The liturgical installations

Anne Michel

MOUNT NEBO

NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS 1967-1997

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Among the rare sources of documentation regarding the Mount Nebo region that have reached us, those by Egeria[1] and Peter the Iberian[2] are by far the most well known.[3] These give evidence not only of pilgrimages, as far back as the 4th century, to the Sanctuary of Moses on Mount Nebo, where a monastic community was present, but also of monks in the surrounding valleys, especially in the vicinity of the spring at 'Uyun Musa.[4] The archaeological research carried out in recent years has complemented this image and thrown new light on this evidence. Around the large basilica erected on Mount Nebo, one finds small independent buildings in the nearby valleys. The buildings at Kh. al-Mukhayyat, the village of Nebo, have been known for some time but up to the present day only the churches discovered have been studied;[5] at the present we must add to these the two churches at 'Uyun Musa (the Lower and Upper Church of Kaianus and the Church of the Deacon Thomas), to the north of Mount Nebo, together with that at 'Ayn Kanisah[6] recently excavated on the southern slopes of the mountain. These excavations have brought to light an abundance of material and useful information to help us understand early Christianity in the region. In the Memorial of Moses, where the chronology is rather complex, little is known about the liturgical installations in spite of the fact that the wealth of material discovered is witness to multiple refurbishments and transformations, which contrasts with the simplicity of the installations found in the small churches in the nearby wadis.

I. THE CHURCHES OF KH. AL-MUKHAYYAT AND IN THE WADIS

The space reserved for the clergy

In the smaller edifices found in the valleys around Mount Nebo, the presbytery is reduced in size limited mostly to the apse (to the square-shaped bema in the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa), but sometimes extended to half of the distance to the easternmost pillar of the nave, as found in the churches at Kh. al-Mukhayyat and 'Ayn Kanisah. The limited space for the bema indicates a not so numerous clergy, reduced movement during liturgical celebrations as well as reduced space for any important development of ancillary installations. Traces of modification to the area reserved for the clergy can be observed only at the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa: a chancel screen was added at the east end of the south aisle, thus cutting off the entrance to the sacristy. This phenomenon

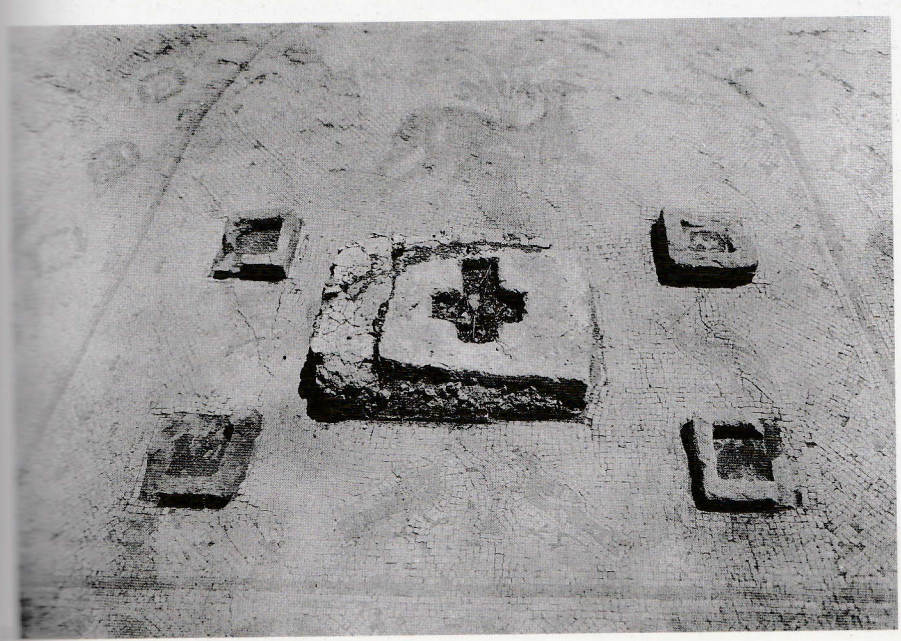
which is rather late, is known also in other churches of the region towards the end of the 6th century but it remains marginal.[7]

The access to the presbytery, generally elevated by one step, rarely by two, was through an opening in the screen placed on the axis of the church. Few elements that made up these screens have survived, but in most cases these scarce fragments enable us to reconstruct them as low screens made of slabs maintained in place by chancel posts, except in the Church of Amos and Kasiseus where there is an entrance to the sanctuary on the southern side of the chancel screen. The material used for these screens is essentially of local origin: bitumenous stone, known as Nebi Musa stone[8] and limestone;[9] the use of imported marble was essentially reserved to the basilica at Siyagha and to reliquaries.

The altar

The traces left by altars in these small churches show that they were consistently placed approximately in the centre of the space reserved for the clergy. In the churches at Kh. al-Mukhayyat the altar is placed immediately in front of the apse, on the chord, whereas in the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa and in the Chapel of the Theotokos at 'Ayn Kanisah, the altar is inside the apse.

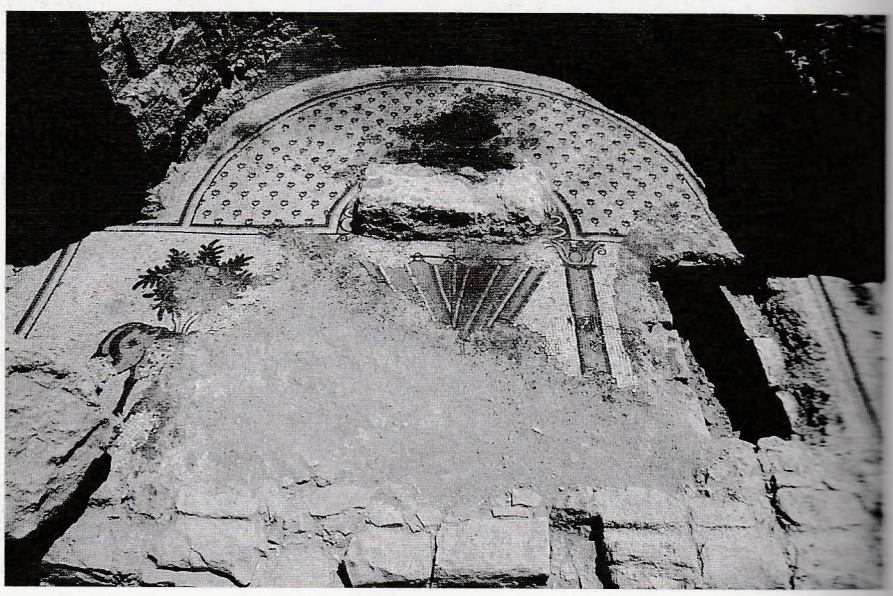
The typology of the altar is mostly known only by the traces left in the floor of the bema by the column legs supporting the *mensa*. The stone cubes, which were utilized to house the small columns of a four-legged altar, can still be seen inserted in the mosaic from the presbytery of the Church of Saint George at Kh. al-Mukhayyat, today exhibited in the basilica on Mount Nebo. One can distinctly see that the tesserae sealing these bases have been carefully laid, which indicates that the placing of the altar is contemporary with the laying of the mosaic in the apse. This mosaic is generally dated at the same period as the other floors of



1 The bases of the altar with the place for the reliquary still in situ in the Church of Saint George at al-Mukhayyat (1935).

the church, i.e. 536. The same observation can be made regarding the Church of Saints Lot and Procopius in the same village, the nave of which was mosaiced during the time of Bishop John and for the Chapel of the Theotokos at 'Ayn Kanisah. In the latter building a small marble column possibly belonging to the altar was discovered in the contiguous room to the north of the chapel.[10] In the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa, missing parts of the mosaic floor indicate that the altar had a similar typology and that it was inserted after the mosaic floor was laid in the first half of the 6th century. A small column belonging to this altar was found in a room next to the church.[11] A similar phenomenon is noticeable in the Lower Chapel of the Priest John at Kh. al-Mukhayyat (after 530). The Church of Amos and Kasiseus had an altar of the same type, traces of which have been preserved in the paved floor in front of the apse. At 'Uyun Musa, small columns from the excavation of the upper Church of Kaianus could have belonged to a four-legged altar.[12] In the majority of cases the form of the *mensa* supported by these four small columns — rectangular or sigma-shaped top — cannot be accurately established because of the lack of significant remains.[13] The chronology of these four-legged altars in the churches of the Mount Nebo region corresponds to what is known about the evolution of the altar in Provincia Arabia, where fixed four-legged tables appear from the second quarter of the 6th century - the earliest known example is that of the lower Chapel of the Priest John at Kh. al-Mukhayyat dated before 530[14] - and where it continued in use until the first half of the 7th century.

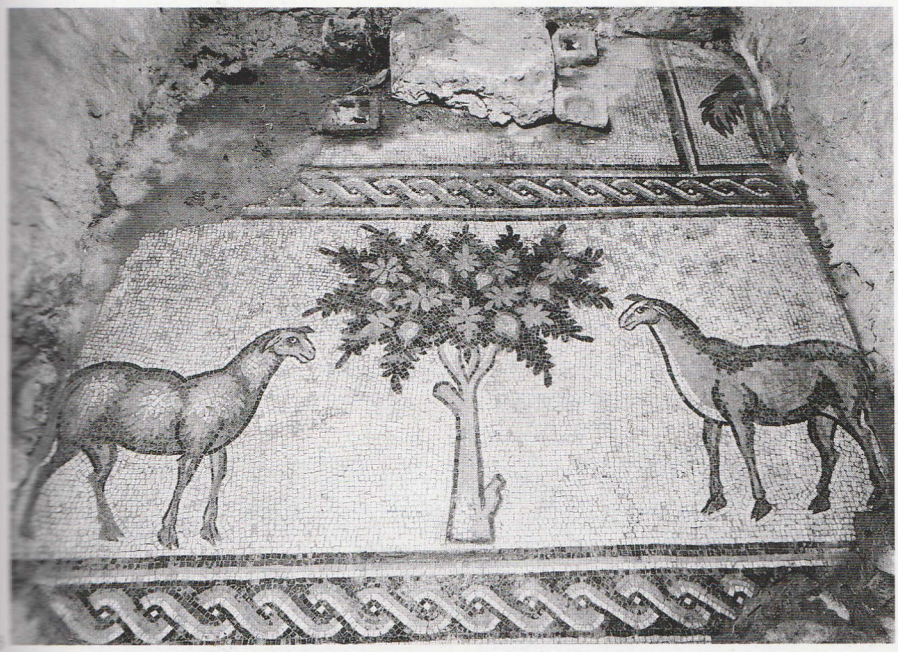
Recent excavations and studies have shown evidence, that from the second half of the 7th century, there existed in Jordan another type of altar which has escaped identification by excavators until now.[15] It is an altar formed of a masonry base supporting a mensa, fragments of which rarely have been identified as pertaining to this type of structure.[16] The recent excavations at the Chapel of the Theotokos in the Wadi 'Ayn Kanisah have brought to light an altar of the same type, which had replaced the first four-legged table. What has been preserved is only the



2 The altar in the Theotokos Chapel in Wadi 'Ayn al-Kanisah.

lower part of the base. Notwithstanding the fact that the absolute chronology of the development in the altar form has not been established here, the presence of two inscriptions, one dated to the second half of the 6th century, and another, commemorating the renovation of the mosaic floor in 762,[17] indicates a rather late date.

Among the churches in the Mount Nebo region, this type of altar has only been recognized in the church at 'Ayn Kanisah, but an analysis of the documentation from former excavations leads us to question the presence of such altars in some other locations. Thus, in the Churches of Saint George and Saints Lot and Procopius at Kh. al-Mukhayyat, the old photographs taken during the excavations, show the remains of the mass of the base still attached to the stone, destined to hold the reliquary underneath the altar.[18] A comparison with the Church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas, where a reliquary was preserved in a niche placed in the massed base of the altar suggests that the traces visible on the old photographs from Kh. al-Mukhayyat are actually the remains of a masonry base to the altar.



The identification of this type of altar in the churches of Mukhayyat could lead us to place its first use forward to the first half of the 7th century, a date which up to now has been set in the second half of the 6th century. As a matter of fact, the early abandonment of the churches at Mukhayyat had already been noticed, based on the total absence of iconoclastic traces on the mosaics. The uncertainty regarding the date of this phenomenon, generally dated to the second quarter of the 8th century,[19] could lead us to doubt the chronology of this kind of altar. But the absence of so-called 'Umayyad' sherds in the churches at Kh. al-Mukhayyat, confirmed in the excavations carried out in the summers of 1995 and 1996 in the rooms to the north and west of the Church of Saint George, indicates that the churches were abandoned already towards the middle of the 7th century. This leads us to move the date when the masonry based altar appeared in this region.

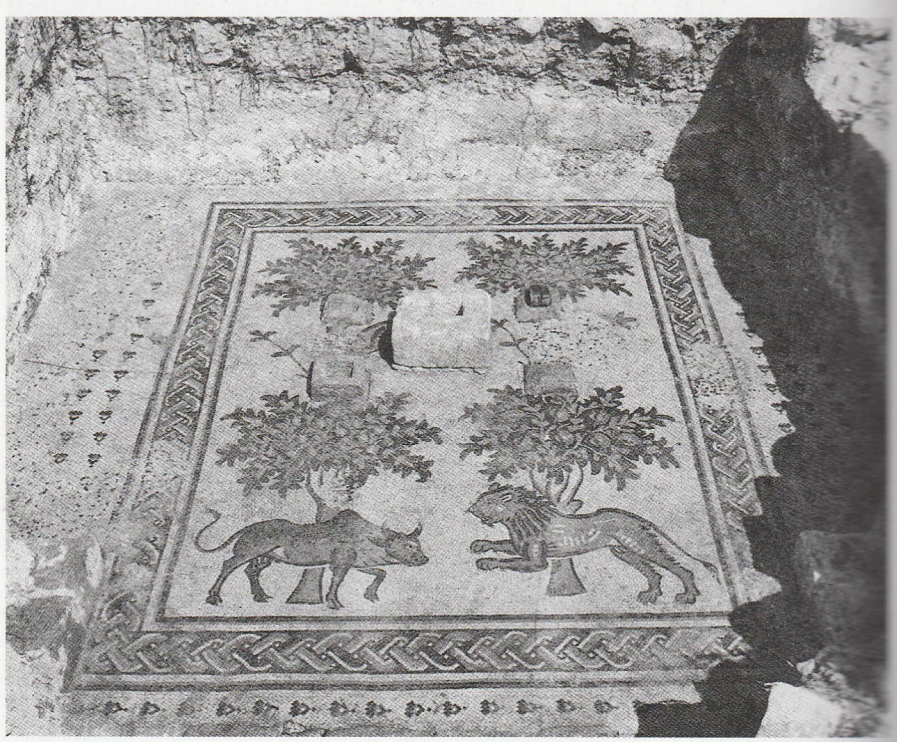
3 The altar with the mortar for the reliquary in the Church of Saints Lot and Procopius (1935).

Relics and Reliquaries

The altar was nearly always associated with a deposit of relics, placed under the altar, or inside the masonry base of the later type of altar. In the churches of the Mount Nebo region there existed only negative traces of reliquaries, either a stone designed to contain the reliquary, which had been found during excavations, or occasions where the floor of the bema was damaged by the insertion, in a second phase, of a reliquary placed in the middle of the altar column legs. For example, in the Church of Saint George at Kh. al-Mukhayyat, a stone, squared externally but presenting a cross-shaped cavity at its centre, has been preserved. The stone juts out above the mosaic of the bema in the middle of the housings for the supporting column legs of the altar. In the nearby church at Wadi 'Afrit and the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa, small rectangular stone containers have been found, probably destined to contain reliquaries. One of these in the church at 'Uyun Musa was found still in the middle of the altar supports. Finally, it is most probable that the Chapel of the Priest John at Kh. al-Mukhayyat had a deposit of relics in its first phase, as shown by the missing mosaic tesserae at the centre of the four holes left by the column legs of the altar.

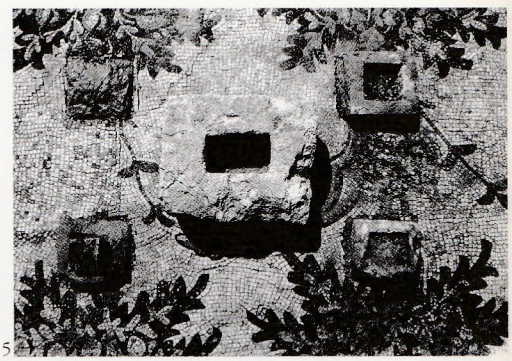
A second reliquary was discovered in the Church of the Deacon Thomas, a small marble box (14 × 13 × 10 cm) with a flat rectangular lid having a relief cross, and a hole in its centre. These measurements do not fit the cavity in the stone found underneath the altar (this measures 20 × 12 × 12 cm).[20] This means that we do not know where the second reliquary was placed in the church.

It is often accepted that the reliquary was placed underneath the altar already when the four-legged altar came into use, but in reality, things must have been more complex. On the one hand the typology of the reliquaries



4 The place for the reliquary under the altar in the Church of the Deacon Thomas in the Wadi 'Uyun Musa.

found in the provinces of Arabia and Palaestina is extremely stereotyped: most often they were in the form of a small sarcophagus-shaped box with an acroterium lid, which generally had a hole in its centre. Since there are no holes allowing the flow of oil from the reliquary box as is the case in Syria, the only exception being the one found in the Church of the Priest Wa'il at Umm al-Rasas, it is generally accepted that the hole in the lid could have served for sanctification through contact.[21] This hypothesis renders improbable the placement of such reliquaries underneath the altar, at least as long as this practice was in use. On the other hand, the archaeological traces left by the liturgical installations in the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa indicate a complex chronology regarding the association of the altar with relics. In the first stage there must have existed in this church a mobile altar that was later replaced with a four-legged table. The altar was inserted with great care; the housing blocks for the column legs of the table encroached on the tree and the right hind leg of the ram depicted in the mosaic of the presbytery, but only the necessary tesserae were removed. A further rehandling took place, the nature of which is difficult to explain; between the supporting column legs on the north and south side of the altar, the mosaic had been damaged and disorderly repaired using the same tesserae. The damage is not due to iconoclasm, traces of which are not found in the church, and must have been done at a later date than the insertion of the altar, which, as explained above, had been done with great care. Was this damage a result of the rehandling due to the placing of the box for the relics on the floor of the presbytery? The deposit of the box containing the reliquary at this spot is to be assigned to a later date because if the changes were contemporary, the container for the reliquary logically would have been inserted into the floor instead of simply being placed upon the mosaic. This was the case for the lower Chapel of the Priest John and for the greater part of unviolated reliquaries discovered in situ in the churches of the region,[22] that were all interred into the floor.



5 The bases for the altar and the place for the reliquary under the altar in the Church of the Deacon Thomas in the Wadi 'Uyun Musa.

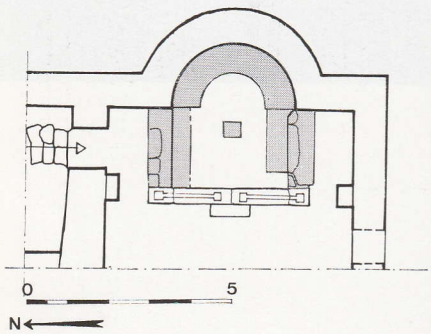
The seats for the clergy

In the small churches in the valleys around Mount Nebo, few traces of seating in the sanctuary have been noticed. A small *synthronon* follows the curve of the apse in the small chapel in the Wadi 'Afrit and in the Church of Amos and Kasiseus at Kh. al-Mukhayyat. In the former, the bench is made of a single step, the latter had two. In the Church of Saint George in Kh. al-Mukhayyat, the old excavation photographs show that the *synthronon* was replaced by a small mass of masonry - probably corresponding to the place of a seat - which was at the end of the apse on the axis of the church.[23] In all these three churches the seats were complemented by very low lateral benches placed in the bema. In the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa no traces of seating were found in the sanctuary, but the mosaic of the bema presents, on either side of the central panel, a wide white border decorated with flowers which could have held benches. On the north side of this panel there are traces of repairs of damage due to wear and tear or due to some sort of structure having been placed there.

The low height of these lateral benches has been explained as being for children,[24] but, in fact these benches should be interpreted as a small step preceding the seat itself, which is often represented on the published plans as a wall. These seats would have been destined for the undoubtedly small number of the clergy, in view of the restricted size of these presbyteries.

The annexed tables

The liturgical installations in these small churches in the wadis around Mount Nebo are generally limited to those seats and the altar accompanied by a deposit of relics. But in the Church of Amos and Kasiseus, there appears a supplementary element, the interpretation of which has given rise to controversy. The four cavities preserved in the southwest corner of the bema of this church had been first considered by the excavators as traces left by an annexed table.[25] The interpretation has been contested by Father Michele Piccirillo who saw in these cavities the traces of a pulpit.[26] In my view we should return to the first hypothesis: the pulpit never appears inside the presbytery in the known churches in Provincia Arabia and presents a very stereotyped typology. It corresponds to a normally elevated platform, which juts out into the nave exactly in front of the south corner of the sanctuary. Furthermore the archaeological discoveries of the last years have confirmed the existence of small tables placed in the corners of the presbytery against the chancel screen. Most of the time



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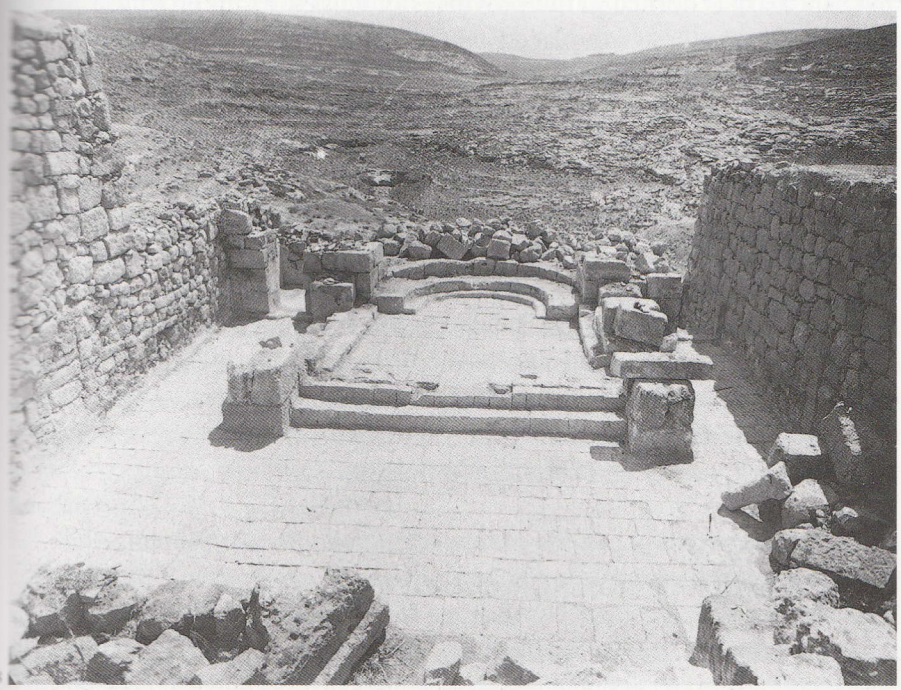
6-7 The sanctuary of the chapel at Kanisat al-Mukhayyat.

two supporting column legs for the table were enough because the table itself rested on the edge of the screen, as can been seen in the small south apse of the church at Petra.[27] These tables can be placed in either or both of the north and south corners of the sanctuary. Their chronology is not well established; it seems that they first appear towards the end of the 6th century and we have traces of them during the 7th century. In the case of the Church of Amos and Kasiseus at Kh. al-Mukhayyat, it is difficult to determine whether the table is contemporary with the floor paving in the sanctuary or later than it. Their function in the church remains as uncertain: reading tables,[28] table for the offerings,[29] or tables for the exposure of reliquaries?



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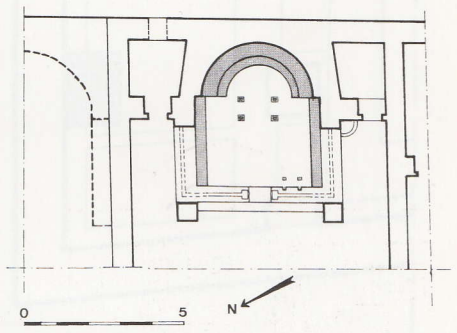

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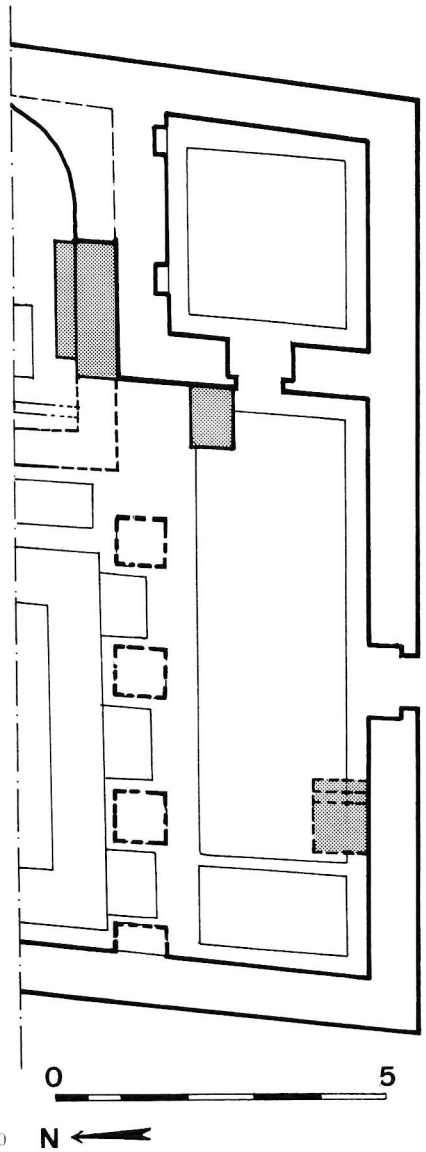
8-9 The sanctuary in the Church of Amos and Kasiseus at al-Mukhayyat.

Other installations which give rise to difficulties of interpretation

In the Church of Saint George at Kh. al-Mukhayyat there are also other installations which give rise to difficulties of interpretation. In fact, on separate occasions, different remains have been interpreted as a pulpit. Father Bagatti, in 1949, interpreted two steps leading to a small masonry platform (0.85 × 1.00 × 0.45 m high), placed near the door in the south aisle of the church, as the stairs of a pulpit.[30] By analogy the column shaft (62 cm diameter), which, at the time of the first excavations, was on a slightly larger masonry base (66 cm diameter) at the eastern extremity of the south aisle near the door leading to the sacristy, was identified as part of a pulpit.[31] In my opinion, both hypotheses should be discarded. The first because the pulpit would have been too far away from the sanctuary, which does not fit into the stereotyped typology and placement in Provincia Arabia. The second hypothesis lacks credibility, because, although the placement comes closer to what would be expected to be the position of the pulpit, access to the supposed pulpit would have been difficult. Furthermore this installation is rarely found in the small churches of Provincia Arabia.



10 The southern sector of the Church of Saint George at al-Mukhayyat.

Further excavations in the summer of 1995 have brought to light a new structure. Beneath the church is a vaulted cistern, already known from the first campaigns, supported by arches, whose voussoirs evidence a high degree of craftsmanship. The mouth of the cistern, which is on the north side of the nave immediately in front of the chancel screen, was protected by a cylindrical stone that had a round opening. The removal of this block during the 1995 campaign, which was put back in place for reasons of security, enabled us to see four squarish cavities as part of the cistern's opening. These cavities bring to mind the traces left by pulpits in churches in Provincia Arabia. But if the placement of the pulpit on the north side of the sanctuary is normal in the provinces of Palaestina, in Provincia Arabia all the known pulpits are placed on the south side.

A similar interpretation might be given to the masonry platform which extends from the north side of the sanctuary into the nave of the Chapel of the Theotokos at 'Ayn Kanisah. This platform does not appear to be uniform in structure: one can notice a break in the masonry which runs parallel to the chancel screen immediately before the door leading to the annexed room, on the north wall of the chapel. The plaster that covered the step riser of the chancel screen is uninterrupted and also covers the platform, but the platform itself is obviously the result of a refurbishment that put the door in the north wall out of use. This relative chronology does not allow us to ascertain the real function of the platform; if its shape, which is quite similar to the remains of the pulpit in the Church of Genesius at Jerash, does bring to mind a pulpit, its placement to the north is still problematic.

II. THE BASILICA OF MOSES ON MOUNT NEBO

A large amount of liturgical installations from the basilica at Siyagha has been preserved, but their study nevertheless is complex, because of the long span of time during which the building was in use as well as the multiple refurbishments that were carried out. These refurbishments can be identified easily, but it is very difficult to establish their chronology, even if a relative one. Therefore the literary sources are of some assistance. The two most quoted texts are the diary of Egeria, who saw a 'small church' towards the end of the 4th century[32] and of Peter the Iberian who speaks of a 'great church' at the start of the following century.[33] Egeria relates that the monks showed her what was considered at the time to be the *memorial* of Moses close to the *pulpitum*.[34] Peter the Iberian mentions a 'table' and altar, and under the latter stood the 'vessel of oil and grace.' Even though these witnesses are still precious, because they attest to the existence of a place of worship, they do not help us to determine the shape and set-up of the internal installations.

During the first three excavation campaigns carried out from 1933 to 1937, Father Saller tried to match the chronology established by the excavations with what the testimonies of Egeria and Peter the Iberian seemed to indicate. He thus identified a first *cella trichora*, dated to the 4th century, to which there would have followed a 5th century basilica corresponding to that seen by Peter the Iberian. But Father Saller admitted that he had not found any archaeological trace to prove this, because this

church must had been destroyed by an earthquake and rebuilt at the end of the 6th century.[35] At the time Father Saller did not have at his disposal the new data regarding the development of the earlier phases, brought to light by the excavations carried out by Father Corbo between 1967 and 1970,[36] and Father Piccirillo in 1976[37] and subsequent years.[38]

The ruins which can be seen today correspond, for the most part to the latest stage of the development of the complex. Most of the mosaics have been removed, restored or consolidated and put back in place, with the exception of the mosaics found in the northern annexes. Here we find the first baptistery dated to 530, which had been covered by another chapel during the last phase of use of the church. That situation, together with the absence of a definite general chronology, renders a synthesis of the progress in the development of the church's liturgical installations premature, and allows us only to study each installation separately.

The space reserved for the clergy

The form and extent of the presbytery are tied to the earlier history of the Christian monument, the first phase of which reused an older three or four-apsed building. In a first stage, this shape must have been preserved, as witnessed by the layout of the mosaic, which follows the apsed form. This phase must have been a Christian one, because the mosaic appears to be related to the monumental *synthronon* that occupies the east apse of the triconch.

Subsequently the two lateral walls were erected in the extension of this apse and the *synthronon*, transforming the bema into a rectangular space closed by an apse and two rooms on either side accessed from the lateral apses.[39] To the west, the bema, which is two steps higher than the naves, was enclosed by a straight screen having the same length as the nave. The surface thus formed corresponds roughly to one third of the total length of the building, proportions which are usual in the churches of Provincia Arabia.

The chancel screen of the bema went through at least three different phases. Today these are difficult to investigate fully as a result of the recent remakes using concrete.

First phase. In a first phase, the chancel screen was a low screen made with five chancel posts holding three slabs. Father Bagatti mentions a pierced marble slab and attributes it to the first phase.[40] According to Father Saller, an aperture had been left open on the south extremity of the screen to allow access to the pulpit. This is improbable since we now know that this installation had been introduced into the region only later.[41]

Second phase. At a later date the barrier was modified; the chancel rail presents traces of the enlargement of the housing for the chancel posts. The cavities were made deeper and reduced in width, a change which Father Corbo attributed to the installation of a first 'wooden iconostasis.'[42] Traces have been noticed, on various occasions, in the churches in Provincia Arabia, of remakes of the chancel screens undertaken as part of their monumentalisation, but these examples are few and far between. On the basis of comparisons made with churches in the Aegean region, it was often

thought that a progressive development was underway towards the design of a high screen, in which the posts would have been replaced by columned posts.[43] Definite evidence of this second stage in the churches of Arabia is rare: one can be sure of it only in the Church of Isaiah and the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash. In any case, the lintels that would have crowned these columned posts have not been identified. On the other hand, the monumentalisation of the access to the bema using two columned posts placed on either side of the entrance is known on more than one occasion; for example in the Church of Wa'il at Umm al-Rasas[44] or in the two joined churches inside the *castrum* at Umm al-Rasas.[45] It is therefore difficult to establish precisely the form that this second screen must have had in the basilica at Siyagha, even more so due to the fact that we do not have at our disposal all of the materials, which either have been lost or were reused in the subsequent remakes.

Third phase. A second refurbishment led to a real monumentalisation of the screen. Four column bases (45 × 45 cm), two of which were found *in situ* during the excavations and the others in the immediate vicinity, were placed on the former housings.[46] They were associated with fragments of four columns (25 cm diameter; 2.20 m height), also found during the excavation.[47] A fragment of a marble chancel slab was still preserved at the southern edge of the chancel rail during the excavations.[48] Another fragment of a slab with molded edge, having a Greek inscription, is also mentioned. In spite of this, it cannot be established whether these fragments belong to the third stage, since neither the column bases nor shafts present traces of cavities that could have held the slabs. Should we thus suppose, as a result, the joint use of chancel posts and columns, as in the nearby Chapel of the Theotokos, or the use of curtains?[49] A similar evolution of the screen has been noticed at the Church of the Virgin and the Church of al-Khadir in Madaba, both close to Mount Nebo, and in the church in the Amman Citadel.

An absolute chronology of these three stages. If the sequence of these different stages appears quite clear, determining their absolute chronology is an arduous task. The probes carried out in the nave in front of the chancel screen show that its location was never modified: Father Saller could identify at this precise point two superimposed floors, 7 cm apart, both stopping against the chancel screen. Both these levels were also discovered further to the west in the nave.[50] These two mosaics are of a later date than the tombs, covered with larger white tesserae, on which the chancel rail is partly laid. The date of those tombs is uncertain, but they are probably not earlier than the beginning of the 5th century; the tombs are built directly on bedrock, and the one placed in the bema against the chancel rail contained several coins dated to the end of the 4th century - beginning of the 5th century.[51] This chronology is confirmed by other coins of the same period, discovered by Father Corbo, some of which he found beneath a similar white mosaic under the new baptistery, and others sealed between this mosaic and the one that covered it later.[52] The installation of the chancel screen is thus later than the beginning of the 5th century; dating the two levels of mosaic in the nave to the 6th century does not allow us to ascertain more precisely the absolute chronology of the screen. It is probable that the first phase of the chancel screen is contemporary with the establishment of the church, but this date is

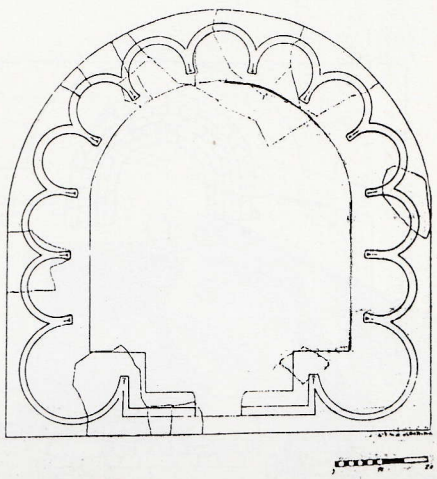
not known with certainty because it essentially depends on the dating accepted for the mosaic in the presbytery, which varies between the 4th and the 5th century, according to the different scholars.[53] At most one might say that the low chancel screen corresponds to the standard typology found in the churches of Provincia Arabia in the 6th century.

The second stage of the chancel screen is as difficult to date as the first. Some rare examples of high chancel screens, made of slabs and columned posts are known in Provincia Arabia. Among them, the Church of Isaiah at Jerash is the only one that gives a *terminus post quem* of 551. In the new baptistery in the basilica at Siyagha an inscription seems to witness to this phase in 597. From the foregoing chronological indications, should we attribute to the second half of the 6th - beginning 7th century the monumentalisation of either the chancel screen of the basilica in its entirety or limited to its central access?

The third phase of the screen should not be earlier than this date. Only a few examples are known of monumental chancel screens where columns replaced either the chancel posts or columned posts, but in two instances we have rather precise chronological indications. At Siyagha, this stage must have existed in the Chapel of the Theotokos, constructed on the south side of the basilica, at the earliest between 603 and 608,[54] dates which refer to the episcopate of Bishop Leontius mentioned in the dedicatory inscription. In the Church of the Virgin in Madaba, where this phase is also present, the first mosaic was laid at the end of the 6th century, but the second inscription in the nave indicates the date of 767, according to the new reading proposed by L. Di Segni.[55] It is true that for this church we cannot be sure either that the columned chancel screen corresponds to its first state nor that it is contemporaneous to the first mosaic of the church. Nonetheless the two dates in the mosaic in the Church of the Virgin, and also in the Theotokos Chapel allow us to propose a span of time between the beginning of the 7th and the 8th century for the monumental columned stage of the screen in the Basilica at Siyagha. It is to this final stage that we can attribute a basket-shaped capital with two facing doves found during the excavations.[56]

The altar

No material trace of the altar has been found. Father Saller proposed placing the altar above the ancient tomb in the centre of the presbytery, immediately in front of the cord of the apse.[57] This is a likely solution in view of the fact that the apse was largely filled by the *synthronon*. This type of placement for the altar, usual in the churches of Jerash, is less frequent in the Madaba territory, where the altar is generally placed internally on the cord of the apse. Some marble fragments that could have belonged to the altar table are mentioned by Father Saller and Father Bagatti. Father Bagatti identifies an altar *mensa* made of *nari* stone (1.06×0.75×0.13 m) with housings, which was found in the middle of the presbytery,[58] and which seems to correspond to the one (1.07×0.78×0.15 m) found by Father Saller to the north of the pulpit. However, Father Saller did not know if the stone was to be interpreted as an altar base whose cavities would have contained relics, an improbable hypoth-



11 Altar table found at Siyagha.

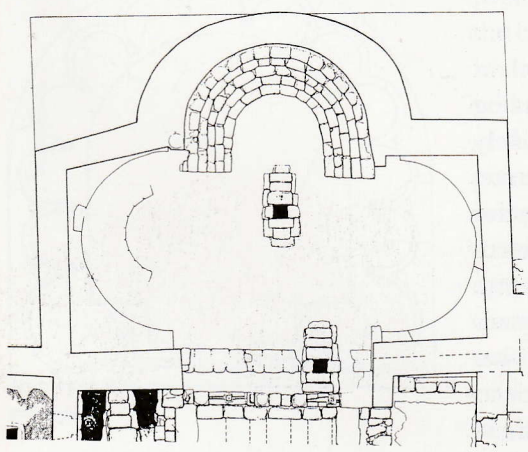
esis which he favored,[59] or as a fragment of the pulpit.

Father Saller considered that the three marble bases (30 cm in length and 24 to 27 cm in diameter), brought to light during the excavations in the southern 'sacristy', had belonged to an altar that would have had an antipendium, since one of these bases had a slot cut into it.[60] One must not forget that six other bases of the same type were found, among which four were found in situ on the chancel rail in the Theotokos Chapel, while the remaining two were found out of context in rooms 16 and 23 of the monastery.[61] Their diameter seems to be too large to accommodate altar column legs; in the Theotokos Chapel the stone housings for the altar column legs present a cavity about 10 cm in diameter. The same dimensions are seen in the Church of Saint George at al-Mukhayyat. Furthermore, the typology proposed by Father Saller does not appear, to our knowledge, in the churches of Provincia Arabia. Here altars with four column legs existed up to the middle of the 7th century, before they were replaced, perhaps as early as the first half of this same century,[62] by altar tables with a masonry base. Finally, we have very few indications about the main altar of the basilica, but a detailed analysis of the marbles found in the excavations has lead A. Acconci[63] to identify the fragments of the supports and the mensa, that can be dated to the 6th century.

The study of the marble found in the basilica has lead to the identification of fragments which probably had belonged to a *ciborium* placed above the altar. No trace of this type of installation can be seen today in the presbytery.[64]

The synthronon

The *synthronon* is undoubtedly the best preserved liturgical installation in the basilica at Siyagha. It is made of solid masonry with five tiers of imposing dimensions (1.80 m wide at the base, 1.27 m in height) which lay on 50 cm high foundation stones. The reduced height of the tiers (about 25 cm) appears insufficient for them to have been all used as seats.[65] According to Father Saller, the axial stone of the top tier was slightly elevated with respect to the others.[66] It is probable that only the last tier was used by the



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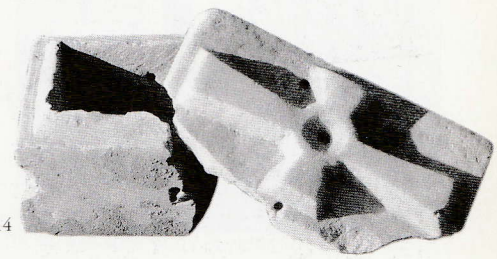
12-13 The synthronon in the Memorial of Moses

clergy for seating, the central place being reserved for the celebrant. The whole structure was originally plastered, some fragments of which were still in place at the time of the first excavations.[67]

The good state of conservation of the structure does not resolve the chronological problems. The *synthronon* has been generally considered to be an ancient element in the church, as it seems to fit perfectly the mosaic of the apse, which has been dated to the beginning of the 5th century, principally based on the epigraphic evidence.[68] But various archaeological inconsistencies still raise difficulties. The reuse, mentioned by Father Bagatti,[69] of elements from an older building, possibly Roman, does not contradict this chronology. The examination of the old photographs shows that the *synthronon* was inserted later - not necessarily much later - than the construction of the apse, since its masonry appears simply to be juxtaposed against the stonework of the same apse wall. On the other hand the tiers of the synthronon extend beyond the cord of the apse, which is unusual for this type of installation.[70] This part of the tiers abutted the walls that isolated the lateral conches of the sanctuary. These walls correspond to a refurbishment, since their insertion damaged the mosaic floor of the bema. In fact the mosaic presents traces of repairs carried out using larger tesserae, in the vicinity of these walls and more so in front of the access to the southern 'sacristy', where glass tesserae, possibly coming from a wall decoration, were used.[71] Furthermore these walls hid the columns originally placed in the corners of the eastern apse. Father Saller resolved this difficulty by stating that the walls and the mosaic were contemporaneous - and therefore the *synthronon* too - because of the similarity of the masonry used in both the walls and the apse. The solution seems to be unsatisfactory, but at the present we must admit that we are unable to establish a better chronology.

The reliquaries

Among the fragments of reliquaries recovered during the excavations of the basilica, none was found in situ. Although a good number of them come from the Theotokos Chapel, we cannot determine their original position within the basilica. The quantity of these fragments together with their bad state of preservation do not allow us to establish how many reliquaries there were. Father Bagatti mentions at least three,[72] but in my opinion, one of them should be discarded: the author interprets as a reliquary related to the first phase of the church, a fragment of marble that bears part of an engraved inscription, which belonged in fact, to a *mensa*.[73] But the other fragments of reliquaries, recovered during the excavations near the Chapel of the Theotokos have allowed us to reconstruct a lid and a casket. The latter (13 × 17 cm), in the shape of a small grey marble sarcophagus, was originally partitioned, according to Father Saller, into three parts, the internal walls having already been destroyed when it was found. It was decorated externally with punctured circles.[74] The sloping white marble lid had acroteria on the corners and had the same punctured circle decoration as the casket. It was perforated in the centre and had also another three holes on one of its longer sides, close to its edge. Even though, for simplicity,



14 The marble reliquary found in the Church of the Deacon Thomas.

Father Saller treated the fragments as belonging to one reliquary because of their similar dimensions, it is not so evident that they in fact did belong to the same one. This typology of reliquaries in the form of sarcophagi with a sloping lid with acroteria is similar to that of the greater part of reliquaries found in the churches of Provincia Arabia and Palaestina, with the exception that the decoration is often limited to either a cross sculpted in relief or encrusted into the lid, the casket being undecorated. The hole in the centre of the lid is characteristic of the reliquaries of the region; it could have been used for the sanctification, by touch using a stick.[75]

The pulpit

The basilica possessed a pulpit that projected into the nave from the south corner of the presbytery. What can be seen today is the result of recent refurbishment, but at the time of the excavation, it was still well preserved: the old photographs show the four access steps of the staircase (0.79 m high) which have today disappeared. The lowest of these steps rested on the mosaic of the presbytery. The staircase led to an elevated platform, supported by small columns, a typology now well known, thanks to the discovery of the pulpit in the Church of the Lions at Umm al-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa.[76] Here the four columns were lodged in a hexagonal base (1.17 × 0.92 × 0.17m) which had four hexagonal cavities (18 - 20 cms at their greatest width), only two of which were visible during the excavation. In fact the two cavities nearer the chancel were hidden by the staircase of the pulpit, which led Father Saller to suppose that the base had been moved.[77] But it is also possible that the base was a reused stone. According to Father Saller, the platform of the pulpit could have been supported by two of the fragments of columns found in the Theotokos Chapel, since the height of these fragments (about 50 cm) allowed the platform to be raised to the level of the top step;[78] during a recent study, A. Acconci has attributed other small columns to the supports of the pulpit.[79]

The other architectural elements (platform, hand rail, platform balustrade) belonging to the pulpit could not be definitely identified.[80] On the other hand, Father Saller wondered about a rectangular limestone slab (1,07 × 0.78 × 0.15 m) found in front of the presbytery to the north of the pulpit.[81] This slab had various cavities on both its faces. The lower, poorly dressed face, had on one of its smaller sides two approximately square cavities (17 -18 cm on a side) 29 cm apart, one of which was already very eaten away at the time of its discovery, while a partially plastered circular cavity was on the other extremity (12 cm diameter). The upper, better dressed face also presented traces of slots: one can distinguish on the longer sides two kinds of rails (approximately 60 cm apart), finishing with right angled turns that match the square cavities on the lower face. Finally, Father Saller doubted that this element had belonged to the pulpit and preferred to interpret this slab as the base of an altar. The position of the cavities on either side of the slab, the excessively large size of the cavities with respect to the small supporting columns, which are usually nearer to 10 - 15 cm in diameter, in my opinion renders this hypothesis improbable. On the contrary the coincidence of the dimensions of the various cavities on either side of the slab and those on the pulpit base is intriguing. It

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15 The base of the pulpit in the Memorial of Moses.

16 The same base seen from the north, during the excavations (1935).

does not seem impossible to me that this slab corresponds to the elevated platform of the pulpit; the two square cavities could have lodged the upper part of the small columns supporting the platform, while the rails (6 cm wide) could have contained the slabs of the balustrade, leaving a space of 60 cm, certainly sufficient if somewhat restricted for this type of structure.

The chronology relating to the installation of this pulpit is difficult to establish. It is definitely an added installation: on the one hand, the lowest step covered the mosaic of the bema, while on the other hand the base of the pulpit itself hid part of the enclosing band of the carpet, which included trees, the hind part of an animal as well as a double return meander. This surviving portion of the mosaic was discovered by Father Corbo during work carried out in 1970.[82] This last phase of the mosaic in the nave, for the most part geometric in pattern, is attributed to the 6th century, probably the first half.[83] This chronology fits well with what we know about the introduction of such pulpits in the churches of Provincia Arabia, which can be fixed at the earliest towards the end of the 6th - beginning of the 7th century.

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17 Stone slab with cavities found in the basilica of Moses.

18 The 'memoria' at the eastern extremity of the southern aisle during the excavations (1933).

The 'memoria'

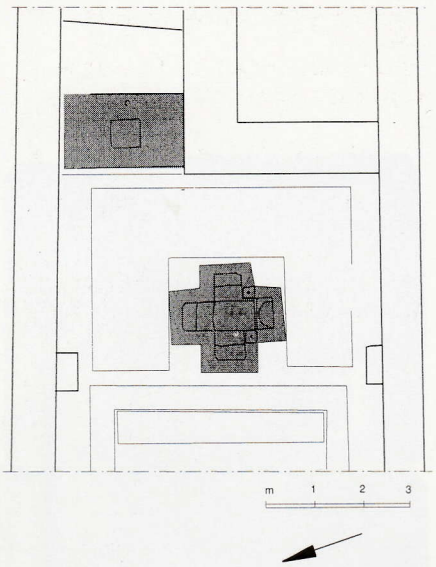
In the vicinity of the pulpit at the east extremity of the south aisle a sort of masonry platform was found. Father Saller [84] identified it with the monument which was considered, at the time of Egeria,[85] to be the memorial of the tomb of Moses, and which would have been rebuilt several times during the construction of the various churches erected on the summit of Siyagha. The interpretation of this structure is, in fact, more complex because when it was excavated in 1970, it turned out to be the latest element discovered, until that time, in the basilica.[86]

The installations of the annexed buildings

The liturgical installations of the various chapels erected around the basilica are, on the contrary, better known.

The old diakonikon-baptistery.[87] The old diakonikon-baptistery was discovered inside an adjacent room to the north of the basilica, in conjunction with the renewed excavations by Father Piccirillo in 1976. The main installation is limited to a baptismal font placed on the eastern extremity of the room's axis. It is a plastered masonry cross-shaped font (2.40 m side), access to which was through a step placed in each of the west, north and east arms of the cross, while a small semicircular plastered basin (0.34 × 0.53 m) occupied the south arm. This basin had a small hole for draining water into the font. The bottom of the font was paved with three marble slabs; a drain hole was placed in the northeast corner. The dedicatory inscription in the mosaic indicates that the font must have been covered by a *ciborium*.[88] Traces of cavities are visible on two stones of the upper course of the font.[89]

The new baptistery. The first baptistery, 'renewed and embellished' in 530 at the time of the Bishop Elias of Madaba, was later replaced by a second baptistery placed in a chapel on the eastern edge of the south side of



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the basilica. The font here was isolated from the body of the chapel by a chancel screen placed about 2.50 m from the apse of the chapel. The cavities preserved in the chancel rail indicate a screen made of two slabs kept in place by four chancel posts. In addition to the usual access on the axis, there were two openings, on either side of the screen, whose dimensions (0.92 m to the north and 0.89 m to the south) indicate that they too could be used to reach the font. It is difficult to reconstruct what the screen looked like because no remains of slabs or chancel posts were found inside the chapel. Father Bagatti proposed a high colonnade made of columned posts that kept the slabs in place and above which curtains would have been suspended.[90] Certainly the excavations did bring to light columned posts, but it is quite impossible to determine their original placement. A masonry seat was installed after the mosaic was laid, against the south wall of the baptistery, between the apse and the chancel screen, and a similar seat was placed in the nave against the north wall. The font itself stood on the cord of the apse. It was made of two parts, which were well studied during the last discoveries of Father Corbo:[91] a cylindrical stone (1.33 m diameter, 0.54 m high) with a tetrafoil cavity, rose above the floor. It rested on a second stone that was inserted in the floor and laid above high foundations. This stone had in its centre a square cavity to which four shallow arms were grafted and whose corners coincided with those of the lobes of the upper stone. The draining hole for the water, pierced in the bottom of the font, communicated with a small canal that led the water inside an earlier tomb, above which the baptistery had been built. The water was dispersed in the ground through infiltration. The two baptisteries at Mount Nebo are among the rare cases in which we possess a definitive chronology that can be associated with a typology of the fonts. These correspond to a well known typology in the region; the first one, in masonry corresponds to the earlier type progressively replaced by monolithic, generally shallower fonts, which had been considered to have been an introduction related to the baptism of children.[92]

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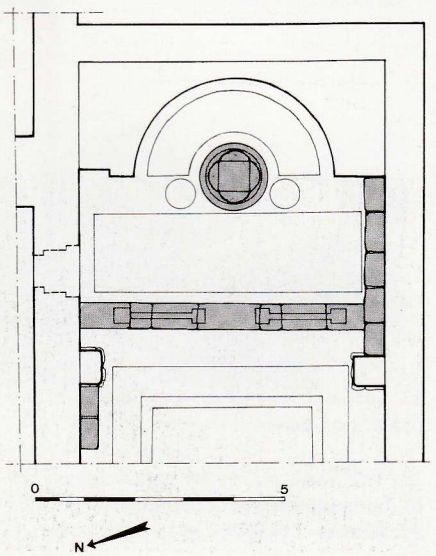
The north chapel ('new diakonikon'). After its abandonment, the old baptistery was covered with care, apparently at one time,[93] and replaced by another chapel. This chapel was subdivided by a two-step raised chancel screen, placed immediately above the old font. The traces of the lodgments for the slabs in the chancel rail, although very consumed, are visible in the old excavation photographs.[94] Fragments of chancel slabs made of oil shale, belonging to a screen, were found in the chapel during the excavations; one must add to these a quasi-cylindrical chancel post presenting traces left by the hanging of a cross.[95] There are no indications that these fragments had belonged to the chancel screen of the chapel.[96] Father Saller also mentions an octagonal stone, without any cavity, found in front of the screen in the south part of the nave.[97] He associates it with the presence of a pulpit, but the hypothesis is improbable, on the one hand because of the tenuous character of this fragment, and on the other because of the existence of another pulpit inside the basilica.



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The Chapel of the Theotokos. Probably at the same time that the new baptistery was built,[98] a final chapel was erected to its west against the south side of the basilica. The chapel dedicated to the Theotokos was completed, as the dedicatory inscription shows, in the time of the Bishop Leontius

known as the bishop of Madaba in 603 and 608. The chapel was divided into two parts by a two-step high chancel screen placed about 1.50 m from the apse. The cavities visible in the chancel rail indicate the placement of two chancel slabs, allowing an access on the axis of the apse, while a small space existed on either end of the screen. The abundance of material found in the chapel and an attentive analysis of the chancel rail show that, notwithstanding the late date of construction, the screen underwent refurbishment. Among the fragments found in the chapel, there are three chancel posts, none of which is identical to the other. One of them had a pine-cone-shaped head and the others had a cylindrical mold with a flat top, obviously designed to receive a small column.[99] Apart from these posts, four column bases (24, 25, 26 and 27 cm in diameter) inserted in the upper step of the chancel rail,[100] elements of grey marble column shafts[101] and four Corinthian capitals, even though of different types, were found in the chapel.[102] Finally, one must add the fragments of two slabs, one in marble,[103] and the other more incomplete, made of oil shale which were found, for the most part, in the vicinity of the door leading to the south aisle of the basilica.[104]

Helped by this material, Father Saller proposed that the chapel had had two successive screens; a first low screen, still in fashion at the time of the construction of the chapel, should have been followed by a columned screen, which became fashionable in Constantinople during the reign of Justinian.[105] Even if it is uncertain that the Constantinopolitan usage reached Provincia Arabia, it is evident that there were two phases in the chancel screen. If the chancel posts found in the chapel really belong to its screen, one must probably reconstruct a first low screen whose access was embellished by two columned posts, an arrangement known on various occasions in the region.[106] The monumentalisation of the screen was later accented by the very careful insertion of additional columns. Contrary to what happened in the basilica, where the column bases, corresponding to the last stage of the chancel screen, were laid directly on the chancel rail, here the chancel rail was altered to allow the insertion of the bases. Each base presents, on the side juxtaposed against the chancel post, a slot in the lower torus, which was cut in such a way as to fit the profile of the post. The care with which these adjustments were made could also suggest the simultaneous installation of both columns and posts, but the lack of homogeneity in both the posts and capitals, leads one to prefer the reconstruction of two successive stages of the chancel screen, carried out using available older material.

An altar was installed internally on the cord of the apse. Four square stones (24 to 28 cm sides) inserted in the mosaic floor were discovered during the excavations; they delimited an area of 1.04 × 0.81 m. The present state of conservation of the mosaic in the apse does not allow us to determine whether their insertion was contemporaneous to the laying of the mosaic or later. However, the late construction date of the chapel leads one to consider that the fixed altar with four column legs was installed immediately, since this type of altar had already replaced the movable type of altar known in the first half of the 6th century in Provincia Arabia. Each of these stones presented on its inside a hexagonal cavity designed to receive the column leg of the altar. During the excavations, one column leg was preserved in situ in one of these stones, but it is uncertain whether it had belonged to the original table because

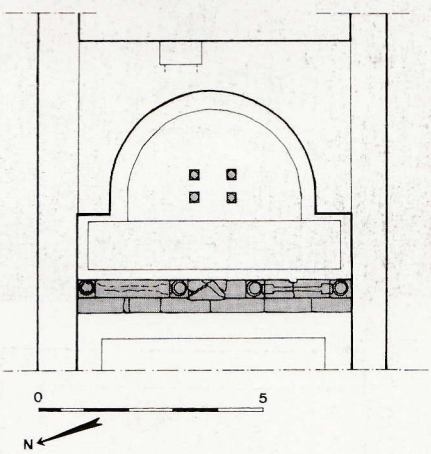
19 The Old Diakonikon-baptistery.

20 The stone monolithic font in the Baptistery Chapel.

21 The apsidal area of Baptistery-Chapel.

22 Apsidal area of the Theotokos Chapel.

23 Detail of the chancel screen in the Theotokos Chapel (1995).



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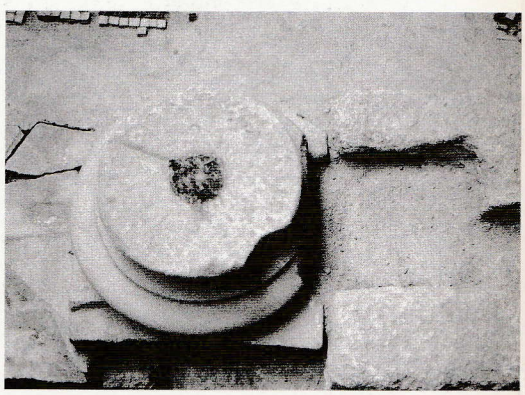

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of its reduced height.[107] Similar elements that can be subdivided into two groups according to their molding, were found in the chapel, but it is difficult to ascertain their original placement. The long period of use of the basilica together with the numerous refurbishments of the liturgical installations do not exclude the possibility that older materials coming from the church itself were reused at various places in the building during the same refurbishments. Therefore these fragments could have been used as altar column legs in the basilica as in the Chapel of the Theotokos, or as column legs for annexed tables whose presence is known in the Theotokos Chapel.

As a matter of fact, Father Saller noted the discovery, during the excavations, of a stone stub jutting out of the floor of the presbytery of the chapel against the south part of the screen. This fragment had a smooth face towards the screen, and two lateral concave sides which developed into a convex front finished off with a flat central strip. He also mentioned the existence of an apparently intentionally removed part in the mosaic to the northwest of this stone stub. This can no longer be verified because of the present bad state of the mosaic, but a small slot in the chancel rail remains approximately in the centre of the south part. Another missing part of the mosaic indicates a probable similar installation to the north, where no other trace is visible because of the pitiful state of the chancel rail on this side. Father Saller interpreted with good reason these tenuous clues as traces left by annexed tables placed in the corners of the sanctuary against the chancel screen, and as parallels he cited the churches in Jerash.[108] Today, further similar examples can be noticed in Provincia Arabia as well as in both Palaestina Secunda and Tertia.[109] These types of installations appear quite frequently, but it is still difficult to specify their exact use. Finally, seats placed in the sanctuary against the north and south walls in front of the apse completed the liturgical installations. These seats were formed by simple stones put in place after the mosaic was laid, the design of which they partially hid. The seats were plastered at the same time as the walls of the chapel. Even if this chapel is among the best preserved remains on Mount Nebo, its interpretation remains quite delicate. An abundance of liturgical material has been found here, but it does not always seem to correspond to the installations inside the chapel itself. These difficulties do in fact constantly crop up in the course of studying the remains at Mount Nebo. The long use of the complex and the frequent refurbishments, sometimes recycling older materials, have lead to a complex entanglement of the various elements. The major difficulty lies in matching of traces - in negative - with the numerous fragments of liturgical material gathered during the excavations. On the other hand the richness of this material allows us to propose as a working hypothesis, a reconstruction of the various development phases of the basilica and of its liturgical installations through the passage of time.

Conclusions

A wall dated to the 3rd or 4th century,[110] whose function is not clear, was replaced by a three conch sanctuary, having a vestibule and two funerary chapels at a slightly lower level.[111] Its construction could date back either to the end of the 4th century (according to Egeria) or to the beginning of the

5th century (according to the chronology established by the excavations), but the stratigraphic analysis of the walls have shown that this three conch sanctuary underwent two successive stages.[112] In the second phase, the cella trichora had already been provided with the *synthronon* and the mosaic that can still be seen in the presbytery and which has been dated, based on stylistic analysis, to the 5th century. This mosaic covers the earlier white mosaic found to the east of the chancel screen. It is generally admitted that this last mosaic dates to the time of hegumen Alexis, who is also mentioned in an inscription in the mosaic of the apse. However, a reduced period of time must have passed between the two mosaics. The diakonikon-baptistery was completed in the first half of the 6th century. Important restructuring was carried out in the first half of the 6th century, when the basilica was established, in which the cella trichora was adapted into the presbytery. The mosaic already present in the older cella trichora now decorated the bema of the basilica and a first level of mosaic was laid in the nave. If the cella trichora did not already have a chancel screen, a low screen separating the presbytery from the nave was put in place at this stage. This chancel screen went through a first phase of monumentalisation, with the addition of columned posts, either at the central access or in its entirety, at the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the 7th century. The old diakonikon-baptistery was buried to provide space for the north chapel, while the new baptistery was completed in 597 on the southeast side of the church.

Less ambitious works were carried out in the first half of the 7th century; in the first decade of the century, at the time of Bishop Leontius, the Chapel of the Theotokos was completed. At the same time the chancel screen in the basilica was refurbished a second time, columns replaced the chancel posts and columned posts. It is not impossible that some of these were then reused in the Chapel of the Theotokos. It was also during this time that the pulpit was erected.

notes

[1] Maraval 1982.

[2] Raabe 1895.

[3] The sanctuary is also mentioned by the pilgrim Theodosius in the middle of the 6th century (*de Situ,* 19) and the pilgrim from Piacenza (*Itinerarium,* 18, 13); cf. Piccirillo 1989, 147-148.

[4] *It. Eg.*, 10, 8 - 11, 4.

[5] The Church of Saint George, the Church of Saints Lot and Procopius, the Church of Amos and Kasiseus with the Chapel of the Priest John, of which two phases have been identified, al-Kanisah an the Wadi 'Afrit; cf. Saller & Bagatti 1949; Piccirillo 1973, 322-358; Piccirillo 1989, 192-197 (earlier phase of the Chapel of the Priest John).

[6] The church and the nearby structures were the subject of two excavation campaigns during 1994 and 1995; cf. Piccirillo 1995c, 38-44; Piccirillo, 1995b, 409-420; Piccirillo 1994, 521-538, Pl. 19-29.

[7] The extension, limited to the south nave, appears in the Church of al-Khadir at Madaba, in Church A at Yasilah, the lower Church at al-Quwaysmah and Saint Stephen's at Umm al-Rasas; in the last two, the screen proceeds in a straight line as a result of successive rehandling.

[8] See the fragments of slabs and chancel posts found in the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa published by Piccirillo 1990, 243, Fig. 3, 1 p. 231, Fig. 10 p. 243, ph. 68 Pl. 21; see also A. Acconci, nos. 3, 4 and 5.

[9] Two stone chancel posts on which are engraved the names of benefactors, coming from the Church of Amos and Kasiseus, have been found, one in the church the other reused as a door lintel in a nearby house, cf. Saller & Bagatti 1949, 35, Fig. 6.1 et Pl. 35. 1-2; an isolated marble fragment, which had belonged to a chancel slab, was found in the Church of Saints Lot and Procopius, *ibid.*, p. 40; see also Acconci, nos. 1 and 2.

[10] Piccirillo 1995c, 39.
[11] Piccirillo 1990, Ph. 69 Pl. 21, Fig. 3,1 p. 231; see also Acconci, no. 1.
[12] Piccirillo 1984b, Fig. 10 A, publishes a fragment of a small column measuring 9.5 × 10.5 × 42.0 cm; see also Acconci, nos. 1 and 2.
[13] The fragments found at Mount Nebo show the existence in the region of the two types.
[14] The absolute chronology of the introduction of this type of altar is here quite certain. The floor of the earlier phase of the chapel, in which the altar was inserted, is prior to 562, the date in which the second floor was laid during the remake of the building. Laid at the time of the Bishop Fidus of Madaba, this first floor must be earlier than 530, because at that time Elias was bishop of Madaba, where he is known at least until 536, preceding John who succeeded him.
[15] See, for example, the south church in the castrum at Umm al-Rasas, Bujard, Haldimann & Bonnet 1988, 106; For the buildings of the Saint Stephen complex, Michel 1994, 116; in general, Michel 1994a, vol. I, 104-107, Duval 1994, 174.
[16] Fragments of the mensa have been identified by the Swiss expedition, in the churches of the castrum at Umm al-Rasas in 1988, cf. Bujard, Haldimann & Bonnet 1988, 105-106.
[17] Piccirillo 1994, 521-538, Pl. 19-29.
[18] Saller & Bagatti 1949, Pl. 22.2 for the Church of Saint George and Pl. 14.1 for the Church of Saints Lot and Procopius.
[19] Cf. the summary of the problem, Schick 1995, 180-219.
[20] Piccirillo 1990, 242.
[21] Duval 1994, 187.
[22] To date, four unviolated reliquaries have been found under the altar in the churches of Jordan: Saint Basil at Rihab, north church at Esbus, church 95 at Kh. al-Samra and the east church at Pella. A fifth intact reliquary, which raises other problems, was brought to light at the eastern extremity of the north aisle in the small chapel of the Tower at Umm al-Rasas.
[23] Saller & Bagatti 1949, Pl. 22.2.
[24] Saller & Bagatti 1949, 35, Nussbaum 1965, 75.
[25] Saller & Bagatti 1949, 35.
[26] Piccirillo 1989, 203; Saller & Bagatti 1949, 44 interpreted these remains as witnesses of a modern refurbishing of the building.
[27] See the photographs published in *ACOR, The first 25 Years*, p. 70 and *Archéologia* no. 302, June 1994, p. 34.
[28] Donceel-Voûte 1988, 254.
[29] Piccirillo 1992, 207 and Piccirillo 1993a, 31.
[30] Saller & Bagatti 1949, 44.
[31] Piccirillo 1989, 179; Saller & Bagatti 1949, 44, interpreted these remains as witness to modern refurbishment of the building. Elements of columns, similar to the one mentioned by Bagatti which obviously come from an older edifice, have been reused in various places in the masonry of the church and in the foundations of the eastern pilasters in the room built against the south side of the church.
[32] *It. Eg.* 12,1: "ubi est nunc ecclesia non grandis, in ipsa summitate montis Nabau" (Maraval 1982, 172).
[33] *Vita Petri*, Raabe 1895, 83.
[34] *It. Eg.* 12, 1-2 (Maraval 1982, 172 and 174).
[35] Saller 1941, 39-46.
[36] Corbo 1967, 241-258; Corbo 1970, 273-298.
[37] Piccirillo 1976, 281-318, Pl. 49-80.
[38] See the notes by Piccirillo 1985, 431; Piccirillo 1986, 349; Piccirillo 1987a, 400-401; Piccirillo 1988a, 457-459; Piccirillo 1989, 147-175, especially 166-175; Alliata 1990, 427-466.
[39] Although Saller 1941, 50 and 211-212, notices evident traces of damage on the mosaic, due to these two walls, he thinks that they are contemporaneous with the rest of the sanctuary, because the masonry of these walls is similar to the one of the east apse. The disappearance of these walls today renders impossible the analysis of the masonry.
[40] Bagatti 1936, Fig. 6, p. 111. Bagatti attributes this slab to a 4th century church, but it is difficult to confirm this and attribute with certainty this slab to the first stage of the chancel. This hypothesis was not taken up again by Saller 1941, 288 and Pl. 124,1.
[41] Acconci (nos. 76, 77 and 88), removes this space, as imagined by Saller, and reconstructs a screen made of six chancel posts and four slabs.
[42] These modifications are mentioned by Corbo 1970, p 281: "così si è potuto constatare un passaggio di adattamenti dagli incastri primitivi per i pilastrini della cancellata bassa, a buche più profonde e strette per ancorarvi, forse, una primitiva iconostasi in legno [...]." These cavities are today invisible because column bases, corresponding to the last stage of the screen have been laid above them.
[43] It has been possible to establish a quite precise chronology of this evolution in the south basilica of the double church at Aliki on the island of Thasos, cf. Sodini &

Kolokotsas 1984, 26-44.
[44] Piccirillo 1993a, 318 and 321, Fig. 17.4, p. 319.
[45] Bujard, Haldimann & Bonnet 1988, 32, 104.
[46] Saller 1941, 51; see also Acconci, nos. 98 - 101.
[47] Mentioned by Bagatti 1936, 121; Saller 1941, Pl. 129, 9-10.
[48] Saller 1941, 50, Pl. 43,1.
[49] Acconci, reconstructs columns maintaining only two slabs.
[50] Saller 1941, 50, Pl. 88,1 and 91,2.
[51] However, Saller 1941, 36-37, mentions that this tomb was not completely sealed, which does not exclude the possibility of extraneous material having infiltrated into it.
[52] Corbo 1970, 250 and 258.
[53] The dating of this mosaic raises several problems. Saller 1941, 267-268, is inclined to place it in the 5th century, even though he admits that, in respect to the inscription mentioning the hegumen Alexis, contemporaneous to the bema floor - but is it true? - that, "a date in the first half of the 6th century or even in the middle of that century would satisfy all the archaeological evidence as far as we are capable of interpreting it at present." Corbo (1967, 258), as a result of his research, opts for the first half of the 5th century, while Piccirillo (1989, 153-154), preferred the end of the 4th century. These dates are based on identifying the hegumen Alexis, mentioned in the funerary chapel brought to light by Corbo, under the new baptistery, with that one mentioned in the inscription of the presbytery, commemorating a remake of the monument. Piccirillo (1989, 153) considers that remake as a generic term. Gatier (1986, 83), accepts this hypothesis because of the rarity of the name in the region. This however does not solve our archaeological problems, because this supposes that the same mosaic floor decorated the presbytery continuously from the 5th century up to the abandonment of the church, while the floor in the nave, attributed to the 6th century, went through at least two stages, which seems paradoxical.
[54] The chancel seems to have known two stages, see below.
[55] Di Segni 1992, 251-257, Pl. 25-26.
[56] Saller 1941, 51-52. Cf. Acconci, no.113.
[57] Saller 1941, 54.
[58] Bagatti 1936, 121.
[59] Saller 1941, 56: "On the upper surface, there are several other cavities [...] I think these cavities were for relics and that the slab was used for an altar" and Saller 1941, 67.
[60] Saller 1941, 55-56.
[61] Saller 1941, 295.
[62] See above, the remarks regarding the altar at Kh. al-Mukhayyat.
[63] See Acconci, nos. 19-24, for the supports during a first stage; but also nos. 31-36 during a phase in which the altar was supposed to have six column legs, associated with a mensa no. 53.
[64] Acconci (nos. 10-14), attributes to a ciborium; column bases (nos. 1-3), Aquitanian marble column shafts, very appreciated at the time of Emperor Justinian (nos. 6-9), and Corinthian capitals. The author attributes the introduction of the ciborium to the 6th century, during the refurbishing of the basilica.
[65] See the remarks by Duval 1994, 190.
[66] Saller 1941, 48-49.
[67] These fragments can be seen on Pl. 81 in Saller 1941.
[68] See above, the summary of this discussion in note 51.
[69] Bagatti 1936, 118.
[70] When this happens, this state is generally the result of a refurbishing; the Church of Saint George at Jerash where a door leading to the presbytery was put out of use by the enlargement of the *synthronon*. An interruption in the masonry of the bench clearly indicates a refurbishing.
[71] Saller 1941, Pl. 84,1; 212 and Pl. 86,2.
[72] Bagatti 1936, 125.
[73] Bagatti 1936, 115, without photo or drawing, writes: "Ben lavorati a traforo sono altri pezzi di transenna (Fig. 6) e di reliquario, nell'orlo del quale rimangono le lettere incavate e poi riempite di pasta nera: ...BA... e ...WN OC..." These epigraphic fragments correspond, in fact in the publication of Saller 1941, to inscription 17, 269, Pl. 127,2, which refers to a marble fragment considered the edge of a mensa, of which we possess five incomplete fragments. Acconci (no. 64), considers these fragments as being part of a liturgical dish or a paten for the Eucharist.
[74] Saller 1941, 101, Pl. 127, 1 and 127, 3.
[75] The hypothesis was already proposed by Bagatti 1936, 126. This is a region where the forms of devotion differ from the ones now well known in northern Syria, where larger reliquaries allowing the circulation of oil, developed. With the exception of the reliquary recovered in the Chapel of Wa'il at Umm al-Rasas, none of the reliquaries of

these southern regions, presented a system for the gathering of the oil.
[76] Piccirillo 1992, 203-225, Pl. 1-22.
[77] Saller 1941, 67.
[78] Saller 1941, 99.
[79] Acconci, nos. 134 and 135.
[80] Acconci recognizes in slab no. 136 a lateral element of enclosure for the tribune of the pulpit and in fragment no. 137 a slab of the balustrade.
[81] Saller 1941, p. 56, Fig. 11,3 p. 55, Pl. 46. It has not been possible to examine this slab.
[82] Corbo 1970, 281. The mosaic, removed for consolidation, has been today replaced slightly to the north of the pulpit, to allow its exhibition to the public.
[83] See Saller 1941, 219-220 and 224, also Piccirillo 1989, 157. Acconci attributes the introduction of the pulpit in the basilica on Mount Nebo to the first decade of the episcopate of Bishop Sergius I (574 - ca. 603) of Madaba, basing herself on the stylistic analysis of the slab decoration.
[84] Saller 1941, 68-69.
[85] *It. Eg.*, 12, 1-2, (Maraval 1982, 172-174).
[86] Corbo 1970, 283 (see E. Alliata & S. Bianchi, p. 178).
[87] See Piccirillo 1976, 281-318, Pl. 49-80.
[88] Cf. Piccirillo 1989, 156-157.
[89] The embellishment of the baptismal font with a ciborium is all the more probable as other examples are known, especially in the rural baptisteries in north Syria, cf. Dufrasne 1989, 648-649.
[90] Bagatti 1936, 121: "... con un pluteo che, forse, era ricoperto di veli i quali impedivano la vista dei battezzanti agli altri. Sotto questo punto di vista si comprende benissimo la chiusura della porta primitiva che dava proprio presso la vasca."
[91] See Saller 1941, 88 and Corbo 1967, 244-245.
[92] Ben Pechat 1989, 179-182; Piccirillo 1985b.
[93] Piccirillo 1976, 298.
[94] Saller 1941, Pl. 99,1.
[95] Saller 1941, 83 and Pl. 61,5.
[96] Acconci attributes to the chancel screen of the chapel three slab fragments and three chancel posts in oil shale (nos. 11-13).
[97] Saller 1941, 67 and 83; no drawing or photograph are published.
[98] Saller 1941, 105.
[99] Saller 1941, 93-94, Pl. 132, 3-4-6 (=10-9-7). Saller mentions only three posts found in the chapel, but he compares one of these to a fourth one, broken into pieces, which he supposes came from the chapel: "it (one of the other posts) closely resembles two other pieces of posts from this chapel of which the one is 55, the other 40 cm l. See also Pl. 132,5." Further on, p. 296, no. 159, he says that this same fragment comes from the chancel of the basilica, because it has a slot, on one of the faces, to keep in place the chancel slab. Acconci considers that the columned posts, nos. 14 and 15 were placed on either side of the entrance of the screen.
[100] Saller 1941, 94, Pl. 109,1, Fig. 14. 3; see also Acconci, nos. 102-105.
[101] Saller 1941, 94-95, Pl. 131, Fig. 1; see also Acconci, nos. 110 and 111.
[102] Saller 1941, 95-96, Fig. 14.1 p. 96, Pl. 131 Fig. 2.
[103] Saller 1941, has doubts about the use of this slab; he first considers it, on p. 95, as a chancel slab and then, on p. 100, as the mensa of the altar.
[104] Saller 1941, 94, Pl. 124,1 and Pl. 61,3.
[105] Saller 1941, 95-96.
[106] See the examples cited above regarding the chancel screen of the basilica.
[107] This column leg belongs to a group of five to six pieces of the same type, measuring 50 to 60 cm in height. Saller 1941, 101, however, mentions, to his embarrassment, the low height of the altar table in the Chapel of the Theotokos; he supposes that these small columns, which can be still seen today, correspond only to the lower part of the altar, or that its remains that have been preserved, correspond to a later non-religious stage ("the posts represent a table, prepared in the final period in the history of the chapel for profane or non-liturgical purposes"). The little information at our disposal regarding the abandonment strata of the building, do not give us any answer. Acconci, in the same publication, recognizes in the small columns nos. 37-40 the column legs of the altar in the Theotokos Chapel. She also adds the mensa no. 58 which presents a late typology.
[108] Saller 1941, 103-104.
[109] Michel 1994a, vol. I, 107-113.
[110] Corbo 1970, 277-279.
[111] Piccirillo 1976, 290-299, Pl. 53, 55-56.
[112] See Alliata & Bianchi, in this publication.