

TEL ANAFA — A PROPOSED IDENTIFICATION

Tel Anafa (formerly: Tell al-Akhdar; 2105/2869), is a low-lying mound (it rises only 10 meters above the plain), situated at the eastern extremity of the Hulah Valley, just west of the Golan Heights, and 2.7 kilometers east of the Jordan. The mound, about 160 meters long and 110 meters wide, lies just east of the fish-ponds of Kibbutz Shamir, and 10 kilometers north-east of the now drained Hulah Lake (ancient Lake Semechonitis).

An abundance of chance finds, many of them Hellenistic, collected on the tell by members of Kibbutz Shamir led the Museum of Art and Archaeology of the University of Missouri-Columbia to organize in 1968 an archaeological expedition to Tel Anafa led by Prof. Saul S. Weinberg. The main aim of the project was to try and establish a closer dating of local Hellenistic material remains by means of correlating them to Greek imports and coinage.¹ Excavation continued from 1968 to 1973 (with 1971 excepted).² After a five-year break, the excavations were resumed in 1978, this time jointly sponsored by the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology of the University of Michigan and the Museum of Art and Archaeology of the University of Missouri.³ At present (1980), the excavations are still in progress.

The main object of this paper is to try and identify Tel Anafa with one of the Hellenistic cities of Northern Palestine mentioned in ancient sources.⁴ I shall, therefore, confine my remarks only to the Hellenistic

¹ See S.S. Weinberg, 'Tel Anafa: The Hellenistic Town', *IEJ*, 21 (1971) 86–87.

² Idem, *ibid.*, 86–109; idem, *ibid.*, 23 (1973) 113–117; idem, *Muse* (Annual of the Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri-Columbia), 3 (1969) 16–23; idem, *ibid.*, 4 (1970) 15–24; idem, *ibid.*, 5 (1971) 8–16; idem, *ibid.*, 6 (1972) 8–18; idem, *ibid.*, 8 (1974) 14–28.

³ S. Herbert, *IEJ*, 28 (1978) 271–274. Prof. S. Herbert was field director during the 1978 season.

⁴ In 1975 Weinberg wrote: 'There is still no indication of the ancient name of the site' (*Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 1, Jerusalem 1975, 65).

levels of Tel Anafa. It seems quite certain that the mound served as an acropolis for a much larger town, the exact spread of which is difficult to ascertain at present, owing to the fish-ponds in the west which hinder excavations, and the relatively high water table east of the mound.⁵ Thus far the excavations have revealed the substantial remains of the Hellenistic acropolis. Such substantial Hellenistic remains are not common in the archaeology of the Holy Land, owing to the intensive re-use of building material during the Roman, Byzantine and Arab periods. But Tel Anafa seems to have been only sparsely inhabited after the Hellenistic period, mainly in the early Roman period and from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, and therefore escaped a similar fate. Two main Hellenistic phases have been observed, which the excavators marked as Phase I (pre-150 B.C.),⁶ and Phase II (between 150 and 80 B.C.), which has three sub-divisions (a-c).

The excavators have established the fact that the city was prosperous during Phase II, its main feature of interest being a lavishly stuccoed large building in the north-central area.⁷ Herbert ascribed the wealth of this phase to the participation of the inhabitants in the international Greek trade with the East, part of which passed through the Jordan Valley route.⁸ The end of Phase II came, judging by the evidence of the coins and the Rhodian stamped amphora handles, a short time after 80 B.C.⁹ This seems to connect its end with the campaign of Alexander Jannaeus in the region of the Golan towards the end of his reign, and we shall presently discuss this problem.

Contrary to the earlier notions of the excavators, the 1972 and 1978 seasons seem to have established the fact that the mound was inhabited as early as the beginning of the Hellenistic period. In 1972 many early Hellenistic lamps were discovered in the north-west area on some floors. The excavators concluded that these floors belong to the third century B.C. or earlier. A piece of Attic black-figured pottery was found there

⁵ Cf. Weinberg (above, n. 1), 87, n. 7; idem, *Muse*, 8 (1974) 8.

⁶ See Herbert (above, n. 3), 272. By pre-150 B.C. Herbert evidently means 332-150 B.C., as we shall presently see.

⁷ Weinberg (above, n. 1), 91-93; idem, *Muse*, 5 (1971), 9-10; Herbert (above, n. 3), 272.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁹ Weinberg (above, n. 1), 97; idem (above, n. 4), 67-68.

as well.¹⁰ A third-century wall associated with many early Hellenistic lamps was discovered in the north-central area.

During the 1978 season an early Hellenistic house was unearthed in the north-east area. In one of its two rooms 'a set of fifteen pyramidal loom weights was found fallen *in situ*', while the latest datable object to be associated with this building is a coin of Alexander the Great.¹¹ In the north-west area of the mound the excavators have found ceramic material datable to the fourth and third centuries B.C., probably testifying to an early Hellenistic building activity.¹²

To the ceramic material one should add the numismatic evidence. Thus far the excavators have notified us of seven pre-150 B.C. Hellenistic coins. The Alexander coin has already been mentioned. Apart from that, four third-century Ptolemaic coins were discovered (one of Ptolemy Philadelphus, another of Ptolemy Euergetes, and two unspecified), a coin of Antiochus III, and a third-second century coin of Aradus.¹³ Apart from the coins three late third-century Rhodian stamped amphora handles were also reported, one dated ca. 220 B.C.¹⁴

The Hellenistic character of the site has been strikingly established by the fact that almost all the epigraphical material discovered so far is in Greek. It mainly consists of graffiti on red-ware ceramics, with the exception of one clay sealing with three lines in Greek and one line in a West Semitic alphabet (Phoenician?), and a lead weight (inscribed in Greek?).¹⁵

We are therefore dealing here with a Hellenistic settlement which existed on the mound from the early Hellenistic period to ca. 80–76 B.C. This brings us back to the question of its Hellenistic name. An obvious way of tackling this problem would have been to check the list of Jannaeus' conquests in the Golan.

Josephus gives two very short accounts of this campaign. One in BJ, 1 105, the other in *Ant.*, 13, 393–394. These accounts, which are practically

¹⁰ Weinberg, *IEJ*, 23 (1973) 114, 116.

¹¹ Herbert (above, n. 3), 273.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Weinberg, (above, n. 1), 97; idem, *Muse*, 8 (1974), 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; see also idem (above, n. 10), 115.

¹⁵ Idem (above, n. 1), 102; idem, *Muse*, 3 (1969), 22 (lead weight); idem, *ibid.*, 4 (1970), 24.

identical, tell of the conquests of Gaulane, Seleuceia, Gamala and the Valley (or: Ravine) of Antiochus (Ἀντιόχου φάραγξ). The first three have already been identified: Gaulane (Γαυλάνη) has been identified with Sahm el Jaūlan, in Batanaea, about 27 kilometers due east of the Sea of Galilee.¹⁶ Seleuceia — with Sulūqiye, 11 kilometers south-east of the Ḥulah Lake,¹⁷ and Gamala, either with Ḥirbet es-Salām near Dēr Qarūh, 11 kilometers north-east of the Sea of Galilee,¹⁸ or with Tell ed-Drā' near Jamle, 20 kilometers due east of the Sea of Galilee.¹⁹

This leaves us with the problem of identifying the Valley of Antiochus. Could it have anything to do with Tel Anafa? All the scholars who have so far attempted an identification took it for granted that the Valley of Antiochus took its name from a nearby city called Antioch.²⁰ This is by no means certain since it should be noted that the valley is named after a certain *Antiochus* (probably Antiochus III) and not after a city called Antioch. But let us discuss the various suggestions. The first to attempt an identification was Schlatter. He connected it with the Ἀντιόχεια ἡ ἐπὶ Δάφνη τῆς Συρίας mentioned in Josephus' narrative of Herod's settlement of Zamaris and his men.²¹ Schlatter assumed that Josephus was mistaken and that this Antioch is actually to be sought near a different Daphne, the one that lies about 7 kilometers south-west of Paneion.²² Schlatter further assumed that this Antioch was founded by Antiochus III to commemorate his victory over Scopus in the nearby battle of Paneion.

Schlatter's assumption was adopted by Avi-Yonah, who located Antioch at Tell el-Qādi.²³ Tcherikover too walked in the footsteps of

¹⁶ G. Schumacher, *Across the Jordan* (London 1889) 92–93.

¹⁷ Idem, *ZDPV*, 9 (1883), 347; and see recently, B. Bar-Kochva, *ZDPV*, 92 (1976) 62–64.

¹⁸ Z. Ilan, *Erez ha-Golan* (Tel Aviv 1969) 312, 330–334 (Hebrew).

¹⁹ K. Furrer, *ZDPV*, 12 (1889) 148–151; see also Bar-Kochva (above, n. 17), 54–71.

²⁰ A. Schlatter, *Zur Topographie und Geschichte Palästinas* (Calw-Stuttgart 1893) 314–320; M. Avi-Yonah, *BJPES*, 10 (1943–44) 19–20 (Hebrew); V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia 1959) 101–102; M. Dothan, in: *Eretz-Israel*, 2 (1953) 167–169 (Hebrew).

²¹ *Ant.*, 17, 24–25.

²² Mentioned in *BJ*, 4, 3.

²³ Avi-Yonah (above, n. 20).

Schlatter, but he located Antioch near Lake Semechonitis.²⁴ But the existence of this Antioch was refuted in 1953 by Dothan, who rightly argued that both Josephus and the various Talmudic sources refer to Antioch in Northern Syria, the capital of Roman Syria, and not to a non-existent Antioch near the sources of the Jordan.²⁵ To Dothan's arguments we can add the fact that in Josephus' narrative it is Saturninus, the Roman governor of Syria, who gives Zamaris 'a place named Ulatha to dwell in'. Were this Ulatha near Lake Semechonitis, as Schlatter maintained, Saturninus would have nothing to do with it, as it lay in Herod's kingdom.

Dothan therefore sought the Valley of Antiochus near one of the three Hellenistic cities of Trans-Jordan known also by the name of Antioch: Gerasa, Hippos, and Gadara.²⁶ Dothan eliminated Gerasa on topographical grounds. He also eliminated Hippos, stating that it is not mentioned among Jannaeus' conquests. This is erroneous; Hippos appears in a list of Jannaeus' conquests preserved by the Byzantine historian Syncellus.²⁷ By this (partly erroneous) process of elimination Dothan reached the conclusion that the Valley of Antiochus is the plain which spreads between the Jordan, the River Hieromices (Yarmuk), and the Sea of Galilee, in the vicinity of Gadara (Antioch).

Be this as it may, it is clear that this somewhat mysterious valley is not to be sought in the vicinity of Tel Anafa. Josephus having thus failed us, we must now revert to Stephanus Byzantinus, the sixth-century Greek grammarian.²⁸ In his Ἑθνικά Stephanus has the following information under the entry Ἀρσινόη τρίτη πόλις Συρίας ἐν Αὐλώνι. ἡ περίμετρος αὐτῆς στάδια ὀκτακισχίλια. τετάρτη τῆς Κοίλης Συρίας. Stephanus has uniquely preserved here information about two Ptolemaic re-foundations.

²⁴ Tcherikover (above, n. 20).

²⁵ Dothan (above, n. 20).

²⁶ Hippos is known as Antioch by some of its Roman coins (A. Spijkerman, *The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia* (Jerusalem 1978) 168). So is Gerasa, (*ibid.*, 157), where a number of inscriptions also attest to it (C.H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis* (New Haven 1938) 600). Gadara is known as Antioch through Stephanus Byzantinus.

²⁷ Syncellus, ed. W. Dindorf, I (Bonn 1829) 559.

²⁸ On Stephanus see the exhaustive article by Honigmann, *RE* II. VI (1929) 2369–2399.

Tcherikover identified the Syrian Arsinoe with Damascus, on the grounds that Stephanus described it as big city, situated in Syria 'in a valley'.²⁹ Damascus was certainly one of the biggest cities of Syria. It is also situated near a valley, which according to Strabo (16.2.20) was called Αὐλῶν βασιλικὸς by the Greeks. However, Abel, ignoring Stephanus' exaggerated information about the circumference of the city, sought this Arsinoe somewhere in the Biqā', the plain between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon.³⁰

These explanations (and especially Tcherikover's) may account for the Syrian Arsinoe. But what about the other Arsinoe — the one designated Arsinoe of Coele Syria? Jones dismissed it altogether as probably being identical with the Syrian Arsinoe.³¹ Tcherikover, on the other hand, wrote: 'We probably have to seek [it] among the cities of Palestine'.³²

It is my suggestion that Arsinoe of Coele Syria is to be tentatively identified with the Hellenistic city which existed on and around Tel Anafa. The archaeological evidence cited above indicates that the site already flourished during the Ptolemaic period. As to its designation as Arsinoe of *Coele Syria*: since the city was already in ruins for more than 600 years when Stephanus compiled his lists, he must have gotten its name from a much earlier, probably Hellenistic, source. Indeed, the term 'Coele Syria' was commonly applied in the Ptolemaic period, and officially in the Seleucid period, to the region in which Tel Anafa is situated. It was then revived during the second century A.D.³³

There is one further consideration: was the city (the ancient Semitic name of which we still do not know) re-named after Arsinoe II, the beloved sister and wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, or after Arsinoe III, sister and wife of Ptolemy IV Philopator? Tcherikover favoured the first

²⁹ V. Tscherikower, *Die hellenistischen Städtegründungen von Alexander dem Grossen bis auf die Römerzeit* (Leipzig 1927) 66–67; idem (above, n. 20), 442, n. 4.

³⁰ F.M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine*, II (Paris 1938) 131.

³¹ A.H.M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford 1971) 450, n. 20.

³² Tcherikover (above, n. 20), 106.

³³ On Coele Syria, see E. Bickerman, *RB*, 54 (1947) 256–268. Cf. M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, I (Jerusalem 1974) 14. That Tel Anafa was situated within the Ptolemaic province of Syria and Phoenicia, becomes clear from the Zenon Papyri. See V. Tscherikower, *Mizraim*, 4–5 (1937) 32–34.

possibility without stating his reasons.³⁴ Nevertheless he may have been right, as it was Philadelphus who ordered a number of important re-foundations to be carried out prior to or during the Second Syrian War. His hitherto known re-foundations (Ptolemais, Philoteria, Scythopolis, and Philadelphia), all had a pronounced military character.³⁵ Arsinoe (Tel Anafa) may have been a further link in this chain, which was designed to forestall a possible Seleucid attack.

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³⁴ Tcherikover (above, n. 20) 106.

³⁵ On the foundation of Scythopolis see the present writer in: *Cathedra*, 8 (1978) 3–11 (Hebrew).