

The Archaeological Discoveries To the Christian Antiquities in Sinai Abd Al- Raheem Rihan Barakat*

The Christian Antiquities in Wadi Firan

Wadi Firan is 60 Km North West of St. Catherine Monastery. The Wadi 5 Km long and between 250-375m width, includes fresh water from many springs where the water collects in cisterns⁽¹⁾. In Wadi Firan lies Mountain of Serbal 2070m above sea level. The name of Serbal derived from Serb Baal which means date palm. Idol Baal had been worshipped by the people who pilgrim to that holy Mountain before the Exodus. Some historians consider that Mountain is Mountain of Sinai⁽²⁾. Because Wadi Firan is very narrow, the torrent of the heavy rain water destroyed most of the antiquities. Wadi Firan mentioned in Old Testament⁽³⁾ in name of Rafedem⁽⁴⁾. The original population in Firan was the Nabataeans and the Bedouins of Sinai⁽⁵⁾.

The Monastic society in Firan

Many of anchorites had been collected in Firan from the fourth century A.D. like Anchorite Nelos who visited Sinai 400A.D and settled in Firan⁽⁶⁾ with the anchorites who constructed hermitages of stone in many places in Firan like Wadi Segalia, Mountain of God and Tall Mahrad⁽⁷⁾.

Monastery of the Girls

It had been discovered by German institute mission in Cairo in the excavation season 1990, chief of the mission Prof. Grossman.

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(1) جمال حمدان : شخصية مصر ، ج ١ دراسة في عبقرية المكان ، القاهرة ، ١٩٨٤ ، ص ٦٠

(2) نعوم بك شقير : تاريخ سيناء القديم والحديث وجغرافيتها ، دير سانت كاترين ، ١٩٩٥ ، ص ٢٥

(3) Numbers 33:13-14, Exodus 37-38-39:2

(4) Meinardus (F.A.): Christian Egypt ancient and modern, Cairo: American UNIV., 1977, p.516.

(5) Tsafir (Y.): Monks and Monasteries in southern Sinai, in- Ancient Churches revealed, Ed.

Tsafir (Y.), Jerusalem, 1993, pp.319-322.

(6) أحمد فخري: تاريخ شبه جزيرة سيناء منذ أقدم العصور حتى ظهور الإسلام ، موسوعة سيناء القاهرة ، ١٩٨٢ ، ص ١١٢

(7) Meinardus (F.A.): op. cit., p. 516.

It dates back to the fifth to the sixth century A.D. where many Sherds of pottery were discovered in the building date book to the fifth and the sixth century. The discovered building looks like a fortification which overlooks the main road of Firan so it is probable that the building was used as a Byzantine military point to protect the southern entrance of Wadi Firan⁽⁸⁾.

Firan Parish

Firan City became a big parish in the fourth century. It contains Churches surrounded by many hermitages. In 451A.D. Archbishop Netra was Archbishop of Firan parish⁽⁹⁾. In 535 A.D. Archbishop Theonas had been titled Archbishop of the holy Mountain and Monastery of Raitho and Church of holy Firan⁽¹⁰⁾. The last bishop of Firan Parish was Theodoros 649A.D. then the main parish had been transported to Tur Sinai Monastery (St. Catherine Monastery later) after 90 years of constructing Monastery of Tur Sinai which had been built in 548 to 565 A.D⁽¹¹⁾.

Tall Mahrada

It lies in the south eastern part of the new girls' Monastery in Firan, measured 400m long and 200m width. It contains the discovered Byzantine city in that place by The German mission season 1986 -1995 (Pl.1). The walls were built of granite stone in the Foundations and mud brick in the upper parts. It is between 185 to 200m width, high of the discovered part between 50 to 170cm. Wall of the city was built in the sixth century⁽¹²⁾. The Byzantine city Contains ruins of many houses of granite stone and the upper parts of mud brick. The upper parts of the houses and wall of the city had been destroyed by the strong torrents in the region. Inside the city was discovered the Episcopal Church and other three Churches.

(8) Grossman (P): Report on the season in Firan: Sinai, March 1990, pp.8-9.

(9) Meinardus (F.A.): op. cit., p. 516.

(10) إبراهيم أمين غالى: سيناء المصرية عبر التاريخ، القاهرة ، ١٩٧٦ ، ص ١٣ .

(11) نعوم بك شقير : المرجع السابق ، ص ٥٤٨ .

(12) Grossman (P): Report on the season in Firan: Sinai, March- April, 1986 p. 3.

The Episcopal Church

The Church lies in the northeastern part of the city, measured 23.50m long and 17.65m width. It was built of granite stone and the upper parts of mud brick. The columns of Sand stone which had been extracted from quarry in Wadi Firan. The Church is Basilica of 3 Aisles the widest in the middle 5m divided by 2 Arcades each one contains 7 Columns of Sand stone (Pl.2). There are lateral rooms in the 2 sides of the lateral Aisles where we found that phenomenon in the transfiguration Church in St. Catherine Monastery. 2 Apses was discovered in the Episcopal Church the oldest behind another one. The Apse is flanked by 2 rooms. Prof. Grossman mentioned that the Episcopal Church date back to the sixth century because the Phenomenon of existing lateral rooms derived from transfiguration Church in St. Catherine Monastery which date back to the sixth century⁽¹³⁾.

The Town Church

It Lies in Middle of the town, constructed by monk Moses, consecrated to monks doctors Kosmas and Damian, their names was found inscribed on upper lintel was discovered in the Church in Greek language season 1995. The Church is Basilica (fig.1) constructed of Granite stone. The entrance in the western side leads to Narthex which leads to the hall 14.50m long and 12m width. It consists of 3 Aisles divided by 2 Arcades each one contains 5 columns, the northern Aisle 3.17m, the southern 3.50 m. That Church besides the liturgical service in sun days and festivals it was used in medicating the patients. That it is obvious in architecture of the Church where there are places for sitting the patients and room south the Apse used also for sitting the patients and in the western end of the western Aisle was discovered room used for heating water and preparing food for the patients. The Mission season 1995 made 4 trenches in hall of the Church where was discovered Nabataeans houses under the land level of the hall where the

⁽¹³⁾ id ., Report on the season in Firan :Sinai , February-March ,1992,p.1

Byzantine city had been constructed on ruins of the Nabataeans City⁽¹⁴⁾.

Church 3

It was discovered by the German mission season 1992, lies in the far east of Tall Mahrad. It is of 3 Aisles the middle Aisle 4.56m divided by 2 Arcades each one contains 5 pillars. It contains cistern hewn in the rock. Because that Church had been constructed in low level and the rock around the Church in high level the Church is completely destroyed except ruins of the Apse and the cistern by torrent of rain water which fall from the upper parts.

Church 4

It was discovered by the German mission season 1995, lies in mid way between the Episcopal Church and the town Church. It is of one Aisle, had been constructed of granites stone 16m Long 8.80m width, the walls 65cm thick.

Churches of Hill of the mill

It lies in front of Tall Mahrad, 886m above sea level. There are on the Hill 2 Big Churches and 3 chapels as a tomb for someone or more where his neighbors come to celebrate by the monumental meal⁽¹⁵⁾.

Church 1

It lies in mid way on Hill of the mill. The Church is Basilica of granite stone, the columns of Sand stone, the walls 80cm thick. There is entrance in the western side leads to hall of the Church directly and 2 lateral entrances (Pl.3). It consists of 3 Aisles divided by 2 Arcades each one contains 4 columns, the middle Aisle 2.55m, the northern and the southern Aisle the same 1.80m. The Apse 2m Width, 50m depth. In front of the Apse high Bema, middle of the Bema was discovered 4 holes full of remains of wood it is probable was used to fix leg of the Altar table. A wall of granite stone 1m thick was added around the Church to protect

⁽¹⁴⁾ id, Report on the season in Firan: Sinai, February-March , 1995 , p.1

⁽¹⁵⁾ id., Report on the season in Sinai, March, 1990, pp.5-6.

the Church against torrent of rain water. There is a small house north of the Church probably to be house of the Church monk.

Church 2

It lies on peak Hill of the mill. It contains many additions from all sides where the original part contains only ruins of the Apse and some walls. It measured 12.85m long and 8.15m width. It is Basilica, built of granite stone, the columns of Sand stone. It consists of 3 Aisles divided by 2 Arcades each one contains 4 columns, the middle 2.80m. The Additions had been executed in 2 stages, in the first stage was added Narthex and 2 corridors north and south of the Church, in the second stage was added room north of the Apse. That Church had been neglected for a long time so in the Fatimid Period (358-567 A.H. 969-1171 A.D.) was turned into mosque by constructing 2 Mihrabs inside the southern Aisle and was hewn cistern in the rock for rain water to collect to be used in ablution before the pray. Sister Egeria or Ethery who came from Spain to visit Sinai in the fourth century A.D. mentioned that Church as the place where Prophet Moses prayed in during the Exodus. Prof. Grossman mentioned that the Church date back to the fourth century A.D. where it is the oldest kind of Basilica style did not contain Pastophoria which became prevalent in architecture of the oriental Churches in the fifth century⁽¹⁶⁾

The Chapels

There is one on low level on Hill of the mill. It is square 3.50m long and 3.30m width, the walls 50cm Thick. It has entrance in the south eastern wall and Apse. Another Chapel on peak Hill of the mill. The third is a small chapel. In 1898 2 monks of St. Catherine Monastery constructed a Church in name of Prophet Moses middle of a great Garden near Tall Mahrada using the old columns of the Episcopal Church and in 1979 had been constructed

⁽¹⁶⁾ id., Early Christian ruins in Wadi Firan – Sinai (An Archaeological Survey), ASAE70, 1984, p.81 -----

a Monastery to Girls Sisters who belongs to St. Catherine Monastery in name of Girls Monastery⁽¹⁷⁾

The Christian antiquities in Raitho

The old Raitho (Tur Sinai) was mentioned in the fourth century A.D. by anchorite Amonius . Also Raitho was mentioned in the thirteenth century when Archbishop of St. Catherine Monastery Simon I visited Crete in Greece in 1203 A.D. and father Honorius III issued pact to give him possessions and agricultural land in Moses Mountain region and Raitho ⁽¹⁸⁾. Name of Raitho continued until the fifteenth century⁽¹⁹⁾ then turned to Tur Sinai which was derived from Moses Mountain which was mentioned in the holy book of Moslems (Koran) in name of Tur Sinen {The fig and olive and Tur Sinen} ⁽²⁰⁾. Tur Sinen means the Mountainous region which was covered by trees and plants as well as olive trees and many rare plants⁽²¹⁾.

Tur Sinai lies at 400 Km from Cairo. The monastic societies in Raitho was concentrated in the inner region (village of Al-Wadi and Wadi AL-Awag) where we discovered Christian antiquities resembles the three monastic stages known in Egypt. So I attest that site is the original place of old Raitho not the coast region known as Ras Raya which derived from a mausoleum of Sheikh Raya (old man of the Bedouins) and there is no relation between that name and old Raitho. Until now the excavation in many seasons showed that no ruins for Christian antiquities, while we discovered Islamic citadel in it.

The region of Village of Al-Wadi and Wadi AL-Awag was characterized by fresh water necessary to monks living and it was separated region suitable and most safe for the monks especially in

(17) Williams (V. S.) and Stoks (P.): Blue Guide (Egypt), London, 1993, p. 723.

(18) Meinardus (F.A.): op cit, p. 52.

(19) . ١٤٨ ص : المرجع السابق ،

(20) Verse the Fig 2:3

(21) جوزيف نسيم يوسف : تاريخ العصور الوسطى ، الإسكندرية ، ١٩٩٣ ، ص ١٣٨ .

the fourth century A.D, where the Roman persecution had been very strong for the Christians.

The anchorites resorted to Raitho from the third Century A.D. like anchorite Moses who had good experience in medicine and medicated many people in the region so many people believed in Christianity⁽²²⁾. In old Raitho we found Christian antiquities resemble the three Monastic stages known in Egypt.

The first stage was titled the separated hermitage which resembles the anchorite (AVAXWPHTHΣ in Greek), who lived in a separated hermitage closed by stone or key ⁽²³⁾. Samples of that stage were discovered in Wadi AL-Awag by mission of south Sinai antiquities region in seasons 1998- 2002⁽²⁴⁾.

The second stage was titled Cenobite (KOIVOBIOV in Greek) which consists of 2 syllables, KOIVOS, means general, BIOS, means living (general living) Cenobite means the group solitude⁽²⁵⁾, where the anchorites live in separated Hermitage but they collect in Saturdays, Sundays, and festivals in general place to Food and services⁽²⁶⁾. We discovered samples of the second stage in seasons 1998-2002 in Wadi AL-Awag. The discovered Building is rectangular 14.50m Long and 11.50m width and contains Church of one Aisle 11.50m Long and 4.30m width flanked by 2 rectangular halls, each one measured 6.30m Long and 2.30m width with places for sitting. There are rooms for preparing food (Pl.4) in the northern part of the discovered Building.

(22) متولى نور : سيناء أرض مباركة ، القاهرة ، ١٩٦٩ ، ص ٤٠ .

(23) مصطفى عبد الله شبيحة : دراسات فى العمارة والفنون القبطية ، القاهرة ، ١٩٨٨ ، ص ١٦ .

(24) The Excavation season 1998 by the Archaeologists: Mohammad Fahmy, Mohammad Omran, Khareb Hussien Ali, Mohammad Helmy , under supervision of Abd Al-Hafiz Diab general director of south Sinai region .

- The excavation season 2002 by Mohammad Fahmy, Mohammad Omran , Ashraf Galal , under supervision of Abd Al-Hafiz Diab general director of south Sinai region .

(25) Stavropoulos (D. N.): Greek – English Dictionary, Oxford, 1988, p.457

(26) Krautheimer(A.): Early Christian and Byzantine architecture, Middlesex-England, 1975, P.99 .

The third stage is the completed Monastery which contains Hermitages, Churches, refectory, olive mill and well. Example Al - Wadi Monastery.

Al -Wadi Monastery

lies 6 Km north of AL-Tur town in Al -Wadi village, 3 Km east of Moses bath of sulfuric water, 200m of Johanes well of fresh water. The Monastery had been mentioned in an Arabic language message in 1164 A.D. had been sent from father Johanes chief of AL-Tur Monastery to archbishop of St. Catherine Monastery JohanesII. In the message, chief of AL-Tur Monastery demanded of archbishop of St. Catherine Monastery to write to the monks who live in hermitages in AL-Tur as adviser and teacher to them, so he wrote his famous manuscript (ladder of the way to sky) which had been translated to many languages and now there are between 416 to 430 copies of that manuscript in library of St. Catherine Monastery⁽²⁷⁾.

Naom Shoker who visited St. Catherine Monastery in 1906 and wrote his book (History of Sinai) mentioned that he red a story in the library of St. Catherine Monastery was written on parchment that the architect who constructed St. Catherine Monastery also constructed Church of mar Athnasius, Monastery of Raya and chapel on AL-Monagah Mountain (Sinai Mountain) and after that he constructed Tur Sinai Monastery⁽²⁸⁾.

Monastery of Raya means AL-Wadi Monastery which had been discovered by south Sinai antiquities region seasons from 1984 to 1993⁽²⁹⁾. It is rectangular 92m long and 53m width (Pl.5). It was built of limestone with external wall 1.50m Thick, penetrated by 8 defensive towers, 4 in the corners, 2 in the northern wall (Pl.6) and 2 in the southern. The towers are square, 7.60m from outside

(27) اثاناسيوس باليوراس : دير سيناء المقدس ، دير سانت كاترين ، ١٩٨٦ ، ص ٣٥ .

(28) نعوم بك شقير : المرجع السابق ، ص ٥٢٣ .

(29) The excavation seasons from 1984-1993 by: Mohammad Fahmy , Ahmed Abd Al-Hamid , Ahmed Esa , Abd Al -Raheem Rihan , Mohammad Omran , Khaled Alian , under Supervision of Abd Al-Hafiz Diab general director of south Sinai region .

4.60m from inside, in each tower 2 lateral pillars bears arch. In middle of the southern wall there is the only entrance of the Monastery. The Monastery contains hermitages and quest rooms lie behind the wall directly. In the first floor 59 rooms and it is probable existence of 37 rooms in the second floor, it is obvious from the five stairs in different places of the Monastery which lead to rooms in the second floor. So total of the rooms are 96 rooms as hermitages and quest rooms for the pilgrims who come to the Monastery to stay for a short time to visit the holy places in Tur Sinai then complete their trip to St. Catherine Monastery. The Monastery contains 4 Churches, refectory, olive mill, well, millstone, oven for bread, oven for manufacturing glass wares and toilets.

The Main Church

It is Basilica lies in the western part of the Monastery, rectangular 28m long and 12m width (fig.2). It has 4 lateral entrances, no entrance in the western side. The Church consists of 3 Aisles, the middle Aisle 4m width the 2 lateral Aisles are the same 2.15m divided by 2 Arcades each one of 5 pillars. The pillars bear semicircular arches go from east to west, 6 arches in every Arcade, one intact until now west of the southern arcade. The Church has 3 windows in shape of arrow slices in the northern wall and the same in the southern wall for lighting and ventilation. There are stairs beside the northern wall from outside which may be lead to gallery up the lateral Aisles, it is probable had been used as an independent Church to visitors of the Monastery. The Church is timbered roof where we found remains of the ceiling wood. The sanctuary in the eastern end, it is square, rib 1.80m flanked By 2 square rooms (Pastophoia). In the north so called (Prothesis) for preparing the holy meal, in the south (Diaconicon) for keeping the clothes and wares which is used in the liturgical service.

The square sanctuary is rare in the Basilica style Churches, because the prevalent plan for the sanctuary is the curved shape but had been found samples of that plan for the sanctuary in Egypt in

sanctuary of Makhura Basilica in Mariot city near Alexandria, it is rectangular sanctuary flanked by 2 rooms⁽³⁰⁾. The architectural study to the Church of AL- Wadi Monastery attests that it dates back to the earlier Basilica from The fourth to the seventh century A.D.

The other Churches

The Monastery contains 3 other Churches in the eastern part. There is Arcade supported on pillars, 4 intact now in front of the Churches.

Church 1

Lies north of Church 2, it is rectangular of one Aisle 14.90m long 5.70m width (fig.3). The main entrance in the western side and 2 lateral entrances, one in the northern wall opens on the hermitages, another in the southern wall opens on the middle Church. Some walls had been added inside the Church hall from later period. The Apse is semicircular from inside 2.20m width 1.15m depth but it relieves from outside with strait walls in shape of semi hexagon.

Church 2

It is the middle Church, there are stairs in the Arcade in front of the three Churches lead to the western entrance of the Church which leads to Narthex leads to the Church hall. It is of one Aisle 16.15m long 14.25m width (fig.4) with lateral places for sitting. The sanctuary ground is more high and covered with pottery tiles. The Apse is semicircular. Hall of the Church was used in later period as a cemetery where we found remains of men, women and children under the ground of the hall.

Church 3

Lies south of Church 2. The main entrance in the western wall and 3 entrances in the southern wall, 2 of them had been closed later and in the northern wall there is entrance opens on the middle

أحمد عيسى أحمد : دير وادي طور سيناء في العصر الفاطمي من خلال موسم حفائر سنة ١٩٨٩ الملتقى الثالث (٣٠)
لجمعية الآثاريين العرب - الندوة العلمية الثالثة (دراسات في آثار الوطن العربي) ١٢-١٣ نوفمبر ٢٠٠٠ ، ج ٢ ،
القاهرة ، ص ٤٩ .

Church. It is of one Aisle 15.80m long 5m width (fig.4) divided to 2 parts. The eastern part contains the Apse and room south the Apse for keeping the clothes and wares which used in the liturgical service with 5 niches may be used for storing wares. The western part contains hall of one Aisle. The three Churches had been constructed in different periods after the main Church.

The refectory

The service region in the north western part of the Monastery contains the refectory (Pl.6), olive mill, well, millstone and Toilets. The refectory consists of a rectangular hall 12.50m long 8.35m width divided to 2 parts by 2 Arcades go from east to west, the eastern arch is intact now.

The olive mill

We found the olive mill north of the refectory, measured 8.35m long 4.80m width. It contains mill of black granite stone consists of 2 conical stones, one put inside another to have been run by the animals. It had been used for squeezing olive necessary to food and lighting by oil lamps and also for squeezing raisin necessary to liturgical service.

The well

It is the fresh water well in middle of the Monastery. The upper part consists of 2 lateral Arches for the water course to be hung for lifting the water from the well.

The glass wares manufacturing oven

We found in the Monastery an oven for making bread in the service region near the millstone but we found south of the 3 Churches an oven for manufacturing glass wares was built of pottery tiles. The place in front of the oven is rectangular with 2 entrances in the southern wall. The entrances open on 4 rooms where we found fragments of glass wares with fault in the manufacturing and burnt spots resulting of the manufacturing. That matter attests that they had been manufactured inside the Monastery and because that oven lies near the 3 Churches it is suitable to be oven for manufacturing glass wares and flasks which are used in the

liturgical service. Also we found pool in front of the oven and another one in the rectangular place in front of the oven which was used in the manufacturing operation.

Ground of the Monastery covered with colored pottery tiles which had been found in some rooms in the north eastern part of the Monastery and stone tiles which had been found in the service region.

The Monastery after the 6th Century

After the construction of the Monastery in the 6th Century by Emperor Justinian may be neglected for a long time then reused in the Fatimid period in the tenth century A.D. as a Fatimid fortification where was found completed group of plates of metallic luster ceramic very famous in the Fatimid period and glass weight in name of the Fatimid Caliph (Caliph Al- Mostanser belah). After that the Monastery be neglected for a long time then turned to a cemetery for the Christians of Orthodox Sect living in the region where was found remains of a Monk which was given to the anchorite Pereferios chief of the new Monastery in AL-Tur to be put in the Church.

In AL-Tur now there is a new Monastery in a beautiful region Tall AL-Kelany. The Monastery contains Church was constructed in 1875 on ruins of an old Church constructed in 1500 A.D. the Church was dedicated to Marigeres where Many visitors from Greece, Egypt and other places come daily to visit the Monastery and the holy places for the pilgrims in AL-Tur. They inscribed their names on the Bell Mountain 10 Km south of Raitho. Name of the bell Mountain derived from a phenomenon where the wind moves the Sand on the Mountain to make sound like the bell.

The Christian antiquities in north Sinai

The north Sinai road is the main artery to traffic between Asia and Egypt. It has economic and strategic importance. In the Christian era from the first to the seventh century many cities flourished on north Sinai road from east to west Gaza, Rafia (Rafah), Renokorora (AL-Arish), Ostracene (Al-Flousiat), Casium (AL-Kals), Gerha (Al-Mohamadia) and Pelosium (AL-Farama)

(Map 2) where many Christian places was discovered by Egyptian and foreign missions.

Ostracene (Al-Flousiat)

Lies on the eastern side of AL-Bardaweel Lake, 30 Km west of Renokorora, 3Km of Mediterranean Sea beach. It has a great strategic importance because it is the cross point of the sea road which pass by Casium, Pelosium and the military road (Horus road). It became a big city in the Christian era where Emperor Justinian constructed many fortifications against the Persian⁽³¹⁾. In Ostracene was discovered 3 Churches, 2 Churches was Discovered by the French Archaeologist John Cledat in 1914, Church 1 and Church 2 , one Church was Discovered by Ben-Gorion University 1976-1977 during the Israel occupation of Sinai, Church 3 .

Church 1

The Church in bad case now because the flood of sea water and the heavy rains from time to time but Cledat drew a plan to the Church. It is rectangular 62m long 22m width, Constructed of calcareous stone from the marine precipitations which precipitate on the beach in north Sinai, limestone, imported from AL-Magara quarry in middle Sinai and marble, may be imported from Aswan or Athens. The Church divided to 3 parts from west to east. The first part is square Atrium, Rib 18m consists of middle Nave surrounded by 3 Arcades, in the eastern wall 3 entrances lead to the hall. The second part is the hall 34m long 19.50m width, consists of 3 Aisles divided by 2 Arcades, each one contains 9 columns of marble. The third part contains the Apse and Pastophoria⁽³²⁾.

Church 2

It is also in bad case for the same reason to the previous Church. It contains square Atrium Rib 11m leads to Narthex which

(31) أحمد فخرى ، المرجع السابق ، ص ٨٢ : ٨٣ .

(32) Cledat (J.) : Fouilles Akhirbat El Floussiyeh , (Janvier - Maris 1914)
ASAE Tome 16, 1916, pp. 21-27.

leads to the hall 20m long 10m width. The hall consists of 3 Aisles divided by 2 Arcades, each one contains 5 columns. The sanctuary in front of the Apse, it is rectangular 5m long and 4.50m width. The Apse consists of three of semi-circles in face of each other.

Church 3

The Church is Basilica style 33m long 20m width contains Atrium divided by stone pillars and columns in shape of letter L and well in the middle. The Atrium leads to the hall of 3 Aisles divided by 2 Arcades each one contains 4 columns. The Apse contains Thronos of 5 semicircular steps flanked by 2 rooms (Pastophoria) and the sanctuary in front of the Apse. The mission also found in the Church oil lamps, pottery wares and coin in name of Emperor Heraclius minted in Nicomedia in 613-614 A.D. and coin in name of Emperor Constantine III minted in Constantinople between 668- 685 A.D. The architecture and the objects explain that the Church may be had been constructed in the fifth century A.D. in the same date of the 2 previous Churches in Ostracene. The existence of a coin here date back between 668-685 A.D attests that the Church had been continuing as a worshipping place to the Christians 30 years at least after the Islamic entry to Egypt where the Church had been let safe in the Islamic period with all the Christian emblems inside the Church⁽³³⁾. The Bedouins in Ostracene found many copper coins (in Arabic Felos) so the Arabic name for the city (Al-Flousiat) derived of Felos which means the copper coins⁽³⁴⁾.

Pelosium (AL-Farama)

Pelosium is 35 Km east of AL-Qantara town on the Pelosium branch of the river Nile where the city derived its name. A monastic society flourished in Pelosium where anchorite Abemakhos the Martyr had been living in the third century A.D. and the Christian scientist Esodoros who wrote many articles in

⁽³³⁾ Oren (E.D.): A Christian settlement at Ostrakine, in- ancient Churches Revealed, Ed. Tsafirir (Y.), Jerusalem, 1993, pp. 306-313.

⁽³⁴⁾ نعوم بك شقير : المرجع السابق ، ص ٢٠١ .

religion⁽³⁵⁾. 2 Christian buildings in the north part of the city were discovered by Mission of north Sinai antiquities region in 1985⁽³⁶⁾.

The eastern building in shape of Rotunda, consists of 2 circular walls of one center were built of burnt brick. The external wall is thicker than the internal 1.30m thick (the internal 80cm thick) may be to bear a circular row of columns which bear arches. There is circular Aisle between the 2 walls, its ground had been covered with marble where there are parts are intact in the northern and western part of the Aisle.

The western building 15m long 12.30m width, constructed of burnt brick. There is low building middle of that building we can reach by descendent stairs. The low building consists of a rectangular hall covered with barrel vault which used as a Church. The entrance of the Church in the eastern wall of the upper building which leads to square room flanked by 2 rooms. In each room entrance in the western wall leads to descendent stairs which leads to the Church hall 7.35m long 4.30m width with sitting places on length of all the walls except the eastern. Ground of the hall covered with burnt brick with a hole in the middle covered with burnt brick. The hole so called in Arabic (Al-lakan) for putting water with praying to be used in feasts of the apostles and the diving feast as memorial to the Baptism of the Christ. The sanctuary in the eastern side of the hall, its ground covered with marble. The Altar in middle of the sanctuary which was built of burnt brick. The 2 eastern and western buildings are attached with each other and constructed in the same time to be used in the same purpose⁽³⁷⁾.

The Baptistery

(35) المرجع نفسه ، ص ١٩٨ .

(36) The excavation season 1985 by Fatehy Talha , Refat Al-Taher , under supervision of Abd Al-Hafiz Diab director of Sinai – Ahmed Hegazy General Director of Sinai region .

(37) Report of the excavation season 1985 By Fatehy Talha , Refat Al-Taher , under supervision of Abd Al-Hafiz Diab director of Sinai – Ahmed Hegazy the General Director of Sinai region.

The Baptistry lies in the north western side outside of the previous western building. It was constructed of burnt brick in shape of cross inside a circle diameter 4.30m. The walls covered with marble from outside, its ground covered with colored marble and stone mosaic where pieces of mosaic were discovered. The baptistry so called in Greek (Fotostyrion) derived from ΦΩΤΙΣΜΑ Fotysma, which means enlightening⁽³⁸⁾. The place where the person had been enlightened, which means that eye of the person opens on the God truth⁽³⁹⁾. The baptism had been a prevailing habit for the Jews and become from the main characters to the Christians later⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Tall Mkhzan Church in Pelosium

Tall Mkhzan lies on the eastern part of Pelosium 7m high above sea level. It is circular, diameter 140m surrounded by salt spots. It was used as a military camp for the Israel militia during occupation of Sinai from 1967 to 1977. The French archaeologist John Cledat described Tall Mkhzan in 1909. The first excavations made by north Sinai antiquities region in 1988 where was discovered a big basilica and Martyrium

The Church consists of 4 parts from west to east. The first part is Atrium consists of rectangular court 31.50m long 15m width and many rooms open on the court. The Atrium leads to Narthex consists of 7 columns supported on 6 Columns, flanked by 2 rooms may be the place of the 2 towers of the Church.

The Narthex leads to the hall 33.40m long 26.35m width. The hall consists of 3 Aisles divided by 2 Arcades each one of 9 pillars of limestone. There are lateral rooms north and south of the 2 Aisles may be used to the pilgrims who come from Jerusalem to visit Mount Sinai. In the eastern end of the middle Aisle is a crypt built of burnt brick. The semicircular apse built of burnt brick 9.60m

⁽³⁸⁾ Stavropoulos (D. N.): op. cit., p.957.

⁽³⁹⁾ The Child is born Moslem

⁽⁴⁰⁾ أشرف سيد محمد حسن البخشونجي: دراسة أثرية للكنائس الباقية بمصر الوسطى خلال العصر

الإسلامي رسالة دكتوراه كلية الآثار جامعة القاهرة، ١٩٩٧، ص ٦٢

width 6m depth with Thronos inside the Apse built of limestone of 5 semicircular stairs. The baptistery lies in the northeastern part of the Church north of the Apse.

We enter to the Martyrium from the southern Aisle. It is square, the rib 16.20m. The ground of two Levels, the First level in the same level of the entrance measured 13.80m long 8.30m width, its ground covered with marble. There is a crypt under the ground measured 14m long 2.70m width which contains 11 tombs of burnt brick. Inside the crypt were discovered Byzantine oil lamps. The second level contains 3 Apses of burnt brick, the biggest in the middle ⁽⁴¹⁾

The Church in Pharaoh Island

Pharaoh Island lies in end of Al- Aqaba Gulf, 10 Km south west of Al-Aqaba city. It is 250m of Sinai beach in Taba. Measured 325m long 60m width. It has many names like the Coral Island, Gray Island and Pharaoh Island ⁽⁴²⁾. The Island consists of 2 northern and southern Hills, between them is an open space. In the excavations by mission of south Sinai antiquities region seasons 1989-90 was discovered a Byzantine building on the southern Hill and Church in the open space.

Saladin constructed his famous citadel on the Island in the Aubid period 567A.H.1171A.D. And kept the Christian buildings safe where we found all the Greek inscriptions and the Christian emblems on the stone inside the Church intact without any harm

Emperor Justinian constructed a Phare on the southern Hill in Pharaoh Island in the sixth century to guide the trade ships going to or returning of Aila port (Aqaba port later) to serve the traffic of Byzantine trade. Justinian founded direct transport with India via

⁽⁴¹⁾ Mohamed Abd Al- Samie: Preliminary report on excavation at Tall El Makhzan (Pelusium), CRIPEL 14, 1992, pp. 91-93.

⁽⁴²⁾ Flinder (A.): The Island of Jezirat Faraun its ancient harbor anchorage and marine defence installations, in the international Journal of nautical archaeology and underwater exploration, Volume 6, 1977 , pp. 127-128 .

the Byzantine Port on Aqaba Gulf, port of Aila to liberate the Byzantine trade from depending on the Persian⁽⁴³⁾.

The Byzantine traffic flourished in the sixth century to import silk from India and Ethiopia, Sandal wood from china, glass and the embroidered clothes from Syria which had been imported by The Ethiopian traders to Adule port on the red sea, Capital of kingdom Aksom (Ethiopia) and from Adule port is transported on the Byzantine ships to Iotab Island (Teran Island in the entrance of Aqaba Gulf in front of Ras Mohammad.

The Byzantine ships also transport the spice from the Arabic ports on the eastern beach of the red sea to Iotab Island⁽⁴⁴⁾. In Iotab Island There is the emperor custom-house to get the customs from the ships coming from India to the Byzantine ports⁽⁴⁵⁾. Some ships sail to Aila and the others to Clysma (Suez port) and from Clysma in land to the River Nile then to Alexandria and from Alexandria all the oriental goods are distributed to the Mediterranean Sea countries⁽⁴⁶⁾.

The Phare on the southern Hill

Measured 7.50m long 4.80m width, Consists of a big building contains the Phare in the middle, a special house for the Byzantine garrison leader and living rooms for the soldiers. Saladin reused the building as a northern fortification to his citadel and added defensive wall penetrated by towers around the building. The building was covered with mortar from outside.

The Byzantine Church

It was discovered by south Sinai region season 1988-89⁽⁴⁷⁾ in the space between the 2 Hills, constructed of granite stone and

⁽⁴³⁾ Vasiliev (A.A.): History of the Byzantine empire 324 – 1453 A.D. Madison ,1952, p. 167 .

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Baynes (N.H.): The Byzantine empire, Oxford, 1925, pp. 211-212.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Mayerson (P.): The Island of Iotab in the Byzantine sources a reprise BASOR 287, 1992, p.1

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Baynes (N.H.): op. cit., pp. 212-213.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ The excavation season 1988-89 by Tarek Al-Nagar , Abd Al- Raheem Rihan , Mohammad Omran , Khaled Alian , Gamal Solemon , under supervision of Abd al-Hafiz Diab general director of south Sinai region .

dressed limestone. It is Basilica style with many rooms in the western Part, Its entrance in the western wall with lower lintel of Marble leads to vestibule 2m long 1.80m width flanked by 2 rooms. There are 2 rooms added to the north western corner from outside, they are from the original building which turned the Church to undisciplined shape. The Church is square the rib 5m divided to 3 Aisles by 2 Arcades each one contains 3 columns of limestone, base of the eastern column of the northern Arcade is intact. It is of the Nabataeans columns where the Island had been occupied by the Nabataeans from the first century B.C. to 106 A.D. The semicircular Apse covered with semi-dome of limestone flanked by 2 rooms (Pastophoria), we can reach to Pastophoria from the 2 lateral Aisles. The Pastophoria extended behind the northern and southern wall of the Church, example was found in Church of Harvat Berachot in Palestine, east of Hebron-Jerusalem road, which was discovered by mission of the antiquities institute in the Hebrew University 1979 in chief of Prof. Tsafrir and Hirschfeld. The Church date back between the fifth and the sixth century A.D. according to the pottery wares which were found in the Church date back to the same date⁽⁴⁸⁾. So the Church of Pharaoh Island dates back to the sixth century A.D. We found Greek inscription and Christian emblems be inscribed and drawn on the stone inside the Church. A transverse wall was added in middle of the Church divided the hall to 2 eastern and western part. There are also 2 walls vertical on the transverse wall divided the eastern part of the hall to 3 parts.

- The excavation season 1989 by Mohammad Kamal , Ahmed Esa , Mohammad Omran , Abd Al- Raheem Rihan , , Khaled Alian , Gamal Solemon , under supervision of Abd Al-Hafiz Diab general director of south Sinai region .

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Tsafrir (Y.) And Hirschfeld (Y.): The Byzantine Church at Horvat Berachot, in - ancient Churches revealed, Ed. Tsafrir (Y.), Jerusalem , 1993 p. 209 .

Flourish of the Christian places in Sinai In the Islamic period

Many churches and monasteries had been constructed in the Islamic period 834 monasteries 2084 Churches had been built in Egypt until end of the eleventh century⁽⁴⁹⁾. There is a safe pact of prophet Mohammad which included the safe of all the Christians and Jews in the Islamic countries so called the prophetic pact, there is now authenticated copy of the pact because sultan SelemI transported the original pact to Turkey in 1517 A.D. and gave the monks authenticated copy⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The Moslem rulers protected the Christian and their places and possessions. In library of St. Catherine Monastery 200 safe pact was issued by the Moslem rulers in all the Islamic periods attest the principle of tolerance.

- 1- Safe pact from the Fatimid Caliph Al-Zaher (411-426 A.H. 1020- 1034 A.D.) to double the gifts to St. Catherine monks and recommended every Moslem to be fair with the Christians and Jews in every thing and to safe them⁽⁵¹⁾.
- 2- Safe pact from the Fatimid Caliph Al-Faez (549-554 A.D. 1154-1159 A.D.) which includes the safety of souls and money of the monks.
- 3- Safe pact from the Auobid Caliph Al-Adel Abu Bakr to safe monks of Tur Sinai (means monks of all Sinai)⁽⁵²⁾.
- 4- In Ottoman period (1517-1805A.D.) sultan SelemI constructed many fortifications to safe the Christian pilgrimage road in Sinai and St. Catherine Monastery obtained possessions in Greece and Romania.

(49) حجاجي إبراهيم محمد : مقدمة في العمارة القبطية الدفاعية ، القاهرة ، ١٩٨٤ ، ص ١٨ .

(50) نعوم بك شقير : المرجع السابق ، ص ٥٣٥ : ٥٣٦ .

(51) فاطمة مصطفى عامر : تاريخ أهل الذمة في مصر الإسلامية من الفتح العربي إلى نهاية العصر الفاطمي ، القاهرة ج ١ ، ٢٠٠٠ ، ص ٢١٢ .

(52) أحمد محمد عيسى : مخطوطات ووثائق دير القديسة كاترين ، المجلة التاريخية المصرية المجلد الخامس ، ١٩٥٦ ، ص ١١٩ : ١٢٠ .

مجلة الاتحاد العام للآثارين العرب (٧)

5- In period of Mohammad Ali (1805-1848 A.M.) St. Catherine Monastery obtained part of the Customs revenue which had been levied in Cairo⁽⁵³⁾. In period of Mohammad Ali's family the monasteries opened their doors to the foreigner visitors and the specialists to study the manuscripts inside the monasteries⁽⁵⁴⁾. AbasI, grand child of Mohammad Ali, visited Sinai and constructed castle on Mount Moses⁽⁵⁵⁾.

6- In Koran (the holy book of the Moslems) God chose Virgin Mary as the greatest woman in the world. There are a special chapter in name of Virgin Mary, chapter 19, here Koran mentions the annunciation and the nativity and attests the miracles of the Christ. According to Koran there is sanctioned the freedom of faith for all humans⁽⁵⁶⁾.

7- The Christian historians attested tolerance of the Moslems like Meinardus who mentioned that Monks, Library and Possessions of St. Catherine Monastery was protected by the Moslems in the seventh century⁽⁵⁷⁾. Amandos mentioned that it had been impossible for St. Catherine Monastery to be safe without the protection of Prophet Mohammad and his successors⁽⁵⁸⁾. Koylereng mentioned that the Moslems did not compel any one to be Moslem and the freedom of religion prevailed in all the Islamic periods⁽⁵⁹⁾.

Terton mentioned that in the Islamic periods the Christian and Jews reached to high grades⁽⁶⁰⁾.

Conclusion

The Christian Antiquities which was discovered in Sinai include many Types of Churches:-

(53) Kamil Jill: The Monastery of Saint Catherine in Sinai, Cairo: American UNIV.1991, p.31.

(54) Meinardus (F.A.): op. cit, p. 526.

(55) Kamil Jill: op. cit, p. 31.

(56) Chapter 10,N.99.

(57) Meinardus (F.A.): op cit, P.52.

(58) أثاناسيوس باليوراس: المرجع السابق ، ص ١٦ .

(59) كويلرينج : الشرق الأدنى (مجتمعه وثقافته) ، ترجمة عبد الرحمن محمد أيوب ، القاهرة ، ٢٠٠٢ ، ص ١٤٢

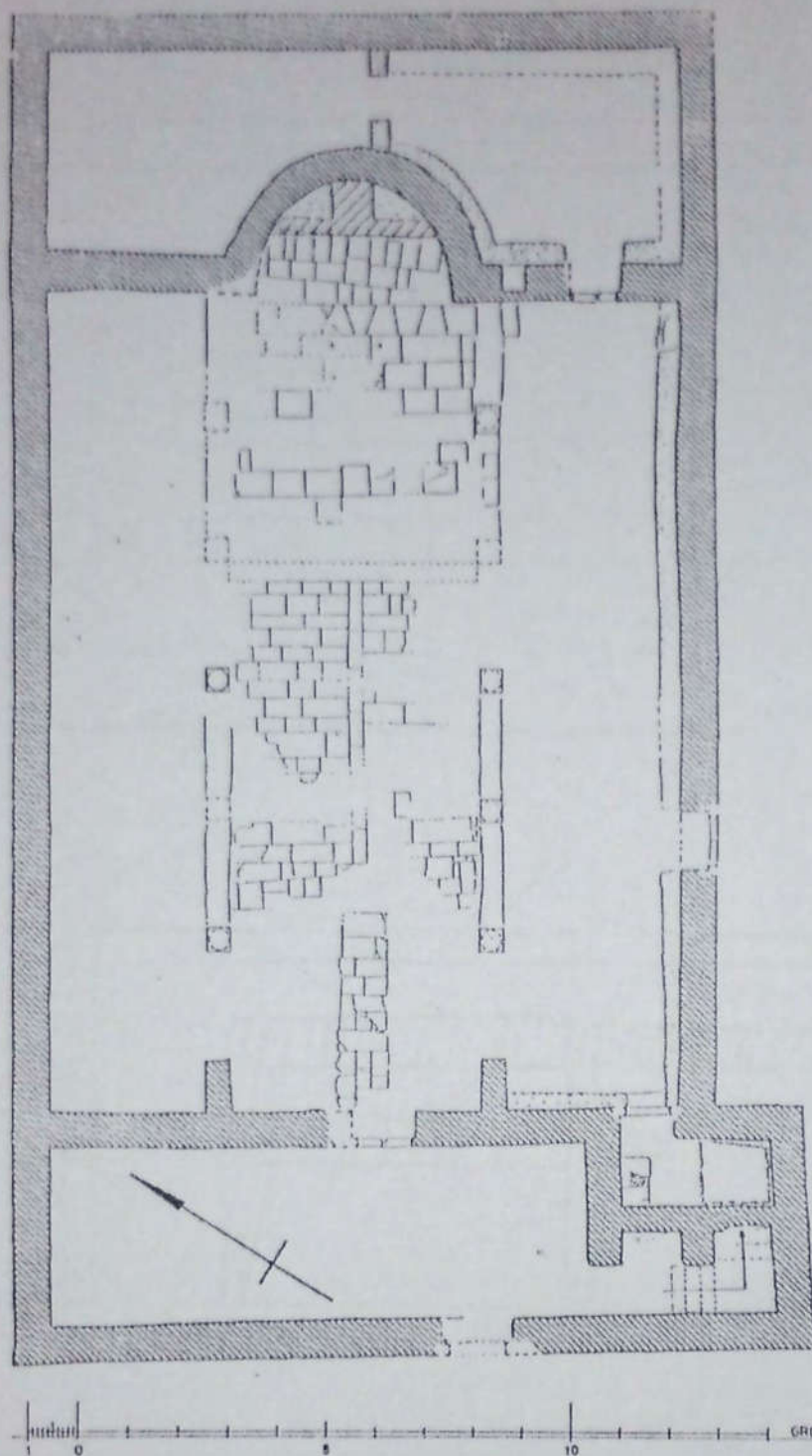
(60) ترتون : أهل الذمة في الإسلام ، ترجمة حسن حبشي ، سلسلة تاريخ المصريين ٧٠

١٩٩٤ ، ص ٢٧٨ .

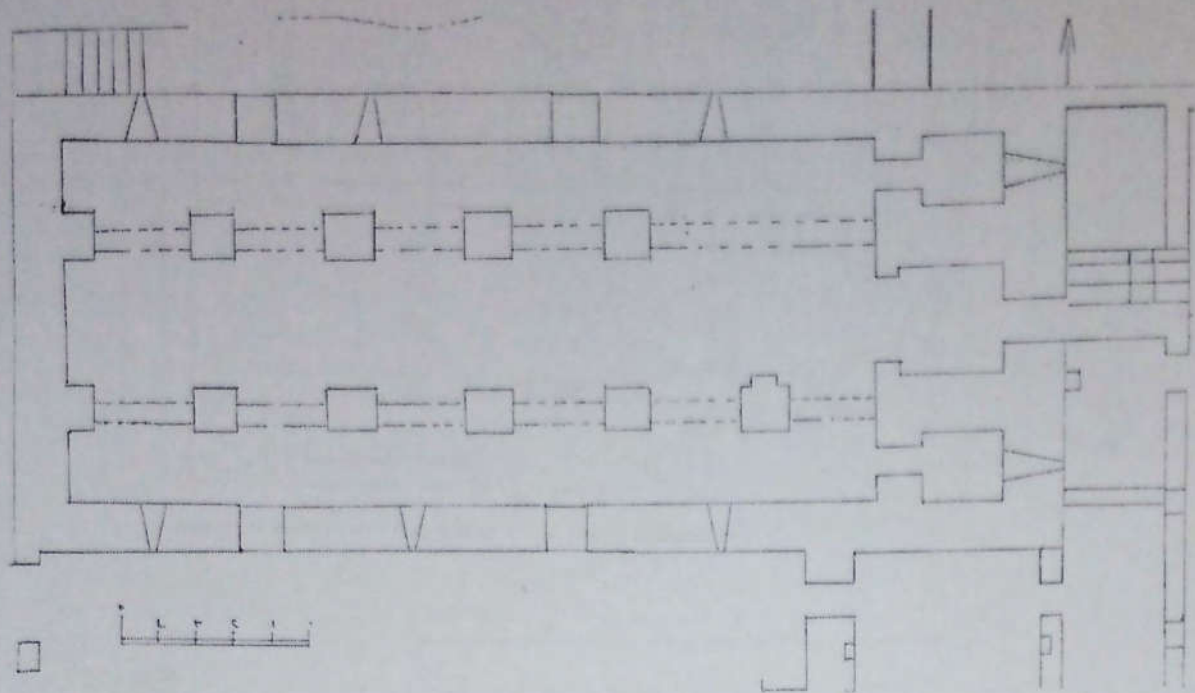
- 1- Square Chapels like the 3 Churches on Hill of the mill in Wadi Firan.
- 2- Churches of one Aisle like Church of Wadi Al- Awag in AL-Tur. Church 4 in Tall Mahrada - Wadi Firan of one entrance in the western side. The 3 Churches of Monastery of Al -Wadi in AL-Tur, Church 1 of 3 entrances the main entrance in the western side and 2 lateral entrances, Church 2 of 3 entrances with stairs lead to the western entrance, Church 3 of 5 entrances.
- 3- Churches of Basilica style like Church 2 on peak Hill of the mill-Wadi Firan, the oldest Basilica style in Sinai date back to the fourth century A.D. of 3 Aisles the Narthex added later and without Pastophoria which became prevalent in architecture of the oriental Churches in the fifth century. Church 3 on Tall Mahrada of 3 Aisles. Church 1 on peak Hill of the mill of 3 Aisles and 3 entrances. The town church of 3 Aisles and Narthex. The main Church in Al- Wadi Monastery of 3 Aisles and 4 lateral entrances, the sanctuary is square flanked with 2 square rooms. The Episcopal Church in Wadi Firan consists of 3 Aisles, Narthex, Pastophoria and lateral rooms. Church 1 in Ostracene of 3 Aisles, Atrium consists of middle Nave surrounded by 3 Arcades and Pastophoria. Church 2 in Ostracene of 3 Aisles, Atrium leads to Narthex, sanctuary in front of the Apse, The Apse consists of three of semi-circles in face of each other. Church 3 in Ostracene of 3 Aisles, Atrium leads to the hall, The Apse contains Thronos of 5 semicircular steps flanked by 2 rooms (Pastophoria) and the sanctuary in front of the Apse. Tall Mkhzan Church in Pelosium of 3 Aisles, Atrium leads to Narthex consists of 7 columns supported on 6 Columns flanked by 2 rooms, Thronos inside the Apse of 5 semicircular stairs. Baptistry lies in the northeastern part of the Church north of the Apse and Martyrium in south eastern part of the Church. The Byzantine Church in Pharaon Island of 3 Aisles, one entrance in the western wall leads to vestibule flanked by 2 rooms, Pastophoria, generally the Church in undisciplined shape.

List Of Abbreviations

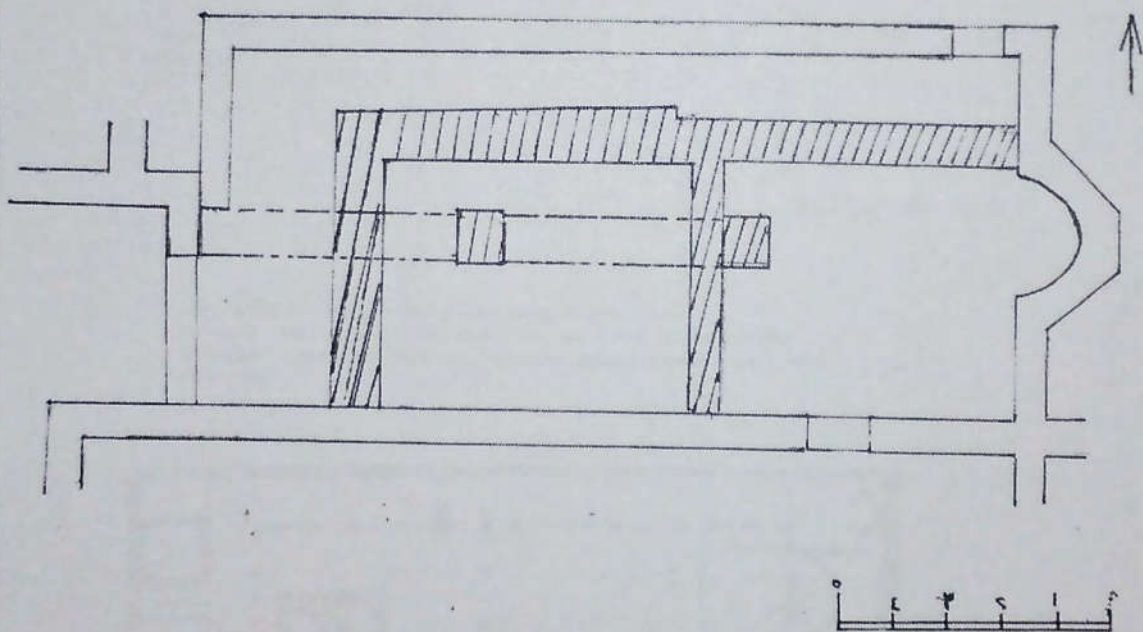
ASAE	Annales du Service des Antiquites de Legypte .
BASOR	Bulletin Of The American Schools Of Oriental Research .
CRIPPEL	Cahiers de Recherches de L' Institut de Papypologie et D' Egyptologie de Lille .



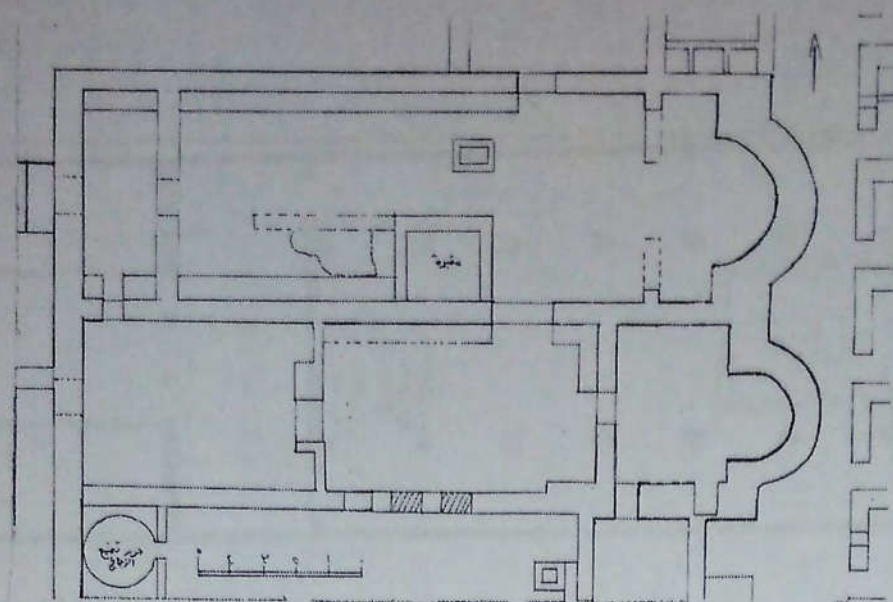
(fig.1) Plan of The Town Church in Tell Mahrada - Wadi Firan .
-Grossmann (P.) : op. cit., 1990.



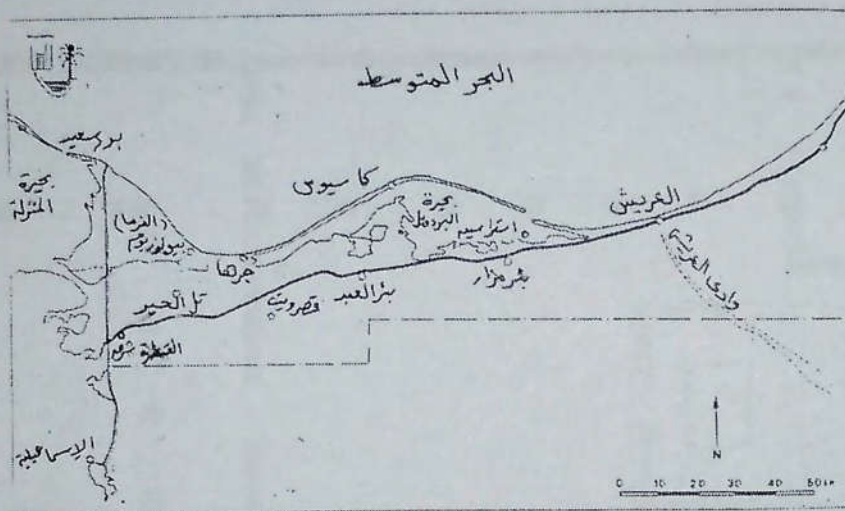
(Fig.2) Plan of the main Church (Basilika) in Al-Wadi Monastery-Tur Sinai (Made by the Researcher) .



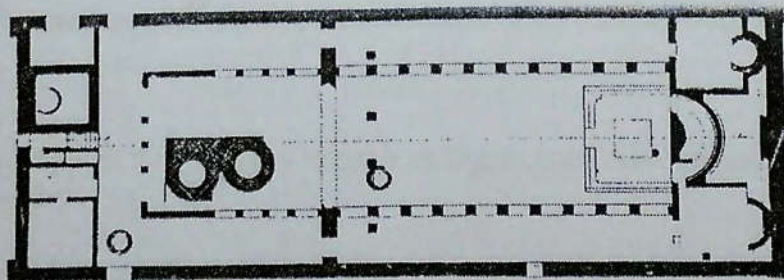
(fig.3) Plan of Church 1 in Al- Wadi Monastery-Tur Sinai (Made by the Researcher) .



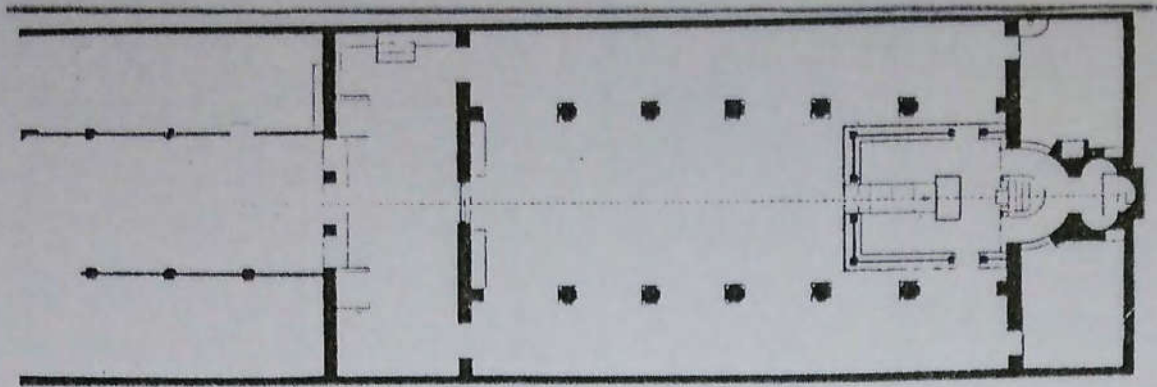
(fig.4) Plan of Church 2-3 in Al- Wadi Monastery-Tur Sinai (Made by the Researcher) .



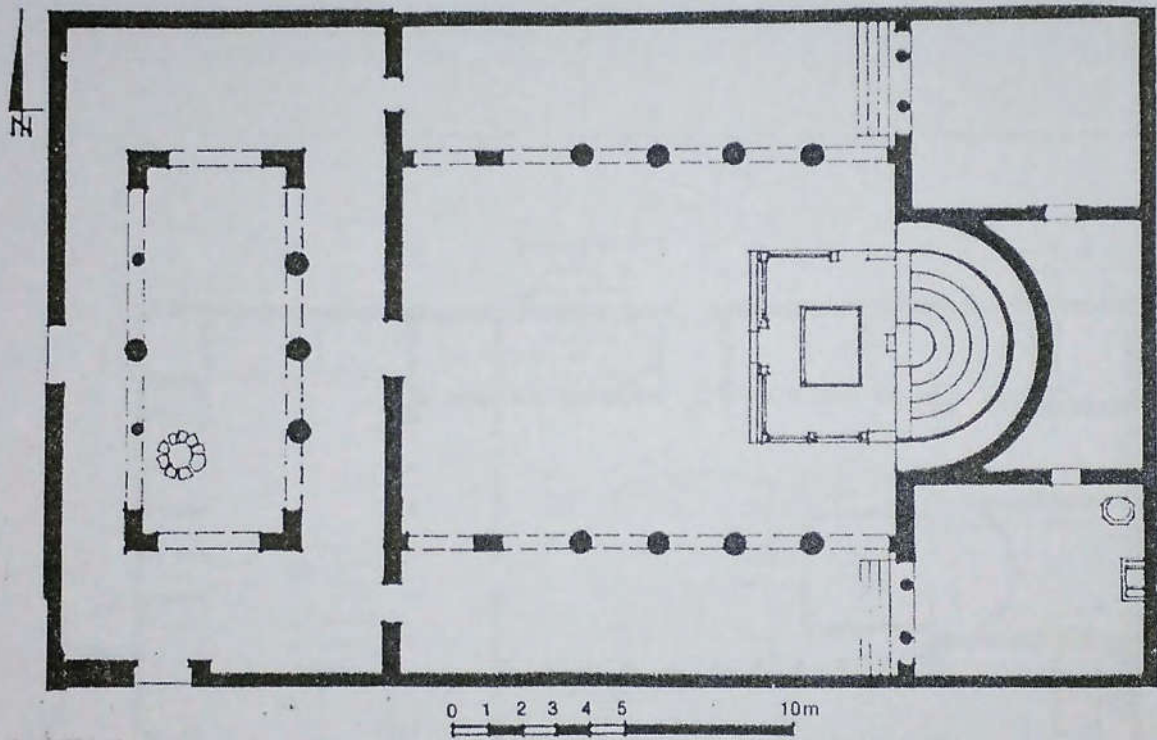
(fig.5)Map of the Archaeological places in north Sinai road.
Arthur (P.) And Oren (E.D.): The North Sinai Survey And The Evidence Of
Transport Amphorae For Roman and Byzantine Trading Patterns , JRA11, 1998
p.194, fig.1.



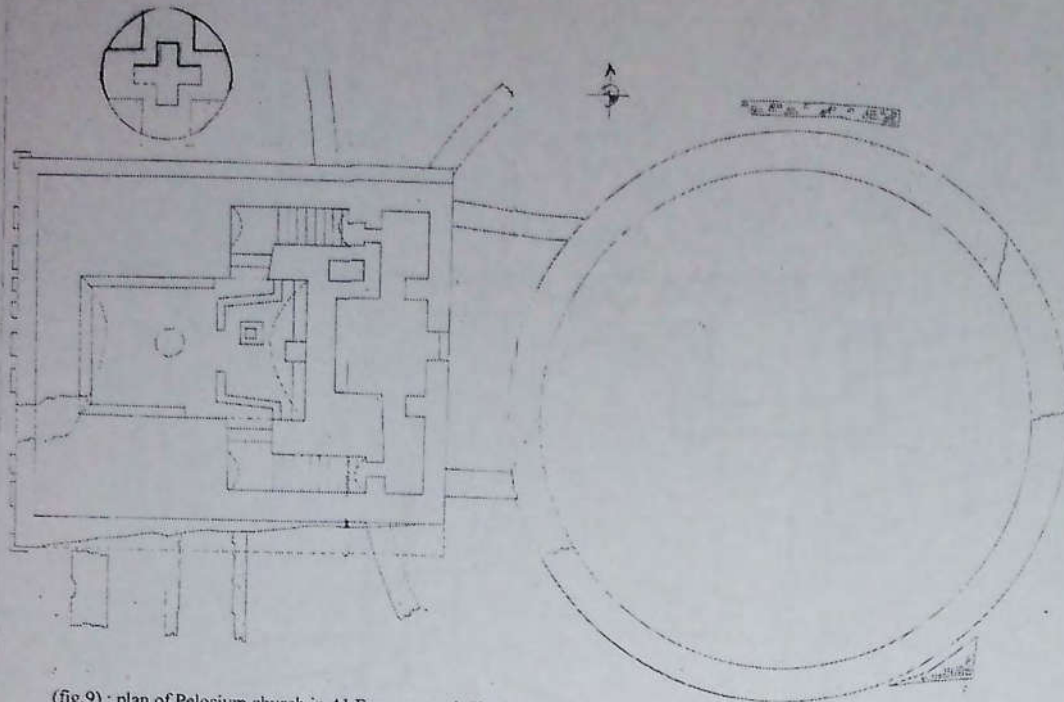
(fig.6) Plan of the southern church in Ostracene (Al-Flousiat)-Noth Sinai.
-Cleadat (J.): op. cit., p.306.



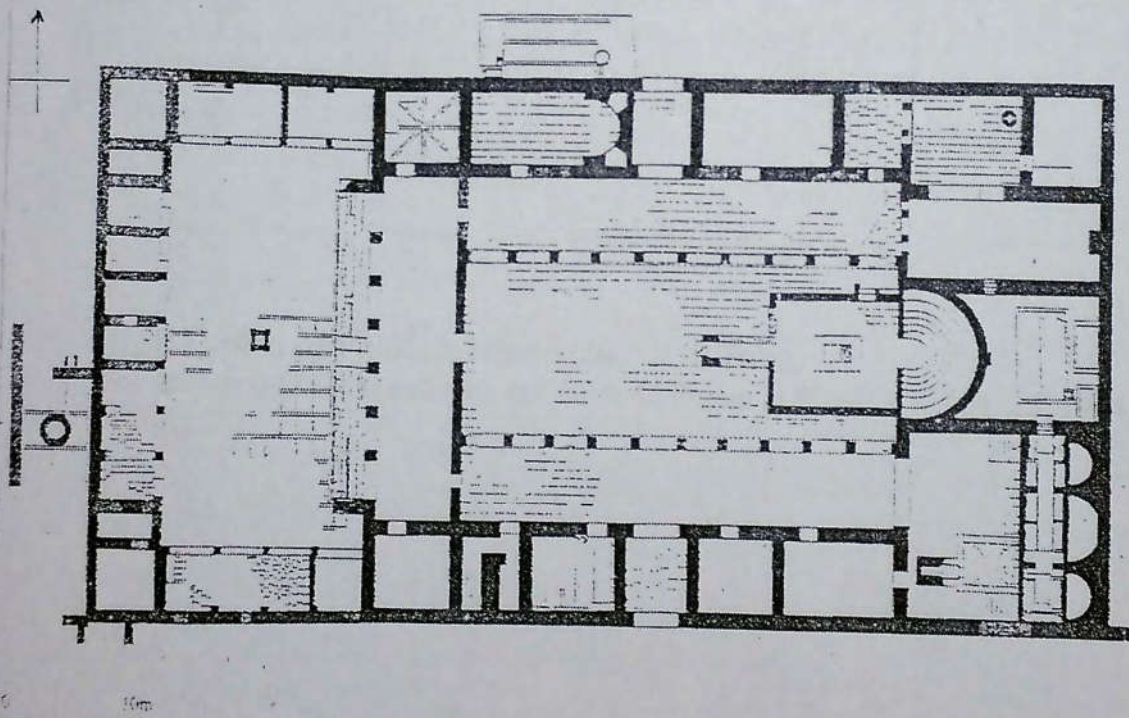
(fig.7) Plan of the northern church in Ostracene (Al-Flousiat)-Noth Sinai.
- ibid.,p.307.



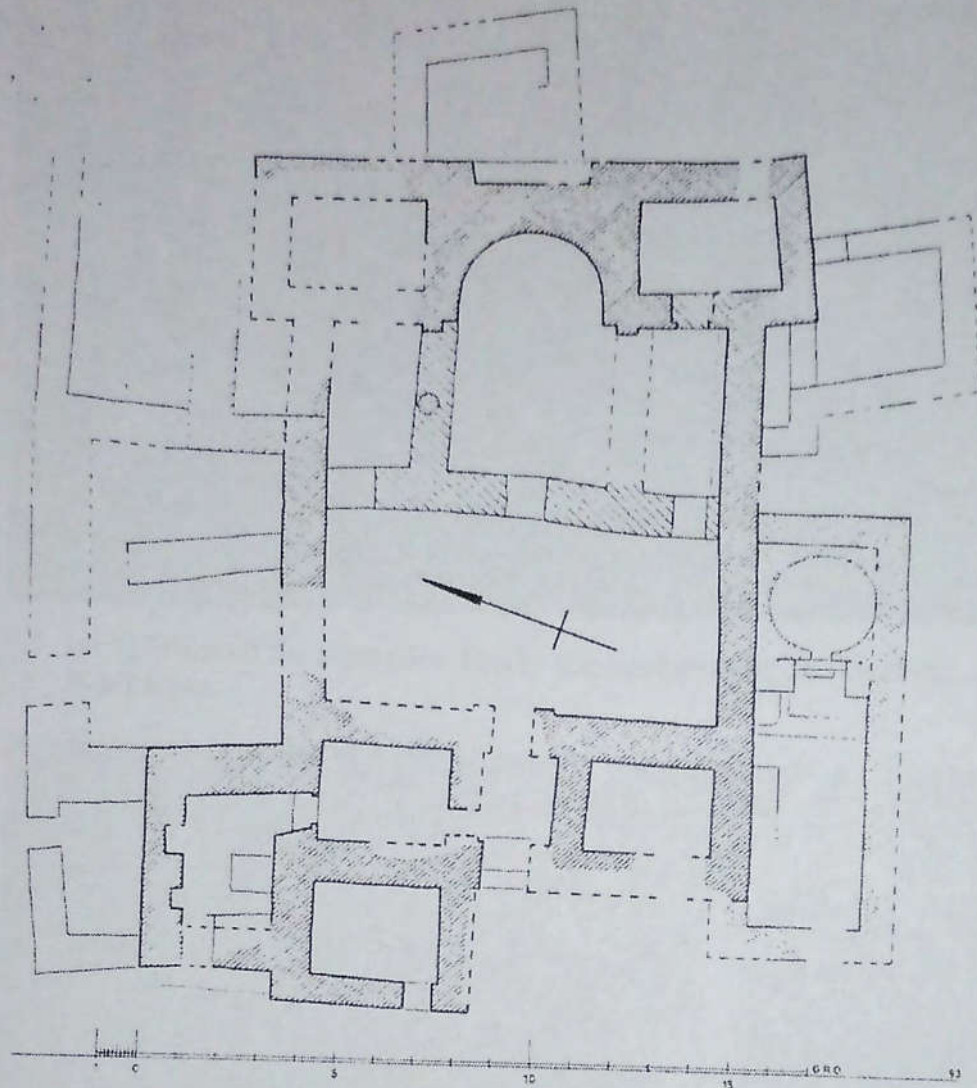
(fig.8) Plan of the western church in Ostracene (Al-Flousiat)-Noth Sinai.
- ibid., p. 308.



(fig.9) : plan of Pelosium church in Al-Farama- north Sinai.
Report of Al-Farama excavation season 1985- north Sinai.

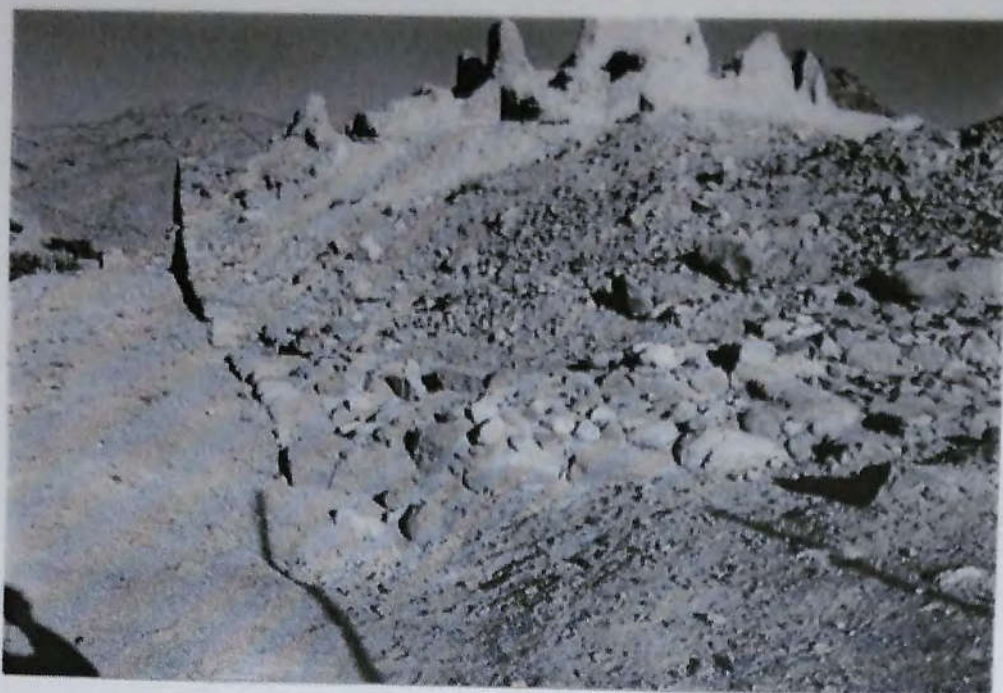


(fig.10) plan of Tell Makhzan church in Al-Farama- north Sinai.
Bonnet (C.) et Mohamed Abdelsamir: L. eglise basilicale de Tell El-Makhzan et de La question en 1997, CRIPEL19, 1998, p.46, fig 1.

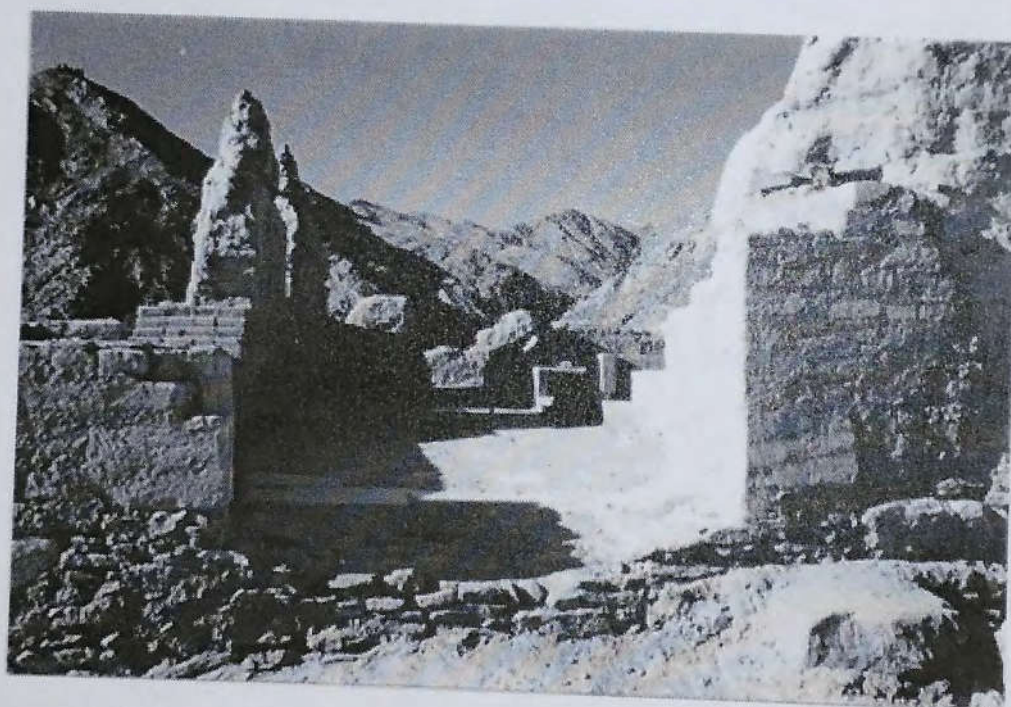


(fig.11) plan of Pharaon Island church in Taba.

Grossmann (p.): On the church at Gezira Al Firaun in Sinai , CRIPEL 16, 1994, p.83,fig. 2.



(pl.1) Walls of the Byzantine City in the northern part of Tell Mahrada-Wadi Firan.



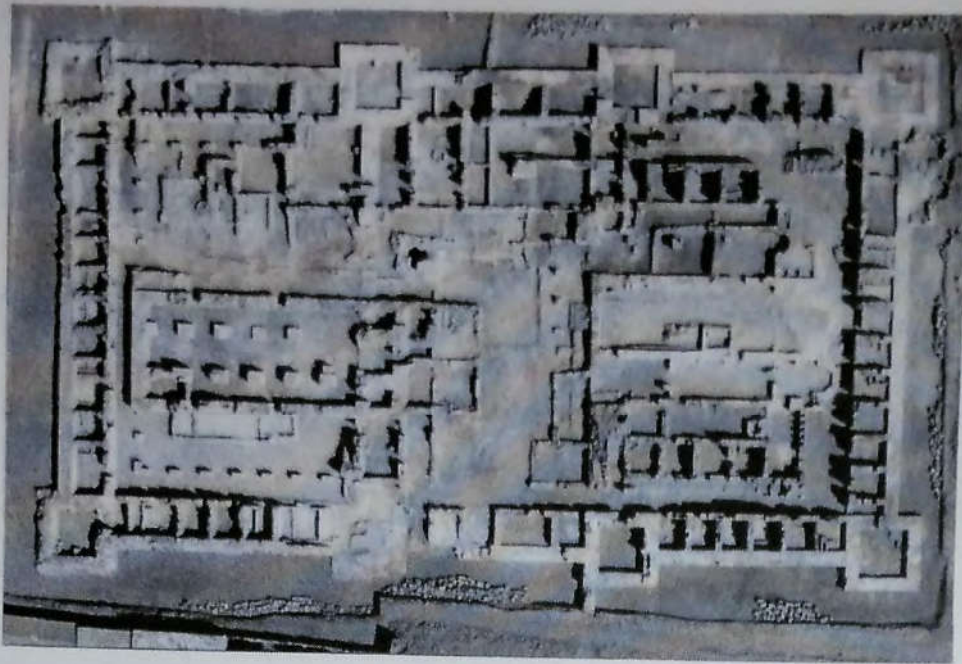
(pl.2) The northern Aisle of the episcopal church in Tell Mahrada-Wadi Firan.



(pl.3) Church 1 in mid way on hill of the mill - Wadi Firan.



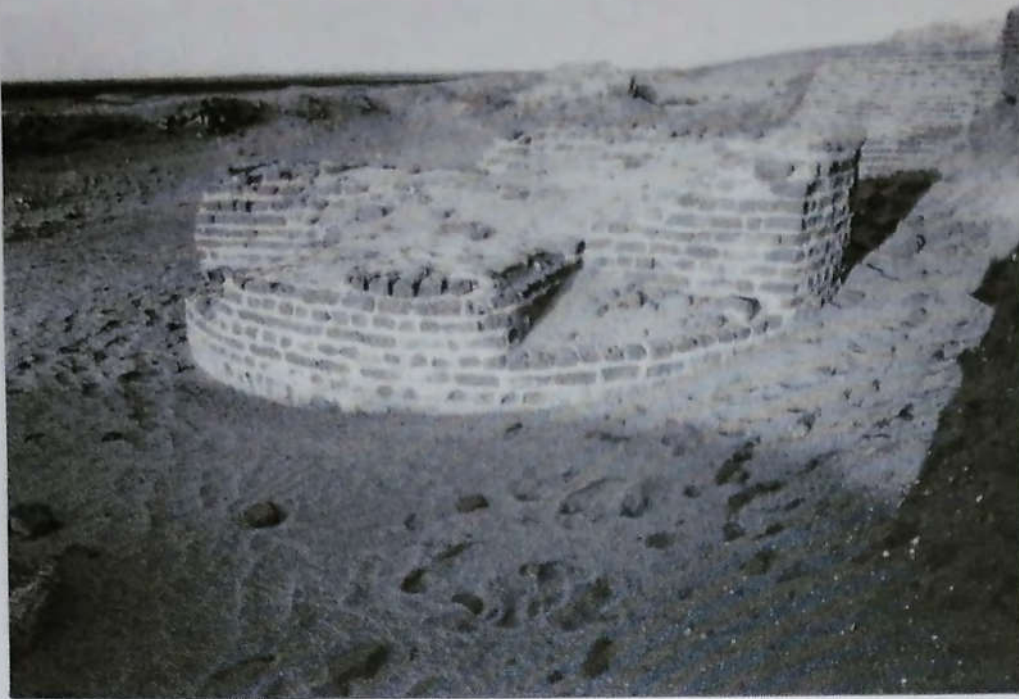
(pl.4) building of the general living (the second stage of Monasticism) in Wadi Al-Awag - Tur Sinai .



(pl.5) Aerial view of Al-Wadi Monastery- Tur Sinai .
-Kawatoko (M.): A Port City Site on the Sinai Peninsula AL- Tur The -
11 The Expedition in 1994, The Middle Eastern Culture Center
in Japan, 1995,pl.1 N.2 .



(Pl.6) The northern part of Al-Wadi Monastery- Tur Sinai .



(pl.7) The Baptistry north west of Pelosium church in Al-Farama .



(pl.8) Tell Makhzan church in Al-Farama .



(pl.9) The entrance of Pharaon Island church in Taba.



(pl.10) General view of Pharaon Island church in Taba.