

# HIPPOS - SUSSITA OF THE DECAPOLIS

**THE FIRST TWELVE  
SEASONS OF EXCAVATIONS  
2000 - 2011**

Volume II

MICHAEL EISENBERG



THE ZINMAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA, MOUNT CARMEL, ISRAEL



# Hippos-Sussita of the Decapolis

## The First Twelve Seasons of Excavations

2000 - 2011

Volume II

Michael Eisenberg



With contributions by

**Mariusz Burdajewicz**, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures,  
Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

**Adi Erlich**, The Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa

**Rafael Frankel**, The Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa

**Rachel Hesse**, Durham University

**Hector Hinojosa-Prieto**, Cologne University

**Klaus-G. Hinzen**, Cologne University

**Emilia Jastrzębska**, Warsaw, Poland

**Lev-Arie Kapitaikin**, Art History Department, Tel Aviv University

**Shmuel Marco**, Department of Geosciences, Tel Aviv University

**Mechael Osband**, The Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa

**Silvia Rozenberg**, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

**Patrick Scott-Geyer**, The Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa

**Tsvika Tsuk**, The Israel Nature and Parks Authority

**Neta Wechsler**, Department of Geosciences, Tel Aviv University

**Oren Zingboym**, Israel Antiquities Authority





*This volume is dedicated to Prof. Arthur Segal  
who initiated and headed The Hippos-Sussita Excavation Project  
for the first twelve seasons (2000-2011).*



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hippos@research.haifa.ac.il  
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Glass Plates: Mariusz Burdajewicz

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# Introduction

**Michael Eisenberg**

The Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa





Fig. 1.2 Mount Sussita, with the Ein-Gev stream flowing below it and the Sea of Galilee to its west.

This second, and last, volume to summarize the first twelve years (2000–2011) of research at Hippos (Sussita) of the Decapolis is published four years after the publication of the first volume in early 2014 (Fig. 1.1).<sup>1</sup>

I am dedicating this volume to Professor Arthur Segal who initiated the Hippos excavation project in 2000, and who has passed on the reins to me after a wonderful and fruitful twelve years of mutual work in the field and in the Zinman Institute of Archaeology. I am greatly indebted to Arthur for his enlightening and enthusiastic teaching and for his professional guidance throughout the period of our mutual work.

The first volume concentrated on the remains exposed so far in the field, comprising the main building complexes, the urban plan, as well as the historical and geographical introductions (Fig. 1.2).<sup>2</sup> The second volume is devoted mainly to laboratory research, small finds, stucco and wall paintings, the water supply system, the main

necropoleis, the winery and the various historical earthquakes that have occurred around the Sea of Galilee. The current articles are aimed at filling the gaps of the research presented in the first volume.

The Hippos excavations were directed by Arthur Segal and Michael Eisenberg from 2000 to 2011. As from 2012, the dig is directed by M. Eisenberg. The excavations are affiliated with the Zinman Institute of Archaeology at the University of Haifa, Israel. Two academic teams joined the expedition. The first was headed by Jolanta Młynarczyk of the Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw and by Dr. Mariusz Burdajewicz of the National Museum in Warsaw, with a team from Poland which conducted excavations at Hippos from 2000 to 2008. The second was headed by Mark Schuler with a team from Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA that has been excavating in Hippos since the year 2002. M. Schuler and his team from the United States continued digging and unearthing

1 *Hippos-Sussita of the Decapolis: The First Twelve Seasons of Excavations* (hereafter *Hippos Summary Vol I*) was first published at the end of 2013. The volume was reprinted in early 2014. The current second volume (hereafter *Hippos Summary Vol II*) was published with the support of the Israel Science Foundation, Grant 62/16.

2 For the full introduction, see Segal and Eisenberg, “Introduction” in *Hippos Summary Vol I*, p. 4–11.

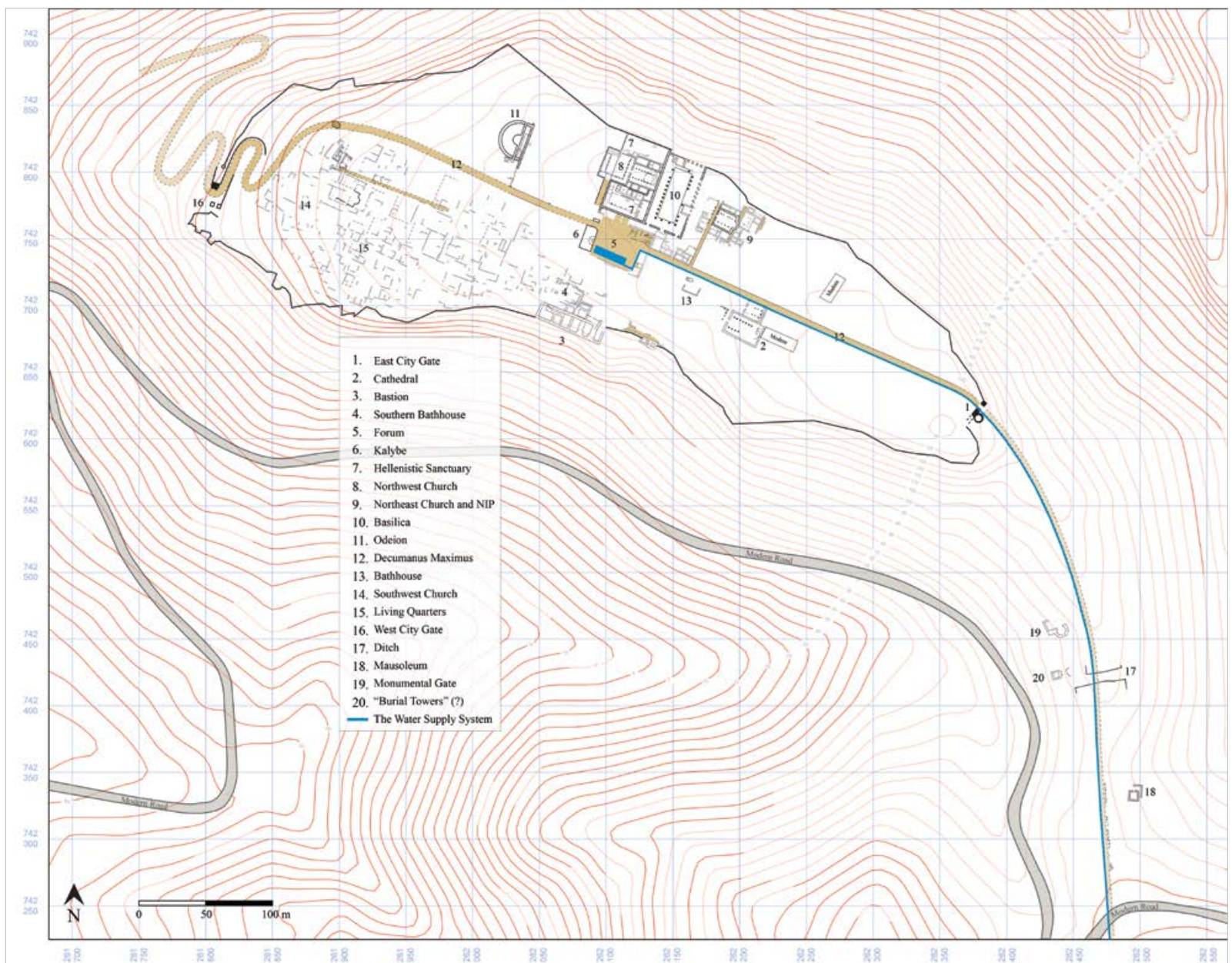


Fig. 1.2 Contour map of Sussita Mountain and its saddle-ridge with the main excavation areas marked.

the Northeast Insula until 2016. We are greatly in debt to Schuler and his team for their long-lasting and successful cooperation.

As with volume I, this volume deals only with the information gathered in the field until the end of 2011. Although some references may be made to later publications, we have tried not to discuss any new insights revealed after 2011.

The publication of this volume and the scholarly research presented here would not have been possible without the immense assistance of the Zinman Institute of Archaeology and its team, the expedition researchers in the field and in the laboratories, and last but not least the hundreds of volunteers from Israel and mainly from around the globe that contributed their enthusiasm, time and finance in order to unearth one of the most exciting and scarcely known poleis in the Decapolis.

I wish to thank the readers of the various chapters in this volume. Their remarks and evaluation contributed immensely to the quality of the presented scholarships.



Fig. 1.3 A. Segal (right) and M. Eisenberg during an off-season winter excavation.



Fig. 1.4 A panorama view from Sussita saddle-ridge towards the Sea of Galilee.



Fig. 1.5 K. Stammerman, aka “the veteran” (right), one of the regular participants from the US as from the beginning of the project, and A. Chocron, a student from the University of Haifa, while excavating in the southern bathhouse.

The prehistoric and protohistoric periods were almost absent from the Hippos publications but today, as we have a wider and deeper understanding of these local phenomena, we should fully publish them in a separate publication. Architectural and small find remains of the Pottery Neolithic period were unearthed only south of the odeion.<sup>3</sup> Remains of the Chalcolithic period can be found all around the center crest of the Sussita mountain once you reach the stratum above the basalt bedrock. We realize now that there was once a significant Chalcolithic settlement on the Sussita mountain though no architectural remains have been found so far.<sup>4</sup>

A new session of excavations was initiated in 2012, and the excavation teams keep unearthing parts of Hippos. Among the sites currently under excavation are the residential quarters, military



Fig. 1.6 R. Kaftory, a student from the University of Haifa, while excavating in the southern bathhouse.

<sup>3</sup> For the Pottery Neolithic see Segal 2009, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> See mainly Segal and Eisenberg 2004, p. 32–35.





**Fig. 1.7** Hippos survey team, D. Steinberg (left), A. Iermolin (center) and Y. Vitkalov, observing from the Kavaroith cliff (fortress) towards the Haruv spring which served as one of the early water sources for Hippos.

architecture, the Roman basilica, the southern bathhouse, segments of the decumanus maximus, the northeast insula, a sanctuary along the Sussita saddle-ridge, and the saddle-ridge necropolis.<sup>5</sup> As from 2017 the research on Hippos no longer concentrates on Sussita Mountain and its environs, but also tries to tackle the Hippos hinterland (territorium) which extended to the center and south of the Golan Heights during its peak in the Roman and Byzantine periods (Figs. 1.7–1.8).<sup>6</sup>

Hippos is located within the Sussita National Park under the management of The Israel Nature and Parks Authority. Although the site is officially open to the public, it has not yet been sufficiently

prepared to receive large numbers of visitors. The Nature and Parks Authority has recently been granted the necessary funds to develop the site and open it for regular public visits and tour groups.

The first exhibition to expose Hippos to the public was opened at the Hecht Museum in the University of Haifa: *Before the Earth Shook—The Ancient City of Hippos-Sussita Emerges*.<sup>7</sup> The exhibition portrays a general view of the city while concentrating on the pagan Roman world and the early Christianity of the Byzantine world as they shift and reflect in Hippos. Simultaneously with the exhibition opening, a special issue of the *Michmanim* journal was dedicated to Hippos and its research.<sup>8</sup>

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5 Within this volume, the Aramaic name Sussita is used mainly to describe the mountain on the crest of which the city was built, and the Greek name Hippos is used when referring to the city itself.

6 The new regional research project is conducted by M. Eisenberg and M. Osband: *An Archaeological Study of the Roman Period Territorium of Hippos: Urban and Rural Settlement Relationships*.

7 The exhibition, curated by M. Eisenberg, was opened in December 2017 and will be open for several years.

8 M. Eisenberg (ed.), *Hippos of the Decapolis and its Region: 18 years of Research*, *Michmanim* 27, 2017.



Fig. 1.8 A. Iermolin overlooking the Ein-Gev stream (April) which flows all year round to the north of Sussita.

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