

## CHRISTIANITY AT HUMAYMA, JORDAN

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The current phase of archaeological excavations at Humayma, in the desert area of southern Jordan, with seasons conducted in the summers of 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, and one more season planned in the summer of 1996, is revealing much information about the Christians there in the Byzantine period.\* This article has the objective of summarizing the results of the excavation of the four identified Byzantine period churches at Humayma along with other evidence for Christians there, in advance of the final publication of the project.

### **The Site of Humayma**

Humayma was the only substantial settlement in the Hismâ, the region of Jordan south of the Ras al-Naqb escarpment, some 40 km south of Petra and 55 km north of 'Aqaba (Fig. 1; see Graf 1979; 1983). The environment of Humayma is bleak desert characterized by sparse desert vegetation. A limited amount of agriculture and animal husbandry is possible in the area, but another function of the site was as a halting place for caravans travelling between 'Aqaba and the Arabian Peninsula to the south and Petra and Syria to the north. The Roman road from Syria to the Red Sea, the *Via Nova*, passed nearby the site. Today only a few nomads live seasonally in the vicinity of the site; the modern village of New Humayma is located some 7 km to the southeast on the main Desert Highway to 'Aqaba.

### **The History of Humayma**

The Nabataean King Aretas III (87-52 BC) founded Humayma (Avara in Greek) in response to an oracle (Uranius 1958: 340). The site continued to be occupied throughout the Roman and Byzantine periods. Ptolemy listed

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\* The excavations at Humayma are directed by John Oleson, the Department of Classics, the University of Victoria, and co-directed by Khairieh 'Amr, Department of Antiquities of Jordan, Rebecca Foote, Harvard University, and the author. The project is principally funded by the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada, the Taggart Foundation and in 1992 by Dumbarton Oaks and 1995 by the Max van Berchem Foundation.

Auara in his Geography in the second century (5.16.8) and it was depicted on the Peutinger Map (*Tabula Peutingeriana* 1976). The *Notitia Dignitatum* around 400 AD listed a unit here of *Equites sagittarii indigenae Haua(r)ae* (Seeck 1876: Oriens 34.25: 73). The fifth century Beersheba Edict recorded the tax assessment of Auara as 43 gold pieces (Alt 1921: 8-10). Stephen of Byzantium in the early sixth century listed it as a *polis* (1849: 144.19-26). Humayma is unattested after the early sixth century until the early eighth century. It is not mentioned in the accounts of the Islamic conquest of the 630s AD.

Humayma's principal claim to historical fame came in the early eighth century when the members of the 'Abbâsid family lived there as they organized their ultimately successful revolution against the Umayyad caliphate in 749-750 AD (Schick forthcoming). The 'Abbâsids were descendants of al-'Abbâs, one of the Prophet Muhammad's uncles. Al-'Abbâs' grandson 'Alî and other members of the family left the Hijâz for Syria, sometime prior to 705 AD and soon purchased the village (*qarya*) of Humayma and settled there in a palace (*qasr*). Alî's children and grandchildren, including the first two 'Abbâsid caliphs Abû al-'Abbâs al-Saffâh and Abû Ja'far al-Mansûr, continued to reside there until the revolution in 749-750 AD when they all left for Iraq. Christians are not attested in the abundant Arabic historical accounts of the 'Abbâsid family's presence at Humayma.

After the 'Abbâsid family left, Humayma dwindled into insignificance. Later Arab geographers continued to record Humayma in their lists of place names (see Le Strange 1890: 455-456), not because Humayma was a significant settlement at the time, but rather because of the 'Abbâsid family once had lived there. Humayma played no historical role during the Crusades or the later Islamic periods.

There are no written records of Christians at Humayma, such as signatures of participants of church council acts. Whether Humayma was a part of the bishopric of Petra, the see of the metropolitan bishop of Palaestina Tertia,

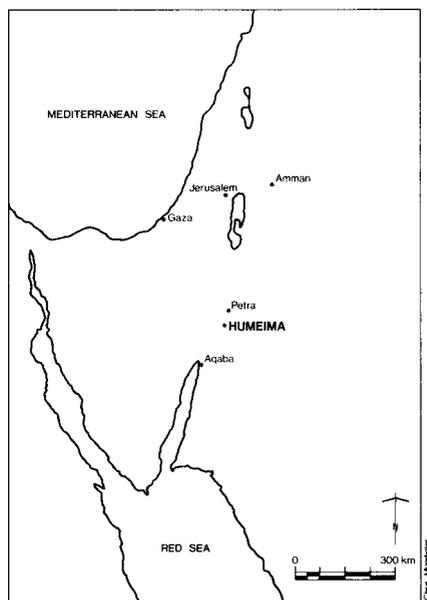


Fig. 1 Map of Jordan showing Humayma.

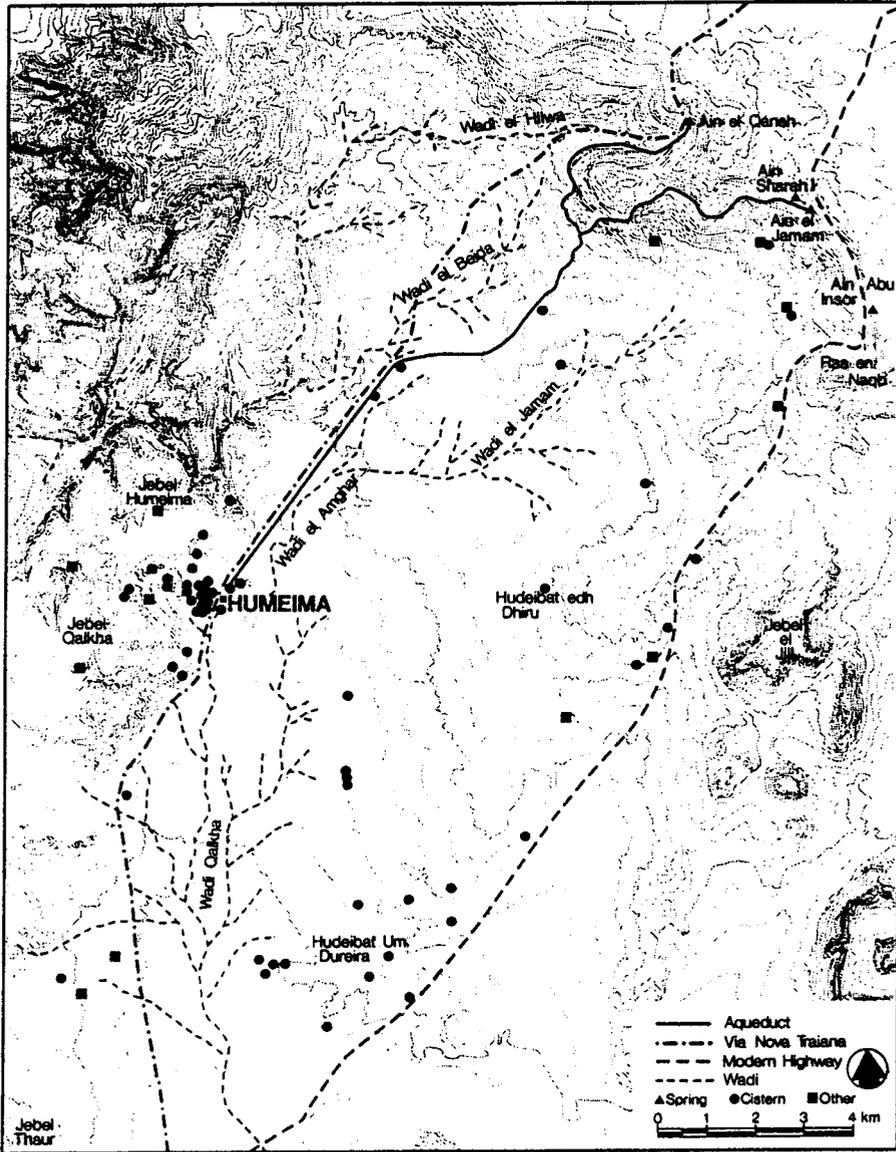


Fig. 2 Map of the Humayma region.

or of 'Aqaba, or was a bishopric of its own is unrecorded. Eadie, following Musil, claims that Humayma was a bishopric in the sixth century (Eadie and Oleson 1986: 52; Eadie 1984: 219-20; Musil 1926: 59-61). This conclusion is based solely on a list of bishoprics in the Province of Arabia by Nilus

Doxapatrius, writing in the first half of the 12th century, who lists “Avarae” among the bishoprics under the control of the metropolitan bishop of Bostra (Assemanus 1719-1728: vol. 3, part 2: 595-596). Just what this “Avarae” refers to is unclear. It could be a purely titular reference to Humayma, but the absence of Byzantine period references to a bishopric at Humayma, leaves unresolved the question of how Nilus Doxapatrius came up with the name. In the Byzantine period Humayma was not part of the Province of Arabia; it was in Palaestina Tertia. The listing can not reflect the reality of a Christian population at Humayma in the early Crusader period, of which there is not the slightest archaeological or other historical trace.

### **Archaeological Work at Humayma**

The ruins of Humayma are spread out over an area of about 1 square km, with a dense concentration in a smaller core area. The structures identifiable before excavation included numerous water reservoirs, cisterns, and other water installations, a bath, a Roman castellum, two Byzantine period churches, and several dozen other multi-room buildings whose wall lines can be traced on the surface. An aqueduct that brought water from the springs of ‘Ayn al-Qanâ and ‘Ayn al-Jammâm 27 km to the north, numerous additional dams and other water installations, and rock-cut graves are located in the surrounding areas.

Archaeological research at Humayma began in 1962 when personnel from the Department of Antiquities of Jordan cleared out much of the interior of the lower church, but nothing was ever published and no records survive. In 1983, a team under the direction of John Eadie of the University of Michigan conducted an initial survey and excavated a series of soundings, but only preliminary reports were published (Eadie 1983; Eadie and Oleson 1986). In 1986, 1987, and 1989 Oleson surveyed all the cisterns, conduits, aqueducts, run-off fields, and other features associated with water supply in the site and the surrounding countryside, excavated probes in a few cisterns and reservoirs, and excavated a bath building from the Roman period (Fig. 2; Oleson 1986, 1988, 1990).

During the 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1995 seasons the project expanded in an effort to explore all aspects of the site. Excavations were conducted in a number of areas: B100, a series of Early Islamic rooms built above a Byzantine church in the center of the settlement; C101, the lower Byzantine church partially cleared in 1962; F102, an Early Islamic house in the southeast area of the site; F103, the ‘Abbâsid family palace and mosque in the southeast area; E116, a Roman castellum in the northeast; C119, the upper Byzantine church

in the southwest; E121, a platform in the northeast; E122, an early Roman house also in the northeast; as well as a survey of tombs in the vicinity (Fig. 3; Oleson, 'Amr, and Schick 1992; Oleson, 'Amr, Schick, Foote, and Somogyi-Csizmazia 1993a, 1993b; Oleson, 'Amr, Foote, and Schick 1994, 1995, and forthcoming reports on the 1995 season).

Specific to evidence for Christianity, Frank, who passed by the site in 1932 noted a church, presumably the lower church (1934: 237). Eadie and Oleson reported a "church built into the ruins of the Nabataean castellum, adjacent to the Via Nova between Auara and the escarpment" (1986: 52), but this has proven to be a spurious identification. Eadie and Oleson's map also indicates a "martyrium" (1986: 52). This is a gratuitous identification based on a crude cross cut into a building stone reused in a modern one-room building on the north edge of the site. The excavations since 1991 have revealed four churches and other physical evidence for Christians.

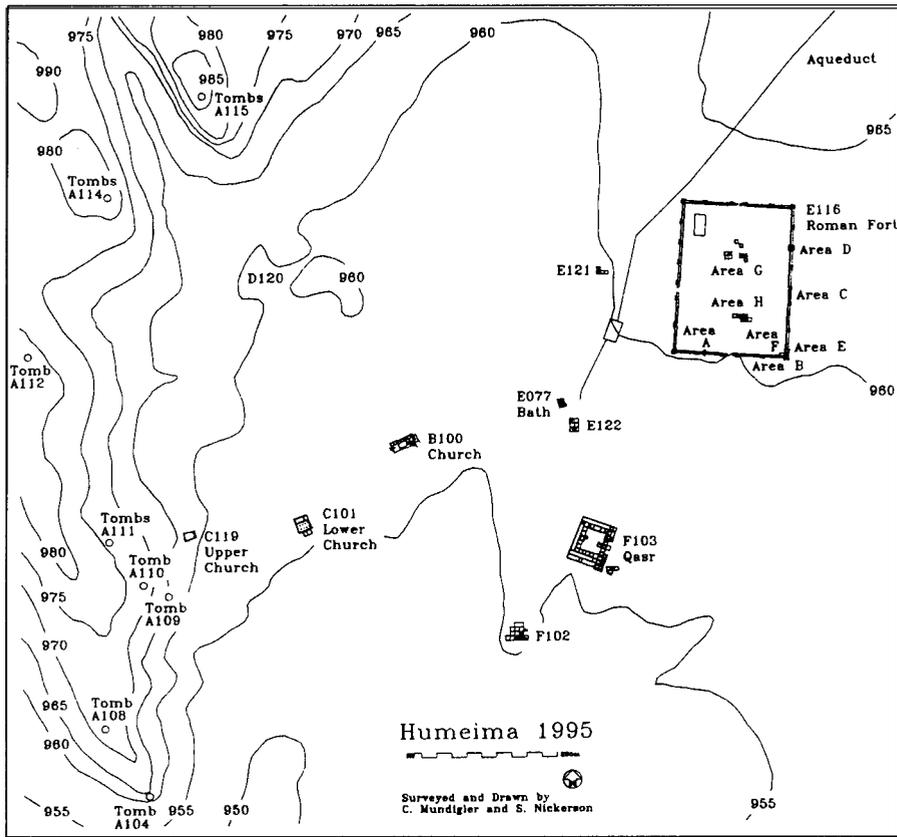


Fig. 3 Map of Humayma showing the excavation areas.

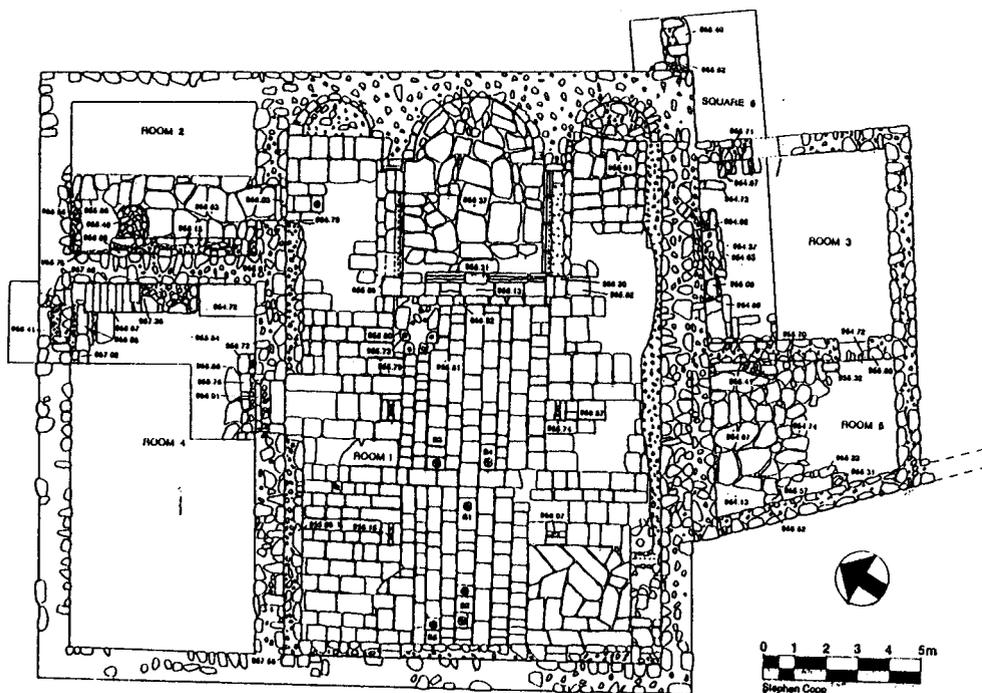


Fig. 4 Plan of the C101 Lower Church.

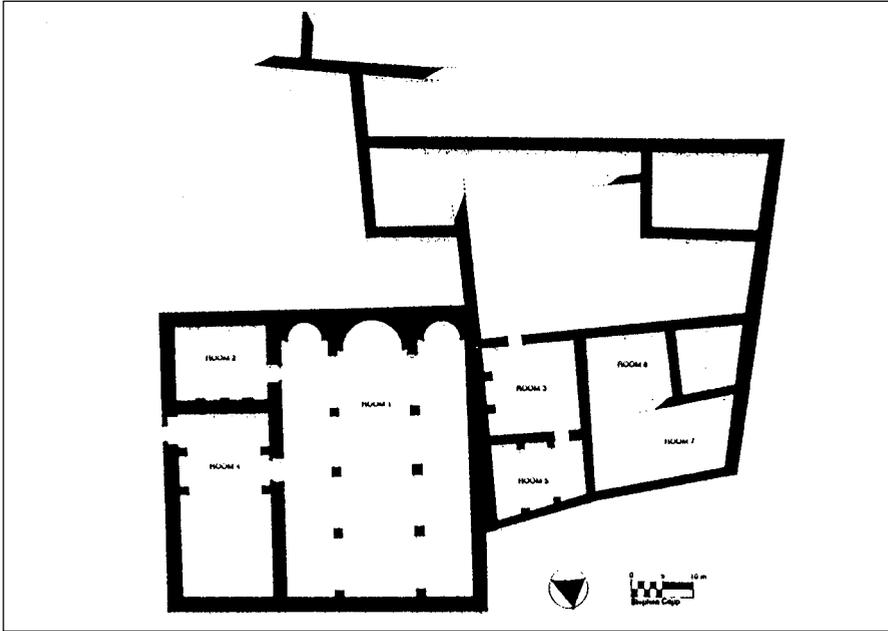
### The Lower Church - C101

The lower church is by far the best preserved of the churches at Humayma and was excavated in the 1991 and 1992 seasons and part of the 1993 season. It is a standard basilica, divided into three aisles with three semicircular apses on the east end. Adjoining the north wall are two rooms. Other rooms with no direct access to the church flank the east and south sides (Figs. 4, 5 and Phot. 1).

#### *The Church Proper (Room 1)*

##### Architectural Features

The interior dimensions of the church proper are about 17.80 m long east-west and 11.80 m wide north-south. It is oriented north of east, about 70°. The walls are usually 1.0 m thick and are preserved to a height of generally no more than a couple meters. The two rows of east-west arches dividing the side aisles from the nave were supported by three freestanding arch



*Fig. 5 Plan of the C101 Lower Church and associated rooms.*

piers and engaged piers against the west and east walls. Benches made of cobbles with mud bricks were placed along the south, west, and north walls. A stairway in the southwest corner led to a gallery over the south aisle. Immediately west of that stairway was a cupboard. The floor consists of large, irregularly-shaped flagstones of bluish flaky slate and harder white sandstone. No roof tiles were found anywhere. Traces of plain white plaster survive on the apses and along the north wall.

The three semicircular apses on the east side do not project beyond the straight east wall of the church. The central apse has a diameter of around 3.5 m and so is larger than the two side apses with diameters about 2 m. No evidence for a synthronon remained. Some pavers in the northeast edge of the central apse were lifted and the sandy fill layers below excavated to a depth of some 1.50 m until the cobble foundation of the apse wall was reached. The fill contained large amounts of pottery and bones, but next to no other artifacts. The pottery did not include any types datable to the Islamic periods, indicating a construction date in the Byzantine period. The west end of the north apse was delineated by a low line of plaster-lined mud brick while the west end of the south apse was delineated by a line of cobbles faced by mud brick. The two side apses appear to belong to the

initial construction period of the church; there is no clear evidence for more than one building phase in the church. The upper preserved courses of the three apses are made of yellow marl, while the lower courses, and all the other building stones in the church are of brown-purple sandstone.

The chancel area in front of the central apse was raised two steps above the nave and aisles and projected into the nave as far as the first arch piers. The marble chancel screen panels, of which only scattered fragments were recovered, were set in grooved yellow marl blocks, which are reused aqueduct conduit blocks. No evidence for the placement of the altar is visible. The only traces of the ambo near the northwest corner of the raised chancel were six post holes in the pavement and a break in the row of the chancel screen blocks (Phot. 2). But that is enough to establish that the ambo was similar to that found in the Petra church (Schick, Fiema, and 'Amr 1993) and the well-preserved one at the church of the lions at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1992).

The sole entrance into the church was through a door located in the middle of the north wall, which led from the northwest room (Room 4). A second door in the east end of the north wall led to a sacristy room (Room 2). There were no doorways in the west wall.

### Stratigraphic Deposits

The side aisles, apses, and chancel were cleared down to the pavements in 1962, but enough of the accumulated tumble layers remained undisturbed in the nave to provide a clear picture of the post-abandonment deposits and the sequence of events that they represent, as recorded in a north-south section (Phot. 3).

In some parts of the nave a thin layer of yellowish clay, which may represent an initial disintegration of the roof, lay directly above the pavement, while a limited deposit of ash was directly above the pavement around the northern portion of the balk section. Above the thin clay and ash and in other areas of the church directly above the pavement was compacted silty soil that contained comparatively few cobbles or pebbles but was rich in organic materials and pottery. Chunks of charcoal, seemingly from roof beams, but without any powdery ash, were found throughout the layer. The Nabataean through Early Islamic pottery in this layer included numerous sherds of large handmade storage jars. The layer also produced many animal bones, hundreds of fragments of ostrich egg shell and glass, especially in the bottom few cms. Dozens of iron nails were found as well,

which would have come from the wooden beam superstructure of the roof. Only a very few other scraps of metal objects, such as brackets, chains, and wick holders for glass oil lamps, were recovered.

Also found within this bottom layer of silty soil were many marble fragments, including portions of at least five chancel screen panels, several fragments of a hexagonal panel that may have formed the base for the ambo, fragments of a large marble basin, and colonnettes and bases, as well as two chancel screen fragments that preserved a few letters of a Greek inscription. The designs of the panels were typical; motifs included a cross, and open-work circles surrounded by stylized acanthus leaves within a rectangular frame of parallel grooves and ridges. Only a small number of the chancel screen fragments joined; less than half of the most complete panel was recovered (Phot. 4). Several fragments were fire-blackened. A total of some 200 pieces of marble strewn about the church or dumped in Room 4 were recovered during the three seasons of excavation, but they make up only a small portion of the marble that would have been in the church originally. While the 1962 clearance operation presumably found additional marble pieces that have now been lost, it is apparent that most pieces had been removed from the church.

Above the silty soil was a layer of ash that was thickest in the center of the nave and thinned out and disappeared as it sloped up towards the north and south aisles. The ash split and merged into a number of sub-layers and lenses with non-ashy soil in between that was often discolored by heat. The ash varied from black to light bluish grey and seems to have come from the burning of the wooden roof beams. A C14 date (TO 3731) for some charcoal from the layer of 1510 +/- 50 BP - 1 s (AD 540-620) provides a date for the construction of the roof. A few bones were found in the ash, but ceramics were scarce and consisted of the usual mix of Nabataean through Early Islamic types typical of the site as a whole.

Above the ash was hard-packed soil with large tumbled blocks and cobbles but very few artifacts, and a deposit of sterile soil on top. These two deposits constituted the collapse of the walls of the building after it had been abandoned, covered by wind-blown silt and sand that accumulated over the centuries.

It is thus clear that when the church went out of use the building remained structurally intact. First, the marble chancel screen panels were broken up and mostly removed along with the metal furnishings, while the ambo and altar were dismantled completely, leaving a deposit of debris from the last occupation and the robbing out directly on top of the pavement. Later on a fire burned down the roof, followed by the collapse of the walls.

### The Burial Probes

A number of crosses were carved into the pavers in the nave, including six in the area covered by the undisturbed soil deposits. There was no symmetry to the distribution of the crosses. In an attempt to understand the reason for their presence, they were lifted and five probes were dug below. As it turned out the crosses marked the locations of burials. The locals speak of additional burials below the north and south aisles, which they would have found during illicit digging below the pavements after they were first exposed in 1962. But because of the disturbed nature of the deposits in the aisles around the many missing pavers, no attempt was made to excavate to confirm the presence of burials there.

The fill layers in these five burial probes contained a great deal of pottery, and animal bones, but almost no other artifacts. The graves were constructed in a similar manner, with flat-lying, but irregularly-shaped sandstone capstones about a meter below the pavement on top of rows of dressed blocks forming the sides. The skeletons were oriented roughly east-west with the head at the west end. All the skeletons were fully extended and articulated. Two of the burials were placed in wooden coffins.

Clear differences in the compaction of the silty fill below the pavement marked the edge of the soil dug out for the burials, demonstrating that the pavement and fill below were installed, and only at a later date were the pavers lifted, the fill below dug out, and the graves constructed. Looser fill was then deposited above the grave capstones and the paving stones replaced. The pottery in the old fill and the loose fill appears to be homogeneous, so the loose fill most naturally was simply a redeposit of the soil that had been dug out to install the graves. There were no sherds datable to the Islamic period in these burial fill deposits.

In the first burial (Phot. 5), a small bronze cross worn as a necklace and remnants of sandals were the only artifacts associated with the skeleton of an adult male.

In the silty fill of the second burial probe exceptionally large amounts of pottery and animal bones were found. The skeleton belonged to a young girl, who was buried with jewelry and other objects, including: a bead of gilded copper foil; two gold-plated copper hoop rings; two gilded copper pendants; a polished agate stone in a gold setting; a glass mirror set in a plaster frame; a figurine, doll, cylinder, ring, pyxis, and two spindle whorls - all of ivory; a wooden spindle whorl; two bone crosses; a copper pendant cross; and dozens of assorted stone, glass and amber beads. A portion of the compacted orange sand layer below the burial was excavated down to

a level 1.74 m below the top of the church pavement. The pottery here was datable to the first to third centuries AD. This layer matched the bottom subpavement layer in Rooms 2 and 5 and Square 6 and so clearly formed part of an extensive deposit of soil predating the construction of the church.

The skeleton of an adult male found in the third burial probe was well preserved inside a largely intact wooden coffin made of long boards. Of particular interest was the highly unusual discovery of the desiccated, but intact brain still inside the skull. A bronze cross necklace was the only associated artifact.

In burial probe 4 on top was sandy soil below the pavers and then lower silty fill down to the top of the capstones of the burial, which were approximately 1.30 m below the church floor, around 0.30 m deeper than the other four graves found at the church. The interior of the grave was filled with soil, due to the collapse of the eastern capstones. An atypical feature of this grave is the absence of the side slabs associated with the other cist graves. The grave had been dug in the compact earth and simply roofed with capstones laid on the margins of the trench. Excavation continued below the burial, with little to no pottery found, until the orange sandy layer was reached.

The body, the only one to be studied in detail so far, had been wrapped in a shroud, which survived only as a dark discoloration on parts of the skeleton, especially the skull. The left arm was draped across the belly, while the right arm was draped across the pelvic region. The close proximity of the leg bones to each other suggest that the legs had been bound before burial. Only three artifacts were found associated with the skeleton: a pair of badly deteriorated leather sandals, a small, cylindrical, bone object with symmetrical patterns found among the bones of the left hand that may have been a bone pin used to close up the burial shroud, and a small bronze clasp or pendant found underneath one vertebra. Based on the small size of the mastoid process, the angle of the mandible, and the size of the orbital sockets, the skeleton should be that of a female. The age of the female, based on the dental condition and cranial sutures, is approximately 25 to 30 years. The wisdom teeth had erupted but there was no sign of any wear, while the right lower first molar showed extreme wear, almost down to the pulp cavity. This shows that the woman had favored the right side when chewing. The cranial sutures were quite clear and the zig-zag patterns were present. No other pathological conditions could be studied due to the poor condition of the skeletal material.

A fifth burial probe revealed a poorly preserved wood coffin. The skeleton of an adult male had no associated artifacts other than a single iron nail, and very slight remains of sandals near the feet.

All the graves were backfilled and the pavers replaced at the end of the 1993 season.

*The Northeast Room (Room 2)*

The western two-thirds of the room were excavated in 1991 (Phot. 6). The room, with interior dimensions about 6 m north-south by 4.5 m east-west was spanned by three east-west arches, and a bench ran along the west wall. The upper layers consisted of rock tumble in loose, sandy and silty soil. The uppermost layer below the tumble in the north end of the room, where an intact Byzantine bronze lamp was found, was composed of ashy, sandy soil, apparently the remains of the cooking fires of transient occupants. Elsewhere were further layers of generally silty, non-ashy soil extending down to thin layers and lenses of ash in the last 0.10 m above the flagstone pavement. These layers were highly variable in color, ranging from dark black to light bluish grey, with deposits of ash-free silt mixed in (Phot. 7). In the center of the room was a hard clay surface surrounding two pavers that had been lifted and dumped on top of dark ash containing many large storage jar fragments. The pavers had been intentionally removed in order to install below floor level an oven lined with fired brick, of which only a small portion survives. The use of the oven can account for the storage jar fragments, the large amounts of bone, and the concentrated ash deposits, that indicate substantial domestic occupation of the room after the church had fallen out of use. Many fragments of glass liturgical lamps were also found mixed in the bottom ash layers.

Two paving stones in the northeast corner were removed in 1992 and the fill layers below excavated deeply until the north and west walls of the room were pedestalled at a depth of some 2.50 m below the pavement. The fill consisted of a series of silty and slightly ashy layers, with orange sand at the bottom. The layers were all filled with substantial quantities of pottery, none of it Islamic in date, and animal bones, but they contained little to no glass or other objects. None of the layers can easily be seen as a beaten earth floor or other occupational surface. The depth at which the walls bottomed out was surprisingly deep for foundation courses.

Given its location off the east end of the north aisle, with no access to the outside, and the presence of many fragments of liturgical glass lamps in the layers immediately above the pavement, the room can be identified as a sacristy.

*The Southeast Room (Room 3)*

Excavation in the north third of the room, with interior dimensions of about 6 m north-south by 6 m east-west, in 1991 and 1992 revealed that rock tumble overlaid compacted silty soil, with relatively small amounts of mixed pottery,

which covered four installations: an east-west row of stones along the north wall, a second north-south row of stones at a slightly lower level along the west wall, a third east-west row between the two arch springers along the north wall, and a fourth north-south row along the east wall. These features rested on top of a flagstone pavement identical to the type of pavement in the church interior, but some 1.5 m lower (Phot. 8). Excavation did not proceed below the pavement. The installations were built as a unit and may be storage bins or feeding troughs for animals. Among the finds were a loom weight, a cluster of reconstructible cooking pot sherds, and two pieces of steatite with mending holes pierced around their edges. The room was roofed by two north-south arches. One doorway of the room was probably located in the middle of the east wall. A second doorway in the middle of the west wall led into Room 5. The north wall of the room was built up against the south wall of the church.

#### *The Northwest Room (Room 4)*

Much time was spent excavating Room 4 in 1992 and 1993. The room's interior dimensions are about 12 m east-west by 6 m north-south. In 1992 the wall lines were fully delineated, revealing in the north wall the sole entrance into the church from the outside. Excavation in 1992 began in the area of the door to expose it fully. Below the thick deposits of rock tumble, outside of the room, excavation reached the top of a compacted sandy layer that represents the original street level when the church was in use. Inside the room excavation below the tumble exposed a 0.10 m thick deposit of silt, ash, and more silt on top of a beaten earth floor. Excavation in a probe below the beaten earth floor did not proceed deeply but appeared to reach the start of fill layers similar to those below the pavement in the northeast room (Room 2).

A springer for a north-south arch was uncovered along the interior face of the north wall just west of the door. A staircase along the east wall had seven steps remaining, made of reused marl aqueduct blocks placed upside down. The landing of the door in the north wall consisted of two levels of large flat-lying stones (Phot. 9).

In 1993 an area about 5.0 east-west  $\times$  3.4 m north-south was excavated in the southeast corner of the room, contiguous to the 1992 trench in order to uncover fully the southern extent of the staircase and expose the doorway in the middle of the south wall (the north wall of the church).

The tumble layers, which included several fallen steps from the staircase, contained little pottery. Several arch blocks from the easternmost arch in the room remain in alignment in the west balk. Below the tumble was a layer of silt

with substantial quantities of sherds. Below the silt in the north was the layer of alternate grey and black ash met in 1992, but the ash proved not to extend into the extreme southeast corner of the room, nor near the door in the south wall.

Below the silt and ash was a layer of loose to compacted silt at the level of the threshold of the south door that contained exceptionally large amounts of storage jar sherds and some marble pieces. The sherds were concentrated immediately north of the arch pier that flanked the east side of the door in the south wall. The placement of the several storage jars so close to the door would have made access into the church awkward. The marble pieces from a number of different chancel screen panels were robbed out from the church and dumped randomly just beyond the door.

Below the concentrated sherd layer generally throughout the southeast part of the room was a layer of compacted sandy silty soil, and below it the beaten earth floor of the room at the level of the flat-lying stones forming the landing in front of the south door (Phot. 10). Below the concentrated sherd layer, but above the room's beaten earth floor, to the south of the staircase were two installations, presumably in some way associated with the storage jars, consisting of flat-lying cobbles and dressed blocks, surrounded by greenish ashy soil.

Portions of the soil deposits below the beaten earth floor were excavated in a meter-wide trench along the east wall, dug to an arbitrary depth about a meter below the floor, when excavation was stopped. The fill layers of ashy silty soil with many small sherds and animal bones resembled those excavated in Room 2 and in the probe in the central apse in 1992. Along the south edge of the staircase was a deep deposit of irregularly laid cobbles representing a sub-floor foundation for the staircase.

It is odd that this room had only a beaten earth floor, rather than the flagstone pavements in all the other rooms, given the amount of traffic that the room saw. Everyone using the church had to pass through it. There was nothing to suggest that a flagstone pavement had been totally robbed out.

### *The Southwest Room (Room 5)*

The room, completely excavated in 1992, has irregular dimensions. The west wall of the room does not parallel the east wall, making the interior dimensions about 6 m north-south by about 4.5 m to 3.5 m east-west. Excavation proceeded through topsoil, tumble, and subtumble down to the flagstone pavement, a sequence similar to that in Room 3. The subtumble deposit proved to contain a couple dozen in situ smashed vessels of roughly mid-seventh cen-

tury types, including an amphora, closely similar to those made in 'Aqaba, and a variety of storage jars and cooking pots, either resting directly on the pavement or within a couple of centimeters of it ('Amr and Schick forthcoming). A small rectangular wooden box was also found just above the pavement. Within the subtumble deposit was a level of charcoal fragments that appeared to be carbonized remains of a thatched roof. A C14 sample (TO-3732) of this charred wood provided a date of 1540 +/- 50 BP - 1 s (calibrated AD 440-600). The flagstone pavement in the north half of the room proved to break off on a fairly straight line about halfway across the room. In its place in the south was a beaten earth floor (Phot. 11).

One large paving stone was lifted in the northwest corner and the soil below excavated until the walls of the rooms were pedestalled. Below the pavement was ashy soil filled with pottery and bones and below it the bottom layer of orange sand.

Arch piers were along the west and east walls. Along the west wall was a bench or storage installation, like the ones in Room 3. A door in the east wall connected the room with Room 3; a concentration of nails found there was clearly part of the door construction. There was no door between the room and the church, or with Room 7 to the south. The north wall, as was the case with the north wall of Room 3, was built up against the south wall of the church.

The results of the excavation showed that the room, along with the adjoining Room 3, were contemporary with the church, but not necessarily functionally related to it.

### *The Far Southeast Square (Square 6)*

Excavation of a 4 m x 4 m square to investigate an east-west wall running east from the southeast corner of the church began in 1992 and continued in 1993. Below topsoil and tumble was silty subtumble soil and lower layers of silty sandy soil that pedestalled the walls in the square and that continued down to the bottom layer of sterile orange sand.

The east-west wall extending east from the southeast corner of the church showed evidence for two phases. Above was a wall with two rows of header-stretcher construction with five irregular courses preserved. In the top preserved course is the bottom portion of a cupboard. Below was a wall of ill defined courses of roughly dressed rocks and cobbles with mud packing and chink stones. The west wall of the square (the east wall of Room 3) had eight courses preserved of irregular height. That wall was two rows wide and was constructed of roughly dressed stones with chink stones and mud packing.

There may have been a door, perhaps blocked, in the wall leading into Room 3, but more excavation would be needed to clarify this.

The results of the excavation showed that the area south of the south-east corner of the church was probably an open air courtyard rather than another room. A pottery concentration in one of the low silt layers points to some sort of pre-church occupation, but its relation to the early phase north wall remains ill defined.

### *Room 7*

A large room south of Room 5 was identified as Room 7 in 1993. Numerous sherds, including a sizable number of storage jar sherds, were collected during the removal of some limited amounts of topsoil to expose the wall lines. The wall lines of the room were fully exposed everywhere except along the north part of the east wall (shared with Room 8), where substantial excavation would be necessary to establish the possible presence of a door. There was no door in the north wall that would have provided access to Room 5.

### *Room 8*

A room south of Room 3 was identified as Room 8 in 1993. Its wall lines were traced, except along the north part of the west wall (shared with Room 7). In order to trace the course of the east wall and establish the possible presence of a door, it proved necessary to excavate a 5 × 1 m north-south trench to a depth of over a meter before the east wall appeared, preserved three courses lower than the other walls of the room. There was no clear trace of a door.

Further wall lines are clearly visible to the south and east of the church, indicating the presence of additional rooms that have not been investigated. It would take a considerable effort to trace the wall lines completely.

### *Summary*

The two and a half seasons of work devoted to the lower church revealed a standard, rather large, triple-apsed basilica in use in the Byzantine period. A precise date of construction within the Byzantine period can not be assigned in the absence of a dedicatory inscription. While the church did not have a mosaic floor, it did contain fancy marble furnishings. A number of

church-related burials were placed below the floor of the nave. The church appears to have continued in use into the seventh century; the tight pottery corpus from the 1992 season in Room 5 is particularly valuable dating evidence for the last phase of use. The building seems to have been peacefully abandoned rather than destroyed. Later on the marble furnishings were mostly robbed out and at least part of the building was used for domestic occupation, as shown by the oven in Room 2. The analysis of the pottery, objects, bone, and flotation samples has not been completed yet.

While work in the rooms south and east of the church, as well as in the incompletely excavated Rooms 3 and 4 would certainly provide additional information about the church complex, other areas at Humayma have a higher claim to attention in future seasons.

### The Upper Church - C119

During the last two weeks of the 1993 season, some clearing and excavation were carried out at a small church in the far west part of the site, identified as the upper church. Surface rocks and some small amounts of top soil were removed from the general area of the structure in order to clarify the wall lines so that a plan of the church could be produced (Fig. 6 and Phot. 12). The church is oriented north of east (about  $72^\circ$ ). It is wider at its west end (9.5 m) than its east end (8.25 m), and is about 14.5 m long east-west.

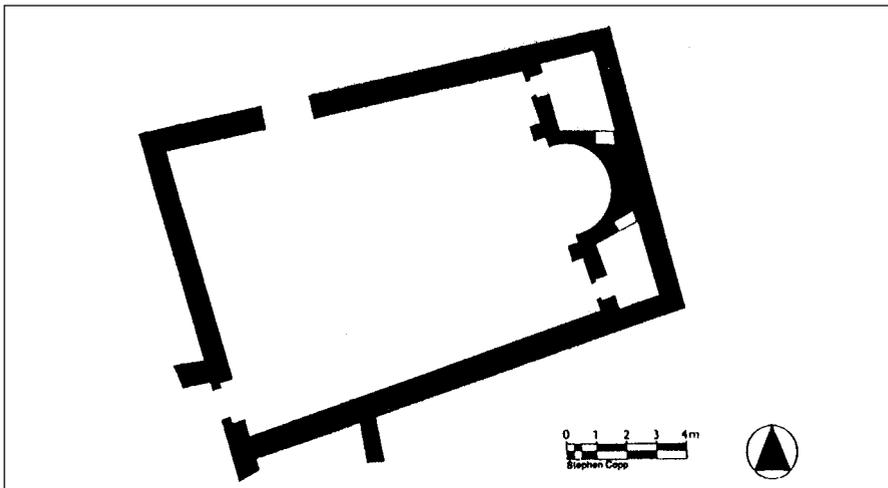


Fig. 6 Plan of the C119 Upper Church.



The removal of surface rocks and soil generally in the church interior, and especially around the apse, revealed that the structure was a basilica with a single-apse flanked by two small rooms. There was one door in the middle of the north wall, another door in the middle of the west wall, and a third door in the south part of the west wall, leading into an adjoining room. There clearly are additional rooms to the south and west of the church, but their wall lines remain incompletely delineated. The interior faces of the church walls were covered with plain white plaster. Numerous fragments of red painted plaster were recovered from the apse. The east wall of the church was poorly preserved, its exterior face had fallen away and slumped down the sharp drop off to the east. The northeast corner in particular was badly preserved.

Most of the room in the southeast corner of the church (Room 2) was also excavated in order to sample the stratigraphy and provide some evidence for dating the building. Excavation proceeded through topsoil and tumble, followed by subtumble silt, which contained two large fragments of marble chancel screen panels and a fragment of a marble colonnette shaft, probably from a leg of the ambo (Phot. 13). Below was a lower layer of silt containing several thousand fragments from liturgical glass oil lamps concentrated in a layer a few centimeters thick. Below the glass layer was further silt, representing a beaten earth floor. Excavation stopped before sterile soil was reached. In the west wall of the room was a door from the south aisle. In the north wall was a cupboard.

The excavation of the southeast room showed that it was used for storage of the glass lamps. After the abandonment of the structure, enough time passed for wind-blown silt to accumulate before the marble furnishings of the church were robbed out, and a few pieces dumped in the southeast room. The major structural collapse of the building occurred after the marble was robbed out.

### **The B100 Church**

The B100 field was excavated during the 1991 and 1992 seasons, and part of the 1993 season. It revealed a cluster of fairly crudely built rooms of domestic houses dating from the Umayyad and 'Abbâsid periods built on top of an earlier Byzantine church (Phot. 14 and Fig. 7). The construction of the early Islamic houses so destroyed the church that it proved difficult even to confirm that the earlier structure was indeed a church - many of its features remain elusive.

Remaining are a large apse oriented well to the north of east (60°) with a diameter of about 4.20 m, portions of flagstone pavements, apparently belong-

ing to multiple phases, and several arch piers (Phot. 15). The full east-west length of the church is not known, but was at least 17.5 m; the church was 12.25 m wide. One pier is bonded to a set of steps with two risers forming the south and west sides of the raised chancel platform. A marl conduit block was reused as a base for the chancel screen, as in the C101 lower church. Its channel was partially filled with white mortar into which the lower edge of a marble screen was set.

A few stray pieces of marble, many of them pavers, were found in B100. Some, if not all of them, presumably belonged to the church. Ceramic materials found in fill below an upper pavement suggest a rebuilding or renovation of the church in the early Islamic period. This fill also contained fragments of marble and moldings, such as were used in the chancel steps, perhaps the remains of an earlier phase of the church or of another public/religious structure to be associated with a lower pavement. Ostrich egg fragments and fragments of thin glass, possibly from lamps, were found above the upper floor.

The surviving portions of the church structure confirm that it was a single apsed basilica with a nave and two side aisles, and a raised chancel area. It would have been a substantial and impressive building when intact, perhaps even more than the C101 church.

### **The F102 Church**

The F102 area was excavated in 1991, 1992, 1993, and part of the 1995 seasons, but it was only due to the discovery of an apse during the 1995 season that the large Byzantine period structure could be identified as a church (Phot. 16 and Fig. 8). The church was a single-apsed basilica and had a flagstone pavement that later was covered with grey plaster. The internal dimensions of the church are around 19.3 m east-west by 9.4 m north-south. Three doorways in the west wall led into the nave and side aisles. There were also one door in the south wall and two in the north wall. The walls were covered with white plaster. The northeast corner is irregular, seemingly inset due to the presence of the nearby cistern. Two rooms protrude out of the south wall on its southwest and southeast corners.

A number of marble fragments were recovered throughout the F102 excavation area. Pottery from a sounding below the flagstone pavement, notably a fragment of an amphora known to have been produced at the early Islamic site of Ayla (Aqaba), points to a date no earlier than the mid-seventh century for construction of the church. The church was built over by domestic houses around the mid-eighth century.

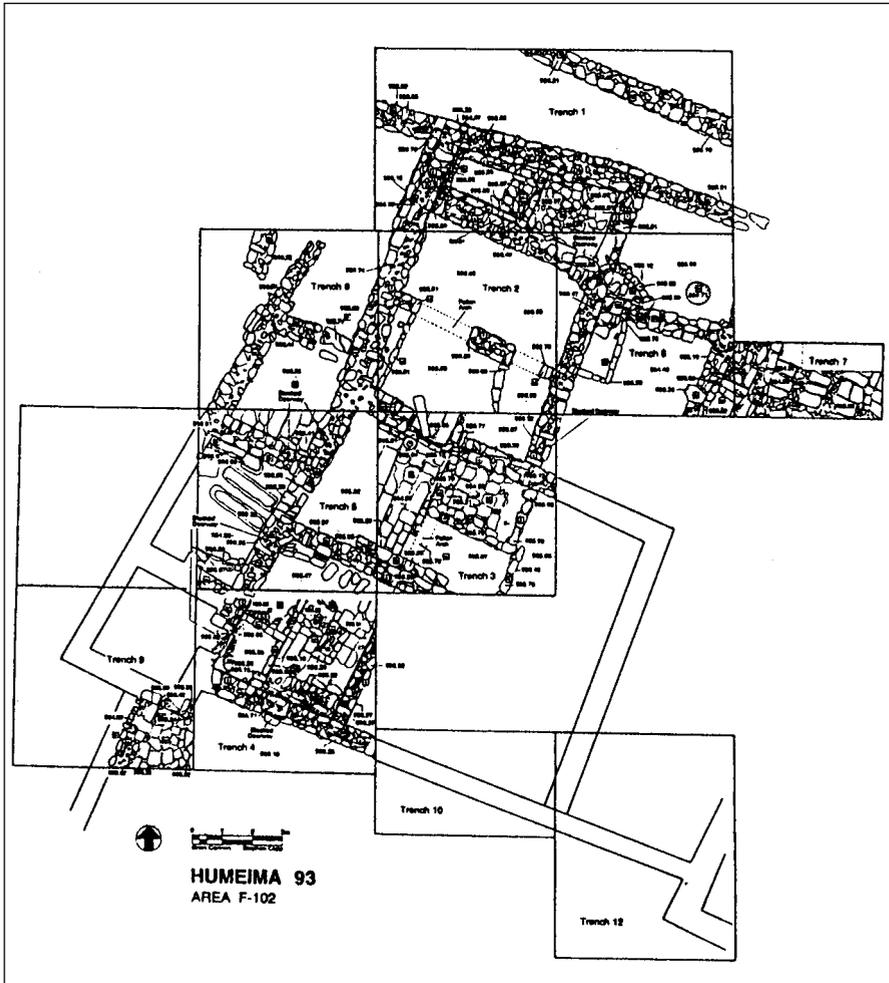


Fig. 8 Plan of the F102 excavation area.

### Other Areas

A few stray pieces of marble panels were found in the F103 area and elsewhere at the site, which would appear to have come originally from one of the churches. A couple of marble fragments, clearly from one of the churches, are currently in use as grave markers in the modern Muslim cemetery south of the site (Phot. 17). A dressed building stone with a cross carved on it was reused in one building in the center of the site (Phot. 18).

## Humayma During The Byzantine And Umayyad Periods

The excavations have revealed much about Humayma and the Christians there during the Byzantine period. The site was thriving as much as ever then, and the B100, C101, and C119 churches, if not the F102 church, would appear to have been in use at the same time. As with so many other sites in Jordan the number of churches seems more than would have been strictly necessary given the small size of the population numbering in the hundreds, rather than thousands. There is nothing in the physical layout of churches that could provide insight into any speculation that the churches served different tribal clans. None of the churches seems to have been necessarily part of a monastery. The churches are all reasonably well built and the use of expensive imported marble, rather than cheaper, locally available material, such as bituminous limestone as in some other churches in central Jordan, for the chancel screen panels and other furnishings, demonstrates that the Christians had a certain level of financial resources available.

The excavations have also revealed much about Humayma for the time that the 'Abbâsid family lived there, and one important question concerns whether any Christians were there then. Although the C101 lower church went out of use by the mid-seventh century, based on the pottery from Room 5, there is nothing archaeological to point to any larger-scale abandonment of Humayma as a whole in the period immediately before the 'Abbâsids arrived. Be that as it may major changes took place in the course of the Umayyad period. In B100, the Byzantine period church may have had an Umayyad period phase as represented by its upper flagstone pavement, but the church was soon built over by a cluster of rooms used for habitation, and so clearly did not survive as a church for long into the Umayyad period. The C101 lower church also had gone out of use well before the 'Abbâsids' arrival. There is not enough evidence from the C119 upper church to tell one way or the other when it went out of use. The F102 church, only a short distance from the F103 'Abbâsid family residence, is most interesting in this regard, given its mid-seventh century or later construction date, based on the Ayla amphora below its pavement, and its end seemingly around the mid-eighth century. Thus it is probable that the B100 and C101 churches were no longer in use while the 'Abbâsids were there, but that the F102 church could well have been in use.

The F103 structure is also of prime interest, because of its probable identification as the 'Abbâsid family residence. The small, roughly square mosque next to the larger palace has a semicircular mihrab niche, and can be dated to the Umayyad period. It is one of the smallest known mosques in Bilâd al-Shâm in the early Islamic period. It is located to the southeast of the palace and there-

fore at the furthest point from the rest of the village settlement and so not convenient to anyone other than the 'Abbâsid family members. No other mosque has been identified at Humayma; there is no evidence to suggest that the churches were converted into mosques. This could suggest that few other Muslims were at Humayma when the 'Abbâsid family lived there.

The site continued to be occupied after the 'Abbâsid family left. It appears that although the 'Abbâsid period occupation may have been reduced from the earlier periods, it was still substantial and consisted of more than handfuls of seasonal nomads. The area around the C101 church appears to have been unoccupied, but in Fields B100 and F102 the residents in the 'Abbâsid period may have continued to build, although it is currently difficult to separate the Umayyad and 'Abbâsid phases. The architecture reflected a reduced level of investment that the residents could have managed with their own resources. The F103 palatial structure continued to be occupied, but early on a fire destroyed at least one room with painted wall frescoes. But Humayma soon dwindled into insignificance, although slight traces, mostly from F102, have been found for occupation throughout the centuries up to the present.

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