

Tomasz Waliszewski

Chhim: Explorations, 1999

Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 10, 237-245

1999

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

CHHIM

EXPLORATIONS, 1999

Tomasz Waliszewski

The Polish-Lebanese-French joint expedition conducted its fourth campaign of archaeological excavations between June 28 and August 26, 1999, at Chhim (south Lebanon) thanks to the particularly favorable attitude of Dr. Chakker Ghadban, acting Director General of the Direction Générale des Antiquités du Liban, and the efforts and generosity of Mrs. Renata Tarazi, responsible for the Mont Liban sector in the Department.¹⁾ The exceptional character of the campaign this year focused our activity on completing a study of the material uncovered in the previous three seasons combined with some limited trial pits designed to clarify our understanding of the chronology and functioning of the site.²⁾

¹⁾ The expedition, which is run jointly by the Direction Générale des Antiquités du Liban, Polish Center of Archaeology of Warsaw University and Institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche Orient, was the only one last summer to receive a digging permit. For this we are extremely grateful to the Lebanese authorities. The work was directed by Dr. Tomasz Waliszewski, assisted by Renata Tarazi representing the Direction Générale des Antiquités du Liban and Lévon Nordiguian from the Institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche Orient. The expedition comprised: Ms Marzena Łuszczewska, Dr. Mahmoud El Tayeb, Ms Hanna Kozińska, Ms Ingrid Périssé (Université de Bordeaux), archaeologists; Mr. Marek Puzzkarski, Ms Anna Błaszczuk, documentalists; Mr. Karol Piasecki, anthropologist; Mr. Kazimierz Kotlewski, photographer; Mr. Abdallah Alaeddine, ceramologist; Ms Urszula Wicenciak, Ms Aleksandra Chabiera, Ms Katarzyna Mikułowska, Ms Danielle Davie, and Mr. Roman Chojnowski, archaeology students from Warsaw University, the Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw and the Université François Rabelais in Tours. The results are being studied under a financial grant from the Committee for Scientific Research of the Republic of Poland (grant 1 H01G 058 13).

²⁾ Cf. previous reports in: *PAM VIII, Reports 1996* (1997), 147-156; *PAM IX, Reports 1997* (1998), 139-152; *PAM X, Reports 1998* (1999), 177-185.

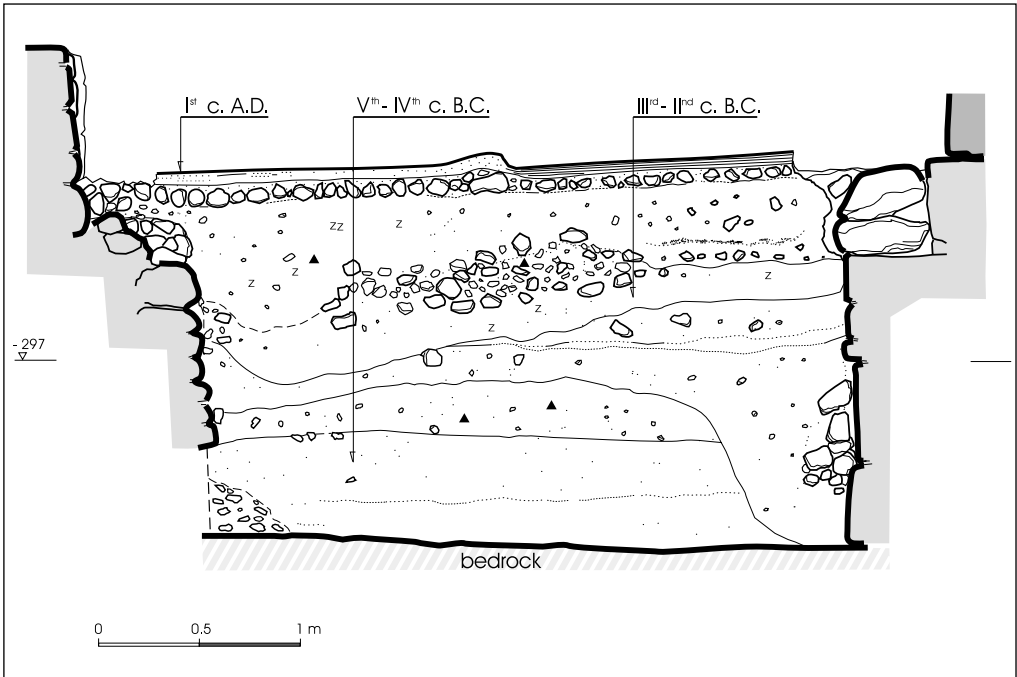
TRIAL PITS

TEMPLE C

The most important results from the point of view of site chronology were expected under a limestone floor uncovered under the temple already in the 1996 campaign. The pottery and a specific stratigraphical combination permitted this level to be dated to the 1st century AD. It ought to be recalled that the floor and the stone structures in the southern part had been covered with a layer of debris constituting the leveling under a temple erected in the 2nd century AD. The last period of use of the temple is marked by the presence of a basin, which was most probably part of some wine press installations, dated to the 5th-6th centuries AD.

The most important of the trial pits cut through the temple on a more or less N-S axis and measured c. 3.70 x 1.00 m. After the floor was removed a stratigraphical study of the levels was made (*Fig. 1*) with the following conclusions:

- Roman level, 1st century AD: after removing a 5-10 cm layer of lime mortar constituting the floor, a bedding layer of small stones was revealed; Eastern Sigillata A plate sherds from the 1st century AD confirmed the earlier proposed dating for this floor;
- Hellenistic level, 3rd-2nd century BC: from 0.15 m to 1.05 m below the floor level, a dark brown earth mixed with small stones, contained two *amphoriskoi*



*Fig. 1. Stratigraphic cross-section through the deposits in Temple C
(Drawing M. Puzkarski)*

and an *unguentarium*, which combined with other vessel fragments gave a provisional dating; an unexpected find was a bronze figurine of a sitting male deity, 11.4 cm high, a typical votive figurine known from Byblos or Ugarit and dated provisionally to the 19th-18th century BC³⁾ (Fig. 2); its presence in this level should be deemed accidental;

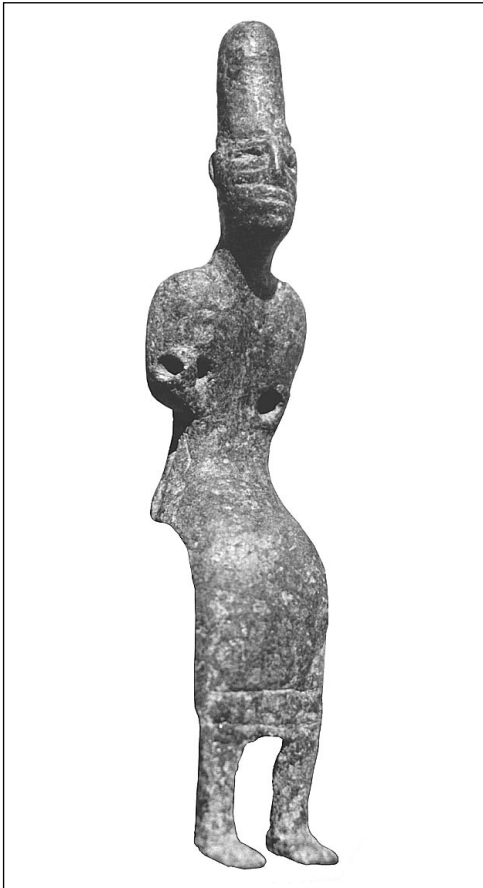


Fig. 2. Bronze figurine of a deity found in the test pit under Temple C (Photo K. Kotlewski)

- Foundation trench of a Hellenistic wall below the north temple wall: a thin layer of soil that thickens toward the northern temple wall, slicing through a lower-lying layer; the layer seems to be connected with a wall made up of three courses of stone blocks erected directly upon bedrock; the wall must have been reused as a foundation for the north wall of the 2nd-century AD temple;
- Layer of the 5th-4th century BC: brown soil some 0.50 m thick yielding sherds of Greek and Persian pottery that support a provisional dating; however, it should be kept in mind that the finds also included potsherds resembling Bronze Age wares;
- Bedrock, discovered at 1.80-1.90 m below floor level.

The investigation of the trial pit under the temple has added to the chronology of the site – the previously unrecorded Hellenistic layer – while posing new questions, such as whether the structure uncovered under the north wall of the temple, taken in conjunction with the votive figurine, should be considered as proof for the existence of earlier sanctuaries on this spot, going back perhaps even to the Bronze Age and whether the stone structures recorded under the temple in 1998 are the remnants of an Early Roman sanctuary (Fig. 3). The only arguments in favor of this hypothesis today is the well known longevity of traditional cult places in Phoenicia and the existence in the 1st-2nd centuries AD of less formal cult places like the *skene* of Apollo discovered years ago in Tyre, possibly reflecting the finds at Chhim.⁴⁾

Another trial pit excavated on the outside of the south temple wall added to the

³⁾ Cf. a similar group of finds presented in H. Seeden, Dieux de bronze, d'or et d'argent, in: Liban. L'autre rive. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe du 27 octobre 1998 au 2 mai 1999 (Paris 1998), 95.

⁴⁾ P. Maynor Bikai, W. J. Fulco, J. Marchand, Tyre: The Shrine of Apollo (Amman 1996), cf. conclusions on 81-85.

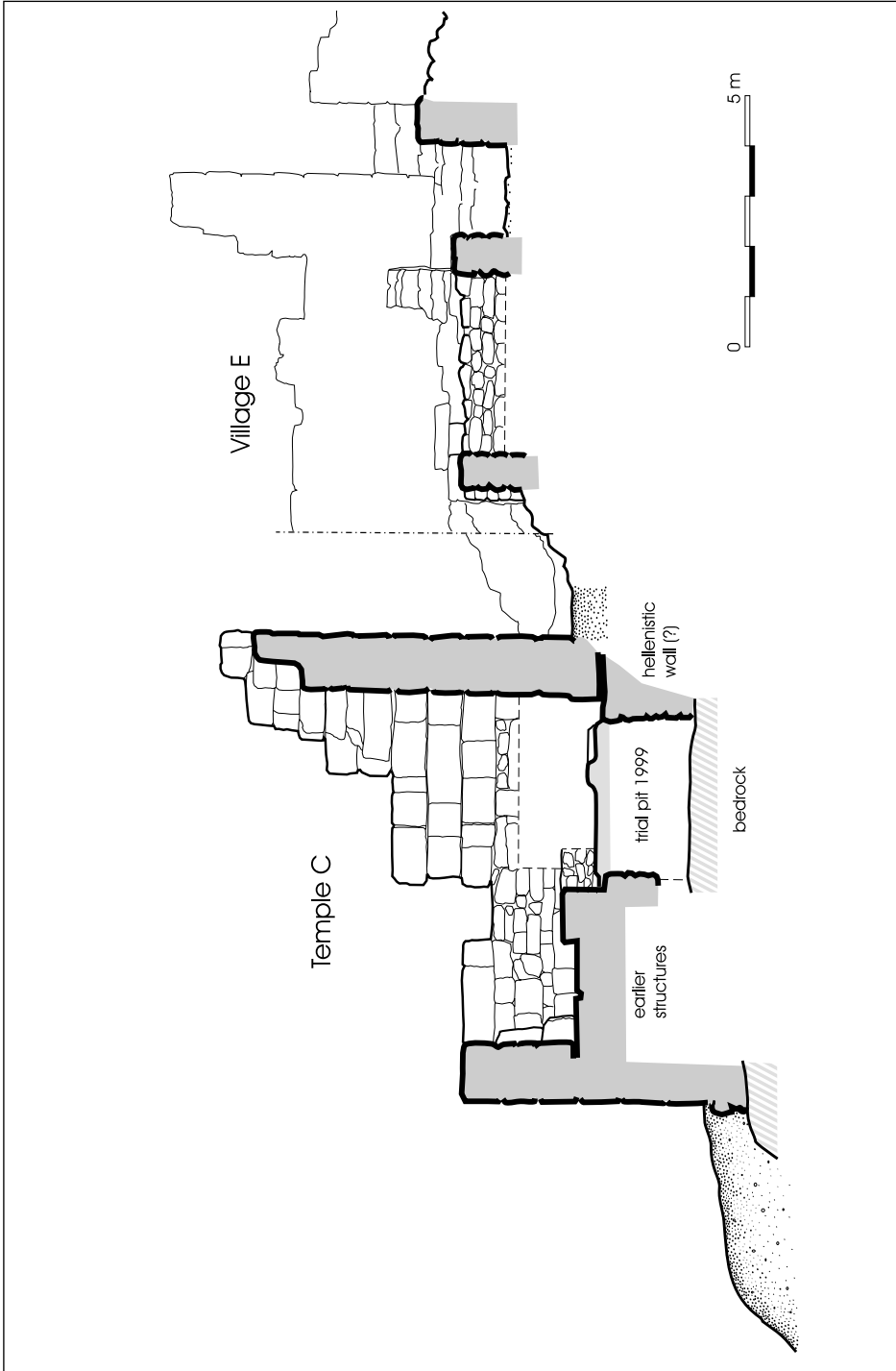


Fig. 3. Cross-section through the temple and part of village E
(Drawing M. PuszkarSKI)

knowledge of the building history of the 2nd century temple. The wall was found to rest directly upon bedrock some 0.50 m below the present ground surface.

TEMENOS A

Four trial pits were dug to investigate the temenos in front of the facade of temple C. Three of these situated around regular stone blocks forming a straight line on an E-W axis gave the expected results. The blocks turned out to be column bases under the portico that presumably lined the front of the temple. The modest evidence available indicates an Early Byzantine date for this structure.

The fourth trial pit, intended to uncover the course of the southern temenos wall, brought surprising evidence of an accumu-

lation layer some 1.20 m thick occurring instead of the temenos wall, which disappears a mere 10 m away from the temple facade. The layer yielded pottery and coins dated from the 4th to the 6th centuries AD. In an underlying layer (0.80 m thick) two poor stone walls were found belonging to a room of unknown original size. A *tannur* (dia. c. 1 m) was found in the southeastern corner. (Fig. 4) This domestic oven had been in use in the 1st century AD to judge by the cooking ware, Eastern Sigillata A plates and oil lamps. Thus, the level identified underneath the temenos, is contemporary with the floor and structures discovered under the temple. It will be possible to say more about the extent and significance of this level once more trial pits have been excavated.



Fig. 4. Room with tannur of the 1st century AD discovered under temenos A (Photo K. Kotlewski)

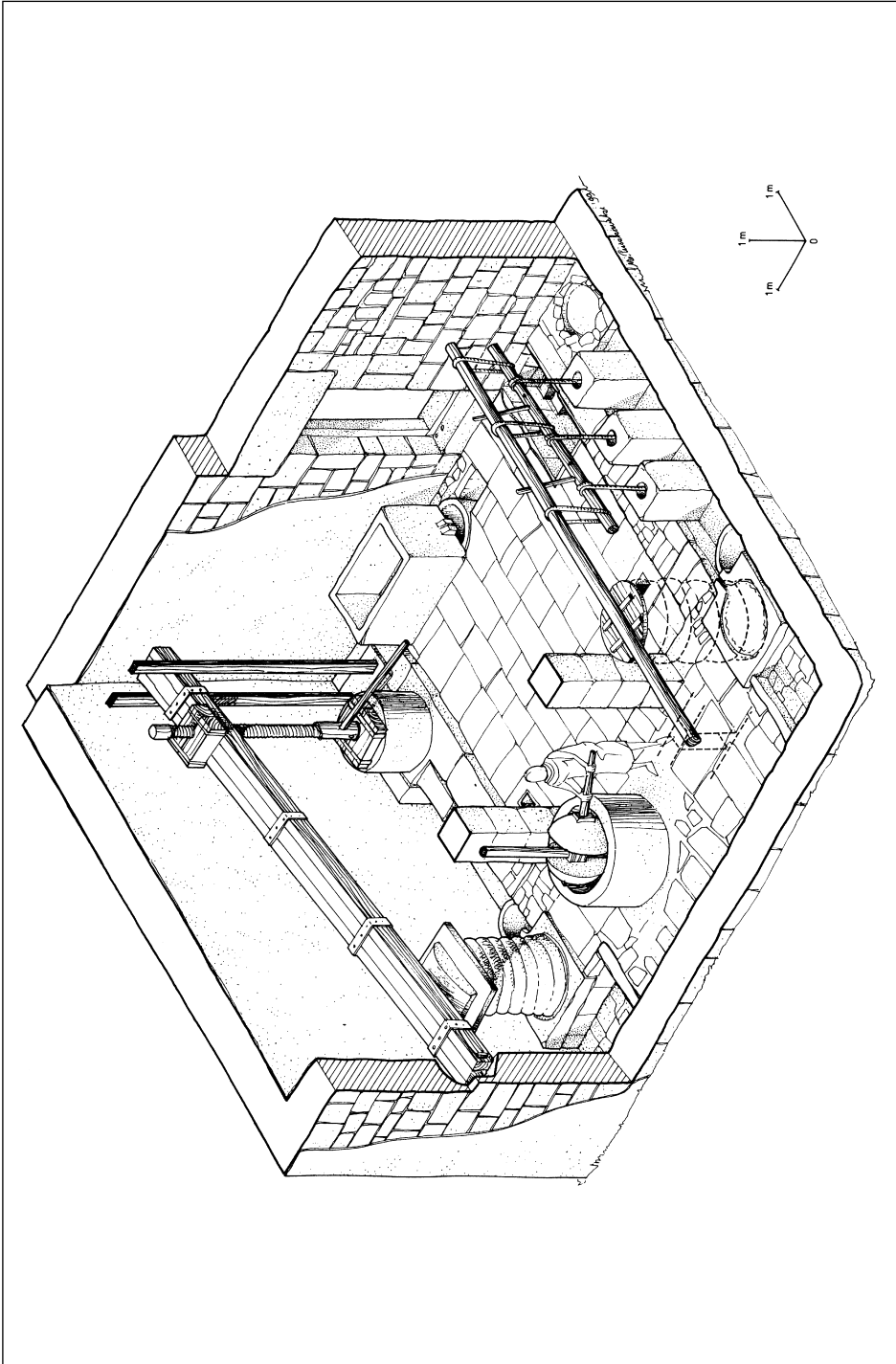


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of E.I oil press of the 5th-6th century AD
(Drawing M. Puskarski)

COMPLEX F

The exploration of the interior of a building located in isolation south of the main part of the ancient village was completed this year. The structure was a dwelling, later extended to include an oil press. The chronology of the house had remained doubtful, the fill having yielded pottery of the 5th and 6th centuries AD. The present work clearing the floor of room F.III brought to light three coins of Constantine the Great and Theodosius I, as well as table and kitchen wares attributable to the 4th century AD. It is possible that earlier discoveries of two coins of Alexander Severus and Heliogabalus along with some sherds of contemporary pottery point to at least a part of the structure being used in as early as the 3rd century AD.

VILLAGE E

(SECTOR NORTH OF TEMPLE C)

In just nine days between August 9 and 19 extensive work was carried out in the sector of the ancient village lying north of temple C. The work was made possible

thanks to the combined effort in the second part of the season of Renata Tarazi of the Direction Générale des Antiquités du Liban and the Chhim municipal authorities. A triangular-shaped part of an ancient lane siding the temple was cleared of overlying debris, as well as a square structure at the village entrance and two intersecting alleys along with some steps that had presumably given onto the house rooftops. The stone pavement and steps uncovered in a street leading from temenos A to the oil press E.1 seem to continue, although the investigations had to be interrupted for lack of time. The finds from the debris date to the 5th-6th and the 1st centuries AD.

OIL PRESS E.I (Fig. 5)

Traces of the 1st century AD settlement in different parts of the site have posed again the issue of the date for the origins of the village of Chhim. The initial assumptions about the 2nd century AD temple preceding the village have become invalid in view of the findings made under the sanctuary itself and the temenos. A trial pit was dug



Fig. 6. Eastern Sigillata A jars and plate found in the cellar of the E.I oil press
(Photo K. Kotlewski)

in the basement of the E.I oil press, excavated in the first season in 1996, in order to obtain fresh evidence. A homogeneous set of pottery was discovered, including an Eastern Sigillata A plate, jars and oil lamps, all dated to the middle of the 1st century AD. (Fig. 6) The results corroborate yet again an earlier date for the establishment of the village, suggested already by Olivier Callot (Maison de l'Orient, Lyon) based on his observations concerning the oil presses at Chhim.

OIL PRESS E.II

A big building with oil presses had been discovered in 1998 north of Basilica B. A small trial pit in the southeastern corner revealed at a depth of 1.80 m a floor and a stone slab belonging presumably to the best preserved oil press anywhere on the site. The outcome of stratigraphic studies was similar to the results obtained elsewhere in the village. The fill consisted mainly of Byzantine pottery, which gave way to a 1st century AD assemblage on the floor itself.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Conservators from the Warsaw Fine Arts Academy carried out the consolidation of stone elements of the liturgical equipment found inside the church, that is, the chancel posts and the altar.⁵⁾ Their main objective – conservation of the mosaic floor from the nave and the northern aisle of the Byzantine basilica uncovered in previous excavation

seasons – was impeded by the stealing of the mosaics by robbers in the winter of 1999. The Lebanese authorities were able to recover the lost pavements, but the whole affair has been treated as a warning and a decision has been made to remove and protect the most valuable of the figural mosaic representations from the church.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Karol Piasecki (Warsaw University, Institute of Archaeology) carried out an anthropological study of the human remains discovered in the 1998 season in two tombs located in the church and in its vestibule, the latter containing many skeletons in a small burial. It was found that the

remains belong to at least 55 individuals who had died much earlier: women, children and elderly individuals, all in good health (only one case of osteoporosis was noted). Without genetic research it is difficult to be sure whether they all came from among the village inhabitants.

STUDIES ON THE FINDS

The eight weeks of the campaign were devoted principally to the ordering and recording of the material coming from the past few excavation seasons. Over 500 pieces of pottery have been recorded; they represent

storage vessels, amphorae, jars, cooking pots, plates and bowls, both locally produced and imported. A distinctive group in the locally-made assemblage are the dark orange products recently identified by W. J. Hayes, as

⁵⁾ Mr. Krzysztof Chmielewski headed a team comprising Mr. Andrzej Karolczak, Mrs. Agnieszka Zambrzycka, Ms Wioletta Tkaczyk and Ms. Marta Bołtowicz

well as the otherwise unknown pink-beige vessels that could have been manufactured in workshops operating in the Chhim environs. Of the imported wares the majority is Late Roman Ware from Cyprus and Asia Minor. The material studied so far forms four chronological groups: Hellenistic (3rd-2nd century BC), Early Roman (1st century AD), Roman of the 2nd century AD and Byzantine of the 5th-6th cent. AD.

The 57 oil lamp sherds fit very well into this picture. What is noteworthy is the appearance of quite a few Early Arabic examples of the 7th-8th century, mainly from the church. The iron objects (79 items)

include mostly different size nails, largely from the wooden roof structure of the basilica. The sole exception is a fragmentarily preserved *polykandelion* (Fig. 7) and a golden horse-shaped pendant, not to mention the discussed votive figurine of a deity. Of the other item categories, 40 pieces of glass vessels were recorded, 220 stone objects (largely architectural elements from the Roman temple) and 78 pieces of painted plaster from the temple and the basilica.

The coins comprised 22 pieces, identified by Mr. Christian Augé as dating from the 2nd to the 7th centuries.



Fig. 7. Reconstruction of a *polykandelion* found on the mosaic in the north aisle of the basilica (Drawing M. Puzkarski)