

II failed repeatedly to take Nisibis in the 340s CE, but succeeded in his siege of Amida in 359, of which Ammianus provides a relatively detailed and instructive account. How skilled were the Persians in siege warfare? How did they treat captured cities? In sum, a missed opportunity to examine thoughtfully the art of siege warfare within a wide and potentially instructive historical context.

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Moshe Fischer, Mordechai Gichon, Oren Tal, *'En Boqeq. Excavations in an Oasis on the Dead Sea*, Vol. II: *The Officina — an Early Roman Building on the Dead Sea Shore*. With contributions by Ruth E. Jackson-Tal, Trude Kertesz, Arie Kindler, Hanan Lernau, Nili Lipschitz, Oded Potcher and Moshe Sade. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2000. xxx + 181 pp., 75 photographs, 7 plates, 9 plans and sections in a separate pocket. ISBN 3 8053 1791 3.

The oasis of 'En Boqeq on the western shore of the Dead Sea is located opposite the Lisan (Lashon), between 'En Gedi in the north and Zoora (Ghor es Safi) in the south. The springs of 'En Boqeq and 'En No'ith (thermal, 39°C), provided water, via two aqueducts and a system of pools, for the irrigation of terraced fields extending over an area of ca. 200 dunams (200,000 m<sup>2</sup>). According to the authors (xvii) other remains cover an area of ca. 5 km<sup>2</sup>. Two structures, 400m apart, are the landmarks of this oasis. They were excavated during the years 1968-1981. The Late Roman *castellum*, on the northern bank of Nahal Boqeq, was the subject of the first volume,<sup>1</sup> while the present volume is dedicated to the second structure — a Herodian pharmaceutical and cosmetics workshop (*officina*) of this agricultural estate, situated on the southern bank, and nearer to the sea shore.

Settlement at the site, located on the fringes of Judaea, overlooking Nabataea on the other side of the Dead Sea, began as a small square surveillance tower. This fortified tower was incorporated, early in the first c. CE, in the SE angle of a rectangular structure (15.60x20.50m) — with six rooms and halls surrounding a courtyard on three sides (S, E and W). Entrance was via two openings on the N and on the S. Twenty-six installations and appurtenances: ovens, basins, stone mortars, grinding stones, containers, pressing floors, hand mill base, and thick accumulations of ashes in all rooms and in the courtyard indicate that the entire ground level served as manufacture and storing grounds. A staircase (or a wooden ladder) led to the roofs. An upper storey existed in the tower, and perhaps above some of the other rooms. In the absence of another alternative, this storey might have served for dwelling.

The stratigraphy is well illustrated in the detailed sections and its chronology is well substantiated by the coins and pottery finds (the absence of a stone-to-stone plan is at odds with the high standard of the documentation). The chapters on the small finds — pottery, stone and glass vessels, metal artifacts and coins — are fine studies, addressing issues of typology, chronology, quantitative analysis (pie-charts), commercial contacts and cultural influences. The chapters on the dendro-archaeological remains and on fish and bird bones address issues of ecology and diet.

The lucrative character of the site is evident in the absence of fine import Terra Sigillata wares. Noteworthy is the fact that of the 57 coins, 56% are Nabataean, 29% are Roman, while only 15% are Jewish coins, indicating close commercial contacts with Nabatene. On the other hand, the scarcity of Nabataean pottery relative to the predominance of the local Judaeian ware, as well as the presence of Jerusalemite stone vessels, and more general historical-geographical

<sup>1</sup> M. Gichon et al., *En Boqeq. Ausgrabungen in Einer Oase am Toten Meer*, Band I: *Geographie und Geschichte der Oase, das spätrömisch-byzantinische Kastell*, Mainz 1993.

considerations suggest that this was a Judean site. This larger historical picture, discussed in detail, complements the fine archaeological report.

The effort to reconstruct the manufacturing processes in detail is a brave effort, yet the exact processes at work remain hypothetical. The materials exploited were the local agricultural products typical to this region, mainly balsam, palm dates, bitumen and salt. Fat might have been extracted from local herds, but the olive oil had to be imported from farther afield, perhaps from the Hebron hills. The minor scale of the installations suggests a moderate rate of production, in accordance with the relatively moderate size of the plantation. The owner was, presumably, the central authority; there are no traces of any rustic villa here to suggest a private landlord.

'En Boqeḳ was a small farmstead in a small oasis of the Dead Sea. To this group belong also Qumran, 'Ein Feshkha, and 'Ein al Guweir. 'En Gedi and Zoora were settlements, not just farmsteads. A possible connection with the Dead Sea sect is considered, but the author's alternative interpretation, that this was an extension of the 'En Gedi plantation, is preferred.

A comparison with Qumran makes crystal clear the differences between these two sites. 'En Boqeḳ is a neat and simple agricultural manor; the absence of any *miqveh* is noteworthy. Qumran has 11 *miqvaot*, a communal dining room and a large cemetery — all indicating services for larger crowds, at times. At Qumran in addition to the regular agricultural industry, similar to that at 'En Boqeḳ, other activities were at work.<sup>2</sup>

The book is a remarkable contribution to the archaeology and economy of the Herodian period. The editors and all the other authors should be congratulated on their achievement.

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Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001. xi + 320 pp. ISBN 0 691 08850 0.

Jewish historiography seems to be at the peak of revisionist tendencies. There is, of course, the onslaught of the 'new' 'Israeli' 'historians' on recent and quite recent events. At the other end of the chronological spectrum the Hebrew Bible has been dismissed as an historical source and presented as the brainchild of a literate ruling class of foreign transportees under Persian rule.<sup>1</sup> It is probably unfair to bracket Seth Schwartz (= S.) with these revisionists, for he is a serious scholar well grounded both in ancient history and in Judaic studies, and thoroughly familiar with modern historical theory and method — and social science jargon. I imagine that he prefers to see himself as a latter-day Wellhausen. For Wellhausen, Ancient Israel was a post-exilic creation; according to S., Judaism ruled by the tenets of the Rabbis came into being much later than is generally thought. Just as, according to Wellhausen, the history of monotheistic Israel was a retrojection from a post-exilic ideology and reality, so in the view of S. a Palestinian Judaism living under the

<sup>2</sup> Pace Y. Hirschfeld, 'Early Roman Manor Houses in Judea and the Site of Khirbet Qumran', *JNES* 57 (1998), 185-7, who maintains that Qumran was just an agricultural manor, see my proposal (J. Patrich, 'Was There an External Residential Area at Qumran?' *Qadmoniot* XXXI/115 [1998], 66-7 [Hebrew], and 'Did Extra Mural Dwelling Quarters exist at Qumran?' in L.H. Schiffman, E. Tov and J.C. VanderKam (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls — Fifty Years after their Discovery*, Jerusalem 2000, 720-7), that the site was, in addition, a community center for the Essenes of Jerusalem — a place to gather and celebrate their feasts, following their sectarian calendar.

<sup>1</sup> For the methodical dismissal of this see S. Japhet, 'In Search of Ancient Israel: Revisionism at All Costs', D.N. Myers and D.R. Ruderman (eds.), *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians* (New Haven and London 1998), 212-33.