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CONTENTS

- 129 In Memoriam: Professor Avraham Biran, 1909–2008
- 132 ISRAEL ROLL and OREN TAL, A Villa of the Early Roman Period at Apollonia-Arsuf
- 150 AVRAHAM FAUST and SHLOMO BUNIMOVITZ, The Judahite Rock-Cut Tomb: Family Response at a Time of Change
- 171 BOAZ ZISSU, The Hellenistic Fortress at Ḥorvat Tura and the Identification of Tur Shimon
- 195 AMOS KLONER, ALLA KUSHNIR-STEIN and HAVA KORZAKOVA, An Inscribed Palestinian Weight Mentioning the Emperor Claudius
- 199 DEBORAH CVIKEL, YAACOV KAHANOV, HAIM GOREN, ELISABETTA BOARETTO and KURT RAVEH, Napoleon Bonaparte's Adventure in Tantura Lagoon: Historical and Archaeological Evidence
- 220 YUVAL GOREN, Micromorphologic Examination of the 'Gabriel Revelation' Stone
- 230 NOTES AND NEWS
- 251 REVIEWS

ABBREVIATIONS

- AASOR Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ADAJ Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan
AJA American Journal of Archaeology
AfO Archiv für Orientforschung
ANET Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament³, ed. J.B. Pritchard, Princeton, 1969
BA The Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BT Babylonian Talmud
CAD Chicago Assyrian Dictionary
CIS Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum
DJD Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD Dead Sea Discoveries
EI Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies
ESI Excavations and Surveys in Israel
IAA Reports Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
IEJ Israel Exploration Journal
JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEA Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies
KAI W. Donner and W. Röllig: *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* 1–3, Wiesbaden, 1962–1964; 1^s, 2002
NEAEHL The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (English Edition), Jerusalem, 1993
PEQ Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PT Palestinian Talmud
QDAP Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine
RA Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale
RB Revue Biblique
RE Pauly-Wissowa's Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
RQ Revue de Qumran
VT Vetus Testamentum
ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZDPV Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins

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The Hellenistic Fortress at Ḥorvat Tura and the Identification of Tur Shimon*

BOAZ ZISSU
Bar-Ilan University

ḤORVAT TURA (Khirbet Sammuniya) is situated in the western Jerusalem Hills on an isolated, cone-shaped hill in the centre of a northward spur, which is surrounded on three sides by a sharp bend in the steep gorge of Naḥal Soreq. The hill (595 m. above sea level) rises 70 m. above the spur and some 250 m. above the river bed. In antiquity, there was most probably a road next to the riverbed connecting the Jerusalem Hills with the adjacent Shephelah (Judean foothills). This road was apparently destroyed by the railroad to Jerusalem, which takes the same course, and by the seasonal floods of the river. The site affords a good view of the region. The approach to Jerusalem can be seen to the east, and the Tzora–Eshtaol ridge to the west. Due to its steep slopes, arising abruptly on all sides, the ancient site is accessible only from the south-west (fig. 1), along an ancient path that is visible even today. This path was blocked by an east–west fosse (*c.* 12 m. wide and *c.* 35 m. long) that had been rock-cut through the entire topographic saddle.

The site was first described by the team of the PEF Survey of Western Palestine, which was impressed by its topographical location (fig. 2). The 1874 expedition also noticed supporting walls belonging to the ancient road mentioned above (Conder and Kitchener 1883: 48, 124). The PEF team prepared a schematic plan of the ruins (fig. 3) and published a detailed description, most elements of which are still visible today (Conder and Kitchener 1883: 124).

M. Marcus explored the site while conducting a landscape survey of the Jerusalem Hills in the 1980s (Marcus 1993: 97–98, sites 75–77). During 1992–1997, the author, together with Daniel Weiss and Gideon Solimany, conducted a new survey of the site, which included measurement of the ruins.¹ Another survey was

* For an early version of this article, published in Hebrew, see Zissu 2004. Fig. 1 was taken by A. Graicer; fig. 4 was prepared by N. Shtober-Zissu; figs. 7, 10 and 15 were prepared by Y. Zoran; fig. 12 was taken by Y. Zissu. Figs. 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 16 were taken by the author. Fig. 2 is from the PEF map, sheet XVII; and fig. 3 is from Conder and Kitchener 1883.

¹ The survey was conducted on behalf of the Archaeological Survey of Israel (104; Map of Nes Harim). I would like to thank Daniel Weiss and Gideon Solimany of the IAA for their assistance. The site coordinates are 12919:15589, and on the Nes Harim survey map it is 15-12/59/1 (Weiss, Zissu and Solimany 2004: 28*–29*). The plans of the site were prepared by Vadim Essman and Slava Pirsky of the IAA and were drafted by Nurit Shtober-Zissu, Natasha Zak and Rina Brin. Assistance was provided by Prof. Hanan Eshel, Yair Zoran, Avraham Graicer, Nili Graicer and Tsafir Shiffman. The

conducted at the site in the summer of 2001, by a team headed by Zvi Greenhut on behalf of the IAA (Greenhut *et al.* 2001: 65–67).

The site, which was never properly excavated, was badly damaged by illegal excavations, especially on the upper part of the site.

THE RUINS OF THE HILLTOP FORTRESS

The compound on the hilltop is divided into two parts: a high, conical portion at the summit of the ridge and a lower ‘flank’ that drops to the north-east (fig. 4). Both parts, on a total area of *c.* 1.5 hectares, seem to have contained buildings surrounded by a wall — perhaps a casemate wall. Without excavating, it is difficult to follow the entire path of the original wall, due to stone terraces (some of them late) built on top of the earlier ruins.

On the uppermost part of the hill stands a square tower (*c.* 11×12 m.), which apparently served as the stronghold of the fortress, dominating the path up to the site and the fosse. Next to the tower there were additional buildings, surrounded by a wall. The foundations of the hilltop structures are made of large ashlar stones (0.7×1 m.) with margins on all four sides and a protruding, crude central boss. The walls were preserved to a maximum height of 3–4 m. (fig. 5). In the inner section of the compound, graduated stone walls were built around the slopes in a concentric pattern, a few metres apart.

In the centre of the lower ‘flank’, north-east of the main tower, the remains of an additional square tower were recorded (*c.* 10×10 m.). The buildings in this area are characterised by walls of smaller, hewn stones. The whole area was surrounded by parallel walls, which follow the topography, forming a kind of stepped fortification. Some (agricultural?) terraces were built by the later inhabitants, making the tracing of the fortifications in various parts difficult. A drum or section of a column (*c.* 0.5 m. in diameter; *c.* 0.6 m. in height) was also found in

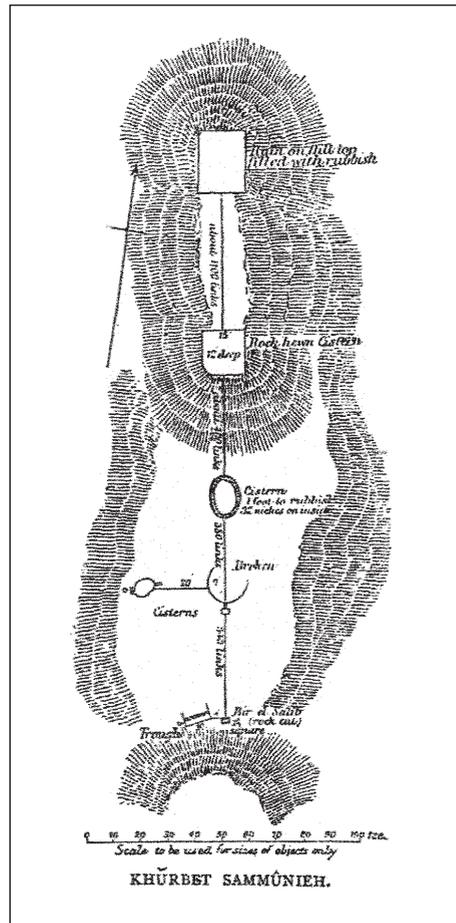


Fig. 3. Schematic plan of ruins, prepared by PEF team

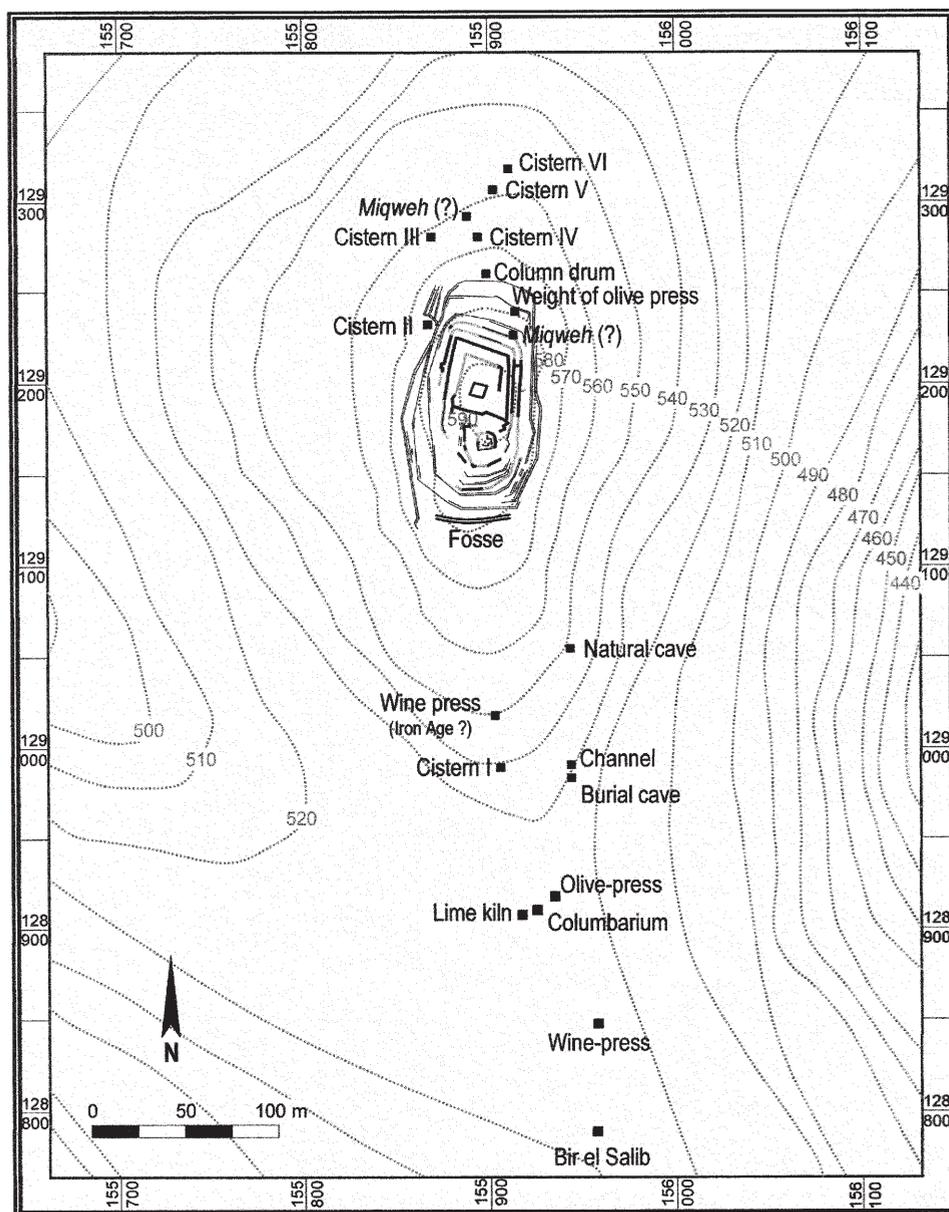


Fig. 4. Plan of fortress

the centre of the lower 'flank'. Similar columns made of drums are common in monumental architecture from the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods (e.g., Foerster 1995: 80–99). Rock-cut and plastered water cisterns were detected in this area as well.



Fig. 5. Ancient wall, relatively well preserved, in western part of the site

A Ritual Bath (?)

On the eastern slope of the lower site, a rock-cut installation (3.6×3.3 m.) was found (fig. 6), accessed by a corridor (1.1×1.6 m.), partly rock-cut and partly built of ashlars. The installation and the corridor were coated with white hydraulic plaster. Erosion and debris make it impossible to examine the floors of the corridor and the installation. The layout of the plastered installation is very similar to that of a typical ritual immersion bath (*miqweh*), of the kind common in Jewish dwellings in Jerusalem and its Judaeen environs (Reich 1990; Amit 1996).

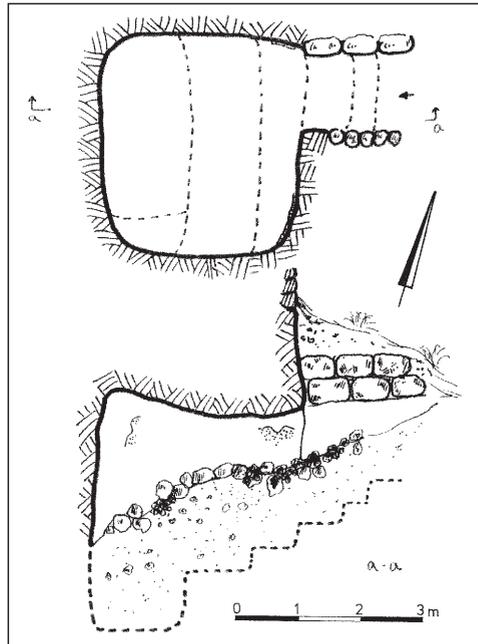


Fig. 6. *Miqweh* (?): plan and section ►

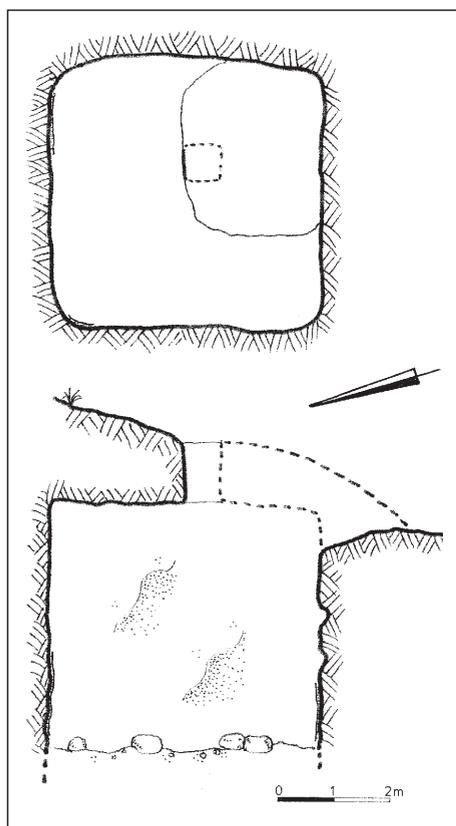


Fig. 7. Cistern I: plan and section

The Cisterns

Six large, rock-cut cisterns have been found in the upper parts of the southern, northern and western slopes (fig. 4). The dense vegetation probably covers the openings of additional cisterns.

Cistern I (fig. 7), in the south, is square, with rounded corners (*c.* 5×5 m.; *c.* 5 m. deep from the ceiling to the debris covering its bottom); its walls are covered with light-coloured hydraulic plaster. The plaster was repaired and a reddish layer with ribbed sherds was added when use of the cistern resumed, apparently in the Byzantine period.

Cistern II (figs. 8–9), in the west, is well preserved, although the entrance shaft cut in its ceiling has collapsed. It is rectangular (*c.* 6×13 m.; 6.2 m. deep, with a maximum storage capacity of 500 cu.m.), and its walls and floor are coated with a single layer of thick, white, smoothed plaster that covers protrusions and flaws in the rock. No signs of repairs or maintenance patches can be seen in the plaster. Horizontal

lines marking the water level in the cistern are visible in the plaster.

Four cisterns (cisterns III–VI) have been found on the northern, lower slope. Cisterns III and IV (fig. 10) are huge, but large parts of their ceilings have collapsed, making it difficult to examine them and to reconstruct their original layout. One entered the cisterns through an opening cut in the side. Water was drawn through shafts cut in the ceiling. Cistern III consists of an oval hall (*c.* 7×10 m., with a rectangular side room, *c.* 3×4 m.). Cistern IV is irregular (maximum dimensions: *c.* 10.5×12 m.). A small, plastered rectangular installation (*c.* 1.7×2.5 m.), initially connected with the cistern, is visible in the upper part of its northern section. This badly preserved installation might have been part of the original entrance to the cistern, a filtering device or perhaps a ritual bath. Cisterns III and IV are connected by a short passage that appears to have been built later. The short length of this tunnel, coupled with the absence of other typical features, makes its identification as part of a hiding complex difficult. The irregular layout of these cisterns might be explained by the bad quality of the local bedrock. The masons would have proceeded according to the shape and condition of the

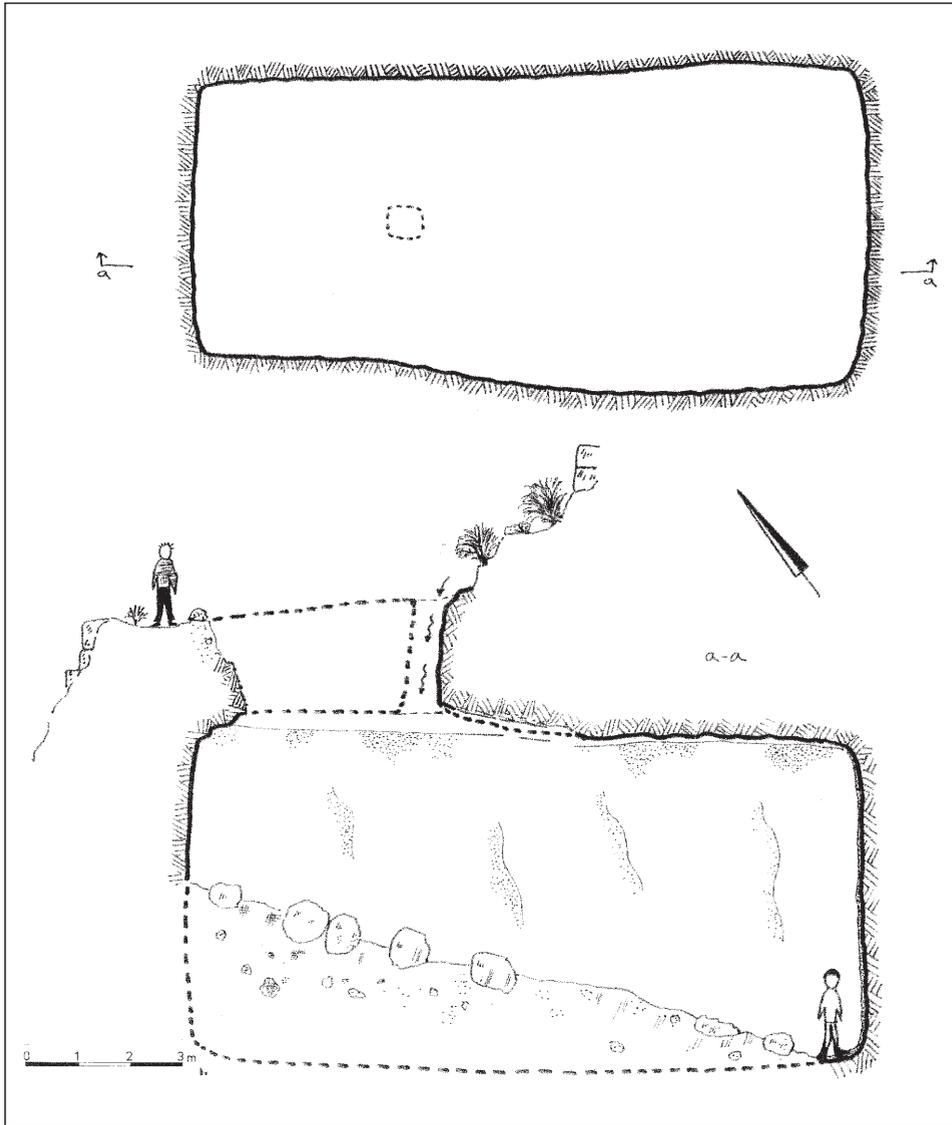


Fig. 8. Cistern II: plan and section

bedrock: when natural fissures appeared they continued to cut into the depth of the rock, until a more stable layer was uncovered. Afterwards the walls were coated with white hydraulic plaster.

Cistern V (figs. 11–12), located in the centre of the northern slope, is smaller than its neighbouring cisterns. The cistern is entered through an oval rock-cut installation with an arched opening cut in its eastern wall. This structure (possibly a *miqweh*) is poorly preserved; its floor is covered with silt and debris, making its



Fig. 9. Cistern II (view to the east)

precise identification difficult. The cistern itself is oval (*c.* 6.6×9 m.). A large protrusion was left in the eastern wall, apparently as a support for the cracked bedrock ceiling. The cistern has a large rectangular opening (*c.* 1×1.7 m.) for drawing water through the ceiling. The walls are covered with white plaster, which follows the shape of the bedrock and was repaired in several places by an additional layer of plaster, containing gravel. The floor is covered by an accumulation of large building stones and soil.

Cistern VI (figs. 13–14), on the northern edge of the slope, was rectangular, with a layout similar to that of cistern II. Since its southern part has entirely collapsed, it is difficult to estimate its original dimensions and capacity. The length of the preserved portion is *c.* 7.8 m.; its width is 3.8–4.8 m.; and its height is over 4.4 m. The original, rectangular entrance to the cistern (1.4 m. wide) was cut in its northern wall. The cistern has a rounded water drawing shaft cut in its ceiling (diameter: *c.* 0.6 m.). High-quality white plaster is preserved on the walls of the cistern, and marks left by the water are visible.

Similar cisterns were surveyed at the palace-fortresses of the Judaeen Desert. Rectangular or trapezoid cisterns were found at Alexandrium (Amit 2002a), Dok, or Dagon (Amit 2002b), Machaerus (Loffreda 1979: 124–125, fig. 4; Corbo 1978: 228) and Masada (Netzer 2002), while at Hyrcania some were rectangular, while others were irregular in shape (Patrich 2002). Cisterns of these types were also discovered at fortified towns and villages in the settled parts of the country (see

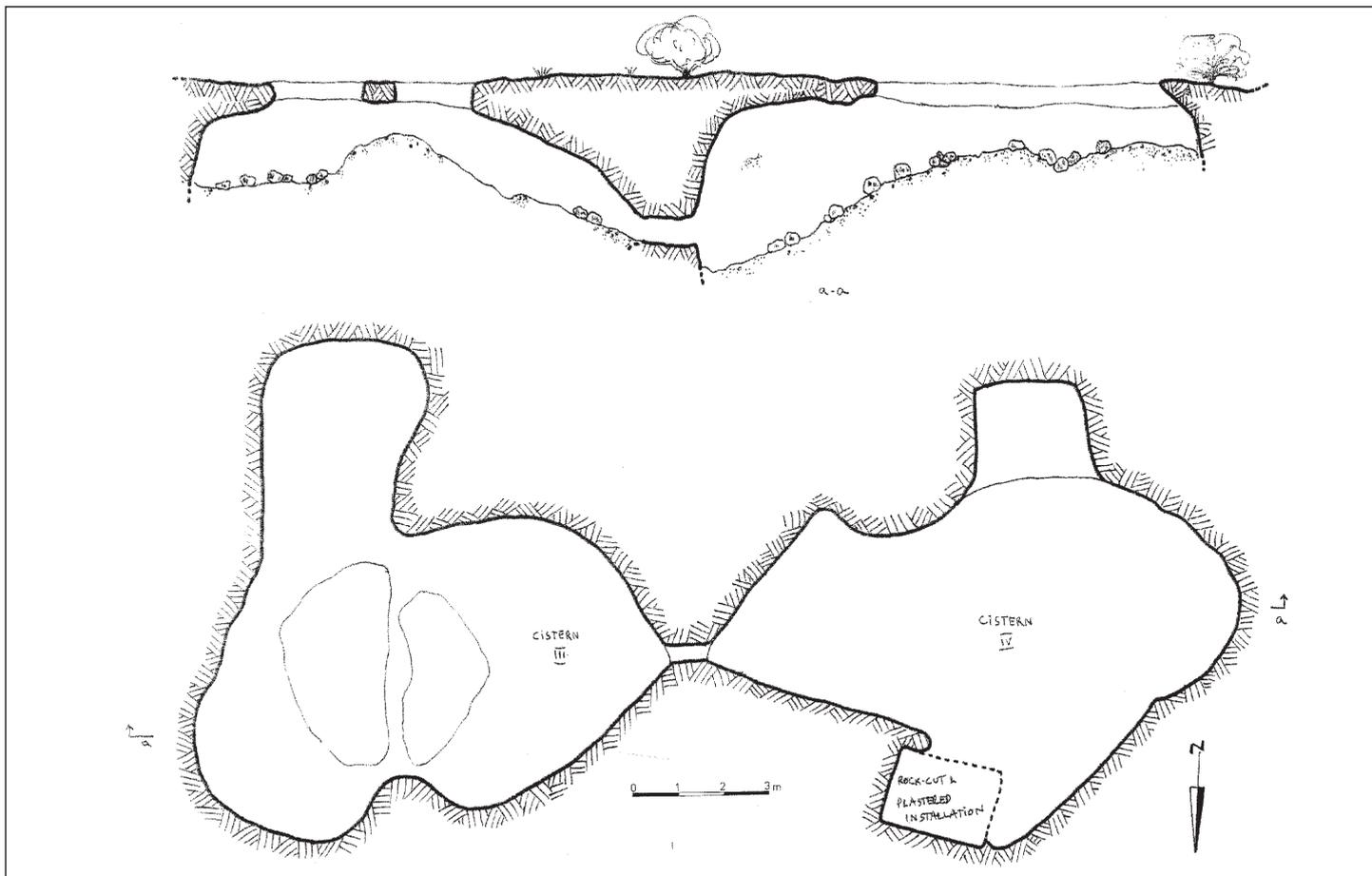


Fig. 10. Cisterns III and IV (plan and section)

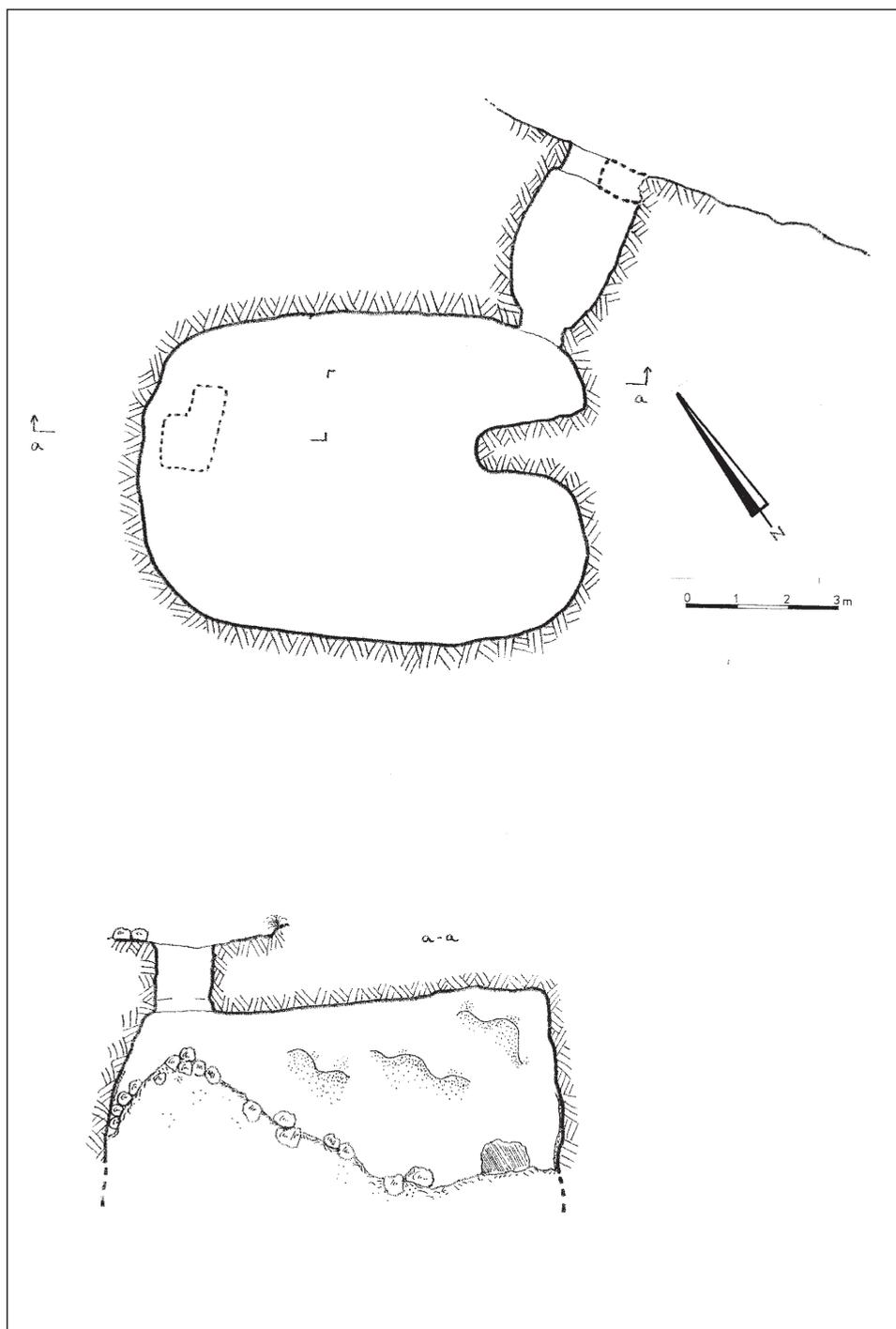


Fig. 11. Cistern V: plan and section

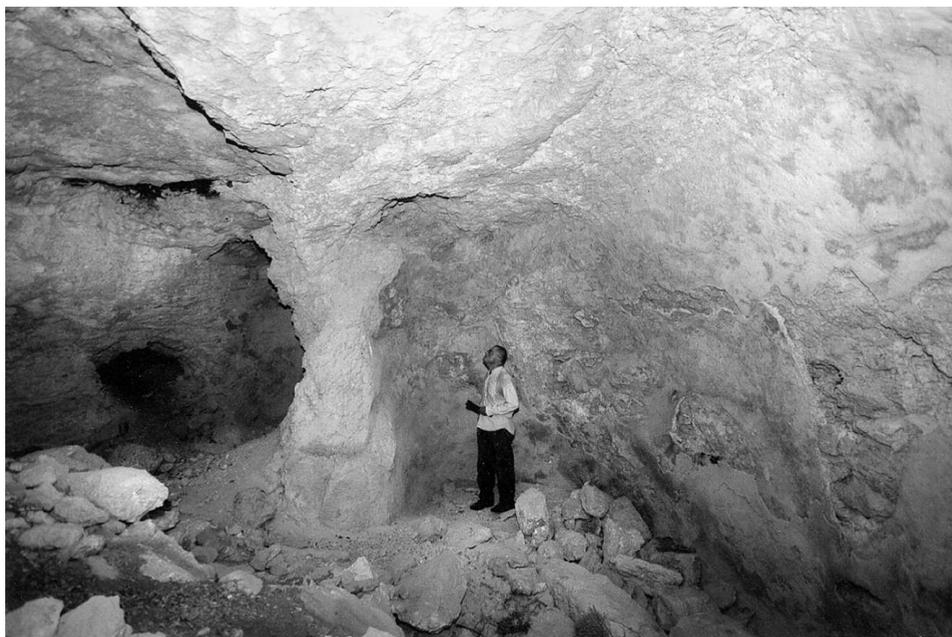


Fig. 12. Photo inside Cistern V (view to the east)

below). It should be pointed out that the white hydraulic plaster that covers the walls of the cisterns at Tura belongs to Porath type I,1, dated to the late Hellenistic period (Porath 2002: 35–36).

Most of the pottery collected on the surface was dated to the Hellenistic period (c. 45%) and the Early Roman period (c. 35%). Some pottery was dated to the Iron Age III (c. 12%) and the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods (c. 8%).

Additional Findings in the Surrounding Area

In the saddle south-west of the fortress, the ruins of a structure with a wine press, remains of an olive press, a cistern and rock-cut troughs were surveyed (a cross was marked nearby on the bedrock, giving the cistern the Arabic name of *Bir el-Salib* ‘The Reservoir of the Cross’; fig. 4). The stone weights of the olive press were incorporated in the walls of a later structure. On the south-western slope of the site a rock-cut columbarium was found (fig. 15), as well as a lime kiln, a cistern and a rock-cut wine press. The building stones at the site on the hill summit come from quarries on the northern slope. On the south-eastern slope of the site we examined a burial cave (fig. 16), which consists of a courtyard and a burial chamber. The chamber is entered through a rectangular opening located in the vertical, western wall of the courtyard. The opening was surrounded by a sunken frame on both sides and on top, where the square blocking stone — not found — would have fit. The burial chamber has six *kokhim* (burial niches) carved in its

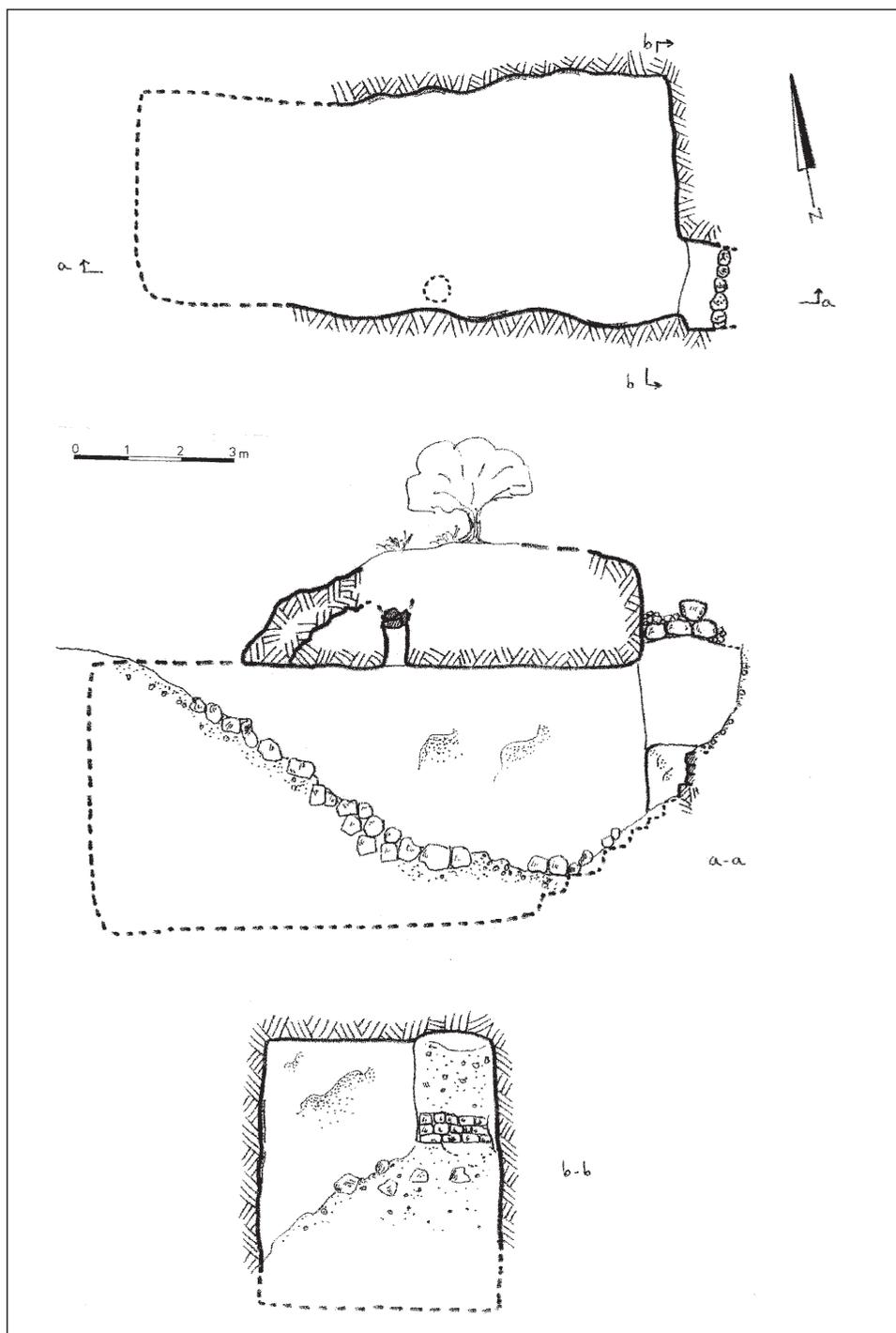


Fig. 13. Cistern VI: plan and section



Fig. 14. Photo inside Cistern VI (view to the west)

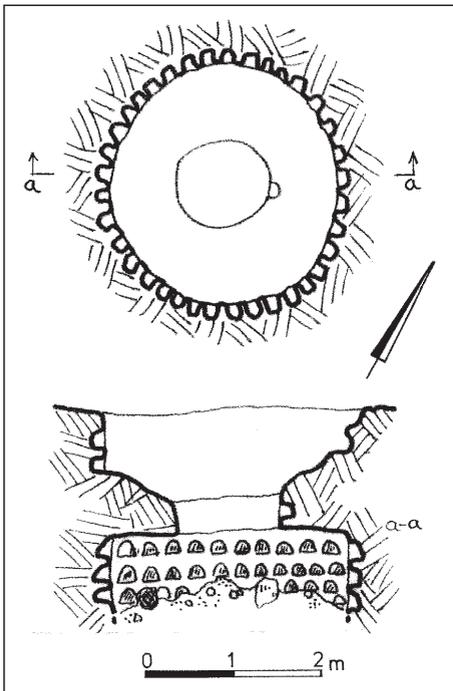


Fig. 15. Columbarium: plan and section

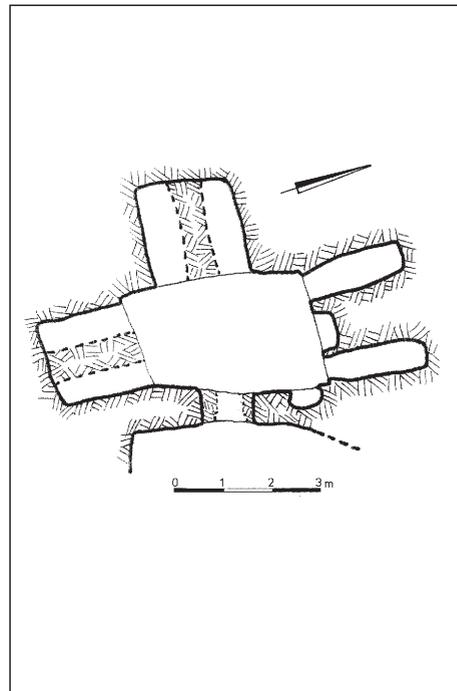


Fig. 16. Burial cave: plan and section

walls. The cave was opened in the past and was therefore empty, but its architectural layout is typical of Second Temple period family burial caves common in the cemeteries of Jerusalem and elsewhere in Judaea (Kloner and Zissu 2003).

The data from the surveys indicate that the main period of existence of the site was Hellenistic, when a fortress and other remains were built on the remains of a late Iron Age site: the buildings on the hilltop, the fortifications, the fosse, and the hewing and plastering of the water installations. The site was also inhabited during the Early Roman period, most probably as a rural settlement which made use of the former fortifications. The inhabitants of this settlement cultivated the nearby slopes and prepared the various agricultural facilities: wine and olive presses and the columbarium. The residents buried their dead in the family burial cave, according to the prevalent custom. We assume that this settlement came to an end in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Some agricultural activities resumed in the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods on a rather modest scale.

A NEW HISTORICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL IDENTIFICATION PROPOSAL: TUR SHIMON AT ḤORVAT TURA

On the PEF map, the place is called Khurbet Sammunieh (fig. 3; Conder and Kitchener 1883: 48, 124; PEF map, sheet XVII); on the British Mandate Survey of Palestine 1:20000 Map (Sheet Deir esh-Sheikh, 15-12) the site is named Khirbet et-Tantura and Khirbet Sammuniya; the name of the section of Naḥal Soreq beneath the site is Wadi Ismʿain.

It seems that these names preserve the ancient name of the place. The preservation of ancient place names among the local inhabitants and their transmission in the Arabic toponymy is a well-known phenomenon, which is at the base of historical-geographical research (Aharoni 1967: 106–112; Rainey and Notley 2006: 14–20). The names Sammunieh, Sammuniya and Ismʿain share the Hebrew root *SMN* or *SMʿN*. The closest Hebrew name that contains these letters is Simon (שמעון), a very common Jewish name during the Second Temple period. It was the name of one of the five sons of Mattathias, the initiator of the Bar Kokhba Revolt and the founder of the Hasmonaean dynasty. T. Ilan recorded 257 occurrences of this name in historical sources, documents, coins and inscriptions (Ilan 2002: 6–7, 218–235, 449).

The other Arabic name for the site, Khirbet et-Tantura, appears on British Mandate maps. It is probably a nickname for the place, due to its conical shape, reminiscent of a hat tapering to a point (*tantura* in Arabic). We cannot discount the possibility that it preserves the Aramaic name *tur/tura*, which means ‘mountain’ (Sokoloff 2002a: 222; 2002b: 498). The site’s modern Hebrew name, Ḥorvat Tura, is the Hebraicised form of the Arabic name Tantura. In my view, the fact that these two names (Tantura and Sammunieh) are preserved together in this unique

site suggests that the site be identified with Tur Shimon, a place known from the ancient sources (see below).

As above-mentioned, the archaeological survey of the site showed that its main feature is the fortress, apparently built during the Hellenistic period. I would tentatively suggest that the fortress was erected by Shimon, son of Mattathias (142–135/4 BCE), and was named after him. Shimon, ‘great high priest, general and leader of the Jews’ (1 Macc. XIII, 42), was one of the most important leaders of the Maccabean Revolt (Schürer 1973: 189–199; Rainey and Notley 2006: 321–328), who fortified Jerusalem and expanded the area under Jewish control westwards, opening it to the Mediterranean. He captured the coastal city of Jaffa, seized Gezer, expelled its Gentile inhabitants and garrisoned it with Jewish soldiers. Shimon finally conquered and destroyed the last Seleucid stronghold in Judaea — the Acra of Jerusalem (1 Macc. XIII, 35–51). He also strategically fortified important places in Judaea, such as Beth Zur (Sellers 1933; Sellers *et al.* 1968) and Hadid: ‘Shimon also rebuilt and fortified Adida [Hadid] in the Shephelah, erecting gates and bars’ (1 Macc. XII, 38). Remains of a fortified settlement were found near Hadid, and their excavator suggested identifying it with Shimon’s fortifications (Dahari 1999: 246–248).

Shimon was assassinated by his son-in-law Ptolemy in 135/4 BCE during a banquet at the Dok fortress, above Jericho — another place fortified by Shimon (1 Macc. XVI, 11–15; *Ant.* XIII, 228).

From the sources, we can infer that there were many other fortresses and strongholds in Judaea, strengthened and secured by Shimon (*Ant.* XIII, 180; XIII, 183), τὰ ὄχυράματα τῆς Ἰουδαίας, in the words of the author of 1 Macc. XIII, 33. Unfortunately, only the desert fortresses were often mentioned by name, while fortresses located elsewhere remained ‘anonymous’.² For example, in 69 BCE, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus demanded control of the country from their mother, Queen Alexandra. She entrusted them with some ‘anonymous’ fortresses, while retaining the fortresses of Alexandrium, Hyrcania and Machaerus (*Ant.* XIII, 417). The fortress at Ḥorvat Tura is apparently one of these ‘anonymous’ fortresses, presumably built by Shimon and named after himself. Alternatively, the fortress under discussion may have been built by his son, John Hyrcanus I, in memory of Shimon.

The practice of naming monumental fortresses or edifices after rulers, their family members, or their friends and allies is well known from the Hellenistic and Roman world, as well as from the Land of Israel. Most of the desert fortresses were named for members of the Hasmonaean family (e.g., Alexandrium and Hyrcania) or the Herodian family (Herodium, Cypros, and the towers of Phasael and Mariamne in Jerusalem or the Drusion at Caesarea).

2 For a list of references to the fortresses, see Guri-Rimon 1996: 13–16.

Tur Shimon in the Rabbinic Sources

Tur Shimon is mentioned in the accounts of the destruction of Judaea in the Palestinian Talmud (PT *Taʿanit* 4, 5, 69a): ‘Tur Shimon produced three hundred *garab* [a unit of measure] of *marquēi lequtot* [food containers?]³ every Friday. Why was it destroyed? Some say because of harlotry, and some say that they played ball’. A similar tradition is reported in the Midrash Lamentations Rabbah (II, 2:4). ‘Mount Simeon [*Tur Shimon*] used to distribute three hundred *garab* [of thin cakes among the poor every Friday]. Why were these places destroyed? If you answer that it was on account of the harlots, is it not a fact that there was only one girl there [who was a harlot] and they expelled her? R. Huna said: The reason was that they used to play a ball game on the Sabbath’.

In both sources, Tur Shimon is mentioned as part of a series of traditions concerning the destruction of Judaea during the Jewish revolts against the Romans, but there are no direct hints as to its exact location. The place is listed after Bethar, Kefar Haruba and the Mount of Olives, and before towns located on Har ha-Melekh (the ‘King’s Mountain’)⁴ and in the Darom (Southern Judaea), thus suggesting a Bar Kokhba Revolt context. The descriptions of the economic abundance in these places before their destruction appear to be exaggerated, but their names are real and they held sway in the ancient geography of the Land of Judaea.

The issue of the ball games on the Sabbath also seems to be related to life in a Jewish locality during the Second Revolt against Rome. A. Cohen (1939: 162, n. 6) believed that the comment on this tradition was made for didactic purposes, attributing the destruction of the place to the ball games because the inhabitants apparently desecrated the Sabbath by indulging in sport.⁵

3 S. Yeivin (1946: 155–156; n. 51 *ad loc.*) explained ‘three hundred *garab* of *marquēi lequtot*’ as meaning three hundred containers for the bread consumed by the throngs of people who set out from there to harvest in the fields. I. Press explained it as flat tin containers or baskets used by harvesters (1948: 376). Y. Shahar (2000: 292–293) translated the puzzling Aramaic word *kait[i]a* as fig harvesters.

4 Har ha-Melekh is used to describe some parts of Judaea and Samaria (cf. *m. Sheviʿit* 9:2; *t. Sheviʿit* 6:10); its location was never conclusively determined. An examination of the Rabbinic sources shows that Har ha-Melekh is a term that may originally have applied to one place or region, but in the course of time was extended to a very large area, chiefly the western part of the Judaeian hills, with an eastern extension stretching to the Judaeian Desert. All traditions describe it as a densely populated region until the second century CE; it appears that the region, or parts of it, later became inaccessible to Jews (Applebaum 1976: 12–13). Recently, Shahar (2000) has suggested that Har ha-Melekh relates to the low hills of western Samaria, to an area extending approximately between the Sharon and Coastal Plain in the west and the central ridge of Samaria in the east.

5 In Jewish law, it is prohibited to carry objects beyond four cubits on the Sabbath, when those objects had been laid in the public domain.

Y. Schwartz has shown that the author of the tradition recorded in the Palestinian Talmud and Eikhah Rabbah considered the ball games wrong because of their similarity to the practices of the enemies — the Romans — during the revolt (Schwartz 1997: 34–37).

We therefore suggest that the former Hasmonaean fortress of Tur Shimon was converted during the Late Second Temple period (until the Bar Kokhba Revolt) into a settlement, one of many places inhabited by Jews. Its residents cultivated the surrounding land and processed the produce in the nearby man-made presses. They preserved the former name of the place, which was later mentioned in the destruction accounts transmitted by the Talmudic sources.

LOCATING TUR SHIMON: THE MODERN HISTORICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

There is little doubt that the place should be identified with a site somewhere in Judaea. A. Cohen, the translator and editor of the Soncino edition of Lamentations Rabbah, wrote that the place cannot be presently identified, but that its name implies that it was once a stronghold in Judea. (Cohen 1939: 162, n. 4).

Other scholars have placed Tur Shimon near Bethar, following S. Buber, the first to attempt its identification (Buber 1899: 106, n. 104). In his book *Eretz Yehuda*, S. Klein suggested seeking Tur Shimon in the vicinity of the final events of the Bar Kokhba Revolt; he even suggested that it was a nickname for Bethar itself, in which case the Shimon in question would be the leader of the revolt (Klein 1939: 245). This opinion was shared by I. Press (1948: 376) and P. Schäfer (1981: 182–183). Another candidate near Bethar was suggested: Bar Kokhba's headquarters at Herodium (Yankelevitch 1981: 23–28). It is noteworthy that Khirbet Tura is just 7.5 km. west of Bethar.

The phonetic similarity between the place names Tur Shimon and Turmus Ayya (a village in Samaria) has led some scholars to suggest the latter as the location of Tur Shimon (Yeivin 1946: 92–94; Avi-Yonah 1976: 102; 1977: 113); see also the collection of references in Reeg 1989: 278). There are several reasons for rejecting the identification of Turmus Ayya with Tur Shimon:

1. The ancient name of Turmus Ayya was most likely Ayya, while the name Turmus is an Arabic corruption of the Latin *thermae* — a public hot bath. Y. Elitzur (1985), discussing the evolution of the Arabic name, notes that Ayya was the ancient name of the site and [that] the bath built there — apparently during Roman-Byzantine times — gave the site its latter name.⁶

⁶ Elitzur discusses the issue of Turmus Ayya and the distortion found in the research literature regarding the 'invention' of Rabbi Jacob of Turmasia (1985: 131–134). Some scholars have suggested that this location be identified as Turbasaim, a village mentioned in Crusader period sources (Röhrich 1887: 206).

2. Turmus Ayya is situated on a low hill in the Shiloh Valley (Yeivin, aware that the identification was inconsistent with the topography, suggested that the fortress might be on one of the peaks in the vicinity, but without specifying where).
3. A survey by I. Finkelstein and his team in the village of Turmus Ayya uncovered a few potsherds from various periods — but none from the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods (Finkelstein *et al.* 1997: 651–652).
4. The outstanding ‘Roman’ find in the area is an ornate sarcophagus adorned with a depiction of Bacchus and personifications of the seasons (Savignac 1913: 106–111). This sarcophagus was mentioned by the scholars who suggested that Tur Shimon was Turmus Ayya as *prima facie* evidence that there was a settlement there in the Roman period. Clearly, the pagan sarcophagus from the Late Roman period is totally unrelated to a Jewish fortress or locality from the Second Temple period and the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Scholars have also come up with other suggestions — not sufficiently well founded — for the location of Tur Shimon: on Mt. Carmel (Neubauer 1868: 267) and at Tel Ḥadid, east of Lod (Wolman 1939: 92–93).

ḤORVAT TURA IN CONTEXT

The strategic topographical location, the nature of the fortifications and the buildings, and the water cisterns indicate that there was a royal fortress at the site. Typologically, this fortress resembles the remote Judaeian Desert fortresses of the Second Temple period and even the fortresses located in the settled parts of the country.

Many scholars have studied the Judaeian Desert fortresses (e.g., Tsafirir 1982). As shown by Tsafirir, there is a great typological similarity between Ḥorvat Tura and the group of fortresses as a whole (Tsafirir 1982: 125).

Several years ago, O. Guri-Rimon addressed the question of the purpose of the Hasmonaean- and Herodian-period desert fortresses, suggesting that they were primarily used as treasuries and administrative centres (Guri-Rimon 1996). Z. Meshel emphasised the function of the fortresses as a solution to the problem of the constant threat — from within and without — to which the Hasmonaean rulers were subject (Meshel 2000: 109–112). The major building efforts of the Hasmonaean rulers in these strongholds should be examined against the background of the general insecurity that characterised the Hellenistic period, and the prevalent warfare in Judaea. The location of fortresses in topographically inaccessible positions was largely determined by the technological developments in the siege warfare and the introduction of artillery (Schatzman 1989; 1991). These developments dictated a skillful use of the topographic conditions in order to keep

the enemy catapults at a safe distance (Milner 1997: 209–215; Pimoguet-Pedarros 2000: 107–134).

The reservoirs at Ḥorvat Tura were planned to collect and contain large amounts of water, needed especially during a prolonged siege. In layout and location, the reservoirs are reminiscent of the ones in the Judaeen Desert palace-fortresses (Garbrecht and Peleg 1994: 161–170); see also the descriptions of water supply system at specific sites: Alexandrium (Amit 2002a), Dok (Dagon; Amit 2002b), Machaerus (Loffreda 1979: 124–125, fig. 4; Corbo 1978: 228), Masada (Netzer 2002) and Hyrcania (Patrich 2002). The main difference between the system at Ḥorvat Tura and the above-mentioned sites lies in the absence of a water collection system (channels or aqueducts), planned to bring water (runoff or even spring water) from a distance. Because this site is located in a rainy region (with annual rainfall of 520mm.), it may be suggested that storage of the runoff water caught from the area of the fortress and collected in the reservoirs in the winter might have been sufficient; when needed, this could be supplemented with water carried by beasts of burden from nearby springs.

In recent years, Hasmonaeen and Herodian fortresses located within the settled country have been investigated. These sites have features similar to those of the desert fortresses, such as an isolated strategic location, fortifications, and large water reservoirs. The prominent sites in this group are Ḥorvat Kefira in the Land of Benjamin (Amit and Eshel 2002), Kh. ‘Urmeh⁷ in eastern Ephraim (Eshel and Erlich 2002), Khirbet al-Hammam (probably ancient Nabata) in Samaria (Zertal 1995; 2002), and Khirbet Jamjum in the Hebron Hills (Amit and Zissu 1999: 114–129).

In their article on the fortress at Khirbet Kefira, H. Eshel and D. Amit addressed the unique nature of the fortresses in the settled parts of the country. It seems that the fortress at Ḥorvat Tura is one of those in the settled country, the study of which is still in its inception.

SUMMARY

The topographical, architectural and archaeological data collected during the survey of the site show that the main remains belong to a Hellenistic fortress. The remains include massive walls and buildings, water cisterns and a fosse. A

⁷ It is generally believed that the Arabic name comes from Arumah, the residence of Abimelech the son of Gideon (Judges 9:41). Alternatively, the name Urma may preserve the Greek ἐρῦμα ('fortress'). Josephus uses this term in reference to Herodium, Machaerus, Masada and Cypros (see table in Guri-Rimon 1996: 16). Interestingly, the members of the British Survey (Conder and Kitchener 1883: 48–52) referred to Khirbet er-Ras, near Ḥorvat Tura, as Khirbet 'Erma.

comparison of these features shows a significant similarity to the royal (Hasmonaean and Herodian) fortresses located in the Judaeian Desert (but also in the settled parts of Judaea).

We suggested that its foundation should probably be attributed to the Hasmonaean leader Shimon the son of Mattathias (142–135/4 BCE), who also gave the fortress its name: Tur Shimon, or ‘the Mountain of Shimon’.

By the late Second Temple period, the former royal fortress was apparently converted into a fortified agricultural settlement, inhabited by Jews, and which existed until the bitter end of the region with the fall of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. This Jewish locality was mentioned as Tur Shimon in the destruction accounts of the Jerusalem Talmud and in the Midrash Lamentations Rabbah. The ancient name was also preserved by the later Arabic names given for that place.

The Jewish settlement apparently made use of the former fortifications for its own protection. Its inhabitants cultivated agricultural products (olives and grapes) from the nearby area, as attested by vestiges of man-made installations, such as wine and olive presses.

Interestingly, this settlement pattern — a settlement built on top of an early fortified site — was already identified in the archaeological records from the late Second Temple period in Judaea. It was identified at Tel Shiloh, Tel ‘Azeqa, Tel Gezer, Bethar(?), Tel ‘Ira and Tel Aroer. A re-examination of their excavation reports indicates that the ancient ruins were refortified or their old fortifications restored in the late Second Temple period and during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. These types of settlements were apparently mentioned in the ancient sources. The Mishnah makes reference to walled cities at the time of Joshua the son of Nun (*m. Arakhin* 9:3; *m. Kelim* 1:7) and distinguishes between a city ‘whose roofs form its wall’ and cities that were walled in the time of Joshua (*m. Arakhin* 9:6). It seems that these sites were considered ‘walled cities’ by their inhabitants, long after their old structures had been erased, for they attributed the earlier fortifications they had restored to the time of Joshua (Zissu 2006).

We cannot discount the possibility that these fortified villages are the 50 Jewish ‘fortresses’ mentioned by Roman Historian Cassius Dio in his description of the results of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (*Historia Romana*, LXIX, 12–14). Whether the settlement at Ḥorvat Tura was one of the 50 fortresses or one of the 985 villages mentioned in this account, we presume that this locality — which should be identified with Tur Shimon of the Talmudic sources — was utterly destroyed during these events.

These preliminary conclusions are based on an archaeological survey. An archaeological excavation will surely provide more accurate data regarding the history of this fascinating site.

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