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In Search of the Hospices of the Early Byzantine *Provincia Arabia* (4th-7th centuries CE)

Pauline Piraud-Fournet (Paris)

Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions - H 2020, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University

p.piraudfournet@gmail.com

Abstract

From the fourth century CE, Christians were encouraged to redeem their faults by caring for the poor. The most striking manifestation of this phenomenon was the building by the Church of more or less specialised hospices throughout the Empire (4th to 7th century CE) to accommodate those who depended on charity for their survival. These establishments are mentioned by ancient texts and lapidary inscriptions. About nine such facilities, *ptocheion* for the needy, *xenodocheion* for the foreigners and travelers, *diakonia* where food was distributed and other types of charitable hospices can be listed in the ancient province of Arabia (Southern Syria, Northern Jordan). The available data, whether textual or archaeological since some remains are observable on the field, are presented in this paper and compared to those collected elsewhere in the Near East.

Keywords

hospices – hostels – charity – welfare – hospitality – ancient Syria and Jordan

Introduction

Among the topics addressed by historiography regarding late Antiquity is a reflection on the upheavals that took place in Roman society from the 3rd century CE onwards, that contributed to the emergence of new values and established in the 4th century Christianity as the dominant

religion in the Western and Eastern Roman empires¹. E. Patlagean, for example, described the rural exodus, the increase in population and of poverty, the development of monasticism which helped to define a new model of society based on asceticism, the renunciation of wealth, the phenomenon of pilgrimage which brought a considerable number of pilgrims onto the roads particularly of the eastern dioceses.² For P. Brown, the Church was at that time building up its power and based it on a new value, the “love of the poor.”³ Christians were encouraged to follow the charitable precepts of Jesus and redeem their faults by caring for the poor. Giving and helping acquired a redemptive value, became religious acts and a requirement for the salvation of the believer’s soul. He was encourage to practice direct charitable giving, to give alms from hand to hand.⁴ He was at the same time encouraged to practice indirect giving, justified by the fear of misuse of the gift or unequal distribution, which led him to entrust his wealth to the Church. Charity henceforth benefited from an institutional organisation aimed at ensuring on the one hand the subsistence of the poorest in numerous establishments where they received board, lodging and care, and on the other hand the maintenance of the clergy.⁵ The charitable programme developed by the Church has been observed in various ways since the beginning of the twentieth century. For some historians, this is the manifestation of “the very revolutionary character of this Christian community which undertook the relief of the sick in a Roman society of extreme violence, marked by slavery and privileges reserved only for the citizens of the cities of the Empire. For by creating the *xenodochia* and giving charitable attention to the poor and the destitute sick, the early Church made possible the attenuation of the social violence that, in part, made it so successful among the subordinated urban populations of the first centuries.”⁶ According to another point of view, while empowering the Church it enabled it to build up its considerable wealth, and while ensuring the care of the individual founders’ souls, it allowed them to gain social prestige.⁷

New architectural constructions materialize the new social and religious practices. From the 4th century onwards, hospices where the poor, sick and strangers received care are mentioned in ancient texts, the writings of the Church Fathers and through the lapidary inscriptions identified on the field. Since the end of the seventeenth century, inventories of these hospices have been made and constantly expanded. In the East, not counting Constantinople, which alone had more than sixty hospices,⁸ the study of ancient texts and inscriptions from Late Antiquity has made it

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² Patlagean 1977; Ritter 2019.

³ In the words of Gregory of Nazianzus in *The Love of the Poor* (Quéré 1982, *Ichtus* 6: 105–134). Brown 2002, “From Lover of the City to Lover of the Poor”.

⁴ The most common practice being the sharing of food: Caseau 2017: 31.

⁵ Durliat 1990: 542; Thiel 201: 149-150; Caseau 2017: 37–38.

⁶ Delaplace 2020: 287–288 (trans. I. Ruben).

⁷ Brown 2002 and Winterhager 2019: 104-105. The topic was also recently addressed by D. Caner (Caner 2021), but I have not yet been able to consult this volume. For a broader presentation of the issues related to this phenomenon in Antiquity and an extensive contextualization, see the introduction of this volume.

⁸ Janin 1969: 552–567.

possible to list more than two hundred and twenty hospices;⁹ they also provide much information: The hospices were set up by bishops, by the emperor, and by pious men and women, who also financed them. They were generally associated with a monastery and administered by monks; they were built in the centre and on the outskirts of towns and in villages or hamlets along the roads. In the towns they could be numerous, for example six hospices were built in Jerusalem at the time of Emperor Justinian alone (527-565)¹⁰ and many others were built for the poor in Alexandria at the request of John the Almsgiver, as well as seven maternity houses.¹¹ The texts also give information regarding the size of these facilities, Procopius describing as "small buildings" the hospitals of Antioch where the poor men, women and foreigners who suffered from physical infirmities were cared for.¹² Their size is also suggested by the number of beds they had. Justinian added to the great complex of the Nea in Jerusalem a hospice of two hundred beds to accommodate sick pilgrims, and according to Leontius of Neapolis, each of the seven maternity houses built by John the Almsgiver in Alexandria contained forty beds.¹³

Outside the towns, several hospices could be grouped together on the same site. This was the case, for example, of the monastic complex of Theodosius in Judea (today Deir Dosi), mentioned by Theodore of Petra. It had three "hostelries" destined for "foreign monks", "laypeople of the upper and middle classes", and the "poor" or beggars, "who were provided with food, clothing and medical care."¹⁴

The terms used in Greek, Latin and Syriac to designate these facilities, especially from the Justinianic period in the 6th century onwards, also show the diversity of the beneficiaries. The *xenodocheia* took in foreigners, pilgrims and travellers, the *nosokomeia* the sick, the *gerokomeia* the elderly, the *orphanotropheia* were intended for the care and education of orphans, the *ptocheia* and *ptochotropheia* welcomed the poor. In the *diakonia*, the poor received food and care, in the *leprosaria*, lepers were taken in, etc. This specialisation must have occurred at least in the large towns, and it is in the hospices of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria that the most explicit terminology was used. However, the historians' interpretations of the terms used to designate these establishments shows their polysemy.¹⁵ The word *xenodocheion*,

⁹ Horden 2006: 217, based on relatively old inventories: du Fresne du Cange 1680; Leclercq 1925: 2748–2770; Mentzou-Meimare 1982; Constantelos 1968. Also Touati 2007. M.A. Anderson takes the whole Empire into consideration (East and West) and lists 297 institutions mentioned in ancient texts (chronicles, letters, sermons, inscriptions, papyri, and Latin, Greek, Syriac and Coptic sources) that were built between the 4th and 7th centuries: Anderson 2012 (unpublished thesis, available online).

¹⁰ According to Morisson 2004: 191. Regarding the hospices of Jerusalem, see Voltaggio 2011; L. Di Segni 2020: 25 and n. 33; Piraud-Fournet 2021: 258 and 259: fig. 3.

¹¹ *Life of John the Almsgiver* (Festugière and Rydén 1974): 324–325.

¹² Procopius, *Buildings*, II, 10 (Roques 2011: 171-172).

¹³ Regarding the Nea complex: Procopius, *Buildings*, b. V, 6-7, 25-26 (Dewing and Downey 1940), *It. Plac.* 23 (Geyer 1965); Voltaggio 2011: 199; Di Segni 2020: 25. For Alexandria, *Life of John the Almsgiver*: 262, 324-325 (Festugière and Rydén 1974).

¹⁴ *Life of Saint Theodosius* 13, 15 (34-37. 39 Usener and Festugière 1963: 120-121); for the quotations in English, Di Segni 2020: 25, who specifies that in the text the word *καταγώγιον* for these hospices is associated with the function *ξενοδοχία* and the action *ξενοδοχεῖν*.

¹⁵ For more about the words that designate welfare and hosting buildings, their meaning and polysemy see Cabouret-Lauriou 2016; Fauchon-Claudon 2017; Caner 2018; Di Segni 2020: 24-26.

which was the most commonly used,¹⁶ designates an establishment intended to receive passing strangers, but this term, depending on the context, can designate an “inn”, a “charitable hostelry”,¹⁷ a “hospital”,¹⁸ also a “hospice for lepers” or a “hospice for the reception of pilgrims”.¹⁹ Similarly, a *xenon* can be a “guest house”, a “stopover house”, a “hostelry” or a “hospice”.²⁰ A *ptocheion*, literally “an asylum for the poor”, could, in Jerusalem, be the equivalent of a “*diakonia*”²¹ and in Bostra a “leper colony”.²² Finally, some terms, *pandocheion* in particular, do not seem explicit enough to distinguish a charitable hospice from a paying inn or hostel for traders. The texts refer to a separation of categories of beneficiaries according to their rank and economic or physical condition, but also according to their sexes. Some hospices were reserved for men and others for women. This is evidenced for instance by an inscription engraved on a stone reused in the city walls of Jerusalem mentioning the foundation of a hospice for poor elderly women.²³

Archaeology also contributes to inform us about this phenomenon. Several possible hospices have been identified, most often on the edges of major pilgrimage sites, and referred to by their inventors as “hostels for pilgrims”.²⁴ Some sites or regions, Jerusalem and Judea, Petra or northern Syria for example, have been the subject of studies or syntheses bringing together textual and archaeological data. They have sometimes made it possible to describe the architecture and organisation of the facilities, to evaluate their monumentality, to observe their functioning, but also to provide information on the practices linked to hospitality, the nature of the care provided, the customs and the way in which they may have contributed to social regulations, on a local and regional scale.

The ancient Byzantine province of Arabia, which today covers southern Syria and the northern half of Jordan, has been particularly well documented by two centuries of exploration and archaeological work and can be subjected to such an investigation. A recent broad study dedicated to this category of buildings (2012) and based on previous inventories, mentions only two installations in Arabia.²⁵ An even more recent study (2020) was carried out by L. Di Segni.²⁶ It focuses on the pilgrimage hosting buildings in the Holy Land and mentions five or six of them of the *Provincia Arabia*. However, a closer examination of the textual and epigraphic sources relating to this region now makes it possible to identify more than nine possible late antique charitable buildings in the province of Arabia; they are listed in the first part of this paper, which also describes all known data for each. The second part gathers data provided by the observation

¹⁶ In Mentzou-Meimare’s 1982 inventory for the Byzantine Empire, excluding Constantinople, fifty-nine *xenodocheia*, forty-nine *nosokoemia* and twenty-two *ptocheia* are listed, Horden 2006: 217.

¹⁷ *IGLS XV/1*, 263 and 264, *IGLS XIV/2*, 592a.

¹⁸ Frösen 2018: 109–139.

¹⁹ *It. Plac.* 12, vv. 7–9 and 13, vv. 13–16 (Geyer 1965) and Voltaggio 2011: 200 and 201.

²⁰ *IGLS XV/1*: 47–49 and 329.

²¹ Voltaggio 2011. In the Early Byzantine empire, deaconries were associations of lay people with charitable aims: Patlagean 1977: 192.

²² Procopius, *Buildings V*, 9, 22–26 (Dewing and Downey 1940), Sartre 1985: 127, *IGLS XIII*, 9132 and 9137, and Feissel 2000: 99. See also Caner 2018.

²³ Germer-Durand 1892: 583, *in sc.* 45 and *CIIP*, *in sc.* 859.

²⁴ For a recent synthesis on this subject, see Piraud-Fournet, 2021.

²⁵ Anderson 2012, unpublished thesis online. See n. 9 above.

²⁶ Di Segni 2020.

of the remains of hospices already identified in the field in the Near East; they are as many material clues to try to recognize the remains of hospices in the ancient *Provincia Arabia* presented in the third part.

I *Xenodocheion, Ptocheion and Diakonia* mentioned in Arabia

In the Ḥawrān region, now divided between southern Syria and northern Jordan and strongly characterised by its basaltic and volcanic nature, more than four thousand ancient lapidary inscriptions have been recorded in more than three hundred villages between the beginning of the nineteenth century and 2011.²⁷ Since the 1980s, they are being re-examined and re-edited by Maurice Sartre and Annie Sartre-Fauriat. A certain number of those dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods mention installations linked to the reception, hosting and possibly care (**Fig. 1**).

Thus, for the pagan Roman period, prior to the mid-4th century, relays along the *cursus publicus*, public houses and inns, reception establishments reserved for certain categories of people, subject to the obligation of hospitality (the *hospitium*) or subject to payment, are reported. The case best documented by epigraphy is that of the *xenon* of *Phaina*-Mismiyyeh (**Fig. 2**), an ancient village located on the northern edge of the Lejā, (Ancient Trachonitis).²⁸ This “hostelry” was built in 186–187 CE. Waddington, and later Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, believed that it could have been intended to receive passing guests, troops or soldiers in particular, equivalent, therefore, to a *metatum*, in a town that constituted a sort of stopover before entering the fossilised and tortured lava plateau of Trachonitis. The meaning of this inscription was to inform visitors that the inhabitants could not be compelled to receive them in their own homes since a dedicated facility existed in the village.²⁹ It suggests that in Antiquity the practice of welcoming strangers may have had the value that it still has today in Syria, a social obligation.³⁰

About twenty inscriptions discovered in the villages of the Ḥawrān mention other “communal houses” or “public houses” (*kamara*, *demosios oikos*, *koinos oikos*, or *apsis*), built between 253 and 362 CE. According to Villeneuve, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, these houses could have been

²⁷ Sartre-Fauriat 1999: 223 reports 3600, *IGLS XVI*: 14 adds 420 unpublished ones, and all the other volumes probably add more.

²⁸ *IGLS XV/1*, 13, “Julius Saturninus to the people of *Phaina*, *mètrokômia* of the Trachonitis, greetings. If anyone, be they a soldier or a private individual, tries by force to take lodging in your house, let me know so that I can protect you from them. Indeed, you do not have to pay a collective contribution to guests, and you cannot be forced to receive guests in your houses because you have a hostelry. Place this letter from me in a prominent place in your *mètrokômia*, so that no one can say in his defence that he did not know about it.” (Trans. I. Ruben).

²⁹ *IGLS I. Syrie*: 573–574.

³⁰ For B. Boudou hospitality is a ritual practice that obeys a relatively simple motto: strangers should not be treated lightly; he recalls that for Nietzsche hospitality is intended to “paralyze the hostile element in the stranger. As soon as the stranger is no longer considered primarily as an enemy, hospitality regresses” (trans. I. Ruben), Boudou 2012: 269–279. Hospitality in the Near East is traditionally embodied in the *maḍāfeh*. M. Ababsa describes the communal *maḍāfeh* of Syrian villages and towns, which traditionally serve as a setting for two types of activities: a function of protection and mediation, a place of negotiation and advice where the political, economic and social life of the community or a tribe is orchestrated, and also a function of a guest house, where reception and care are guaranteed to every visitor and stranger for at least two days, Ababsa 2001. See also Dufourg 1951: 417; Villeneuve 198: 98.

used as common rooms for meetings of the town’s magistrates, as well as to accommodate passing guests. The village of Mleiḥāt Ḥizqīn, for example, in the south of the Lejā, had such a “house”; its construction is not dated.³¹ Two others (called *koinou kamara*) were erected on the edge of Jebel al-‘Arab, at Sijin³² and at *Bosana-Būsān*, the latter even being referred on a second inscription (*tou koin[ou] oikou*)³³ mentioning its restoration around 380 CE. Further south on the Nuqrah plain, a “communal house” (*koinos oikos*) is recorded at Mu‘arribeh, dated to 336–337 CE³⁴ and another “public house (*oikos*), thanks to the generosity of the village” at Kerak is dated 253–254 CE.³⁵ Another of these houses was identified in the field by Butler, at Waqm.³⁶ According to an inscription, it was built in 316 CE “at the joint expense of the whole village”³⁷ and the inscription was still *in situ* in a building that was also still well preserved in the early 20th century³⁸ (**Fig. 3**). The original building was situated on a slight rise to the east of the village and consisted of a single square room on the ground floor, with twenty niches and three windows on its four walls. According to the hypotheses above, the niches, or cupboards, have housed the community’s archives, or else accommodated the effects of travellers.³⁹ A second floor was attested by the remains, and it was here that passing guests could have been accommodated. A small chapel was built next door and this association allows us to suggest that this meeting and reception house, which is different from the other houses in the village, acquired a charitable character in the Byzantine period.

At the very southern edge of the Ḥawrān, in today’s Jordan, the village of Umm es-Surab, which stood on the road between *Bostra* and *Gerasa*, was perhaps a relay on the *cursus publicus*. Indeed, an undated inscription indicates the association of “(...) a barn, (...) a *triklinos* and (...) a gateway”,⁴⁰ three architectural installations that could constitute such a relay.⁴¹ This ruined inscription was discovered in the centre of the village, in a Christian complex dedicated to Sergius and Bacchus consisting of a church and many outbuildings. Among these, and directly connected by a door to the church, was an elegant two-storey residence built around a courtyard whose paving covered a large cistern. This residence would have been a small monastery.⁴² Could the inscribed lintel come from the neighbouring building, located further north? It brings together two semi-detached houses, heavily reoccupied in medieval times, which are distinguished from the other houses in the village by several features (**Fig. 4**). The western house had a large courtyard that could have accommodated crews. On the ground floor of the eastern house was a large, 5-m high room with troughs, which was a barn or stable and, as was traditional in this region, on the upper floor, perhaps accessible through a gallery carried by a portico, would have

³¹ IGLS XV/1, 73.

³² IGLS XVI/1, 49.

³³ IGLS XVI/1, 52.

³⁴ IGLS XIII/2, 9692.

³⁵ IGLS XIII/2, 9801.

³⁶ Butler 1919: 417, ill. 357.

³⁷ IGLS XV/2, 318.

³⁸ In the 2000s, M. Sartre and A. Sartre-Fauriat found the bloc reused in another house of the village.

³⁹ Villeneuve 1985: 98. For a list of villages with an inscription mentioning a public house: IGLS XV/1, 73 and previously Sartre-Fauriat 1999: 224–225, n. 5 and Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 260. See also Di Segni 2020: 26 and n. 41.

⁴⁰ τὸν ἀχυρῶνα κ[α]ὶ τὸν [τ]ρίκλινον καὶ τὸν πυλῶ[να], IGLS XXI. *Jordanie* 5, 63.

⁴¹ Gatier-Bull. ép. 1998: 528.

⁴² Butler 1914-1919: 94-99 and Gilento 2015.

been the *triklinos*, a living or dining room.⁴³ Was the architecture of the inns or relays of the *cursus publicus* stereotyped, duplicated across the different provinces of the Empire?⁴⁴ Their most elementary form could have been similar to a “caravanserai”-type plan, consisting of a courtyard surrounded by rooms, sometimes including stables. However, insofar as their construction and maintenance were the responsibility of the municipalities, we cannot rule out the hypothesis that the architecture of each region was locally influenced, subject, of course, to the materials available and local construction methods. The ancient facilities for accommodating strangers in the Ḥawrān so far identified do not really seem to have had a commercial purpose, but rather to have been governed by a moral law, the *hospitium*, or by the civil and military administration.

In the Early Byzantine and Christian period, in the Ḥawrān, the vocabulary related to the accommodation of strangers became more diverse. In the north of Batanea, Kafr Shams is known thanks to the *Letter of the Archimandrites*, which mentions the presence of a Monophysite convent in this village in the 6th century. An inscription copied by Ewing in 1892 mentions a *stablōn* (**Fig. 2**) that was built there under the aegis of a religious dignitary, but the date of its construction is not specified.⁴⁵ Sartre and Sartre-Fauriat believe this term designates a barn or a stable, or perhaps an inn, and the inscription specifies that the *stablōn* was built with a “ἀνάγιν”, a term which can designate an upper floor (ἀνάγειον) or a post house (ἀλλαγὴ). Thus, this *stablōn*, could correspond to an inn; indeed, this is the function that Jerome assigned to the equivalent Latin word, *stabulum*.⁴⁶ It was built by the Church⁴⁷; does this make the building a charitable facility? In this village, four houses were extensively surveyed and studied in the early 1980s and 2000s.⁴⁸ All of them would have had upper floors, but among all the houses surveyed, only one may have had a stable or barn. It has indeed, on the ground floor and accessible through a portico, a large room framed by two smaller ones, each separated into two parts by walls probably pierced with bays furnished with the troughs so characteristic of stables in this region.⁴⁹ Three others *stablōn* are mentioned in *Maximianopolis-Shaqqā* each dated around the 6th century (**Fig. 2**),⁵⁰ however there is nothing to link their construction to the Church.

Two inscriptions report the construction of a *pandocheion* in Ḥarrān,⁵¹ a village on the southern fringe of the Lejā (Trachonitis). This “public” and “communal” inn was built between March 397 and August 398 CE, “in gratitude and remembrance” (**Fig. 2**). These two inscriptions were recorded by Waddington in the nineteenth century. He stated that one was inscribed “on the lintel of the door of an ancient building, next to the church (...)”, the other “above a window, on the first floor of the same building (...)”. “The two inscriptions of Ḥarrān are still in their

⁴³ I surveyed this complex in 2018. The study is in progress.

⁴⁴ About the *cursus publicus*, see Pflaum 1940; Bauzou 1989; Leveau 2016 and Le Guennec 2019.

⁴⁵ IGLS XIV/2, 534. The location of this inscription in the village was not specified and has not been found again.

⁴⁶ Jerome, Letter 108, funeral oration of St. Paul 12:17 (*ad stabulum Ecclesia deportavit*) and Fauchon-Claudon 2017.

⁴⁷ Di Segni 2020: 27.

⁴⁸ Clauss-Balty 2008: 48–49, pl. II to V.

⁴⁹ According to Villeneuve 1985: 112, fig. 21 and Clauss-Balty 2008: 48, 62 and pl. II and III, the presence of stables remains hypothetical.

⁵⁰ IGLS XVI/3, 513, 514 and 515, comments on pp. 36–38.

⁵¹ IGLS XV/1, 263 (δη<μ>όσιον πανδοχῖον) and 264 (κοινὸν πονδοχῖο[ν]).

original place. (...); the ground floor was built by certain people, and subsequently other people added the first floor (...).⁵² The formula used by the inscription and the proximity of the ancient church encouraged him, before Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, to see in this *pandocheion* a kind of Christian ex-voto and a place of welcome for travellers or pilgrims. The inscriptions specify that the construction had been entrusted to the *diocesi*, those responsible for the finances of the village. The word *pandocheion* means, *a priori*, a commercial hostelry with a bad reputation,⁵³ but these hostelries multiplied in the vicinity of great pilgrimage sites and it seems that the word also came to designate charitable places of welcome adjoining a church.⁵⁴ The presence of two different inscriptions and dedications, one on the ground floor and the other on the first floor, can be explained in several ways. According to the most likely hypothesis, the *diocesi* would have supervised the first stage of the construction, i.e. the building of the ground floor of the *pandocheion*, and the *diocesi* elected a few months later the addition of the upper floor. But we can also propose that two *pandocheia* were built in this village, one on top of the other, one for men, the other for women for example, or one for travellers, the other for the poor, one for the healthy, the other for the sick etc. In the middle of the nineteenth century, when Waddington and Vogüé visited, it would have been possible to analyse the form and organisation of this *pandocheion* or these *pandocheia*. Unfortunately, Butler, and later Sartre and Sartre-Fauriat, found fragments of these two beautiful inscriptions reused in other buildings in the village; they are no longer in their original locations and the buildings to which they refer have perhaps been destroyed.

At Mutbīn, another village that had a Miaphysite convent in the 6th century, a *xenodocheion* is mentioned in an inscription discovered by Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre in 2008 (**Fig. 2**).⁵⁵ The building of this “Inn of the public (or Catholic) church” is not dated. This expression could refer either to the “official” Orthodox Church or to the building itself, a church open to all, not only to monks. Volume XVI/2 of the *IGLS* provides a photograph of the inscribed block and shows it without spalls, most likely *in situ* in the entrance façade of the original building. This ancient building is itself represented by another photograph in the chapter on this village.⁵⁶ It shows a large unroofed room that was used as a sheepfold in 2008. The eastern and western walls of this room and the two large arches that once held the ceiling of the ground floor seem to have been built in the medieval and modern periods. In the background, a north-facing ancient façade is almost completely preserved in its ancient state. In the centre, the entrance door is surmounted by an impost window and, even higher up, by the threshold and the first jambs of the door which served an upper floor. This floor must have been accessible from the outside, via a flight of steps set into the façade and a cantilevered landing, as was traditional in the antique houses of the region. The careful construction of this ancient façade and the fine finish of the surface of the blocks suggest that the facing shown in the photograph is the exterior of the building. Moreover, the absence of light in the impost window suggests the existence still in 2008 of a closed room on the other side of this façade. This southern building must therefore have been accessible in

⁵² *IGLS* I. Syria, 2462 and 2463.

⁵³ *Pandocheion* gave the word *funduq*, “hotel” in Arabic: Constable 2004: 4–37.

⁵⁴ *IGLS* I. Syria, 2408, 2462 and 2463. About the meaning of this word, see also Fauchon-Claudon 2017.

⁵⁵ τοῦτο τὸ ξενοδοχίον τή<ς> καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας, *IGLS* XIV/2, 592a. See also Di Segni 2020: 27.

⁵⁶ *IGLS* XIV/2: 581 and 582.

ancient times via a courtyard to the north, bordered by another building to the west, the remains of which can be seen at the base of the modern stable building.

In the Jebel al-‘Arab, at *Dionysias-Swaydā’*, the construction of a *xeneon* under the protection of St. Theodore was commissioned by Bishop Petros (**Fig. 2**).⁵⁷ The inscription found in “a house to the west of the mosque” and copied by Waddington has not been found again. Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, relying on the hypotheses of Rey-Coquais and Feissel, describe the different meanings that the word ξενεών can take depending on the context. For some scholars, the patronage of St. Theodore, a military saint, suggests that it was a stopping place for military troops. For others, a function as a charitable hospice seems more appropriate for a lodge erected by a bishop. Perhaps this *xeneon* could be linked to the pilgrimage church situated to the south of the main street, which Donceel-Voûte suggests should be recognised among the half-dozen ancient churches identified in the town.⁵⁸ According to a more recent hypothesis carried out by L. Di Segni, this word designated a “house of rest for travellers, since Swaydā’ was located on an important thoroughfare”.⁵⁹ However, since she showed that in other contexts the word ξενεών could be related with a state of sickness and medical cure, it can also be proposed that this building was an infirmary or a hospital.

At Rîmet Ḥāzem (**Fig. 2**), an incomplete inscription mentions several [- - -]δοχεῖα. The inscription, discovered and recorded by Waddington, was probably reused, “Near the entrance to the sheikh’s house; stone broken on the right, the other sides complete. Large letters”;⁶⁰ it has not been seen since and is undated. For [- - -]δοχεῖα, Waddington reconstructs *pandocheia*,⁶¹ hostels built “in commemoration”.⁶² For Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, who suggest other interpretations for this incomplete word, the words ξενοδοχεία or πανδοχεία would not be restitutable because it seems too unlikely that a single individual had several inns or hospices built in a village, and these in commemoration. Another argument against the hypothesis of hospices in the village of Rîmet Ḥāzem is the absence today of visible remains dated to the Early Byzantine period, such as other inscriptions, churches or monasteries. Nevertheless, the disappearance of such remains could be attributed to the extensive destruction suffered by this village between the first quarter and the end of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, other arguments support the hypothesis that they were several hospices. On the one hand, other sites, whether towns, or isolated monastic complexes such as that of Theodosius in Judea mentioned above, had hospices grouped in twos or threes because they were intended for different beneficiaries; this is perhaps also what the two inscriptions discovered in the village of Ḥarrān in the Ḥawrān might suggest.⁶³ Furthermore, Sartre-Fauriat proposes that the invocations in some

⁵⁷ IGLS XVI/2, 339 and pp. 16–18.

⁵⁸ IGLS XVI/2: 18 and Donceel-Voûte 1997.

⁵⁹ Di Segni 2020: 25-27.

⁶⁰ IGLS I. Syria, 2408.

⁶¹ IGLS XVI/1, 59, already mentioned in IGLS XV/1: 329.

⁶² Διομήδη[ς - - -] τοῦ Μοορο[υ - - - τὰ - ?] δοχεῖα μνήμ[ης χάριν]: “Diomedes, son of . . ., grandson of Mooros, to . . . the receivers, in his memory,” (trans. I. Ruben) IGLS XVI/1, 59. See also IGLS XV/1: 329.

⁶³ IGLS XV/1, 263 and 264.

inscriptions relating to constructions, such as “in ex-voto” or “for the peace of the soul” – in this case “in his memory”, evoke religious buildings.⁶⁴

Further south, in *Bostra-Boṣrā*, the capital of the Province of Arabia, a *ptocheion* (an asylum for the poor) was built by order of Justinian, thus between 527 and 565 CE (**Fig. 2**).⁶⁵ Christianity developed early in this city, where the bishop of the province resided, who became archbishop in the 6th century.⁶⁶ Inscriptions and remains of ancient and Early Byzantine buildings abound here and have been the subject of extensive historical and archaeological research since the nineteenth century.⁶⁷ One of the inscriptions discovered mentions an oratory dedicated to the “holy and victorious Job” which, like Waddington before them, Sartre and Feissel link to the *ptocheion* mentioned by Procopius, for Job was the patron saint of hospices and leprosia.⁶⁸ This foundation could be linked to the great plague which ravaged the region from 542 onwards.⁶⁹ However, we have seen that hospices were, as far as possible, assigned to a very specific category of beneficiaries, either the poor or the lepers rather than to the poor and lepers, and that this specialisation was particularly evident in towns, which could possess numerous charitable establishments. Why, then, not suggest that the capital of the province had one hospice devoted to serving the poor (the *ptocheion*) and another to relieving lepers (linked to the oratory of Job)?⁷⁰

Finally, three other establishments are mentioned in inscriptions in the Province of Arabia, further south in the limestone part of the Transjordanian plateau, at Jerash and Ma’in. In the city of *Gerasa-Jerash*, there are two inscriptions from the 6th century. One mentions a prison and the other a deaconry (**Fig. 2**). The prison (referred to in this text as φυλαχή and φρουρά) was erected in the 6th century as a charitable gesture, a “humanitarian action”, since it was commissioned by a bishop, and intended to keep the accused sheltered from the condemned.⁷¹ The prison has not been located, even though the site has been well explored since the 1930s and is rich in ancient remains. On the other hand, in the centre of the city, immediately accessible from the colonnaded main street, stood a *diakonia*, mentioned by an inscription in a mosaic that is still preserved in its original place.⁷² This term designates the headquarters of a charitable association of lay people, where the poor were welcomed for the distribution of food and care.⁷³ The *diakonia* of *Gerasa* was built in 565 CE in two former courtyards that belonged to the

⁶⁴ Sartre-Fauriat 1999: 235.

⁶⁵ πτωχεῖον, Procopius, *Buildings* V, 9, 22, see Feissel 2000: 99, Sartre 1985: 127, *IGLS* XIII/1 and 2, 9132 and 9137.

⁶⁶ Sartre 1985: 70–120.

⁶⁷ For an extensive bibliography, see Sartre 1985, *IGLS* XIII/1 and 2, Dentzer et al. 2001, Dentzer-Feydy et al. 2007.

⁶⁸ *IGLS* I. Syria, 1916a, *IGLS* XIII/1, 9137, Sartre 1985: 127 and Feissel 2000: 99.

⁶⁹ Sartre 1985: 127, n. 246, see also Morisson and Sordini, 2002: 193.

⁷⁰ In addition, some other inscriptions mention the construction of buildings in the Justinianic period, without specifying their function and could relate to this *ptocheion*, or to other hospices. One in particular, dated 540 and found near the Church of Saints Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius, mentions the construction of a building whose name ends in “on”, under Justinian and under the aegis of Archbishop John. Sartre believes this could also be the *ptocheion* reported by Procopius, *IGLS* XIII/1, 9131 and Sartre 1985: 203.

⁷¹ Gatier 198: 299–307 and for citation p. 302, Piccirillo 2002: 133–134 and Gatier 2009: 278.

⁷² Jones 1928: 169–170, *insc.* 36 and Kraeling 1938: 229. Marrou 1940: 113: “By the grace of God the *diakonia* (ἡ διακονία) was instituted in the month of Artemision of the 13th Indiction, the year 627.” The complete translation of the text, which also mentions the beneficiaries, is given by Lassus 1947: 239, “(...) † Incline, Lord, your ear, and hear me, for I am beggar and poor (...)” (Trans. I. Ruben).

⁷³ Patlagean 1977: 192. See also Caseau 2017: 36–41 and Fauchon 2013: 564–565 and n. 32.

propylaea of the ancient temple of Artemis (**Fig. 5**). The elongated east-west courtyard was transformed into a church, the other trapezoidal courtyard, with its exedras and colonnades, became the atrium of the church built to the east. The exedras were transformed into closed circular rooms. The charitable facility occupied these rooms, which may have been used as offices and shops, as well as the courtyard and the northern portico of the atrium, which was transformed into a two-storey building in the late 6th or early 7th century.⁷⁴ The distributions and care must have taken place in this courtyard. One of the services overseen by deaconries was to take the destitute to the baths,⁷⁵ and the deaconry identified at *Gerasa* is indeed in the very heart of the city, close to the markets and several public baths.⁷⁶ The nearby bathing complex, of modest size, built by Bishop Placcus a century earlier, in 454–455 CE, could thus have been used by the poor. It underwent renovations, as indicated by an inscription, at least until 584 CE, and its use as a bath lasted until the end of the 7th century. Its public character and its use for hygienic bathing rather than for relaxation seem clear and a possible civic or charitable function has already been suggested for this complex.⁷⁷ In the same way, why not the two large thermal complexes in the centre of the town could have been, occasionally or regularly, used in the service of the poor.

In the large town of Ma'in, 8 km southwest of Mādabā, several inscriptions on mosaic pavements have been found, which indicate the existence of Early Byzantine monuments, churches and others buildings.⁷⁸ One of them, found not far from a Byzantine church, mentions the construction of a hospice (ξενεώ[ν]) in 598–599 (**Fig. 2**). This hospice could have provided accommodation for pilgrims on their way to Mount Nebo.⁷⁹ Another mentions the construction of a *πριβάτον*,⁸⁰ a term that probably designates a small bath open to the public, but privately operated.⁸¹ The inscription was found near the remains of a thermal facility and this *pribaton* could be related to the hospice.⁸² For L. Di Segni, the function of this ξενεών which was built far from the main pilgrimage route but close to hot springs was probably a place of medical cures.⁸³

According to this inventory, in the Early Byzantine *Provincia Arabia*, at least twelve buildings could be referred to as public buildings for housing, hospitality, assistance or care and nine of them belonged to the Church or were associated with a church. Attested by the texts and inscriptions, the existence of these hospices in villages and cities is indubitable, but the texts do not give much information on practices, customs, officiants and beneficiaries, and the possible

⁷⁴ For an architectural and archaeological study of this complex, see Crowfoot 1931: 13–16, and Brizzi *et al.* 2010: 354, who brought to light the installation of this upper floor and its relationship with the charitable association.

⁷⁵ About baths associated with deaconries, see Marrou 1940: 116–120 and Caseau 2017: 41 and 45.

⁷⁶ According to H.-I. Marrou, the features of the *diakonia* of *Gerasa* are close to those built one or two centuries later in Rome, since most of them were built in abandoned public buildings of imperial Rome, old disused sanctuaries or old buildings previously used for supplies for the city and included a chapel, offices and shops. Marrou 1940: 113. For a recent study of the *diaconiae* of the Early Medieval Rome, see Winterhager 2019 and an overview of the evidence for all known Roman deaconries, Hermes 1996: 38–72.

⁷⁷ About the baths of Placcus, Gatier 2009: 277–279 and Lepaon 2015.

⁷⁸ IGLS XXI. Jordan 1: 183.

⁷⁹ IGLS XXI. Jordan 1, 163.

⁸⁰ IGLS XXI. Jordan 1, 162.

⁸¹ Alpi 2009: 182, n. 105.

⁸² IGLS XXI. Jordan 1:189 and Gatier 2009: 281.

⁸³ Di Segni 2020: 26.

care provided. However, the observation of other buildings identified by the archaeology in the Near East, even if their function and charitable natures are more hypothetical, give clues for the reconstruction of the possible architectural organization of the hospices and the way they were occupied.

II Remains of Possible Hospices Identified in the Near East and in Arabia

The analyse of hypothetical hospices or hostelries' archaeological remains already identified allows us to sketch an outline of the forms and organisation that these facilities might have adopted. Buildings intended to provide charitable accommodation for guests, whether strangers, poor people or pilgrims, could have been akin to inns.⁸⁴ The one identified in Sergilla, one of the best-preserved villages in northern Syria, has benefited from a very thorough archaeological and architectural study.⁸⁵ On the ground floor there is a stable preceded by a portico, and there are two rooms on the first floor, one of which opens onto an open upper gallery, which probably served as a dormitory. This inn was built in the immediate vicinity of the baths of the village, which were perhaps thus made accessible to travellers. It had no enclosed courtyard, a feature that distinguishes it from the other houses and suggests that the building was directly accessible from the public space of the village. Moreover, the hostel was not connected to a religious building, church or monastery, which makes it a commercial rather than a charitable facility. It can be proposed that the three *stablou* of Shaqqā-*Maximianopolis* in the Ḥawrān was similar to this hostel.

In the village of Deir Sim'ān, which adjoins the great pilgrimage site of St Symeon Stylites (Qal'at Sim'ān) in the region of Antioch, fifteen "hostelries" more or less associated with monastic complexes were built on the outskirts of the village (**Fig. 6**).⁸⁶ Two of them are designated as *pandocheion* by inscriptions on the lintel of their entrance doors, which date their construction to 479 CE.⁸⁷ These *pandocheia* have been described very briefly as elongated buildings, consisting of large and smaller rooms distributed on two or three floors, surrounded on all four sides by porticoes on each floor. These porticoes could have served as ventilated sleeping quarters. In two other buildings dated to the 6th century, at Brād and Sheikh Sleimān, a small church is closely associated with a reception building, a "hostelry" or "guest house" according to J. Lassus, which differ in their form from the local dwellings. One of these is at least part of the house with the "complex plan", built by the apse of cathedral of Brād (**Fig. 7**).⁸⁸ The three rooms on the ground floor are entered by a courtyard and a portico and one of them is a stable with troughs. The other, at Sheikh Sleimān, is a building preceded by a portico and consisting of a stable and an upper floor, built in the atrium opposite the entrance to the Church of the

⁸⁴ Constable 2004: 37.

⁸⁵ Charpentier 2013: 497–506.

⁸⁶ Tchalenko 1953: 209 and Lassus 1947: 234.

⁸⁷ IGLS I. Syria, 2691 and 2692, thus abbreviated πανδ[οχέϊον] in both cases and Leclercq 1925: 2758. Brief description in Vogüé 1865–1877: 128, pl. 114, Butler 1920: 268–278, Lassus 1947: 234, Tchalenko 1953: 209 and Constable 2004: 30.

⁸⁸ Lassus 1947: 34-169, fig. 77.

Virgin.⁸⁹ Lassus suggests that these hostelries were linked to pilgrimages.⁹⁰ As at *Dionysias-Swaydā'*, Saint Theodore protects the hospice (ξενεών) of Umm al-Ḥalaḥil, another settlement the remains of which were preserved and were described and photographed by Lassus.⁹¹ This small ancient town had at least three churches, two of which are surrounded by a set of indistinct buildings, dwellings and an imposing citadel. Lassus was able to describe the citadel enclosure, its four corner towers and the inner buttresses, a cistern and the remains of a water-raising system, but not the inner buildings, which were already in the 1940s too ruined.⁹²

Several other pilgrim hospices have been identified at sites near or on the routes leading to another major pilgrimage site, Jerusalem. The monastic complex of Theodosius was excavated, however the three “hostelries” mentioned by Theodore of Petra could not be identified at the site.⁹³ In contrast, the excavations carried out on the ancient complex assigned to Martyrius unearthed a vast enclosure including a monastery, a large church, baths, a large refectory, a garden and a cistern, and outside but adjoining this enclosure, a hospice. The latter included a stable, a chapel and rooms that could have been used as bedrooms.⁹⁴ A few kilometres further south, in the monastic complex of Euthymius, a martyrdom church, a hospice and, close to the church and the tomb of the saint, a small room with two masonry beds interpreted as an infirmary for incubation rites were discovered (**Fig. 8**).⁹⁵ Further south, in Petra, at the top of Jabal Hārūn, a pilgrimage complex from the 5th–6th century comprises a monastery, a church and outbuildings. Established as a distinct but adjoining complex to the north, a hospice has been excavated. It consists of three wings arranged around a central courtyard, consisting of a dozen rooms side by side.⁹⁶ Its identification as a hospice, perhaps a hospital, is supported by the mention in papyri unearthed in Petra of the existence in the city of at least two *xenodocheia*.⁹⁷

Numerous other hospices have been roughly located, but have not yet been the subject of excavations which would make it possible to clarify their appearance.⁹⁸ However, the hostels and hospices that have already been identified through excavations or surveys in the Near East have common characteristics. They are at least associated with a church, otherwise with a monastery, which includes within its precincts a residence for the monks, a cistern, a church and

⁸⁹ Lassus 1947: 35, fig. 14.

⁹⁰ Lassus 1947: 234.

⁹¹ Lassus 1936: 67, insc. 31 and pp. 64–65 for the description of the building.

⁹² The inscription was carried by the lintel of the great door of this citadel and the word *xeneon* is interpreted here as “barracks of passage, intended for the troops on the march.” (Trans. I. Ruben).

⁹³ Hirschfeld 1990.

⁹⁴ Today, Khirbet Murassas in the heart of the Israeli settlement of Maale 'Adumim, 6 km from Jerusalem. The site was excavated and published by Magen and Talgam 1990.

⁹⁵ Hirschfeld 1993.

⁹⁶ Fiema et al. 2016 and Whiting 2016.

⁹⁷ Frösén 2018: 109–139, who translates this term as hospital.

⁹⁸ For example, the complex attributed to Hilarion, on the outskirts of Gaza, also features a monastery, separated by a church and baths from a hostelry or hospice, which has not been excavated, see Elter and Hassoune 2004 and 2008. In other cases, the hospice has not been looked for and identified, but its surroundings are known. In the Jordan Valley, “three miles from the city” of *Gadara-Umm Qeis*, a *xenodochium* was erected near the “baths of Elijah” where the lepers were purified in the 6th century, *It. Plac.*, chap. 7, vv. 13–16 (Geyer 1965). An inscription discovered at *Scythopolis-Beth Shean* on the other side of the Jordan, also mention the restoration in 558–559 of a *xenodocheion* near a healing bath intended to treat lepers, Avi-Yonah 1963: 325–326. However, on the nearby site of *Hammat Gader* a thermal ensemble has been excavated, Hirschfeld 1997: 5–9. Beside it were a synagogue, a church and a “residential area” where this lepers’ house could be sought.

sometimes baths. The hospices, however, always seem to have been built independently of the monastery, in a separate but adjoining compound. This was to ensure that the monks could live a regular life, away from the secular world and protected from the spread of disease. They might be organised like caravanserais, with rooms arranged around a central courtyard, or they might consist of a ground floor and one or more upper floors with rooms, preceded by porticoes, which could also be used for sleeping in the open air. They sometimes had barns or stables for the animals used for transporting travellers or pack animals, for example for carrying water or food. Their layout was probably similar to that of other buildings intended for hospitality and accommodation, such as inns, but the element that distinguishes them from paying inns is their association with a church, a chapel or a monastery.

Returning to Arabia, and more particularly to the basaltic region of the Ḥawrān, even if the discovery of inscriptions there is quite random, hospitality facilities, perhaps charitable, mentioned in Late Antique texts seem to be fairly evenly distributed across the region (**Fig. 1**). This network perhaps reflects that of small local pilgrimage sites.⁹⁹ These hospices have not yet been the subject of a specific study, as the attention of researchers working in southern Syria has been entirely focused on the study of well-researched ancient constructions, such as pagan and Christian sanctuaries, public facilities, baths, theatres and domestic architecture, which are sometimes spectacularly preserved.

Since 2011, the villages and the remains of these installations have been out of reach because of the war that is ravaging Syria, and can no longer be explored *in situ*. By contrast, in the Jordanian part of the Ḥawrān, which remains accessible, the inventory and study currently being conducted by the IGLS has not yet identified any inscriptions mentioning hospices. However, the likelihood of their existence and the clearer picture that is emerging of their organisation encourage a search to be made for their remains in the Jordanian Ḥawrān field, or else in the records of work already carried out in the region. For example, at Umm es-Surab, a village on the road connecting the towns of *Bostra* and *Gerasa*, where various domestic complexes were built on either side of a monastic complex and the possible relay post mentioned above, a building could have served as a charitable guest facility. It is located at the northern end of the village, away from the other buildings and near a very large cistern. It combines two adjoining buildings: a small church of almost square plan (14 m × 16.5 m) and another building of almost identical dimensions (14 m × 15.3 m) built against the apse of the church to the east (**Fig. 4**, **Fig. 9** and **Fig. 10**)¹⁰⁰. The church was accessed through its western façade. The corbels that crown this façade allow us to postulate a portico and a covered porch in front. Another door in the south wall of the church provided a secondary access. The entrance to the adjoining building was also in the centre of its southern façade. The door opened into a room with five cupboards on the rear, north wall, and most probably the cupboards may have been mangers. Such installations were quite common in the ground floor rooms of houses in the Ḥawrān and suggest that the entrance area, which was in the centre, was covered and was therefore a room rather than a small courtyard. It gave onto

⁹⁹ Lassus 1947; Maraval 1985; Piccirillo 2002.

¹⁰⁰ These buildings were first surveyed and described in King 1988: 48-51, fig. 6.

two elongated rooms to the east and west, also equipped with at least three cupboards or mangers to the west and at least four to the east. The small western room led to two other rooms to the north. Buildings in the Ḥawrān usually had an upper floor and if this building had had one, it would have been accessed by a flight of stairs and a landing embedded into the main façade, as is traditionally done in the region.¹⁰¹ More generally, the organisation of this house distinguishes it from the other houses in the village, the absence of any trace of an enclosed courtyard in front of the house for example, which makes it similar to the inn at Sergilla in northern Syria. However, its close association with the small church is reminiscent of the facilities seen at Brād and Sheikh Sleimān and could make it a building for charitable welcome and accommodation. With this in mind, its peripheral and isolated location, to the north of the village, would have kept strangers, non-natives and the sick away from the dwellings of the villagers and the monks.

We have seen through texts and examples such as the Theodosius complex described by Theodore of Petra that several hospices could be associated within the same complex. A complex surveyed in the early twentieth century in one of the largest villages in the southern Ḥawrān, at Umm al-Quṭṭein, may illustrate such an arrangement.¹⁰² The American archaeologist Butler identified at Umm al-Quṭṭein at least four churches, two chapels, five or six large private residences, and water reservoirs like those found in all these villages. But he also described a large monastic complex, that was perfectly preserved at the time of his visit, associated with a church in the south-eastern part of the village.

This monastery consisted of three multi-storey buildings arranged around an irregular courtyard. The large rooms on the west side, lit by large windows protected by small awnings and equipped with niches, would have served as a refectory. Adjoining the church and monastery complex, to the east, were two identical buildings, preceded by a courtyard or large walled garden with a cistern or well (**Fig. 11** and **Fig. 12**). These two side by side carefully constructed buildings consisted of two huge, high rooms entered on the north side through a portico, and each giving access to two small superimposed rooms in the rear, on the south side. Above each of their doors was a large circular window, and on their lintels were carved wreaths and flowing patterns of grapevine. Clearly, Butler was unaware of the existence of charitable institutions, which he did not mention in his publications and which he never sought to identify during his explorations.¹⁰³ He assigned these two identical and adjoining buildings to the use of the monks of the monastery without specifying what function they might have had, but, given the examples previously mentioned, perhaps a large hospice or twin hospices can be envisaged. It seems reasonable to propose that this layout is illustrative of the *pandocheia* mentioned in inscriptions in the villages of Rīmet Ḥāzem and Ḥarrān, further north in Syria. Unfortunately, this complex was destroyed after Butler's visit, possibly by the French bombardment during the Mandate in 1925, and is no longer visible today.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ A first archaeological excavation was carried out on this building in Oct. 2021. This study will contribute to clarify its layout and function.

¹⁰² Butler 1919: 137–142, figs. 120–122 for the monastic complex.

¹⁰³ However, M. de Vogüé mentioned *pandocheia* and *xenodocheia* in the introduction to his work half a century earlier, Vogüé 1865–1877: 15.

¹⁰⁴ King 1990: 73. In 2019, I also searched in vain on the site for remains of this monument.

Eventually, the rich documentation gathered since the nineteenth century on *Bostra* and the greater knowledge we have of these charitable installations and their distribution across the region allow us to propose hypotheses as to the location of the *ptocheion* mentioned by Procopius in the capital of the province (**Fig. 13**). It was probably a large building, with a portico, erected on the outskirts rather than in the centre, adjoining a church or a monastery and close to some baths.¹⁰⁵ It could have stood within the perimeter of the large church in the south-eastern quarter, where the remains have been identified of a very large church with a centred plan erected on a high podium and crowned with a very large dome, as well as those of a large residence, possibly episcopal¹⁰⁶, and of a small rectangular building further south, which could be a small bath of Early Byzantine time. Another hypothesis suggests that the asylum for the poor or the leper colony mentioned in the inscription relating to Job could have been built in the northeastern quarter, where there are the remains of two or three large churches and possibly a monastic complex, that of the monk Bahīra. Not far away are the al-Jahīr spring, which may have served as a curative bath, and a small bathing complex identified by Butler.¹⁰⁷

In the Early Byzantine *Provincia Arabia*, at least nine buildings that could be referred to as public buildings offering accommodation, hospitality, assistance or care could belong to the Church and for that reason we consider them as charitable hospices. However, many points remain to be clarified. For instance, it was suggested that the buildings called *pandocheion* and *stablōn* were paying hostels in contrast to the *xenodocheion* which would be a free hospice¹⁰⁸ and that the baths associated with monasteries and hospices could even constitute rental buildings providing income to these institutions.¹⁰⁹ Further work on the texts should be aimed indeed to try to distinguish charitable establishments from possible rental facilities belonging to the Church.

A few inscriptions, for instance those mentioning a *xenodocheion* in Mutbīn and *pandocheia* in Deir Simʿān, may still be in their original place in well preserved buildings. An archaeological study of those remains would perhaps one day give the opportunity to identify the features of a *xenodocheion*, of a *pandocheion*, and one thing leading to another, to distinguish these types of hospices or hostels from other types. Furthermore, the evidence of the existence of hospices in the *Provincia Arabia* encouraged us to identify as such two complexes linking a church with a hosting building placed apart from the other constructions of two ancient villages of northern Jordan. Even if the function of these complex is still hypothetical, it is necessary to rely on archaeology which could illustrate or clarify the text, and gradually refine our knowledge of this phenomenon. Eventually, archaeology of welfare, charity and hospices is likely to give us details about the ways in which different social categories lived together, the rich and poor, the sick and healthy, the local inhabitants and foreigners.

Illustrations

¹⁰⁵ Gatier 2009: 281–282. A fine example is on display in the monastic complex of 'Umm al-'Amr, near Gaza, Elter and Hassoun 2004: 363 (plan) and Elter and Hassoun 2008.

¹⁰⁶ Piraud-Fournet 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Butler 1914, *PPUAES IIA* 4: 265 and ill. 233.

¹⁰⁸ Constable 2004: 4-17.

¹⁰⁹ Fauchon 2013: 6, n. 55.

- Fig. 1.** Hosting Buildings in the Byzantine *Provincia Arabia*. Map of the Hawrān. The author 2022.
- Fig. 2.** Hosting Buildings in the Byzantine *Provincia Arabia*. List and references. The author 2022.
- Fig. 3.** “Public House” in Waqm. From Bulter 1914: 417, ill. 357.
- Fig. 4.** Aerial Photograph of Umm es-Surab Village. Crédit: A. Almagro 1978, photogrammetry: P. Gilento 2018, Caption: The author 2021.
- Fig. 5.** Map of *Gerasa*-Jerash in Late Antiquity. Drawing T. Lepaon 2010, Caption: The author 2021.
- Fig. 6.** Map of the Ancient Village of Deir Sim‘ān. From Tchalenko 1953: T. 2, pl. 208.
- Fig. 7.** Plan of a Church in Brad. From Lassus 1947: 169, fig. 77.
- Fig. 8.** Photograph of the “Infirmarium”. From Hirschfeld 1993: 138, pl. 9, ph. 6.
- Fig. 9.** Umm es-Surab. Annex Building of the Northern Church. Plan and first attempt of reconstruction. The author 2021.
- Fig. 10.** Umm es-Surab. Annex Building of the Northern Church. Photograph from the North to the South. The author 2021.
- Fig. 11.** Monastic Complex in Umm al-Quṭṭein. Plan and Elevation. From Bulter 1919: 140, ill. 120.
- Fig. 12.** Monastic Complex in Umm al-Quṭṭein. Reconstruction. From Bulter 1919: 138, pl. 9.
- Fig. 13.** Map of *Bostra*-Bosra. T. Fournet 2007, Caption: The author 2016.

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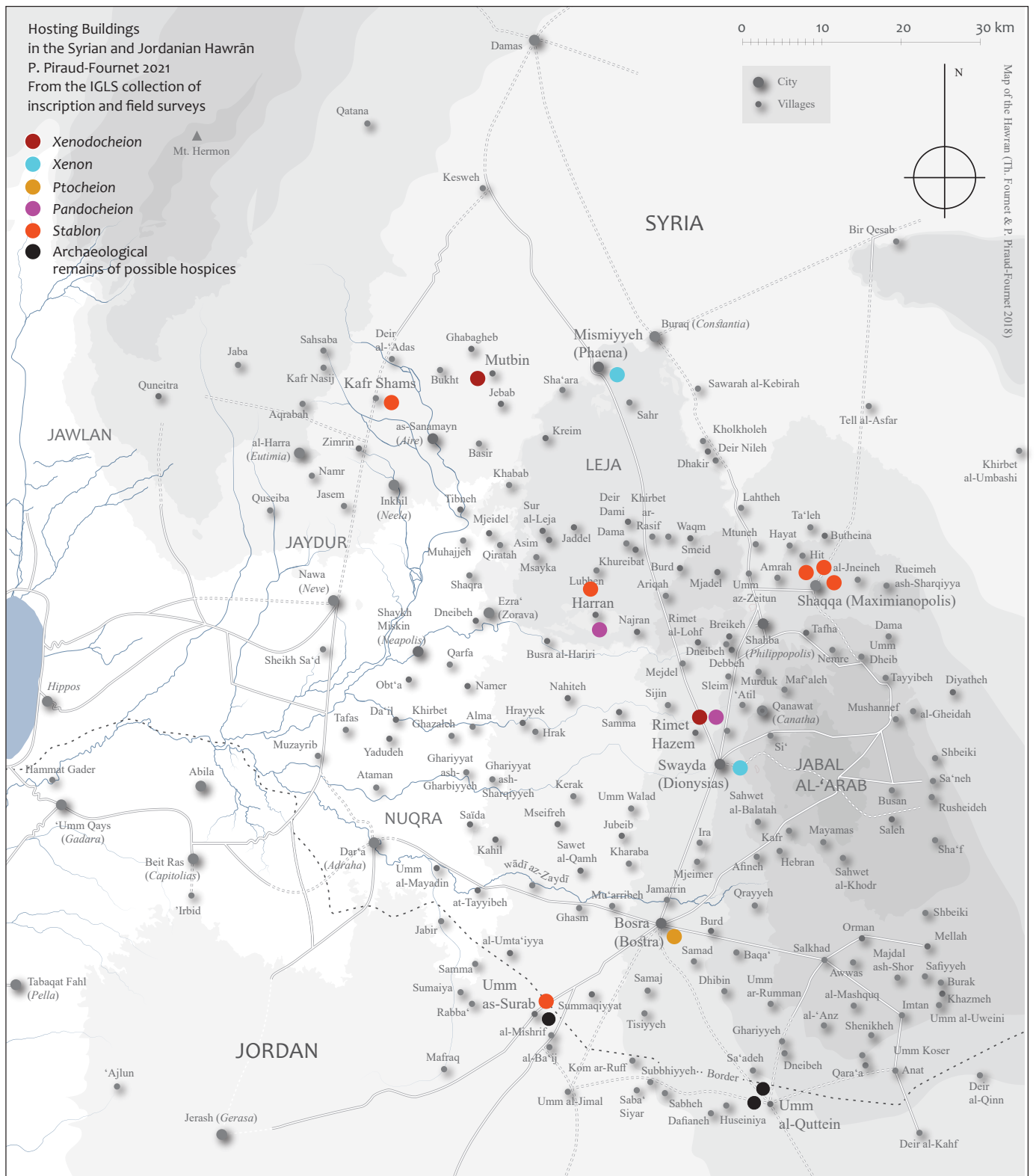
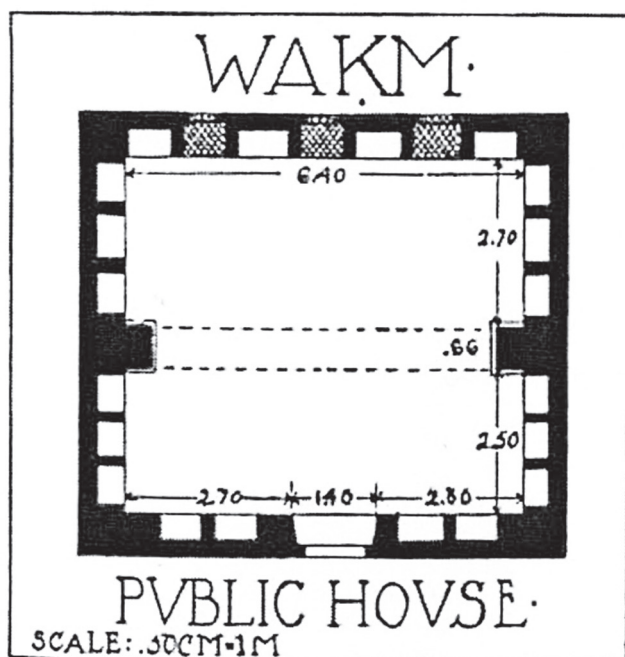


FIGURE 1. Hosting Buildings in the Byzantine Provincia Arabia. Map of the Hawrān.
 © P. Piraud-Fournet 2022

SITE	REFERENCE	WORDS	HYPOTHESES OF INTERPRETATION	DATATION	CONTEXT AND COMMENTS	ON THE FIELD
MISMIYYEH <i>Phaina</i>	<i>IGLS XV-1</i> , insc. 13, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 47-49	ξενόν <i>Xenon</i>	« Hostelry », « Place to shelter for guests of passing by », « Stopover lodge »	186-187 CE	Inscription in place, on the temple door (Wadd.)	Little surveyed site
KAFR SHAMS	<i>IGLS XIV-2</i> , insc. 534, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016: 512-513	στάβλον <i>Stablon</i>	« Inn or Post office relay », « built with an upper floor »	Non dated Byzantine era (L. Di Segni 2020)	No indication. Inscription not recovered (Sartre)	Little surveyed site
SHAQQA <i>Maximianopolis</i>	<i>IGLS XVI-3</i> , insc. 513, Sartre-Fauriat et Sartre 2022: 35-36	στάβλον (τὸ στάβλον περίκλινον) <i>Stablon</i>	« Inn » or « caravanserai » (with a dining room ?)	Hard to date mid 6th c.?	Inscription. Stone probably moved but recently observed (Sartre)	Little surveyed site
SHAQQA <i>Maximianopolis</i>	<i>IGLS XVI-3</i> , insc. 514, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2022: 36-37	στάβλον (τὸ στάβλον καὶ τοῦς ὄμο τρικλίνους) <i>Stablon</i>	« Inn » or « caravanserai » (with a dining room ?)	586-587 CE	Inscription. Stone probably moved, not recovered (Sartre)	Little surveyed site
SHAQQA <i>Maximianopolis</i>	<i>IGLS XVI-3</i> , insc. 515, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2022: 37-38	στάβλον (τὸ στάβλον καὶ τοῦς ὄμο τρικλίνους) <i>Stablon</i>	« Inn » (with a dining room ?)	Hard to date 6th or 7th c.	Inscription. Stone probably moved, not recovered (Sartre)	Little surveyed site
HARRAN	<i>IGLS XV-1</i> , insc. 263, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 327-329	δη<μ>όσιον πανδοχείον <i>Pandocheion</i>	« Communal Inn » « built in gratitude and remembrance », « a kind of Christian ex-voto and a place of welcome for travellers or pilgrims »	March-August 397	Inscription, door lintel of the building next to the church. Recovered (Sartre), broken, moved	Not surveyed site
	<i>IGLS XV-1</i> , insc. 264, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 327-329	κοινὸν πανδοχείον[ν] <i>Pandocheion</i>		September 397- August 398 CE	Inscription, window lintel of the upper floor of the building next to the church. Recovered (Sartre)	
RIMET HAZEM	<i>IGLS XVI-1</i> , insc. 59, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2020: 81 (also Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014 <i>IGLS XV-1</i> : 329)	[- -]δοχεῖα [Xeno]docheia ? ou [Pan]docheia ? and other assumptions	« Hostleries ? » « Built in commemoration »	Byzantine era?	Inscription. Stone probalement moved. Not recovered (Sartre)	Not surveyed site
MUTBIN	<i>IGLS XIV-2</i> , insc. 592a, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016: 582	ξενοδοχίον <i>Xenodocheion</i>	« Inn of the church » or « inn of the Church »	Byzantine era	Inscription in situ, in the original building	Not surveyed site
SOUEIDA	<i>IGLS XVI-2</i> , insc. 339, Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2020: 65 (also Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014, <i>IGLS XV</i> : 329; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016, <i>IGLS XIV-2</i> : 582)	ξενεὸν <i>Xeneon</i>	« Hospice for pilgrims placed under the protection of St. Theodore », « built by Bishop Petros »	Byzantine era	Inscription. Stone moved, Not recovered (Sartre)	Little surveyed site
BOSRA <i>Bostra</i>	Procopius, <i>Buildings</i> , V, 9, 22, Sartre 1985: 127 and Feissel 2000: 99	πρωχεῖον <i>Ptocheion</i>	« Hospice or hospital for the poor » +	Between 527 and 548 CE	Ancient text	Well surveyed site
	<i>IGLS XIII</i> , insc. 9137, Sartre 1982: 208-209	Oratory of Job	Oratory for a « leper colony »	Byzantine era	Inscription. Stone moved, Not recovered (Sartre)	
JERASH <i>Gerasa</i>	Gatier 1985: 299	φυλαχὴ et φρουρά	« Prison »	539 CE	Inscription. Stone moved, recovered (Gatier)	Well surveyed site
JERASH <i>Gerasa</i>	Jones 1928: 169-170, insc. 36, Marrou 1940: 113, Lassus 1947: 239	διακονία <i>Diakonia</i>	« Diaconia »	565 CE	Mosaic in situ Still visible	Well surveyed site
MA'IN	<i>IGLS XXI-2</i> , insc. 163, Gatier 1986: 189; Di Segni 2020: 26	ξενεῶ[ν] <i>Xeneon</i>	« Guesthouse or hospice »	598-599 CE	Mosaic in situ, near a Byzantine church. Not localized	Not surveyed site

FIGURE 2. Hosting Buildings in the Byzantine Provincia Arabia. List and references.

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Ill. 357.

FIGURE 3. “Public House” in Waqm.
From Bulter 1914: 417



FIGURE 4. Aerial Photograph of Umm es-Surab Village. Cr dit: A. Almagro 1978, photogrammetry: P. Gilento 2018, caption:   P. Piraud-Fournet 2021



FIGURE 5. Map of Gerasa-Jerash in Late Antiquity. Drawing T. Lepaon 2010, Caption: © P. Piraud-Fournet 2021

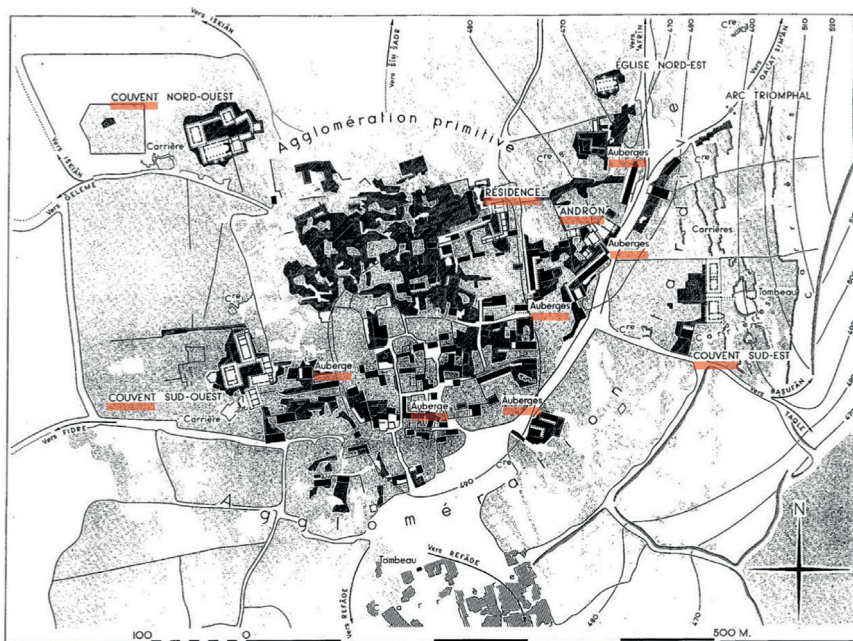


FIGURE 6. Map of the Ancient Village of Deir Sim'an. From Tchalenko 1953: T. 2, pl. 208

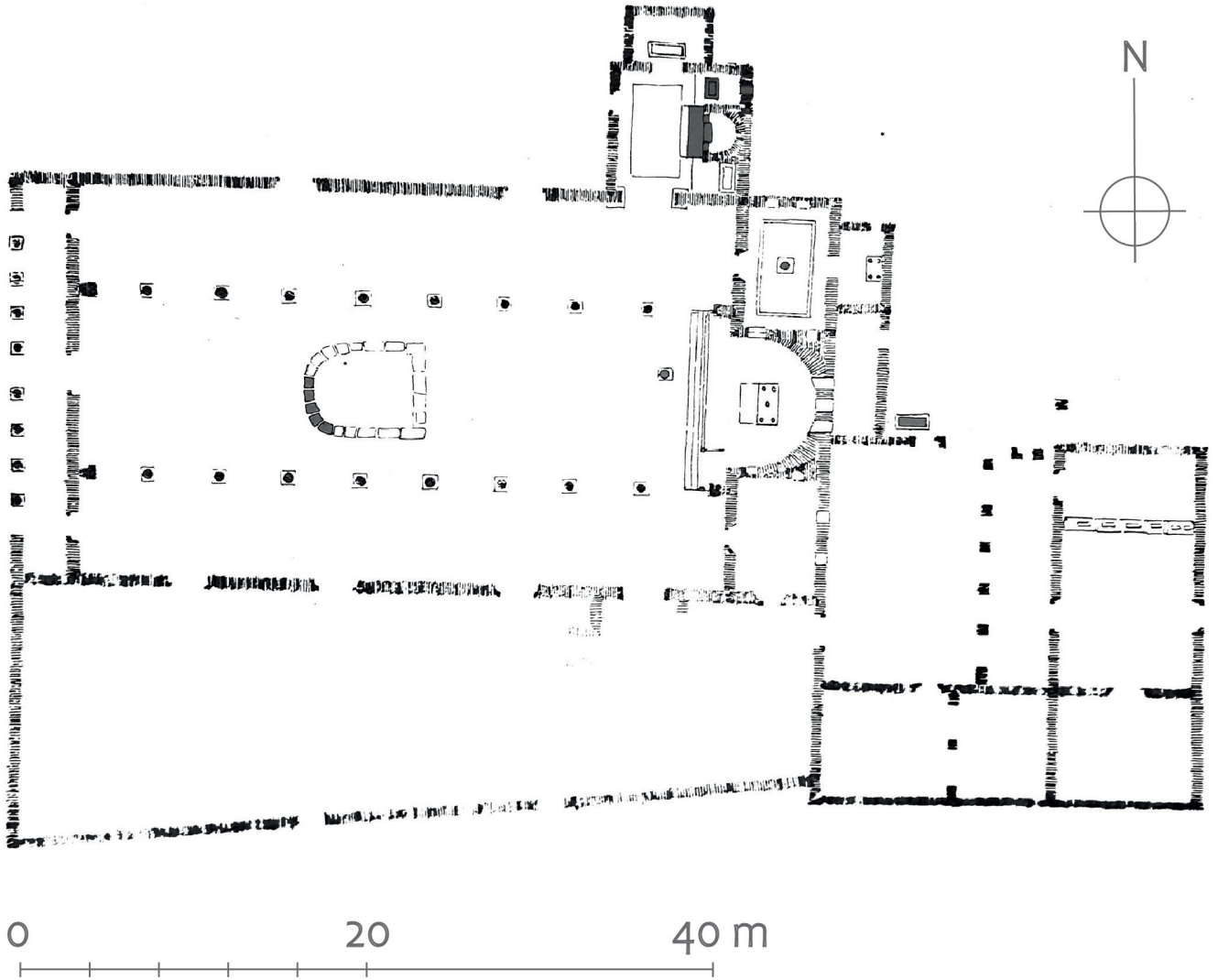
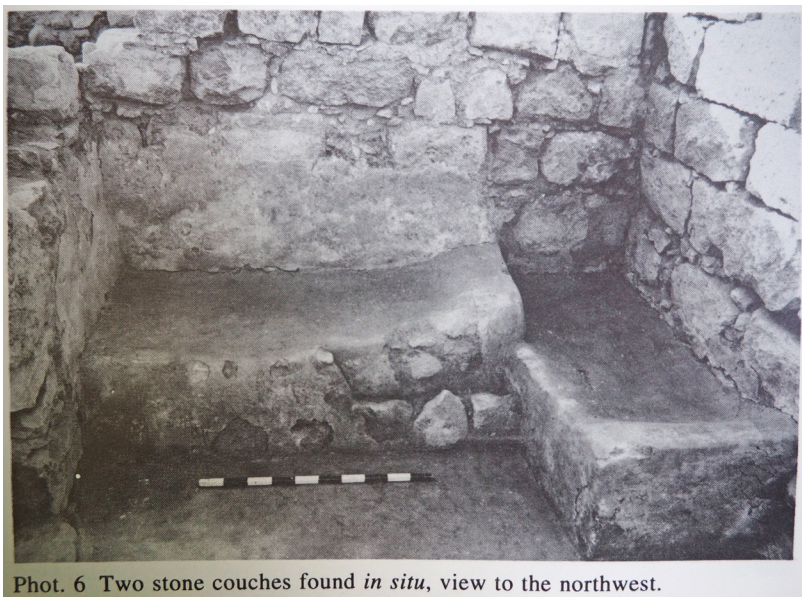


FIGURE 7. Plan of a Church in Brad. From Lassus 1947: 169, fig. 77



Phot. 6 Two stone couches found *in situ*, view to the northwest.

FIGURE 8. Photograph of the "Infirmery". From Hirschfeld 1993: 138, pl. 9, ph. 6

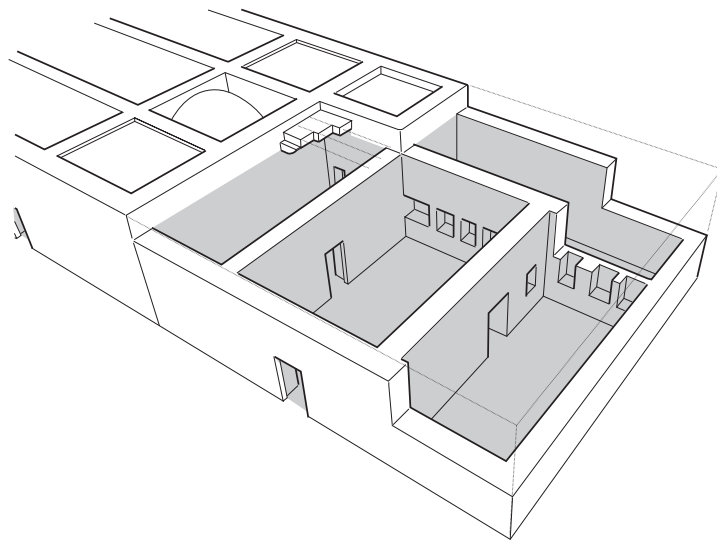
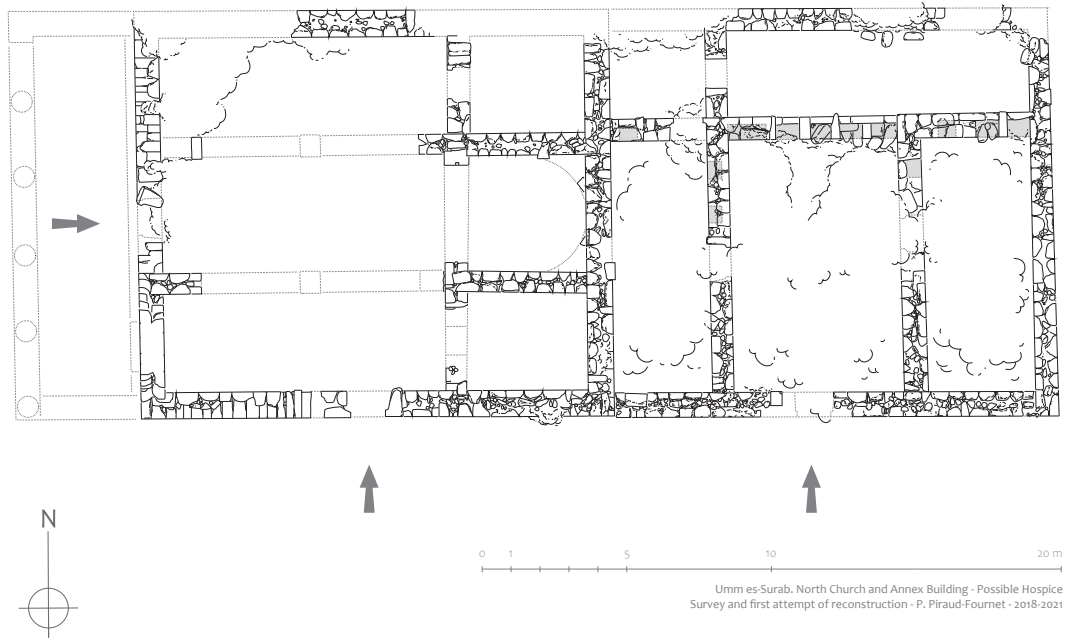


FIGURE 9. Umm es-Surab. Annex Building of the Northern Church. Plan and first attempt of reconstruction. © P. Piraud-Fournet 2022



FIGURE 10. Umm es-Surab. Annex Building of the Northern Church. Photograph from the North to the South. © P. Piraud-Fournet 2021

VMMILKVTTËN
RESTORATION OF MONASTERY VIEW FROM NORTHEAST

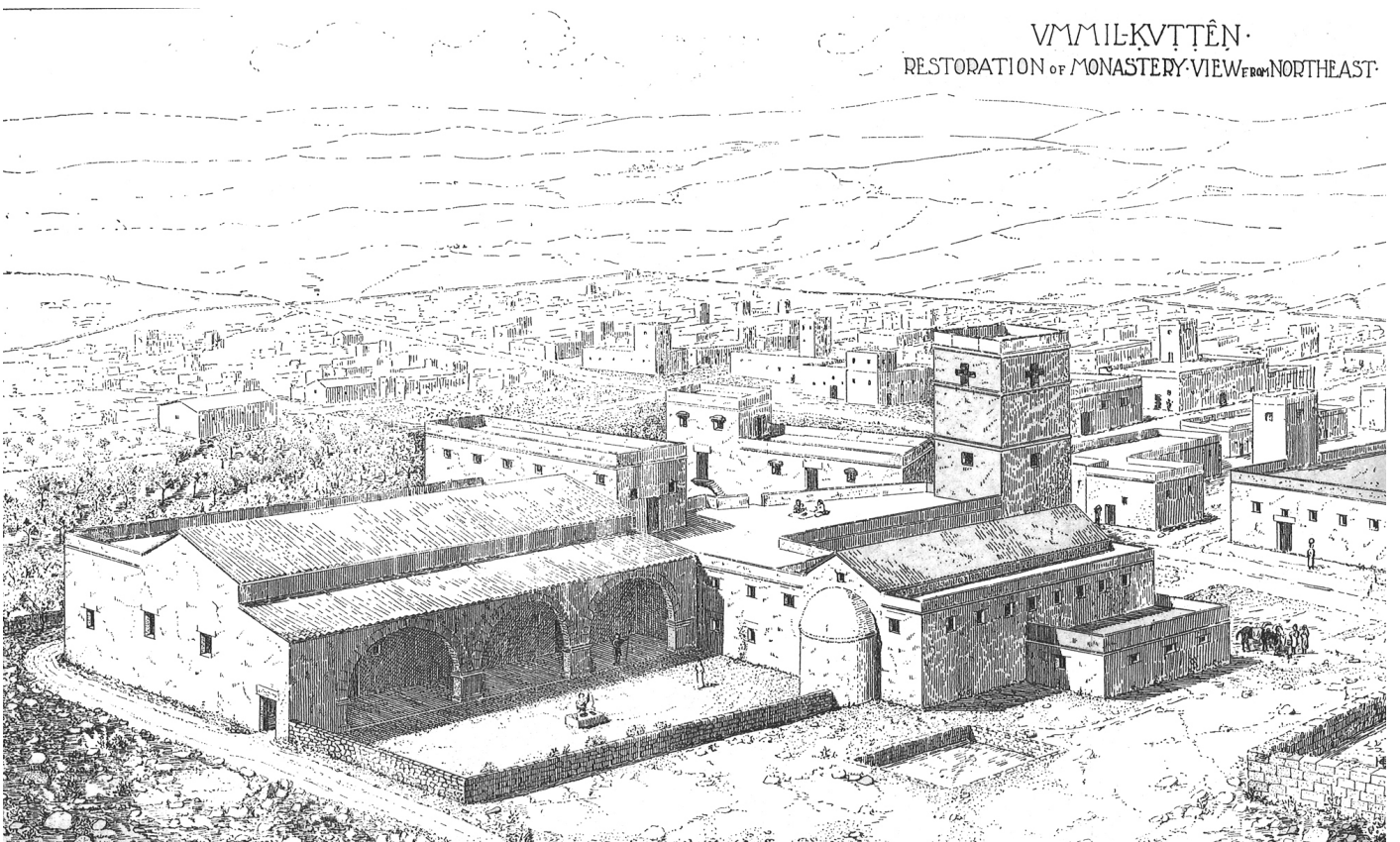


FIGURE 12. Monastic Complex in Umm al-Quttein. Reconstruction. From Bulter 1919: 138, pl. 9

