

The Decapolis: History and Archaeology

3 Archaeology of the Hellenistic period (3rd/2nd c. BCE)

COHEN, G. M. 2006: *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London.

Hellenistic foundations

Status quaestionis

- Tell sites – deep stratigraphy, poorly uncovered
- Massive building activity in the Roman and Byzantine period, some sites continually occupied until Medieval/Modern period (destroying/overlying earlier remains)
- Only few well excavated sites
- Even fewer well published sites
- Persian/Early Hellenistic period
- very few known sites in general
- Discrepancy between text and archaeology
- Unclear status – military colonies or full-fledged cities? (what remains to expect)

Scythopolis Beth-Shean – continually occupied from mid-3rd c. BCE to the Medieval period



Hellenistic foundations

Alexander

- Tyre
- Gaza
- Samaria

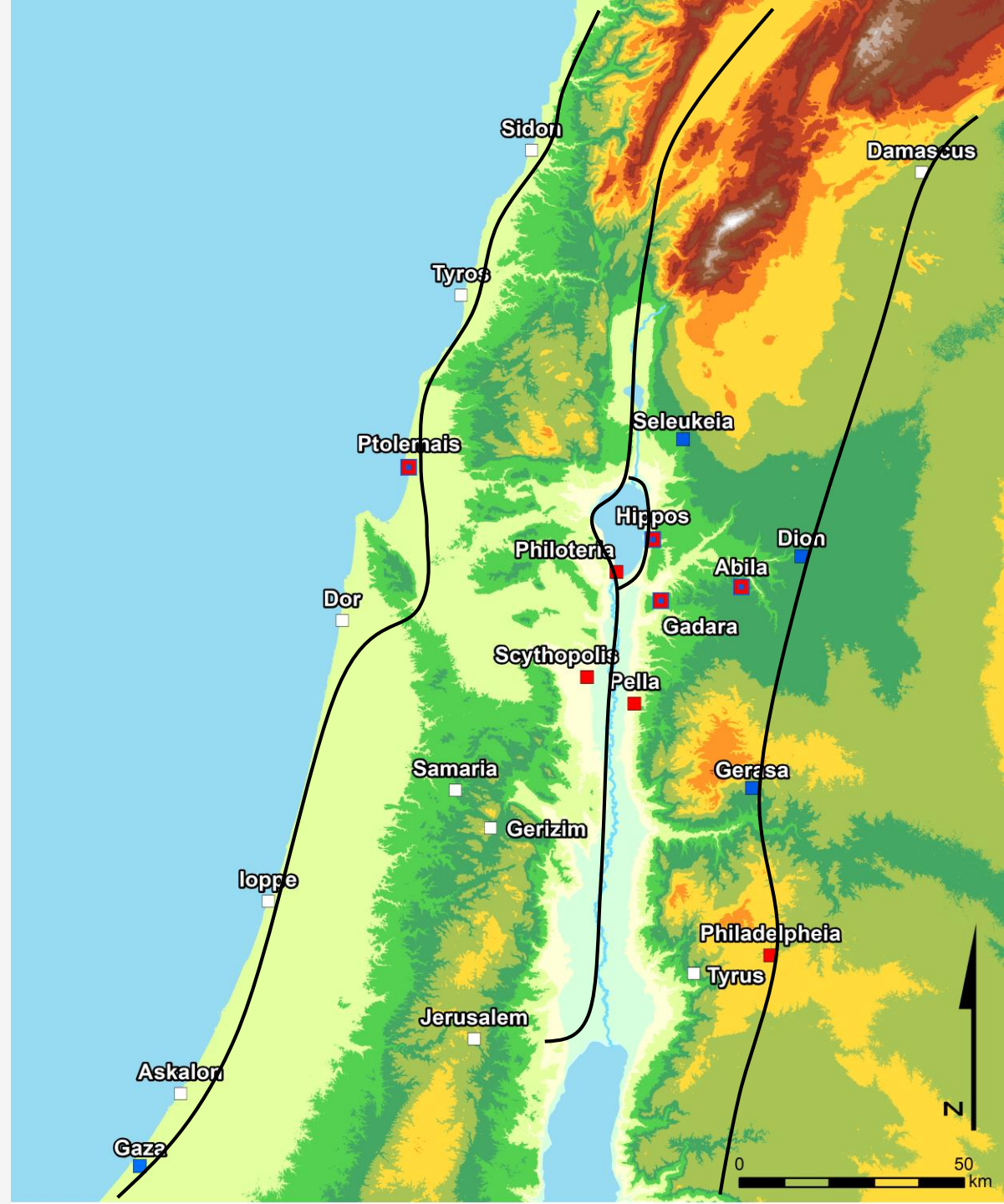
Ptolemy II Philadelphos

- Ptolemais
- Philoteria
- Philadelphia
- Scythopolis
- Pella
- Gadara
- Abila
- Hippos

Seleucus IV/Antiochus IV

- Seleukeia Gaza
- Seleukeia Gadara
- Seleukeia Abila
- Seleukeia in the Gaulanitis
- Antiocheia-Ptolemais Ake
- Antiocheia-on-the-Chrysorrhoeas
- Gerasa
- Antiocheia Hippos

Three main north-south communication routes indicated in black



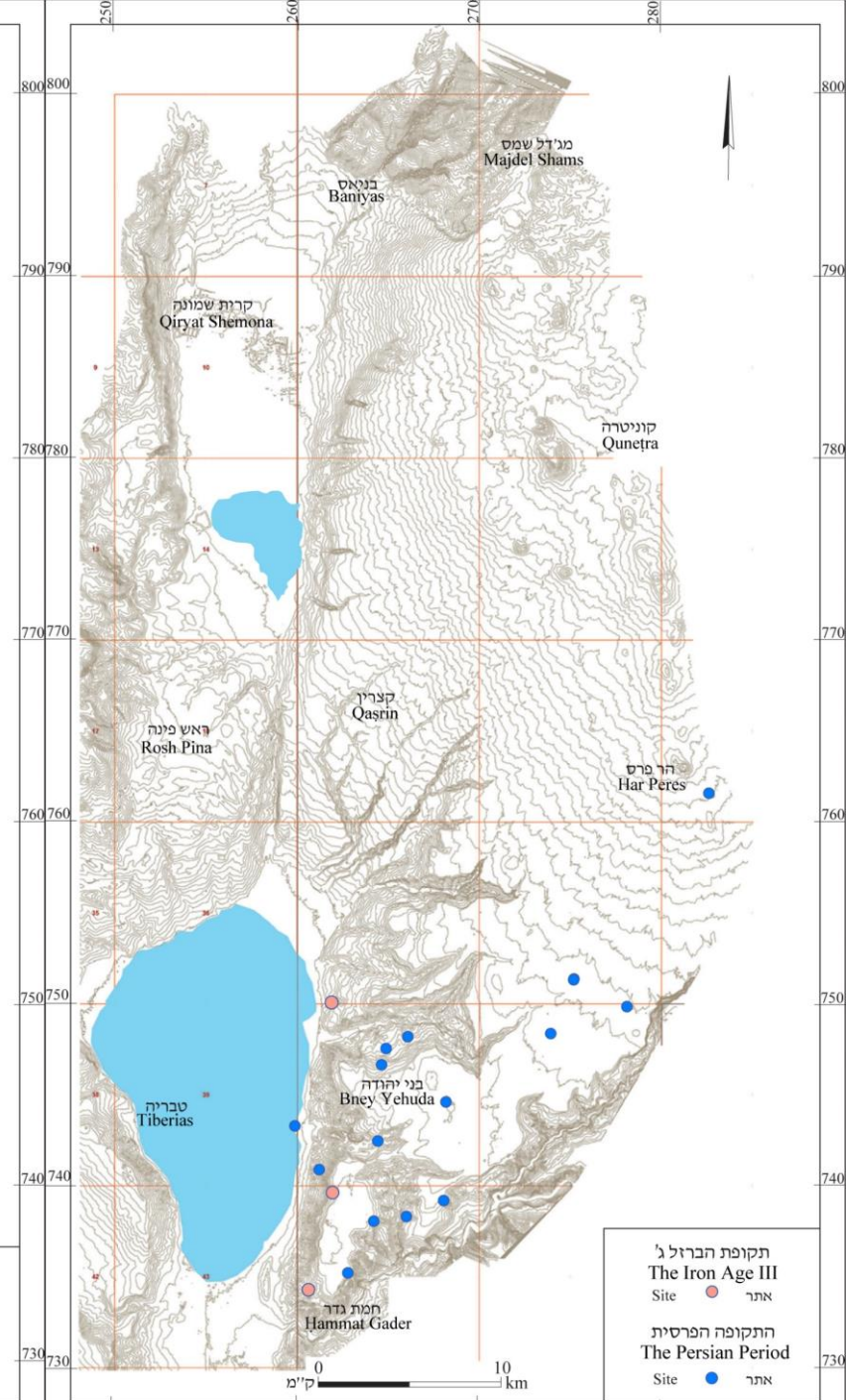
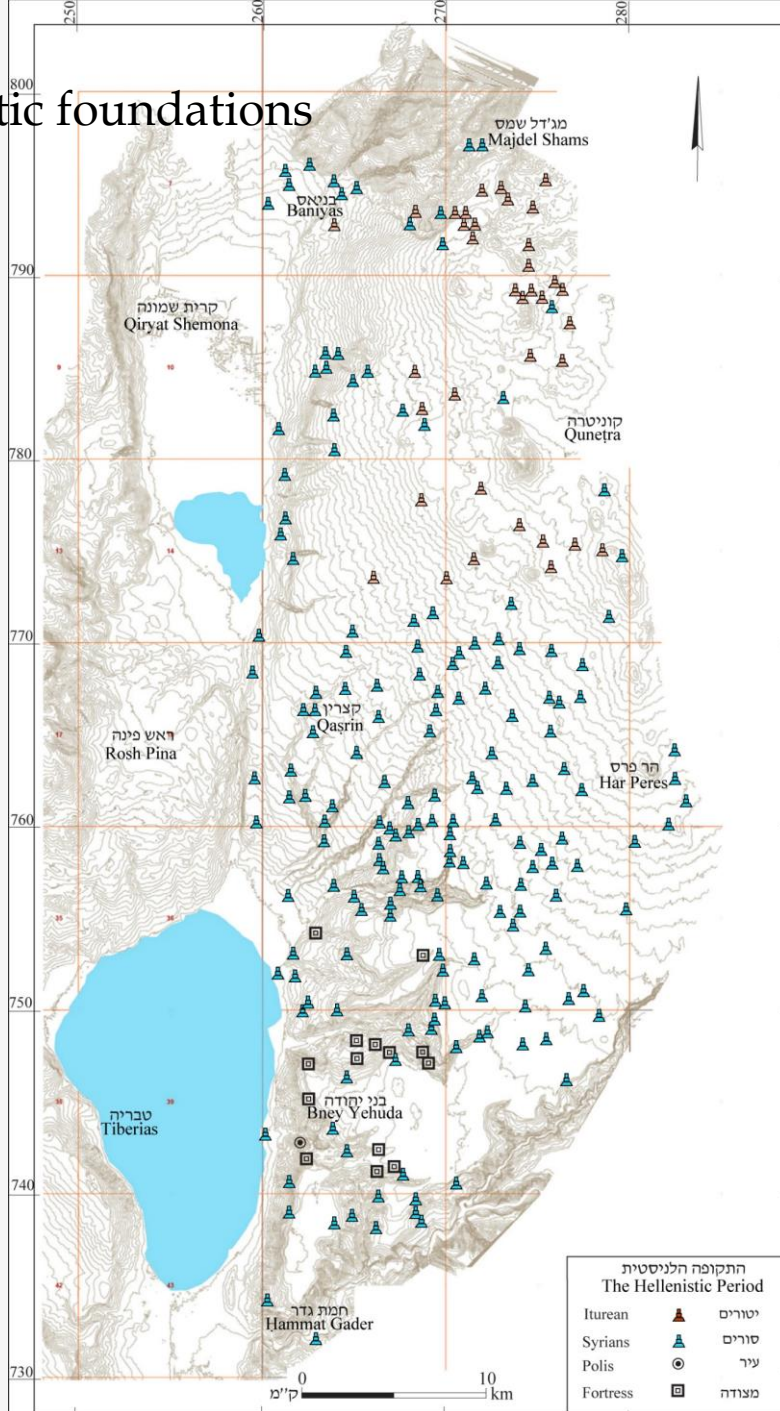
Hellenistic foundations

Growth of settlements in the Transjordan (Golan) – from 15 sites in the Persian period to more than 150 in the Hellenistic (majority however dating from the 2nd c. BCE onward, 3rd c. BCE is very poorly represented).

Settlement of Ituraeans in the north?

Settlement of Greek colonists in the south? (Hippos)

Other settlements? – Sedentarization of nomads?

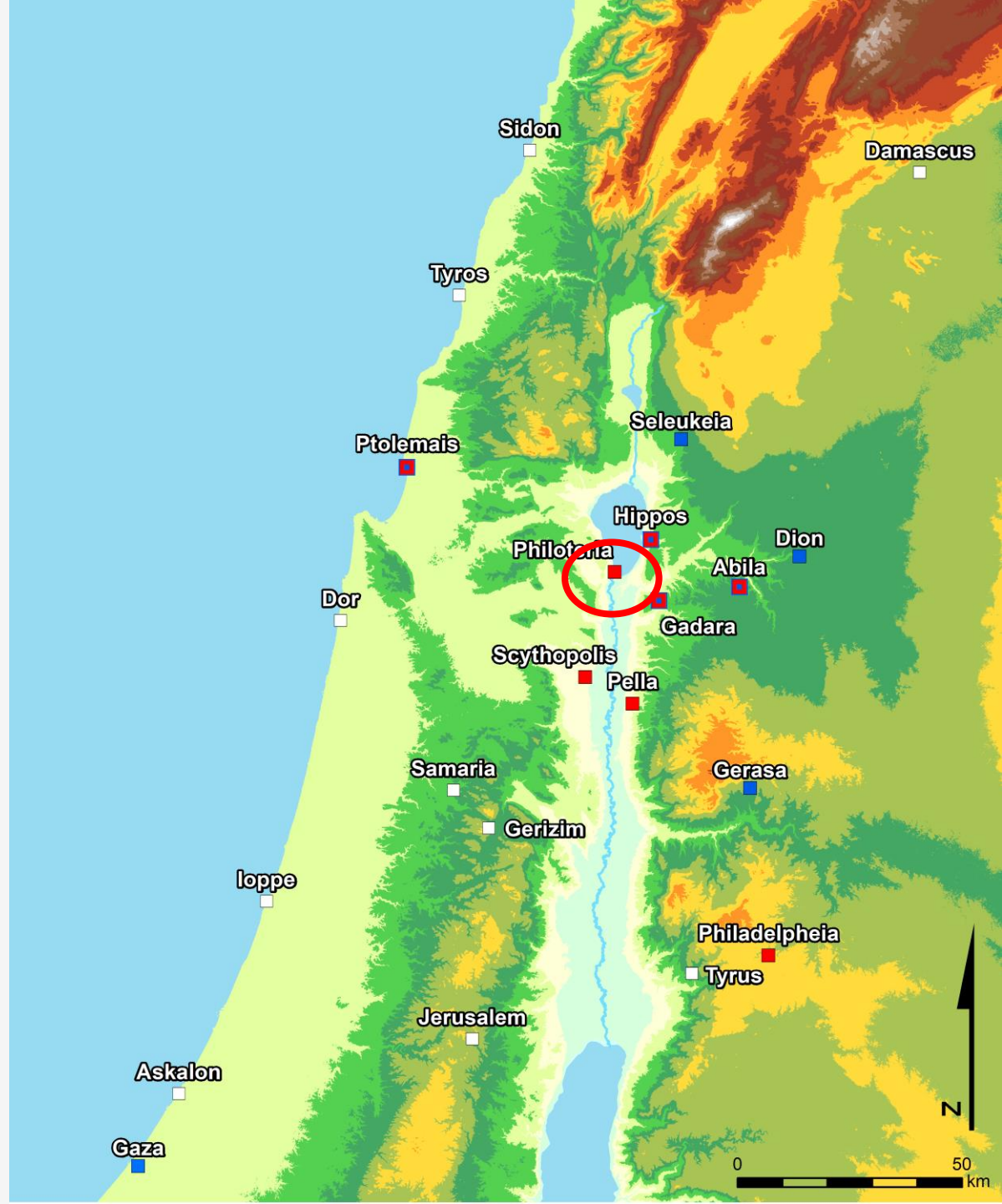


Main sites

Philoteria

“Now Philoteria is situated right upon the shores of the lake into which the river Jordan discharges itself, and from which it issues out again into the plains surrounding Scythopolis. The surrender of these two cities to him encouraged him to prosecute his further designs; because the country subject to them was easily able to supply his whole army with provisions, and everything necessary for the campaign in abundance.”

Polybius 5.70



Main sites

Philoteria

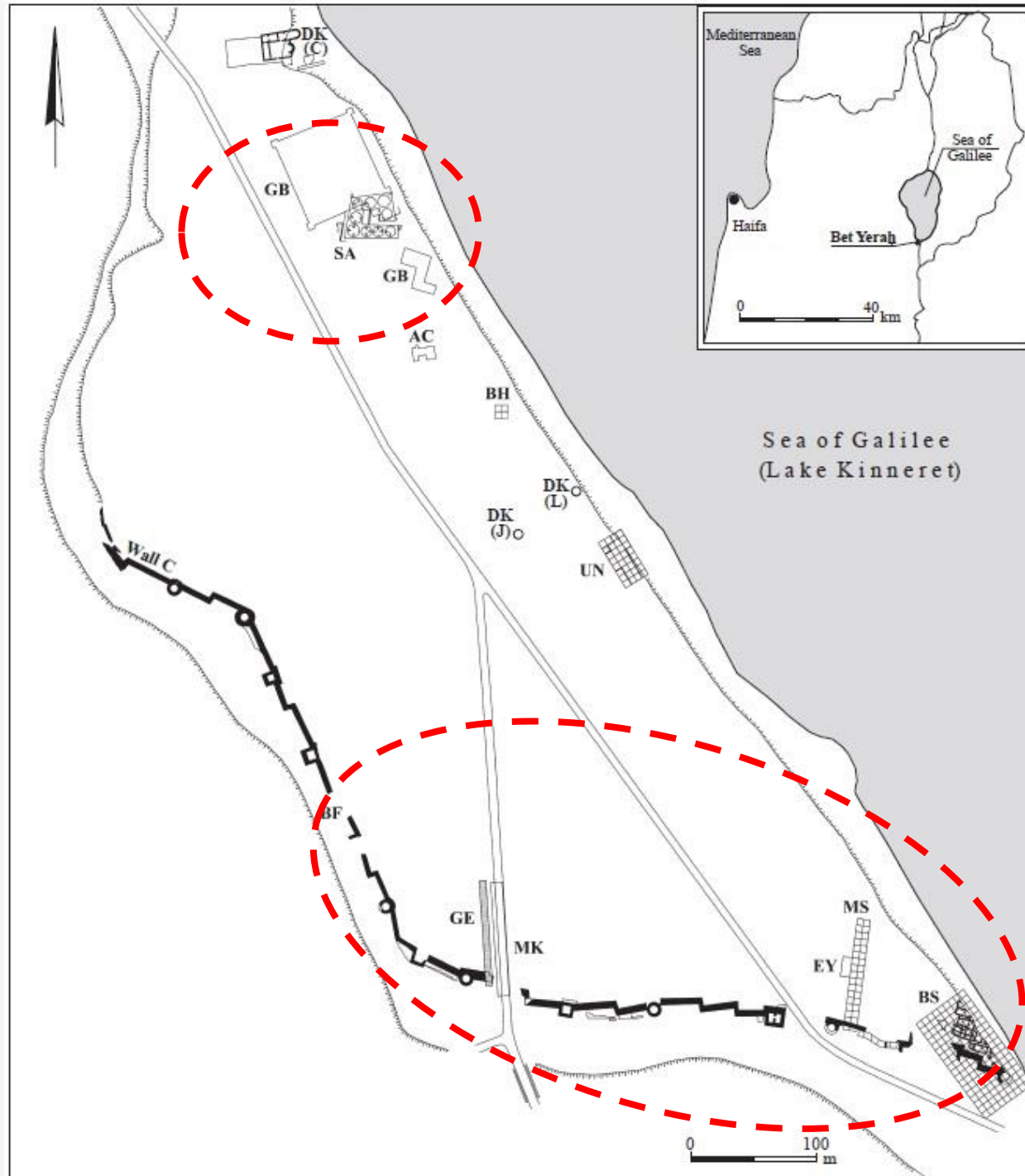
- Chalcolithic/EB tell
- ca. 27 ha
- Visible remains of EB architecture in the Hellenistic period
- Two core areas of HL settlement
- SW-NE orientation of the settlement
- Ancient discharge of the Jordan river from the Sea of Galilee indicated



Main sites

Philoteria

- Chalcolithic/EB tell
- ca. 27 ha
- Visible remains of EB architecture in the Hellenistic period
- Two core areas of HL settlement
- SW-NE orientation of the settlement



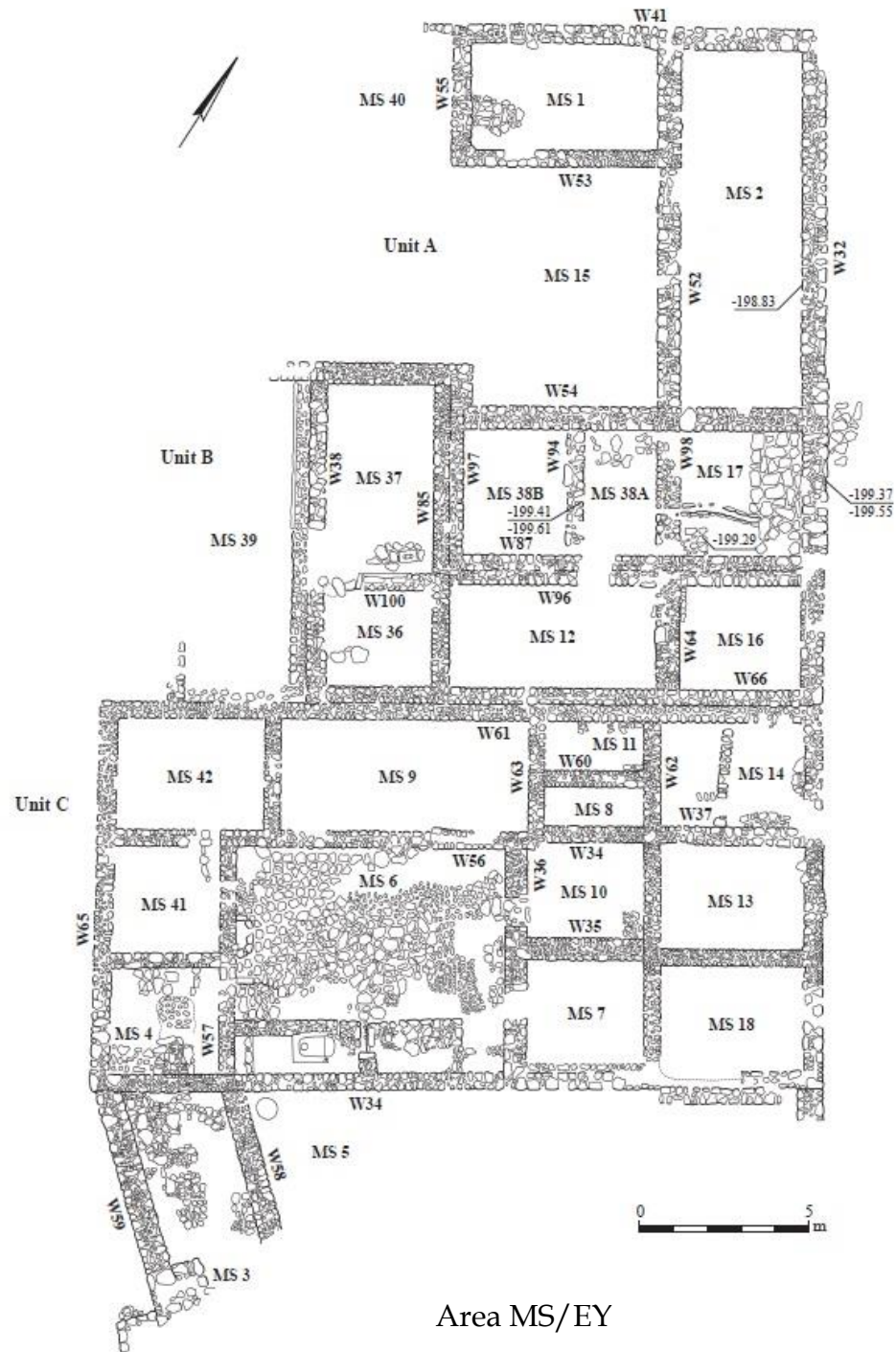
Main sites

Philoteria

- Domestic architecture – simple courtyard houses
- Rows of rooms open to the street – commercial, industrial spaces
- Stone foundations, mudbrick superstructure
- Paved courts



Area BS



Area MS/EY

Main sites

Philoteria

- Domestic architecture
- Plastered walls
- Stucco, fresco decoration (see the red band with acanthus leaves in the upper register on the right)



Area BS



Area BS

Main si

Philoteria

- Material culture
- Fish plates, bowls
- Slip

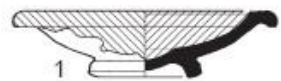
13, 14 - table
amphoras

15, 16 - craters

Imports:

8 - Egyptian Buto
ware

11-15 Phoenician
semi-fine ware



1



2



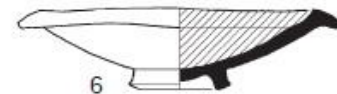
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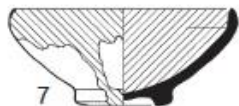
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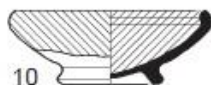
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8



9



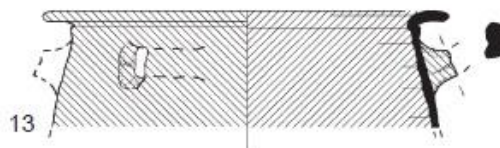
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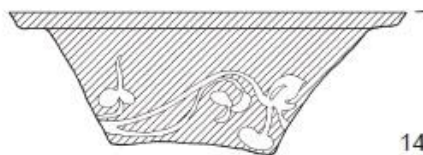
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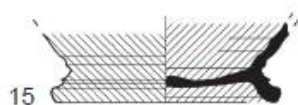
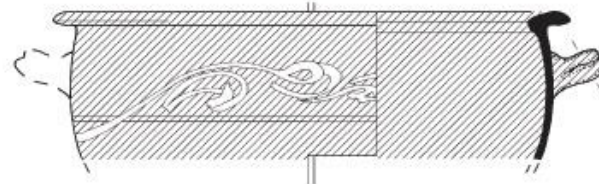
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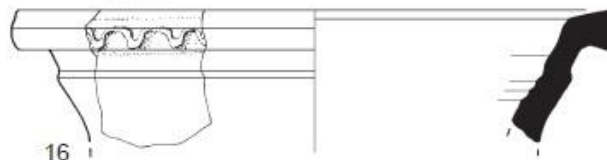
13



14



15



16

Area MS



Main sites

Philoteria

- Material culture

- Imports

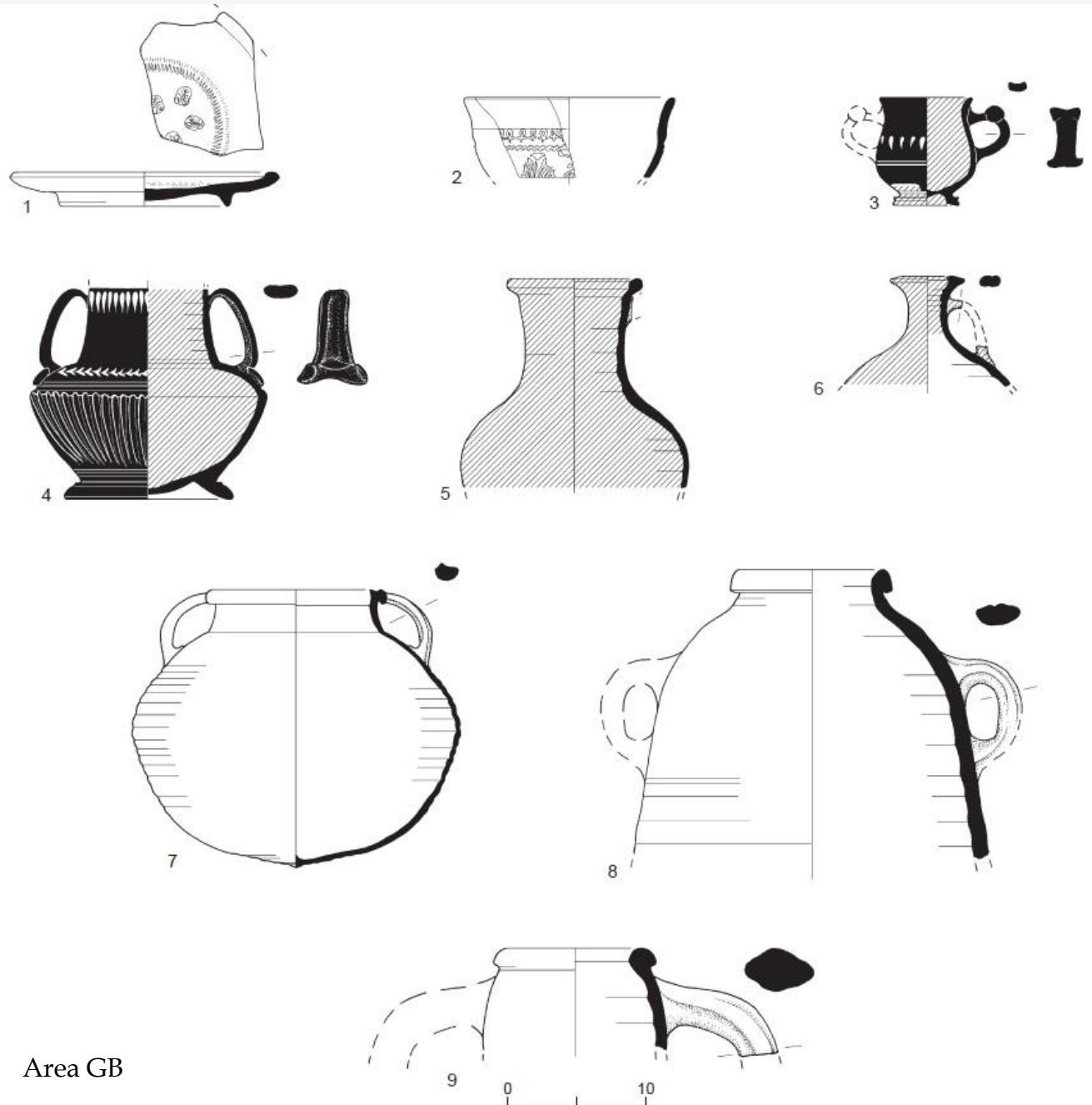
1 - Attic

2 - Relief semi-fine ware

3,4 - West slope (Eastern production - Asia Minor)

8 - Phoenician amphora

9 - Chian amphora

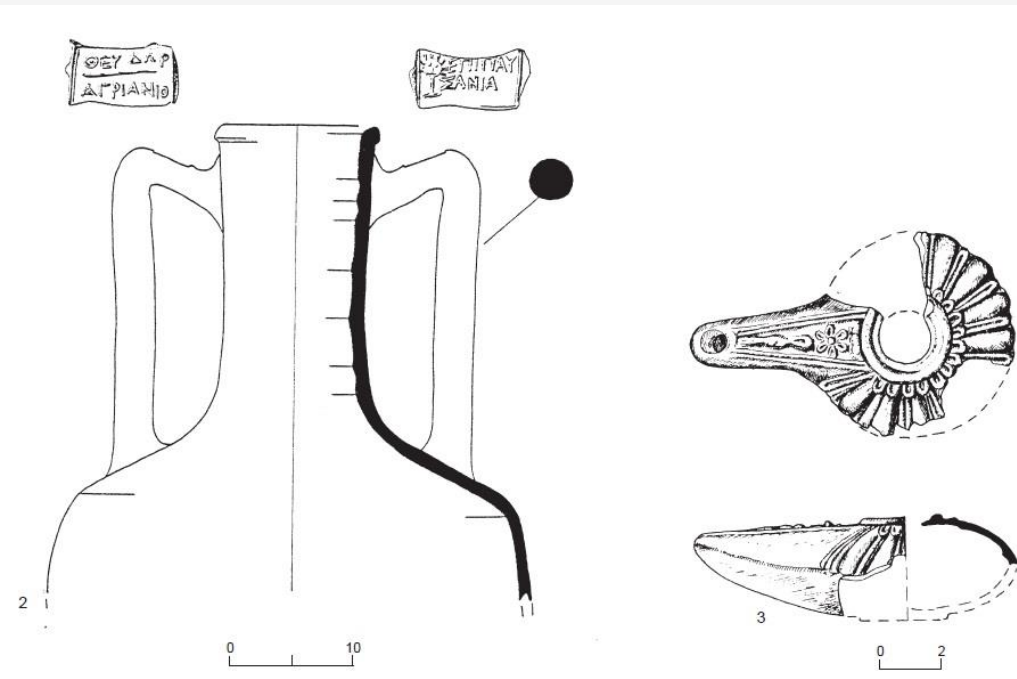


Area GB

Main sites

Philoteria

- Material culture
- Mold made/wheel made lamps
- “Athenian” style terracottas (local manufacture but style and manufacture method are Athenian)



Area MS



Area MS



Main sites

Philoteria

- Material culture
 - Amphorae
- Rhodian
Chian
Knidian
Koan
- 96 stamped handles
(91 Rhodian, 2
Knidian, 1 Koan)

Area EY/MS; MS 2; Reg. No. 528

Shape: Rectangular

ΕΠΙΠΛΑΥ / ΣΑΝΙΑ

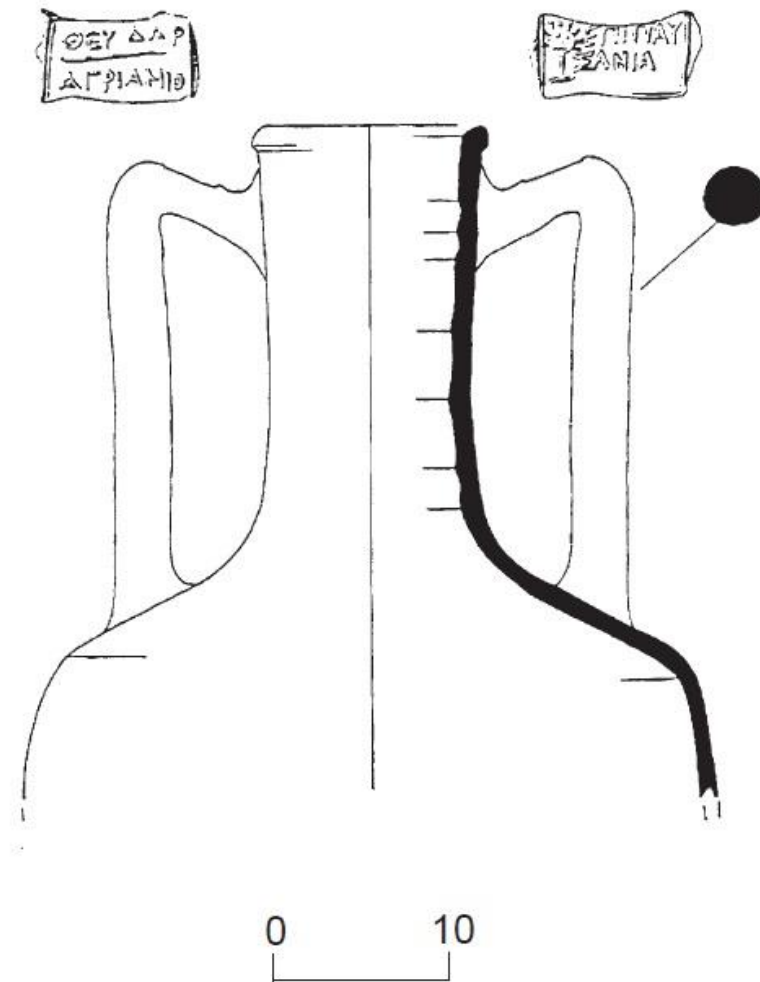
Eponym/Device: Πανσωνίας/ Head of Helios, on left

Shape: Rectangular

ΘΕΥΔΩΡ / ΑΓΡΙΑΝΙΟΥ

Fabricant: ΘΕΥΔΩΡΟΣ

Date: Period IIc (c. 225 BCE)



Main sites

Philoteria

- Stamped amphorae handles
- Starting mid-3rd c. BCE
- Eponyms: up to 134/3 BCE
(Areas BS, GB)
- Fabricants: up to 107-88/86 BCE
(surface finds)

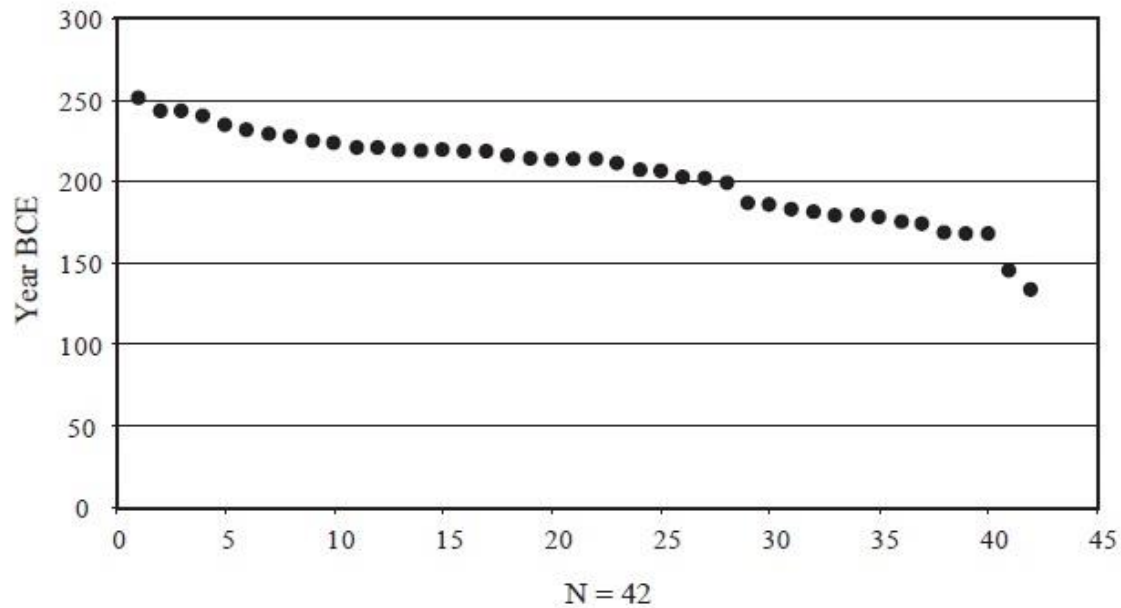
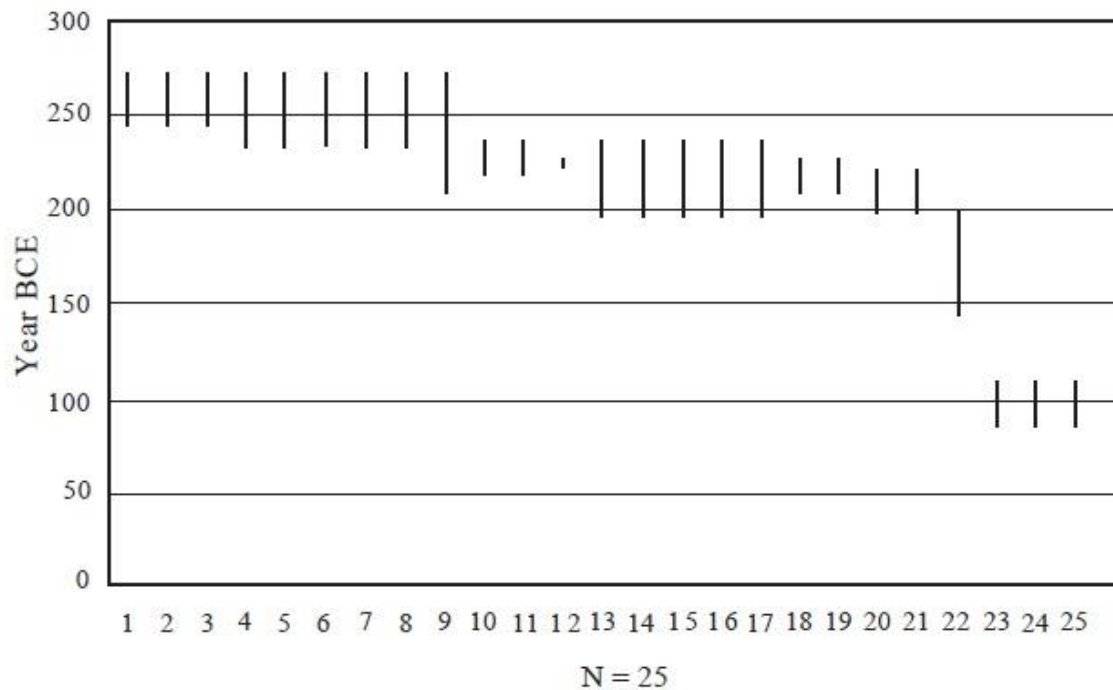


Fig. 5.2. Graph illustrating date range of Rhodian eponyms.



Main sites

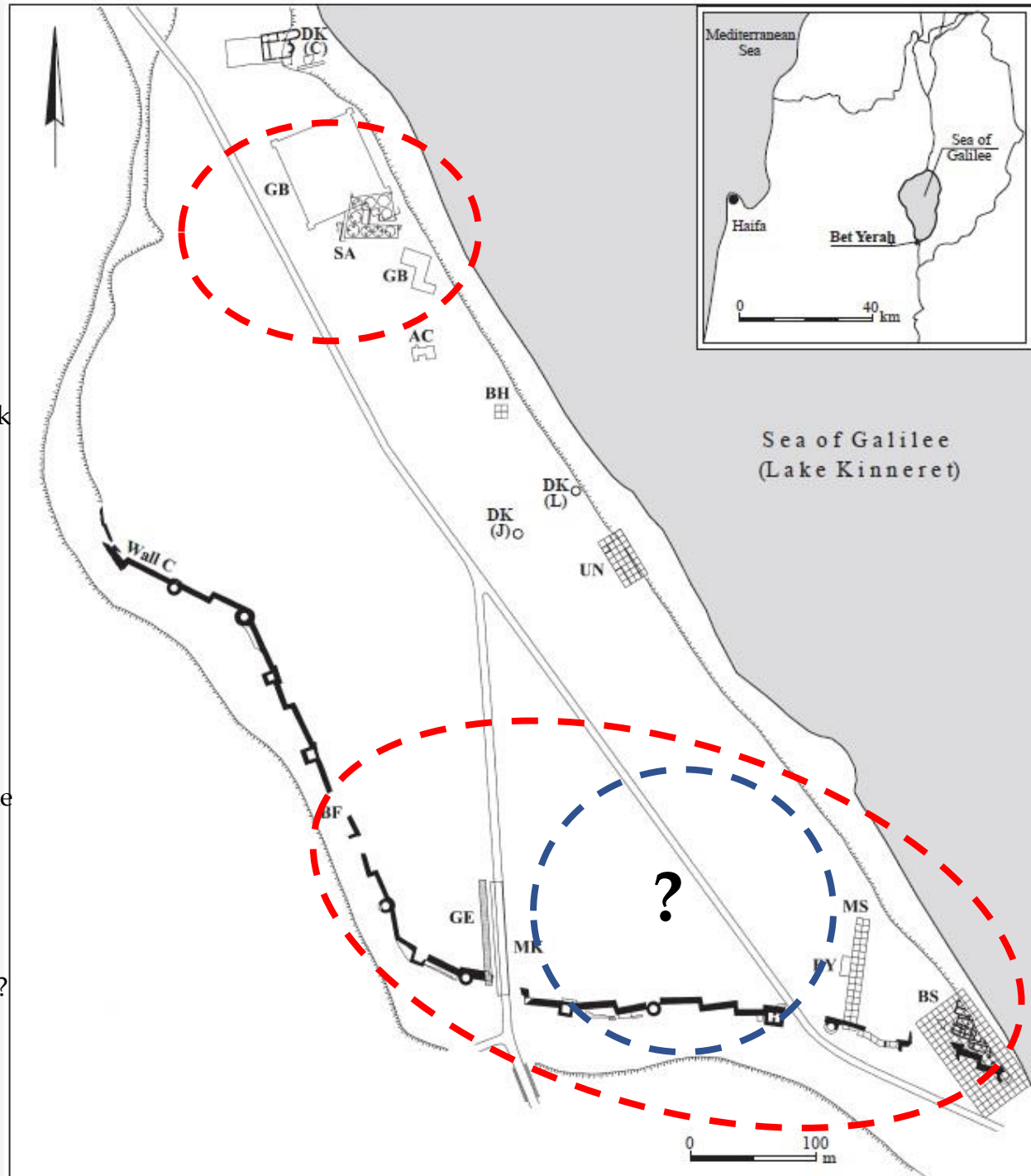
Philoteria

- First destruction connected with Jonathan's campaign against Demetrius II in Galilee? (1 Macc. 11.63-74, battle of Hazor and sack of Kadasa - north of the Sea of Galilee)

→ ca. 145 BCE

Several other destructions in the Galilee can be connected to this event

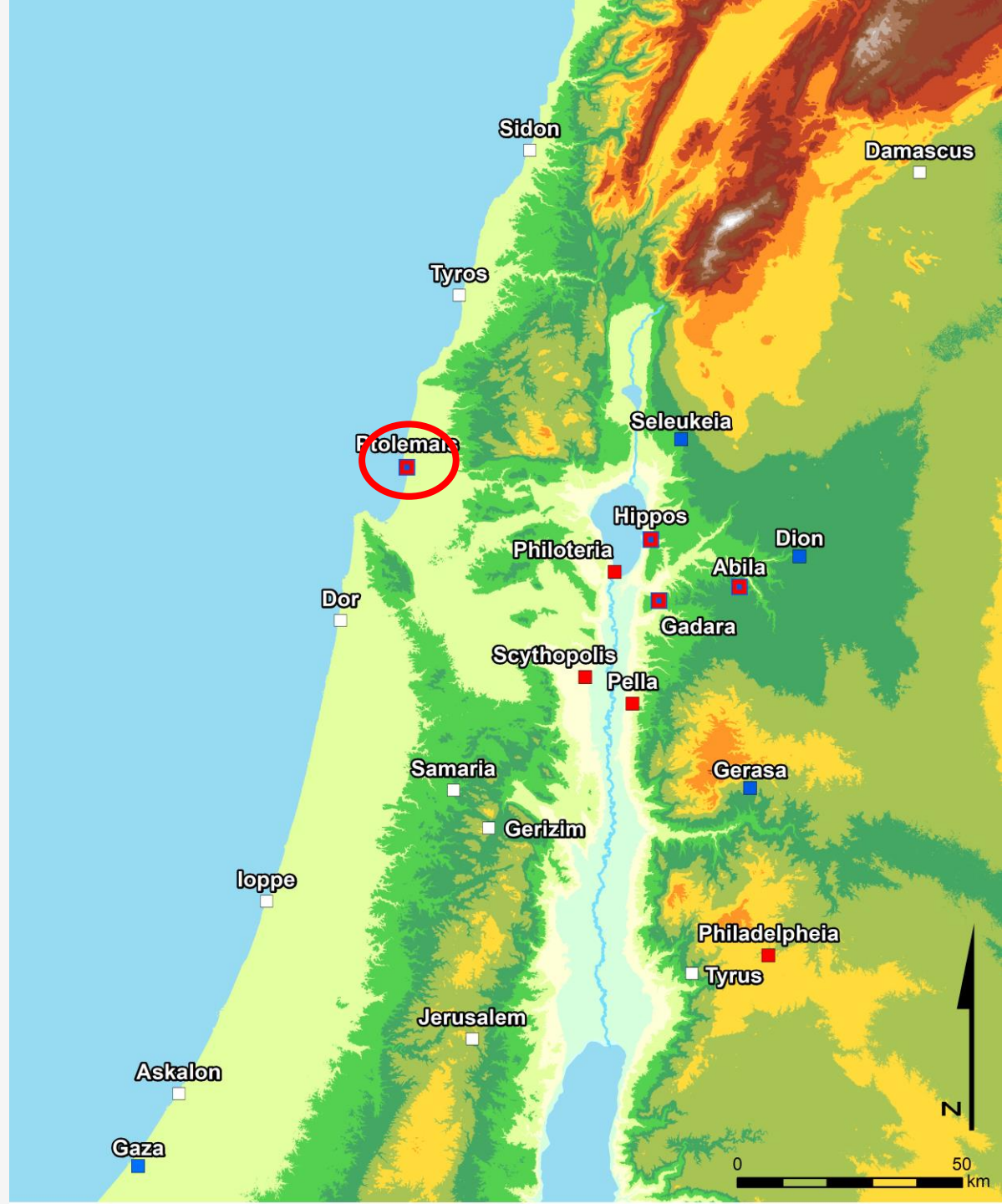
- Continuing settlement only in the southern part of the site?
- Final destruction under Alexander Yannaeus 90/80 BCE?



Main sites

Ptolemais-Ako

- Important harbour town (last natural harbour before reaching Egypt)
- Ancient BA/IA tell settlement above Belos river (Nahal Na'aman) estuary

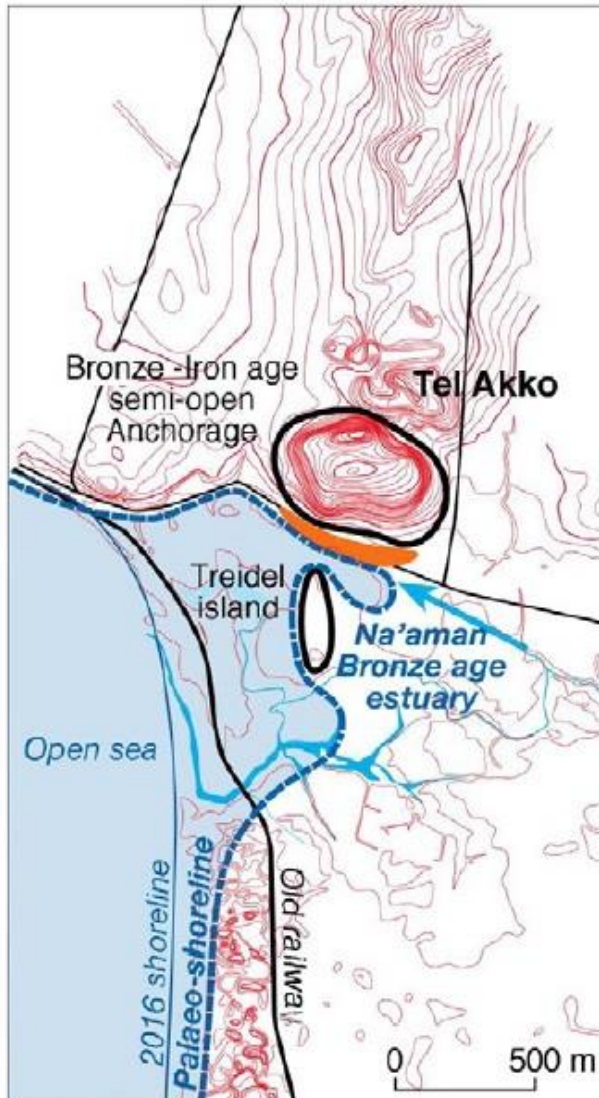


Main sites

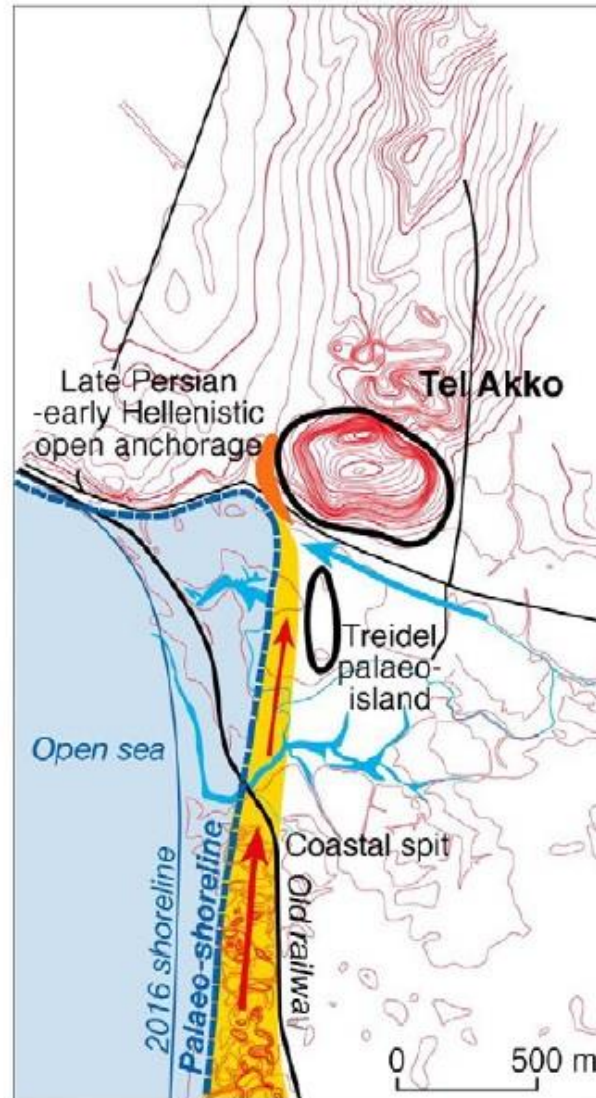
Ptolemais-Ako

- Gradual silting of the river estuary and harbour below the tell

Until 2800 years BP



2800-2000 years BP



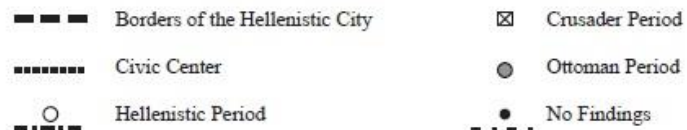
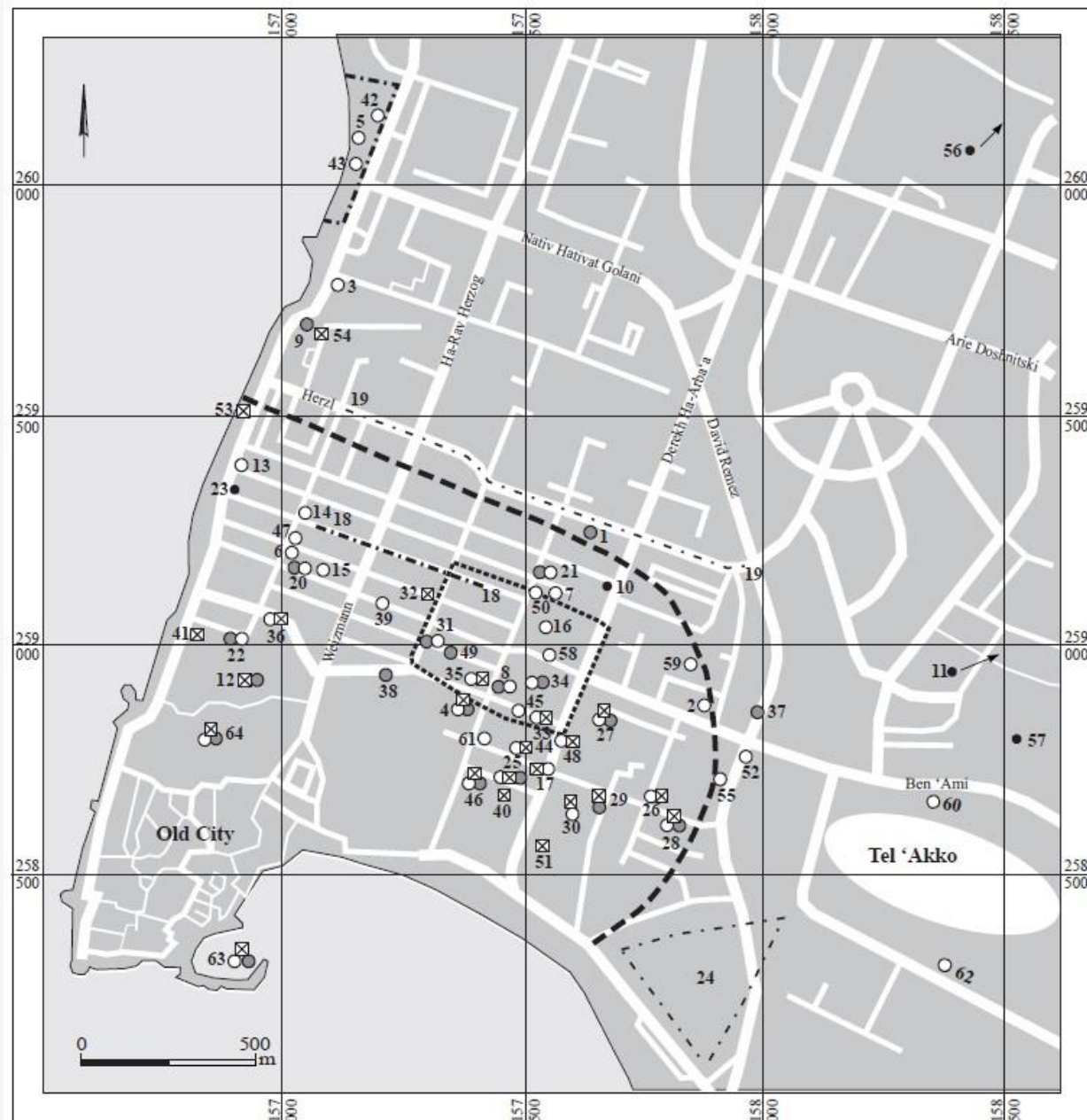
2016 AD



Main sites

Ptolemais-Ako

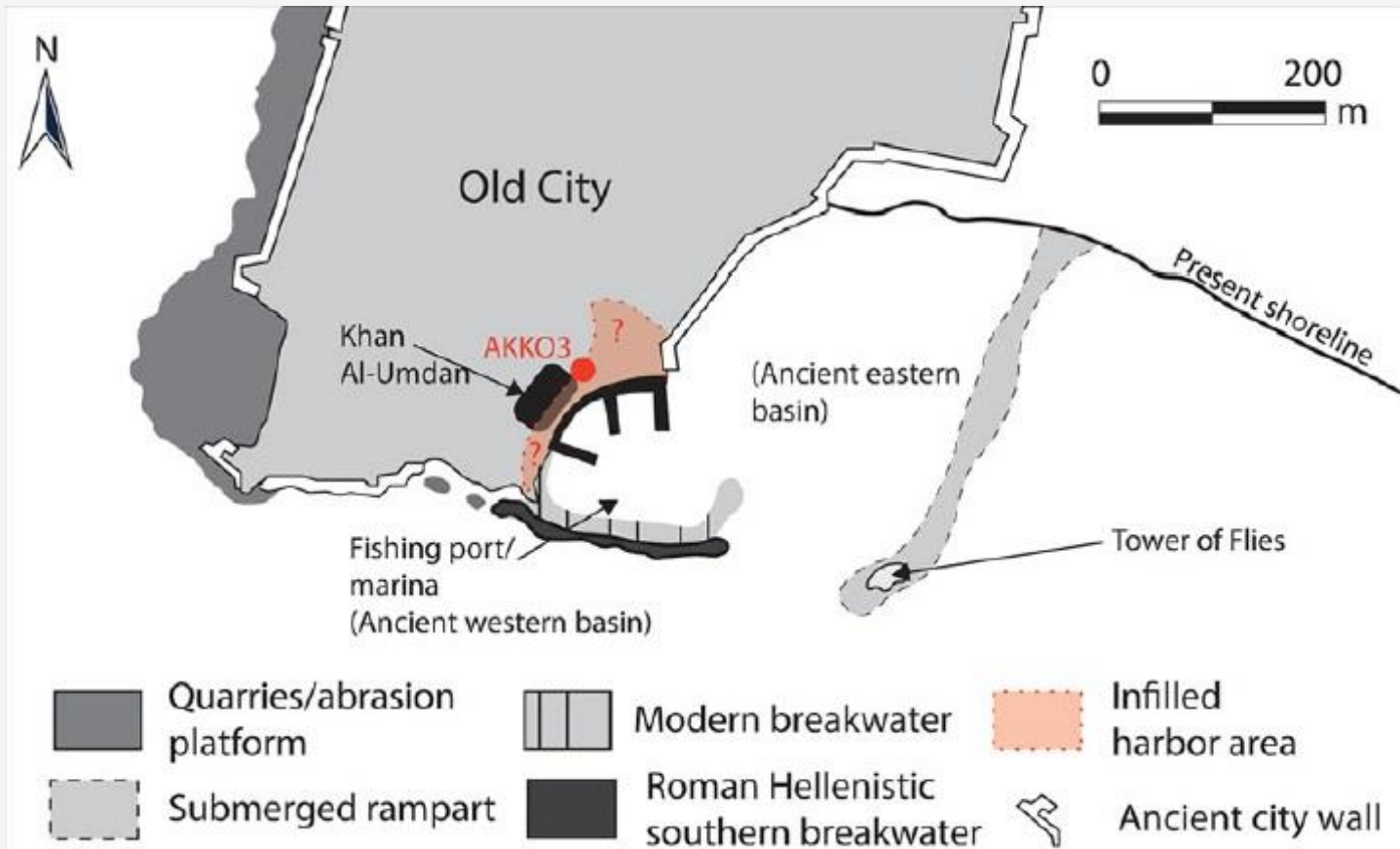
- Ptolemaic new foundation to the west of the tell
- Civic centre - agora, temple - moved to the lower city, tell gradually abandoned
- Harbour moved to the promontory



Main sites

Ptolemais-Ako

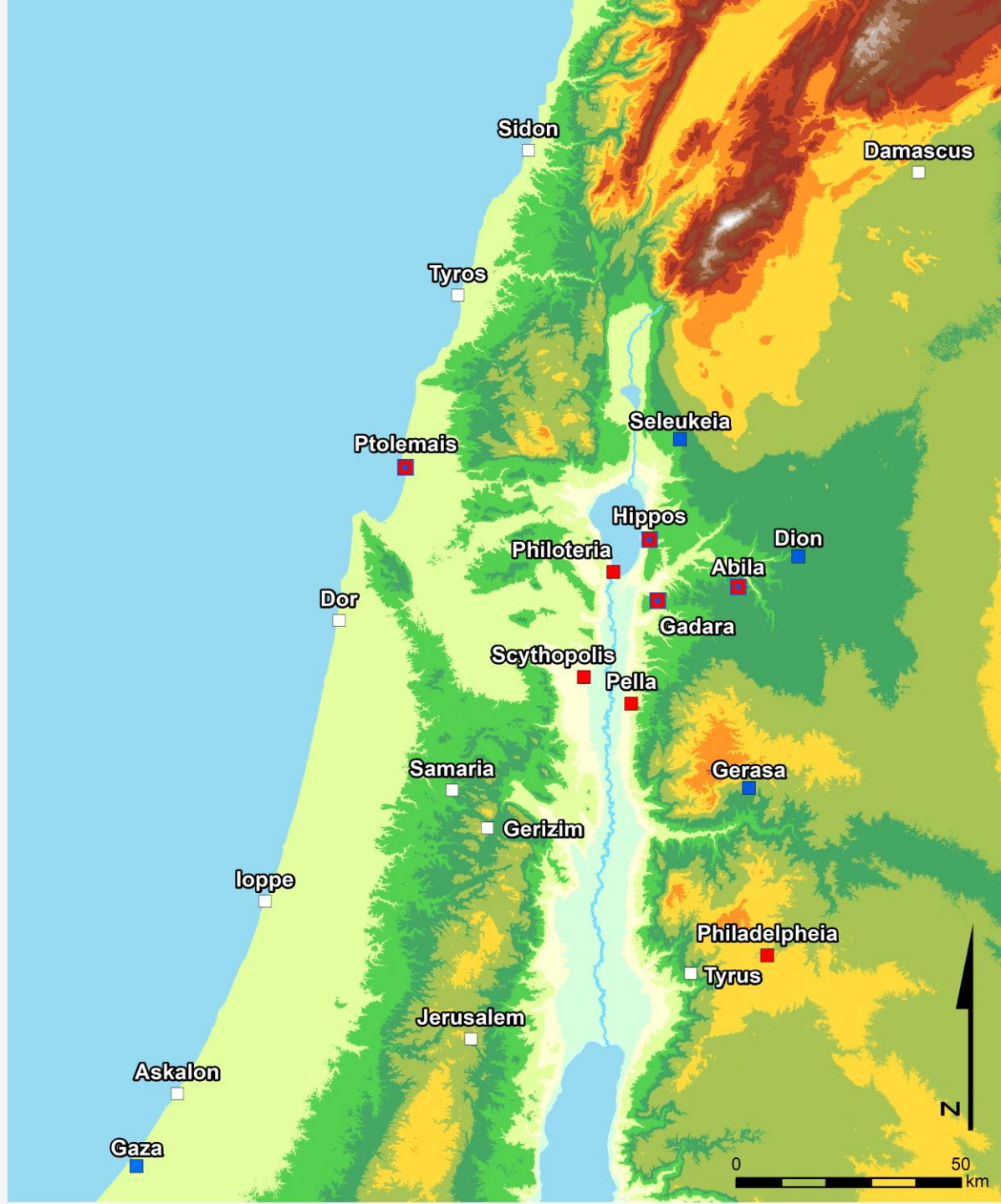
- Ptolemaic new foundation to the west of the tell
- Civic centre - agora, temple - moved to the lower city, tell gradually abandoned
- Harbour moved to the promontory



Main sites

Other Ptolemaic foundations

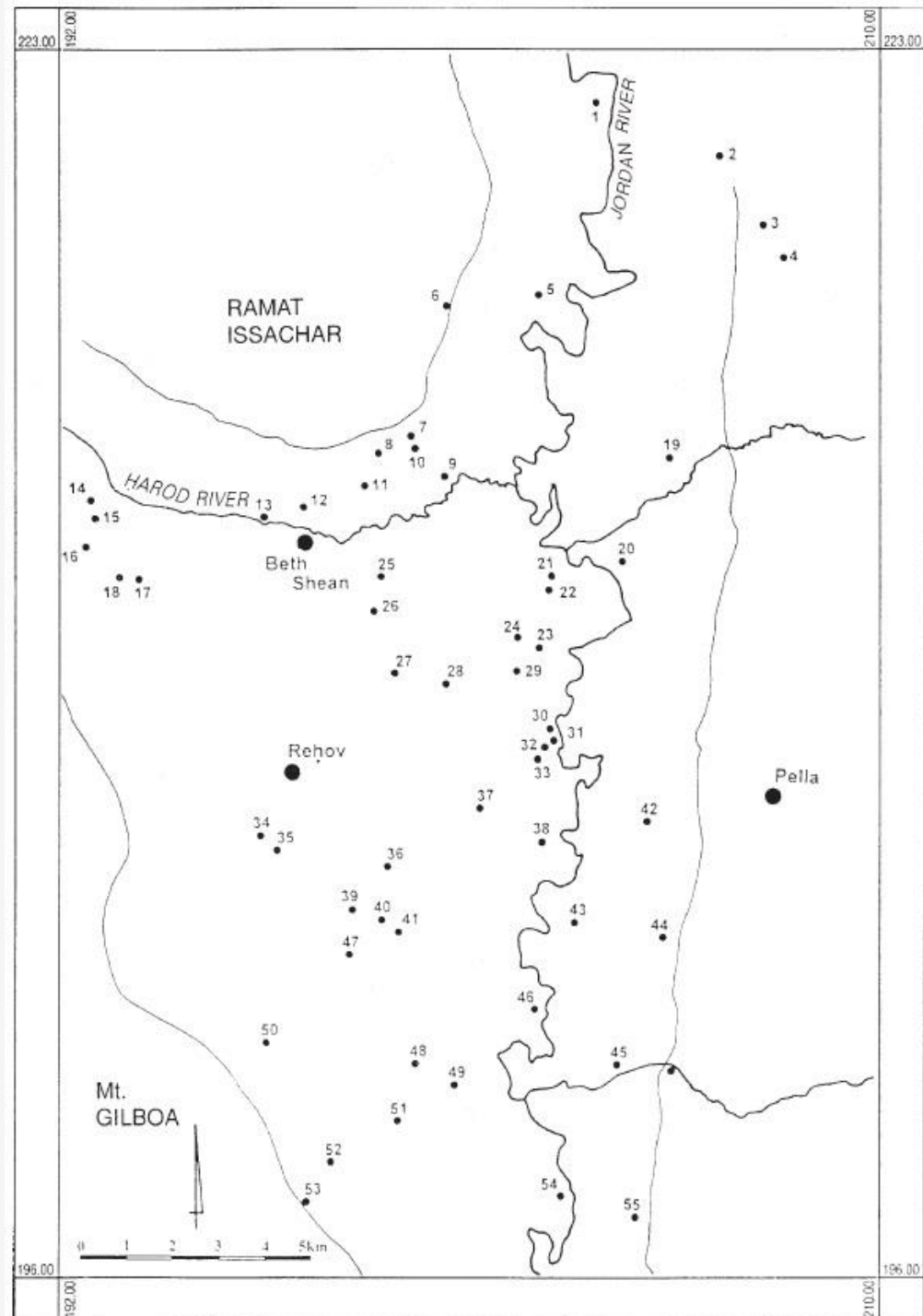
- Tell sites/hillocks
- 3rd c. BCE poorly represented



Main sites

Scythopolis

- Ancient BA/IA tell above Harod River in the Yezre'el valley (rich alluvial deposits favouring intensive agriculture)
- Natural corridor from the coast to the Jordan Valley and further east
- Across from Pella - on the route to the Transjordan



Main sites

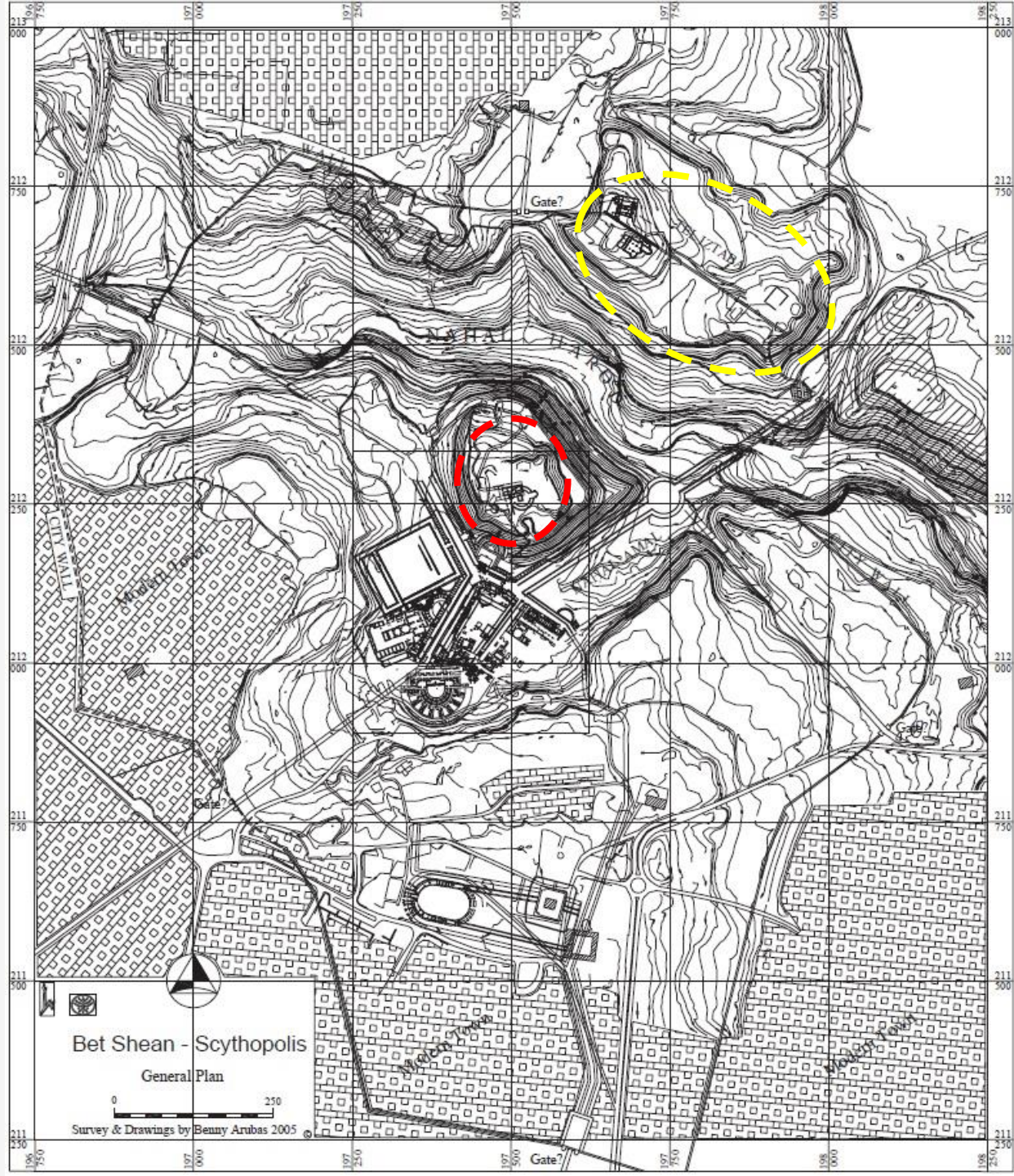
Scythopolis



Main sites

Scythopolis

- Tel Beth Shean/Tell el-Husn (red, ca. 1.5 ha)
- Tel Iztabbah (yellow, ca. 6.5 ha) – only 2nd c. BCE!
- Hellenistic remains under Byzantine levels on the main tell
- At Tel Iztabbah often directly below surface
- Coin hoard of Ptolemy II Philadelphos on the main tell hints at the foundation date



Main sites

Scythopolis

- Material culture
- Fish plates, bowls

Imports:

- West slope, Black glaze, Relief mould-made bowls
- Stamped amphora handles

51 from Tel Beth Shean – all 3rd c. BCE

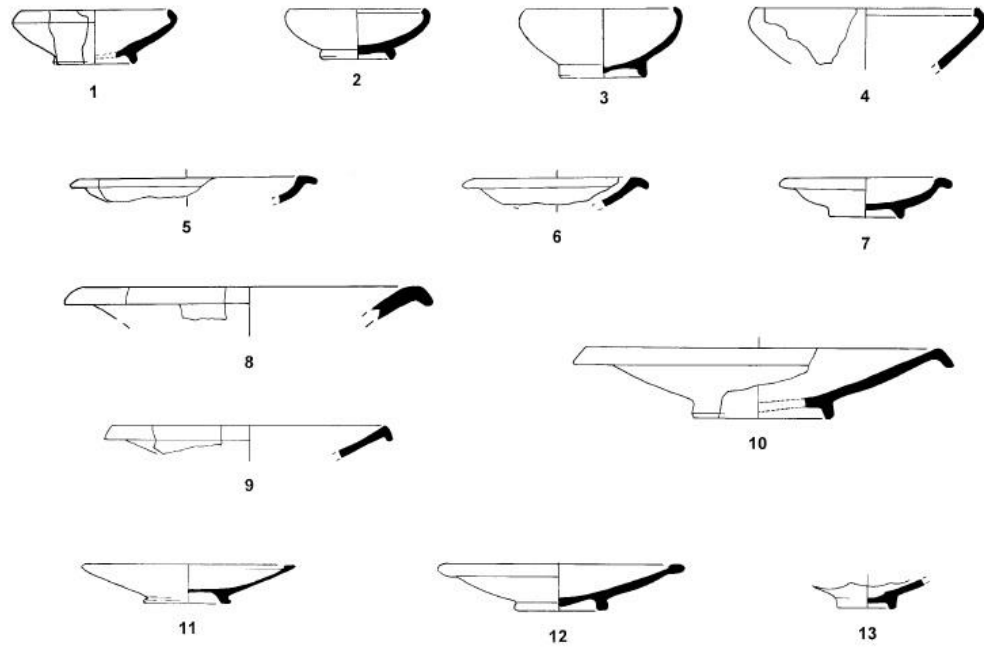
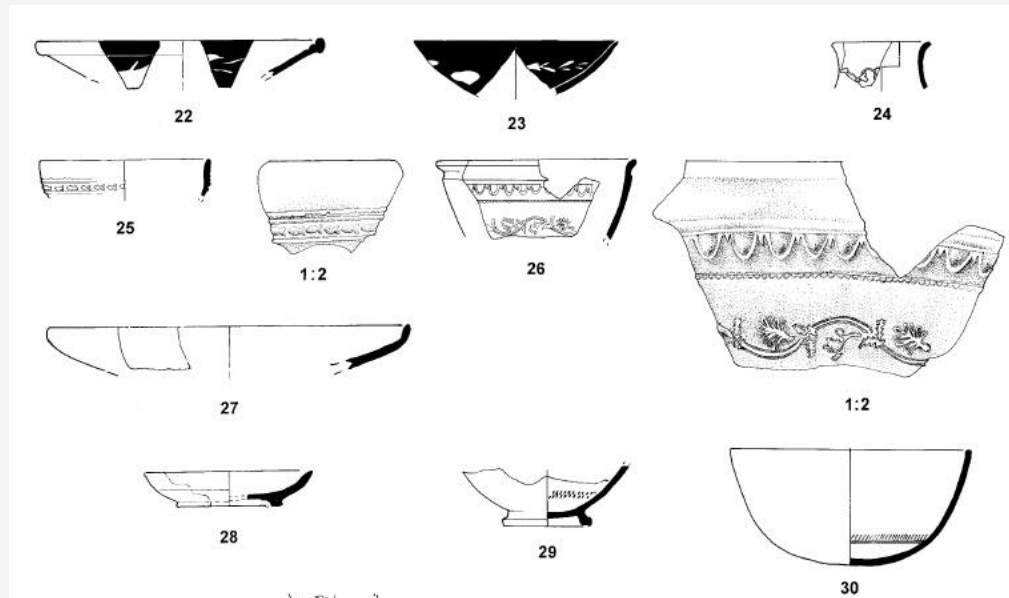


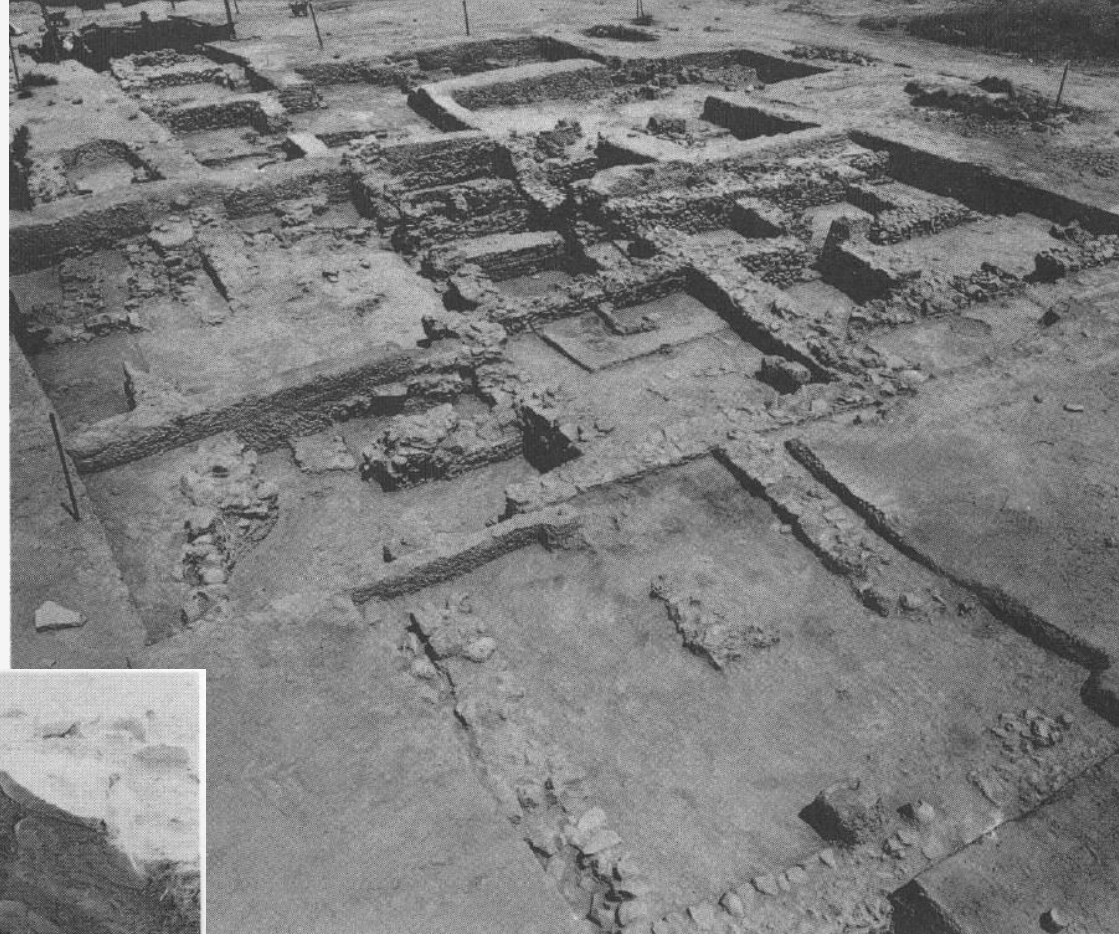
Photo 15.3. “West Slope Technique” saucer, Cat. No. 23



Main sites

Scythopolis

- Tel Iztabbah
- Purely 2nd c. BCE settlement
- Over 100+ Rhodian stamped handles
- Destruction layer
- Both dated ca. 108 BCE (John Hyrcanus I)



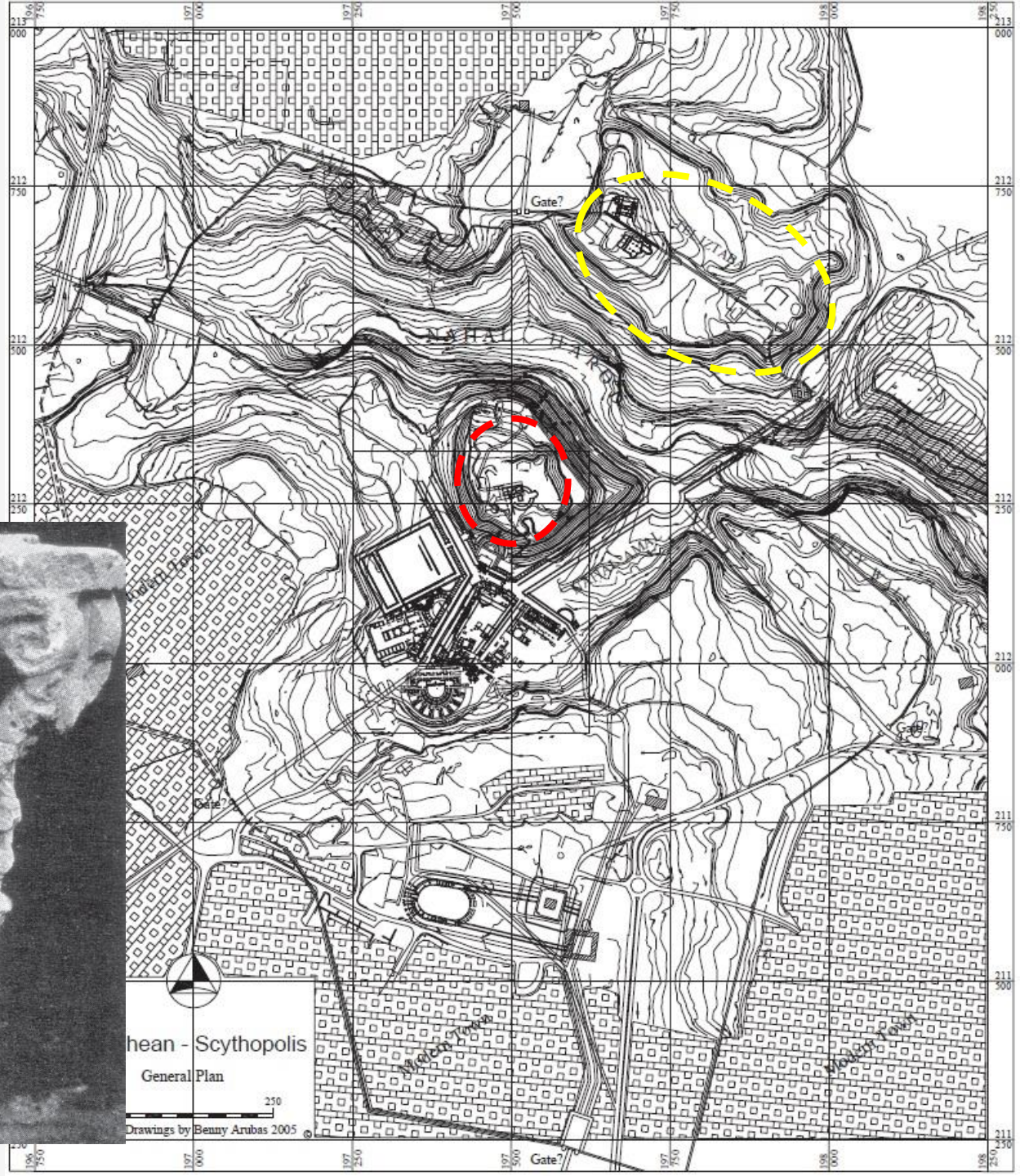
- Courtyard houses built from mudbrick with stone foundations – same as in Philoteria

Left: Rhodian amphorae in situ in the destruction layer

Main sites

Scythopolis

- Cult place at Tel Beth Shean (Zeus Olympios)
- Seleucid re-foundation on Tel Iztabbah?
- Composite capital from Tel Iztabbah suggests large public buildings already in the 2nd c. BCE



Main sites

Pella

On the ascent from the Jordan Valley to the east



Main sites

Pella

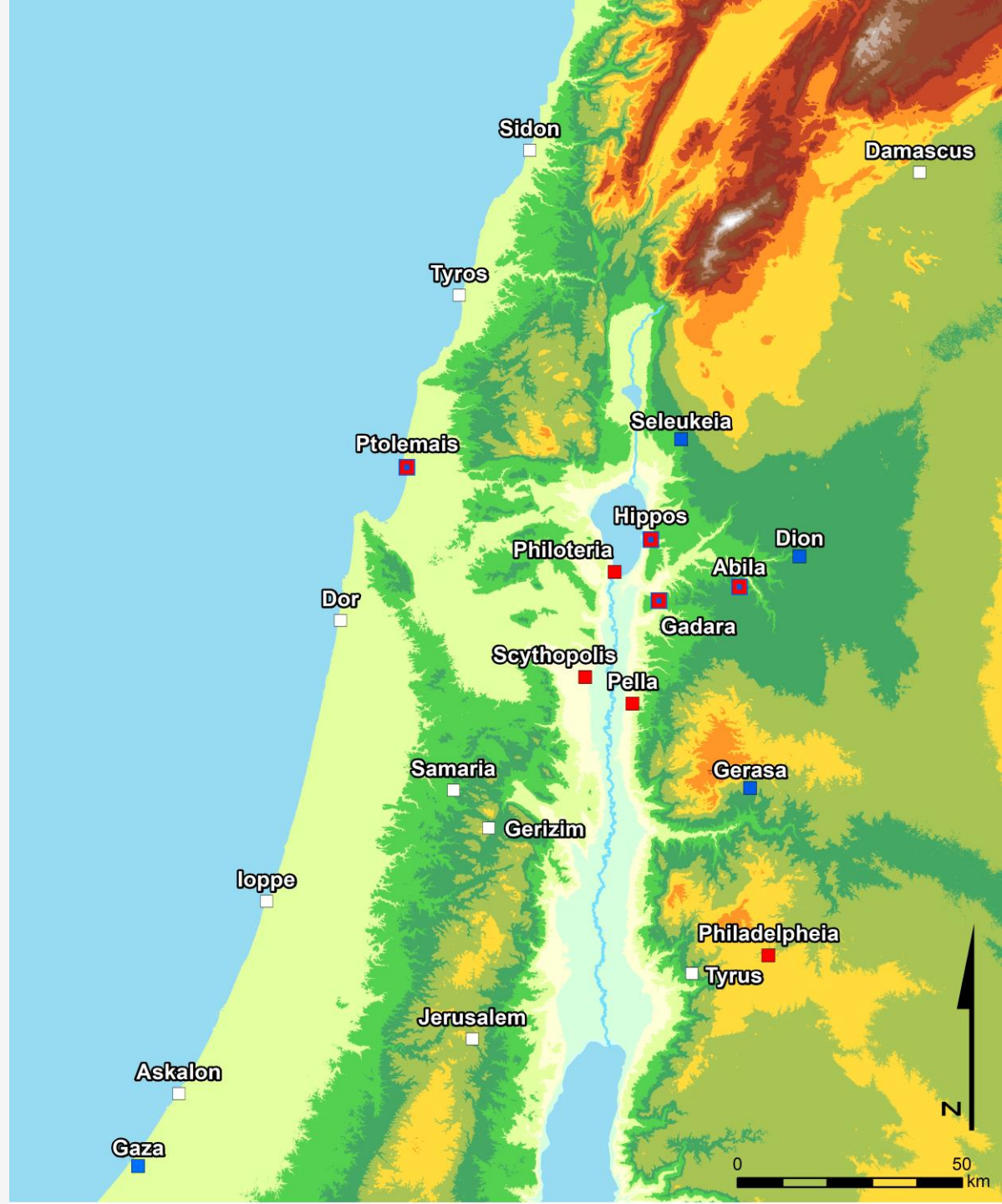
- Tabaqat Fahl ca. 5 ha
no clear 3rd c. BCE strata
- Tell el-Husn (BA/IA tell)
ca. 1.5 ha
indications of 3rd c. BCE
settlement



Main sites

Seleucid foundations

- Also tell sites/hillocks/ridges
- Several has Ptolemaic phase (Hippos, Gadara, Abila, Scythopolis)
- Elevation of settlement status? (from military colony to *polis*) – true at least for Gadara



Main sites

Gadara

Gadara (red) in relation to Philoteria (white)



Main sites

Gadara

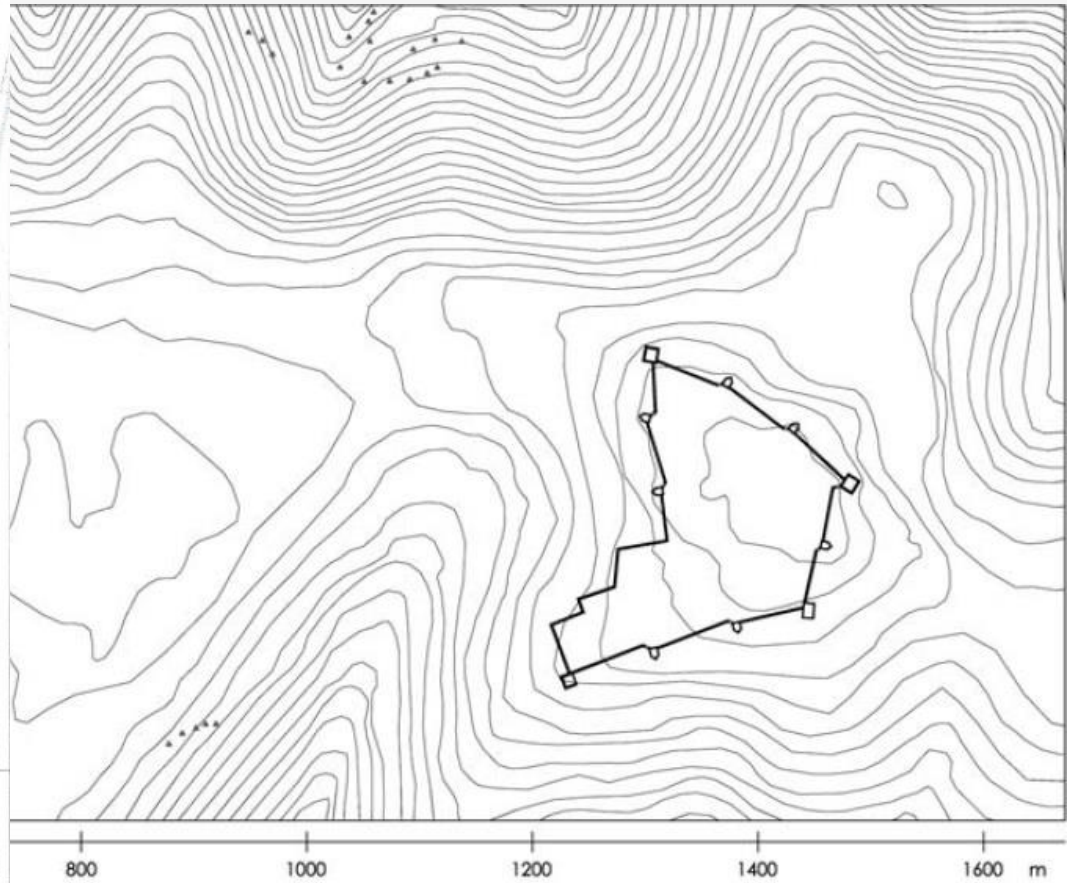
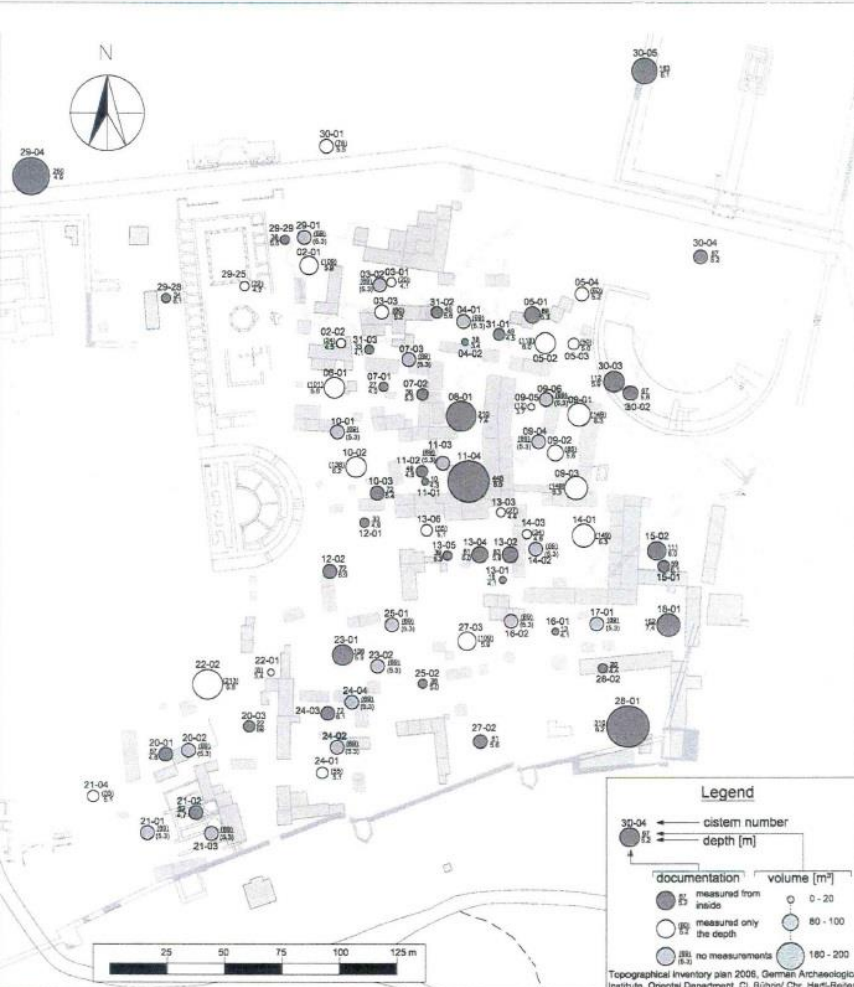
- Situation of the settlement on a small elevation on a narrow ridge between Yarmouk River to the north and another wadi to the south



Main sites

Gadara

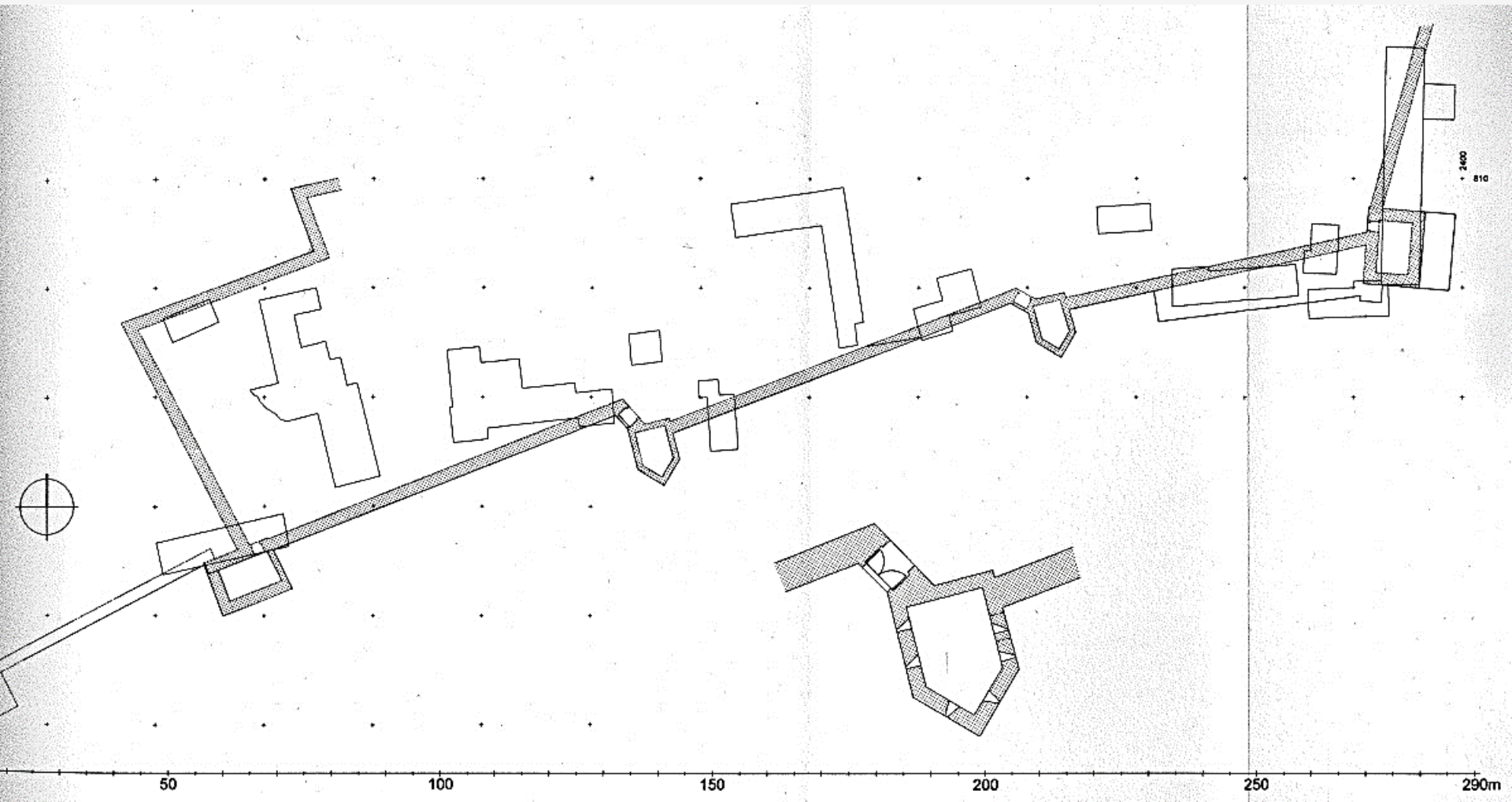
- Fortifications of the early 2nd c. BCE
- Ca. 5 ha (city wall + cisterns)



Main sites

Gadara

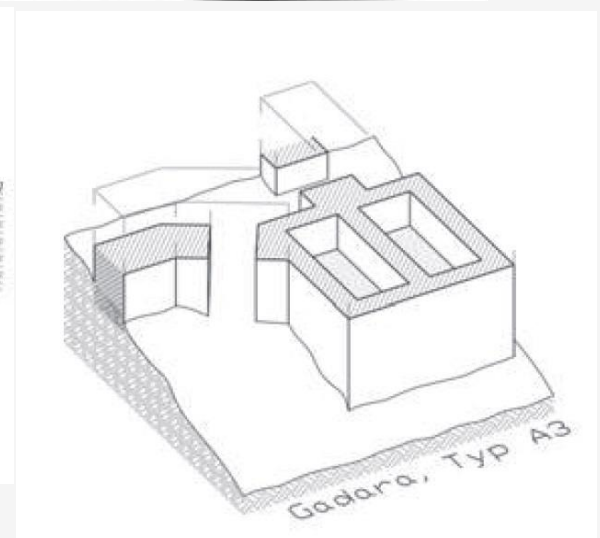
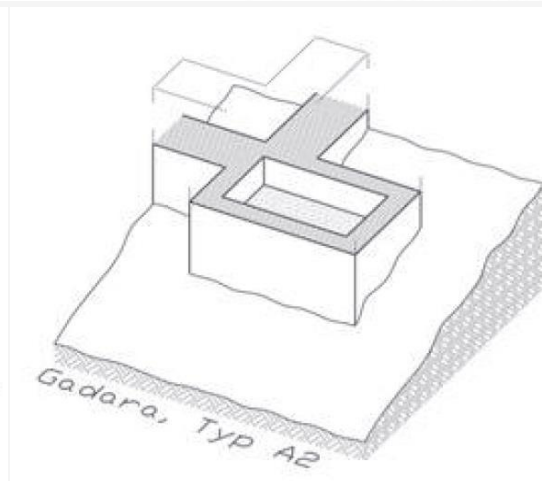
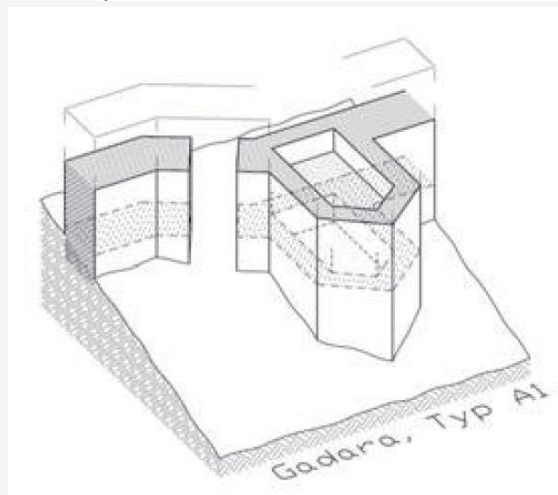
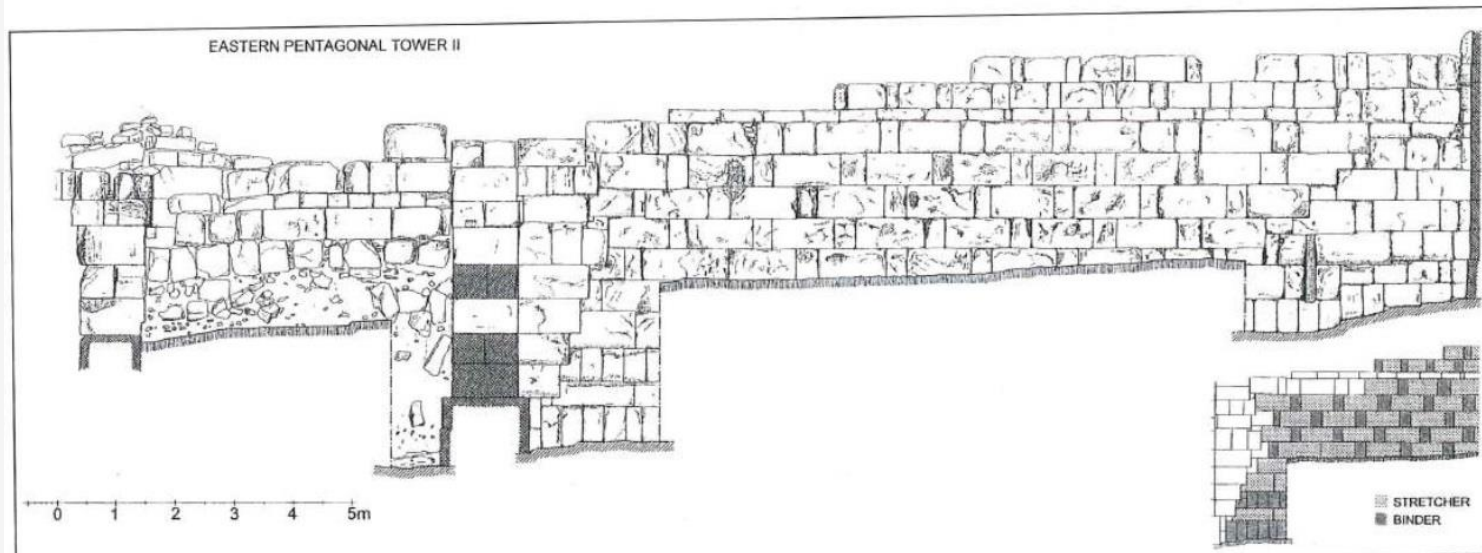
- Pentagonal towers, posterns (no gates)
- Rectangular towers/"bastions"



Main sites

Gadara

- Headers and stretchers



Main sites

Gadara

- Hellenistic temple and temenos (2nd – early 1st c. BCE)
- Ca. 92x106 m + "high place"

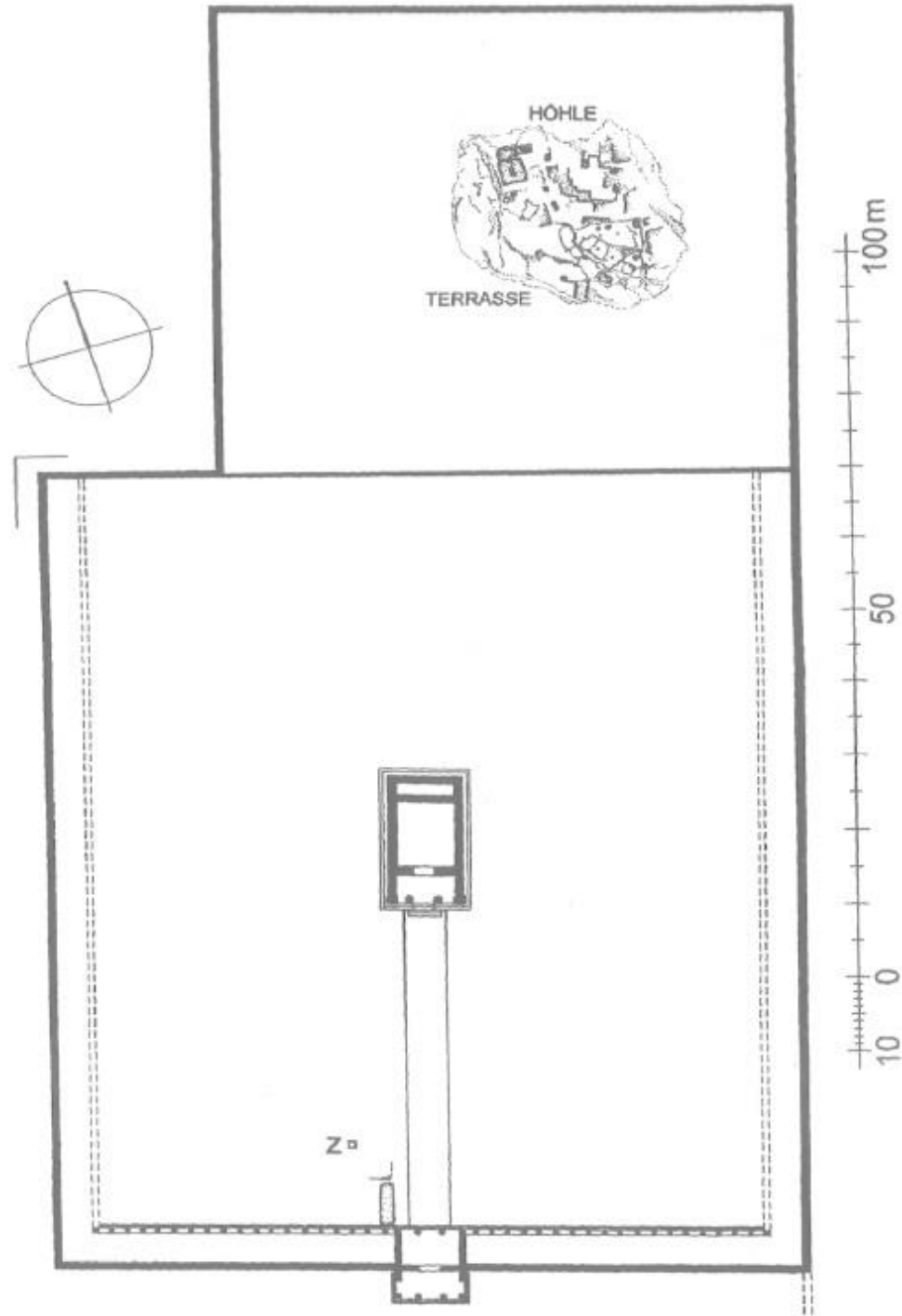


Main sites

Gadara

- Hellenistic temple and temenos (2nd – early 1st c. BCE)
- Ca. 92x106 m + "high place"

- High place in the northern enclosure – a carved rock;
continuation of an older (IA) cult site?

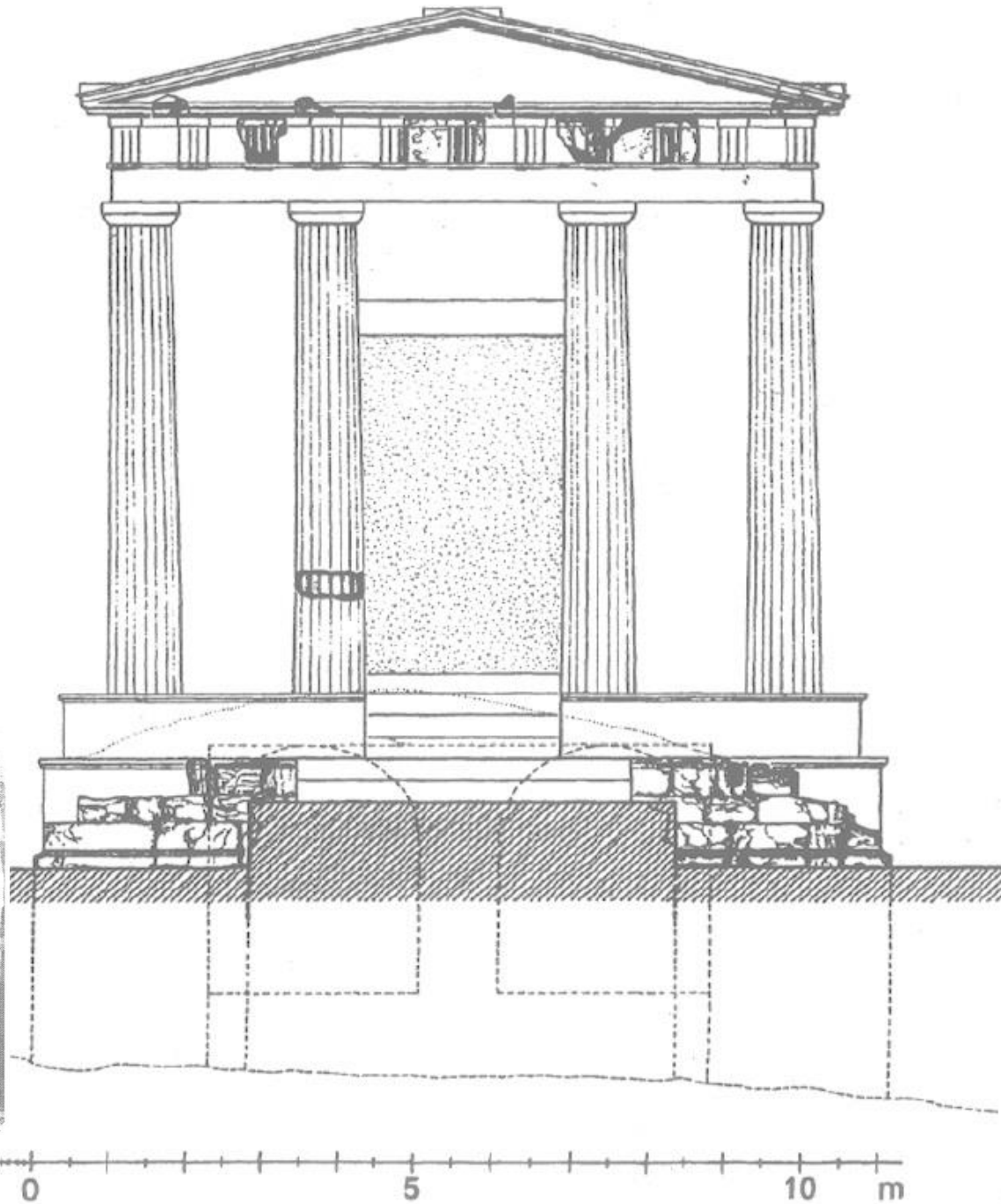
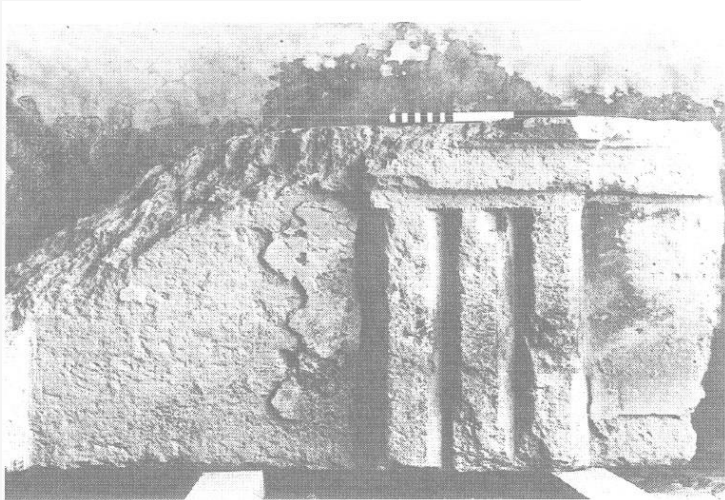


Main sites

Gadara

- Doric *distylos in antis*
- 2nd – early 1st c. BCE
- Ca. 11.2x19.3 m
- Undecorated metopes
- Fresco decoration
- Roof tiles

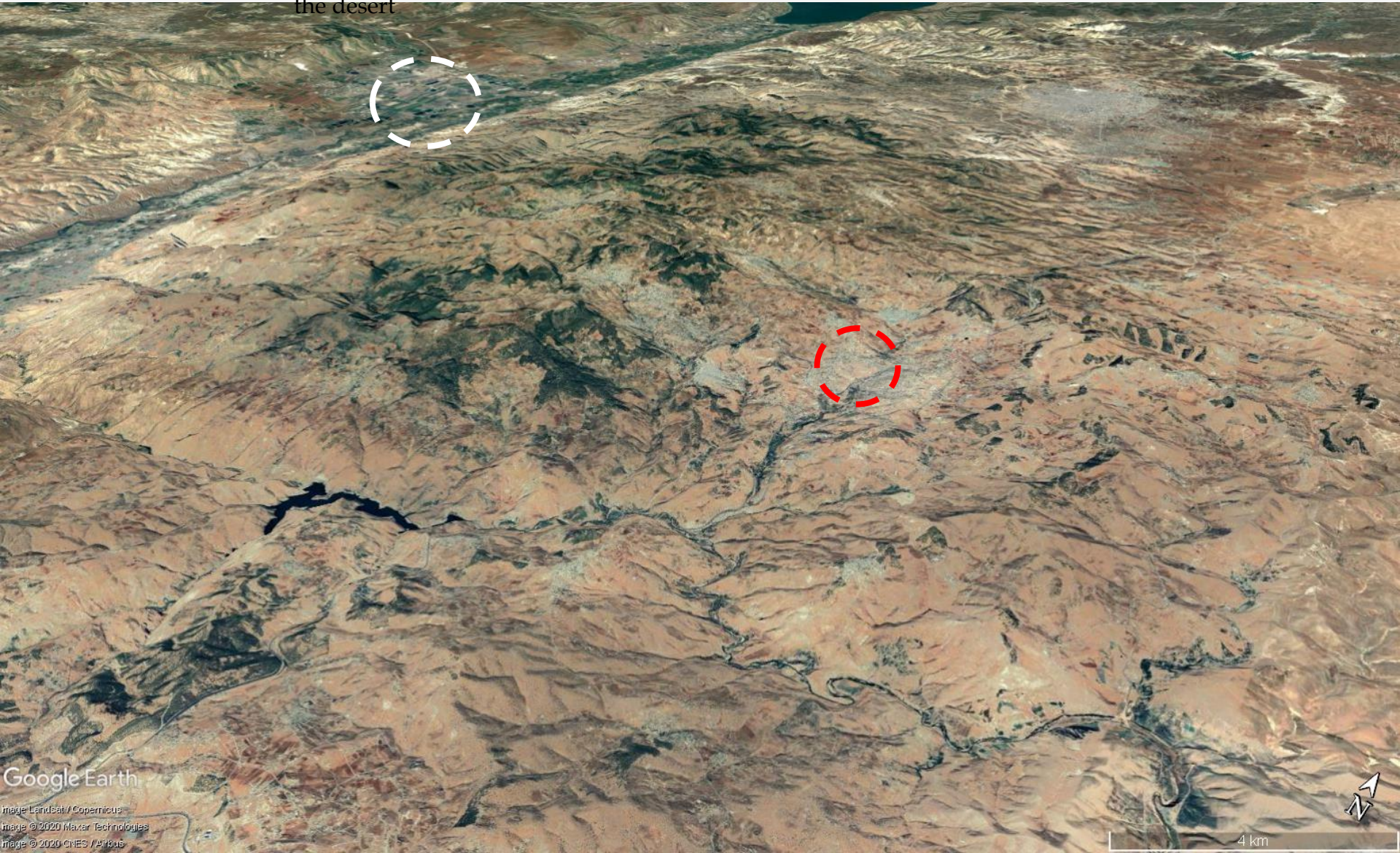
- Zeus Olympios?



Main sites

Gerasa

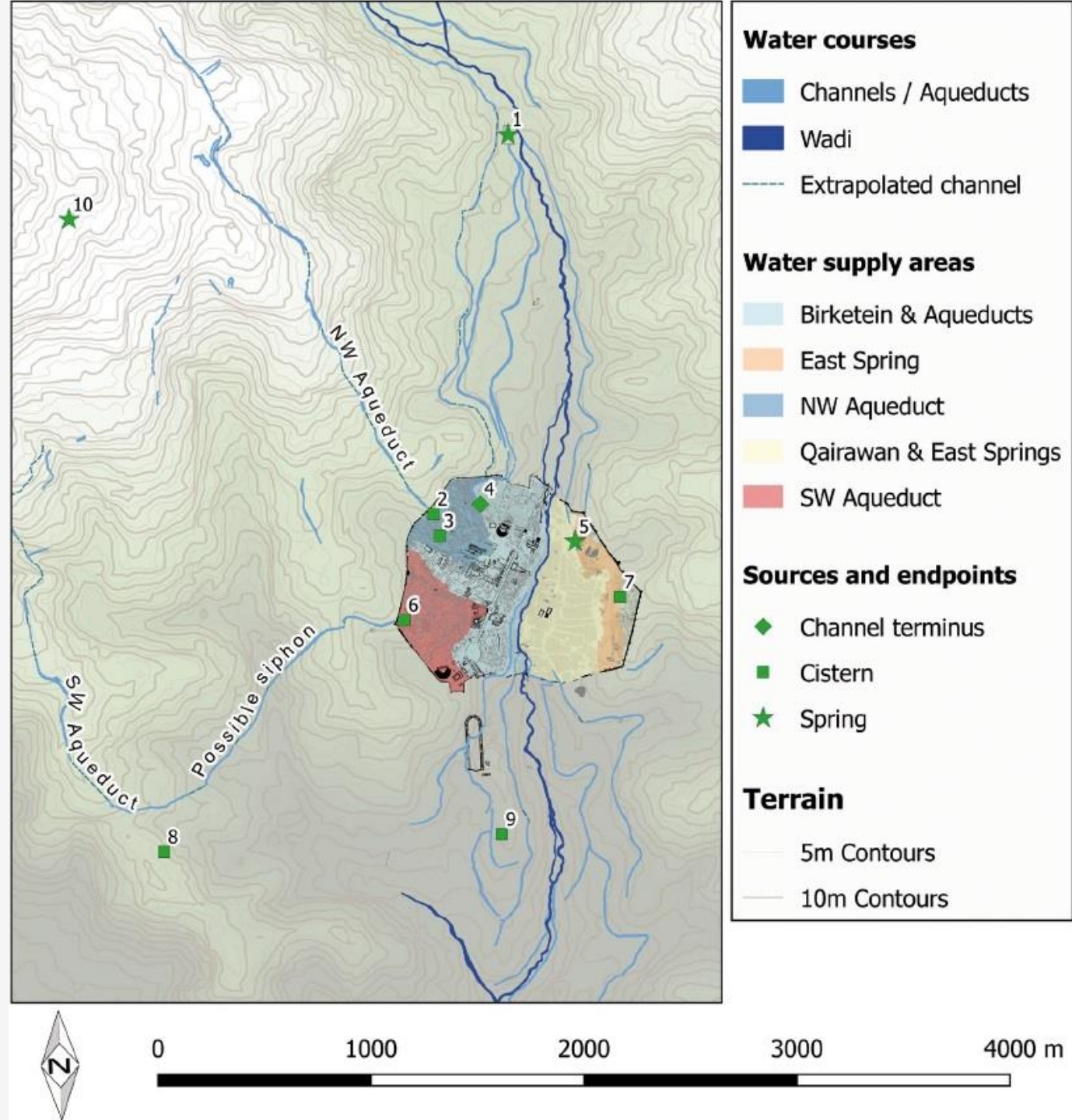
Gerasa (red) in relation to the area of Pella and Scythopolis (white), in the transition zone on the edges of the desert



Main sites

Gerasa

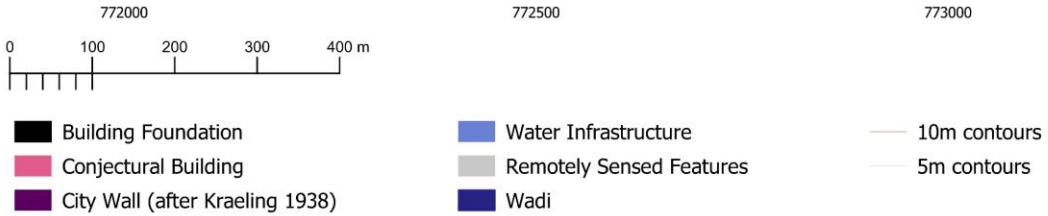
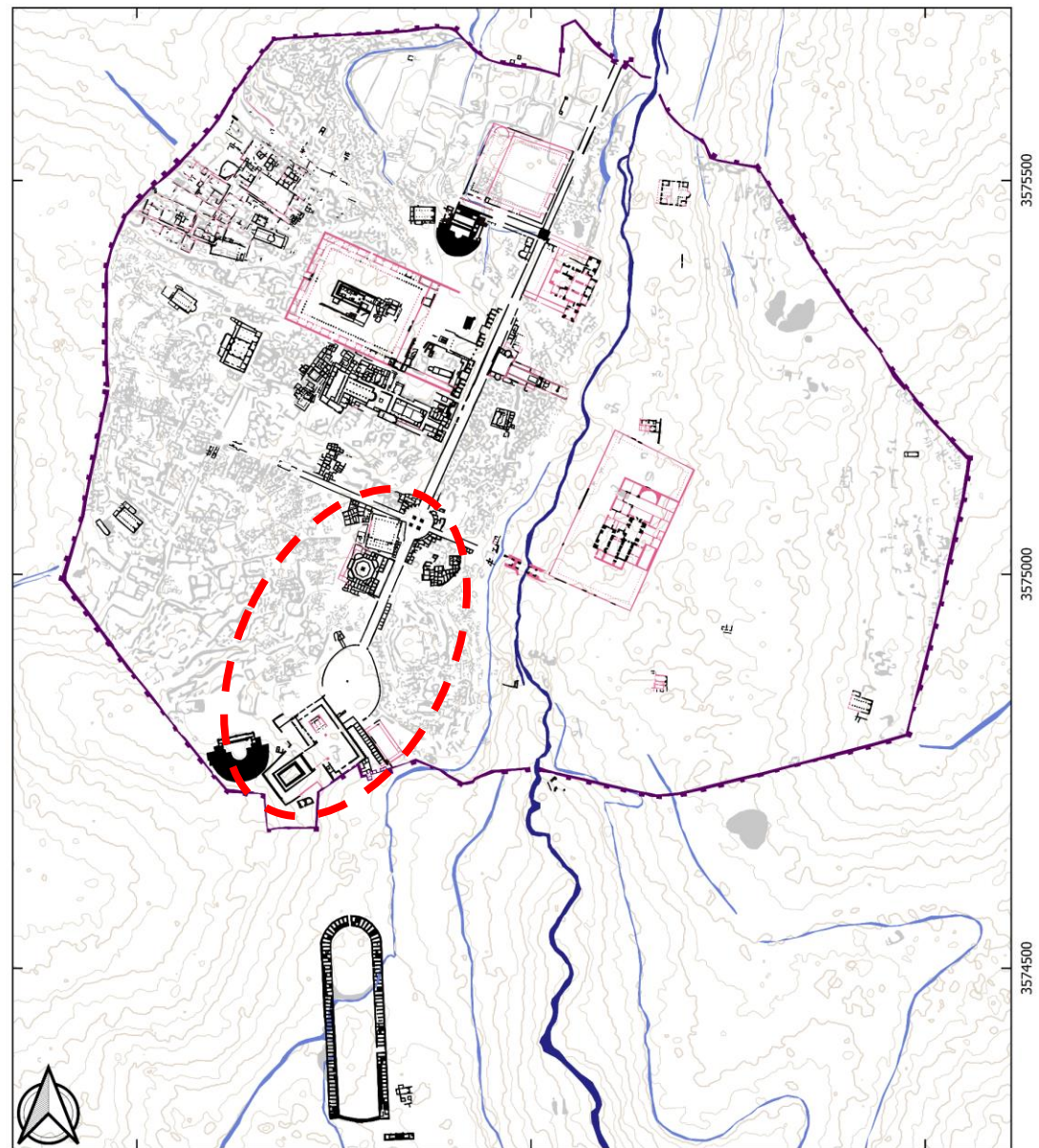
- In the valley of a river
- Several water springs in the vicinity



Main sites

Gerasa

- Centered on the Oval Plaza and Temple of Zeus
- Ca. 10 ha?



Main sites

Gerasa

- "Naos" of Zeus
- Ca. 70/60 BCE
- Southern entrance to the city
- Early Roman temenos of the Temple of Zeus



Main sites

Gerasa

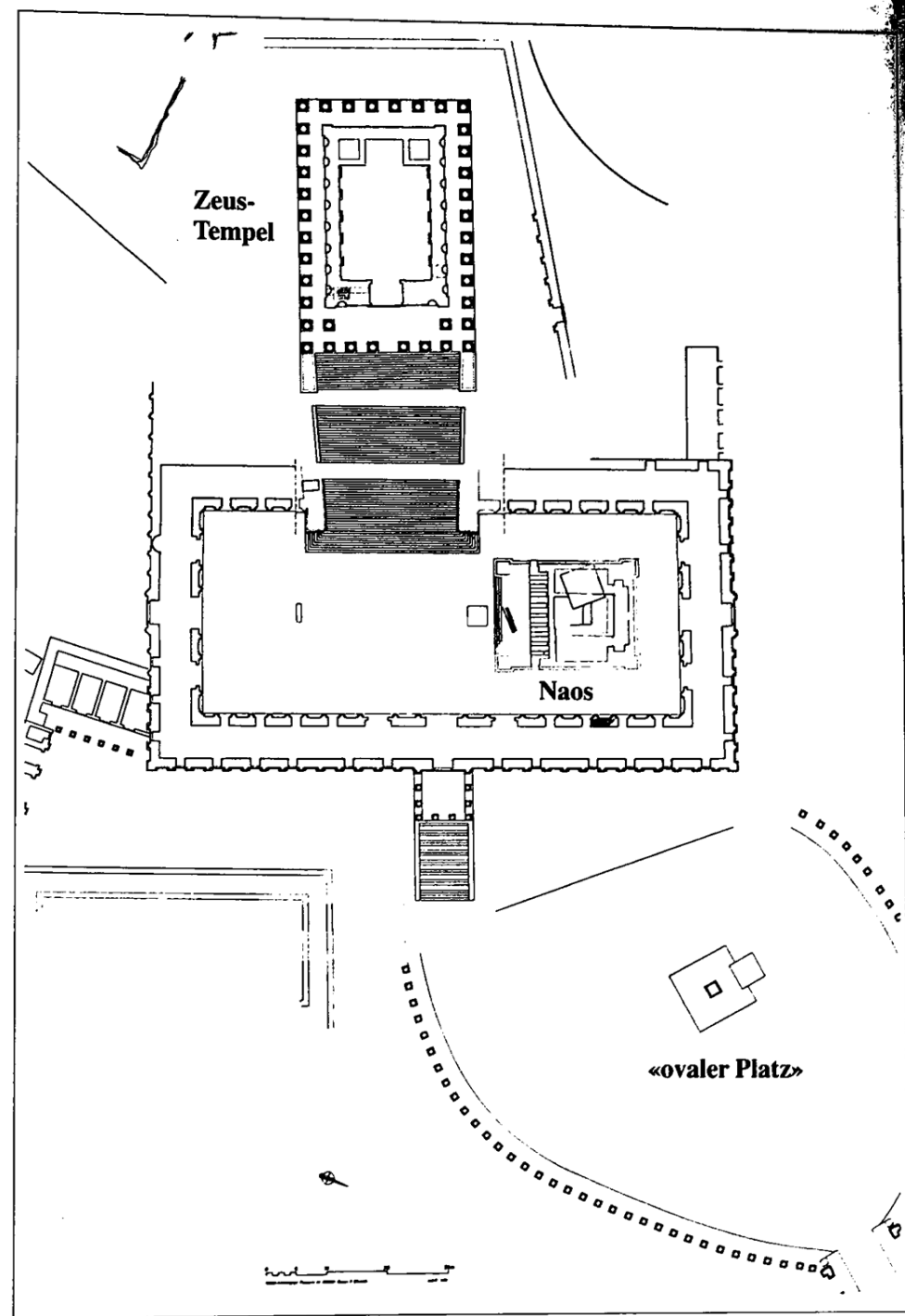
- "Naos" of Zeus
- Ca. 70/60 BCE



Main sites

Gerasa

- "Naos" of Zeus
- Ca. 70/60 BCE
- On older "high place" (rock outcrop below later temple structures)
- Inscription of ca. 130 BCE mentioning "*hamana*" (altar?)



Main sites

Gerasa

- "Naos" of Zeus
- Ca. 70/60 BCE
- View of sanctuary precinct above the Oval plaza



Main sites

Gerasa

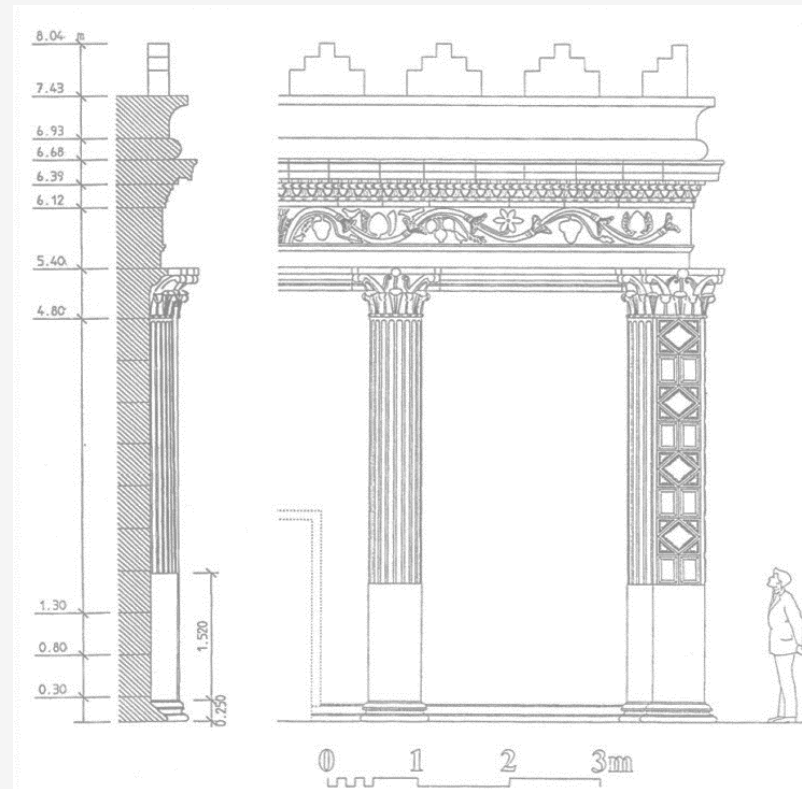
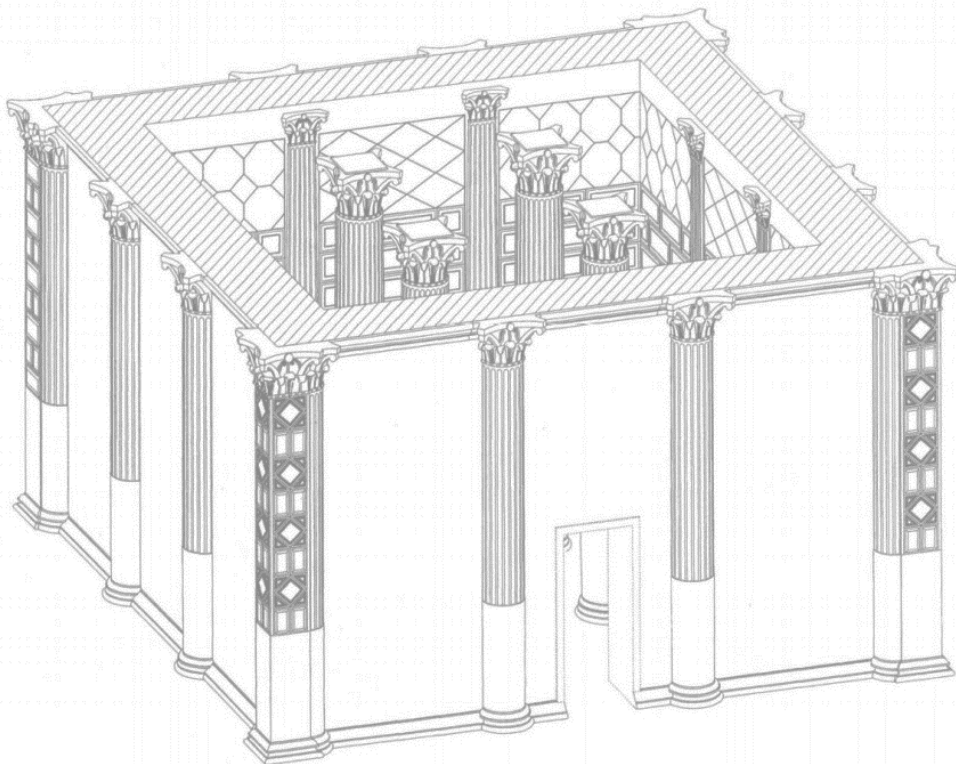
- "Naos" of Zeus
- Ca. 70/60 BCE
- Interestingly the Hellenistic sanctuary is not located on the highest topographic position of the city – view from the theater hill towards the precinct over later Roman temple



Main sites

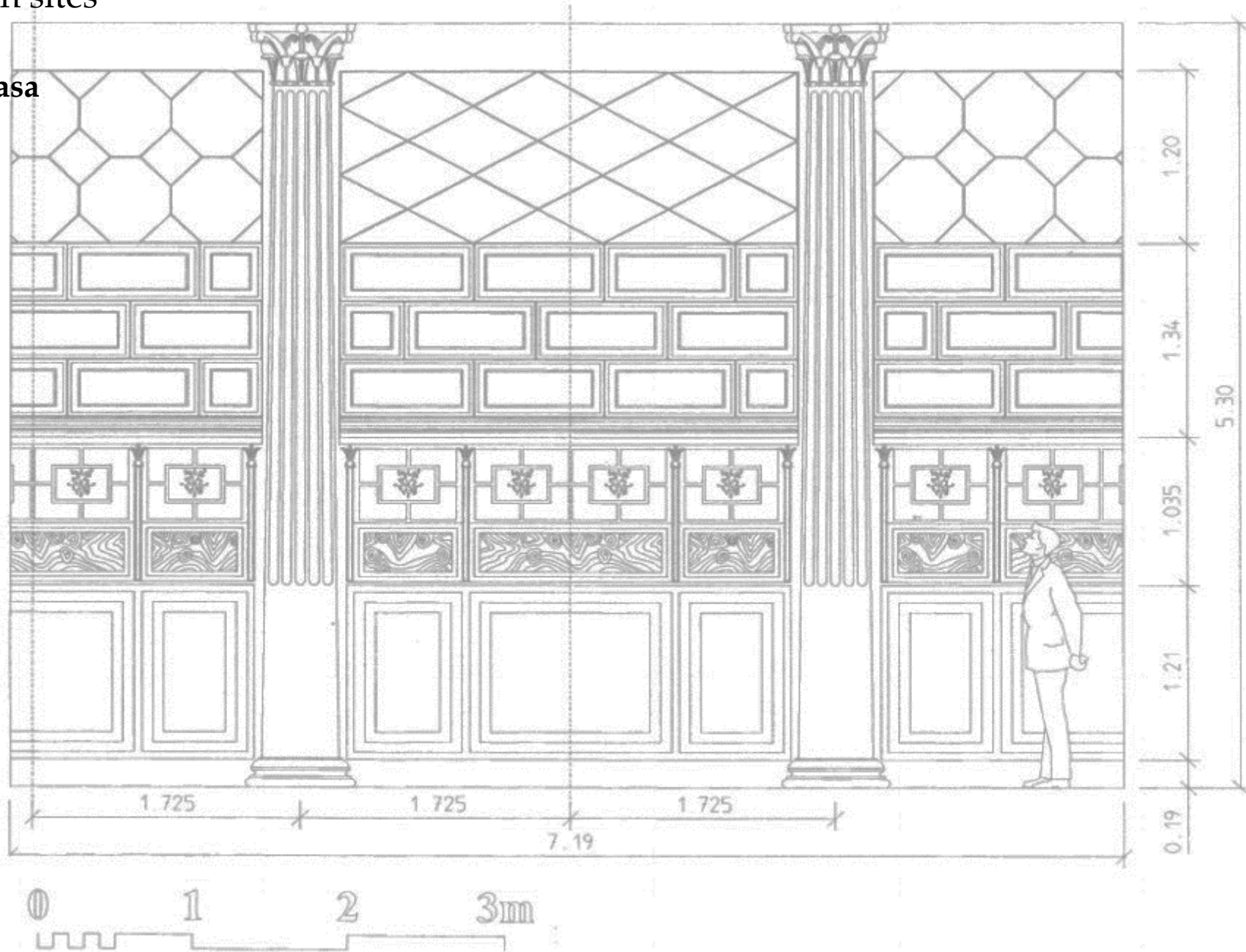
Gerasa

- "Naos" of Zeus
- Pseudoperipteral (half-columns attached to the walls) rectangular temple, Corinthian order
- Stucco and fresco decoration in the First Style



Main sites

Gerasa



Main sites

Hippos

- Ptolemaic garrison → Seleucid *polis*?
- Ca. 8 ha
- A natural hill rising above eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee



Main sites

Hippos

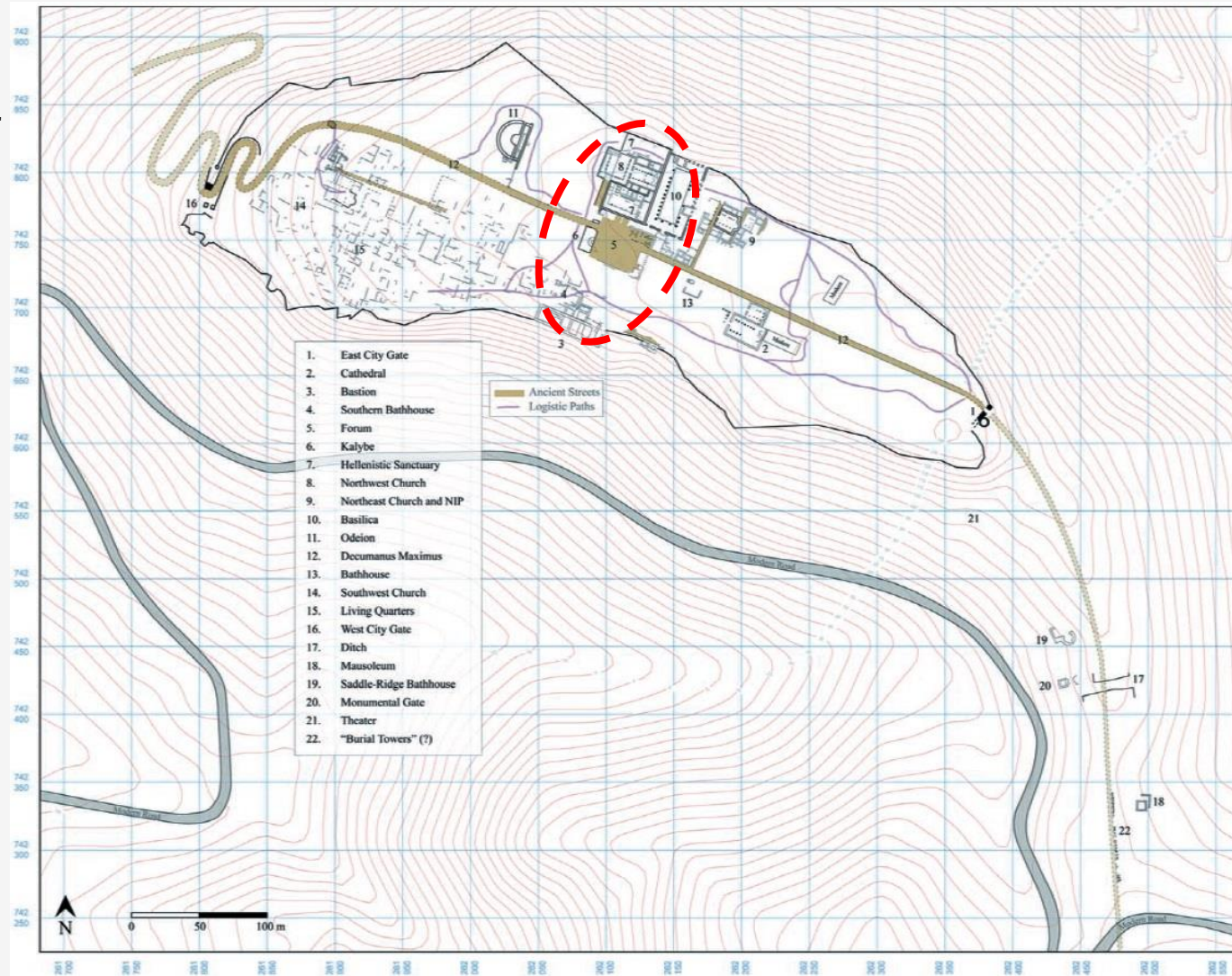
- Ptolemaic garrison → Seleucid *polis*?
- Ca. 8 ha
- A natural hill rising above eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee
- Good access only on the east through a saddle



Main sites

Hippos

- 3rd c. BCE levels below later agora
- 2nd c. BCE floors below Hellenistic sanctuary
- Hellenistic sanctuary – late 2nd/early 1st c. BCE



Main sites

Hippos

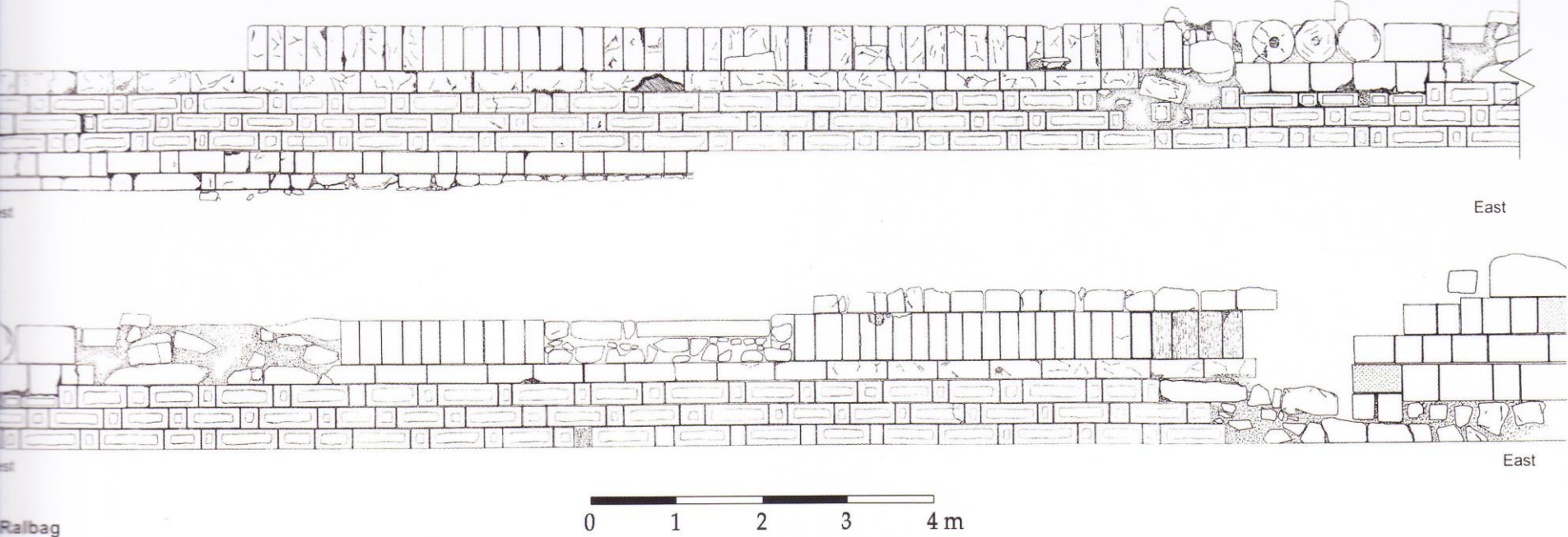
- Hellenistic sanctuary



Main sites

Hippos

- Outer wall of the Hellenistic sanctuary
- Headers and stretchers with bosses and marginal drafting
- The limestone masonry on top is later



Main sites

Hippos

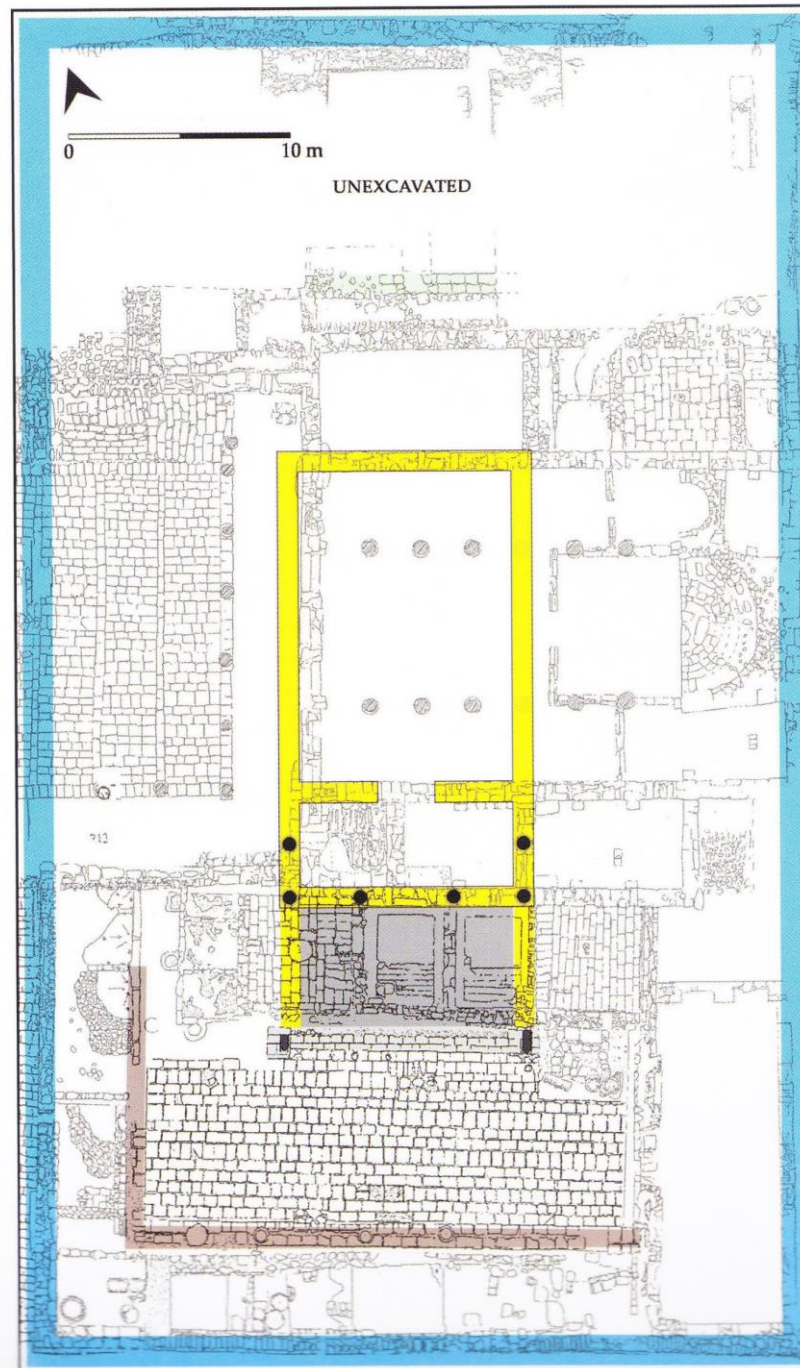
- The peristyle court of the sanctuary



Main sites

Hippos

- Hellenistic sanctuary
- 35.75x60.1 m
- Hellenistic temple did not survive
- Doric?
- Zeus?



Blue: outline of the Hellenistic sanctuary

Yellow: Early Roman temple (presumably in place in place of the Hellenistic temple)

Brown: stylobate of the peristyle

Main sites

Hippos

- Hellenistic sanctuary
- Doric elements re-used in the Roman basilica – from the Hellenistic temple?



Other sites

Abila (left)

- Two sites
- Tell Abil (ca. 5 ha), Umm el-Amed (ca. 48 ha)
- Hellenistic necropolis

Dion (right)

- Tell ca. 7 ha
- Hellenistic occupation unclear

Both along the Yarmouk river or its tributaries



Other sites

Abila

- Two sites
- Tell Abil (white, ca. 5 ha), Umm el-Amed (to the south, ca. 48 ha)
- Hellenistic necropolis (dark blue)



"Native" sites

Jews

- Jerusalem
- Hasmonaean palaces in Jericho

Samaritans

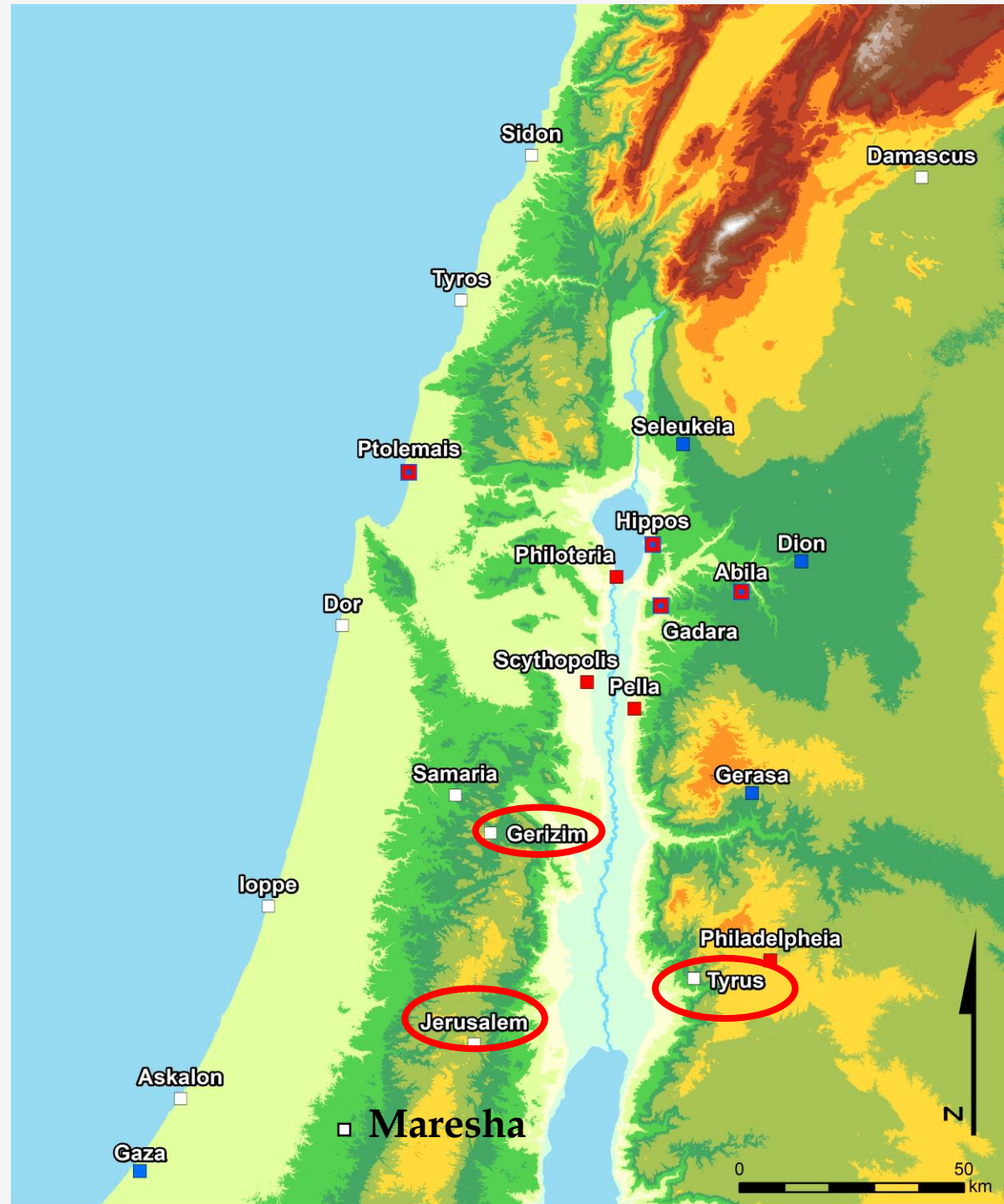
- Mt. Gerizim

Tobiads

- Iraq el-Amir (Tyros/Birta)

Idumaeans

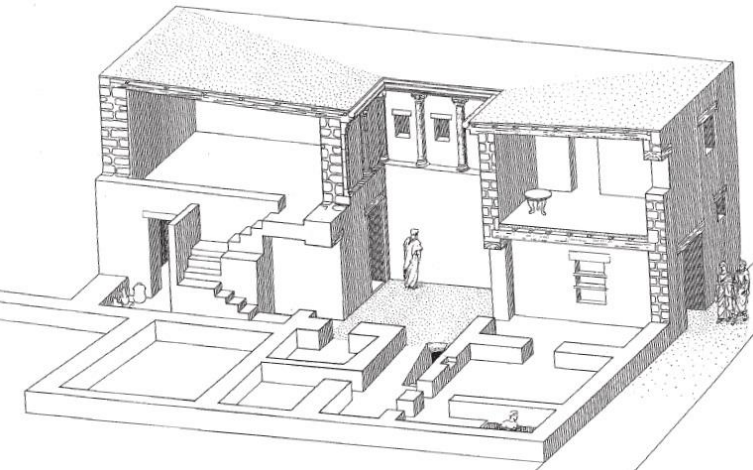
- Maresha/Marissa



"Native" sites

Marissa

- "Sidonian" colony
- Semi-planned city
- Advanced fortification methods
- Use of Greek language (with Aramaic)
- Ecclectic material culture
- 3rd/2nd c., destroyed by Hasmonaeans after ca. 108/7 BCE, then again by Parthians in 40 BCE



"Native" sites

Hellenistic painted tombs in Maresha – clear Hellenistic method, architectural decoration and iconography

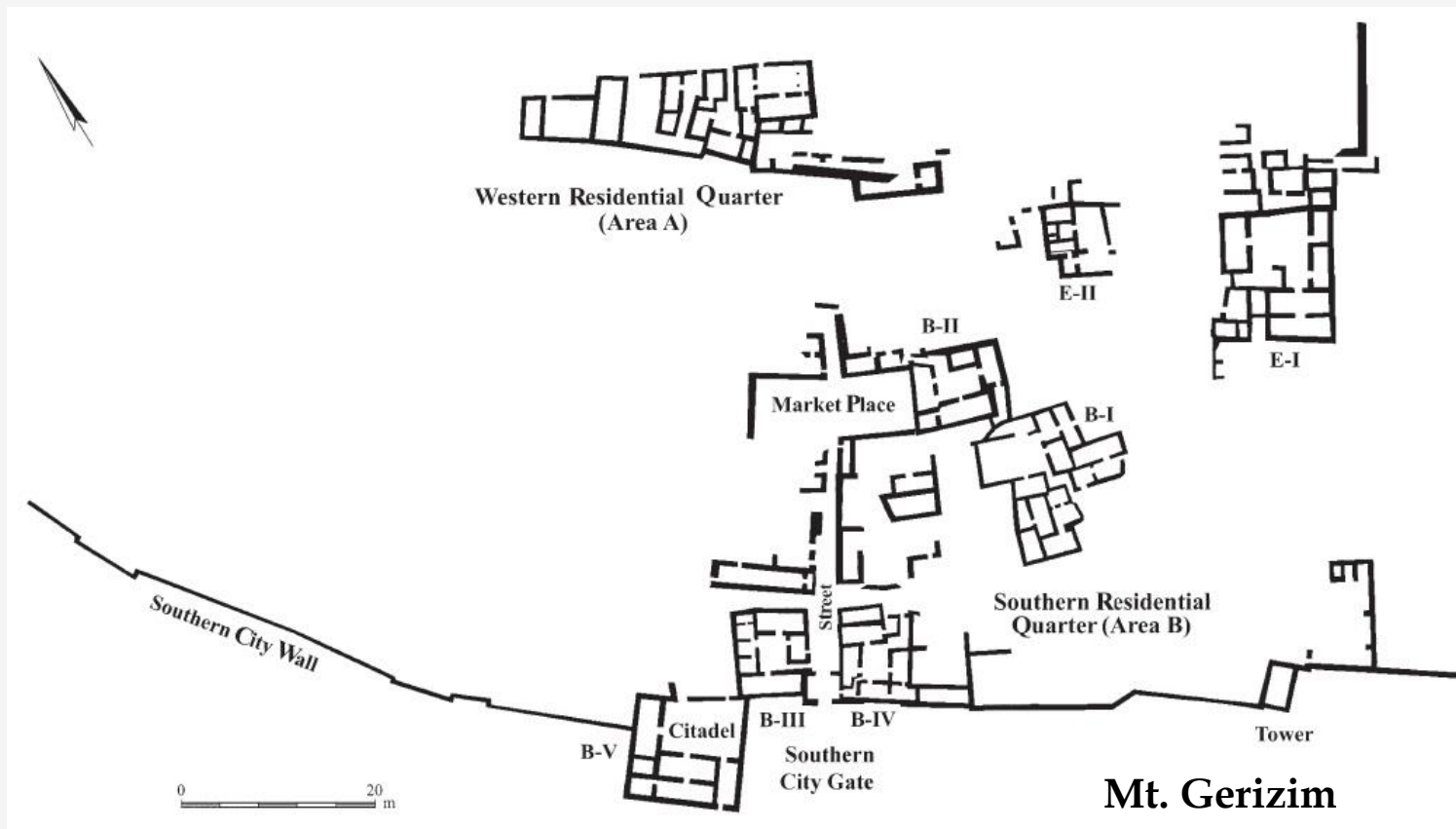


"Native" sites

Mt. Gerizim

Jerusalem

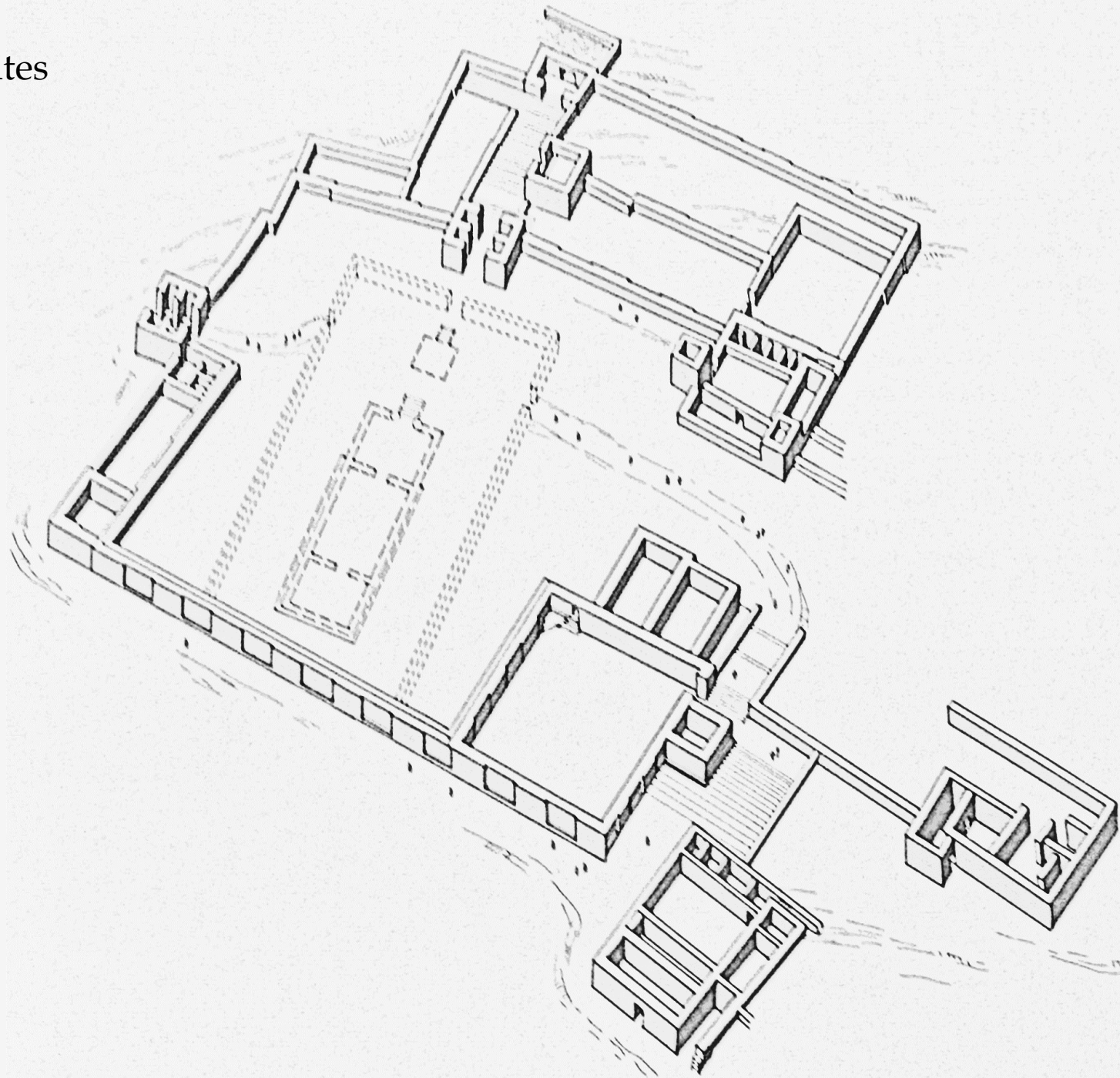
- Few imports (if any)
- No Greek architectural decor until the second half of the 2nd c. BCE



"Native" sites

Mt. Gerizim

- Courtyard houses
- Fortifications not reflecting any Hellenistic developments
- IA chambre gates
- Syrian three-room longhouse temple



Greek and "Natives"?

Domestic architecture

- No Greek house types (*prostas*, *pastas*, peristyle)

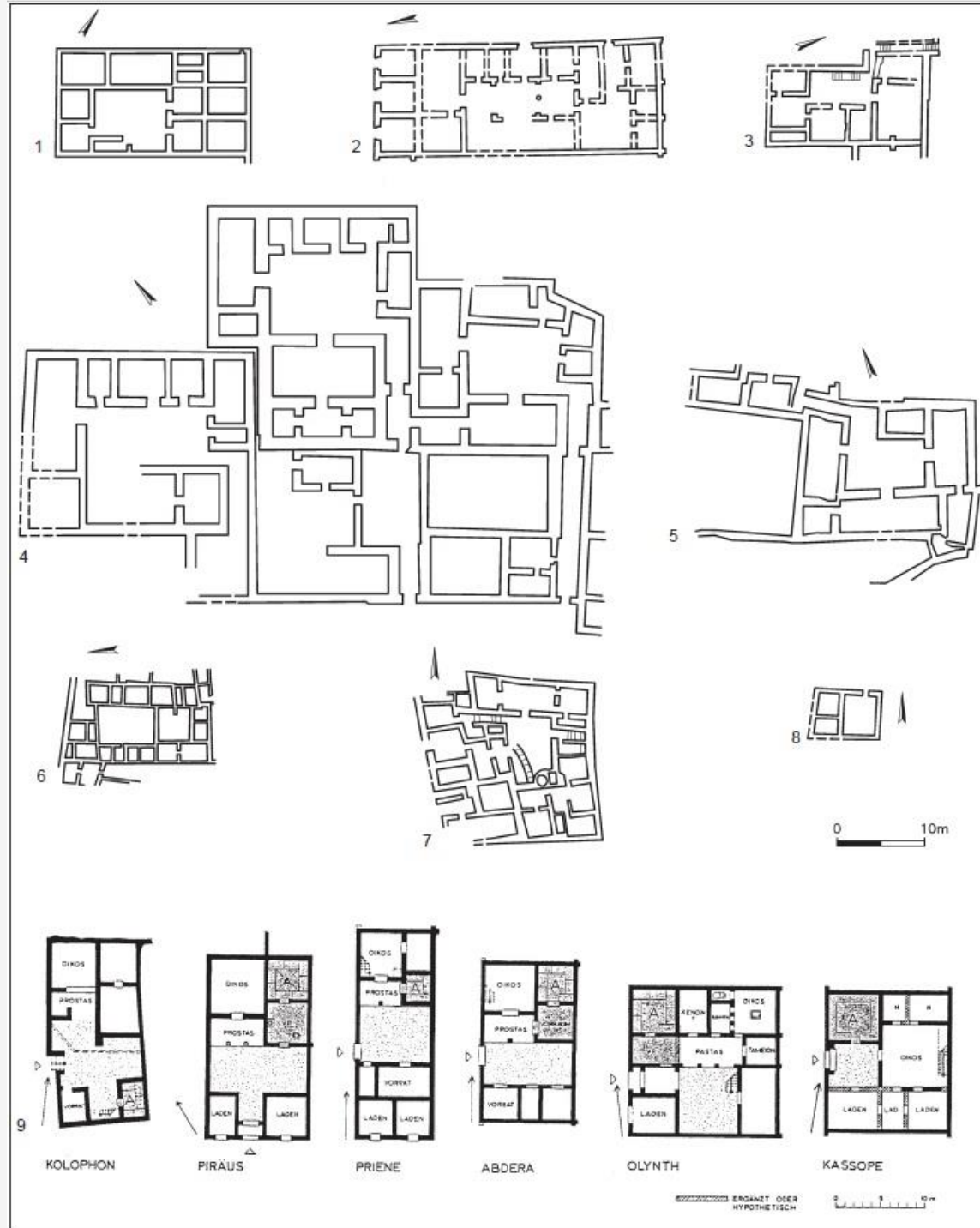
1 - Philoteria

2, 3 - Samaria

4,5 - Mt. Gerizim

6,7 - Maresha

8 - Ashdod



Greek and "Natives"

Tobiads

- Iraq el-Amir
- Early 2nd c. BCE
- Alexandrian influence and local traditions



Greek and "Natives"

Tobiads

- Iraq el-Amir
- Early 2nd c. BCE
- Alexandrian influence (Corinthian capitals, overall design?) and local traditions (lion and eagle frieze, monolithic construction)





Girl's height ca 1.60 m, note the bossed ashlars and decorated cornice.

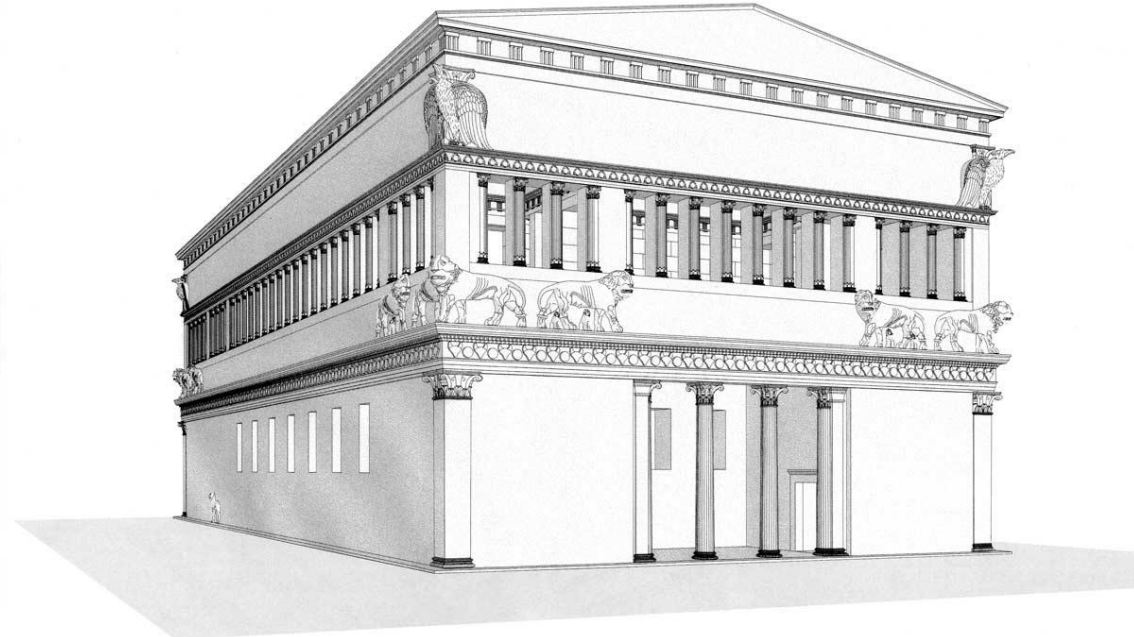
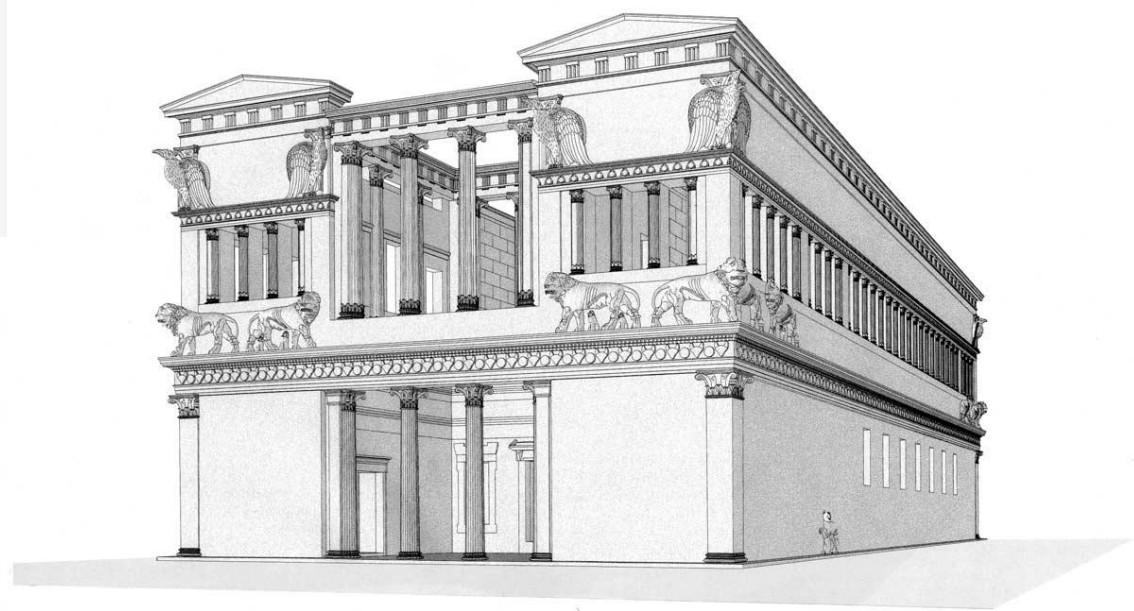
Greek and "Natives"

Tobiads

- Palace? Mausoleum (Marzeah)?



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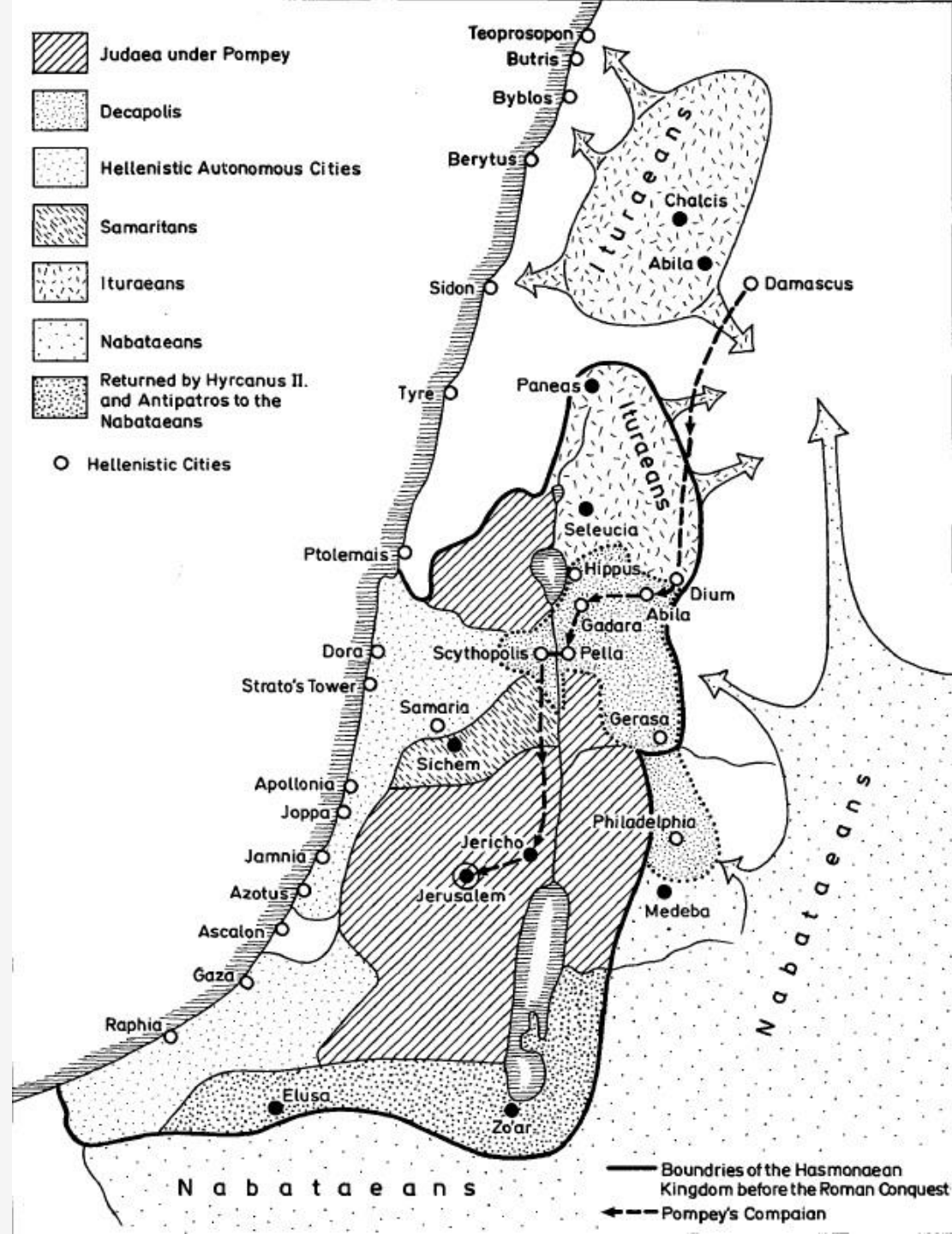
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Greek and "Natives"

Hasmonaeans

- Adoption of Greek language
- Adoption of Hellenistic idea of kingship
- Adoption of Greek architectural decoration

- Decrease in imports
- Uprooting Greek *poleis* and colonies

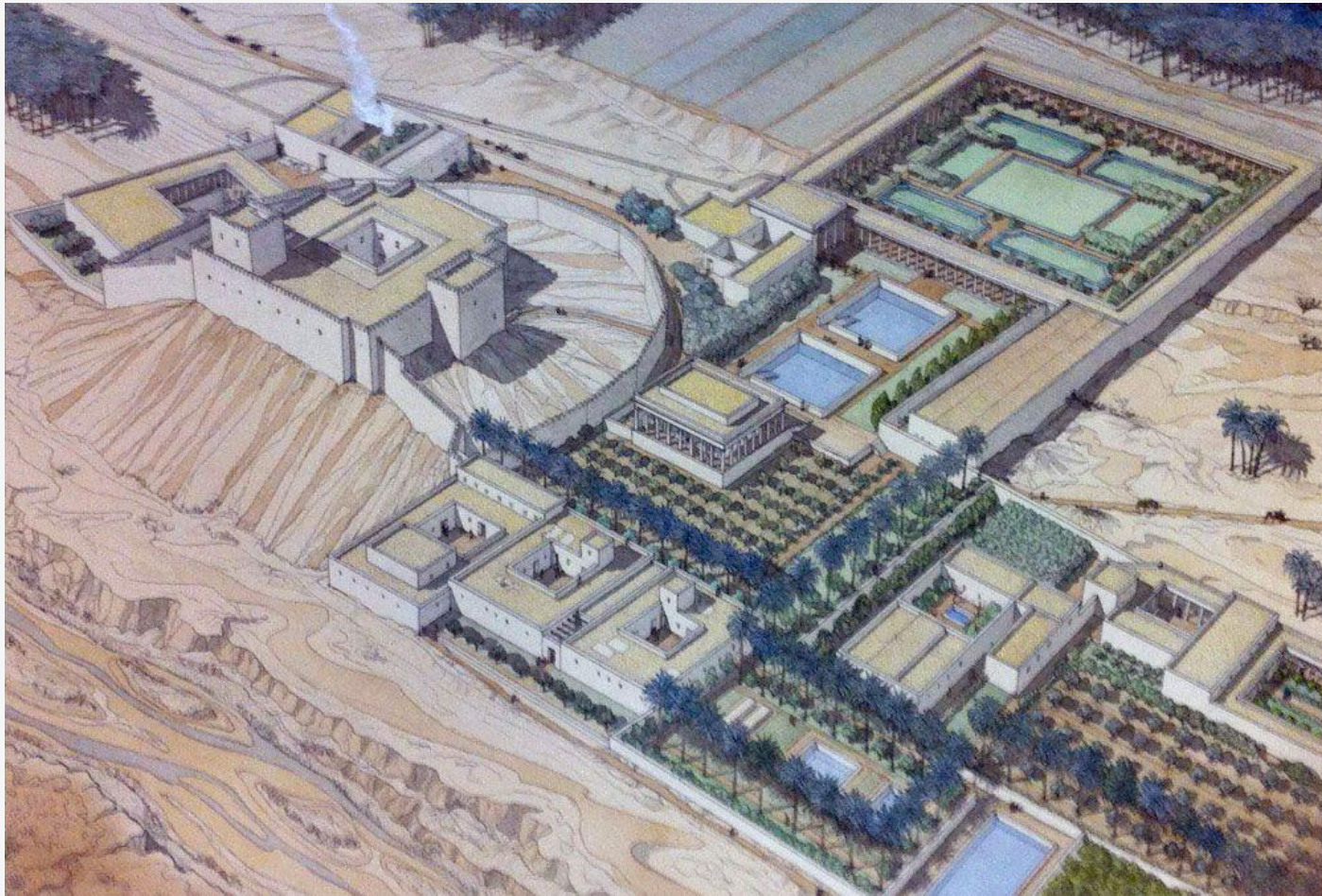


Greek and "Natives"

Hasmonaeans

- Winter palaces in Jericho
- Blend of local, Hellenistic and eastern (Persian) tradition

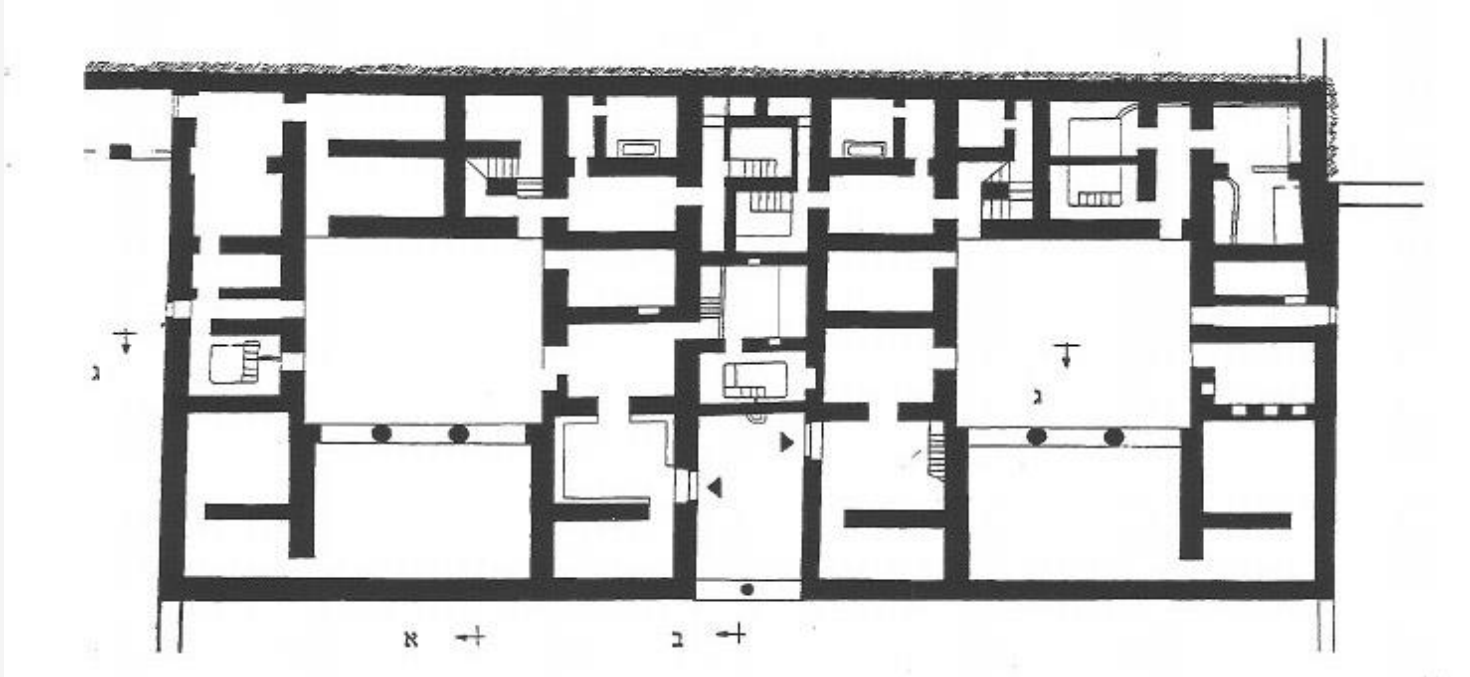
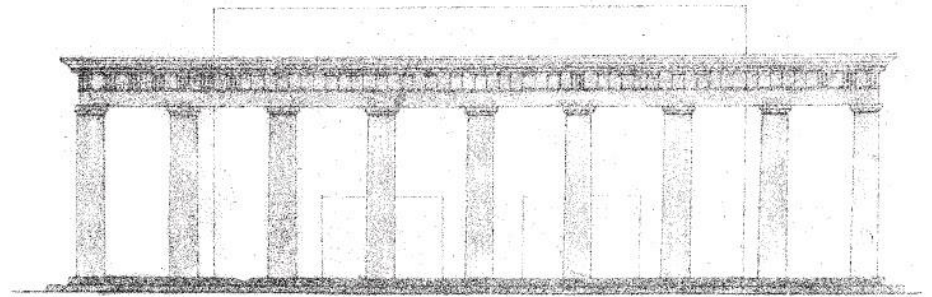
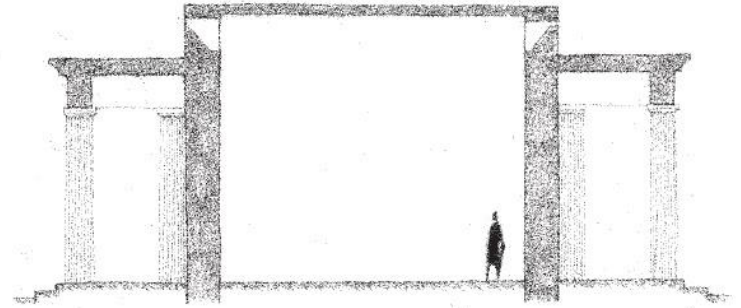
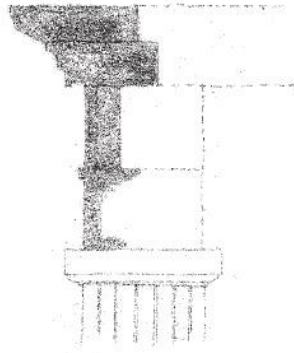
1. Jonathan (ca. 140-130 BCE) – first palace
2. Alexander Yannaeus (103-76 BCE) – Doric pavilion, twin pools, "castle"
3. Hyrcanus II/ Aristoboulus II (76-64 BCE) – Twin palace



Greek and "Natives"

Hasmonaeans

- Courtyard houses
- Ritual baths (*mikwa'ot*)
- *Distylos in antis*
- Doric order
- Pavilions, gardens, pools (Persian feature)



Greek and "Natives"

Hasmonaeans

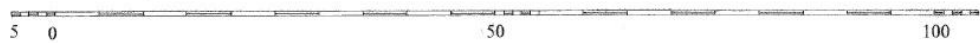
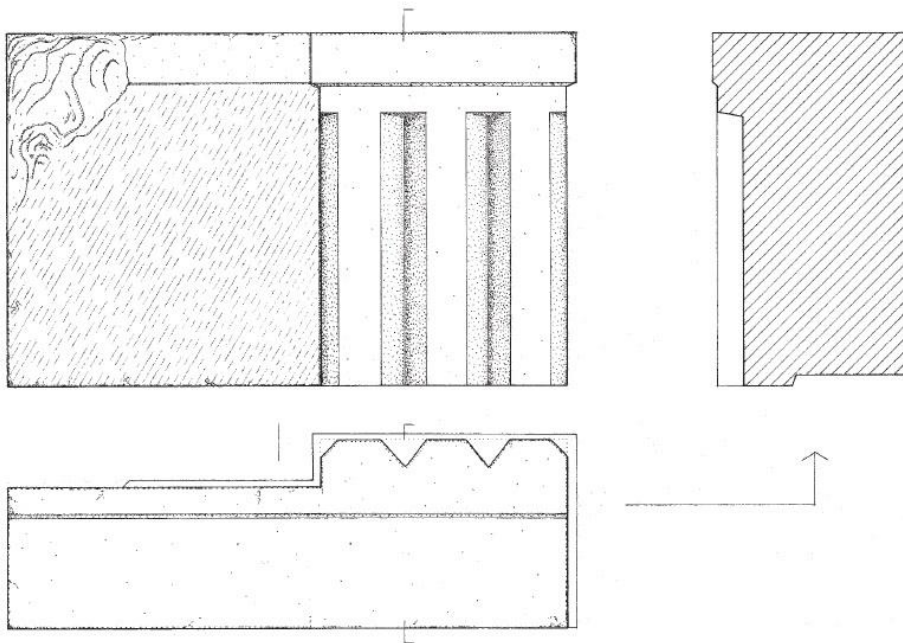
- Jewish ritual baths (*mikwa'ot*)
- Stepped plastered immersion pool and *otzar* (water storage)
- Mikwa'ot from the Twin palace



Greek and "Natives"

Hasmonaeans

- Preference for Doric order (not associated with pagan temple architecture - but see Gadara, Hippos)
- Few fragments of Corinthian capitals in Jericho
- Undecorated metopes



Greek and "Natives"

Hasmonaeans

- Preference for Doric order (not associated with pagan temple architecture?)
- Monumental tombs



Tomb of Jason, Jerusalem

Tomb of Bene Hezir, Jerusalem

Greek and "Natives"

Hellenistic foundations

- Greek/Macedonina colonization of the southern Levantine interior
- Bringing Greek material culture further inland

"Natives"

- Samaritans and Jews "introverted" and "traditional" during the Ptolemaic period (except the Tobiads)
- More entangled with the Hellenistic world from the 2nd c. BCE onward

Maccabees/Hasmonaeans

- "Anti-Greek" traditionalist reaction
- Increasingly more and more entangled with Greek cultural norms (ideas of kingship, architecture etc.)
- Artistic influences from Alexandria
- Overall preference for the Doric order (no Ionic/Corinthian entablatures)