

RESEARCH ARTICLE

SURVEY AND EXCAVATION RESULTS FROM TALL SUFAN AND ITS SURROUNDING (WESTERN NABLUS, PALESTINE)

Loay Abu Alsaud

Department of Tourism and Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities, An-Najah National University
(loayabualsaud@najah.edu)

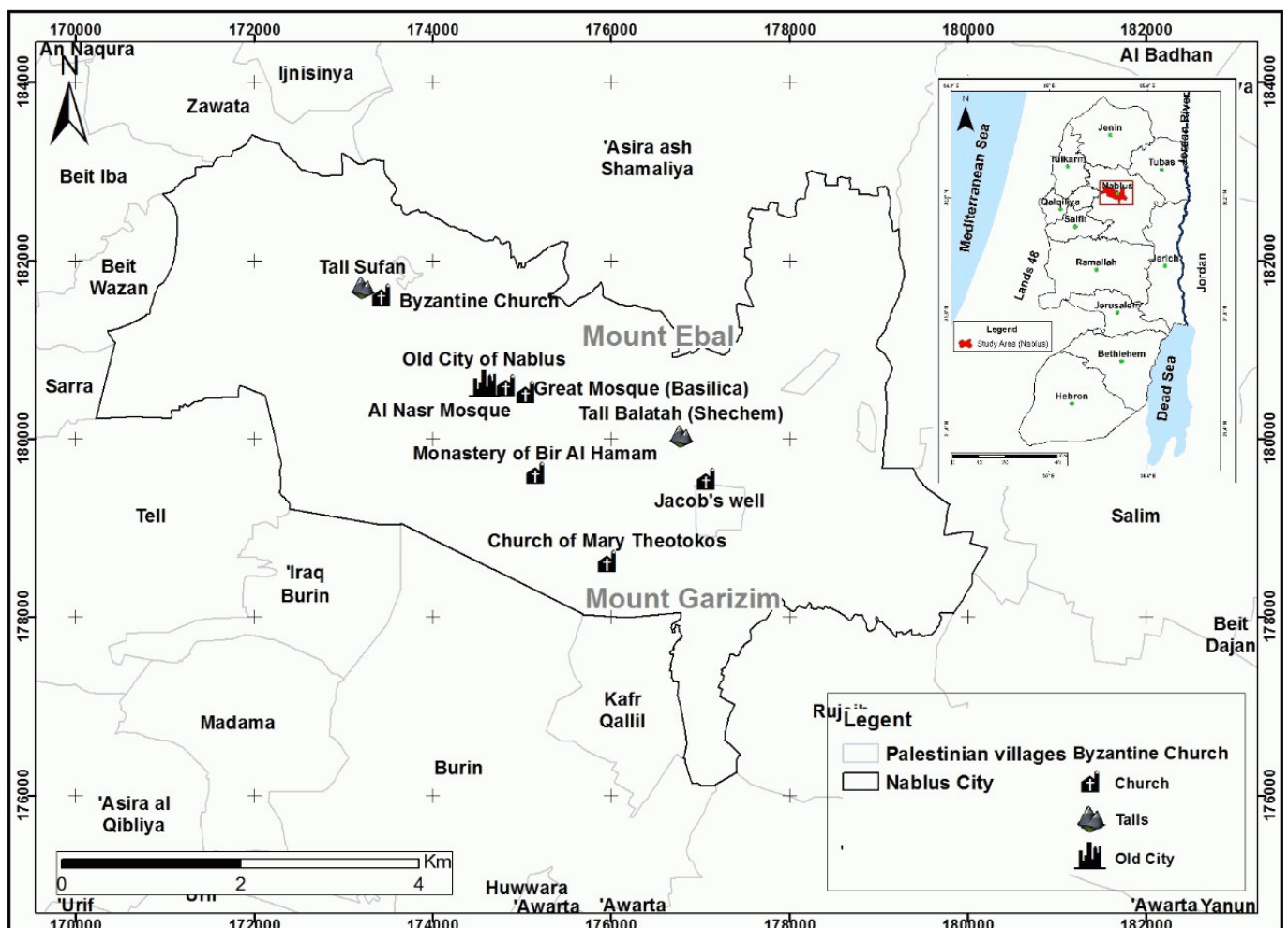


Figure 1. Map of the Nablus area (drawing by M. Burqan).

ABSTRACT. Tall Sufan, a 1.5-hectare hill in an area with a number of archaeological sites, is located 1.5 km west of the city of Nablus. This site contains remains from Bronze (3600–1200 BC) and Iron Age II (918–539 BC), Roman (63 BC–324 AD), Byzantine (325–638 AD/16H) and Islamic periods (638/16 Hijra–1918). From the Ottoman-Turkish period until modern times it was in agricultural use. However, in recent decades, human activities have destroyed sections of Tall Sufan. The surviving features include a fortification system, a pond, an aqueduct, a watermill and several dry-stone terrace walls, cylindrical weigh oil press, silos, and burial caves. This article describes these structural

Received: January 8, 2019. Modified: January 22, 2019. Accepted: January 23, 2019. Published: January 28, 2019.

Edited & Published by Pascual Izquierdo-Egea. English editing by Emily Lena Jones. Endorsed by Abdel Khaleq Issa & Mohammed Al-Khatib. Arqueol. Iberoam. Open Access Journal. License CC BY 3.0 ES. <http://purl.org/aia/4102>.

elements and compares them to similar sites in Palestine. In addition, it provides information on coins recovered during the 2016–2017 campaigns.

KEYWORDS. *Tall Sufan; silos; olive oil press; tombs; fortifications; coins; shrines.*

RESUMEN. *Tall Sufan se encuentra a 1,5 km al oeste de la ciudad de Nablús y tiene una superficie de 1,5 hectáreas. Es una pequeña colina en un área donde hay una serie de sitios arqueológicos que se remontan a varios periodos. En las últimas décadas, las actividades humanas han destruido algunos sectores de los espacios fortificados. Los restos arqueológicos estudiados incluyen un sistema de fortificación, un estanque, un acueducto, un molino de agua y varias terrazas de piedra seca, una prensa de aceite de peso cilíndrico, silos y varias cuevas de enterramiento. Todas las estructuras localizadas fueron construidas con piedras de diferentes tamaños, unidas con mortero de barro. Los suelos consistían en piedras incrustadas en el material del piso. Después de comparar estos elementos estructurales con otros similares en Palestina y las monedas descubiertas en el sitio, Tall Sufan muestra evidencias de la Edad del Bronce (3600-1200 a. C.), la Edad del Hierro II (918-539 a. C.), la época romana (63 a. C.-324 d. C.), la bizantina (325-638 d. C.) y la islámica (638/16 hégira-1918). Desde el periodo otomano-turco hasta los tiempos modernos tuvo un uso agrícola. Finalmente, se presentan las monedas localizadas durante las campañas 2016-2017.*

PALABRAS CLAVE. *Tall Sufan; silos; prensa de aceite de oliva; tumbas; fortificaciones; monedas; santuarios.*

INTRODUCTION

Tall Sufan is a small hill situated approximately two kilometers west of the city of Nablus, at 484 m above sea level (Figure 1). The very fertile soil combined with the presence of several water sources (*Ayn Al-Jeser* spring; *Ayn Bait Al-Ma* spring; *Wadi Al-Tufah* or apple valley spring; and *Rafidia* spring) situated Tall Sufan ideally for agriculture (Figure 2). In this article, we provide results of our survey of the surrounding area and our initial archaeological exploration at Tall Sufan, including documentation on fortifications, silos for storing grain, tombs, an olive oil press, and coins; we establish a basic chronology for the site; and we assess economic development at the site in the context of the wider Nablus region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goals for our research at Tall Sufan were to undertake a topographic survey of the region, establish the site boundaries, and identify the main features. We hoped to determine the early landscape at the site and create an occupation timeline, to identify locations of surface finds and partially emerged structures as a guide to below ground remains, and to ascertain the most appropriate areas for intensive excavation.

BACKGROUND

The site was listed as Tall Sufan in the topographical map made by British scholars (Fig. 3). While the source of the name of this site is unknown, there are a number of suggested sources. The name ‘Sofer’ appears historically¹ in the Old Testament, referring to the son of Ayub (Job 2: 11, 11: 1, 20: 11, 42: 9). However, local legend attributes the name to a queen who once lived in the area.² In Arabic, ‘sofer’ means whistling of the wind, and may refer to its geographic situation on the western side of the city between the two mountains, Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim (*The Al-Muheet Dictionary* 5430, p. 762). In addition, Sofer is derived from the earlier name, ‘Sufan’, with the word meaning a type of plant. Finally, Nadrasky 1964 believes the name ‘sofer’ is from the colour yellow mentioned in the Old Testament (Nadrasky 1964: 89–90). The local community uses the name Sufan attributed to the owner of the site’s land.³

¹ There is no relation between Sofer and the site, especially that the son of Ayub (Job) did not reside in Nablus and the site.

² Interview with Abu Ahmad Surakji, local site community member.

³ No European, Arab or Islamic historians have ever referred to the site, nor does it appear in ancient Greek or Roman sources. Consequently, we rely on field information and finds from the 2013 summer excavations.

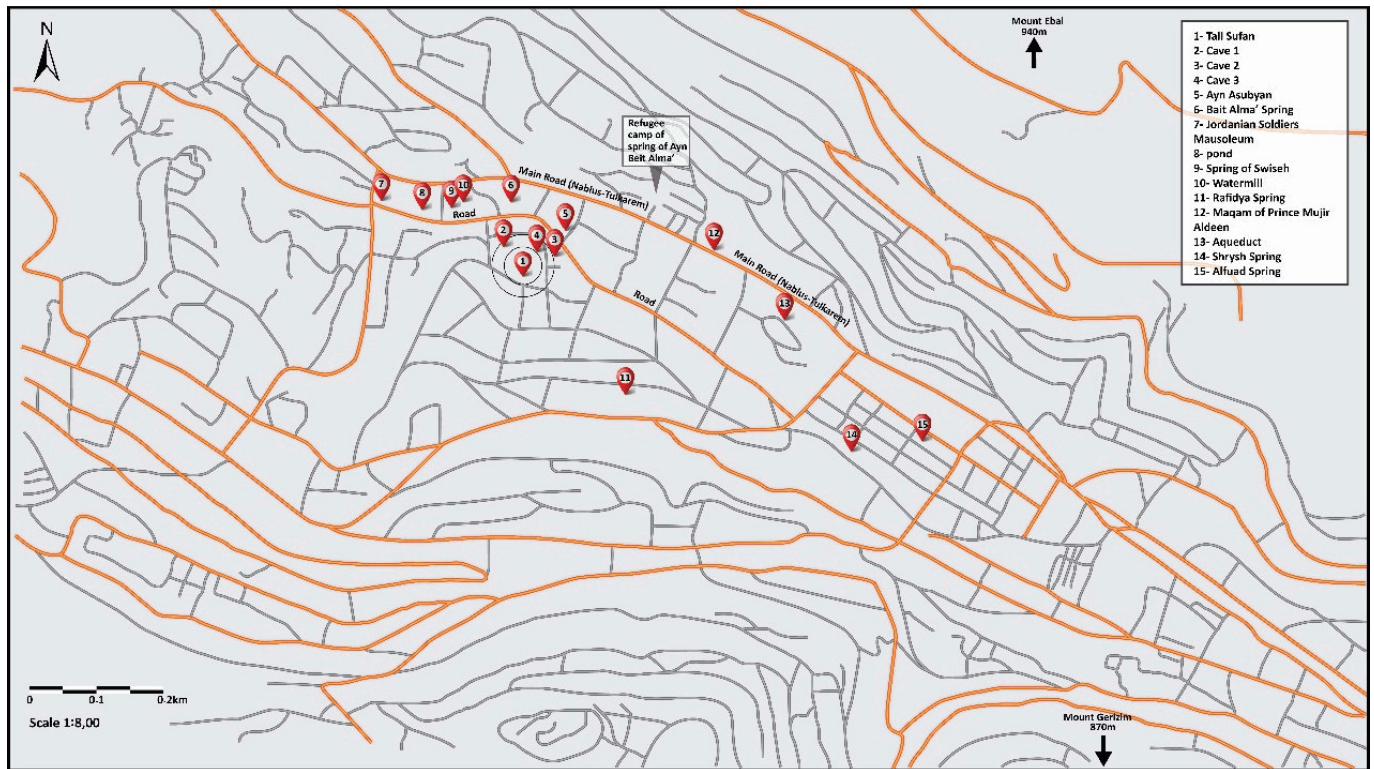


Figure 2. Tall Sufan and the surrounding area.

The area of the hill site is about 15 *donums* (15,000 m²) (Fig. 4). It was first studied by Böhl in 1931 and the site served as a defense for Tell Balaltah (Shehcem) in subsequent years. In 1964 Nadrasky carried out archaeological interventions and surveys were limited in scope: excavations did not take place and no significant reports were published. In Palestine, prior to 2018 the laws relating to protection of archaeological sites were the same as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan laws of 1966. Therefore, they were vastly out of date, especially in regard to penalties. Problems that have arisen as a result of the older laws are looters looking for gold at the site, the fact that the law was not enforced during the chaos of the second *Intifada* (2000–2004), and the lack of control of building expansion. The fact that the owner has rights over the lands also poses a problem (Figures 5 and 6).

Since 1998, excavations at Tall Sufan have been carried out by a team from the Archaeology Department at An-Najah National University. During the initial season, storage jars and a pit dating to the late Bronze Age were recorded (these findings have not been confirmed by subsequent investigations). In the course of three seasons of summer student training excavations, a large hall and foundations of other buildings were found. In 2008, during construction of a building on the lower slope of Tell Sufan, a large number of pottery fragments

and tesserae dating to various periods, including the Bronze Age, Roman Era, and Islamic Period, were found. During salvage excavations, a late Roman-Byzantine wine press was found. It is *in situ* and in need of restoration. Finally, in 2013 the research team unearthed two silos for grain storage. In subsequent seasons, we conducted excavations in the area where the two silos were identified.

At the beginning of the excavation project, a master grid of 5 × 5 m squares was laid out (Fig. 4). The east-west coordinates were designated letters of the alpha-

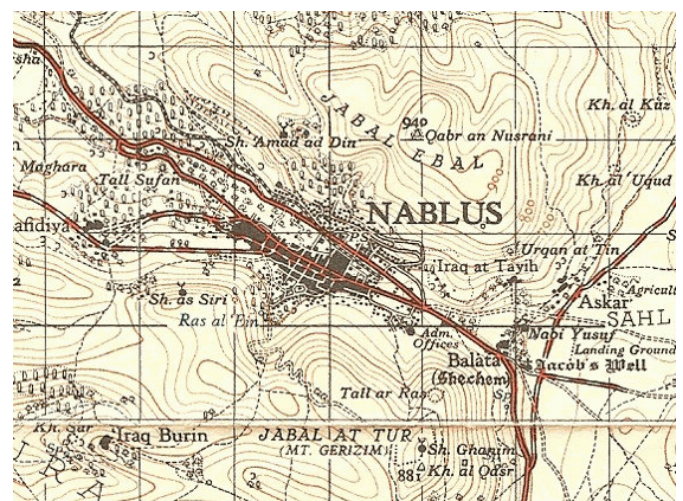


Figure 3. Topographic map of Nablus.

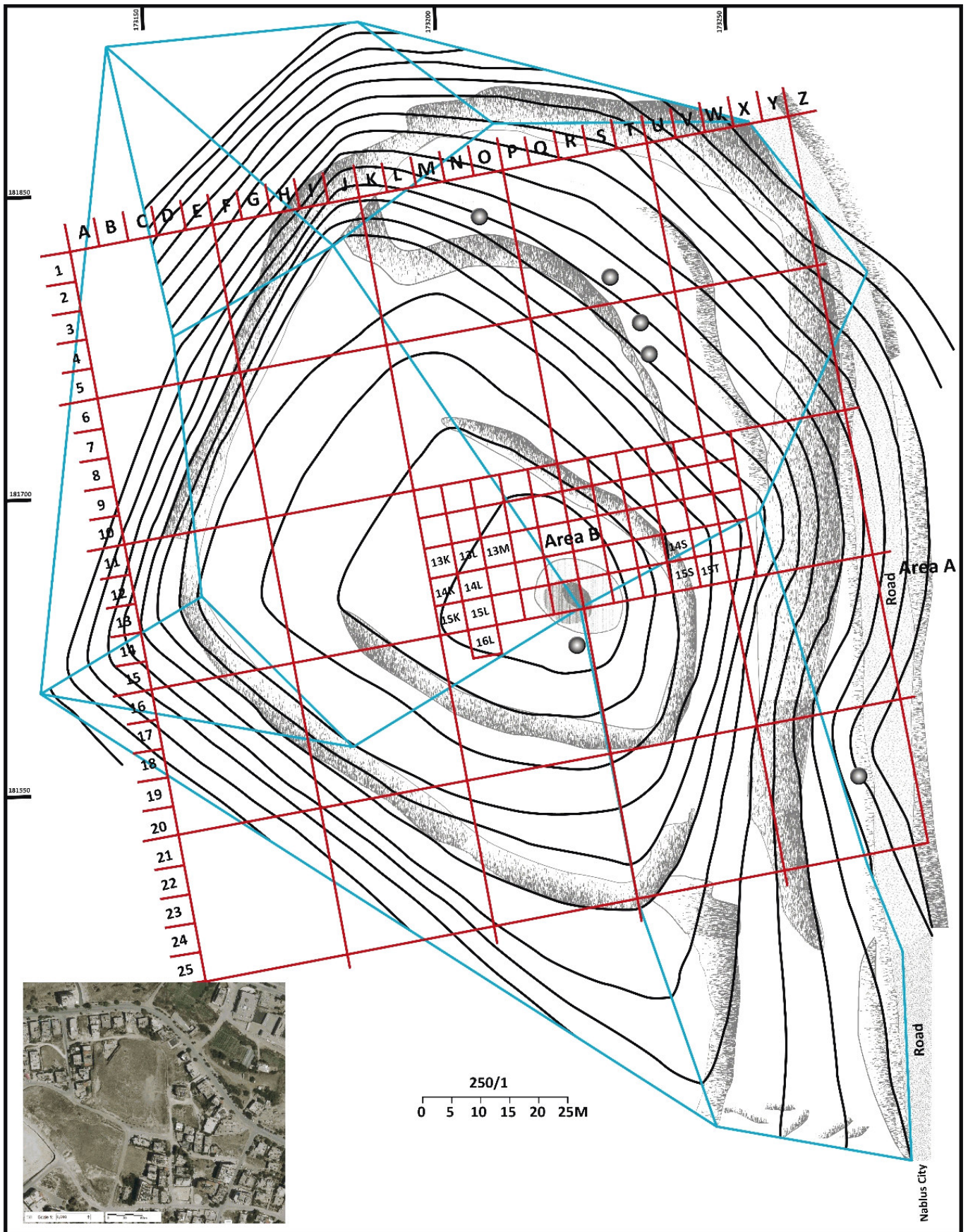


Figure 4. Grid squares at Tall Sufan (drawing by J. Abdel Hadi).



Figure 5. Evidence of attempted looting at the top of the tell (L. Alsaud).

bet, and the north-south coordinates, numerals. Along the inside of the border of each square a 50 cm strip was left in place, giving each square an excavation area of 4×4 m and making one metre wide baulks between the squares. We left the baulks standing during excavation to provide a record of the vertical stratigraphic sequence. Within each square, strata were numbered sequentially. To differentiate levels, a datum point was established 2.6 m west of the north-eastern corner of the Tall Sufan at 484 m above sea level. Field records were kept as written notes, drawings and photographs. Architectural features, such as drums, column bases and fragments, were labelled with an inventory number according to their excavation square, stratum and type. Survey and excavation procedures varied according to the specific circumstances for each excavation unit and will be discussed with information on that unit, but in general we used excavated trenches to establish stratigraphy, and cross sections and plans of these were drawn *in situ*. In addition to daily reports, stratum sheets re-

corded excavation progress and described separate deposits according to their chronology and function. All the information was summarized on stratum lists and much was recorded using Harris matrices. In addition, all recovered material was recorded by both provenience and by material type (pottery, bone, or other material culture).

The stratigraphic information led us to the conclusion that a number of periods are represented, beginning with the Chalcolithic age (4500–3000 BC) through to the Byzantine era (324–638 AD) and that the land was in agricultural use during the Islamic period. The site demonstrates intensive human activity. A large quantity of finds date to the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Roman and Byzantine eras and the early Islamic period. The most significant finds were two silos, seven coins, an olive oil press, two burial caves and a fortifying wall. We will later discuss these in detail. We make brief descriptions of the items we analyzed, although the analysis was limited. We did not conduct



Figure 6. Private home adjoining the archaeological site (L. Alsaud).

any archaeometric or ^{14}C analysis. We intend to conduct these analyses at a later date, with a view to publishing a complete report; at that time we will include a report on the fauna and flora found at the summit and around it as well.

We have divided the preliminary report that follows into two parts. The first part describes the survey of the site and surrounding area, and the second presents the results of the archaeological excavations supervised by the author between 2013 and 2016.

SURVEY OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

Tall Sufan is a microcosm of the larger environment, in which native flora and fauna proliferate due to sparse inhabitation. Visitors to this ancient site may find the natural environment especially interesting because, over many centuries, inhabitants have seen the same flora

and fauna. The species of plants and animals represented are mainly determined by the soil and climate conditions. Four bioclimatic zones can be found in Palestine: the Mediterranean, the Steppe (Irano-Turanian), the Desert (Saharo-Arabian) and the Tropical (Sudanian), with the Tropical overlapping the steppe and desert zones, during heavy rains (Taha & Van der Kooij 2014: 34) (Fig. 10).

Tall Sufan lies at the western end of a narrow valley in the mountains, facing a large plain to the west in the Mediterranean zone; originally, there was fertile red soil in the area. The site also has a certain mineral content that allows specific plant species to grow on the site; this is a result of clays brought to the site for building and the remains of burnt and waste materials. In general, the site, at 484 m above sea level, is not far from the Mediterranean Sea. Mediterranean wild-flowers can be found at the site, but not shrubs or trees. A few self-seeded small almond trees were removed for site protection reasons. However, there are orchards

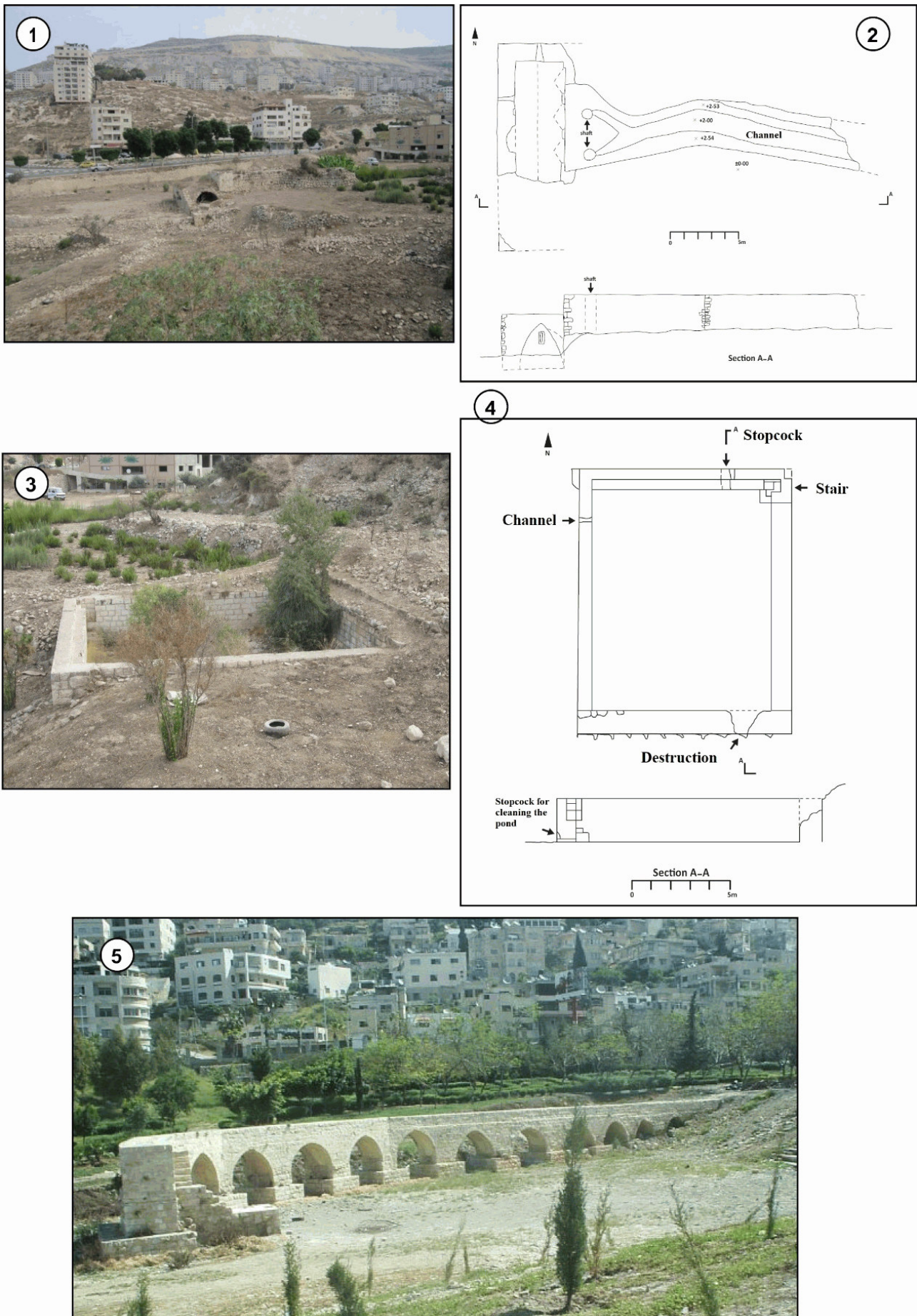


Figure 7. 1–2) Watermill; 3–4) The pond; 5) Southern view of part of the aqueduct (L. Alsaud).



Figure 8. 1) General view of Shrine of Prince Mojir Ad-Din; 2) The Shrine Room; 3) The Tomb.

(mainly olive groves) on the privately-owned parts of the site, as well as fig (*Ficus carica*) and banana trees, the Mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), *Pinus halepensis*, *Saccharum*, *Ephedra*, and some cereal crops (Fig. 11: 1–6). Flowers cover the site from February to April, but the rest of the year, the landscape is brown and yellow with only the three coloured flowering plants visible: the common or viscous globe thistle (*Echinops viscosus macrocarpus*), the spotted golden thistle (*Scolymus maculatus L.*) and the wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) (Fig. 11: 7–9)

In terms of fauna, insects, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals can all be found at the site throughout the year. These include the oriental hornet (*Vespa orientalis*) (Fig. 11: 10), numerous ants (Fig. 11: 11) and several species of bees, and a number of colourful butterflies,

including the Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*; Fig. 11: 12). Other fauna include the black pitted beetle (*Adesmia cancellata*), the camel spider (*Solifugae*), and scorpions (Fig. 11: 13–15). Amphibians (frogs, toads, and salamanders) are rarely observed, but some reptiles appear in daylight, including the Greek tortoise (*Testudo graeca*; Fig. 11: 16), the rough tail rock agama (*Laudakia stellio*; Fig. 11: 17), the common chameleon (*Chamaeleon*; Fig. 11: 18), skinks such as the eyed skink (*Chalcides ocellatus*; Fig. 11: 19), and the snake-eyed lizard (*Ophisops elegans*; Fig. 11: 20). Geckos (Fig. 11: 21) and snakes are nocturnal and only occasionally seen; they include the Turkish gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*) that is also seen inside homes, and non-venomous snakes such as the tree-climbing Ghamchen snake (*Coluber rubriceps*), the large black brown-eyed fire racer



Figure 9. Jordanian Soldiers' Mausoleum.

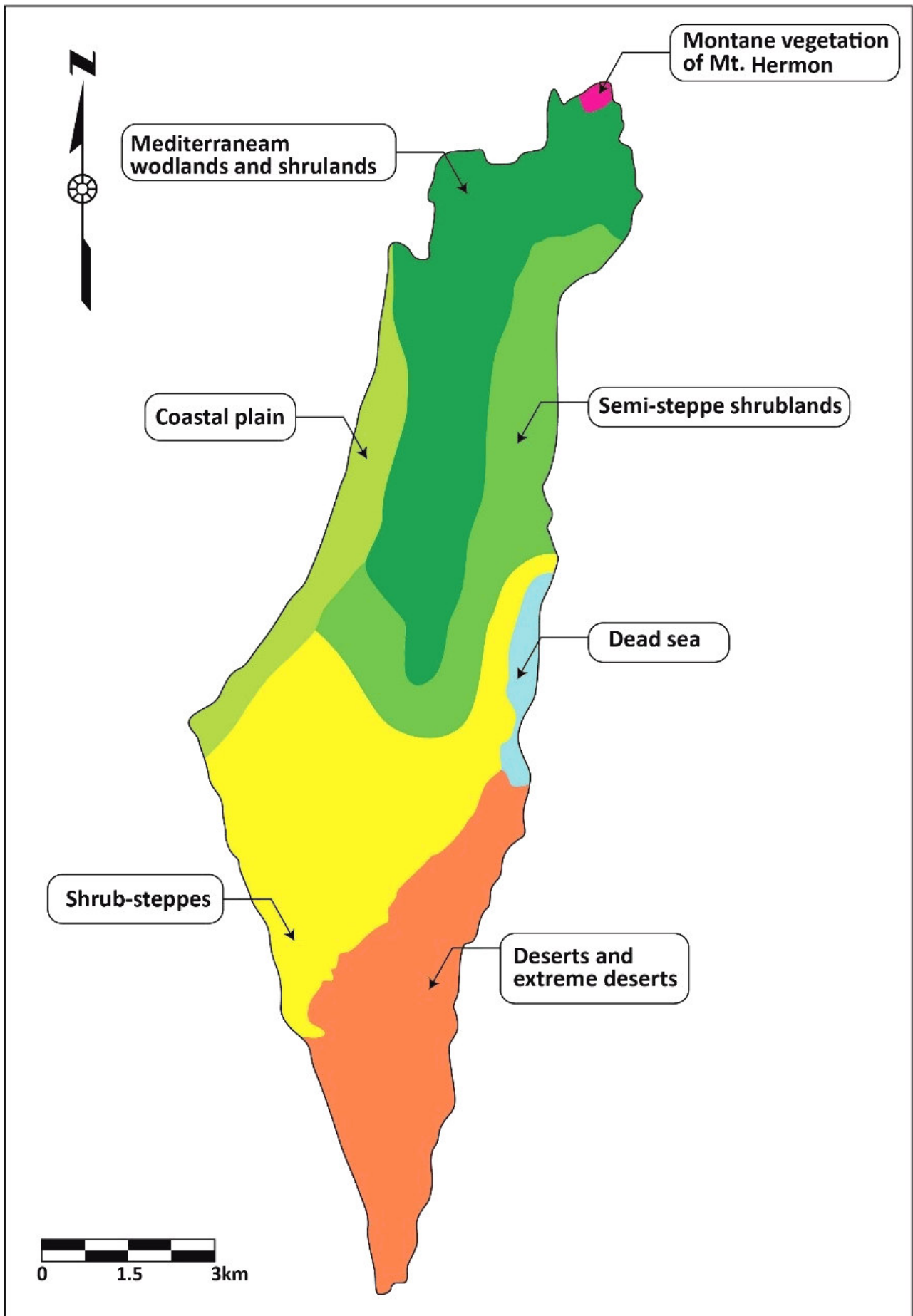


Figure 10. Climatic zones in Palestine region.

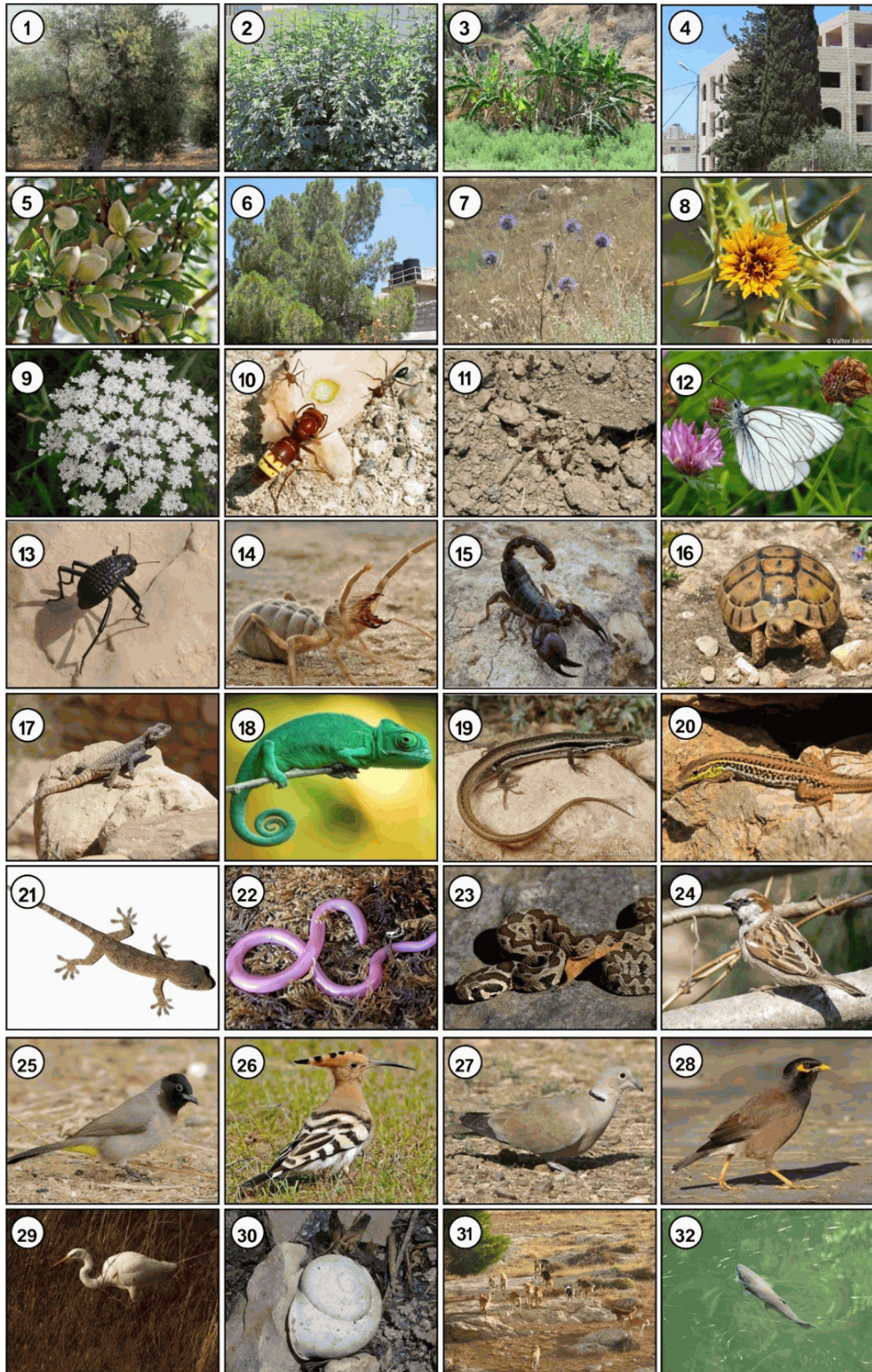


Figure 11. Fauna and flora of Tall Sufan.



Figure 12. Aerial photo of Tall Sufan showing squares excavated in 2013 and 2016 in area B.

(*Coluber jugularis*), and the thin, pink subterranean Eurasian worm-snake (*Typhlops vermicularis*; Fig. 11: 22). The venomous snakes in Palestine are all vipers, except the black-eyed black desert cobra (*Walterinnesia aegyptia*) in the Jordan Valley. Although most vipers live in the steppe and desert zones, the very poisonous Palestinian viper (*Vipera palaestinae*; Fig. 11: 23), patterned with a brown zigzag line on back, is found in the Mediterranean zone, including in villages. Birds, heard more often than seen, include the house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*; Fig. 11: 24), the spectacled bulbul (*Pycnonotus xanthopygos*), which has a yellow under-tail (Fig. 23: 25), the hoopoe (*Upupa epops*; Fig. 11: 26), and the collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*; Fig. 11: 27). The common myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) nests in a building at the western site boundary (Fig 11: 28). Visible flying over the site is the great white egret (*Egretta alba*; Fig. 11: 29), passing over in an E-W direction on its path to and from wetland feeding grounds, solo or in small groups. Snails (Fig. 11: 30) and local dogs (Fig.

11: 31) also inhabit the area and there are small fish at the *Swish* Spring (Fig 11: 32).

In addition to the hill itself, there is one watermill and one water storage pond in the area of our research. Also present are an aqueduct, a shrine of Prince *Mojir Ad-Din Ibraheem Ibn Abi Dikra*, and the Jordanian Soldiers Mausoleum. We discuss these areas in sequence below.

Watermill

The watermill is located outside the Roman wall of the city of Nablus, 300 m northwest of the Tall Sufan site. It measures 26 × 3 m. Associated with the mill is a 15 × 5 m building which was used as a storeroom (Fig. 7: 1–2). This limestone building was constructed using three different techniques, suggesting three construction stages. It was further modified in the 20th century. Although no longer in use, it was used for grinding flour using the water falling from the upper level from

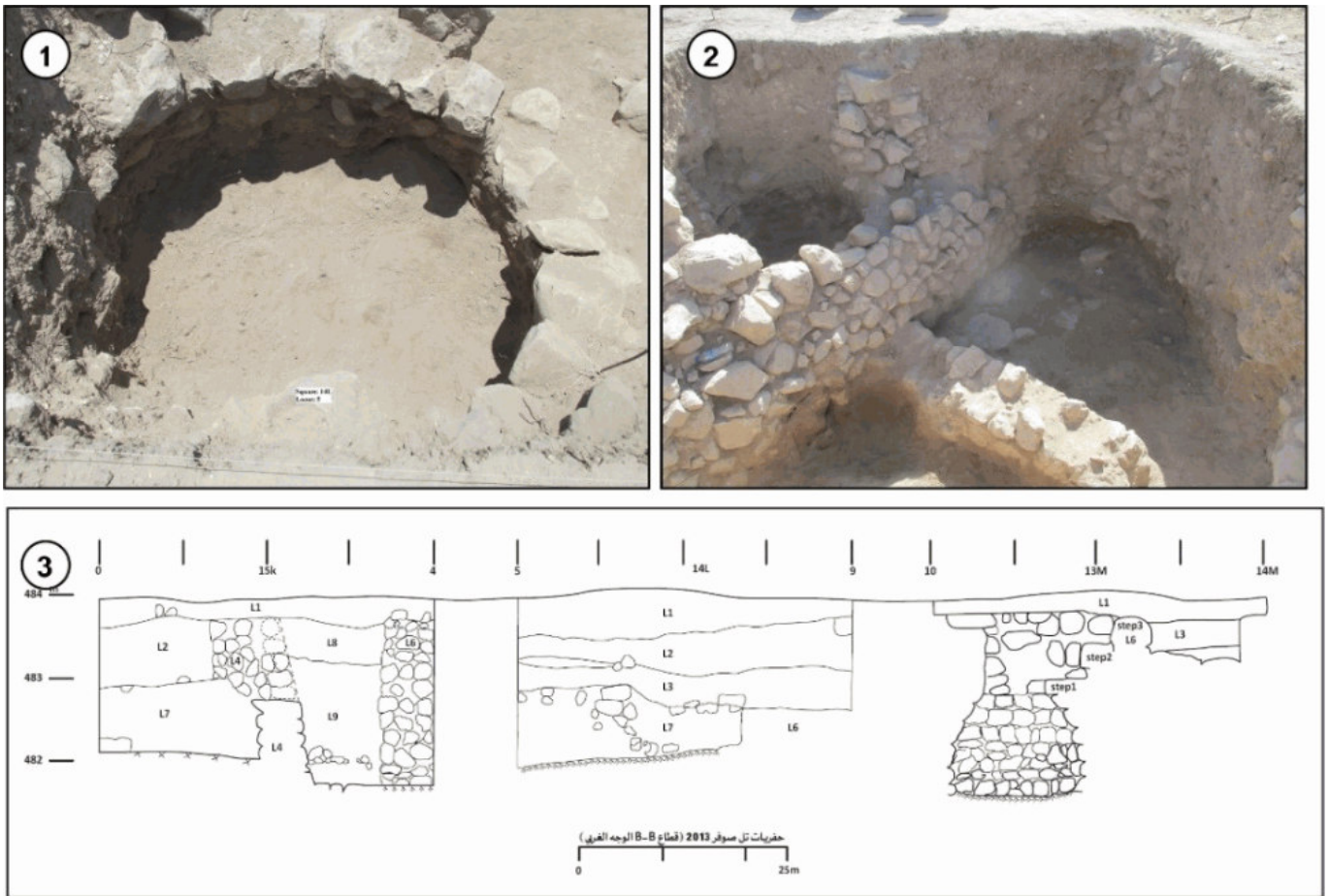


Figure 13. 1–2) Silos 1 and 2 discovered in 2013 by the author; 3) Section A-A (I. Iqtait).

the of *Ein Al-Sibyan* spring from the beginning of the Crusader period (1099–1187) and during the Mameluk (1260–1516) and Ottoman periods (1516–1917).

Water Storage Pond

A water storage pond is located about 20m from the water mill. The pond measures 12 × 8 m and 3 m deep and was lined with fine white plaster to support the storage of water flowing from the watermill. A flight of stairs, of which 8 were preserved, was hewn out of its western wall, enabling descent into the pond. The pond was used during the Ottoman and British rule in the 20th century. It is no longer in use (Fig. 7: 3–4).

Aqueduct

A portion of an aqueduct survives to the west of Nablus, outside the city limits, in the *Yamal Abdel Naser Park*. The surviving section is 66 m in length, 4.30 m high and 2 m wide. In recent years the aqueduct has been reconstructed and restored by the Nablus city council

(Fig 7: 5) (Al-Qadi 2004: 255, 273). We were unable to identify the original construction materials of the aqueduct due to alterations that probably took place in the middle Ages.

Consequently, this presents difficulties in giving an exact date to the original construction. However, a typological study allowed us to broadly date the earliest construction stage back to the Roman era.

Shrine (Maqam) of Prince Mojir Ad-Din

A *maqam* is a tomb for Muslim saints. It is a small, cube-shaped funerary construction, roofed with a dome. The *maqams* in Palestine were considered very important by biblical archaeologists of the 18th and 19th centuries because their names were used to identify the biblical landscape. The traditional form of a *maqam* is a single-celled square building covered with a dome. A doorway leads to an interior which usually has a grave in the centre marked by a rectangular cenotaph covered with cloth. There is sometimes a *mihrab* in the south wall, although in many cases this is absent as it



Figure 14. Three bag-shaped amphorae and a storage jar found *in situ*.



Fig. 15. The cylindrical stone in square 14S.

might cause a confusion between praying towards Mecca and worshipping the saint. The interior is usually lit by a single window although there are often

niches set into the wall to hold candles or oil lamps. From this basic form many variations have developed, although the domed maqam usually remains an essential feature of the complex (Petersen 1996: 99).

The shrine of Prince *Mojir Ad-Din Ibraheem Ibn Abi Dikra* is located on the north side of the road from Nablus to *Tulkarem*, near the *Ayn Beit Al Ma'* (House of the Spring) Refugee Camp (Fig. 8: 1). The shrine measures 5 × 4 m and contains a central dome (Fig. 8: 2). The prince was one of the officers of *Yusuf Al Ayubbid*, king of Aleppo (*Halab*). He was killed in 658 H/1259 AD and was interred in the Shrine (Fig. 8: 3). The building was later restored as a sanctuary to venerate the prince. It consists of a square room housing his cenotaph (Al-Dabagh 1966: vol. 2, p. 234).

Jordanian Soldiers' Mausoleum

The Jordanian Soldiers' Mausoleum was constructed by the Palestinian National Authority and the Municipality of Nablus to commemorate the battle that took place in Nablus during the Six-Day War (*Maraket Al-Mudaraat*) between the Jordanian and Israeli armies on 7th June 1967 for control of Nablus. A large number of Jordanian soldiers lost their lives at the site (Fig. 9).

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Excavation results from area B during the excavations 2013–2018 (Fig. 12) include:

Fortifications: Wall and Fortress Palace

We found a continuous fortifying wall around the north-eastern upper part of the hill, measuring 40 m. While it seems to be from the Byzantine Era, additional investigation is necessary to confirm this. We plan to excavate close to the wall in future seasons to obtain more information on its characteristics and exact chronology.

The palace is a fortress situated on the summit; it appears to date to the Ottoman period and is constructed of local masonry stone. The palace likely represents a base from which the surrounding land (at that time planted with beans and other legumes) could be tended. We believe the palace would have extended as far as the road out of Nablus toward other sites in the Nablus area (Fig. 2). We have yet to fully examine the palace area to obtain more information.

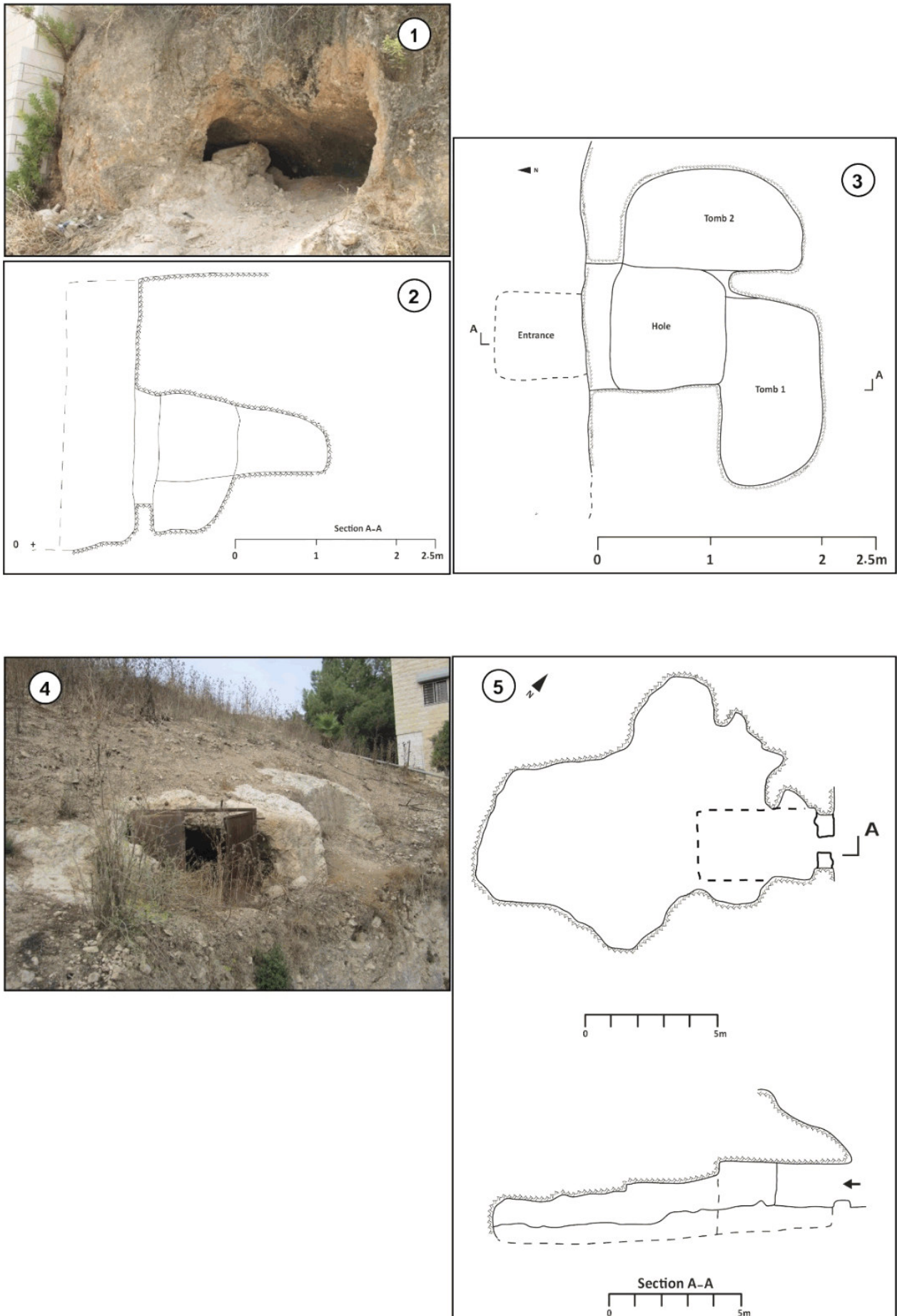


Figure 16. 1–3) Burial cave in the north-west part of Tall Sufan; 4–5) Burial cave in the north-east part of Tall Sufan.

Table 1. Coins found at Tall Sufan in 2016.

No.	Recorded Information	Chronology
1	Area D, Square 15S, Locus 4, Bucket 11, Date: 09/06/2016	Late Roman Period
2	Area D, Square 15S, Locus 4, Bucket 12, Date: 09/06/2016	Late Byzantine Era
3	Area D, Square 15U, Locus 1, Bucket 1, Date: 03/08/2016	Late Byzantine Era
4	Area D, Square 15U, Locus 4, Bucket 5, Date: 06/08/2016	Early Islamic
5	Area D, Square 15U, Locus 4, Bucket 6, Date: 07/08/2016	Hisham Ben Abed Al-Malek Ben Marwan (740-744 AD)
6	Area D, Square 15U, Locus 1, Bucket 2, Date: 04/08/2016	Early Islamic
7	Area D, Square 15, Locus 1, Bucket 2, Date: 04/08/2016	Early Islamic

Silos

The 2013 excavations revealed two silos dating to the Byzantine Era (Fig. 2, 4, 12), both constructed out of similar materials and using similar techniques. The walls were built from different-sized stones and with mud used as a mortar; stones filled the bases (Fig. 13: 1–3). Silo 1, found in the northern-eastern corner of Square 14L, is near circular in shape with a diameter of 195 cm. It was filled with soil and other elements of material culture. The team removed the soil and reached bedrock at a depth of 250 cm. Three bag-shaped amphorae dating to the fifth and sixth centuries AD were found there (Figs. 14: A, B, C). Silo 2 was found in the south-western corner of Square 15K. Only one wall was found situated in the northern part of the square lying southwest to northeast across the square. The wall measures 490 × 50 cm. The architectural design of this silo is very similar to that of Silo 1, suggesting the two silos were constructed in the same period (Fig. 13: 1–3).

Olive Oil Press

In the 2016 summer season excavations we recovered a cylindrical weigh oil press (Sq.14S), consisting of a single stone with a diameter of 90 cm. It was *in situ* (Fig. 15). This find indicates olive oil production in this area of the site. In the coming archaeological excavations we expect to obtain more information relating to the oil olive press and to olive oil production here.

Cave Tombs

In the preliminary survey of Tall Sufan and of the site flanks, also reaching the westernmost extension of the western Nablus, at least 3 cave tombs were identified, some of them already violated in antiquity. A cave tomb was reused as a nighttime shelter for goats and sheep (Fig. 16: 1–5). The tombs were spread over the rocky crags and ridges of a region characterized by limestone ledges and terraces and underlying natural caves, all of which could be easily cut and transformed into tomb chambers. The tombs belonged to several epochs, but mainly to the Middle and Late Bronze, Iron Age, and Hellenistic-Roman Periods. They were cut into the bedrock with irregular entrances.

Coins

Seven coins were found during our 2016 and 2017 season excavations.⁴ While a few are identifiable, others are in poor condition. One of the coins dates to the reign of the emperor Aurelian in the late Roman period, another to the Ayyubid period, and the others date to the Byzantine Era or the Omayyad period. All of them were found in Area B (*vid.* Table 1). Descriptions follow:

Coin 1. Metal: Silver. Mint: Antioquia. Obverse: IMP C P LIC GALLIENVS P F AVG, radiate draped and

⁴Four of it were discovered by Hussein Madina during season of excavation in 2016. Photos courtesy of the An-Najah National University, Modern Campus, Nablus.



Figure 17. Roman coin.



Figure 18. Byzantine follis.



Figure 19. Byzantine follis.



Figure 20. Islamic coin.

cuirassed bust right. Reverse: ORIENS AVG, Emperor standing left, holding spear, receiving wreath from draped figure standing right. RIC V, Part I, 445. Calligraphy: Latin. State of conservation: Good. Diameter: 21 mm. Weight: 4.1 g. Emperor: Gallienus (253–268 AD). Struck: circa 259–263 AD (Fig. 17).



Figure 21. Umayyad coin.



Figure 22. Islamic coin.



Figure 23. Illegible Islamic coin.

Coin 2. Metal: Copper. Mint: Nikomedia. Obverse: Illegible. Reverse: A/N/N/O - G/ B// NIKO. M. Calligraphy: Greek language. State of conservation: good. Diameter: 26mm. Weight: 11.2 g. Dating: Late Byzantine Era (Fig. 18).

Coin 3. Metal: Copper. Mint: Illegible. Obverse: Illegible. Reverse: K and the Cruz. Calligraphy: Greek language. State of conservation: Good. Diameter: 22 mm. Weight: 9.4 g. Period: Late Byzantine Era (Fig. 19).

Coin 4. Mint: Illegible. Obverse: *La Ilaha Ila Allah* (No God except Allah). Reverse: Illegible. Calligraphy: Arabic language. State of conservation: Good. Diameter: 15 mm. Weight: 3 g. Dating: Omayyad period (Fig. 20).

Coin 5. This coin, found in Square 17T locus 2, is from the reign of Umayyad Caliph *Hisham Ibn Abed Al Malik* (105–125 AH/724–743 AD). Legend tells us it was struck in Wasit (city east of Iraq) in 124 AH. The Governor at that time was *Yusuf Bin Amr Al Thaqafi*. Dirham of Caliph *Hisham bin Abdul Malik*. Obverse Field: *La Ilaha Ila Allah Wahdaho La Sharika Lah* (There is no deity except [the one] God alone. He has no equal). Obverse margin (triple borders with five annulets around): *Besm Allah Duriba Hatha Al-Dirham Bewaset Sanat Arba Wa Ashron Wa Meah* (In the name of God. This Dirham was struck in Wasit in the year one hundred and twenty-four). Reverse field: *Allahu Ahad Allahu Alsamad Lam Yaled Wa lam Ulad Walam Yakun Lahu Kufwan Ahad* (God is one God. The eternal and indivisible, who has not begotten, and has not been begotten and never is there His equal). Reverse margin (five annulets): *Mohammad Rasul Allah Arsalahu Belhuda Wa Din Al-Haq Layudberahu Alla Al-dini Kulu Walau Kureha Al-Mushrekun* (Muhammad is the messenger of God. He sent him with guidance and the true religion to reveal it to all religions even if the polytheists abhor it). Weight: 29 g. Diameter: 25 mm. Denomination: Dirham. Metal: AR. Struck: circa 124 AH (741 AD). Mint: Wasit (city east of Iraq) (Fig. 21).

Coin 6. Metal: copper. Mint: Damascus. Obverse: illegible. Reverse: illegible. Calligraphy: Arabic language. Condition: poor. Diameter: 12 mm. Weight: 23 g. Dating: Early Islamic period (Fig. 22).

Coin 7. Metal: Copper. Mint: Illegible. Calligraphy: Arabic language. Condition: very poor. Diameter: 10 mm. Weight: 7 g. Date: Unidentified (Fig. 23).

CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude that the site was occupied over a number of periods, beginning with the late Bronze Age, and followed by the Iron Age, the late Roman Era (135–324 CE), the Byzantine Era (324–636/15H) and the Early Islamic period. The stratigraphic information demonstrates that the site can be dated to three main stages, as follows:

First Stage: Iron Age (1200–333 BC). We found potsherds from jars dating to the Iron Age in Square 15K.

Second Stage: Byzantine Era (324–636/15H). In Squares 15K, 14L, and 13M we found storage jars belonging to the Byzantine Era showing that the Byzantine agricultural settlement was built over the earlier Iron Age settlement.

Third Stage: Early Islamic period (660–750 CE). We found two coins dating to this period. One to *Hisham Ben Abed Al-Malek* (744–748 CE) and the other most probably to the Ayubbid period.

The land at Tall Sufan does not appear to have been used for agriculture until the height of Ottoman rule. The pottery recovered all dates to the Byzantine era, most probably from the late 5th century-early 6th century AD onward and appears to have been manufactured locally rather than imported from other regions (e.g., the area of *Bisan, Scythopolis*).

Finally, the techniques used to construct the silos suggest a local traditional style of architecture was used. We were unable to find equivalent silos in other sites in Palestine. This may be because the silos on Tall Sufan were used by local farmers with few economic means. Our recommendations for the future of the site include the continuation and eventual completion of excavations (our excavations to date have covered a very limited area), government acquisition of the site by the Palestinian Ministry of Antiquities—the value of land with an area of 15 *donum* (15,000 m²) would be equivalent to one and a half million American dollars—and the establishment of an archaeological site museum for exhibiting finds and material from the site.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Acting President of An-Najah National University Professor Maher Al-Natsheh and the Deanship of Scientific Research Professor Najj Qatanani for their financial support.

REFERENCES

- ABEL, F.M. 1933. Le puits de Jacob et l'église Saint-Sauveur. *Revue Biblique* 42/3: 384–402.
- ABUSOOD, L. 2006. *Estudio arqueológico del urbanismo y arquitectura antiguos de la ciudad de Neápolis (Nablús, Territorios Palestinos)*. Doctoral dissertation. Universidad de Salamanca.
- AL-DABAGH, M.M. 1966. *Biladuna Filastin*. Vol. 2. Beirut.

- AL-QADI, H. A. 2004. *Traditional Quarters of the Old Town of Nablus: A Study within the Framework of the Traditional Islamic Cities in the Arab World*. Doctoral dissertation. Institut für Städtebau, Fakultät für Architektur, Technische Universität Graz.
- BÖHL, F.M. 1931. *Palästina in het licht der jongste opgravingen en onderzoekingen*. Paris.
- COLLINS, S., K. TARAWNEH. 2013. *Tell El-Hammam Season Eight: Neolithic Period to the End of the Iron Age*. Tel Aviv: Masada Press.
- CONDER, C.R., H.H. KITCHENER. 1978. *The Survey of Western Palestine 1882–1888*. Palestine Exploration Fund. London.
- DODGE, H. 1999. Amusing the Masses: Buildings for Entertainment and Leisure in the Roman World. In *Life, Death and Entertainment in the Roman Empire*, edited by D.S. Potter & D.J. Mattingly, pp. 205–255. University of Michigan Press.
- HENDRIX, R.E., P.R. DREY, J.B. STORFJELL. 1996. *Ancient Pottery of Transjordan. An Introduction Utilizing Published Whole Forms, Late Neolithic through Late Islamic*. Andrews University.
- HOLUM, K.G. 1988. *King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea*. New York, London: Penguin Books Canada.
- MAGNESS, J.
— 1993. *Jerusalem Ceramic Chronology: Circa 200–800 CE*. Vol. 9. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
— 1997. The Chronology of Capernaum in the Early Islamic Period. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117: 481–486.
- NADRASKY, I.K. 1964. Tell Sophar. *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 8–9: 89–90.
- PEACOCK, D.P.S., D.F. WILLIAMS. 1991. *Amphorae and the Roman Economy: An Introductory Guide*. London: Longman.
- PETERSEN, A. 1996. A Preliminary Report on Three Muslim Shrines in Palestine. *Levant* 28/1: 97–113.
- SAUER, J.A. 1982. The Pottery of Jordan in the Early Islamic Periods. In *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan I*, edited by A. Hadidi, pp. 329–37. Amman: Department of Antiquities.
- TAHA, H. 2015. *The Monastery of Bir el-Hamam in Beit Felasteen: Mount Gerizim*. Ramallah: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.
- TAHA, H., V.K. GERRIT. 2007. The Water Tunnel System at Khirbet Bal'ama, Khirbet Bal'ama Archaeological Project. In *1996–2000 Excavations and Surveys Reports*, Vol. II, pp. 1–6. Ramallah: Ministry of Tourism and Archaeology.
- TAHA, H., G. VAN DER KOOIJ. 2014. *Tell Balata Archaeological Park: Guidebook*. Ramallah: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage.
- WHITCOMB, D. 1988. Khirbet al-Mafjar Reconsidered: The Ceramic Evidence. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 271: 51–67.
- YADIN, Y., Y. AHARONI, R. AMIRAN, T. DOTAN, I. DUNAYEVSKY, J. PERROT. 1958. *Hazor I. An Account of the First Season of Excavations, 1955*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University.
- YEIVIN, Z. 1935. Tell Sophar. *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 47: 12–13 (Hebrew).