although its qualities are provenance are currently unknown.

¹⁸²⁷ See Breydy 1985: VII-VIII.

¹⁸²⁸ The presence of Anthony David of Baghdad at Mar Sabas in the mid-ninth century is evidence of this. Anthony appears to have been commissioned by Anba Isaac of Mount Sinai to copy books at Mar Saba for the Sinai community. The most famous product of this exchange is preserved in Vatican Arabic MS 71 and Strasbourg Oriental MS 4226 (both dated to around 880s). For a broader discussion of his scribal activities see Griffith 1989. A further example of intellectual exchange would be the awareness of Theodore Abū Qurrah regarding John of Damascus’ defence of image veneration. For the translation and edition see *A treatise on the*

From this perspective, the transmitted copies of the *Capture of Jerusalem* emerge as products of a broader intellectual and literary milieu where the collective memory of the siege within the Chalcedonian community was progressively formalised; where historical accounts were composed and circulated concurrently with hagiographical literature; and in an environment where a dedicated liturgical commemoration of the Sassanid occupation was known amongst writers active in the most prominent Melkite centres of the region.¹⁸²⁹ What is currently less clear is the relationship between the Strategios' narrative and this broader context: in sum, whether the text played a definitive role in the formalisation of subsequent memories of the period or whether it represents a product of existing formulas which had already emerged at the time of its composition.

Although such observations can only be confirmed with more intrusive research, the evidence is sufficient to qualify the current identification and use of Strategios' narrative as a narrative historical account of the 614 siege. This approach, as was suggested above, is primarily a composite product of selective early twentieth-century translations of the text and a general paucity of tailored critical studies devoted to outlining the role of the source in its tenth-century context.

My reservation is endorsed by the fact that the earliest surviving versions of Strategios narrative make no suggestion that the modern readings of the source as a narrative historical account (as we would understand this term in its modern sense) correlate with the context in which it was received by its Melkite contemporaries in the tenth century. In terms of literary context, all of the Arabic versions of Strategios' narrative, which survive at Mount Sinai, were compiled and circulated as components of a selection of hagiographical material

veneration of the Holy Icons (ed. Arendzen 1987, tr. Griffith, 1997). A discussion of Theodore Abū Qurrah's biography is offered in Lamoreaux 2002.

¹⁸²⁹ As evidenced by the *Jerusalem Lectionary*: 17 May (ed. Tarchnisvili 1959/60: 979, 11) and the *Sinai Georgian Menaion* (*Sinai Georgian* 34: 17 and 20 May (ed. and tr. Garitte 1958: 67).

and sermons employed in the festal cycle of the Melkite church.¹⁸³⁰ In addition, as was noted by Paul Speck, the earliest Georgian accounts of the *Capture* narrative identified its primary use as a sermon: an acute, but commonly overlooked, observation which reflects the centrality of the theological sections of the text usually marginalised in modern critical appraisals of the text.¹⁸³¹ This observation is borne out to some extent within the earlier Arabic versions also. Although the tenth century Arabic copies 428 and 520 adopt the more ambiguous term *قوله* – speech, utterance, declaration – in the initial identification of the work, the later use of the term *مصحف* – holy book – to identify the *Capture* narrative provides a plausible explanation for the consistent compilation of the text alongside a series of hagiographies and homiletic works.¹⁸³²

This identification, which indicates that Strategios' narrative was received in a liturgical context, is supported by closer readings of the marginalia and headings which augment the earliest Georgian copy.¹⁸³³ Accompanying a terse description of the ensuing *Capture* is a calendar date – 20 May – which we may tentatively interpret as an intentional direction to the community as to when the text was to be recited.¹⁸³⁴ This interpretation is

¹⁸³⁰ The version of the *Capture of Jerusalem* in Sinai Arabic 428 was compiled with writings of Ephraem, Isaac the Syrian, Makarios, Anastasios of Sinai, Epiphanius of Salamis, John Chrysostom and *Lives of John the Almsgiver, Serapion and Arethas*. In Sinai Arabic 520 the text appears alongside, *Questions of Michael* the Patriarch of Nikaia, the *Passion of the Maccabees*, *Lives of John Chrysostom, Victor and Stephen, St Epimachos and Kosmas and Damian*. These passages have not been published or identified. This is a reflection of the limited attention given to the organisation and compilation of individual codices. The possibility that text selections may have been chosen to convey specific themes or ideas has not been widely explored in terms of Melkite literary production or book making.

¹⁸³¹ I would also add Sinai Arabic 428 to this. The opening statement of Sinai Arabic 428 fol. 438r begins, 'In the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. This is the sermon (rendered as *قوله*) of the monk Abba Eustratios, a holy man who lived in the monastery of blessed Mar Saba...' It is not, however, repeated in Arabic Sinai 520. The earliest Georgian version preserves a similar statement 'The word of the Monk Strategios who lived in the Holy Laura of our Father Sabas', see *La Prise de Jerusalem Par les Perses AD 614*: 1-3. The texts of Arabic Sinai 428 and 520 later go on to themselves as *مصحف*; *Capture of Jerusalem* (version A): 1.1 (ed. Garitte 1973), *Capture of Jerusalem* (version B): 1.1 (ed. Garitte 1973).

¹⁸³² See notes 1830-1831 above.

¹⁸³³ *La Prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614*: 1 (ed. Garitte 1960, tr. Garitte 1960).

¹⁸³⁴ The date is missing from Sinai Arabic 428 and 520. It is preserved in the heading of the Georgian version edited in *La Prise de Jerusalem par Les Perses*. It is unclear as to why it is missing in the Arabic versions. I would tentatively suggest, however, in the context of the *Capture's* translation into Georgian, alongside other prominent texts (such as the liturgical calendar in Sinai Georgian 34), would imply that the *Capture* was part of a much broader process aimed at introducing Palestinian liturgical custom into Georgian practice. The date

reinforced when this date is correlated with the calendar listings of the Sinai *Georgian Menaion*, as we have seen a product of the same century and context as the earliest *Capture* narratives, where the date corresponds to the feast observing the sack of Jerusalem and the capture of the True Cross.¹⁸³⁵ By the tenth century, this feast appears to have been observed between the 17 and 20 May and formed part of the stational liturgy of Jerusalem with a *synaxis* in the Church of the Anastasis.¹⁸³⁶

Further indications that the Strategios' narration of the siege was defined by a liturgical structure emerge when the main episodes of the story are correlated with the guidelines for the Feast of the Burning of Jerusalem proscribed by the Jerusalem Lectionary on 17 May. Here, the Lectionary requires the reciting of Psalm 50.20, followed by the *stichos*, Psalm 50.1. Following the reading (2 Tim 1.16-2.15), the the Lectionary proscribes Psalm 136 in the second mode and concludes with a reading of Luke 22:20-36 probably as a prelude to the Eucharist. A series of petitions in the *Capture* narrative, which evoke liturgical *ektenia*, also point to the highly liturgical sentiment of the text. When superimposed on the Strategios' narrative, this formula of readings conforms to the scriptural allusions which accompany the major narrative events of the siege as shows in the following chart (Fig. 2.20).

appending the Georgian versions may well be interpreted as a direction as to its liturgical use in relation to the annual festal cycle.

¹⁸³⁵ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 20 May (ed. Garitte 1958: 67).

¹⁸³⁶ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 17 May, 20 May (ed. Garitte 1958: 67).

Fig. 2.20 Chart of the liturgical readings proscribed in the Jerusalem Lectionary for the 17 May and compared to Strategios' Capture of Jerusalem (Version B). Below are a series of petitions from Strategios' Capture which evoke the structure of ektenia.

Liturgical Structure
Jerusalem Lectionary
Feast of the Burning of Jerusalem 17 May

Oechos I: Psalm 50. 20

*Be favourable and gracious unto Sion:
build Thou the walls of Jerusalem*

Stichos: Psalm 50. 1

*God, have mercy upon me, according to
thine heartfelt mercifulness.*

Alleluia

Psalm 136. 5

*If I forget you Jerusalem let my right
hand forget its skill...*

Chapter 9

O Lord! Do not forsake us!
O Lord! Do not hand over believers into enemy hands!
O Lord! Look upon us attentively and have mercy upon us!

Chapter 13

Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy on your city!
O Lord! Have mercy on your altar!
O Lord of us! Have mercy on your holy sanctuary!
O Lord! Guard over us and do not sleep!
O Lord! Attack your enemies that rejoice in the destruction of your holy city and altars...

Chapter 18

Remember, O Lord, of the devastation of the churches.
Remember, O Lord, the devastation of Sion.
Remember, O Lord, what is being done to the cross of your might.
Remember, O Lord your holy Church of the Anastasis.

Strategios, Capture of Jerusalem
Sinai Arabic 520 (10th Century)
Scriptural citations in relation to the narrative
structure

**Chapter 1: Opening of narrative: Psalm
50.17**

*Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord: and my mouth
shall show Thy praise*

**Chapter 18: Zachariah's Sermon
Psalm, 136: 1-5**

*By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down
and wept, when we remembered Zion. If I
forget you Jerusalem let my right hand forget
its skill...*

**Chapter 22: The Letter of Zachariah, Psalm
136: 1-5**

*By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down
and wept, when we remembered Zion. If I
forget you Jerusalem let my right hand forget
its skill...*

The strong influence of the Book of Jeremiah on the characterisation and response of the Patriarch to the Sassanian siege has been compellingly observed by Robert Wilken.¹⁸³⁷ But there are further examples in the Strategios' account which also point to the importance of biblical formulas in the precise narrative events of the siege routinely cited as 'historical'. Although the Sassanian siege of the city walls, followed by the sack of the city (including the burning of the city, the capture and ransoming of its civilians and focus on Jerusalem and its churches) and destruction of the Sepulchre-Anastasis complex are all conceivable developments of the 614 siege, all also have precedents in biblical narratives concerning the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem recounted in the books of Jeremiah, Chronicles, Kings and Ezra.¹⁸³⁸ Furthermore, the description of destruction of several of the key topographical features of Jerusalem, which underpin several recent archaeological assessments of the city, is questionable. For one, the destruction described in the text is not identical in all versions; descriptions of the city appear to have been supplemented and omitted according to the changing context of redactions made from the Arabic versions between the tenth to fourteenth centuries and a similar process is apparent in the corresponding Georgian traditions.¹⁸³⁹ Moreover, although features such as cisterns, fosses, the praetorium and the marketplace are conceivable elements of the Byzantine city, these features, like the narrative of the Sassanian siege, all have precedent in existing biblical descriptions of the urban topography of Jerusalem.¹⁸⁴⁰

At the very least, Strategios is self-consciously aware of the biblical model of Jeremiah in description of the siege of Jerusalem in 614. That Strategios' narrative provides a workable portrait of Jerusalem following 614 is a debatable issue – and also a discussion

¹⁸³⁷ See Wilken 1992: 21-224 and Wilken 1999.

¹⁸³⁸ Compare *Capture A*: III. 1-6, *Capture A*: VIII. 5-7, *Capture A*: VII-IX; *Capture A*: VIII, 17 and *Capture A*: X (ed. and tr. Garitte 1973) with Isa. 29.3; 2Kings 25.1, 2Kings 24.13, 2Chr. 36.19, Jer. 39.8, Jer. 24.1 and 2Kings 24.14-7..

¹⁸³⁹ *Capture A*: XXII, *Capture B*: XXIII (ed. and tr. Garitte 1973), *La Prise de Jerusalem*: XXIII (ed. Garitte 1960).

¹⁸⁴⁰ See 2Kings 25.4, 2Chr 32.5, 2Chr 26.9, Jer. 52.7, Jer. 38.7, 2Chr 26.10, Jn 5.2, 2Chr 33.14 and Mk 15.16.

which requires separate deliberation – but one where archaeology is presently of limited value. The uninterrupted occupation of the city has truncated the stratigraphy of this period and inhibits more intrusive – and extensive – interventions to its archaeological underpinnings.¹⁸⁴¹ The redevelopment of sites, either in the period of the Latin kingdom or more recent appropriation by Christian communities in the twentieth century, further contributes to the general obscurity in contemporary understanding of the urban layout of the city by the seventh century. Where more extensive excavations have been possible, as with sections of the Nea church dedicated by Justinian, the influence of Strategios’ narrative in determining site chronologies – thus supporting widespread devastation in the city in c.614 has been seriously challenged.¹⁸⁴² The appearance of several of these churches in later sources contradicts the premise that such churches were completely destroyed. Even accepting that the *Capture* contains a workable historical core, the majority of churches listed by in the text were arguably only damaged in the 614 siege and continued to function for the remainder of the seventh century. In archaeological terms, there is also considerable room for doubt in the context of the Mamilla grave.¹⁸⁴³ The assertion that the remains in the charnel pit represent a single depositional phase is not assured (or discussed in the publication) and the identification for the interred remains as Christian, based on the presence of scarring caused by tuberculosis, is, to put it mildly, problematic.¹⁸⁴⁴ Modern epidemiological research

¹⁸⁴¹ This is true in cases such as the Church of the Eleona, The Probatica and the Sepulchre/ Anastasis where Crusader remodelling or 19th century constructions inhibited archaeological investigations. See Pringle 2007: 5-27 and 389-397 for overviews of the Crusader reconstruction of the two churches.

¹⁸⁴² This, however, has been more recently challenged by Gutfeld 2012: 141-250 who has argued that the material produced from the Nea church shows no indication of destruction in this period.

¹⁸⁴³ Nagar, Taitz and Reich 1999.

¹⁸⁴⁴ The presence of coins dating to c.610 may indicate that the final phase occurred in the early seventh-century. However, there is no indication that all of the skeletons interred were deposited in one phase. Furthermore, the attribution of the burials to the Sassanian massacre is based primarily on the perceived gender and age of the skeletons (apparently mostly women and children) which correlate with the narrative of Strategios where the Jews target women and children. However, closer inspection of the excavation report reveals that no complete skeletons were recovered during the excavation and, by the admission of the post-excavation analysts, were not always sufficient to confirm a gender or age for many of the specimens (this is especially the case in the absence of skulls and pelvic bones). The identification of the interred as Christians, based on Tuberculosis scarring, derives from a series of studies conducted by Maurice Fishberg in New York in the late 19th and early 20th century. The assumption that the socio-economic conditions for Jews in 7th century Jerusalem and 20th century

has identified no strong correlation between biological ethnicity and the transmission of tuberculosis; chartable ethnic distinctions between the Palestinian Jewish and Palestinian Christian populations cannot be discerned in this period; and the study upon which these assessments based, a nineteenth-century report focussed on New York, has been universally discredited by modern medical research. Furthermore, the explanation that the inscription ‘God knows their names’, which accompanies the charnel pit, can be considerable reflective of a ‘crisis burial’, in response to the Sassanid massacre, is doubtful; inscriptions of this nature are abundant from earlier and more peaceful periods and are not necessarily indicative of catastrophic circumstances or post-conflict burial.¹⁸⁴⁵

In any case, to attempt to extract empirical archaeological information from these descriptions which can be cross-referenced and corroborated with archaeological material, risks imposing a reading and a context upon a source whose principal intent contradicts the basic tenets of this approach. The theological exclamations of Zachariah, which are often overlooked in modern analytical approaches, are informative in this regard; pointing to a permeating ideological thread, which prioritises the salvatory rather than historical significance of this siege. The importance of ritualised lamentation, a feature of the work fully noted by Robert Wilken, denotes the status of Strategios’ work framed by the motivation to locate and understand the sack of Jerusalem in the context of the dialogue between humanity and the divine; an attempt to identify the reasons which contributed to a devastating ideological defeat; and as a text which centres on the theme of chastisement and spiritual purification.¹⁸⁴⁶ The literary parallelism between biblical and contemporary experience in the text provides an example of how this is achieved. By stressing the

New York are comparable is suspect. In addition, Fishberg's findings, which advocated Jewish immunity to the disease, must be seen from the context of his broader background as an advocate for Semitic racial equality in opposition to more prevalent 19th century ideas of eugenics and notions of European racial supremacy.

¹⁸⁴⁵ See for example the ‘Bird chapel’ in Stone 2002:212 and the Church of the Bishop Sergios, Kastron Mefa’a: Piccirillo 1994h: 265, inscription 24.

¹⁸⁴⁶ Wilken 1992: 218-224 and Wilken 1999.

similitude between the Israelite and Christian experience, the Strategios narrative places the Sassanian siege in a broader framework which promises eventual restoration.¹⁸⁴⁷

The explanation of the siege as a retribution for Christian sin represents one manifestation of this response and it is a recurrent feature which resonates in other literature emerging in connection the Sassanian conquest. The theme of divine reprisal pervades the *Life of George of Choziba* and the *Epistle of Antiochos Monachos* which both identify Christian sin as the core reason behind the Sassanian military successes and the centrality of orthodoxy in enduring its effects.¹⁸⁴⁸ In Antiochos' Monachos ensuing *Pandektos* –which accompany his *Epistle* – it is evident from its content and structure that the work was born out of wider social and theological preoccupations which placed increasing attention upon correct belief and conformity to modes of approved practice within the entire Christian community.¹⁸⁴⁹

The development of this response following the Sassanian occupation is, however, rather obscure. Whilst the sources of the *Life of George of Choziba*, the *Epistle of Antiochos of Mar Sabas* and, to a lesser extent, the *Life of Anastasios the Persian* imply a fairly rapid emergence of cults and works associated with the period c.614-c.628, critical scrutiny of these sources remains sporadic and has, on the whole, sidestepped issues of dating and transmission. Only one of these sources, the *Life of Anastasios the Persian*, has been subjected to thorough appraisal in a comprehensive study by Bernard Flusin and a shorter, but more sceptical, review by Paul Speck.¹⁸⁵⁰ The *Life*, in its current form, is largely a product of tenth-century reworking but an earlier version of the work (now lost) was

¹⁸⁴⁷ For further bibliography see 1846.

¹⁸⁴⁸ *Life of George of Choziba* (ed. House 1888:95-144, tr. Vivian and Athanassakis 1994). Antiochos of Mar Saba, *Letter to Eustathios*, PG 89, 1424-1428.

¹⁸⁴⁹ Antiochos Monachos, *Pandektos*, PG 89: 1420-1849. No critical edition of this work exists to date. The version preserved in the Migne corpus derives from MS Barocci 32, dated to the fifteenth century and Paris suppl. 1389, dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The earliest surviving copy in Greek, St Sabas 76, which is incomplete (it contains homilies 17-130) is dated to the tenth century. For the Slavonic tradition: Popovski 1989. Beyond a short article published by Mayerson 1984:216-223 there has been no serious engagement with this text.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Flusin 1992, Speck 1997b: 180-226.

available to Bede the 730s and Anastasios is listed among the commemorations of Bede's martyrology and the later ninth century martyrologies of Rabanus Marus and Usuard of St. Germain.¹⁸⁵¹ The remaining material is less secure. This is frustrating, given that it is the two lives of George of Choziba and Antiochos of Mar Saba which provide the closest view of monastic life during the Sassanian interim 614-628. The *Life of George of Choziba* survives in a single copy, dated to the late tenth or eleventh century, as part of a compilation of Palestinian saints' lives in a codex – Paris Gr. Coislin 303 – where examples of redaction have already been identified in recent decades.¹⁸⁵² Whilst this is not sufficient to disqualify the value of the *Life*, the lack of supporting material to confirm a date for the text earlier than the tenth century, is a factor which requires, but has yet to receive, more detailed critical engagement.

This is primarily because the use of non-literary material (predominantly archaeology) to support a contemporary date and Palestinian origin for the *Life* has conferred an inordinate degree of retrospective importance upon the text, and modern scholars have attempted to demonstrate of the prevalence the cult of George of Choziba in Palestinian monastic circles by the late seventh century. David Olster's proposal that the cult was created to attract pilgrims to Choziba has generated much support in this regard, alongside his concurrent argument that its creation represents an attempt to regenerate the community's patronage base following a period of Sassanid destruction.¹⁸⁵³ There are, however, some problems with Olster's approach. As has been discussed above, archaeological evidence for widespread or systematic destruction of pilgrimage sites – and collapse of patronage networks – during this period is tenuous and in the case of Choziba, where the current nineteenth-century monastery

¹⁸⁵¹ Rabanus Maurus *Martyrologium* 22 January, (ed. McCulloch, 1978).

¹⁸⁵² See the study and translation of *the Life of Elias of Heliopolis* in McGrath 2003 for a further example of a text which may have been rewritten or produced in a period much later than the narrative account.

¹⁸⁵³ Olster 1993.

inhibits invasive archaeological research, extremely difficult to confirm.¹⁸⁵⁴ Beyond identifying the continuation of the site into the twelfth century, very little can be said of its occupational sequences in archaeological terms.¹⁸⁵⁵

The supplementary material which underpins the perceived significance of the cult to a broader Melkite audience is also questionable. A wall painting at the monastic site of Khirbat-Mird/Kastellion – part of a larger scheme depicting around thirty-six monastic figures – identified by Andreas Evaristus Mader as George of Choziba in 1912 is commonly enlisted to endorse this claim but does not, on closer inspection, confirm a seventh-century date for the text or cult.¹⁸⁵⁶ Firstly, the dating of the scheme to the Byzantine-Early Islamic period are uncertain, with scholars vacillating between an eighth and post-eleventh century date for these schemes.¹⁸⁵⁷ The date cannot be confirmed by stylistic parallels – the paintings were heavily restored when the Sabaite community reoccupied the site in the early twentieth century – and the scheme is no longer preserved. Observations by modern scholars on a series of early photographs from the expedition by Mader have tentatively suggested a post-eleventh century date for these images, a dating which would correlate well with similar executions of fresco schemes at other sites in this period and a date which Mader himself also proposed.¹⁸⁵⁸ Secondly, there are no inscriptions to explicitly confirm the identities of the

¹⁸⁵⁴ The archaeological investigations at the site have been limited surveys of the surrounding caves. There has been no excavation on the main site of Choziba and thus we have little understanding of its material phases in the Byzantine or Early Islamic period. For the discussion of the survey see Patrich 1990.

¹⁸⁵⁵ The restoration of the monastery in the mid-twelfth century is suggested by a dated Arabic inscription which identifies two brothers as the donors: Pringle 1993: 183-186.

¹⁸⁵⁶ See Mader 1977: 27-58, 92-212.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Mader 1937: 208-211 hesitated to date them to the early period, preferring a post-11th century date. This was supported by Kühnel 1984: 88, n.50. Patrich 1995: 143-145 rejects this hypothesis and argues that they date from the eighth century based on a broader context of iconophile support for wall paintings by John of Damascus and Theodore Abū Qurrah and the apparent lack of archaeological material or architecture which confirms activity at the site during the 11th century. However, the site was extensively cleaned by monks during the 1920s in an attempt to reoccupy the monastery. The excavation report, which is not sufficiently stratified or published, does not clarify this issue see Milik 1961.

¹⁸⁵⁸ Kühnel 1988: 90, n.50 who has placed it in a broader context of other wall painting schemes dated to this period.

saints portrayed.¹⁸⁵⁹ Lastly, the spatial context of the images, positioned above a series of stone coffins, suggests that they are more plausibly seen as depictions of prominent members of the community interred within the cave-tomb.¹⁸⁶⁰

These misgivings about an early awareness of the cult are compounded by the relative paucity of evidence for its existence in Melkite-Arabic literary contexts – a silence not reflected among the other texts associated with the period where Strategios' *Capture*, the *Life of John the Almsgiver*, the *Life of Anastasios the Persian* and the *Pandects of Antiochos Monachos* all have corresponding Arabic traditions or are listed as feasts in the surviving festal calendars.¹⁸⁶¹ The *Life*, or related literature about George of Choziba, does not emerge in any of the known archives of Melkite literary writings (or translations) – a feature which is not shared by the protagonists of Cyril of Scythopolis or John the Almsgiver where multiple copies are known – and it is not listed in the surviving *synaxaria* or *menologia* of the period. In contrast, both the *Jerusalem Lectionary* and *Sinai Georgian Menaion*, transmitted in Sinai Georgian 34, associate the Monastery of Choziba with the Nativity of the Virgin and provide the only evidence for a wider cultic awareness of the monastery prior to the emergence of the *Life of George of Choziba* in the tenth/eleventh century Paris Coislin 303.¹⁸⁶²

Contextual details within the *Life* may, however, assist in securing a seventh-century date for the text despite the limitations of the manuscript tradition and the lack of any known cult of the saint. Derek Kruger's recent work has sought to set the *Life* in a broader context of seventh-century hagiographical writings which feature Mary as the guardian of monastic

¹⁸⁵⁹ Mader 1937. Although there are inscriptions accompanying the paintings, several give only the first name (e.g. John, George and Martyrios) and therefore cannot be explicitly identified with the hagiographical figures known through hagiography.

¹⁸⁶⁰ For a discussion see Patrich 1995: 143 and Mader 1937. The tombs were placed and sealed beneath a simple mosaic floor comprised of white tesserae. The presence of Arabic, Syriac and Greek inscriptions, which have never been published, suggest that it was a place of pilgrimage or veneration see Patrich 1995: 143.

¹⁸⁶¹ *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)*: 11, 12, 30 November (ed. Garitte 1958: 103, 107).

¹⁸⁶² The feast, commemorating the Nativity of the Virgin is listed in the *Sinai Georgian Menaion (Sinai Georgian 34)* is listed under January 16- January 18 (ed. Garitte 1958: 45).

thresholds.¹⁸⁶³ This remains plausible, although suggestions by the editors that several of these miracle accounts are interpolations underscores the possibility that the present text, if not a tenth or eleventh century product, was overwritten in later redactions.¹⁸⁶⁴ The traditional seventh-century dating of the text is far from secure, and there is no evidence the cult itself formed an integral part of the Melkite devotional consciousness regarding the Sassanian siege.

We may conclude, however, that the *Life* presents very little material to support the Sassanian devastation theory in which it is often enlisted. Indeed, the temporary abandonment of the monastery by the monks around 614 was, according to the *Life*, provoked by raids of nomadic Arab groups and thus reflects the general insecurities which ensued following the breakdown of Byzantine control rather than systemic Sassanian hostility (which make only a fleeting appearance in the *Life*). The details of the *Life* do not furnish particular details of this event, although the killing of several monks in the monastery by the Arab raiders indicates that such events did not occur without loss.¹⁸⁶⁵ However, the issues with the key sources for the Sassanian siege of 614, which have been outlined above, do imply that a more considered analysis of each text is necessary in order to achieve a more nuanced assessment of the impact of Sassanian occupation of Palestine's monastic population.

¹⁸⁶³ Krueger 2011.

¹⁸⁶⁴ See the accompanying comments in the translations of *Athanasakis* and *Vivian* 1994.

¹⁸⁶⁵ *Life of George of Choziba*: 31 (ed. House 1888, tr. Vivian and Athanasakis 1994).

APPENDIX C

DONOR PORTRAITS AND PORTRAITURE

There is, to date, no systematic synthetic study of donor conventions in churches in the regions which formerly constituted Palaestina Prima, Secunda, Tertia and Arabia, although the collective evidence for donor portraiture in churches in the Transjordan was recently surveyed in a study by Lihi Habas.¹⁸⁶⁶ This brief discussion will not attempt a synthesis of the material but will outline a number of key case studies – Kastron Mefa'a, Khirbet el-Mukhayyat and Jarash – which stress the flaws of approaches which correlate rates of church construction or abandonment with demographic fluctuation.

Alternatively, the commemoration of local notables and elite family units in the dedicatory inscriptions of these buildings proposes that the construction of churches represented a more conventional medium of elite display which did not necessarily respond to actual demands of corporate worship.

Our evidence for the incorporation of donor portraits into the decorative programmes of Palestinian churches derives primarily from church schemes which fall broadly within the boundaries of modern Jordan.¹⁸⁶⁷ There are possible exceptions to this distribution, accepting Hugh Kennedy's recent reinterpretation of the 'Kyria Silthous' portrait in the Hagios Elias Church of Kissifum, but the pattern holds true of the broader corpus.¹⁸⁶⁸ This regional distribution may prove an interpretive rather than data-driven position, given that the surviving portraits are consigned only to the medium of mosaic – more specifically floor schemes – which often represent the only surviving component of decorative programmes in Palestinian churches dating to the Byzantine or Umayyad periods. There are no ways of

¹⁸⁶⁶ Habas 2008.

¹⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Habas surveys the sites where donor portraiture is currently known.

¹⁸⁶⁸ Kennedy 2010: 186. The original discussion of the mosaic appears in Cohen 1993.

confirming the concurrent existence of portraits executed on walls or apse schemes (whether mosaic or fresco) in a form known from other contemporary churches outside of the region (as with the churches of SS Cosmas and Damianus in Rome and Hagios Demetrios in Thessaloniki), although trace survivals of plaster painted with inscriptions and figurative schemes in the churches of the Negev and Kastron Mefa'a suggests that their former existence is highly plausible (Fig. C.1-C.2).¹⁸⁶⁹

Explanations for the apparent clustering of churches in the Transjordan with surviving donor portraits is, at present, also visibly lacking, although are likely linked to the fact that the majority of churches which depict donor portraits are later sixth-century constructions and conform to the increasing preference for highly animated mosaic schemes in the later sixth and seventh centuries.¹⁸⁷⁰ This period is, as we have seen, also one where patterns of rural expansion and church building are more overt for the Transjordan than in the regions now encompassed by the territories of modern Israel and the Palestinian territories.¹⁸⁷¹ The presence of similar donor portraits in the church of Kissufim, which may be assigned to the later-sixth century, provides some indication that this clustering may not reflect particular regional traditions of church decoration but more general rhythms of settlement distribution and expansion.¹⁸⁷² An overview of the churches with known examples of donor portraiture would support this hypothesis. The Church of the Bishop Isaiah of Jarash is dated by inscription to 559 and is paralleled in the city by a similar series of portraits in the Church of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos (dated 533) where representations of the

¹⁸⁶⁹ Fragmentary examples of human portraiture in fresco schemes are known from the Church of the Priest Wa'il in Kastron Mefa'a and from the North Church in Rehovot-in-the-Negev. For a discussion of the Church of the Priest Wa'il see Piccirillo 1993b. Tsafir 1988a: 65 reproduces an image of the fresco fragment which depicts a human face. Other cases are reported in early excavation reports but the schemes have long since been destroyed. Avraham Negev reports of the existence of a scheme featuring haloed figures at the Martyrion of Hagios Theodoros at Avdat/Oboda which no longer survives: Negev 1997: 132. On the donor portraits of Hagios Demetrios see Brubaker 2004 and Brubaker 2013 for further discussion of donor and family portraits.

¹⁸⁷⁰ Hachlili 2008: 111-147.

¹⁸⁷¹ As discussed in De Vries 200 and Walmsley 2005. The epigraphic evidence presented in Di Segni 1999b confirms a similar pattern.

¹⁸⁷² The dedicatory inscription of the monastic church of Hagios Elias dates the mosaics scheme to 576, see Cohen 1993: 277.



Fig.C.1 (above) Rome, SS Cosmas and Damianus, apse scheme.
© Reynolds 2011



Fig.C.2 (left) Thessaloniki, Hagios Demetrios donor portrait.
©Reynolds 2010

paramonarios Theodore and his wife Georgia appear in two separate panels in front of the church bema (Fig.C.3-C.4).¹⁸⁷³

The general pattern is also replicated further south in the churches of the Madaba plateau; notably among those of Kastron Mefa'a where the dates of the schemes at the Hagios Sergios and Stephanos complex (587 and 718 respectively) all conform to this broader chronological timeframe.¹⁸⁷⁴

Before we proceed with further discussion, it is necessary to outline a number of broad characteristics which are shared among the churches with known examples of donor portraits. Firstly, with the exception of Jarash, these churches were predominantly founded in rural contexts and often, as in the case of Jarash and Kastron Mefa'a, in settlements which already possessed large numbers of churches or during periods of rapid church construction. The Bishop Isaiah church of Gerasa, constructed in 559, was founded following a period of intense church building in the city during the sixth-century, which included the Prokopios Church (526/7), the Church of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos (533), the Church of John the Baptist (531), Hagios Giorgos (529), the Synagogue Church (530/1) and the Church of Hagios Petros and Paulos (540).¹⁸⁷⁵ Those of Kastron Mefa'a and Madaba exhibit a similar concentration during the episcopates of the Bishops Sergios and Leontios (570s-610s) and mirror a surge in activity in the rural settlements of Rihab and Khirbet es-Samra which also span the late-sixth and early-seventh centuries.¹⁸⁷⁶ There are no indications that these bursts of construction responded to broader demographic pressures, although the distinct lack of

¹⁸⁷³ On the Church of the Bishop Isaiah see Bowsher 1986: 319-322. The Church of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos is discussed in Crowfoot 1938: 446-448.

¹⁸⁷⁴ The inscriptions of both churches are reproduced and translated in Piccirillo 1994h.

¹⁸⁷⁵ All of these churches are discussed in Crowfoot 1938: 171-250.

¹⁸⁷⁶ The dated churches of Kastron Mefa'a are: the Church of the Bishop Sergios (dated 587); the Church of Hagios Stephanos (dated 718), the Church of Hagios Paulos (576 or 595/96), the Church of the Lions (574 or 589); and the Church of the Priest Wa'il (586). A discussion of the mosaics in the Churches of Hagios Sergios and Stephanos is offered in Piccirillo 1994c: 122-164. The Church of Hagios Paulos is discussed in Piccirillo 1997: 375-394. For the Church of the Lions and the Church of the Priest Wa'il see Piccirillo 1992 and Piccirillo 1993b respectively.



Fig. C. 3 (Above) Jarash, Church of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos, portrait of Theodoros the *paramonarios* (left) and his wife Georgia (right).
©Reynolds 2010.

Fig. C. 4 (Below) Jarash, Church of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos, detail of the portrait of Theodoros the *paramonarios*.
©Adam 2011.



further excavation beyond church structures in Kastron Mefa'a and Rihab makes the rate of church construction extremely difficult to contextualise with respect to other settlement processes.¹⁸⁷⁷

The second characteristic is that the churches with known examples of donor portraiture were founded and maintained by individual family groups or close networks of prominent rural figures. The Church of Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa'a, by way of example, owed its existence to a network of family units, which included the family of the archon: many of which are portrayed in the *tabula ansata* panels of the nave and north aisle (Fig. C.5-C.6).¹⁸⁷⁸ The donor portraits of Hagios Stephanos, and their earlier equivalents in Kastron Mefa'a and Jarash, effectively visualise sentiments and family relationships that were more commonly expressed through epigraphic forms; to which we will now turn.

The Church of Horvat Hesheq and the Church of the Bishop Isaiah at Gerasa/Jarash provide two examples of smaller churches that appear to have been commissioned by single patron families. The dedicatory inscription of the Bishop Isaiah Church (559) commemorates its construction and its decoration by Beroios and his wife Eulampia for their salvation and that of their children.¹⁸⁷⁹ A further inscription, in the floor of the south chapel, also commemorates the construction of the church in memory of Eulampia's father, Ioannes, and her deceased son Eugenios (Fig.C.7).

¹⁸⁷⁷ See note above which represents the main thrust of excavation strategies to the settlement of Kastron Mefa'a. No further excavations, aimed at exploring the general nature of settlement in the town, have yet been undertaken.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Piccirillo 1994h: 244-246, 248.

¹⁸⁷⁹ See Bowsher 1986: 319-321.



Fig. C.5 Kastri Mefia, Church of Hagios Stephanos (facing east). The donor portraits are visible in the panel in front of the bema and alternate with representations of fruit trees.
©Reynolds 2012.



Fig.C.6 Kastri Mefia, Church of Hagios Stephanos (facing east). Donor portraits in the north aisle. The base of the chancel screen can be seen to the right of the image.
©Reynolds 2012.

Fig. C.7 Dedicatory inscription in the south chapel of the Bishop Isaiah Church.¹⁸⁸⁰

Εκ προσφοράς Εὐλαμ<ι>πιας λαμ(προτατη) υπέρ μηνήμης Ἰωαννοῦ πατρός και Εὐγενίου <υ>ιου
μακαριωτατων

Out of the offering of the most illustrious Eulampia in memory of her blessed father Ioannes and her son
Eugenios

The formula of the inscription is not unique, but reflects a common theme where the construction or refurbishment of churches was associated with petitions for salvation or as *ex voto* dedications on behalf of donors and family members (whether living or deceased).¹⁸⁸¹

The Church of Hagios Giorgos at Horvat Hesheq reflects a similar use of church benefaction as a vehicle through which such petitions were articulated.¹⁸⁸² A series of inscriptions in the church dated either to 519 or the 530s makes explicit the association of the church with the family of Demetrios the deacon and his son George, as well as his deceased father, Somas, and two children who had died prior to the dedication of the church.¹⁸⁸³

Like the Church of the Bishop Isaiah, the inscriptions of Hagios Giorgos represent the increasing role of church construction as a primary vehicle for the expression of elite euergetism within Palestinian urban and rural settlements by the sixth century. This transition was marked by more general shifts in urban usage and elite investment within Palestinian urban centres which saw diminishing investment in the traditional late Roman civic core and a growing emphasis on the construction of churches and commercial structures. These general processes have been well noted (both within Palestine and other regions of the Late

¹⁸⁸⁰ Transcription and translation reproduced from Bowsher 1986.

¹⁸⁸¹ On the use of portraits as *ex voto* images in Byzantium see Brubaker 2004 and the discussion of similar practices in the medieval west in West 2004: 59-62. Similar examples from Palestine where church dedications invoke intercession may be observed at Khirbet el-Beiyûdât and the Church of Hagios Varos. This provides two further example of a common trend which has yet to be fully appraised on a regional level. On Khirbet el-Beiyûdât see Di Segni 1993c: 164. On Hagios Varos see Najjar and Sa'îd 1994: 552.

¹⁸⁸² The Church of Horvat Hesheq is discussed in Aviam 1990: 351-378 and Aviam 1993: 54-65.

¹⁸⁸³ Di Segni 1993a: 66-70.

Antique world) and require little additional clarification.¹⁸⁸⁴ But the urban centre of Jarash provides a useful case study of the broader changes to urban investment and elite patronage, which had occurred by the sixth century, in the context of the present discussion. Both churches, linked to prominent urban families, were constructed in a period also characterised by the abandonment or reuse of pre-existing late Roman structures. Excavations at the North Theatre and the *temenos* area of the Artemis Temple, by way of example, have identified the subsequent reuse of the sites as centres for ceramic production by the sixth century and provide two examples of the shifting uses of urban space which have been observed in other urban contexts.¹⁸⁸⁵

The material and spatial properties of church dedicatory inscriptions offer further confirmation of the use of church construction as a platform for the projection of elite status. The location of such inscriptions in highly visible spatial contexts, in the chancel space or before the bema, would suggest that dedicatory inscriptions, and the donor portraits that occasionally accompanied them, functioned to promote the status of the donors in the most public and active components of liturgical space.¹⁸⁸⁶ No systematic regional studies of these arrangements currently exist, but, as in the cases of the churches of Hagios Giorgos of Rihab or Hagios Giorgos of Horvat Hesheq, the positioning of dedicatory panels before the bema, altar tables or the main entrance to the church, provide some indications of the conscious positioning of inscriptions aimed at drawing attention to the identities of the donors and their

¹⁸⁸⁴ For the Levant see the classic study in Kennedy 1985 and the recent update in Avni 2011b.

¹⁸⁸⁵ Schaefer and Falkner 1986.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Regarding the churches with donor portraits, the inscriptions which mention the names of the donors are commonly found before the bema or in a prominent location of the main nave. The dedicatory panels of the Church of Hagios Stephanos and the accompanying portraits are located before the bema: see Piccirillo 1994h. This pattern is also mirrored in the church of the Priest Wa'il and in the Church of Hagios Paulos, see Piccirillo 1993b and Piccirillo 1997: 383 respectively. Outside of Kastron Mefa'a the pattern is also visible in the Church of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos and the Church of the Bishop Isaiah where dedicatory panels are all placed before the bema or in front of the screen of side chapels: see Bowsher 1986, Clark 1986 and Crowfoot 1938: 446-448.

association with the church building.¹⁸⁸⁷ This was often reinforced by the visual properties and decorative framing of the inscriptions themselves. The adoption of the *Tabula Ansata* motif present in the churches of Horvat Hesheq, Hagios Giorgos in Rihab (Fig. C.8-C.9) and a number of others – including Herodion, Kissufim and Khirbet el-Beiyûdât – offer examples of the conscious exploitation of established decorative motifs and ways of framing dedicatory messages as a means of legitimising the statements of the donors.¹⁸⁸⁸ The use of the *Tabula Ansata*, a motif which maintained long associations with expressions of elite votive offerings and legal recognition, offers one example of how established Roman modes of elite expression were translated for increasingly Christianised architectural and patronal contexts by the sixth century.¹⁸⁸⁹

Interlinked with their role as instruments of promoting prestige, the emphasis of such inscriptions on family relationships indicates that the action of church building and decoration also functioned as a means through which the social ideals and integrity of the individual and the family structure could be negotiated and expressed. The dedications of Horvat Hesheq, the parallel examples in the basilica of Mount Nebo and the Church of Hagios Giorgos in Khirbat el-Mukahayyat, offer three examples which invoke both the primary (adult) donor and their children and deceased relatives.¹⁸⁹⁰ The centralised panel in the Church of the Theotokos of Madaba (767), and that of Hagios Prokopios and Lot in Khirbat el-Mukhayyat (557), provide further cases of collective and familial patronage of churches where requests for salvation or divine munificence are explicit in their dedications

¹⁸⁸⁷ For the Hagios Giorgos church of Horvat Hesheq see Aviam 1990, Aviam 1993 and Di Segni 1993a. Very little information about the Hagios Giorgos is published. For an important re-dating of the scheme see Blumell and Cianca 2008.

¹⁸⁸⁸ Meyer 2004: 21-120 explores the long association of the *tabula* motif with pre-Christian votive and legal practices. On Herodion see Netzer, Birger-Calderon and Feller 1993: 222-223. On Kissufim see Cohen 1993. On Khirbet el-Beiyûdât see Di Segni 1993c and Hizmi 1993.

¹⁸⁸⁹ Meyer 2004: 21-120.

¹⁸⁹⁰ The dedications of Horvat Hesheq are discussed in Di Segni 1993a. The inscriptions of Mount Nebo and Khirbat el-Mukahayyat are reproduced in Di Segni 1998.

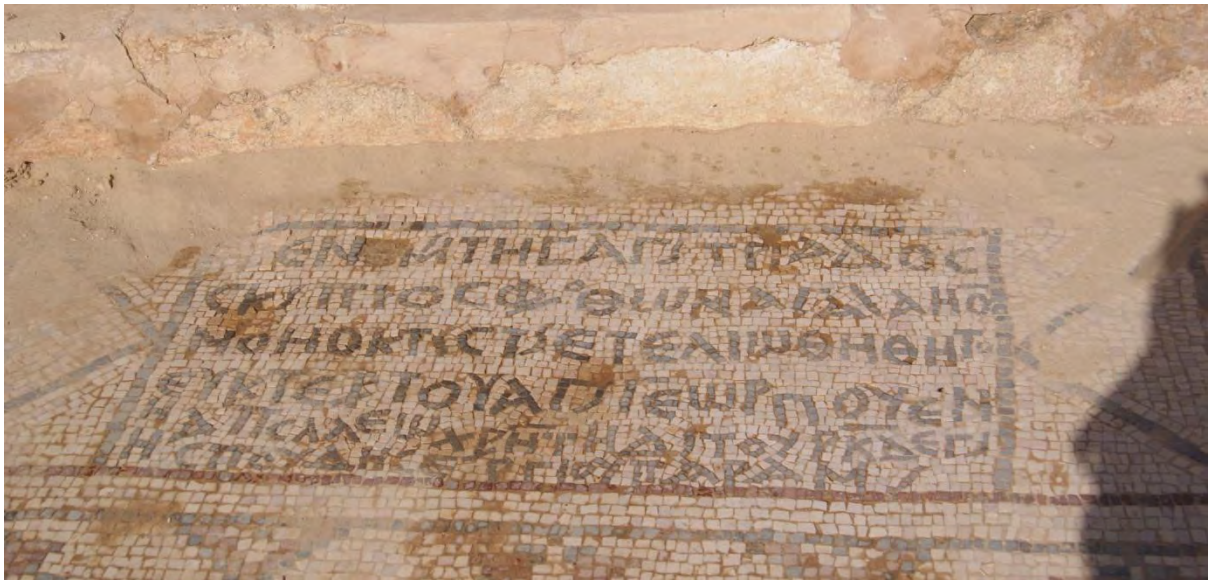


Fig. C.8 Rihab, Church of Hagios Giorgos, tabula ansata.
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Fig. C. 9 Rihab, Church of Hagios Giorgos, facing east.
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Fig. C.10 Khirbet el-Mukhayyat, Church of Hagios Lot and Prokopios.
©Housen 2010

“At the time of the most holy and most saintly Bishop John, Your holy place was built and finished by its priest and paramonarios, Barichas, in the month of November of the time of the 6th indiction [A.D. 557]. O God of Holy Lot and of Holy Prokopios, receive the offering and the present of the brothers Stephen and Elias, the children of Cometissa. O God of the holy martyrs, receive the present of Sergios and Prokopios his son. For the welfare of Rabata [the daughter] of Anastasia and for the repose of John [the son] of Anastasios and for those who contributed, the Lord knows their names.”



Fig. C.11 Madaba, Church of the Theotokos dedicatory panel.
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(A.10-A.11).¹⁸⁹¹ This formula is widely replicated across churches in Kastron Mefa'a and in Rihab where inscriptions often identify the donor in the context of their patriline and living children.¹⁸⁹² In the Church of Hagios Stephanos of Kastron Mefa'a the majority of the inscriptions follow this template mode of expression, with each donor conventionally identified in the context of their father and their (primarily) male children.¹⁸⁹³ Such inscriptions provide some insight into understanding how the public image of the family structure was ideally expressed and portrayed in Palestinian rural contexts. We have no way of telling how such dedications were understood or interacted with in individual contexts but the collective effects of such dedications, where they had accumulated over several generations must have been imposing. Any visitor to the monastic church of Hagios Sergios and Bakkhos in Nessana or the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev by 700 would have been confronted with a wealth of inscriptions – whether burial or dedicatory – that stressed the association of individual families with the churches for over a century.¹⁸⁹⁴

However, the primacy of familial or collective sponsorship of church building should not be stressed exclusively, as a number of cases also serve to demonstrate the use of church dedication as a way in which individuals could exert their status beyond the confines of the family unit. Monks and clergy are two such groups who invocations often omit familial links in favour of more individualised petitions or the alternative social structures offered by the

¹⁸⁹¹ For the church of Khirbat el Mukhayyat see Fig.C.10 for an image and translation of the inscription. The inscription of the Church of the Theotokos of Madaba reads as follows: 'In the days of our most saintly father, Bishop Theophanes was made all this beautiful work of the mosaic of the glorious and venerable house of the holy and immaculate Lady Mary the Mother of God, by the care and zeal of the Christ-loving people of this city of Madaba, for the salvation and succour and the remission of sins of those who offered and offer to this holy place. Amen, o Lord. It was completed by the grace of God in the month of February of the year 6074, in the 5th indiction: tr. Di Segni 1992: 251-252.

¹⁸⁹² Thus the inscriptions of Hagios Stephanos identify the primary donor in the context of their father and living sons: see Piccirillo 1994h. The inscriptions of Rihab demonstrate a similar convention, see Piccirillo 1981b.

¹⁸⁹³ This is particularly visible in the dedications of north chapel: see Piccirillo 1994h: 241-270.

¹⁸⁹⁴ On the inscriptions of Nessana see Kirk and Welles 1962. The inscriptions from the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev are reproduced in Tsafir 1988b.



Fig. C.12 Jarash, Church of the Bishop Isaiah, facing east.
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Fig.C.13 Jarash, Church of the Bishop Isaiah, aerial view.
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Fig. C.14 (above), Jarash, Church of the Bishop Isaiah, south chapel with the view of the dedicatory inscription of Eulampia.
 © APAAME 2011. Apaameg_20111021_mnd-0135

Fig. C.15 (below), Jarash, Church of the Bishop Isaiah, detail of the dedicatory inscription of Eulampia.
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church.¹⁸⁹⁵ Women are another group prominent in a number of dedicatory inscriptions of rural churches which, given their relative invisibility in the wider material corpus associated with Palestine, require further exploration.

Turning again to the dedication of Eulampia, in the Church of the Bishop Isaiah, which commemorates Eulampia's commission of the south chapel, the inscription provides one case of the importance of church dedication as one of the few (now) identifiable ways that women could independently express their own philanthropic activities in the public arena of Palestinian urban society (Fig. C.12-C.13).¹⁸⁹⁶

We have no way of determining the private sentiments that compelled Eulampia to commission the chapel in honour of her deceased relatives, but there are some additional features of this dedication that are worth stressing. For one, the spatial context of the inscription, located in the bema behind the chancel screen, implies that the visibility of the dedication was more restricted when compared to the *Tabula Ansata* set into the nave and positioned before the central apse (Fig. C.14-C.15). Consequently, whilst Eulampia's status is affirmed by the dedication, her status as an independent donor is confined to the more marginal space of the south chapel. The message expressed by the inscription is consequently subsidiary to the more public declaration of the *tabula ansata* positioned in the central nave and where her status as a component of the corporate family is more explicitly conveyed.¹⁸⁹⁷

Whilst the dedication of the south chapel functions to project Eulampia's patronage independently of the familial unit, the act of dedicating the structure to her deceased father and son functions simultaneously to stress Eulampia's fulfilment of the idealised virtues of

¹⁸⁹⁵ As in the cases of 'Ayn al-Kanisah or the Monk Kaioum of Phisga in the dedicatory scheme of Hagios Stephanos at Kastron Mefa'a. In both examples, monastic figures appear as independent donors or as part of a collective with other priests or clergy, see Piccirillo 1994e and Piccirillo 1994h :241-270.

¹⁸⁹⁶ The inscription is reproduced in Bowsher 1986: 319-322. See Brubaker 1997 for an important study of the use of church dedication and patronage as an avenue for projection of status among imperial women. Dixon 1983 explores the earlier Roman precedents.

¹⁸⁹⁷ Bowsher 1986: 319-322.

piety and the welfare of the family.¹⁸⁹⁸ The extent of Eulampia's independent status and authority is, therefore, conveyed in the Church of the Bishop Isaiah principally in the context of her male relatives: her husband Beorios, her deceased father and deceased son.¹⁸⁹⁹ This follows a convention paralleled in the Churches of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos and Hagios Giorgos of Khirbat al-Mukhayyat where cases of female donation and prestige are similarly acknowledged but are conveyed commonly as a means of promoting the unity and status of the patrilineal family structure.¹⁹⁰⁰

The inscriptions themselves afford little detail about the lives or personalities of the women which sponsored them. Such material, therefore, needs to be utilised cautiously in understanding the more complex dynamics of individual family structures and the actual extent of the social influence of individuals – regardless of their gender. The inscriptions of the Church of the Bishop Isaiah provide an apparatus to understanding how the authority of individuals such as Eulampia were expressed and projected rather than any indication of how that authority was physically manifest and exercised by individuals. Nonetheless, they confirm the increasing role of church foundation and patronage by the sixth century as a means through which the social positions of the individual and the collective family could be validated and proclaimed.

Church constructions could, therefore, result from the patronage of individual kinship groups and function to promote the interests and welfare of individual family units. A number of dedications in the churches of Kastron Mefa'a and Rihab indicate, however, that in more modest rural contexts, church construction was often more commonly facilitated by collective

¹⁸⁹⁸ The literature on this subject, especially with regards to marriage in the Late Roman world is immense and beyond the scope of this study. I direct the reader to Harper 2012: 672-693 for a survey of the current debate.

¹⁸⁹⁹ See Fig. C.7 above.

¹⁹⁰⁰ On the Church of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos: see Crowfoot 1938: 446-448. For Hagios Giorgos at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat: see Di Segni 1998: 440.

efforts sponsored by whole communities or groups.¹⁹⁰¹ In Kastron Mefa'a both examples are visible. The dedicatory panel of the Church of Hagios Paulos, constructed during the episcopate of the Bishop Sergios of Madaba, invokes God for the remittance of the sins of one of its donors, Rabbos, and serves as a funerary dedication for another unnamed donor which the inscription indicates was probably the father of Sergis and Paul.¹⁹⁰² On a more ambitious scale, the construction of the church of Hagios Stephanos in 718 was facilitated by the collective donations of several families whose petitions and portraits appear in a number of mosaic panels adorning the bema, north aisle and nave (Fig. C.16).¹⁹⁰³ The prominent spatial contexts of the portraits, often directly before the chancel screens, would support the impression that such donations functioned as a platform for the promotion of prominent local families.¹⁹⁰⁴ The later effects of iconoclastic censoring do not permit a full understanding of the original visual properties of each portrait. The surviving outlines of the figures, however, do indicate that the subjects were depicted in a frontal standing position, facing west into the nave: confronting their lay audience with a linear sequence of local donors and officials whose identities must have been familiar to the users of the church. A detail which escaped the effects of iconoclastic erasure, a sword or a staff which adorns the costume of a figure in the north aisle panel (Fig.C.17) provides some tentative indication that these expressions of donor status were augmented by the use of formal costume to identify individual donors.¹⁹⁰⁵

¹⁹⁰¹ Thus the Churches of the Bishop Sergios and Hagios Stephanos, the two largest monuments of the settlement, appear to have been funded by the collective donations of several families: Piccirillo 1994h. Similarly, the small churches of Rihab, whilst linked to individual family units of donors, also introduced a number of other figures in the church dedications who do not appear to be associated with the family: Piccirillo 1981b: 62-69.

¹⁹⁰² Piccirillo 1997: 388-389.

¹⁹⁰³ Piccirillo 1994h: 241-253 surveys the epigraphic evidence related to the church.

¹⁹⁰⁴ For a discussion of this convention, replicated in other regions, see Habas 2008: 73-90.

¹⁹⁰⁵ Further examples, which depict individuals carrying censers, or dressed in formal costume, can be observed in Church of the Bishop Isaiah: see Clark 1986. See also the Church of Hagios Elias where the portrait of a robed woman is probably to be identified as the donor Kalliora, Lady of Silthous. This interpretation is shared by Habas 2008: 83 and Kennedy 2010: 186. Cohen 1993: 279 suggests a different interpretation and links the donor with the large estates of Saltos Konstantiniakos and Saltos Geraritikos. Other possible donor portraits include those in the church of Hagios Kosmas and Damianos in Gerasa, where two portraits of the *paramonarios* Theodoros and his wife Georgia were included in the mosaic scheme, see Crowfoot 1938: 247.



Fig. C.16 Kastoria Mefakia, Hagios Stephanos, donor inscriptions, north aisle.
The names of each donor are prefaced by the phrase "Remember, Lord, your servant...".
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Fig.C.17 Kastoria Mefakia, Hagios Stephanos, detail of donor portraits.
© Reynolds 2010

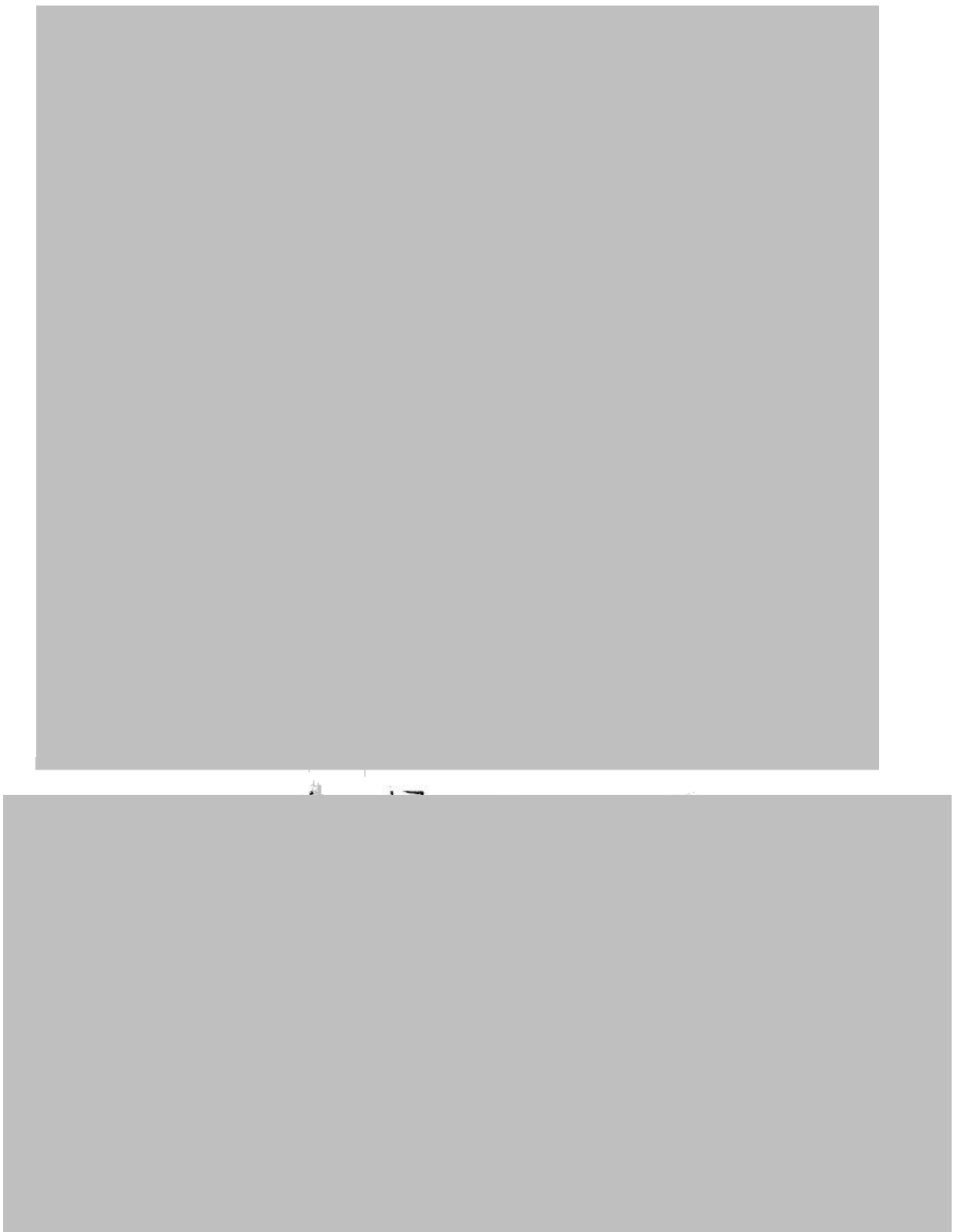


Fig.C.18 Kastron Mefa'a, Hagios Paulos, dedicatory panel and donor portraits.
The inscription in the top register reads:

‘ + For the memory and the repose of [of...and of.....Sergis and] of Paul his sons and for the
salvation and remittance of sins of Rabbos.....through their care all the work was completed [in the
month] of July the twelfth indiction.’

Tr. Piccirillo 2002: 546.

© Piccirillo 1997



Fig.C.19 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of Hagios Paulos.
©Reynolds 2012



Fig.C.20 Kastron Mefa'a, Hagios Stephanos, donor portraits
in front of the bema.
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A further example in the Church of Hagios Paulos (dating to the episcopate of Bishop Sergios (570s-590s)), which depicts a standing figure carrying a thurible, may indicate that the Hagios Stephanos portraits followed an established regional convention of formalised donor portraiture (Fig. A.18-A.19) seen in the earlier portrait of Theodoros and Georgia in the Hagios Kosmas and Damianos of Jarash (Fig. C.1-C.2).

The thurible-bearing figure, whom the *titulus* identifies as Sergis, is surely to be identified with the named donor in the dedicatory inscription featured in the register above the portrait.¹⁹⁰⁶ The inscription adorning the second figure (or figures) in the scheme has only survived in partial form, but the surviving *tituli* ‘Paulos’ and ‘Rabbos’, both of which occur in the accompanying commemorative panel, provide further indication that the figure is to be identified as another of the principal donors.¹⁹⁰⁷ Correlating the figures in the Hagios Stephanos schemes with names mentioned in the adjacent dedicatory panel is less straightforward due to the absence of accompanying *tituli* and the sheer number of individuals mentioned in the mosaic programme.¹⁹⁰⁸ It is possible in the case of the north aisle that the inscription which envelops the two central figures is to be associated with the portraits; in which case these representations were commissioned to commemorate the contribution of John son of John son of Suades (Suwaid) (Fig. C.17).¹⁹⁰⁹ An open handed gesture by the left figure, towards the neighbouring portrait, intimates an association between the two; likely, given the nature of the accompanying inscriptions (all of which repeat similar formulas), a patrilineal relationship. The subtle disparity of size between the two figures also intimates an attempt to establish the seniority of the figure to the viewer’s left.

¹⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰⁸ The main dedicatory panels of Hagios Stephanos are offered in Piccirillo 1994h: 244-248 (inscriptions 2 and 3). It is possible that the farthest figure to the left of the panel is to be identified with a son of Samuel (Inscription 3). The fragmentary nature of the inscription offers no further clarity on this issue however.

¹⁹⁰⁹ The inscription is reproduced in Piccirillo 1994h: 249-250 (Inscription 6d).

The motif appears again in the panel in the central nave inscription where a similar gesture by the central figure is directed to one at the viewer's right (Fig. C.20). A comparative gesture in the Church of the Priest Wa'il (dated 586), between the priest and his servant, provides an earlier example of this convention.¹⁹¹⁰ These portraits effectively visualise familial or household relationships and paternal lineage that elsewhere in the church of Hagios Stephanos are more commonly expressed through epigraphic forms. A large proportion of the donors who appear in the church are accompanied by their patronymic and the names of male offspring.¹⁹¹¹ The church of Hagios Stephanos in Kastron Mefa'a is by no means exceptional in its use of this formula, but the number and complexity of the dedications do enable us to identify a number of family networks linked to the creation of the church in 718 and the continuation of these families during the later phase of renovation in 756 (Fig. C.21).¹⁹¹²

The message conveyed by these inscriptions and portraits, that church construction and embellishment could act as a vehicle through which familial salvation could be sought and social status projected, has implications for the view that processes of church construction can be seamlessly correlated with perceived demographic fluctuations. In contrast, patterns of maintenance or foundation of many churches may have been far more integrated with the economic and social priorities of individual families rather than the collective interests of the Christian community. Beyond Kastron Mefa'a, the example of the Sergios-Patrikos family in Nessana, attested in a number of dedicatory inscriptions in the Monastery of Sergios and Bakkhos from the late 590s, offers a comparative example mirrored among a number of sites across the region (Fig. C.22).¹⁹¹³ The evidence in itself is

¹⁹¹⁰ Piccirillo 1993b: 323-327.

¹⁹¹¹ A complete discussion of the epigraphic corpus of Hagios Stephanos and the Bishop Sergios Church is offered in Piccirillo 1994h: 241-161.

¹⁹¹² This is the family of Lexos. John son of Isaac son of Lexos appears in the dedicatory panel in front of the bema in the nave (Inscription 2).

¹⁹¹³ The family is discussed in the accompanying notes to *P. Colt* 44. For examples of the dedications attributed to the family.

not sufficient to propose that all church construction in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods responded exclusively to patron demands over demographic stimulus: the fragmentary nature of the evidence make all sweeping generalisations about monastic/church patron economies presently precarious and a feature that will elude secure definition until the corpus of church dedications is collated and appraised.

Simply, the use of church construction as an avenue through which familial status and piety was publicly promoted undermines the credibility of simplistic explanations, based on diminishing lay congregations, for church site abandonment in the post-Byzantine period. Equally, it proposes that our understanding of subsequent trends in church building and maintenance in Palestine following the 740s must intersect with wider questions about the changing focus of elite patronage (whether in terms of institution or medium) as well as the continued economic capacity of patron families to perpetuate established patterns of construction.

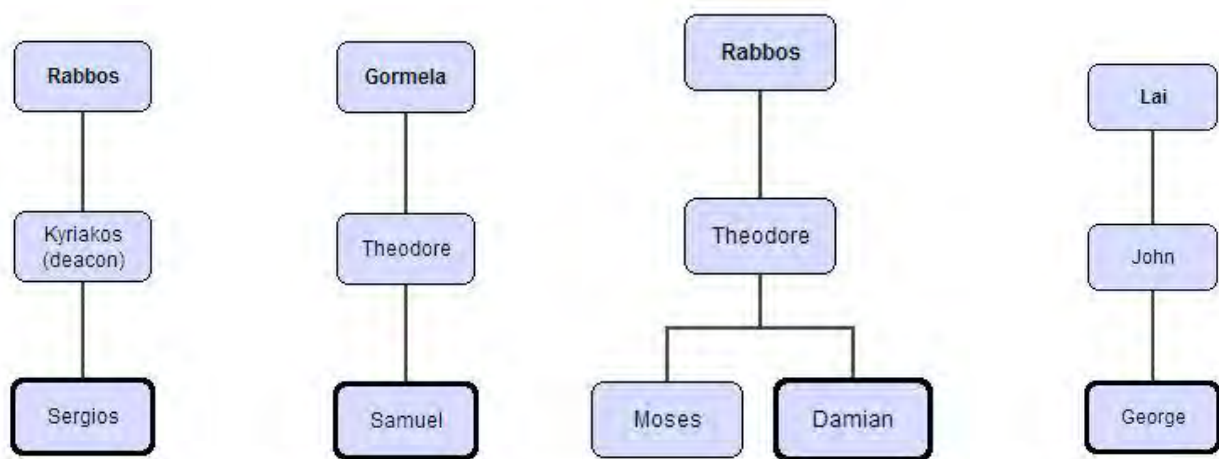


Fig. C.21 Family lineages mentioned in the 718 and 756 mosaic schemes from the Church of Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a. John, the grandson of Lexos, served as priest, archon and *oikonomos* of Kastron of Mefa'a in 718. His nephew, Elias, is mentioned in the later refurbishment to the apse scheme dated to 756. The remaining four inscriptions are found in the mosaic schemes of the north aisle (and chapel) and demonstrate a similar use of the schemes as a means of

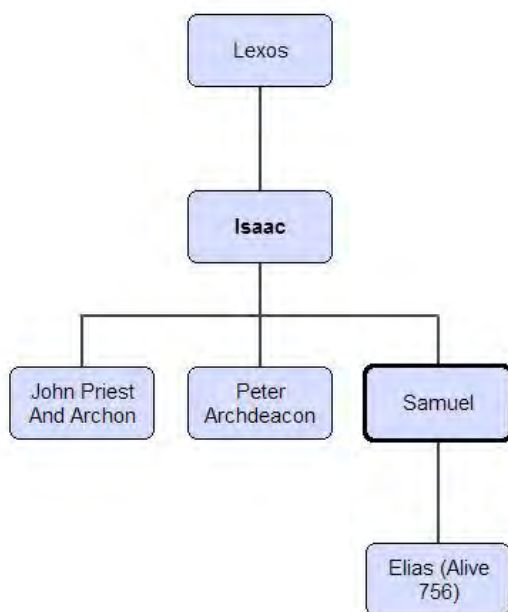


Fig. C.22 The family of Flavios Sergios (560s-680s) attested in the Nessana papyri hoard. Sergios (died 592) is the first attested priest and hegoumenos of the monastery of Sergios and Bakkhos. The post was still held by his great grandson George in the 680s.

APPENDIX D

A NOTE ON PALESTINIAN ICONOPHOBIA

As noted in the earlier discussions of this thesis, the limitations of archaeological approaches to Palestinian church structures, which often omit detailed discussion of post-Byzantine phases, has reinforced the importance of iconoclastic intervention as a means through which eighth-century activity at Christian cult sites may be identified.¹⁹¹⁴

This perception of Palestinian *Iconophobia*¹⁹¹⁵ rests on observations about its dating and the material characteristics of iconoclastic intervention, which would support an eighth-century date for the activity and the identification of Christian communities as those responsible for the intervention.¹⁹¹⁶

Debate among Byzantinists and historians of the early Islamic period has generally focussed on identifying the ideological impetus which underlay these activities, although few have reached a broad consensus of its origins. Although less explicit in debates than in the mid-twentieth century, when a number of the iconoclastic churches were excavated, the view of Palestinian iconophobia as a response to the edict of Yazid still maintains a presence in the debate.¹⁹¹⁷ Similarly, though the general opinion among scholars considers Palestinian iconophobia as a response to Islamic pressures on local Christian groups, this hypothesis has been challenged more recently in a study by Henry Maguire who has sought to re-establish the primacy of the Byzantine iconomachy debates of the eighth century.¹⁹¹⁸

The purpose of this brief discussion is not to review the merits of each respective position or to draw conclusions about the origins of the developments which provoked the

¹⁹¹⁴ See Maguire 2009. Ribak 2012: proposes a number of possible interpretations but views the phenomenon as part of a localised iconoclastic sentiment in Palestine.

¹⁹¹⁵ A term first coined by Susana Ognibene in the first major study of phenomenon: Ognibene 1998 and Ognibene 2002.

¹⁹¹⁶ Schick 1995: 181-219.

¹⁹¹⁷ Bowerstock 2006: 91-111.

¹⁹¹⁸ Brubaker and Haldon 2001: 30-35 and Maguire 2009.

known examples of iconoclastic intervention. Rather, it will outline a series of archaeological approaches to the material which I consider necessary to construct a more nuanced profile of the site and communities interwoven within this phenomenon.

This is primarily because the debate appears comparatively imbalanced in terms of analytical approaches to the material. Over forty sites are known from the published material; many of which have been discussed in microcosmic terms by their excavators.¹⁹¹⁹ What we lack is much of the middle ground to the debate in terms of comparative approaches between individual churches or regions where iconophobic activity occurred. Accordingly, our explanations for this phenomenon – whether the edict of Yazid, Islamic pressure or Byzantine iconomachy – are often based upon the testament of writers or legal restrictions far removed from the ‘iconoclastic’ communities in geographical and social terms.¹⁹²⁰

Inconsistencies in the debate have consequently emerged. Proponents of the edict of Yazid, have yet, for example, to explain why the main nucleus of iconophobic activity occurred primarily in the more marginal zones of the Bilad al-Sham and in areas where evidence for a substantial Muslim presence is visibly lacking – an issue which also resonates in explanations which endorse Muslim social pressures against Christians as the primary motivating factor for iconoclastic activity in the region. Maguire’s argument is similarly hampered by the use of a single example – the Church of the Theotokos in Madaba – which imposes a uniform explanation for the activity upon Christian communities and sites for which no mutual characteristics have yet been identified.¹⁹²¹ In what follows, therefore, I will outline a series of approaches which I consider a necessary starting point from which to review the explanations currently proposed.

¹⁹¹⁹ The best overview of the material, including the most recent gazetteer, appears in Shiyyab 2006.

¹⁹²⁰ Thus Maguire finds support for his theory in the *Life of Stephen the Younger*. Those which view iconophobia as a response to Islamic coercion draw their primary inspiration from Theodore Abū Qurrah’s treatise on the veneration of icons: Brubaker and Haldon 2001: 172, Griffith 2011, Ognibene 1998: 385-387.

¹⁹²¹ Maguire 2009. Maguire’s hypothesis also rests on a series of sentiments drawn from the writings of John of Damascus and the *Life of Stephen the Younger*: sentiments and ideas which cannot be linked with any of the iconoclastic communities currently identified.

VISUAL AND TEMPORAL PERSPECTIVES

Through a closer comparison of the schemes subjected to iconoclastic activity and dated epigraphic formulas in the Churches of Deir al-Addas and 'Ayn al-Kanisah, Ognibene has proposed an approximate date of c.720-c.760 for the interventions in the Palestinian region.¹⁹²² This chronological framework compliments the stylistic qualities of mosaic schemes currently known from the region. Deir al-Addas (dated 722) provides the last dated example of a scheme featuring anthropomorphic and zoomorphic motifs and compliments the contemporary examples of Hagios Stephanos in Kastron Mefa'a (718) and Ma'in (719/720) whose figural schemes were subsequently censored by iconoclastic activity. Schemes which post date 750, as with the apse scheme of Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a (756), The Church of the Theotokos at Madaba (767) and the Theotokos Chapel of 'Ayn al-Kanisah (762), all adopt geometric forms in these later renovations.¹⁹²³ Observations of iconoclastic activity in the narthex of Jabāl Harūn, which was sealed by the earthquake of 749, and a further example from Kursi, suggest that in some contexts this date can be narrowed further to the period c.720-750.¹⁹²⁴

The general characteristics of Palestinian 'iconophobia' have been well explored in recent decades through a series of studies concentrated on the Madaba region and its environs. During the mid-eighth century, by Susana Ognibene's estimations beginning

¹⁹²² Ognibene 2002: 115-116.

¹⁹²³ On Deir al-Addas: Donceel-Voutê 1988: 45-53. The inscriptions of Ma'in are addressed in Piccirillo 1993c:196-201. The inscriptions of the Church of Hagios Stephanos in Kastron Mefa'a are addressed in Piccirillo 1994h. For the Church of the Theotokos in Madaba see Dauphin 1975 and the revised dating in Di Segni 1992. Those of 'Ayn al-Kanisah appear in: Piccirillo 1994e: 525-530.

¹⁹²⁴ On the mosaic scheme see the discussion by Hamarneh and Hinkkanen 2008: 263-271. On the iconoclastic interventions of Kursi see Tzaferis 1983: 23-24. These were attributed to the post-liturgical activity of the Muslim squatter phase proposed by Tzaferis and dated to the early eighth century. This phase has since been discredited by Stacey 2004:16-17. The survival of some motifs within the scheme is due to the subsequent partitioning of the site following the earthquake in 749 and the obscuring of these designs beneath blocked doorways and columns (the church still remained in use) such as that of the northern aisle (Plate XI:4). This not only suggests a *terminus post quem* of 749 for the activity but indicates that it was undertaken when the complex still actively functioned for liturgical use. On the churches of Kastron Mefa'a: see note 3.

around 720, human and animal representations in mosaic floors were deliberately removed from existing mosaic programmes and either replaced by plain tesserae or were rearranged into non-figurative designs (Fig. D. 1).

Whilst studies have focussed primarily on the examples of the Madaba plateau, a focus undoubtedly facilitated by the intensive excavations in the region by the Franciscan Institute, identified examples of iconophobic activity have been observed throughout the region formerly encompassed by the Bilad al-Sham.

The last synthetic study of Palestinian iconophobia identified forty sites – all churches – where iconoclastic interventions in mosaic schemes have been identified: although the number of identified sites continues to expand with ongoing excavation (Fig. D.2).¹⁹²⁵ The results of excavation do not, however, appear to contradict the pattern of distribution among the published sites. The majority of iconoclastic sites are located in the Transjordan, either in the Madaba plateau and the southern Dekapolis near Jarash, but a further clustering of activity may also be identified in the environs of Jerusalem. The development appears to have occurred only in churches; although scholars have yet to reach agreement with regards to the factors which provoked a response in the eighth century.

¹⁹²⁵ One example if the Church of Ya'amun: Nassar and Turshan 2011.



Fig. D.1 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of the Bishop Sergios, nave mosaic with iconoclastic intervention.
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| Number | Church/Monastery |
|--------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Bahan: Khirbet Kafr Sibb |
| 2 | Beth Guvrin/Eleutheropolis |
| 3 | Deir as-Si'na |
| 4 | Ein Hanniya |
| 5 | Emmaus |
| 6 | Farah el-Hashimiya |
| 7 | Gaza (Jabaliyah) |
| 8 | Hesban |
| 9 | Horvat Hanot |
| 10 | Gerasa/Jarash |
| 11 | Hufa |
| 12 | Jabāl Harūn |
| 13 | Jubeiha |
| 14 | Khasfin |
| 15 | Khattabiya |
| 16 | Khilda |
| 17 | Khirbat Asida |
| 18 | Khirbat el-Burz |
| 19 | Khirbat Dohaleh |
| 20 | Khirbat (Horvat) Beit Loya |
| 21 | Khirbat es-Samra |
| 22 | Khirbat et-Tira |
| 23 | Kursi |
| 24 | Madaba |
| 25 | Ma'in |
| 26 | Masuh |
| 27 | Mount Nebo |
| 28 | Muqawir |
| 29 | Nitl |
| 30 | Qum |
| 31 | Quwaysmah |
| 32 | Rihab |
| 33 | Roglit |
| 34 | Sa'ad |
| 35 | Suhmata |
| 36 | Tel Kerioth |
| 37 | Umm al-Rasas |
| 38 | Umm el-Manabi |
| 39 | Ya'amun |
| 40 | Zay el-Gharbi |

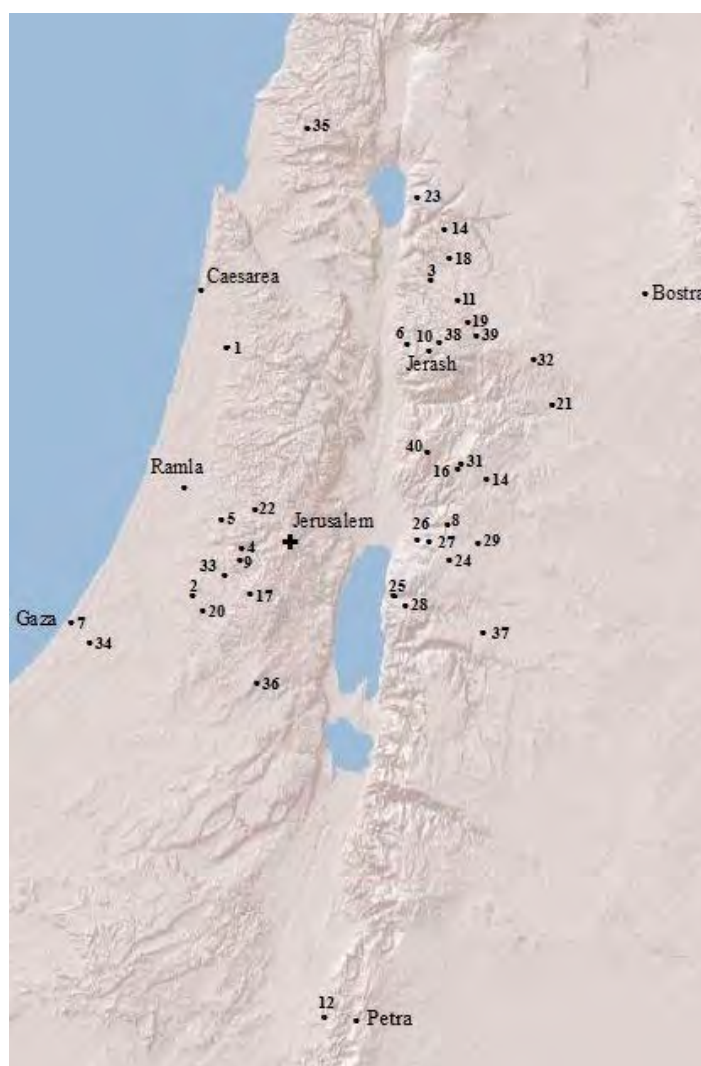


Fig. D.2
Map of the iconophobic interventions
in the region in Christian cult sites.
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Popular consensus has largely viewed the phenomenon as an insular response among Christians to Islamic sensitivities about the use of figurative representation in the decoration of religious space.¹⁹²⁶ A recent counter-theory proposed by Henry Maguire, encouraged by a close reading of the *Life of Stephen the Younger*, however, has sought to reassert the role of the Byzantine iconomachy debates as a formative influence to the concurrent trends in Palestine.¹⁹²⁷ The conventions employed by these communities in neutralising offending images were generally sympathetic to the existing designs but were not uniform. As Robert Schick has observed, whilst these interventions and repairs were carried out with considerable care, and with respect to the existing decorative scheme, the manner in which these images were removed and replaced often varied between church sites and even within single decorative contexts.¹⁹²⁸

As with the example of the Theotokos Chapel of ‘Ayn al-Kanisah, whilst a number of figural motifs in the vine scroll were systematically removed and replaced with geometric patterns, others were only partially modified or escaped modification entirely.¹⁹²⁹ An image of a phoenix in the central medallion of the scheme of ‘Ayn al-Kanisah was preserved and may even have been restored in order to accentuate the contours of the design.¹⁹³⁰ Explanations for such selective activity are visibly lacking in recent approaches to the subject but may be attributed, in part, to a tendency to de-contextualise analysis of mosaic schemes from concurrent observations of spatial context.

¹⁹²⁶ Brubaker and Haldon 2001: 31-36. Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 232-234.

¹⁹²⁷ Maguire 2009; *Life of Stephen the Younger* (Aldershot 1997), 126-127, 221-222; tr.Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey), 152.

¹⁹²⁸ Schick 1995, 189-200.

¹⁹²⁹ Ognibene 1998: 375-384.

¹⁹³⁰ *Ibid.*: 377-380.



Fig. D.3 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of the Bishop Sergios
The detail escaped iconoclastic erasure as it was beneath the ambo of the church. This was lifted during the excavations by Piccirillo.
© Reynolds 2012



Fig. D.4 Kursi, mosaic detail, the panel was located beneath a blocked doorway after 749 when the iconoclastic interventions took place.
© Conger 2006

In the example of the Bishop Sergios Church in Kastron Mefa'a, the survival of a figure (possibly an angel) in a panel in front of the church bema is easily explained when we consider that the panel lay beneath the ambo of the church until its removal by excavators in the late-twentieth century (Fig. D.3).¹⁹³¹ The ambo was not subsequently replaced following excavation. Consequently modern visitors to the Church of Bishop Sergios are confronted with the stark image of complete figural motif (in a church which shows a high degree of iconoclastic intervention) which would not have been visible to its eighth-century occupants.¹⁹³² The surviving figural panel of Kursi, located underneath a doorway by the mid-eighth century, provides another example (Fig. D.4).¹⁹³³

These examples are instructive in terms of understanding the limitations presented by an archaeological corpus where the reclamation of mosaic schemes has received unrivalled attention. As with the examples of the Kastron Mefa'a churches, the removal of later architectural features, subdivisions or furnishings by recent excavators, with the aim of uncovering a complete mosaic carpet, fosters an artificial impression of the visual and spatial environment to which the individuals engaged in iconoclastic intervention were responding. These observations are preliminary, but the issues they raise in terms of understanding the high degree of variation between individual churches is central: approaches aimed at understanding the complexity of the phenomenon must re-engage with the archaeological material and observe cases of iconoclastic intervention within their immediate spatial contexts.

This approach may not explain all examples where figural motifs remained uncensored. In this respect, a more synthetic approach to the phenomenon, which compares a number of examples is required but cannot be offered here.

¹⁹³¹ Piccirillo 1994 g: 125.

¹⁹³² Tzaferis 1983: 24.

¹⁹³³ Tzaferis 1983: 26.



Fig.D.5 Kastron Mefa'a, the Church of Hagios Stephanos. The central mosaic panel shows a highly animated nilotic scene and images of hunting in the vine scroll medallions.
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Fig. D.6 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of the Hasios Stephanos, defaced nilotic *putti*.
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Fig. D.7 Kastron Mefa'a, Church of the Bishop Sergios, nilotic scene with scrambled and reset tesserae.
© Reynolds 2012



Fig. D.8 Jarash, Church of Hagios Giorgos, figurative motif replaced by plain limestone tesserae.
© Reynolds 2010

Some broader characteristics of these iconoclastic interventions may, however, be proposed. Among the known examples of iconoclastic activity, cases of intervention appear to have commonly focused on motifs associated with secular scenes (including hunting and pastoral activity) or upon personifications of the natural world and symbolic allusions to evocative Biblical passages (Fig. D.5). However, on rare occasion, changes were also exacted upon schemes depicting biblical figures as seen at the Church of the Bishop Leontios at Ya'amun, near Irbid, where two aisle panels featuring figurative schemes of Abraham and Isaac another showing Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael *and* Azariah were altered and rearranged.¹⁹³⁴

The approaches adopted during these interventions may be broadly categorised into four main groups. The most common appears to have involved the removal of the tesserae cubes of figural subjects which were mixed together and reinserted at random to produce a pixellated impression. The central nave of the Church of Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a and the adjacent Hagios Sergios basilica provide two well published examples of the trend.¹⁹³⁵ In the example of Hagios Stephanos, the designs of the vine scroll medallions were completely removed, scrambled and reset so that only the faintest outline of the original subject was subsequently visible (Fig. D.5).¹⁹³⁶ This approach was not executed uniformly, even within the Hagios Stephanos basilica itself. On the eastern border of the nave mosaic representations of nilotic *putti* were only partially defaced and, consistent with examples known from the adjacent church of Hagios Sergios and the Theotokos Chapel of Mount Nebo, focussed predominantly on the face, eyes and limbs of human or animal figures (Fig. A.D6-D7).¹⁹³⁷

¹⁹³⁴ Nassar and Turshan 2011.

¹⁹³⁵ Ognibene 2002 provides the most systematic overview of the interventions in the Church of Hagios Stephanos. For the mosaic of Bishop Sergios: Piccirillo 1994c: 122-134.

¹⁹³⁶ *Ibid*: 134-164.

¹⁹³⁷ On the Theotokos chapel: Piccirillo 1998c: 300-306.



Fig. D.9 Kastron Mefa'a, donor portraits. The tesserae in the right hand figure have been scrambled and re-arranged to form an abstract shape.
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Fig. D.10 Ma'in, Akropolis church. Example of iconophobic intervention (now displayed in Madaba Archaeological Park). The original motif (an ox) has been replaced by a more neutral foliate design. The original scheme, complete with zoomorphic imagery, was executed in 717/718.
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The second trend known from other churches in the region is characterised by the complete removal of figurative motifs and their replacement with tesserae of similar colour to the schematic background. Examples of this are known from panels in the Church of Hagios Giorgos Jarash, and in the Church of Hagia Maria, Rihab, where figural representations set within square or diamond-shaped medallions – in otherwise predominantly geometric schemes – were carefully erased and concealed (Fig. D.8).¹⁹³⁸

A third technique involved the replacement of animate subjects with more neutral geometric or vegetal designs. Situated alongside several examples of defaced or pixellated motifs in Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a, are examples of vine leaves and abstract symbols inserted into the vine scroll medallions which replaced human or animal representations. Donor portraits in the north aisle exhibit corresponding examples of these abstract geometric or vegetal patterns (Fig. D.9). Similar examples of replacement are also known from the Akropolis Church of Ma'in (dated 719/720) where, in one of the auxiliary chambers of the church, a scheme which portrayed a representation of Isaiah 65:25 – 'and the lion shall eat chaff like the ox' – was unpicked and most of the ox replaced by a tree and an urn (Fig. D.10). Far less common are cases where images were completely removed and the cavities subsequently patched with plaster or lime mortar. Nevertheless, two examples are known from the Transjordan: the North Church of Hesban and the basilica of Kursi east of the Galilee.¹⁹³⁹

These four examples represent the most common means through which iconoclastic interventions were carried out in Palestinian churches in this period. Estimating the broader impact of this development on the wider visual repertoire of churches is, however, more

¹⁹³⁸ On the church of Hagia Maria in Rihab: Piccirillo 1993c: 310-313.

¹⁹³⁹ Lawlor 1994: 125. This latter example was, until recently, attributed to the developments of a post-monastic squatter phase: Schick 1995: 195 and Tzaferis 1983, 23. A recent reanalysis of the basilica's phasing by David Stacey, however, proposes that these interventions were executed during the active functioning of the church around 749 and therefore conform to the chronological framework for Palestinian iconoclasm proposed by Susana Ognibene: Stacey 2004, 16-17.

problematic. Mosaics provide the only surviving material trace of iconoclastic activity in the region which may have extended to other media. A small corpus of chancel screens, yet to be fully published, provides some preliminary suggestions of a potentially wider impact of these processes within church space.¹⁹⁴⁰

A fully-preserved chancel screen depicting two rams bowing to a central cross, from the Civic Complex Church provides one example of similar defacement of figural schemes beyond church floors. The dating of this activity is unknown, although the destruction of the church in the earthquake of 717/718 proposes that these activities were carried out prior to the conventionally accepted beginning of iconoclastic activity around 720. Parallel examples are also known from the Church of the Lions and the Church of the Priest Wa'il in Kastron Mefa'a where depictions of lambs were carefully erased from the chancel screens. In all three contexts the dating of this activity is uncertain and may always evade a universal consensus among scholars. The relatively long occupational histories of these sites, spanning from the late sixth century until the early ninth, presents only the crudest of chronological parameters and does not offer sufficient nuance to a debate focussed on change across decades rather than centuries.

ICONOCLASTIC LANDSCAPES

The nucleation of iconophobic activity into a series of clusters concentrated around Jerusalem and the Transjordan would nonetheless indicate the highly regionalised nature of the issue. Settlement processes may offer a partial explanation. Regional appraisals of Byzantine mosaic schemes in the region have noted the progressive trend toward the use of highly animated schemes and inhabited scroll motifs among in the embellishment of church

¹⁹⁴⁰ The chancel screen of the Church of the Priest Wa'il shows some evidence of censoring as does the chancel screen of the Civic Complex Church of Pella: Piccirillo 1993b: 317-318, Piccirillo 1993c: 330.

floor schemes after 550.¹⁹⁴¹ This compliments the general pattern of church construction in the Transjordan where the majority of churches with clear indications of figural and zoomorphic erasure possessed schemes dedicated in the late sixth or early seventh centuries (Fig. D.11).

Rural churches also dominate the corpus of known iconoclastic churches: a feature which may point to the possibility that the factors which conditioned the need for intervention were subtly framed by an underlying economic framework. At least among the larger urban churches of the region, marble *opus sectile* schemes, realised in geometric forms, appear more common in the embellishment of large civic churches.¹⁹⁴² These collective factors provide some tentative explanations for the concentration of iconoclastic activity in the Madaba plateau: an area characterised by a high concentrated of small rural/quasi urban sites which exhibit demonstrable evidence for post-Justinianic expansion.¹⁹⁴³

Closer reading of the epigraphic corpus from the Madaba plateau also assists in linking this activity to the concerns of Chalcedonian communities and bishoprics.

The names of two Bishops of Madaba both appear in dedicatory inscriptions in the main basilica of Mount Nebo commemorating the construction of the Theotokos Chapel under Leontios in 607/8 and the new Baptistery in 597 under Leontios' predecessor Sergios (Fig. D.12).¹⁹⁴⁴ The dedication of the southern chapel at Nebo to the Theotokos would appear to endorse the impression that the site was beneath the jurisdiction of the Chalcedonian episcopate of Madaba (Fig. D.13).¹⁹⁴⁵ We know little about the Christological affiliation of the episcopate beyond the evidence of the inscriptions themselves although the mention of Gaianos, Bishop of Madaba, among the attendance lists of the Council of Chalcedon

¹⁹⁴¹ Hachlili 2009: 111-147.

¹⁹⁴² See Piccirillo 1993c: 328-332.

¹⁹⁴³ On this expansion, which is primarily attested by the building of churches, see Di Segni 1999: 165, Walmsley 2005: 511-522 and De Vries 2000:41-43.

¹⁹⁴⁴ Di Segni 1998: 432-433.

¹⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid*: 433-434.

(represented by the Bishop of Bostra), provides some indication of a Chalcedonian presence in the city by the mid-fifth century.¹⁹⁴⁶ A brief mention of the site in the ninth-century works of the Melkite Peter of Bayt Ra's confirms this association into the mid-ninth century.¹⁹⁴⁷ Further examples of iconoclastic censoring at other sites with possible Chalcedonian associations, including Jabāl Harūn and Kursi, add weight to this broader impression.¹⁹⁴⁸

More certain, however, is the clear connection between the corpus of churches with noted cases of iconoclastic intervention and their relationship to established episcopal networks. The churches of Kastron Mefa'a, all constructed between 574 and 589 (with the exception of the later church of Hagios Stephanos dated 718), invoke the Bishop of Madaba Sergios (known from the baptistery of Mount Nebo) within their dedicatory inscriptions (Fig. D.14). This pattern is continued among the churches of Madaba, where the Bishop Leontios, Sergios' successor, is identified in the renovations to the Cathedral Church at Madaba (dated 603) and the Church of Al-Khadir.¹⁹⁴⁹ The appearance of Bishop Job of Madaba in the dedicatory inscriptions of the Theotokos Chapel in 'Ayn al-Kanisah (dated 762) and in the renovations to the apse mosaic in Hagios Stephanos, Kastron Mefa'a (dated 756), and (Fig. D.15-D.16) suggests that the churches remained under the jurisdiction of the bishopric of

¹⁹⁴⁶ We hear very little about the bishopric of Madaba in the intervening centuries. In terms of regional connections we are aware of letter written by Pope Martin to Theodoros, Bishop of Esbous, requesting recognition of John of Philadelphia as *vikarios* of the Pope in the East: *Letter to Theodore, Bishop of Esbous*, *Mansi* X, 815-816. Pope Martin's attempt to acquire support from Bishop Theodore of Esbous is discussed in a separate letter addressed to John of Philadelphia: *Mansi* X, 813-814. These, however, lend no information about the concurrent situation in Madaba in the seventh and eighth centuries.

¹⁹⁴⁷ Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 382 (ed. Cachia 1960: 206, tr. Watt 1960: 162) describes the following: 'We must now return in our discourse to the remainder of the holy relics and objects of veneration which Christ gave us in this world, and must complete this by the relics of the prophets, which over and above the relics of Himself, He gave us when He appeared to them and spoke to them. Of these are Mount Sinai, where God spoke to Moses; and Mount Horeb, where God spoke to Elijah the Prophet – it is part of Mount Sinai and the site of the convent of Job, the upright, where God spoke to him and took away his affliction, and where he died and was buried; and the mount of Moses, where he died, east of the Dead Sea; and the convent of Aaron, the brother of Moses, the high priest, where he died and was buried, in the land of Sharāh...'

¹⁹⁴⁸ Jabāl Harūn is discussed in the *Al-Tanbih wa-l-Ashraf* of al-Mas'ūdī: 133-134 (ed. de Goeje 1894) dated to around 943. Mas'ūdī notes that the site was under the jurisdiction of the Chalcedonians. Kursi is discussed in the *Kitāb al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhān*: 321 (ed. Cachia 1960: 170, tr. Watt 1960: 136). The source is less explicit as to whether this site was under the custodianship of the Melkites. The context of Peter's argument, however, and the list of sites he presents (many with known Chalcedonian connections), supports the impression that Kursi was also among those under the control of the Chalcedonians in the ninth century.

¹⁹⁴⁹ Piccirillo 1993c: 06, 117, 129, 265, 268. For the inscription of the Cathedral church: see Savignac 1911: 437-440 and Piccirillo 1993c: 116.

Madaba throughout the active period of iconophobic activity proposed by Susanna Ognibene.¹⁹⁵⁰ This would suggest that these iconoclastic communities were not only in dialogue with one another but evidently recognised themselves as part of a single established episcopal network in the region. From the evident connection of these church sites with centres such as Mount Nebo and the numerous dedications to the Theotokos, we may also infer that these groups identified themselves as Chalcedonian. It is less clear at present as to whether this represents a uniform attitude across the Palestinian region in this period or one which emerged from highly localised sentiments within the Melkite church and was restricted to a cluster of Christian networks in the Transjordan and Jerusalem. These points are preliminary and will require considerably more embellishment than can be offered here. However, what these collective arguments support is a review of our understanding of iconoclastic landscapes and centrality of reintegrating the archaeological data into this debate in order to fully appreciate the complexity of iconoclastic landscapes on an individual basis, as a collective group and as a component of a much broader social landscape.

¹⁹⁵⁰Ognibene 2002:115-116. For the renovations at 'Ayn al-Kanisah see Piccirillo 1994e: 527-530. A preliminary report of the excavations appears in Piccirillo 1995b: 409-420. The inscription of Hagios Stephanos is discussed and dated in Piccirillo 1994h: inscription 2.

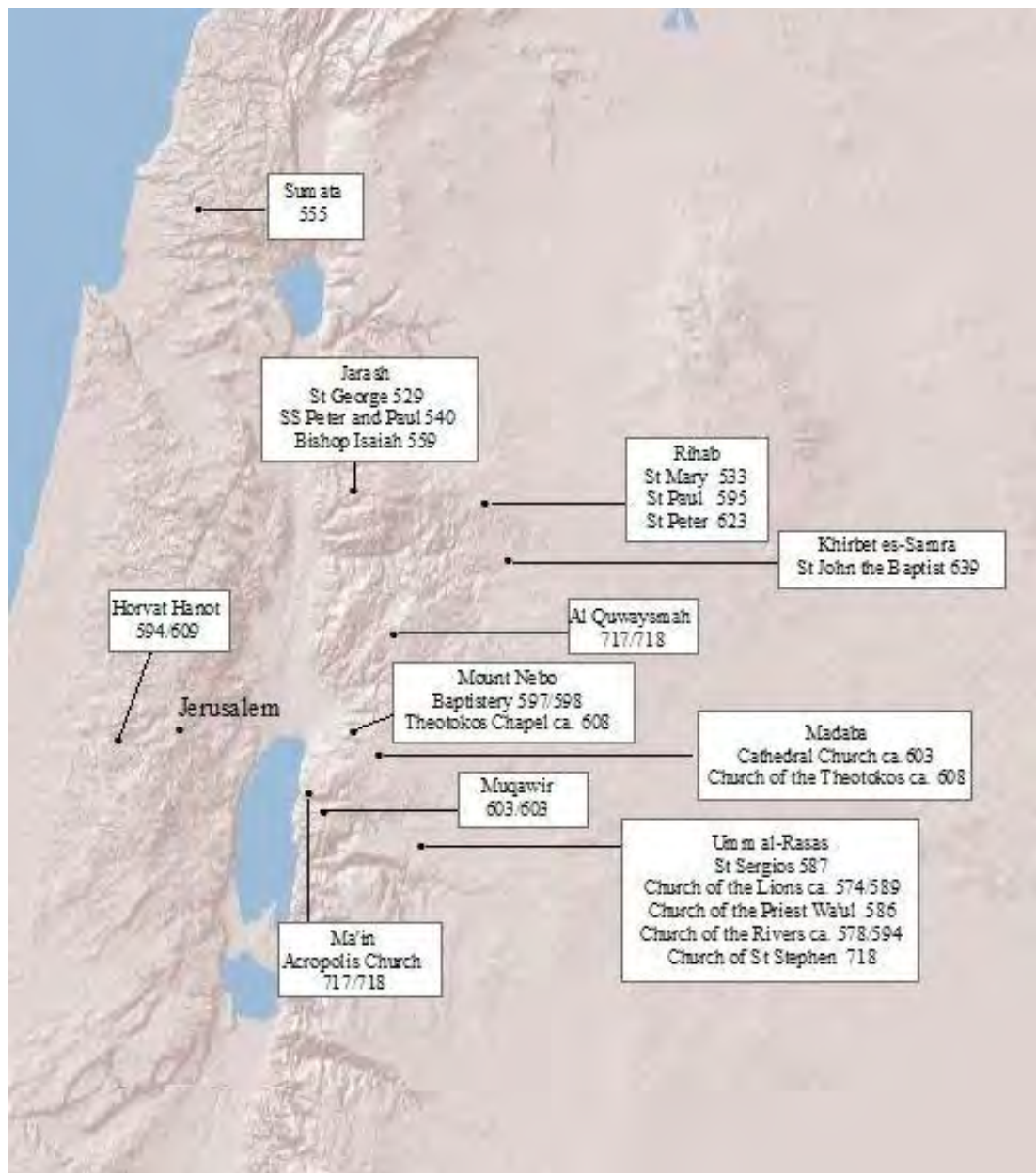


Fig. D.11 Dated inscriptions at 'iconoclast' churches.
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Fig. D.12 Mount Nebo, The New Baptistery, Basilica of Mount Nebo.
©Piccirillo 1993c.

The inscription reads “With the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, the construction of the holy church and baptistery was finished, under the most pious bishop Sergios and the most beloved by God the priest and hegoumenos Martyrios in the 15th indiction of the year 492 (597).”



Fig. D.13. Mount Nebo, the Theotokos Chapel, Basilica of Mount Nebo.

The dedicatory inscription (not visible in photo) is located in the nave in front of the bema.

©Piccirillo 1993c.

| Site | Date | Bishop |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Mount Nebo and environs | | |
| Chapel of the Theotokos | 603-610 | Leontios |
| New Baptistery | 597 | Sergios I |
| Ayn al-Kanisah | 762 | Job |
| Kastron Mefa'a | | |
| Hagios Stephanos | 718 | Sergios II |
| | 756 | Job |
| Church of the Bishop Sergios | 587 | Sergios I |
| Church of the Lions | 574/589 | Sergios I |
| Church of the Priest Wa'il | 586 | Sergios I |
| Church of the Rivers | 574/586 | Sergios I |
| Madaba | | |
| Church of the Theotokos | 767 | Theophanes |
| Cathedral Church | 5 th century | Cyrus |
| | 562 | John |
| | 603 | Leontios |
| Al Khadir | 578 | Sergios I |

Fig. D.14

Chart of the iconoclastic churches from the Madaba plateau accompanied by their foundation date and the name of the Bishop invoked in their dedicatory inscription.

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Fig. D.15

Kastron Mefa'a, Hagios Stephanos apse restoration (dated 756). The Bishop Job is mentioned in the dedicatory inscription to the left of the altar.

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Fig. D.16
 Reproduction of the dedicatory panel mentioning the Bishop Job from the monastic church of 'Ayn al-Kanisah dated to 762.
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