



המכון לארכיאולוגיה ע"ש זינמן  
THE ZINMAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

# **Excavations of the Hellenistic Site in Kibbutz Sha'ar-Ha'Amakim (Gaba) 1984 – 1998**

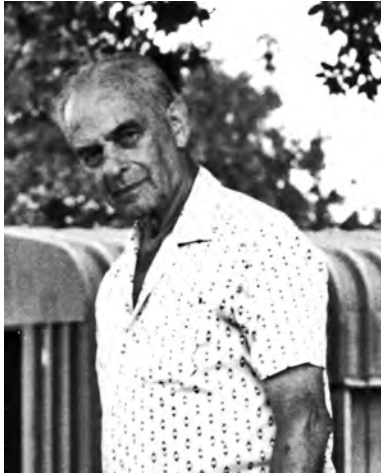
Final Report

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of  
Yehuda Naor (1909-2004)

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## CHAPTER 2: THE FORT (THE CENTRAL STRUCTURE): ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

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We have here a solid, tower like structure, built of local limestone ashlar, and which is almost square in shape (see figs 7-9). Its external length from east to west is 13.30 m and its width from north to south is 12.30 m. The internal measurements are 10.20 m. in length, 9.30 m in width. The structure has been preserved up to a height of 2 to 3 courses, i.e. 1.60 m and the walls are 1.30 m thick. Parallel to the four outer walls of the tower, there were four low walls an additional, external fortification called *proteichisma* (see below, the detailed description of the *proteichisma* walls). This structure appears to be a fort in which only the foundations have survived. It may be that its construction was never completed, but it is not unlikely that its stones were robbed after it fell into disuse. In the western part of the northern wall (W101), in the second course from the bottom, one of the ashlar was placed so that the side with the boss and dressed margins faced upwards and not outwards toward the north as would have been expected. This means that when the fort was no longer in use, its upper sections were dismantled, leaving only two or three courses. It is possible that these courses were used to create a kind of level expanse or platform for some unknown purpose. The excavation revealed nothing that could be interpreted as deliberate destruction caused by war or earthquake. The four outer walls of the tower were built on bedrock, and the bottom courses were placed in hewn foundation trenches with an average width of 1.80 m (see fig. 14-18).<sup>1</sup> The courses were built in a graded system of construction, with the lower course slightly wider than the one above it, and so on.<sup>2</sup> The secondary walls that partition the interior space into smaller areas were also built of ashlar that were placed upon the levelled bedrock or mounted on a plinth of small rough stones and not in foundation trenches.

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<sup>1</sup> The very fact that the foundation courses of the four walls were placed within foundation trenches confirms that this was a particularly solid structure with walls that were meant to reach a great height.

<sup>2</sup> This method of construction, which is typical for large and solid buildings, was widespread and mainly used for fortification systems during the Hellenistic period. See for example the northernmost of the two square towers that stand guard over the city gate at the Hellenistic site of Jebel Khalid. The excavators of this site, which is located in Northern Syria on the Euphrates, have dated it to the first third of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. The walls of the northern tower are built on their inner sides by stretcher ashlar only, with the courses placed in a stepped manner, as in Sha'ar- Ha'Amakim. See: G.W. Clarke et al., *Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates: Report on Excavations 1986-996*, Sydney 2002, p. 17-23, plate 6 (4).

The state of preservation of the outer walls of the tower is not uniform (see figs 14-18). The best preserved of them is the eastern wall (W102) of which three courses remain along its full length. These courses are constructed of large ashlar with dressed margins and a protruding boss in the centre. At first glance the wall seems to be solid and impressive because of the ashlar, but when examined more closely, its lack of uniformity becomes obvious, since each course is built according to a different method and the ashlar are of various non-uniform sizes. The upper course is built of headers facing outward – towards the east – and of stretchers facing inwards.<sup>3</sup> Most of the ashlar have dressed margins and a protruding boss in the centre (see figs 14-15, 17, 30-31).<sup>4</sup> The middle course is of a mixed construction, and so is the lower course, which is laid in foundation trenches and is a little wider than the middle course, while the upper course is narrower than the middle course.<sup>5</sup> This method of graded construction was supposed to

<sup>3</sup> This method of construction is not rare in the Hellenistic period. In Megara Hyblaia in eastern Sicily, a number of square towers were erected at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE that are almost of the same size as the fort in Sha'ar- Ha'Amakim. But unlike the latter, the towers in Megara Hyblaia are integrated with the walls. In one of these towers (Tour III) the southern wall is constructed as in Sha'ar- Ha'Amakim with the ashlar facing outwards placed as headers and those facing inwards placed as stretchers. On the other hand, in another tower (Tour II), the southern wall has stretchers facing outwards and headers facing inward. See: L. Karlsson, *Fortification Towers and Masonry Techniques in the Hegemony of Syracuse, 405-211 BCE.*, Stockholm 1992, p. 39-49, figs. 27, 31.

<sup>4</sup> In Israel, a number of sites of the Hellenistic period have so far been excavated in which the walls were built of ashlar with dressed margins and a protruding or smoothed boss in the centre. See for example: Acre, Caesarea, Dor, Samaria and Jerusalem. On the fortification sections of the Hellenistic period that were discovered during the excavations of M. Dothan at Acre, see: M. Dothan, "Akko: Interim Excavation Report: First Season, 1973/4", *BASOR* 224 (1976), p. 1-48. On Caesarea, see: A. Raban, "The City Walls of Straton's Tower: Some New Archaeological Data", *BASOR* 269 (1987), p. 71-88. On Dor, see: E. Stern, "Hellenistic Dor", *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 1 (1982), p. 17-26; E. Stern, "Five Seasons of Excavations at Tel Dor", in E. Lipinski (ed.), *The Land of Israel: Crossroads of Civilizations*, Leuven 1985, p. 169-192; E. Stern, *Excavations at Dor: Final Report Volume I A, Areas A and C: Introduction and Stratigraphy*, Jerusalem 1995, p. 38-45, figs. 4.3-4.5, plans 4.5-4.6, photos 4.5-4.7. On Samaria, see: J.W. Crowfoot, *The Buildings at Samaria*, London 1942, p. 24-27.

I. Shatzman briefly summarised the subject of fortifications during the Hellenistic period in which use was made of ashlar with dressed margins and a protruding boss in the centre. See: I. Shatzman, *The Armies of the Hasmonaeans and Herod: From Hellenistic to Roman Frameworks*, Tübingen 1991, p. 49-50, n. 54-56. Since the publication of the above summary by Shatzman, additional building sections of the Hellenistic period have been found that make extensive use of the ashlar with dressed margins and a protruding boss in the centre. See for example Hippos-Sussita (see fig. 72). In the summer of 2007, Mr. Yehiel Zelinger found a section of the Hasmonaean wall on the southern slope of Mount Zion that was built in a very similar manner to the walls of the fort in Sha'ar- Ha'Amakim (see fig. 73). On the new discoveries in Mount Zion, see: Y. Zelinger, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Psalms 51:18): The exposure of the 'Eudocian wall' around Mount Zion and its date", in J. Patrich, D. Amit (eds.), *Archaeological Discoveries of Jerusalem and its Region*, Jerusalem 2007, p. 101-107 [Hebrew].

During the excavations in Sussita, a sanctuary of the Hellenistic period was partially exposed. The southern wall of the sanctuary compound is built of ashlar courses of headers and stretchers with dressed margins and protruding bosses in the centre. See: A. Segal et al., *Hippos-Sussita: Fifth Season of Excavations (September-October 2004) And Summary of All Five Seasons*, Haifa 2004, p. 26-31, figs. 32-33.

<sup>5</sup> See above, n. 2

Plate I



Plate II



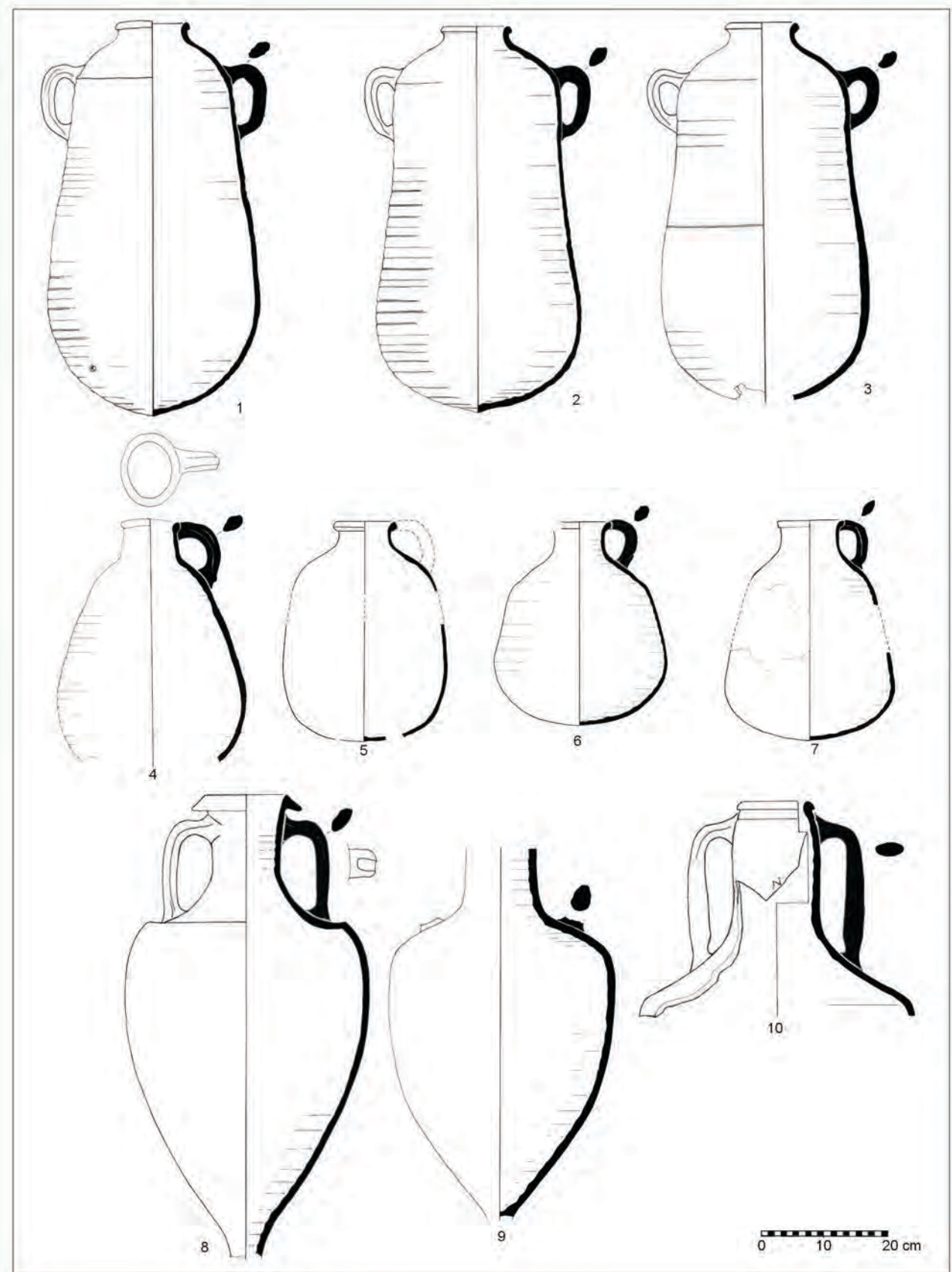


Fig. 2. Early to mid-Hellenistic storage vessels from “cistern” G/R: jars (1: 897.7; 2: 890.8; 3: 889.7), storage jugs (4: 889.5; 5: 912.7; 6: 889.1; 7: 889.4), imported *amphorae* (8: 887.1; 9: 907.19; 10: 910.16).



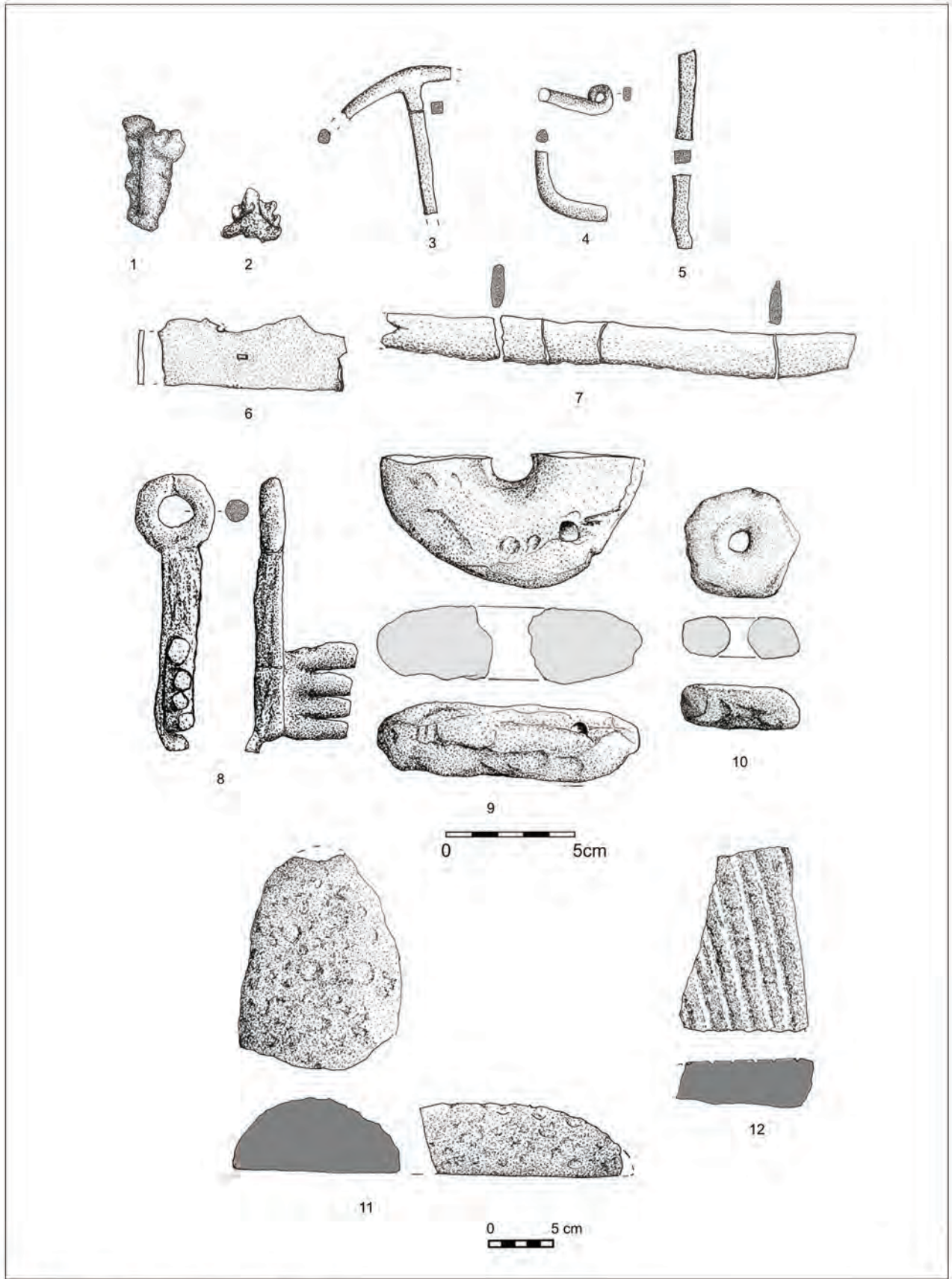


Fig. 7 Small finds from Cistern G/R.

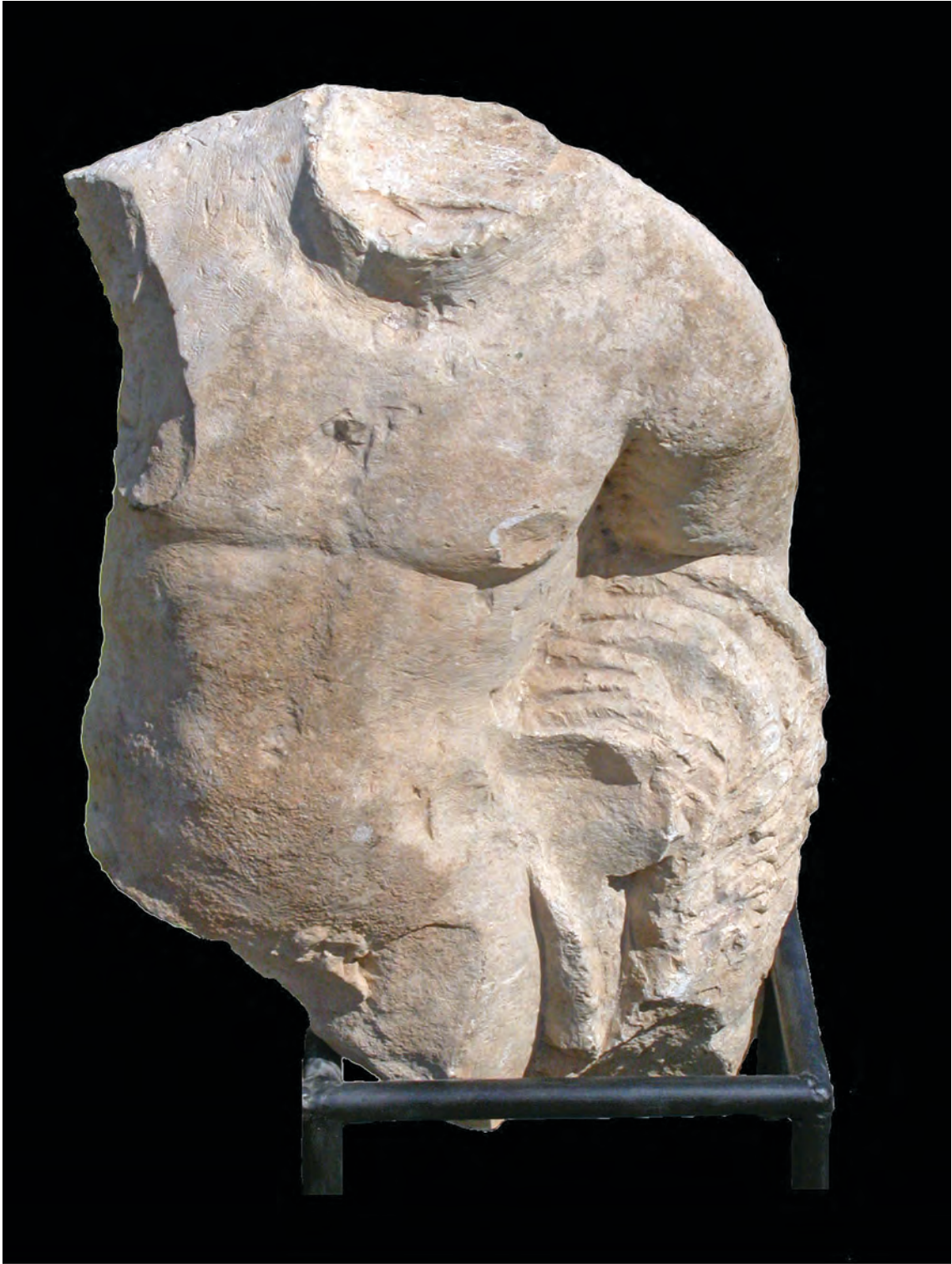


Fig.1, Frontal view.

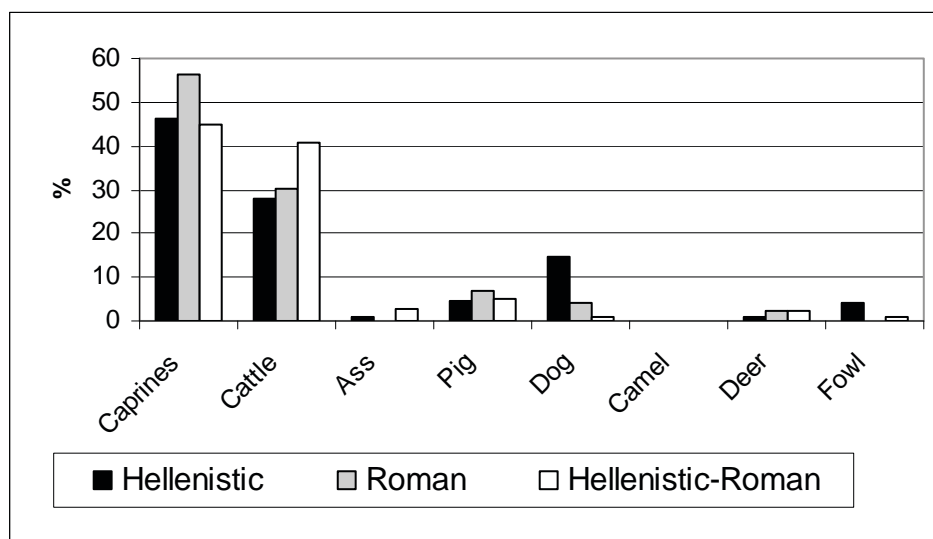


Figure 2: Relative frequencies of faunal remains from different deposits at the site (N=2554).



Figure 3: Dismemberment cut mark associated with removal of the cranium on atlas of a pig from Hellenistic phase.



Fig. 39, Sha'ar-Ha'Amakim, eastern walls of the *proteichisma* (W139 & W142). Note the 1.50m wide gap between the two walls, where the gate to the Fort was located.



Fig. 40, Sha'ar-Ha'Amakim, eastern walls of the *proteichisma* (W139 & W142). View from the south.