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Arthur Segal in Hippos (2011)
(Photo by M. Eisenberg)

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Cover drawing - The bronze mask of Pan of Hippos. Drawn by Yannis Nakas

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THE PROPYLAEUM OF THE EXTRA MUROS SANCTUARY AT HIPPOS

Michael Eisenberg*

Abstract - *During recent excavations along Antiochia Hippos saddle, a monumental gate dating to the Roman period was unearthed. The monumental gate (propylaeum) served as an entrance to a large extra muros compound built along the western slopes of the saddle. So far, besides the gate area itself, a public bathhouse and a theater were partially exposed in the compound. Since the perfectly preserved bronze mask depicting Pan was unearthed in the propylaeum, and other features were also located within the saddle compound, it is very likely that it served as a sanctuary. The propylaeum, which was the main area of excavations within the compound, is the focus of the present paper.*

Acknowledgments

Hippos' saddle excavations could not have been conducted without the professional assistance, enthusiasm, and mainly the volunteering spirit of many who joined the dig and enjoyed the hard labor on Fridays accompanied by the great panorama of the Sea of Galilee. Though it is not possible to thank every and each participant of the last few years, I wish to thank the permanent team of participants: Alexander Iermolin, the team's small finds conservator, for his endless enthusiasm and vision throughout the excavations; Arleta Kowalewska, Hippos expedition co-director and main excavation partner; Adam Pažout of the Hippos team, who supervised some of the fields and also dealt with the Total Station and the GIS related measurements; Nina Koskanen and Nofar Shamir of the Hippos team; Mechael Osband, in-charge of the pottery reading; Danny Syon, the team's numismatist; Eli Gershtein and Michael Peleg, photogrammetry; Arthur Segal for his fellowship and professional support; and Rebecca Toueg for the English editing. I wish to thank the steady participants whose assistance is highly appreciated: Alex Nakaryakov, Miri Hecht, Shlomi Michaeli, Meir Shoval, Leonid Penksik, Yana Vitkalov, Vladimir Lechem and Alexander Khait. The support of the University of Haifa and mainly the Institute of Archaeology is greatly appreciated. This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (Grant No. 722/17).

Introduction

Antiochia Hippos (Sussita), one of the well-known poleis of the Decapolis, is located on the crest of a mountain 2 km east of the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Israel. Mount Sussita rises to a height of about 350 m above the lake and about 200 m above its surroundings, making it rather dominant in the area. The upper geological strata of the mountain are the Golan basalt cover, and beneath it is a layer of soft limestone (caliche). These two, the ba-

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salt and the limestone, served as the main building materials for the city. The length of the crest is about 550 m along a southeast–northwest axis, and a maximum width of about 220 m along a north-south axis on the western side (Figs. 1-3). The mountain is almost cut off from the surrounding area by three streambeds. On the southern side is the Sussita stream (Wadi Jamusiyeh), in the north is the Ein-Gev Stream (Wadi Fiq) and the Noa stream cuts along the saddle and mountain on the eastern side. On the western side, it slopes toward the Sea of Galilee with a twisting snake-like path leading down the mountainside. In one place only, on the southeastern side, the mountain is not detached from its surroundings. This is where a saddle connects Mount Sussita with its environs (Figs. 1-4). It is here, quite naturally, that a main entrance road led to the main city gate in the east[1].

Hippos was the only polis in the central and southern Golan region, and this status remained during the Byzantine period when it became the seat of a bishopric. Its status as the regional capital was lost following the Early Muslim conquest (c. 636 CE) when Tiberias (Ṭabariya), on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, became the capital of Jund al-Urdunn, and Fiq to the east gained more control while Hippos declined into a small town until it was finally abandoned following the 749 CE earthquake[2].

A major excavation project at Hippos began in 2000 under the auspices of the Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa, Israel[3]. To date, the excavations have exposed large areas of the city center that include the Hellenistic sanctuary and several public spaces and structures of the Roman period – the forum, the basilica, the odeion, the southern bathhouse, Early Roman fortifications and part of the city's landscape, mainly along the decumanus maximus with cardines intersecting at right angles with it and creating a planned orthogonal Roman city (Fig. 3)[4].

Hippos, similarly to many Decapolis cities, flourished during the 1st to the early 3rd centuries CE. Most of its public buildings and monumental construction belong to this span of time including the saddle compound. A decline is well attested in number of areas and building complexes towards the end of the 3rd cent. and during the 4th cent. The 363 CE earthquake served as the last straw to some of the very fundamental Roman institutions. As from the end of the 3rd cent., up to the 363 CE earthquake, the basilica, odeion, southern bathhouse, probably several of the Roman temples and the saddle compound area, gradually disappeared from the Hippos cityscape.

The Saddle Compound

The saddle compound excavations were the most exciting ones at Hippos during the past few years. The excavations here began at the end of 2014 in-between the main excava-

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1) Sussita is the Aramaic name for Hippos and solely used in the early Jewish sources without mentioning the city by its official name – Antiochia Hippos. Sussita (or Susita) is also the modern geographical name of the mountain.

2) Eisenberg 2016a; Eisenberg *et al*. 2018, p. 77-80.

3) The excavations are carried out by a team, directed by A. Segal and M. Eisenberg (2000-2011), M. Eisenberg (2012-2015) and M. Eisenberg and A. Kowalewska (2016 - present). Annual excavation permits are issued by the Israel Antiquity Authority (G-16/2019) and by the Israel National and Parks Authority (A007-19, Susita National Park). For a description of the excavation seasons of Hippos until 2011, see: Segal 2014. For the annual excavation series of monographs (2002-2010) see: http://hippos.haifa.ac.il/index.php/publications. For the major complied publications of the research conducted at Hippos see: Segal *et al*. 2014; Eisenberg (ed.) 2017; Eisenberg 2018.

4) Eisenberg, forthcoming.

Fig. 1. Sussita Mount and the Sea of Galilee from the drone's eye, towards northwest

Fig. 2. Sussita Mount and the saddle area. Drone photography towards north-north-west

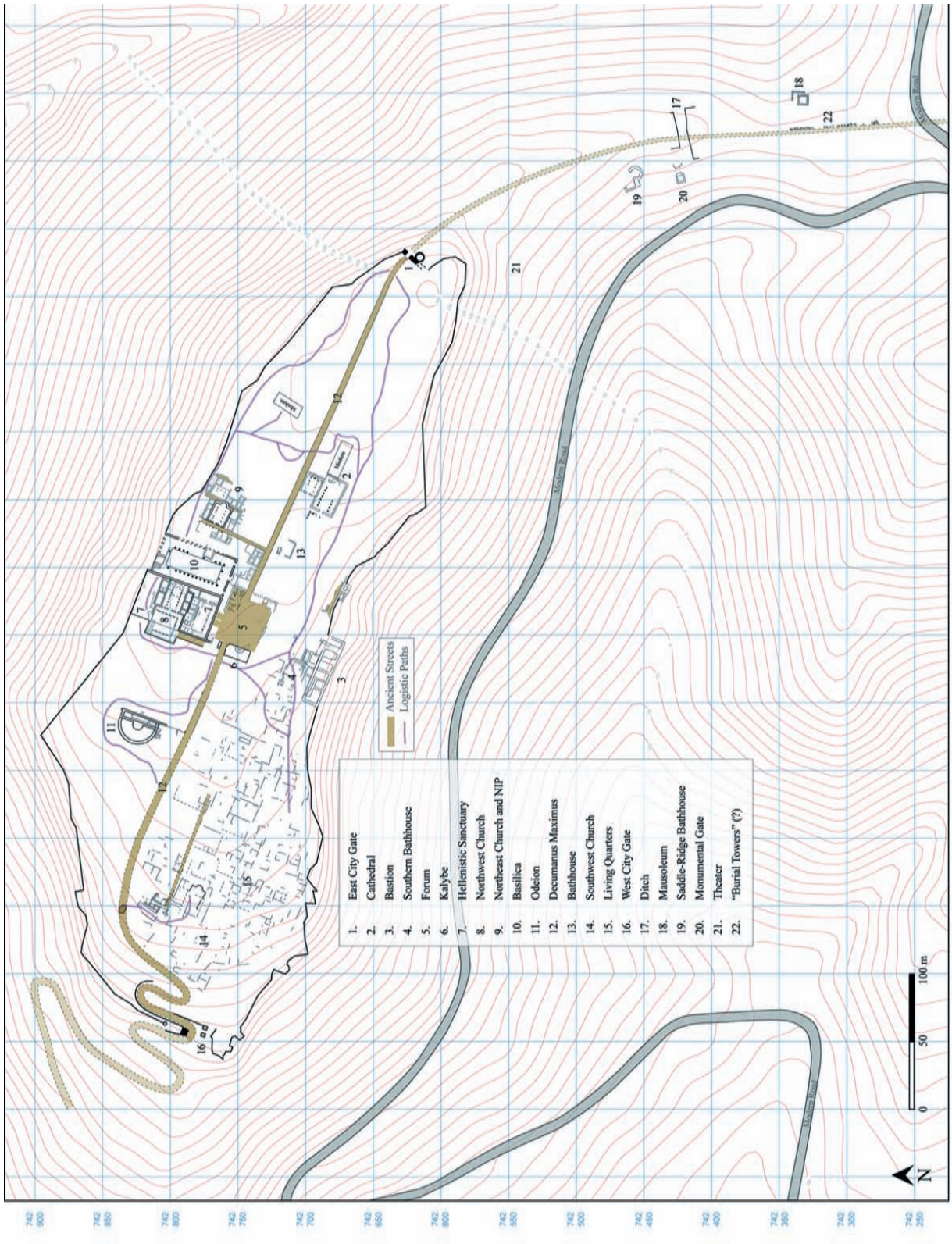

Fig. 3. Plan of Hippos based on a contour map showing main excavation areas

tion seasons. About a dozen excavation days per year are carried out with a small group in the more pleasant seasons and not at the peak of summer (Fig. 5).

The saddle connects the Sussita crest to the southern Golan Heights. It is about 400 m long starting south-south-east of the main city gate (Figs. 2-4). The Roman road along the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee was connected to an additional road which ascended eastward along the Sussita Stream where it crossed the southeast side of the saddle. At this junction the road continued due east in the Fiq passage towards the southern Golan and another road ran along the ridge of the saddle which led to the east city gate of Hippos on the mountain crest[5]. At about the middle of the saddle a protective ditch was cut into the soft limestone, 7 m. wide on its eastern side, 6 m. wide in the western side and of about 4 m. deep (Figs. 2-4, 6-7)[6]. The ditch must have been spanned by a wooden bridge in antiquity, and above it facing towards the city a frontal gate/proteichisma was built the remains of which are evident although not yet excavated (Fig. 7)[7]. The saddle necropolis extends up to the ditch which serves as a clear border between the city of the dead and the polis. None of the mausolea or sarcophagi cross this line towards the city.

The western side of the saddle, from the ditch towards the main gate on the east, slopes gradually towards the Sussita Stream. It was here, by the ditch, where the remains of a sol-

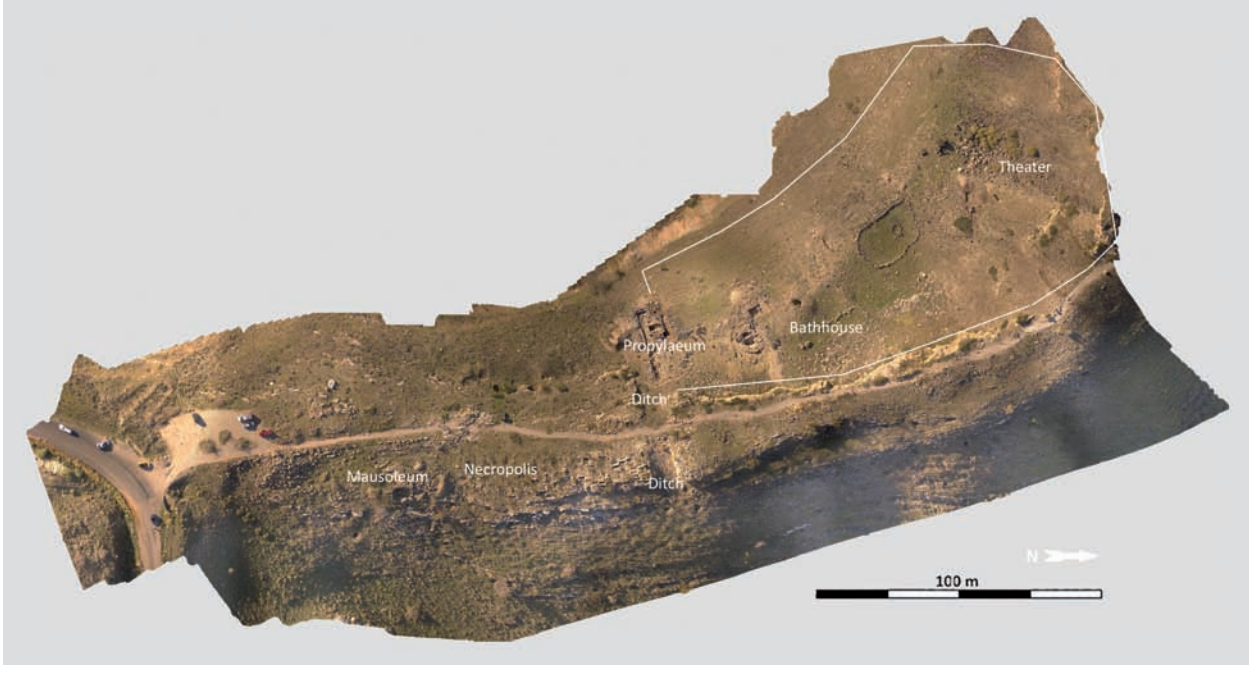

Fig. 4. Hippos saddle with its main building complexes and a rough sketch of the compound perimeter

5) The path of the Roman road from the Sea of Galilee towards the saddle is based on the expedition surveys and mainly according to the descriptions of G. Schumacher, Mendel Nun (member of the nearby Kibbutz Ein-Gev) as well as on the reports made by archaeologists during the salvage excavations and surveys conducted at Hippos and its environs up to 1970s. The Roman path from the saddle to the Golan was never traced, but the passage of Fiq served in antiquity as the main one to the southern Golan in this area and a rough route of it was sketched following the Hippos expedition surveys while locating several unknown necropoleis (not yet published) which the road is assumed to have followed adjacent to it. Pažout 2017; Pažout forthcoming.

6) Eisenberg 2014, p. 93; Eisenberg 2017, p. 65-70.

7) This front gate (?) above the ditch bears similarities to the propylaeum and may have even been part of the same building enterprise, but as it is partially preserved and not yet excavated, it will not be part of the present discussion.

id basalt structure were identified prior to the excavations (Figs. 3-4, 6-7). The general assumption, which was the main reason for initiating an excavation here, was that this area is naturally less protected, hence in danger of assault by besieging forces and should have been highly defended. The basalt structure, 30 m north of the ditch, was assumed to be a protective hangar for the heavy defensive projectile machinery (catapults and ballistae)[8]. Though a solid construction was indeed excavated here, it turned out to be an omega shaped hall of a caldarium with the remains of the hypocaust (Figs. 6-7). A half ballista ball made of hard limestone, split upon impact, was most probably shot by the enemy towards the saddle defenses, but their nature is yet to be clarified. The excavated caldarium is part of a large public bathhouse built in the middle of the saddle compound. Though traced above ground, only a small section of its southern halls has been excavated so far. A propylaeum (described below) built 30 m. south of the 'omega' hall served as an entrance to the compound, while a theater, very partially excavated, was built along the southeastern slopes of Sussita Mountain, 30 m. north of the bathhouse complex (Figs. 2-4, 6-7).

Fig. 5. Part of 'the saddle team' inside the pool above the propylaeum

These three features, propylaeum, public bathhouse and theater, define the saddle compound within the limits of the ridge of the saddle to the east which was artificially cut vertically to serve as part of the defense, a perimeter wall (fortification wall?) along the western slopes of the saddle, the ditch on the south and a theater on the north. The assumed dimensions of the compound are 170 × 60 m. (Fig. 4).

The Propylaeum

The entrance to the saddle compound was via a propylaeum. The gate is situated below and adjacent to the north side of the ditch (Figs. 6-9). It is yet unclear whether the ditch continued towards the west and created a deep obstacle to be passed over by a bridge or a flight of stairs. The excavations at the gate began under rather surprising circumstances mainly caused by deep curiosity following the finding of the mask of Pan, to be described below. Only a few of the upper western tower walls were exposed prior to the excavations. Following this unique find we decided to split our forces between the bathhouse and the gate, just 30 m. apart.

Propylaeum Plan and Construction

A large part of the gate area was excavated; it measures 19 (west–east) × 6.5 m. (north-south). Two almost identical square towers flank a 3.65 m. wide single passageway (Figs. 8-12).

The Gate Passage – Two symmetrical solid piers (W5073 and W5078) of the gate vault, 3.6 × 1.4 m., are built on both sides of the portal passage that runs along the tower walls

8) Eisenberg 2014, p. 93-99; Eisenberg 2016b, p. 617-620.

Fig. 6. The southern part of the saddle compound by the ditch

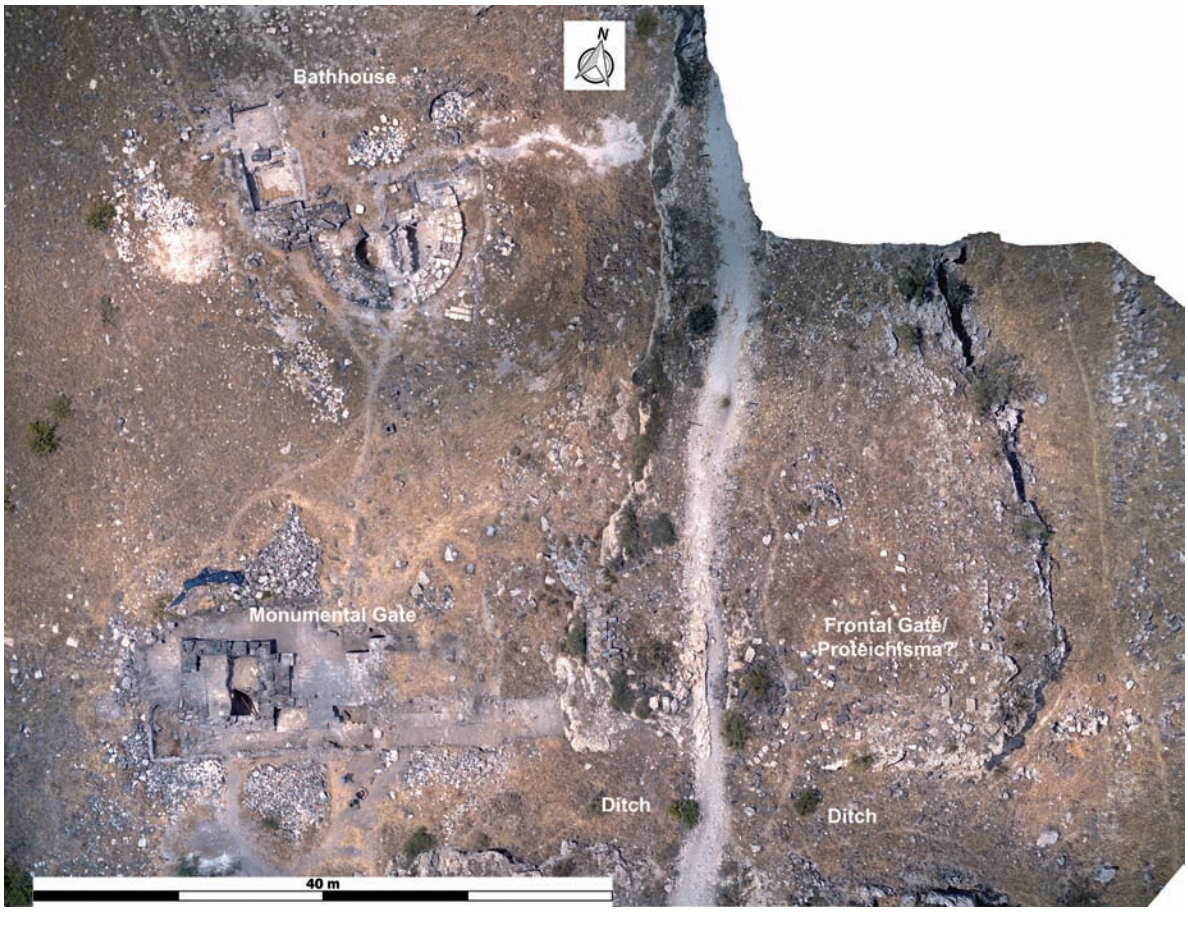

Fig. 7. Vertical photogrammetry of the southern part of the saddle compound

Fig. 8. The propylaeum, an isometric view towards north with the location find of the mask of Pan

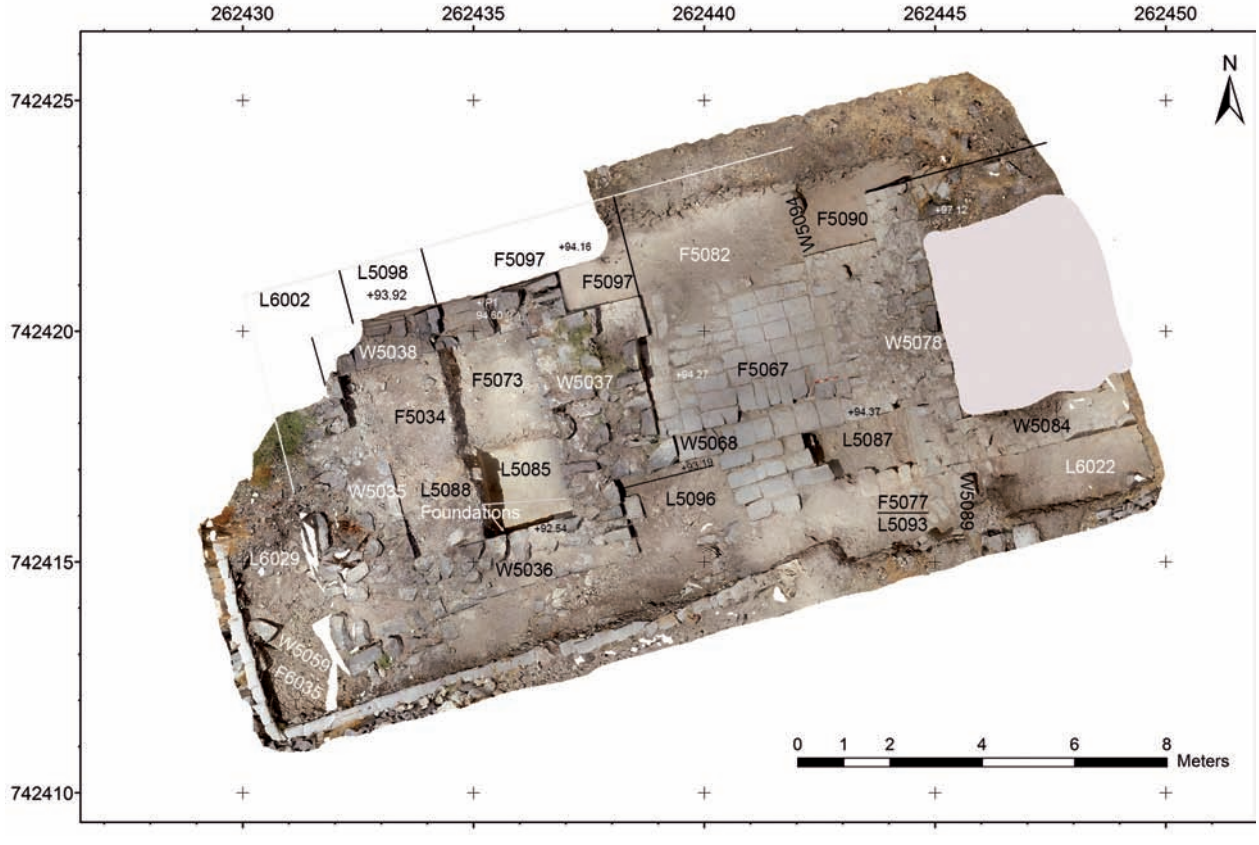

Fig. 9. The propylaeum, a vertical photogrammetry with loci and heights map

(Figs. 8-12). The gate passage was not fully exposed to its original depth. The basalt slabs that pave the gate and which are visible today (F5067, height - 94.27 m.) are of a later phase (4th cent. CE) when the gate was already partially in ruins. This was confirmed during the excavations of the western tower (described below) and the probes conducted to the north and south of the west wall of the eastern tower (described below, Fig. 9). During the redesign of the gate, following its destruction, the original paving stones of the gate were reused in a negligent manner as evident from the various sizes and the careless way of paving (Fig. 12). The paving within the gate passage, bordered by the vault piers, is intact (12.5 m^2). None of the slabs were found to the north while to the south a flight of stairs was built. The pavers in the eastern part of the gate are of a high uniformity and are better laid in comparison with the western side. Even here, in the post-original phase, we can observe several phases of construction of the 4th–6th cent. The original floor of the gate should be located at a height of c. 93.76 m., about half a meter deeper than the present paving. Though none of the original pavers was found in-situ, the excavations in various places along the gate's lower profiles and foundations give us a rather accurate height of the original paving (Figs. 13-16). It is our intention in the near future to dismantle part of the later paving in order to reach the original surface of the gate.

A crude flight of stairs consisting of four basalt steps, partially preserved, connects with the southern gate entrance (Figs. 10, 12). Keeping in mind that the present gate paving is half a meter higher than the original floor level it is hard to determine whether the original plane consisted of a similar design. If indeed, as expected, the ditch continued towards the west, passing south of the gate, then two solutions could have resulted in order to span the height differences; either a staircase, as described above, or a bridge. A bridge with piers on both sides of the ditch would have been a more elegant and practical solution for transporting carts and carriages. Moreover, a careful observation of the southern part of the passage (W5068) makes it clear that it was blocked in the second phase (Figs. 9, 12, 15).

The area to the south of the gate was hardly dug and we shall have to wait for the removal of the heaps of earth here by a mechanical tool before initiating an excavation in the ditch area.

The Western Tower – The tower was almost fully exposed. It is square, with each side measuring 6.45 m., excluding profiles. The width of the walls varies from 1.05 to 1.22 m. The tower had a single doorway located on its northern wall (W5038). It is off-centered towards east. The entrance, 0.70 m. wide, consisting of two lower posts and a threshold, were exposed (Figs. 8-11, 14). Along the inner side of the western wall (W5035) a footing, 0.60 m. width, was exposed made of pebbles and mortar (Fig. 9). It seems it served as the basis of a staircase leading to the upper floors. The southwestern corner of the western (W5035) and the southern (W5036) walls collapsed violently towards the southwest, perhaps due to the 363 CE earthquake (Fig. 18). Two floors were identified in the tower which were part of its original use before its collapse; the upper one F5034 (92.60 m.) and F5073 (91.99 m.). The mask of Pan, to be described below, was found on floor F5034 prior to excavating it (Figs. 8-9). Both floors are made of whitish plaster and use the local yellow-orange sand as foundations (see discussion below). F5034 is 1 meter (3 courses) lower than the entrance set at the northern wall, and F5073 is about 1.6 m lower than the entrance. These height differences must have been bridged by a wooden staircase. We cannot say why the level of F5073 was raised by about a meter to F5034 but we may assume the existence of a ground floor that was cancelled. The southeastern part of the western tower, at the corner of W5037 and W5036, was dug further down to the bedrock (Figs. 17, 19-20). The tower walls rest in foundation trenches in the limestone bedrock, 7 courses deep (2.65 m.) below F5073. The maximum preservation of the tower walls, including its foundations, reach 15 courses (c. 5.50 m.).

Fig. 10. The propylaeum, a vertical view

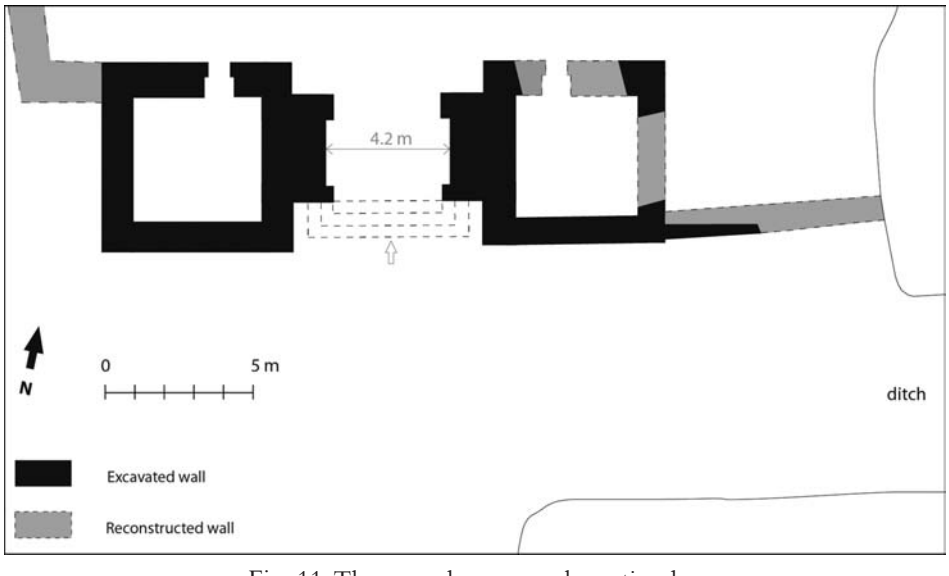

Fig. 11. The propylaeum, a schematic plan

Fig. 12. The propylaeum. The later staircase and paving of the gate, view towards northwest. Note the later blocking of the southern passageway

The lower courses, beneath the floor level, are all of basalt ashlars roughly dressed, while the upper courses are better dressed and bear chisel marks. Some smoother ashlar faces were deliberately scarred in order to allow for the plastering of the walls. All the fill of the tower below its floors consists of the local sand, and stratigraphic examination here supplied us with crucial dating for the tower construction and both plaster floors – the first half of the 2nd cent. CE at the latest.

One meter southwest of the tower, a short diagonal basalt wall (W5059) was exposed (Figs. 9-10). The purpose of the wall is unclear. No earlier traces of construction were identified, and it must have served as part of the tower's constructive protection towards the western slope.

The western tower, like the eastern one, had a single decorative profile running along its lower part and surrounding the towers. The profile was exposed in-situ by the southern entrance to the tower and in the debris to the west of W5035 (Figs. 13-14).

The Eastern Tower – The eastern tower was only partially excavated. The upper contour of the walls as well as the outer southern and western walls were exposed, and small stratigraphic soundings were opened to the southwest and northwest of it (Figs. 10-12, 15-16). It is slightly smaller than the western tower, measuring 5.95 (east-west) and 6.30 m. (north-south), excluding profiles.

Gate Construction

The gate complex is a solid structure built solely of basalt ashlars with a single profile decoration running over its lower part designed as a torus and inverted cyma recta (Figs. 14-16). The several limestone ashlars visible on the upper preserved courses are a result of later phases following the partial destruction of the gate complex. The width of the walls is of about 1 m. All the walls are built of two ashlar faces with rubble and mortar in the core. The courses are laid in a mixed manner of headers and stretchers, while the stretchers are more frequent. Most courses are 0.4 m. high. The average stretcher size is (w × h × l) 0.6 × 0.4 × 0.25 m. and an average header size is 0.3 × 0.4 × 0.7 m.

The Pool

Three meters above and southeast of the eastern tower gate, a pool was almost fully excavated. The pool is built along the width of the ditch and fed by a water conduit running above it and crossing the entire ditch from south to north (Figs. 5-6, 21-24). The excavations of the pool are not yet complete, hence the following brief description. The pool is Gamma shaped (Figs. 22, 24), measuring c. 7.5 (south-north across the ditch) × 4 m. (east-west). The width of the pool is 1.40 m. and it is well preserved on its long eastern side. The eastern and southern perimeter of the pool is bordered by the natural soft limestone and the front is a basalt ashlars wall which survived up to one course above the floor level. Four pier bases were preserved along the western pool wall, located at equal distances of 1.35 m. from one another. These piers probably served for the arches which covered the small span of the pool, allowing for its roofing and perhaps for some more decor. The pool was coated with a thick white plaster from within and along the artificially cut limestone walls, including the use of pebbles and mortar in order to seal the pool (Fig. 22-26). The floor of the pool (F6072) is made of thick plaster with several layers of replastering. The conduit which runs along the longer side of the pool is plastered with a channel width of 0.12 m (F6034). In the middle of the conduit, a basalt ashlar is set (L6044). The ashlar is designed with two large decora-

Fig. 13. The propylaeum. The northern face of the western tower. View towards west

Fig. 14. The propylaeum. The entrance to the western tower along its northern wall. View towards south

Fig. 15. The propylaeum. The southwestern corner of the eastern tower. View towards north. Note the later blocking

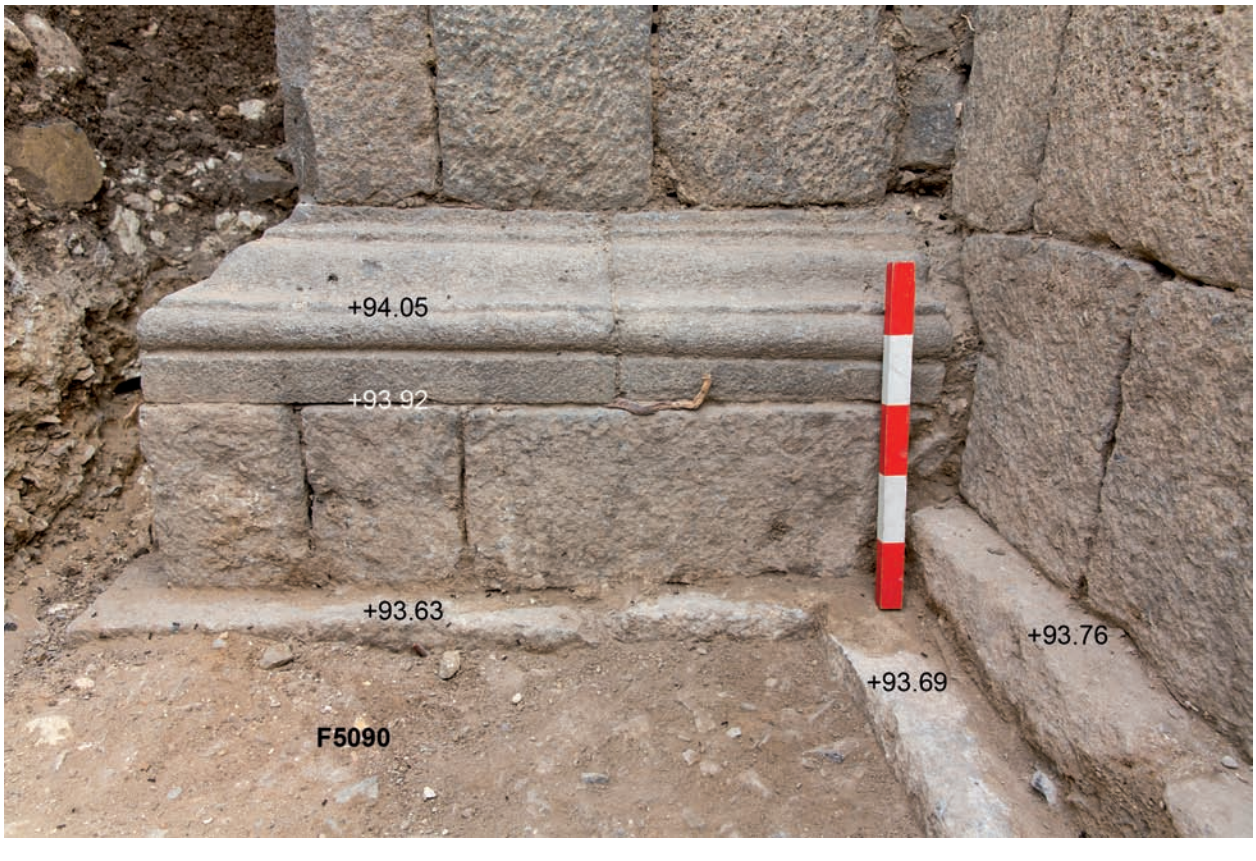

Fig. 16. The propylaeum. The northwestern corner of the eastern tower. View towards east

Fig. 17. The propylaeum. Sounding in the western tower. View towards southeast

Fig. 18. The propylaeum. The western wall of the western tower. Note one of the profile stones in its outer debris and the wall's collapse in its southern part. View towards east

tive semi-round spouts which allowed the water to run from the conduit and feed the pool (Figs. 22-26). The remains of two layers of plaster are clearly visible on the decorated ashlar (Fig. 26)[9]. It is clear that the pool was larger in its original phase and continued towards the north. A basalt wall (W6031), which joins and continues the southern wall of the eastern tower gate, cuts across the northern part of the pool for a reason we do not know and shortens its original dimensions (Fig. 22). The excavation work is still in progress, but the pottery remains found within the pool are of the Late Roman period (2nd - early 4th cent. CE) during the last activity in the pool. The pool was part of the gate complex during its original function.

The Mask of Pan

The mask (B10205) was found in L5032, a fill just above plaster floor F5034 inside the western tower gate and next to W5037 (Figs. 8-9, 17). The mask, found by A. Iermolin while using a metal detector, was about 0.4 m. below ground (Fig. 28)[10]. Prior to conducting any cleaning or conservation treatment to such an unusual artifact, it was analyzed via non-destructive techniques in order to choose the optimal conservation method. The mask was scanned via radiography by I. Hershko and D. Breitman of the Department of Radiography, of Soreq Nuclear Research Center, Israel. After verifying that there were no flaws in the original cast and no severe trauma or corrosion, the conservation treatment was initiated by A. Iermolin in the conservation lab at the Zinman Institute of Archaeology. The process is basically a mechanical one; cleaning cm by cm under a binocular microscope while documenting all of the stages. The first phase of conservation was cleaning one half of the front of the mask (Fig. 28). After checking the results, we moved to the other half. The final phase of conservation involved stabilizing the metal and applying protective patina to the front of the mask. The rear of the mask is unfinished and rough and was never intended to be seen, hence it underwent only basic conservation and stabilization (Fig. 30). Within several months the conservation treatment was completed, enabling us to analyze the mask in detail, assisted by photogrammetry techniques.

The mask is made of bronze in high quality casting (Fig. 29). Traces of lead and zinc are visible in the rear and it is clear that the mask was installed from the back (Fig. 30)[11]. It is in an almost perfect state of preservation, weighing 4.97 kg and measures 30 cm in height, 28 cm in width and an average of 6 mm in thickness. It portrays a young man face with small horns on top of his head, slightly hidden by a forelock, strands of a goat beard (of which only one survived) and long pointed ears. His eyes are wide open and his mouth is gaping in what seems to be a furious and tragic expression[12].

Similar masks, influenced by the style of the theatre masks, are known from the Hellenistic and Roman world, but all of these are made of stone and were never intended to be used as real theatre masks. Several sculptures depicting a similar portraiture of the Hippos mask are mainly dated to the 1st - 2nd cent. CE. These sculptures, made mainly from marble

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9) Plaster conservation work was done by Y. Vitkalov.

10) The mask was found in November 2014 prior the excavation of the gate while excavating the nearby bathhouse. A Minelab CTX 3030 metal detector was used.

11) XRF (handheld X-Ray Fluorescence analyzer) analysis was conducted by Sariel Shalev of the University of Haifa.

12) Being one of a kind, several international newspapers and journals nominated it as one of the most unique archaeological finds in the world for 2015, i.e. National Geographic (Spanish) and the Biblical Archaeology Review.

and some from bronze, are generally referred to as Satyri and sometimes as Pans/Fauns. Their common characteristics is a young face, sometimes furious and sometimes mischievous, and they often bear two small horns on their foreheads and long pointed ears. One of the most famous collections are the magnificent bronze statues of the drunken Satyr and the sleeping Satyr from the Villa dei Papyri in Herculaneum, exhibited in the Naples National Archaeological Museum. The mask from Hippos bears all these features, but also includes strands of a goat beard. Such features make it easy to identify the mask as depicting the Greek God Pan/Roman Faunus and not just a generic depiction of a satyr.

It is not within the scope of this paper to elaborate on the unique mask of Pan, but its role within the gate complex is discussed below.

Post Propylaeum Phases

The gate complex passed through some significant changes during the 4th cent. CE. It was most probably partially destroyed not later than the 363 CE earthquake (see chronological discussion below). During the late 4th cent. and onwards it was still in use, but the evidence in our hands suggests that the towers were at least partially in ruins, the gate passage was raised by half a meter and was then repaved by secondary use pavers with pressed earth floors attached to the paving (Figs. 8-10, 12-15). The staircase leading to the gate from the south is part of this later post-gate phase including changes in some of the tower walls. This phenomenon is similar it seems to the rest of the saddle building complexes, e.g. the public bathhouse and the theatre, though further soundings ought to be conducted in these areas for a firmer dating. The area of the compound continued to be in some use until the 6th cent. and then abandoned. It is not in the scope of this paper to elaborate on the later phases, but I shall note two special small finds found in the later phase of the gate complex not in context, probably of the 6th cent. CE. A piece of jewelry made of gold, probably a necklace segment (B14126), and a gold ring bearing a Maltese cross (B11155, Figs. 31-32). Several later walls that were added to the gate complex make use of large limestone ashlars bearing margin drafting and a rough boss. We cannot locate the original structures of these ashlars, but their dressing style is typical of the late Hellenistic-Early Roman periods. It well may be that an earlier building enterprise (fortifications?) was built next to the ditch during the late Hellenistic or Early Roman period, not later than the 1st cent. CE, when the ditch area was still part of the city's outworks.

Chronological Framework

The propylaeum was built not later than the first half of the 2nd cent. CE. It was destroyed most probably during the 363 CE earthquake but we cannot exclude an earlier destruction phase of the 4th cent. CE. Below are the main chronological criteria for the dating[13].

1. **L5044** – A fill locus that covers F3034 in the western tower. A single coin of Antoninius Pius (138–161 CE).
2. **F5034** (Figs. 8-10) – The plaster floor on which the mask of Pan was found (F5034, 92.60 m). The mask can be dated stylistically to the 1st-2nd cent. CE. The material in

13) All the coins from the propylaeum area were identified but not all the pottery was yet processed.

Fig. 19. The propylaeum. The eastern wall of the western tower. Photogrammetry based side view

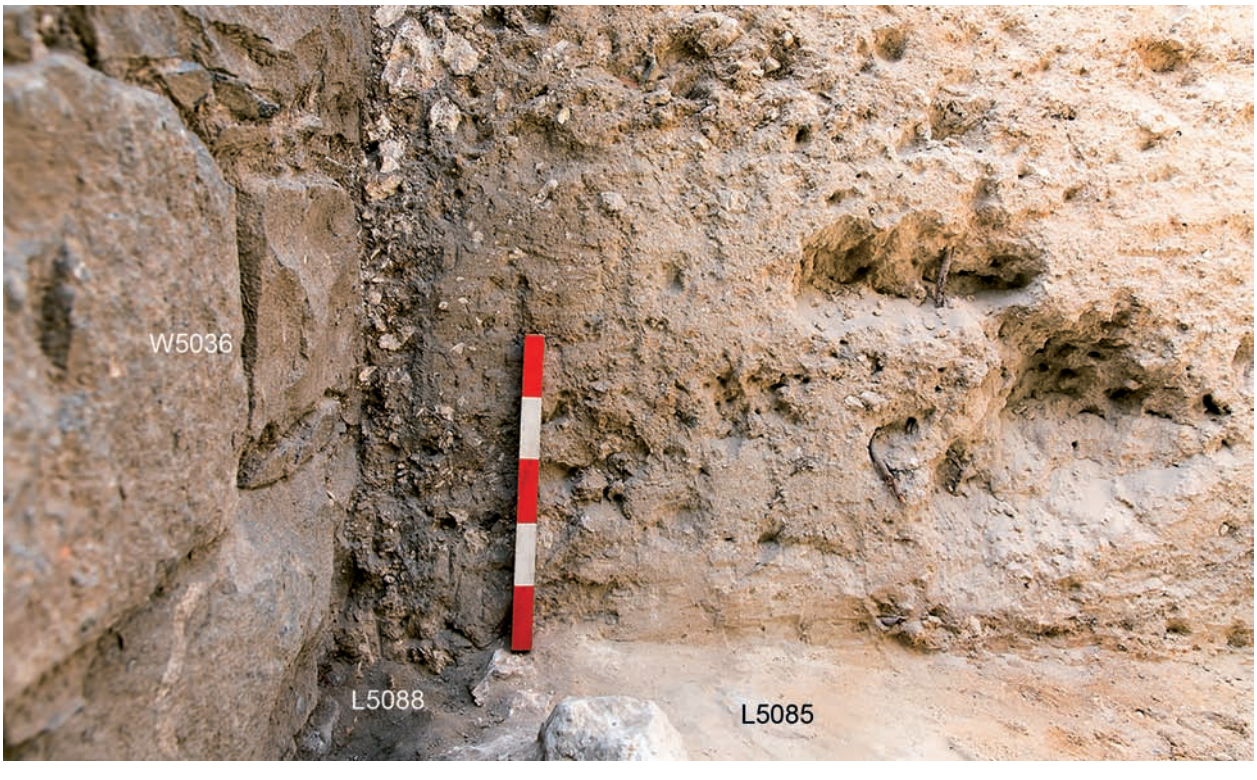

Fig. 20. The propylaeum, the foundations of the southern wall of the western tower. Note the foundation tunnel in the sand fill. View towards west

Fig. 21. The pool above the propylaeum during excavations. Vertical drone photography

Fig. 22. The pool above the propylaeum during excavations. Vertical drone photography

the floor foundations and beneath it is of the 1st-early 2nd cent. CE. The fill above the floor and beneath the tower debris, based on the pottery reading, is Late Roman/3rd-4th cent. CE[14].

3. **F5073** (Figs. 8-10) – F5073 (91.99 m.) is the plaster floor below F5034 and the first to be associated with the construction and use of the western tower gate. A single coin was found in the floor (C10252) dated to Hadrianus (131/2 CE).
4. **Sand as floor foundations** (Figs. 15-17, 20) – The local Ein-Gev Sand Formation is to be found all around the saddle area and is used for the foundations of the plaster floors of western tower gate F5034 and F5073. It is interesting to note that the use of the nearby sand is very scarce in ancient construction at Hippos. Only three additional cases of the use of sand are known from previous excavations at Hippos and all are for plaster floor foundations. The first is the Basilica, built at the end of the 1st cent. CE and destroyed in 363 CE, in which all its plaster floors use this technique. The second is the plaster floor of the 'Lions Mausoleum' burial chamber (2nd cent. CE-4th cent.), located at the saddle necropolis. The third is at the nearby vomitorium (2nd cent. CE) in the theater at the far northern edge of the saddle compound.
5. **Soundings in the western tower** (Figs. 9, 17, 19-20) – The sandy fill beneath F5073 down to the bedrock (L5085,) including the foundation trenches (L5088) of the eastern (W5073) and southern (W5036) tower walls, yielded a lot of pottery, all dated to the 1st-first half of the 2nd cent. CE. No coins were found here.
6. **West of the western tower gate** (Figs. 9, 18) – L6029 contained fragments of a floor west of W5035, upon which the tower ashlar collapsed. Two coins were found here: C11190 (350-361 CE) and C12523 (355-361 CE).
7. **Southwest of the western tower gate** (Figs. 9-10, 12) – L6035 is located southwest of W5059 and contains two coins: C12524 (351-361 CE) and C12525 (4th cent. CE).
8. **Sounding southwest of the eastern tower gate** (Figs. 9, 12, 15) – The sounding (L5086, L5087) was opened along the tower's southwest corner down to the level of the tower profiles. It yielded pottery of the Late Roman period and five coins: L5086: C10279 (350–361 CE) and C10280 (355–361 CE); L5087: C10284 (4th cent. CE), C10285 (355–361 CE) and C12003 (4th cent. CE).
9. **Sounding northwest of the eastern tower gate** (Fig. 16) – The sounding was opened almost symmetrically to the southwestern tower one. F5090 yielded Roman pottery (1st-3rd CE).
10. **Last phase gate floors** (Figs. 9, 12-13) – The basalt paving of the gate (F5067) yielded a 5th cent. coin (C11125). The packed earth floor to its north (F5082) yielded a single coin, C11116 (498-518 CE) and pottery dated to the Late Roman–Byzantine period.
11. **Summary of the coins find** – Nineteen coins were located in the gate area including the pool area above it. Six of them are dated to 350-361 CE and additional three to the 4th cent. Interestingly enough none are late Byzantine, the latest coin being dated to 498-518 CE[15].

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14) For the initial pottery reading of the western tower and several soundings in this area see Osband 2017, p. 93-94, 104-105.

15) The numismatic reports were prepared by: 2014 – B. Bowlin; 2015 – C. Meir and D. Syon; 2016 – D. Syon and B. Bowlin; 2017 – C. Meir; 2018 – D. Syon.

Fig. 23. The pool, a basalt ashlar with spouts incorporated in the conduit

Fig. 24. The pool and conduit. Note the piers for the arches and the basalt ashlar with spouts incorporated in the conduit. View towards south

Chronological conclusions – The numismatic and pottery evidence, the mask of Pan and the additional construction criteria mentioned above support an early 2nd cent. CE construction date for the propylaeum. The location of the mid-4th cent. coins and their date until 361 CE points very clearly in favor of the 363 CE earthquake as the reason for the gate's destruction. Similar numismatic evidence was located beneath the collapsed debris of the basilica at Hippos which was destroyed during the same event[16]. Following its destruction, the gate was only partially rebuilt and went into a state of decay. Apparently the pool above it was used at least as early as the 3rd cent. CE and perhaps originated earlier with the gate construction. The gate area was scarcely in use until the 6th century.

Suggested Reconstruction of the Propylaeum

The plan of the gate is almost fully clear following the excavations. It is a simple one entrance gate flanked by two towers and built solely of basalt. No decorated architectural elements were found so far except for the lower profile that adorns the towers just above floor level. A similar unfortified gate built of basalt and well preserved is the west gate of Bosra, the capital of Provincia Arabia[17]. The gate is dated to the first quarter of the 2nd cent. CE, its main lower vault raises it to a height of 7 m and the gate passageway is 4.3 m. wide. The ratio of the gate's height (7/4.3) to its passage width is 1.63.

Similar ratios are repeated in other comparable gates as well. The northwest 'Commodus' gate at Umm-el-Jimal in Provincia Arabia served as the main gate of the town. It bears a high resemblance to the Hippos gate although it was incorporated in the fortification wall and its ashlars are less carefully dressed. It has a single passageway, built of basalt and dated to 176-180 CE. Two piers at each side supported a barrel-vaulted passageway. It almost without any decoration. The passageway is 3.9 m. wide and 5.4 m. high., a ratio of 1.38[18]. The north gate at Gerasa of the Decapolis is built of limestone in 114/115 CE and is by far a more decorative one. Its single vaulted passageway is 5.4 m. wide and 9.15 m. high; a ratio of 1.69[19].

The Hippos propylaeum has a single passageway 3.65 m. wide. The vault may be reconstructed to a height of 6 m. (1.64 ratio) and the gate itself up to a height of 8.4 m. (suggested reconstruction in Fig. 33). The propylaeum passageway is 0.45 m. wider than the main city gate at the east side of the crest which is not more than 3.2 m. wide. Its location on relatively low and unprotected ground makes it hard to defend. This characteristic makes the propylaeum more of a monumental gate in character than part of Hippos' military architecture[20].

Discussion

Though the excavations in the saddle compound are far from complete, the data we have points to one construction phase of the late 1st to the early 2nd century CE and destruction in the 4th century, probably during the 363 CE earthquake. Judging by the ex-mural location of the compound, the three main features: a propylaeum, bathhouse and a theater,

16) Eisenberg 2016a, p. 5-8.

17) Segal 1997, p. 90-91, and there for additional references.

18) Segal 1997, p. 87-88, and there for additional references. Recent conservation work at the gate (2015 - 2016) allowed further analyzing of its plan and construction (http://www.ummeljimal.org/en/commodusgate.html).

19) Segal 1997, p. 90-94, and there for additional references.

20) Eisenberg 2014, p. 93-101, 119-123.

it may be possible to identify it as a sanctuary dedicated to one of the rustic gods, possibly Dionysos. Such a sanctuary could be of a dual sanctity such as part of a healing complex – an Asklepieion. Since no temple or religious attributes have been located so far, except for the mask of Pan, its purpose will remain for now unsolved.

Pan's mask was located in the fill of the western gate tower. It was probably hung on the western side of the gate, facing south towards the people entering the compound. It well may be that a Dionysos mask was placed on the eastern side of the gate. A stone altar with their bronze masks is optional as well. Such a duality between Dionysos and Pan is common, both being good companions and frequently represented together in classical art and in cultic aspects including their depiction in the media of masks. Their appearance and possible cult in Hippos should be of no surprise; The polis north of Hippos in the northern Golan is Paneas (Caesarea Philippi) dedicated to the cult of Pan (Paneion) and is one of the most famous Pan sanctuaries[21]. The polis to the south of Hippos in the Jordan Valley is Nysa-Scythopolis, dedicated to its mythological founder Dionysos[22]. A hexagonal limestone altar found in the city's basilica and dated to 141/2 CE is decorated with masks of Dionysos, Pan and Silenus[23].

The extra muros nature of the saddle compound can be explained by the rustic nature of the sanctuary's worship and/or by the lack of appropriate space within the natural crest of Mount Sussita. During the peak of the city in the 2nd cent. CE it may have required additional urban space not available within its city walls. The northwestern area of the saddle would have permitted close and easy enough terrain for such an enterprise. The previous outworks connected with the protective ditch cut across the middle of the saddle must have been replaced with the new city's public-monumental construction in the peak of the Pax Romana after the turmoil of events during the Great Revolt in Galilee of the late 60s slowly diffused.

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21) Berlin 1999; Ma'oz forthcoming; Wilson 2004.

22) Arubas *et al.* 2008; Foerster 1993; Gitler 1991; Mazor 2008; Ovadiah 1975; Ovadiah and Mucznik 2015; Tsafrir 2014; Tsafrir and Foerster 1997.

23) Di Segni 1997; Di Segni *et al.* 1996.

Fig. 25. Reopening the spouts of the pool conduit

Fig. 26. Y. Vitkalov conducting conservation work at the pool and conduit plasters

Fig. 27. A small Roman ceramic cup found in the bottom of the pool

Fig. 28. The mask of Pan following its one half receiving mechanical conservation treatment

Fig. 29. The mask of Pan. Enlargement of its upper part following full conservation treatment

Fig. 30. The rear of the mask of Pan

Fig. 31. A gold necklace segment

Fig. 32. A gold ring bearing a Maltese cross

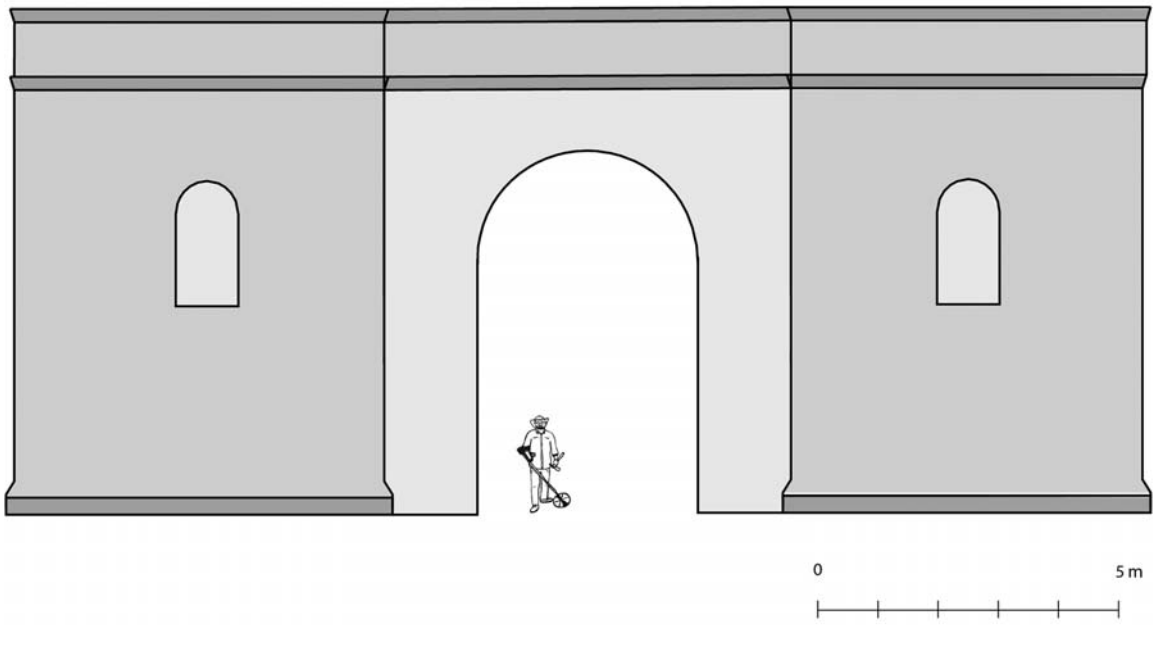

Fig. 33. The southern façade of the propylaeum, a suggested reconstruction

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Illustrations references

Fig. 1: Photo. M. Eisenberg, Jan. 2019.

Fig. 2: Photo. M. Eisenberg, March 2019.

Fig. 3: M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 4: Drone photo and vertical photogrammetry by E. Gershtein.

Fig. 5: March 2019, photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 6: Jan. 2019, vertical drone photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 7: June 2017, drone photo and photogrammetry by E. Gershtein.

Fig. 8: June 2016, photo. M. Eisenberg, photogrammetry by E. Gershtein.

Fig. 9: June 2016, photo. M. Eisenberg, photogrammetry by E. Gershtein.

Fig. 10: December 2017, drone photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 11: A. Kowalewska.

Figs. 12-18: Photo. M. Eisenberg.

Figs. 13-18: Photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 19: Photo. M. Eisenberg, photogrammetry by M. Peleg.

Figs. 20-22: Photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 23: M. Eisenberg.

Figs. 24-30: Photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 25: Photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 31: B14126, photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 32: B11155, photo. M. Eisenberg.

Fig. 33: Drawing by A. Kowalewska.