

REVISITING THE MAUSOLEUM AT HERODIUM: IS IT HEROD'S TOMB?

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An attentive examination of the impressive finds of the mausoleum uncovered in 2007 in Herodium has demonstrated that these are not in accord with the characteristics of Herodian architecture as postulated by the late Prof. Ehud Netzer. The following four arguments show that this monument, which was indeed built by Herod, did not serve as his eternal resting place:

- *Its moderate dimensions.*
- *The absence of an appropriate gateway to the burial ground, and an adequate assembly space around the tomb.*
- *A stratigraphic argument: The stairway leading up to the palace-fortress on the hilltop leaves the mausoleum 'in its shade', being also overlaid on top of the single irrigation pool that served the small garden that had surrounded the tomb.*
- *The absence of any correspondence between the axis of symmetry of the mausoleum, and that of Greater Herodium, indicating that these two were entirely different building projects.*

Two alternative proposals are presented for the possible locations of the tomb, which might have disappeared.

Keywords: Herodium, Herodian architecture, mausoleum

I. INTRODUCTION

The building projects of Herod the Great as described by Josephus, and their surviving remains, fire one's imagination. Many of these sites were excavated and published by Ehud Netzer — the world-renowned expert on Herodian architecture (Netzer 2006).

According to Netzer, the main features of Herodian architecture, in which the king was personally involved, are these¹:

- A. The meticulous selection of the site, including that of Herodium, located partly on a hill, and partly in the flat area at its foot, at the edge of the desert.²
- B. Multi-functionality: several activities and usages were possible in each complex. Greater Herodium was considered by Netzer to be a most striking example, in which a burial compound, a palace, a fortress, and the capital of a toparchy were harmoniously combined.
- C. The adoption of a programmatic approach for each project, implementing original ideas in determining the purpose(s) of the project. Multi-functionality is an example of such an approach.
- D. The outlining of basic principles for planning the buildings or major components of them. On this point, Netzer mentions Herod's decision to build the 'Mountain

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Palace-Fortress' as a circular building partly covered by an artificial fill, giving the hill the shape of a truncated cone.

To this list, one can add the large dimensions of his buildings (see in the discussion below).

According to Netzer, the following features are common to both Greater Herodium (comprised of the upper palace-fortress on top of the hill, and a lower complex of buildings below — both having common axiality), and the third palace of Jericho (extending on both sides of a streambed; Netzer 2001, 132):

- (1) Use of architectural axes.
- (2) Existence of architectural focal points.
- (3) Adjustment of the building project to the natural topography.
- (4) Modification of the natural topography at will, by means of immense earth-moving operations.
- (5) Incorporation of water works in the general layout.
- (6) Integration of decorative gardens in the general layout.

According to Josephus, Herod's body was brought in a pompous funeral (see below), to be buried in Herodium (*Ant.* 17.196–199; *War* 1.671–673); he says nothing about the shape of the burial chamber, or its exact location. A major challenge for Netzer in his many years of work at Herodium was to locate Herod's burial place. From the beginning, he believed that it was to be found at the bottom of the hill, not on its summit. He opined that the original site, which he proposed to locate in Lower Herodium, to the southeast of the pool complex, was abandoned before being completed. Its components were, he alleged, the 'Course' with the monumental triclinium at its western end, the adjacent *miqva'ot*, and a presumed Doric portico, the stones of which were incorporated in an Early Christian church built at the site in the Byzantine period ('the Central Church', end of the fifth century or beginning of the sixth). He assumed that this portico was intended to serve as an antechamber for an underground tomb that was never hewn.³

Early in 2007, surprising finds (the remains of an impressive mausoleum⁴) emerged in an unexpected location. Shortly thereafter, in May 2007, Prof. Netzer summoned a press conference at the Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University, announcing that Herod's tomb had been found. This was a month after exposure of the remains began. The good news quickly spread throughout the country, and the world. Many articles were published in newspapers and other media, while television teams came from all over the world to film the interesting finds: fragments of three sarcophagi and architectural members of high-quality workmanship. Lectures were delivered and tours were given for many groups of visitors thrilled by the new finds. Subsequently, Netzer and his team published numerous, more detailed articles.⁵ As excavation at the site progressed, further intriguing and completely unexpected finds came to light not far from the tomb. The most exciting among them was a small theatre built of stone with a royal reception hall above it, decorated with extraordinary work in stucco and fresco. All these finds were the focus of a large and impressive exhibition held at the Israel Museum ('Herod the Great: The King's Final Journey,' February 2013–January 2014), dedicated to Herod's building projects, and his last journey.⁶ It is now clear that Herod erected a vast royal estate facing northeast on the hill slope (also including warehouses, water cisterns, and a building with a bathroom with a heated tub), in addition to the buildings on the hilltop, and at its bottom. A second monumental stairway was also uncovered under the monumental diagonal stairway, already known, which connected Upper and Lower Herodium. Nothing was previously known about this estate and the early stairway, which were later buried under the fill that turned Herodium into an artificial mound in the shape of a truncated cone.

The more we examined the new finds in detail (Fig. 1), the more we became convinced that the mausoleum under discussion cannot be Herod's final resting place. There are several crucial aspects that are not in accord with Netzer's viewpoint on Herodian architecture and in fact contradict it. It is with deep regret that we voice our objections only now, when Netzer is no longer with us. While he was still alive we attempted to express to him, with

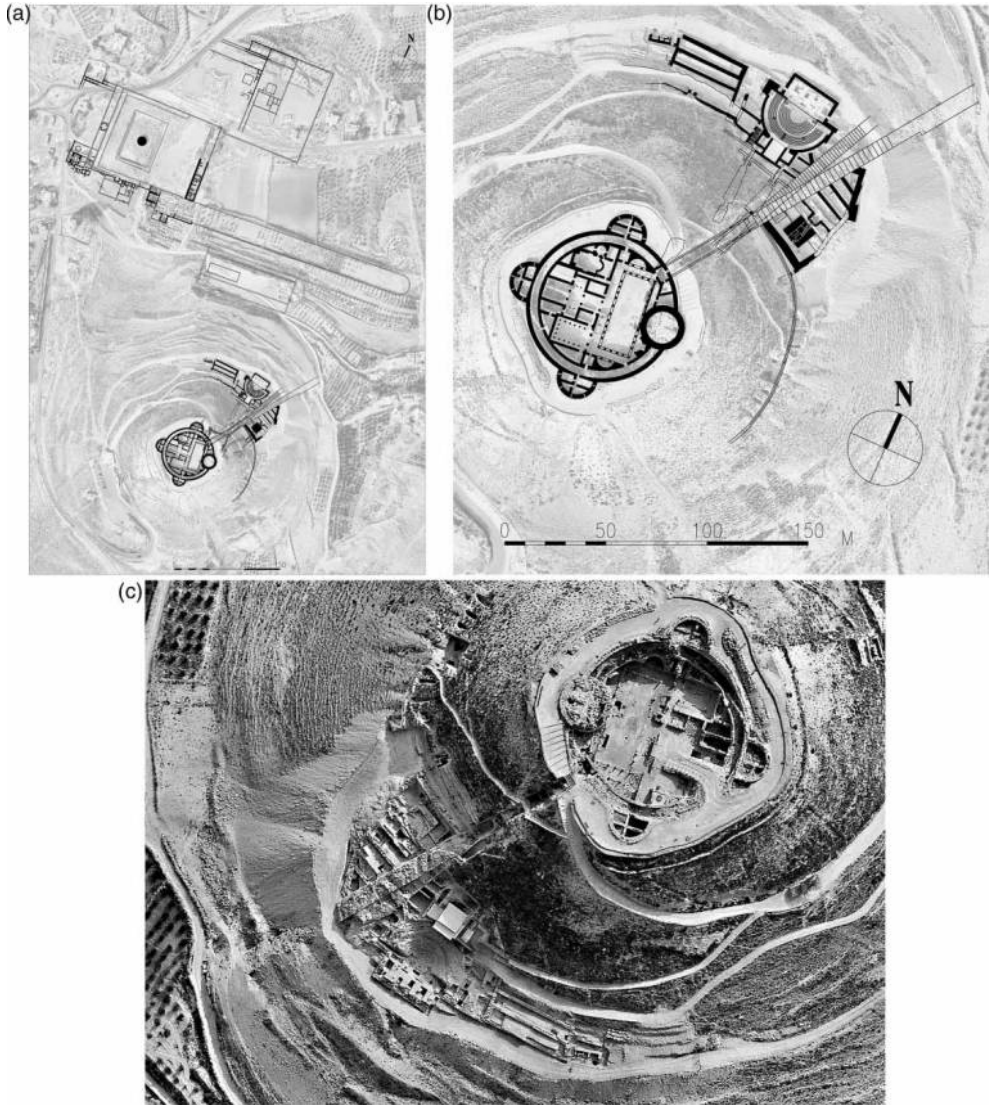


Fig. 1. (a) Plan of Greater Herodium, including the new excavations (courtesy of the Herodium Expedition). (b) The structures on the summit and on the hill slopes, including the water cisterns (courtesy of the Herodium Expedition). (c) An aerial view of Herodium showing the cone and excavated structures on the hill slopes (courtesy of the Herodium Expedition).

great respect, our reservations and doubts; we intended to meet him at the site, and discuss these matters, in the hope of persuading him. Concurrently, we hoped that the ongoing excavations would reveal additional remains that would lead him to abandon his hasty conclusions. Sadly, Netzer died before we could meet him in the field. To his last day, he was absolutely sure that he had finally uncovered Herod's tomb. Now all we can do is to express our doubts in writing, in the hope of reaffirming Netzer's well-established theory of Herodian architecture, the features of which are listed above, and Herod's personal involvement in its design and execution. If the mausoleum under discussion is Herod's tomb, this theory is no longer valid as outlined above. But, in fact, Netzer's characterisation of Herodian architecture should be upheld, since the mausoleum cannot be Herod's tomb.

Four issues argue against the identification of the monument as Herod's tomb: (1) its modest dimensions; (2) the absence of an appropriate gateway and assembly space; (3) its location in the shadow of the monumental stairway and off any axis of symmetry; and (4) a stratigraphic consideration, discussed below.

2. THE MODEST DIMENSIONS OF THE TOMB (FIG. 2)

In the current reconstruction of the mausoleum, the two-story structure stood on a square podium. The lower storey was square in shape and the upper storey was circular, surrounded by columns and surmounted by a concave cone, like that on top of 'Absalom's Tomb' (1st century BCE). The podium is *c.* 10 m × 10 m in area and the monument stood, according to the proposed reconstruction, to a height of 23 m (Porat et al. 2013, 268). It is larger than 'Absalom's Tomb', which has a rocky podium measuring 7.5 m × 7.8 m and a height of 19.7 m without a colonnaded storey.⁷ Still, these are not the dimensions appropriate to the royal tomb of a ruler of high reputation both in Rome and in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, an eternal resting place for Herod the great builder. Its dimensions of 10 m × 10 m × 23 m are quite modest when compared to other contemporary funerary structures (see below). Such a tomb might have befitted Herod at the beginning of his reign, but not after 36 years of kingship. This monument displays no extraordinary concept in either its shape or its dimensions, and we maintain that Herod was not buried there. He built it indeed, but not to serve as his ultimate place of interment; rather, we argue, for members of his family.

In Herodium proper, at the western end of the 'Course',⁸ Herod erected a monumental structure now correctly interpreted as a triclinium, with recessed niches in its walls.⁹ Its dimensions are 14 m × 15 m — larger than the mausoleum of our concern. It is assumed that a pyramid, more than *c.* 5 m in height, stood on its top, giving it a total height of 25 m.

Let us now turn to burial structures of rulers and their families in Judaea. The complex known as the 'Tombs of the Kings' is the mausoleum of the Adiabene royal family in Jerusalem,¹⁰ the construction of which began in *c.* 45 CE.¹¹ It was adorned by three concave cones, not one, and its façade is more than 27 m wide. Approximately, 180 years earlier, Simeon the Hasmonean erected in Modi'in (Modein) a mausoleum for his father and brothers, crowned by seven pyramids.¹² Could Herod have intended to be buried in a much more modest tomb?¹³ Moreover, in front of Jerusalem's city wall, *c.* 250 m northwest of the Damascus Gate, Netzer himself along with Sara Ben-Arieh excavated the remains of an *opus reticulatum* podium formed by two concentric walls, a kind of mini-Herodium (Netzer and Ben-Arieh 1983). Netzer proposed that these remains should be identified as the podium of Herod's Memorial, mentioned in the writings of Josephus.¹⁴ His suggestion that the monument was erected by Herod makes sense, since this building method is encountered in Israel only in Herodian building projects. The outer diameter of the inner wall was 12.5 m and that of the outer wall 33 m, both larger than the corresponding dimensions of the mausoleum in Herodium.¹⁵ Herod also built the

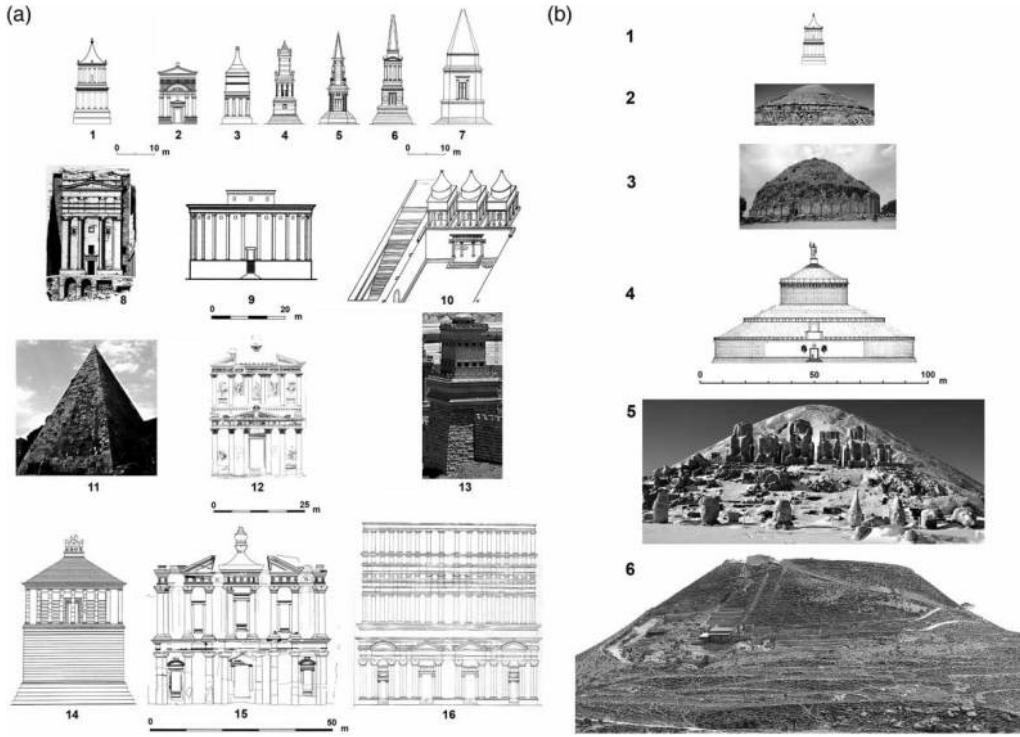


Fig. 2. Comparative plates of various mausolea, to scale (assembled and reduced to scale by B. Arubas). (a) (1) Herodium (Israel/Judea), mausoleum, 1st century BCE; (2) Petra (Jordan/Nabatea), tomb no. 763, 1st century CE; (3) Jerusalem (Israel/Judea), ‘Absalom’s Tomb’, 1st century CE; (4) Thugga (Tunisia/Africa), Mausoleum of Ataban, 2nd century BCE; (5) Sabratha (Libya/Numidia), Puno-Hellenistic Mausoleum B, 2nd century BCE; (6) El-Khroub (Algeria/Numidia), ‘Tomb of king Massinissa’, 3rd century BCE; (7) Siga (Algeria/Numidia), ‘Mausoleum of king Syphax’, 3rd century BCE; (8) Petra (Jordan/Nabatea), the Urn Tomb, 1st century CE; (9) Jerusalem (Israel/Judea), ‘Herod’s Memorial’, 1st century CE; (10) Jerusalem (Israel/Judea), ‘Kings’ Tombs’, 1st century CE; (11) Rome, Pyramid of Cestius, last quarter of the 1st century BCE; (12) Petra (Jordan/Nabatea), al Khazneh, 1st century CE; (13) Jerusalem (Israel/Judea), the Phasael tower, Herodian, 1st century BCE; (14) Halicarnassus (Turkey/Caria), Mausoleum of king Mausolus, 4th century BCE; (15) Petra (Jordan/Nabatea), ad-Deir, 1st century CE; (16) Petra (Jordan/Nabatea), Palace Tomb, 1st century CE. (b) (1) Herodium (Israel/Judea), mausoleum, 1st century BCE; (2) Medracen (Algeria/Mauritania), circular mausoleum, 4th–3rd century BCE; (3) Tipasa (Algeria/Mauritania), circular mausoleum, 4th–3rd century BCE; (4) Rome, Mausoleum of Augustus, 28 BCE; (5) Nimrud Dagi (Turkey/Commagene), tomb of King Antiochus I, 1st century BCE; (6) Herodium (Israel/Judea), the artificial mound or tumulus, Herodian.

burial compound of the Patriarchs, the ‘Jewish Mausoleum’, in Hebron.¹⁶ This was a vast, unroofed rectangular compound, measuring 34 m × 59 m and reaching a height of 20 m above its surroundings, enclosed by a wall decorated on the outside by attached pilasters. Inside stand the traditional tombs of the Patriarchs.

At Petra as well we find much larger and much more elaborate tombs, not only monuments attributed to the Nabatean kings like al-Khazneh (with a façade 25.30 m wide and a maximum height of 39.1 m) or ad-Deir (46.77 m wide façade, maximum

height of 48.3 m), but also tombs of wealthy merchants (even if some or all of them post-date Herod's death).¹⁷

Moving farther beyond the borders of Judaea to examine royal and other tombs that could have inspired Herod to imitate them, we encounter structures of gigantic dimensions. These monuments should be compared with the artificial mound at Herodium, rather than with the mausoleum (which is not oriented along any axis of symmetry governing upper and lower Herodium, and therefore should not be conceived as Herod's funerary memorial; see below). First and foremost is the mausoleum of Augustus, Herod's patron, erected in Rome in 28 BCE. There can be no doubt that Herod saw it during his visits to the city.¹⁸ The upper part of this mausoleum resembled an Etruscan tumulus, c. 300 ft in diameter and 150 ft in height, or c. 45 m × 90 m (the diameter of the external wall of Upper Herodium is c. 63 m; see Netzer 1981, 84), but the diameter of the base of the artificial mound is much larger, of course). It has been suggested that the tomb of Alexander the Great in Alexandria (also later serving as a dynastic burial ground for the Ptolemies), which was perhaps shaped like a tumulus, was another source of inspiration.¹⁹ Herod may have seen it when passing through the city in 40 BCE, on his way from Jerusalem to Rome. In addition, he had probably heard about and may have seen the enormous tumulus-shaped mausoleum of Antiochus I, king of Commagene (ruled 69–38 BCE) on the summit of Nimrud Dağı (2150 m high),²⁰ and likewise the tomb of Mausolus, king of Caria, in Halicarnassus, which was topped by a stepped pyramid and was famed in antiquity as one of the seven wonders of the world: Vitruvius,²¹ Strabo, and Pliny,²² give its dimensions. It is quite likely that Herod saw the latter during his journeys to Asia Minor; the city of Halicarnassus is located on the coast and could be seen from afar from the sea.

In every manifestation of his building projects, Herod's wish to acquire world-wide fame and glory and his pursuit of reputation and respect are evident.²³ We see this in the huge *temenos* of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (the largest in the Graeco-Roman world), in the harbour of Caesarea Maritima and the city itself, and in his other building projects. Given these immense building projects, assuring his fame in Rome and in the entire East, is it likely that for his eternal resting-place Herod would settle for a tomb and monument as simple in design and as modest in dimensions as the one recently found?

3. THE ABSENCE OF AN APPROPRIATE ENTRANCE AND OF AN ADEQUATE ASSEMBLY SPACE; LOCATION IN THE SHADOW OF THE MONUMENTAL STAIRWAY

The burial plot is located below the slanting-ashlars wall (a kind of glacis preserved to a maximum height of 4–5 m), which runs along the slope of the hill and may have completely surrounded it.²⁴ The burial plot was delineated on the northwest by a monumental stairway (the earlier of the two), which ascended to the top of the hill, crossing over the slanting-ashlars wall. This impressive stairway avoids the tomb, running 6–8 m above its surface level. On the east the burial ground was delineated by a thick wall which was not straight and of no particular splendour, which gave the burial plot an irregular, roughly triangular shape, very different in character from the strict regularity of Greater Herodium. To the south, above the tomb, rose a wall built of rough, undressed stones with an apparently plastered surface. This wall stood at the edge of a roughly rock-cut terrace, located 3 m above the level of the tomb's podium (Fig. 3). This wall gives the impression of imminent collapse. It meets the foundation wall of the early monumental stairway at a right angle. The tomb is located in a garden with four terraces, one below the other. In the southwestern corner of this area, at the level of the tomb, was a rectangular irrigation basin.

Where was the entrance to this burial plot? There was a gate 1.6 m wide, arched but otherwise quite simple in shape, in its southeastern corner. This gate, however, led to a levelled,



Fig. 3. View of the mausoleum podium, looking south (B. Arubas).

elongated, narrow strip of land that extended between the slanting-ashlars wall and the wall that delineated the tomb on the south. The purpose of this gate and the elongated, narrow strip in front of it are at present unknown, but it is clear that it was impossible to get from there to the tomb, located *c.* 7 m below. Moreover, at a later stage the natural rock outside of the gate, at the foot of the slanting-ashlars wall, was steeply cut, making approach to the gate from the east impossible. Another gate, actually a wicket gate 85 cm wide, may perhaps have existed at the lowest end of the burial plot, near the lower end of the undulating eastern wall. But here too the difference in elevation between the wicket gate and the base of the tomb, located five terraces higher, is *c.* 15 m. There was no viable passage between the terraces, and hence one cannot understand how the tomb could be approached from these directions. The sole remaining option is that it was accessed from the west, along the terrace on which it stands, but this alleged passage was then blocked by the early stairway. As a matter of fact, it might still be hidden in its core. But even on this side there is no trace of a propylon, which one would expect to encounter in a royal tomb, or an appropriate assembly space. These facts stand in contrast with Netzer's features A and C of Herodian architecture, listed above. That is, the placing of the mausoleum in the shadow of the monumental stairway does not indicate a meticulous selection of location, and the building programme would also be defective, with neither an appropriate approach nor an adequate assembly space.

For comparison, in front of the 'Tombs of the Kings' in Jerusalem there is a vast courtyard measuring 25.8 m × 27.4 m, and the stairway leading down is 9 m wide or more (Cohen 1947, 31). Well laid-out courtyards or spacious and convenient entrance grounds were also provided in front of more modest tombs that were not royal, such as Nikanor's Tomb on Mount Scopus (dated to the mid-1st century CE). Purely as an illustration, one may compare the layout of the mausoleum at Herodium with burial complexes no. 14 (the 'Tomb of Judah HaNasi,' early 3rd

century CE), and no. 20 in the necropolis of Beth She‘arim, in front of which are huge courtyards with gates (for our purposes it is irrelevant that these burial complexes postdate the tomb with which we are concerned). At Petra, the levelled courtyard in front of the Urn Tomb (1st century CE) was raised on a series of vaults. It would have been possible to erect something similar at Herodium in order to install a propylon and an adequate assembly space around the tomb. However, Herod apparently decided not to do this. The vast assembly areas at Herodium where those escorting the king’s bier²⁵ could gather — the garden around the swimming pool and the ‘Course’ of Lower Herodium (located 3 m below this garden and below the Lower Palace, which blocked the view from there to the south) — are some distance from the monument under discussion, and the monumental stairway would have concealed much of a view of the monument from people standing in either space (Fig. 4).

These are strong arguments that this monument was not Herod’s tomb. As indicated above, the mausoleum was concealed by the monumental stairways, both the earlier one and the later one that was built above it and replaced the former. While the tomb under discussion could have been seen from the immediate expanses of the desert, it could not be seen at all from the vicinity of Jerusalem (e.g. the Mount of Olives or Mount Scopus); instead, from that far, the eye would have been attracted to the silhouettes of the upper palace and of the truncated cone-shaped mound (‘breast-like’, according to Josephus). The mausoleum itself could not have been recognised from that far. Likewise, Herod’s Palace (the Phasael tower, to be more precise) was the only place within the city limits that could have provided a line of sight towards the truncated cone of Herodium. It could not be seen from the Temple Mount, and the mausoleum was also entirely hidden from Lower Herodium.

A possible reason for the modest dimensions and inconspicuous location of this mausoleum could be a desire to make it less prominent than Herod’s own tomb, which undoubtedly stood in a much more central and prominent location and was of much larger dimensions. If the mausoleum under discussion was indeed Herod’s, then all the deficiencies noted above indicate poor planning, when evaluated in light of the features considered by Netzer to be characteristic of Herodian architecture.²⁶

4. LOCATION OFF ANY AXIS OF SYMMETRY

Most scholars agree that the artificial mound as a whole, with the palace-fortress at its summit, approached via the later stairway, was intended to serve as a commemorative funerary monument for Herod; an immense tumulus-like memorial that befitted Herod’s fame and his claim for eternity. Benjamin Arubas had noted that a principal axis of symmetry of Upper Herodium (running approximately south to north) cuts through the Phasael tower of Herod’s Palace in Jerusalem (the base of which is identified with the so-called Tower of David) and that there is a line of sight between these two sites (Fig. 5). This cannot be a coincidence. It also sheds some new light on *War* 1. 418–419, according to which the Phasael tower (of gigantic dimensions — according to *Jos.*, *War* 5.169, ‘90 cubits high’), was built to perpetuate the memory of his brother, and Herodium — ‘in the form of a breast,’ was built as a memorial for himself. But the mausoleum of our concern is offset relative to any geometrical axes of symmetry characterising Upper and Lower Herodium. The orientation of the mausoleum (as well as of the theatre and of the earlier stairway in between), was dictated by a different consideration: a wish to impress guests travelling to Herodium along the road from Jerusalem. The lower section of the early stairway, between the mausoleum and the theatre, has an azimuth of 26–27°, and the continuation of its line to the northeast cuts this road near the spot where the hill of Herodium is first visible to an approaching visitor (the most notable being Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Augustus’ aide, who visited Herod at Herodium during

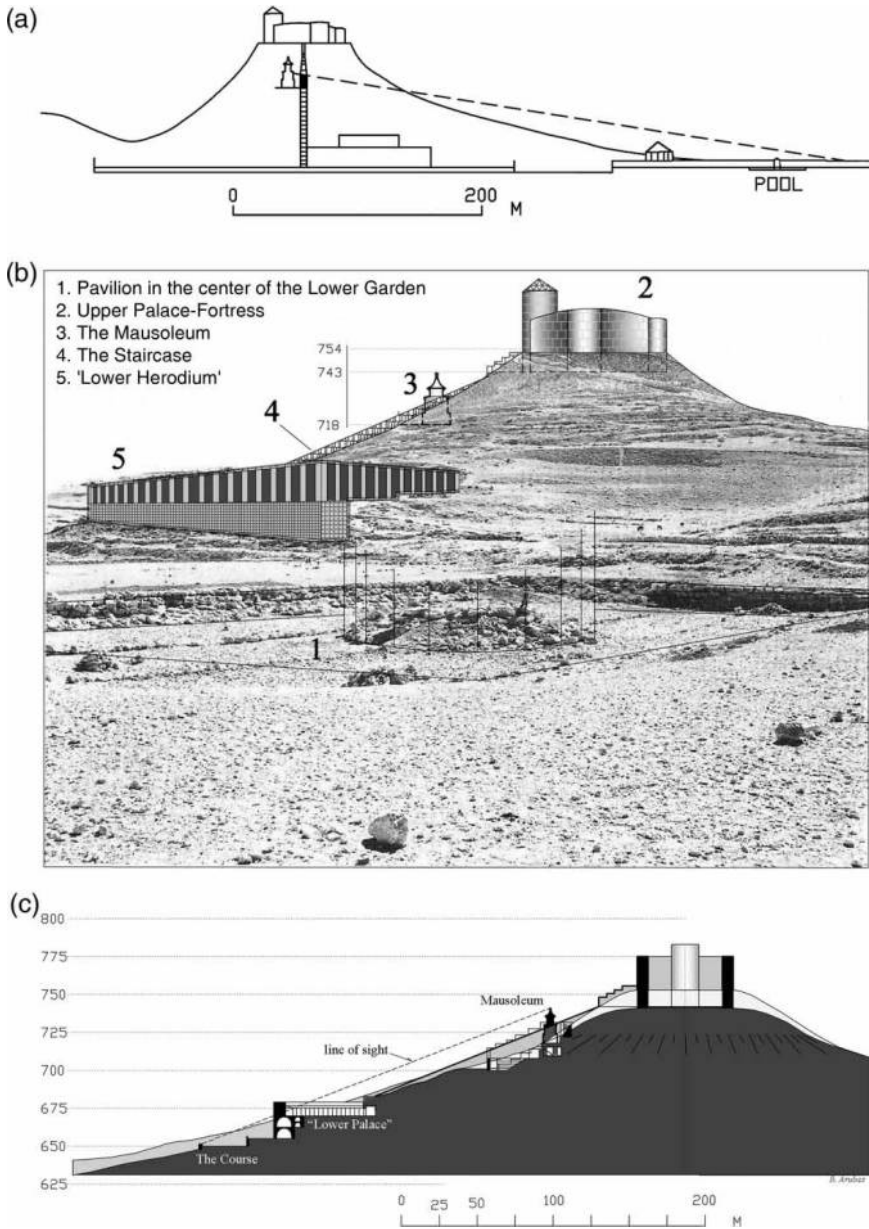


Fig. 4. Reconstructed views indicating that the mausoleum could barely have been seen from the northern area of the pool garden in Lower Herodium (a and b) and from the ‘Course’ (c); B. Arubas.

his imperial visit to Judaea in 15 BCE; Fig. 6).²⁷ This line does not run along a radius of the circular palace-fortress, or of the tumulus-like memorial, as one would expect if this tumulus was erected in order to serve the mausoleum under consideration, located on the hill slope.

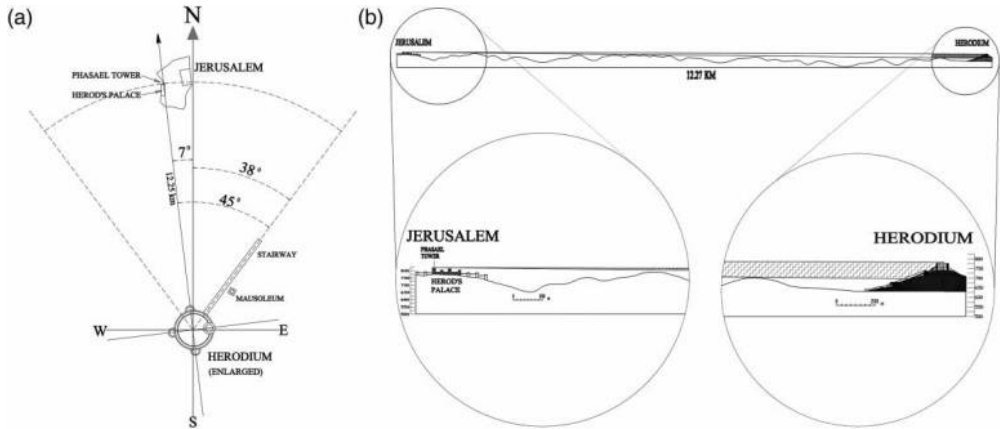


Fig. 5. Azimuth (a) and line of sight (b) between Herodium and the Phasael tower at Herod's palace in Jerusalem, the latter 90 cubits (c. 45 m) high (B. Arubas).

5. THE STRATIGRAPHIC CONSIDERATION

The later monumental stairway, built above the earlier, not only left the mausoleum in its shadow without an appropriate approach, but also hid the greater part of it from sight when being viewed from the north, either from Lower Herodium or from Jerusalem. Most importantly, it was built over the only irrigation basin associated with the tomb garden (Fig. 7). Is it conceivable that Herod would obscure his own burial place in such a manner? Is it reasonable to attribute such an awkward layout to his design? This stratigraphic consideration is in itself enough to invalidate the identification of the tomb under discussion as Herod's.²⁸ Herodium, together with Herod's other building projects, shows how meticulous Herod was in the choice of a building site and in coherent planning (characteristic features of Herodian architecture, according to Netzer).

6. WHERE WAS HEROD'S TOMB? TWO ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

As mentioned above, Augustus, who was not a person of good health, began the construction of his mausoleum in 28 BCE, early in his rule, only 3 years after the battle of Actium. Herod was in a precarious position, exposed to many dangers, and may also have wished to build a tomb for himself at an early stage in his rule. Was the mausoleum erected in an early building stage to serve as his own tomb? It cannot be entirely ruled out that the burial plot may have originally looked quite different, having a proper entry and an orderly assembly space.²⁹ Nevertheless, we argue that the mausoleum of moderate dimensions uncovered in an inconspicuous location on the slope of Herodium was indeed built by Herod, but was not his tomb due to the considerations listed above. Members of his family — his father Antipater, his mother Cyprus, and one or some of his brothers might have been interred there. The three sarcophagi uncovered in the excavations may have held the bones of Herod's relatives.³⁰ Herod was instead buried in a tomb not yet exposed and perhaps no longer extant. It should be sought elsewhere. Two alternative options may be suggested:

- A. The tomb might have been located in the eastern tower of the palace-fortress. If the lower core of the tower, under the water cistern, is solid, the tomb could have been located on an upper level that has disappeared (likewise there are no extant remains



Fig. 6. Aerial view of Herodium and surrounds, indicating the azimuth of the later (1) and earlier (2) stairways intersecting the road (3) approaching from Jerusalem (graphics: B. Arubas).

of the tombs of the Hasmoneans in Modi'in, or of Alexander the Great in Alexandria). The monumental stairway could have been intended to emphasise the dignity of the dead king and his wish to be elevated in order to reach the heavens. The palace that served Herod during his lifetime could have become his burial palace.³¹ However, since no lavish architectural fragments of high-quality workmanship that would have befitted such a monument were uncovered in Corbo's excavations, this option seems to us less attractive.

- B. Another option, which seems more plausible, is that a burial chamber was constructed on the axis of symmetry of the palace-fortress at some depth within the cone-shaped mound, in a location that is thus far unexcavated (Fig. 8). Such an option fits well with Herod's ambitious personality and his ingenious principles of planning, and makes better sense of the tumulus shape of the tomb, in accordance with other royal Greco-Roman tumuli (Fig. 2b). Several observations give more credence to this proposal, setting it beyond the realm of a mere speculation: a large cave that had collapsed



Fig. 7. View of the later stairway built over the irrigation basin of the mausoleum. (a) Looking west: (1) later stairway; (2) irrigation basin; (3) southern wall of the burial lot; (4) earlier stairway (B. Arubas). (b) (1) mausoleum podium; (2) irrigation basin; (3) later stairway (J. Patrich).

inwards can still be recognised in the hill behind and to the south of the 'Lower Palace'. The rocky façade of the cave was neatly cut in a manner parallel to the 'Lower Palace'. A tunnel might have led from there into the mountain.³² The 'Lower Palace', a building 130 m long³³ and bisected by the major N-S axis of symmetry of the upper palace-fortress, might actually have served as a decorative forecourt of the burial cave, facing the rocky façade at the foot of the mound. In any case, it seems unlikely to have been a palace since no remains of a bathhouse (a universal component of Herodian

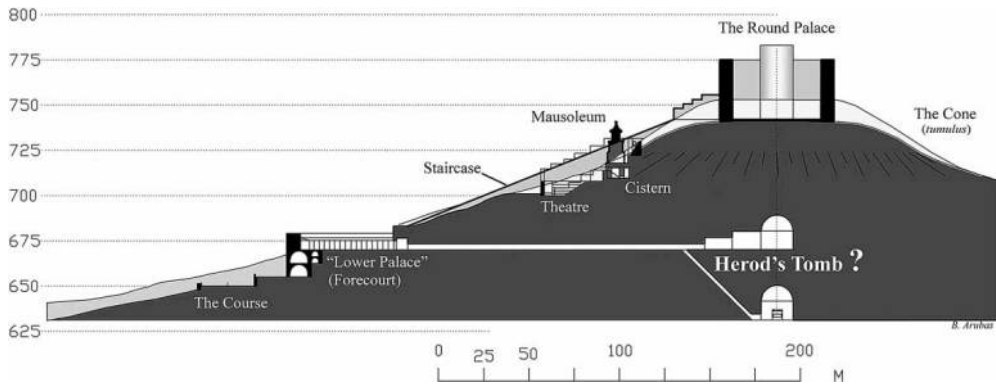


Fig. 8. A new proposal for locating the burial chamber within the hill, with a tunnel passage leading in from the 'Lower Palace', the latter presented here as a decorative forecourt (B. Arubas).

palaces) were found among its ruins. Such remains, if they existed, would not have disappeared in their entirety. In addition, there is no indication that the aqueduct ever reached this compound.³⁴ To the south of the 'Lower Palace', between it and the parallel rock-cut wall, ran a wide road that enabled convenient passage from west to east between the building and the rocky wall, towards the diagonal monumental stairway.³⁵

Herod's tomb is still to be sought.

NOTES

¹ Netzer (2013). He also lists there the integration of water and vegetation and the well-conceived application of building materials, features with which we are not concerned here. See also Netzer (2006, 294–300) on Herod's personal involvement in his building projects, and the general discussion, Netzer (2006, 243–308).

² It is evident that he wrote this before buildings were uncovered on the slope of Herodium as well (see below).

³ Netzer (2011, 37–48) and Netzer *et al.* (2013b) relying on earlier publications. Practically speaking, one would expect that the burial cave would be hewn first, before construction of its façade. We maintain that the entire complex to which Netzer referred was a stadium with a tricladium and other facilities for entertainment, refreshment, and immersion (i.e. the *miqveh* for the Jews among his soldiers) at its western end, rather than a component of a funerary/burial complex.

⁴ This term was applied by Netzer and his team to designate the monumental tomb of our concern, shaped like a memorial monument (*nefesh* in Hebrew) of two stories, topped by a concave cone. Two burial chambers are located at its core, and a third one in its podium. The podium and the ground floor are square; the upper story round and peripteral. We adhere to this terminology.

⁵ Netzer *et al.* (2010), Netzer (2011), Netzer *et al.* (2013a, 2013b).

⁶ The exhibition catalogue, Rozenberg and Mevorah (2013), is dedicated to the memory of Ehud Netzer, who passed away in a tragic accident at the site in 2010.

⁷ Avigad (1954, 92–93). The dimensions of this monument above the podium are 6.4 m north–south and 6.55 m east–west.

⁸ A term used by Netzer to designate a flat, narrow east–west strip of land c. 200 m long about which see also *infra*.

⁹ An early hypothesis that this was Herod's tomb was abandoned when it was realised that the structure has many openings. See Netzer *et al.* (2013b).

¹⁰ Helene, Queen of Adiabene, erected a mausoleum with three pyramids at a distance of three stadia outside the city wall of Jerusalem (Jos., *Ant.* 20. 95). Pausanias (8.4, 16), writing during the reign of the emperor Hadrian, mentions two noteworthy tombs — the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus and the tomb of Queen Helene in Jerusalem, in which there was an elaborate hidden mechanism for opening the doors on the commemorative anniversary. This mausoleum is still standing. For its detailed description, see Cohen (1947).

¹¹ There is no need to differentiate between early and late in connection with the size of tombs, since with this feature there was no linear evolution over time. In the Greco-Roman world there were huge tombs before Herod's time, as well as after. The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus and that of Augustus (as well as the pyramids of Egypt) indicate that not only rock-cut façades could be produced with such gigantic dimensions; free-standing structures could attain such dimensions as well.

¹² "Over the tomb of his father and his brothers Simon constructed a monument impressive for its height, built

of hewn stone on both its front and rear sides. He set up seven pyramids, one in front of the other, for his father, his mother, and his four brothers. For the pyramids he contrived an elaborate setting: he surrounded them with massive pillars on which he placed full suits of armour (*πικροπλῖα*) as a perpetual memorial; besides the full suits of armour, there were carved ships intended to be seen by all who sailed the sea. This tomb, which he erected in Modein, still exists today" (1 Macc. 13:27–30, transl. Goldstein 1976). "And Simon also built for his father and brothers a very great monument of polished white marble, and raising it to a great and conspicuous height, made porticos round it, and erected monolithic pillars, a wonderful thing to be seen. In addition to these he built for his parents and his brothers seven pyramids, one for each, so made as to excite wonder by their size and beauty; and these have been preserved to this day. Such was the zeal which we know to have been shown by Simon in burying Jonathan and building monuments to his family" (*Ant.* 13. 211–212, transl. Marcus 1943). Herod certainly knew it, since the mausoleum of the Maccabees could still be seen in the time of Eusebius of Caesarea, who composed his *Onomasticon* in c. 300 CE: "Modecim ... where the Maccabees were, and where their tombs are still now shown"; Jerome still attested to their existence a century later (Klostermann 1904, 132, lines 16–17 (Eusebius); 133, lines 17–18 (Jerome); transl. Freeman-Grenville 2003).

¹³ Kasher and Witztum (2007, 181) argue that Herod's desire to perpetuate his memory with a massive monument stemmed from his emotional need to 'compete' with the tombs of the Hasmoneans and to demonstrate the superiority of his tomb over theirs in both height and splendour. See, however, a critical review of their historical approach and medical diagnoses in Bar-Kochva (2012).

¹⁴ Jos., *War* 5.507; paragraph 108 there speaks of monuments, in the plural. The site is mentioned in conjunction with the siege system erected by the Romans around Jerusalem. For the proposed identification, see Broshi (1992) and *infra*, next note.

¹⁵ Netzer and Ben-Arie (1983) and Netzer (2006, 133). A different reconstruction was previously published in Netzer (1983). On this structure, see also Banato-Baccari (2002). On circular mausoleums as typical tombs of Roman *virī triumphales* since the Late Republic, see Gros (2001) and Balty (2006).

¹⁶ Arnon (2009). On this complex, see Vincent *et al.* (1923) and Magen (2008).

¹⁷ For example, note the dimensions of the Palace Tomb (with a façade 49 m wide, and height over 49 m), the Corinthian Tomb (façade 27.55 m wide, height 26 m), the Urn Tomb (façade 16.49 m wide, height 26 m), the Tomb of Sextius Florentinus (façade 10.37 m wide, height 16.9 m) and the Tomb of the Roman Soldier (façade 11.68 m wide, maximal height 12.5 m). For the dimensions, see the Monuments Catalogue in McKenzie (1990, 127–72).

¹⁸ Herod visited Rome three times, in 40, 17, and 13 BCE. The first visit was before the construction of the mausoleum of Augustus. Building work at Herodium started in c. 24–23 BCE. Thus, anyone who claims that the construction of the circular palace-fortress on the hilltop started earlier than Herod's second visit to Rome cannot claim that it was inspired by seeing the

mausoleum of Augustus. On the mausoleum of Augustus, see Strab., *Geog.*, 5.3, 8; Suet., *Aug.*, 100–101; *Claud.*, 1; Verg., *Aen.* 4, 872–874; Tac., *Ann.* 1.8, 16.8; Pliny, *HN* 36.69–74; Cordingley and Richmond (1927), von Hesberg and Panciera (1994). See also Reeder (1992).¹⁹ Magness (1998). Ptolemy IV Philopator built in the centre of Alexandria, near the compound of the royal palaces, a commemorative monument for his royal predecessors, and also transferred the bones of Alexander the Great there from another tomb in Alexandria. The place was called *Sema*, or according to other sources *Soma*. According to Strabo (*Geog.*, 17.1, 8), the *Sema* was a precinct surrounded by columns (*peribolos*) that comprised the tomb of the Ptolemaic kings and of Alexander. In other words, it was not tumulus-like and hence comparing it to Herodium or to the Mausoleum of Augustus is irrelevant. But the poet Lucan (*BC* 8.692–699; 10.15–19 and 23), who wrote in 39–65 CE, says in Book 8 that Alexander was buried in an underground chamber and the Ptolemaic kings were buried in pyramids and mausolea, and in Book 10 he notes that the underground chamber was hewn within a tumulus. For a discussion and citation of the literary sources, see Fraser (1972, Vol. 1, 15–17; Vol. 2, 32–33, n. 79; 35, n. 83).

²⁰ Sanders (1996). For such comparison see, for example, Tsafir (1982), and Netzer's publications.

²¹ Vitruvius, *De arch.* 2.8, 11; 7. prol. 13. For the description of the remains and a proposed reconstruction, see Ashmole (1972) and Jeppesen (2000, 2002).

²² Strab., *Geog.* 14., 16; see also Pliny, *HN* 4. 36, 30–31. According to Pliny, the circumference of the monument was 440 Greek feet (which is equal to c. 129 m; where 1 Greek foot = 29.4 cm), and its total elevation was 140 Greek feet (c. 41 m).

²³ Schalit (1969, 664–71) emphasizes Herod's unrestrained obsession with honour and his wish to disseminate his fame far and wide as powerful drives motivating him to initiate grand actions, and writes that his lust for building was intended to increase his fame. Kasher and Witztum (2007, 171–73, 181, 185, 189, 203–205), speak about megalomania. Netzer, however, contested this diagnosis. He listed the following five symptoms as expressions of megalomania, claiming that none of them characterises Herod's building projects: (1) unreasonable dimensions; (2) absurd location; (3) integration of unnecessary functions; (4) application of excessive building materials, far beyond a reasonable necessity or standard; (5) excessive application of decorations (Netzer 2010, 82*). One may question whether these criteria are indeed expressions of megalomania or whether none of them characterises Herod's building projects, but this is evidently a subjective judgment, especially with respect to size and location (points 1 and 2). However, Netzer agreed that Herod wanted to acquire eternal fame in his building projects (Netzer 2010, 90* and above, n. 1). We maintain that the mausoleum with which we are concerned, in its modest dimensions and inconspicuous location, would not have brought him such eternal fame. Evidently, there were also political, economic, religious and other considerations underlying his building projects, alongside his talent for architecture. See Richardson (1985, 1999, 191–95) and Netzer (2006).²⁴ A short segment of this wall was already found by Corbo (1989, photos 31–33).

²⁵ According to Josephus, Herod was borne upon a bier of solid gold studded with precious stones and with a cover of purple embroidered with various colours over it. Besides his sons and a host of relatives, the bier was accompanied by the army: first came his bodyguard, then the contingents of the Thracians, the Germans and the Gauls in their suits of armour, and after them the entire army, led by its commanders and their subordinate officers of all ranks, and they were followed by five hundred servants and freedmen carrying spices. The funeral route, in this form, was eight stadia long (c. 1.5 km), toward Herodium (the entire route from Jericho, where he died, was 200 stadia long; *Ant.* 17.196–99; *War* 1. 671–73). The first four contingents formed the royal guard, with an estimated 2000 soldiers. The standing army at the time comprised of more than 16,000 soldiers. See Shatzman (1990, 183–85, 193–95). Hence, no less than 18,500 people took part, in an official capacity, in the funerary procession.

²⁶ Similarly, note the fact that the mausoleum was constructed above an earlier water cistern, the function of which was interrupted by the construction of two thick walls, to retain the mausoleum above.

²⁷ This consideration brings to mind the *Septizodium* — a gigantic (90–95 m, 300 Roman foot long) free-standing façade dedicated by Septimius Severus in 203 CE. The *Septizodium* was constructed at the bottom of the eastern slope of the Palatine hill, below the eastern wings of his palace, and it dominated the approach from the Via Appia. Similar scenographic considerations were familiar from Hellenistic times.

²⁸ Roi Porath (pers. comm., 28 May 2013) considers this a marginal point, but we are most grateful to him for details that he provided on phases and stratigraphy, showing us the original plans, as well as for several detailed discussions on site.

²⁹ As a matter of fact, the triangular shape of the burial lot is conjectural. The southwest and southeast corners of the lot are rock cut at right angles. The early stairway that had demarcated it on the west is perpendicular to the southern side. Much of the eastern wall is missing — more than half, on its northern end. The fact that the natural rock there was not given a smooth slope, like the rock surface farther east, suggests that the missing part of the wall had originally continued straight down, giving the burial lot a rectangular shape. Yet it was of quite moderate size, and its delineating walls were of a quite poor quality.

³⁰ Doubts about the identification of the mausoleum as Herod's, and a proposal that it should be conceived as the tomb of members of his family, were already put forward by Jacobson (2007, 143). For a brief response, see Netzer (2008). One of Jacobson's arguments is that the sarcophagi were made of a common local stone, not of marble, which would have been imported. Indeed, marble in various colours started to be imported to Judaea under Herod, mainly for *opus sectile* pavements. Certainly, he could afford importing for himself a marble sarcophagus. A gold coffin seems to us a more attractive and appropriate option, since during the funeral he was reportedly borne upon a bier of solid gold studded with precious stones, as was mentioned above. (The narrow dimensions of the extant stone sarcophagi do not suggest that an inner coffin was set inside.) Foerster (2013) argues that it is

impossible to establish the identity of those who were laid in the sarcophagi, although it can be assumed that they were among the notables of Judaea in the Second Temple Period. Foerster does not mention Herod, though he wonders whether the interred might have been members of Herod's family — a question that he leaves open. We maintain that it would not be an exaggeration to assume that Herod, being carried in his funeral on a golden bier, was laid in a golden coffin, although this is not stated by Josephus (nor does he say anything about the exact location of the burial chamber; all he says is that Herod was carried to his burial place in Herodium in a solemn procession attended by thousands (see n. 25 above).

³¹ Magness drew attention to the fact that no Fine Ware pottery of the 1st century CE (from Herod's death up to the First Jewish Revolt) was found in Corbo's excavations of the fortified palace on the summit. This suggests, so she claimed, that the complex had ceased to serve as a palace in that period. Hence, she concluded, the tomb must have been in Upper, rather than Lower Herodium; that is, after it became a burial ground it was no longer occupied as a residence (Magness 2001). The new finds on the hill slope do not invalidate this conclusion. As a matter of fact, Foerster, excavating the corridor at the upper end of the stairway, found that it had been intentionally blocked by a thick layer of artificial fill, perhaps soon after Herod's death (Foerster 1969, 123–24). Recent excavations in the same corridor seem to confirm Foerster's conclusion. For a recent opinion that Herod's tomb might have been located in the core of the eastern tower, or in its missing upper part, see Shanks (2014). This author embraces our arguments, as expressed in the Hebrew version of the present article, questioning the identification of the mausoleum of Herod's tomb (Patrick and Arubas 2013).

³² A simple trench, to be excavated along this rocky façade, may indicate if the façade were originally covered by an external decorative layer of masonry and whether a rock-cut tunnel led into the hill. Hopefully such a probe-trench will be carried out in the future.

In 2004, Lichtenberger published a proposal that the burial place should not be sought on the summit, where the palace was built, but rather down-slope, and that its location was purposely well hidden. (The article was written before the mausoleum under consideration was uncovered on the hill slope.)

³³ Netzer (1981, 30–35, ills. 49 and 59) and Netzer *et al.* (2013a), with an aerial photograph and a plan on p. 134. Conder and Kitchener (1883) refer to it as a 'stable' and depict it somewhat narrower in dimension. Only the substructure, comprised of parallel vaults, was partially preserved in the north.

³⁴ The aqueduct to Herodium is mentioned by Josephus (*Ant.* 15. 323–325; *War* 1. 420). Its destination was seemingly the Great Pool and the bathhouse located in the southwestern corner of the vast garden that surrounds it. On this aqueduct, which started at springs adjacent to 'Solomon's Pools' (at an elevation of 770 m above sea level) rather than at Ain Artas, see Amit (1994, 2002) and Mazar (2002). The remains of the aqueduct disappear at an elevation of 670 m above sea level, at a distance of 800 m from Herodium. The

elevation of the saddle near Herodium from which the aqueduct descended to the pool is 660 m above sea level, while the elevation of the terrace on which the Lower Palace stood is around 670 m. Technically, it would not be impossible to lead the water in that

direction, but there are no remains to suggest that this was the case.

³⁵ This stairway was filled in by a thick layer of earth after Herod's death, putting it out of use (Foerster 1969). See also above, n. 31.

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