

# The Rural Landscape of Antipatris' Hinterland from the Hellenistic to the Byzantine Periods

Amit Shadman

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To my Parents Elizabeta and Benjamin Shadman

This volume is based on my doctoral dissertation, supervised by Prof. Shimon Dar of Bar-Ilan University. I want to thank Prof. Dar for his patience and pleasant nature; his friendly attitude and vast knowledge turned the work into a real pleasure. It was a great privilege to be escorted by him on this long, thoughtful and exciting journey.

Amit Shadman

# INTRODUCTION

## The Area

The region under discussion extends for approximately 30 sq km (Fig. 1.1), and it is a distinct geographical area delimited by the Shiloh river (Naḥal Shiloh) Shiloh on the south, the Rabah river (Naḥal Rabah) on the north, and by the eastern part of the Coastal Plain on the west. On the east, the area is bounded by the 'Green line'—the pre-1967 border between Israel and Jordan. The geographic characteristics of the region influenced the nature of its settlements (land distribution, road system, administrative units, and such). It is worth noticing that some sites in the study area, discovered both in previous surveys and by the author, were not included in the present study, either due to their poor state of preservation which did not allow their plans to be drawn or because the sites had been utterly destroyed by contemporary works. Nevertheless, important destroyed sites were taken into account in the discussion of each period.

The area was subdivided into four settlement strips, and the sites were defined along these strips according to the following divisions and definitions (Fig. 1.2):<sup>1</sup>

A. The Western Strip. This strip includes the sites of Migdal Afeq and Qurnat al-Haramiya. Additional sites, located south of the study area, include H. Zikhrin, Mazor, Quleh, Nabalat and Hadid. A conspicuous feature of this strip is the location of the sites just above the alluvial valley of the Coastal Plain.

B. The Farmsteads Strip. Located east of the Western Strip, this strip includes a series of agricultural farms. Most of these farms have been documented by Finkelstein (1978a, 1981) and dated by him mostly to the Iron Age II, the Persian and the Hellenistic periods. Some farms, excavated by the author, will be presented in Chapter 3.

C. The 'Rural Towns' Strip (medium- to large-sized villages). This strip includes, *among other things*, four relatively large sites, probably founded in the Byzantine period. Due to their considerable size, it is suggested to call them 'rural towns,' although these are clearly medium-large villages. These are, from north to south: Kh. Kesfa Kh. Umm al-Hammam, H. Yeqavim, and Kh. Ta'amur. Also included in this strip are the monasteries of Kh. Dayyar, Kh. Umm al-Bureid, and H. Te'ena, as well as some farmhouses or estates located near the 'rural towns.'

D. The Eastern Strip. This strip includes the sites of Rafat, Deir Balut, and Ez-Zawiya, and to some extent also al-Luban and Rantis. Only limited data is available on these sites although, according to the survey conducted in the region by Kochavi (1972: 231), the first two were settled during most historical periods. It should be noted that this strip of settlements slightly deviates from the boundaries of the present study, but they are an essential component for the overall picture.<sup>2</sup>

## Site Names and Map References

This study includes twenty-two sites, known by their names in earlier studies, except for site No. 20 which was first discovered during the present work. In some cases, there is a discrepancy between the names appearing in the *Survey of Western Palestine* and other maps of the 19th century, and in modern maps. For example, the location of the sites of Kh. Dayyar, Kh. Umm al-Bureid and Kh. Umm al-Hammam differs from what is known today. In these cases, we followed Kochavi and Beit Arieḥ (1994), who surveyed the area in the 1970s. A similar problem was identified with the sites of Qurnat al-Haramiya and Qasr es-Sitt.

It should be noted that, in the British maps of the 1940s, the sites bear the same names as today. In several cases, we added a suffix to the name of a site—such as

<sup>1</sup> Finkelstein (1978a: 31–33) and Safrai (1995b) have already discussed the subdivision of the region into strips. Finkelstein (1981:341) noted two strips, west and east, with two rows of villages. He named the area between these two strips 'the intermediate hills'.

<sup>2</sup> A noteworthy feature is the existence, east of this strip, of another important strip of sites which includes the sites of Deir el-Mir, Deir Qal'ah and Deir Sam'an (see Chapter 10).

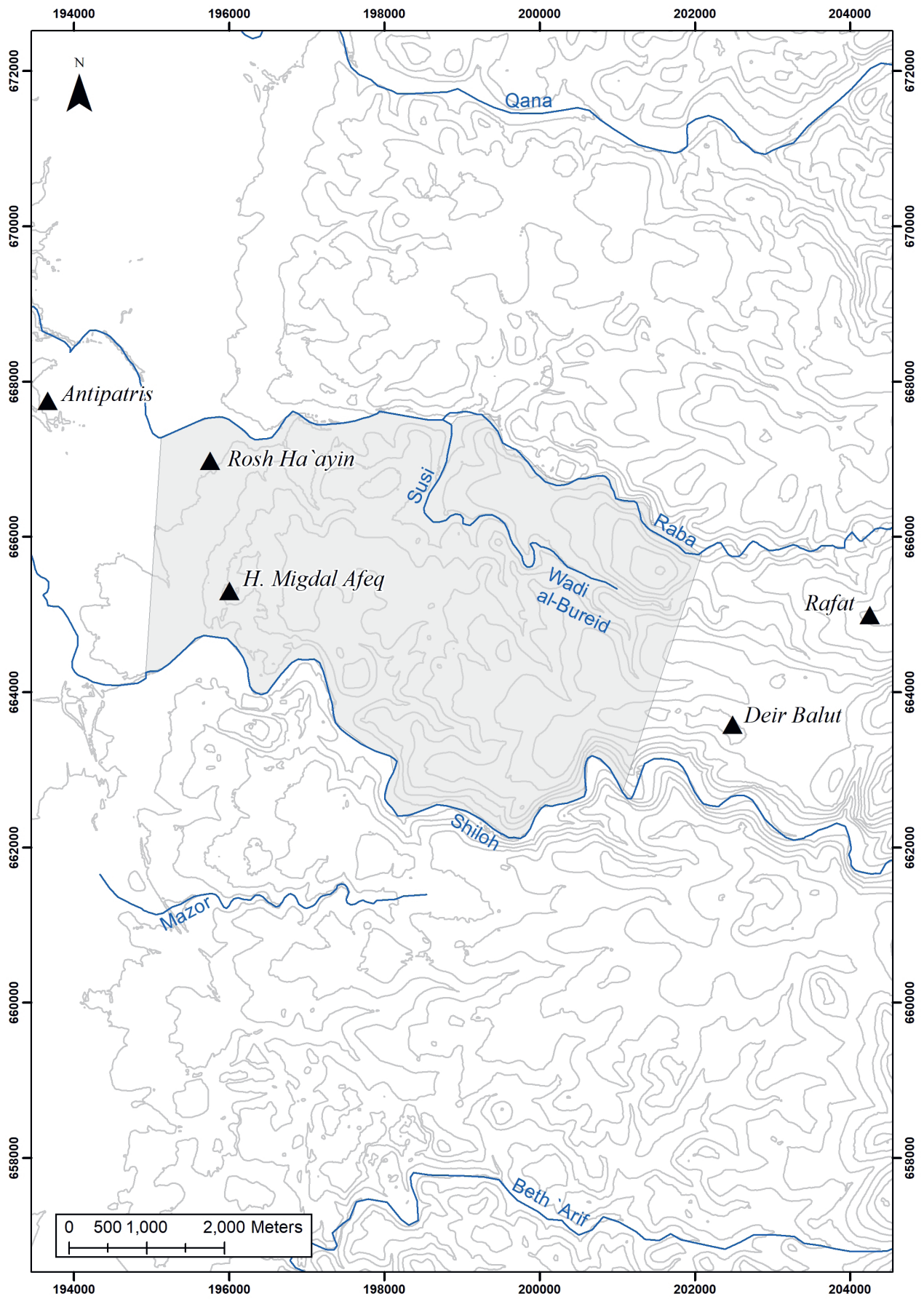


Fig. 1.1. Location map of the study area.

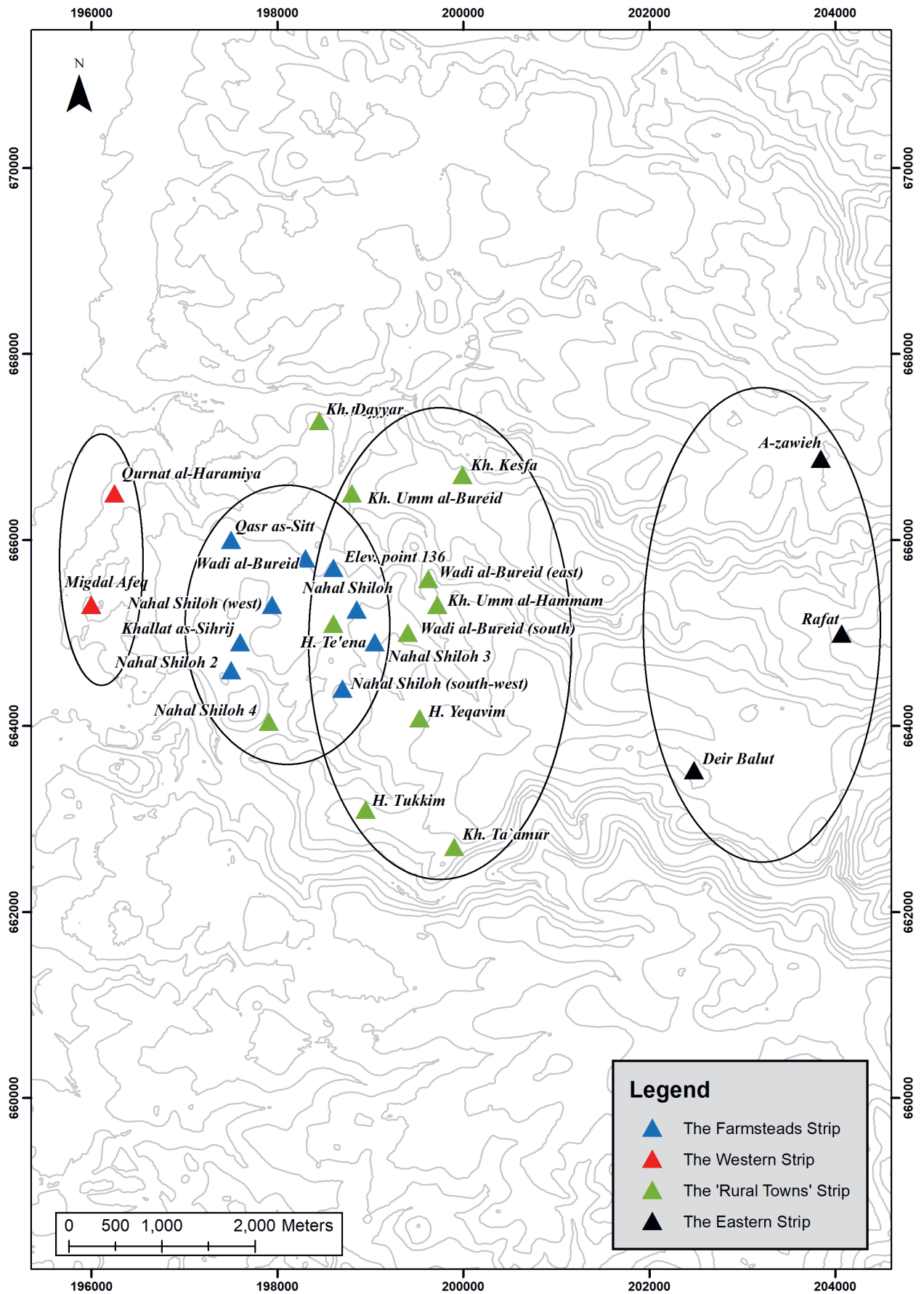


Fig. 1.2. The subdivision of the study area.

the cardinal direction or a number in parentheses—to differentiate it from others. Map references follow the New Israel Grid, with a precision of 12 digits. Based on the data, several maps were generated presenting the settlements' distribution through time, with the placement of installations such as field towers, winepresses, burial caves, cisterns and more. On the installations maps, the points of reference were occasionally shifted a few meters to make the map more accessible.

### **Definition and Classification of the Sites in the Rural Landscape, and Finds**

The sites in the region were classified according to size. Their analysis and dating were based on the 22 sites included in this study and their agricultural precinct (the area of the plot). Sites smaller than 0.5 dunams,<sup>3</sup> such as field towers, limekilns, winepresses, and so on, were discussed as part of the agricultural plot of each settlement and were not taken into account in the calculation of the size of the constructed area. The site area, therefore, includes the central complex of structures and rooms. Burial fields, churches, and such, discovered near the settlement, were included in the agricultural plot of the relevant site. The sizes of the sites and their definitions are as follows:

A small, 1–3 dunams site: Farmhouses or estates.

A medium-sized, 3–5 dunams site: Monasteries and villages.

A large, 10–15 dunams or larger site: 'Rural towns'—medium- to large-sized villages.

Defining each site was done taking into account other studies of a similar nature. The main settlement patterns in the area are farmhouses, estates, rural villages, castles, monasteries/churches and 'rural towns.' The structural remains of some sites had been already surveyed in the past and accompanied by plans, for example during the salvage excavations conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), and in Safrai's survey (Safrai 1997a).

The latter drew the plans of Kh. Kesfa and Kh. Ta'amur. Other sites were surveyed as part of the present study, and their plans were generated by GPS.

Within the framework of the present research, we conducted an in-depth survey of several key sites within the region, mostly in the 'rural towns strip.' The ceramic finds from these sites are presented at the end of the discussion of each site. The finds excavated by the author of this book are presented and discussed as part of the study of site No. 2. It should be noted that the ceramic finds from this site are similar to those from the other farmhouses in the region.

### **The Agricultural Plot**

As stated before, the agricultural plot is composed of the agricultural lands surrounding the settlement. The discussion includes the various installations in the agricultural plot: winepresses, cisterns, burial caves, stone clearance heaps, sheep pens, kilns, and so forth. The delineation of the agricultural plots was done based on the topography of the area (Kallai 1960: 89) and the walking distances from the site to the roads, particularly to the agricultural ones. These roads were intended to link the settlement to the fields located nearby and to allow for the transportation of agricultural products to the settlement or the field towers. Most of the roads were similar to the rural roads, and the main difference between them is in their length, with the agricultural roads estimated from only hundreds of meters to about a maximum of 1 km. These roads were numbered with the site's number and a suffix (for example, the agricultural roads of H. Yeqavim—site No. 9—were numbered as 9a, 9b, and so forth.). Emphasis was made on the analysis of the enclosed plots of each settlement, especially those of the major sites, such as Kh. Ta'amur, H. Yeqavim, and Kh. Kesfa. The region as a whole is characterized by numerous field walls, agricultural terraces, dams and enclosed areas which raised many questions, including their construction dating.

<sup>3</sup> A dunam is a measure of land equal to 1000 square meters.