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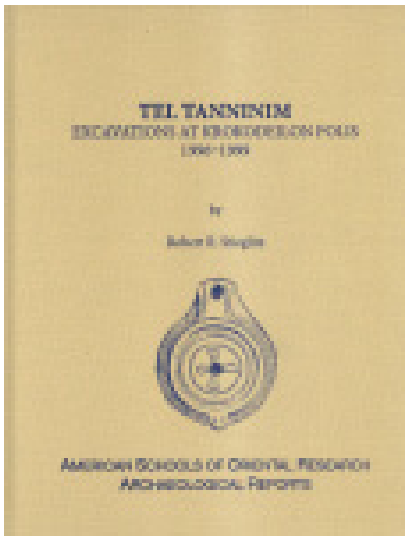

Stieglitz, Robert R.

Tel Tanninim: Excavations at Krokodeilon Polis 1996–1999

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This is the final report on excavations at Tel Tanninim (ancient *Krokodeilon polis*), which were conducted 1996–1999 under the direction of Robert Stieglitz. The volume includes introductory and concluding chapters (Stieglitz) and chapters on the architecture and stratigraphy of the various excavated areas (Stieglitz, A. Eger, D. Everman); the pottery of different periods (S. Yankelevitch, M. Oren-Paskal, Y. Arnon); the small finds, including glass and oil lamps (R. Pollak, Arnon, Stieglitz) and the fish bones (A. Fradkin and O. Lernau).

Tel Tanninim is located about 5 kilometers north of Caesarea, at the point where Nahal Tanninim ("Crocodile River") empties into the Mediterranean. Much of the original mound has been eroded by the sea, and the surviving remains are also badly eroded. The main structures uncovered by the excavations date to the Byzantine period (fourth to seventh centuries C.E..) and include the apse of a church (Area A), fishponds, wells (one with a water-wheel mechanism), and bath houses (Areas B, B2, and D). Remains belonging to earlier periods (late Iron Age-Persian-Hellenistic) were also found, as well as Islamic and medieval structures (including a Crusader tower).

During the earliest periods of occupation Tel Tanninim was a Phoenician town like other settlements in the coastal region, such as Tel Mevorakh and Tel Dor. During the Hellenistic period the site was renamed *Krokodeilon polis*, after the adjacent river (the

Crocodilon). In the early first century B.C.E. the site was abandoned as a result of Hasmonean activities in the area. It was reoccupied only in the Byzantine period in connection with the urban expansion of Caesarea Maritima. The town was now called by the Aramaic name *Migdal Malha* ("Saltworks Tower"), and a large church was constructed on top of the mound. The archaeological remains indicate that the primary economic base was fish farming, including the small-scale production of sea purple dye. The town declined during the seventh century, and by the eighth century it was largely deserted. The Crusaders established a small naval base at Tel Tanninim that was later occupied by the Mamluks, but by the mid-fourteenth century the site was abandoned.

The excavators are to be commended for publishing a final excavation report in such a timely manner. Nevertheless, there are a few technical errors and omissions. Perhaps the most serious of these is the failure to indicate on the top plans and section drawings all (or even most) of the locus numbers mentioned in the text. This is especially true of the plan of Area A, in figure 16, which is so small that I had difficulty discerning the locus and wall numbers even with reading glasses! In a few cases changes to figure numbers were not made in the text (for example, on 24 the reference to Persian lamp fragments should read figure 153:1; on 25 the reference to the piece of crocodile hide should read figure 165). One would also have expected the excavators to provide a reconstructed plan or drawing of the church.

The published evidence suggests that the excavators' proposed dates for the church and associated Byzantine period occupation are too early. The stratigraphy indicates that there was a gap or break in the construction of the church, during which time a thick layer of dune sand accumulated. The church remained in an unfinished state until work eventually resumed and was completed. The excavators date the start of construction to the late fourth or early fifth century, based on a bronze coin from the fill of the foundation trench (26), and the resumption of work to the mid-fifth century. However, Byzantine oil lamps dating to the sixth and seventh centuries were found in the foundation fills, apparently under the layer of accumulated sand (L1204 and L1241; see 27, 196). The excavators correctly date their oil lamp Type Ba (with a specimen from L1241) to the sixth to early seventh centuries (see 196), but the suggested fourth to seventh century range for their oil lamp Type Bb (with a specimen from L1204) should be narrowed to the sixth to seventh centuries, as the evidence for dating this type to the fourth to fifth centuries comes from sites with unreliable chronologies, especially Jalame and Beth She'arim (199). Three more Type Ba lamps were associated with an early pavement in the apse (L1114; see 196). This evidence suggests that the initial construction and renewed work on the church should be dated to the sixth century, not the late fourth or fifth century. Finally, evidence for eighth-century presence or activity in the church does not necessarily mean that the building still functioned as a church at that time (see 57).

Although the stratigraphic report refers to pottery found in the church, none of it is published in the Byzantine pottery chapter (by Oren-Paskal; the oil lamps are published in a separate chapter by Arnon). For example, on page 33 there is a reference to "Byzantine sherds predominantly dating to the sixth century" found within the church floor, but none of these is illustrated. In contrast to the chapters on oil lamps (Arnon) and glass (Pollak), the chapter on Byzantine pottery provides no information on quantification, such as how many sherds were recovered and how many examples of each type are represented (and in which loci or areas). In addition, whereas the chapter on glass presents assemblages from sealed loci (189–92), this is missing from the Byzantine pottery chapter. I am puzzled by the numerous parallels listed for imported Late Roman Red Wares in the Byzantine pottery chapter (125–29), as these types are common at sites around the eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, these parallels do not affect John Hayes's chronology, which is all that needs to be cited. For example, African Red Slip Ware Form 104C dates to roughly 550–625, not to the late fifth to early eighth centuries, and Late Roman "C" (Phocean Red Slip) Ware Form 10C dates to approximately 580/600 to the end of the seventh century, not to the late fifth to eighth centuries (125–27; see J. W. Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery* [Rome: British School, 1972], 166, 382). The cooking pots in figure 114 numbers 28–29 represent a Cypriot type of the sixth to eighth centuries that is found at some sites along the Palestinian coast. All of the Gaza amphoras illustrated date to the sixth to seventh centuries (143–45; see Grzegorz Majcherek, "Gazan Amphorae: Typology Reconsidered," in *Hellenistic and Roman Pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean—Advances in Scientific Studies: Acts of the II Nieborów Pottery Workshop, Nieborów, 18–20 December 1993* [ed. H. Meyza and Jolanta Młynarczyk; Warsaw: URGA, 1995], 163–78; Forms 3–4).

The published material suggests that the Byzantine period settlement at Tel Tanninim was established in the sixth century, not in the fourth or fifth century, as the excavators suggest. The church, which has an inscribed apse flanked by *pastophoria*, represents a regional type that is common along the Phoenician coast. The excavators correctly view the Byzantine period occupation at Tel Tanninim in the context of the urban expansion of its large and powerful neighbor to the south, describing the town as "a satellite of Caesarea" (56). This report clarifies the occupational history of Tel Tanninim and sheds light on the economic hinterland of Byzantine Caesarea.