

Figure 16.1 Map: Legio-Kefar ‘Othnay and the sites in Palestine that mention Roman military presence, Roman roads and the activities of the soldiers of Legio II Traiana and Legio VI Ferrata (according to Roman Road map, Roll 1994).

This evidence has given rise to various theories about the size of the Roman legionary base and the period of time it was occupied by the soldiers of the Sixth Legion until its abandonment.¹¹ An archaeological survey in the Legio area proposed that the Roman legionary base at Legio-Kefar 'Othnay was situated on the northwestern part of the El Manakh hill.¹² A geophysical survey (2010–11)¹³ and four excavation seasons (2013, 2015, 2017, 2019)¹⁴ took place on the hill over the past decade, during which

¹¹ Ritterling 1925: 1587–96; and see also Barnes 2008b.

¹² During 1998–2000 a survey was carried out in the Legio-Megiddo region by the author, on behalf of the Department of Classical Studies and the Megiddo Excavation Expedition of Tel Aviv University. In the wake of this survey, identifications were proposed for the location of the ancient Jewish-Samaritan village of Kefar 'Othnay, the headquarters of the Roman Sixth Legion Ferrata and the city of Maximillianopolis. See Tepper 2002; 2003a; 2003b; 2007; 2014b.

¹³ Ground-penetrating radar combined with electromagnetic sensitivity testing was carried out during 2010–11 in the northwestern part of El Manakh hill to identify subterranean architectural remains. The tests revealed a number of clear-cut anomalies including an artificial line running northeast–southwest, where in a previous survey an artificial depression and an earthen embankment were uncovered on the northwestern edge of the hill. See Pincus et al. 2013.

¹⁴ The four excavations were carried out under the auspices of the Jezreel Valley Research Project (JVRP) on behalf of W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research at Jerusalem. The first took place in the northwestern part of the base on the hill, and the second, third and fourth took place in the central part. The first three excavations seasons' excavations were directed by Yotam Tepper, Matthew J. Adams and Jonathan David, and the fourth by Matthew J. Adams, Susan Cohen and Yotam Tepper. In the northern excavation area a 125-meter-long archaeological trench was excavated from north to south, extending from the embankment on the edge of the hill to the upper part of the hill. At the top of the embankment a thick wall was uncovered on the inner side of which were dwellings, alleyways, the lines of water pipes and drainage channels in a complex identified as legionaries' barracks. In the upper part of the trench a rock-cut street was discovered, next to which were alleyways, drainage channels and more complexes of rooms. During the second through fourth seasons, two areas were excavated in the central part of the hill, one to the east and one to the west of a relatively level area where the winter rains had uncovered the tops of walls, floors and ashlar construction. The base's main street was uncovered in this central area, along which were the lines of clay water pipes and a central drainage channel, flanked by complexes built in an organized array. The tops of walls were uncovered west of the street, as well as a large, ashlar-built complex. In the western area, another street was discovered with a similar arrangement of water pipes and a drainage channel. Adjacent to it on a lower level a structure was discovered, partially ashlar-built and partially rock-cut. In one of the rooms of that structure a floor was found made of bricks bearing military stamps, along with an installation defined as a latrine. The identical orientation of the remains in all three areas, the use of clay pipes, the complex sanitation system and the small finds including weapons, tiles/bricks featuring military stamps and countermarked coins, support the identification of the remains with the Roman legionary base at Legio-Kefar 'Othnay. Moreover, in addition to the other remains described earlier, in the 2015, 2017 and 2019 seasons, we believe we unearthed the remains of the main street within the base, the *Via Principalis*. The location and details of the main structures in the base allow us to propose that remains of the principia (legionary headquarters) were located alongside the main street. A wide gate was exposed at the eastern lower part of the Principia and hewn and built rooms in the western upper part. Now we can estimate the base dimensions as 350 × 575 m. (20.125 ha). The findings from the excavations indicated that the Roman legionary base was abandoned in an organized and orderly manner, no later than the late third century through the beginning of the fourth century CE, and remained so for a long period (for the report of the first season's excavation, see Tepper et al. 2016; Adams et al. 2013;

architectural remains were uncovered. These support the identification of the legionary base at the site and enable us to relate archaeologically to the history of Roman military presence there in the second–third centuries CE. The findings also allow us to assess the area of the Roman legionary base, whose size resembles Roman legionary bases from the same period known in other parts of the empire.¹⁵

In this chapter we will survey the historical background of the Roman legionary base at Legio-Kefar ‘Othnay and the small finds such as roof tiles/bricks with Roman military stamps and coins with countermarks as well as Roman weapons.¹⁶ We will also discuss their contribution to understanding the Roman military presence at Legio-Kefar ‘Othnay.

To begin with, we note that the Latin term *castra* may be the most suitable term to describe the legionary base. The term translates into English as “camp,” “fort” or “fortress” depending on the usage in various periods. Webster proposed that the term “camp” was used to designate a temporary locale; “fort” was a more permanent station for a single unit, while “fortress” signified a permanent legionary base.¹⁷ Nevertheless, this chapter will apply the term “legionary base” rather than “fortress” to the Roman legionary base at Legio, because this term attributes administrative characteristics to the site as well as those more typical of a permanent settlement than those associated with a fortified complex. We thank Professor Benjamin Isaac for his assistance in clarifying this issue.

Historical Background

The historical sources about Legio-Kefar ‘Othnay, which were collected by Tsafir, Di Segni and Green,¹⁸ reveal evidence of three settlements at the site in the Roman period: a Jewish village (Kefar ‘Othnay), a Roman army

for the report of the second and third seasons, see Adams et al. 2019); for similar abandonment of Roman military structures in that region, see Tepper and Di Segni 2006: 42–4).

¹⁵ As noted, this chapter will not include detailed results of the archaeological excavations in the Roman legionary bases, nor of additional Roman remains found nearby, including an amphitheater, military fort, cemetery, enclosure atop Tel Megiddo, aqueducts and the Roman road system to and from the base (for more on these subjects, see Tepper 2014a; 2003a; 2003b; 2007). These findings underscore the evidence of the extent of Roman military presence at the site.

¹⁶ Latin inscriptions that are also characteristic of a Roman military presence at the site will not be discussed here (see Eck and Tepper 2019). Burial fields in general and cremations in particular are characteristics of Roman military presence on the site; for urns finds, which also will not be discussed here, see Tepper 2007: 65–6.

¹⁷ Webster 1969: 167.

¹⁸ Tsafir, Di Segni, and Green 1994: 170. Unless otherwise indicated, we use here the name Capercotani; see also Roman Road map, Roll 1994.

base (Legio-Capercotani) and a Roman–Byzantine city (Maximianopolis). In other sources, postdating the Byzantine period, the settlement is mentioned by the Arabic name El Lajjun and in Crusader sources is called La Leyun. These names preserve the name Legio, which in turn stems from the site's association with the Roman legionary base; it is the name by which the site is still known today.

Flavius Josephus describes Lower Galilee as encompassing the mountainous region only; his description did not include the “Great Plain” (the Jezreel Valley) to the south. The southern boundary of Galilee was marked at Exaloth (Iksal); no Jewish or other settlement is mentioned in the area between Exaloth in the north and Ginae (Jenin) in the south, on the northern border of Samaria.¹⁹ The Mishnah also indicates that the valley was not included in Jewish Galilee.²⁰ By contrast, according to clear Talmudic tradition,²¹ Kefar 'Othnay marks the southern halachic boundary of Galilee.

The name Kefar 'Othnay is not known in the Bible, and according to Elitsur, this form originated in *onomastica* of the Second Temple period.²² Talmudic sources mention a locale by the name Kefar 'Othnay as early as the first generation after the destruction of the Second Temple, at the end of the first century CE.²³ This is the first mention of Kefar 'Othnay and the presence of Jews there; later on, Rabban Gamaliel, who was the Patriarch (*Nasi*) in the second generation after the destruction of the Temple (c. 85–115 CE), visited Kefar 'Othnay at the end of the first or early second century CE to confirm the divorce of a woman whose two required witnesses were *kutim* (Samaritans).²⁴ Further evidence about the site is found in the testimony of Gamaliel's son Simon, of the 'Usha generation' in the middle of the second century, who presented Kefar 'Othnay as an example of the produce of Samaritans.²⁵

¹⁹ Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 3.1.35–48.

²⁰ M. Shevi'it, 9, 2 and its parallels; Shahar 2004: 192–204.

²¹ M. Gittin 7, 7 and its parallels in Tos. Gittin 5, 7 (ed. Lieberman: 266–7), and JT Ba.Maz. 7, 11c, BT Gittin 76a.

²² Elitsur 2009: 336, 433.

²³ Tos., Para, 10, 2 (ed. Tzukermandel: 638); Gilat 1968: 243–4. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, who lived in the second half of the first century and until the second decade of the second century, said that his teacher, Yohanan ben Zakkai, allowed one Shemaya, from Kefar 'Othnay, to use *mei hatat* (a liquid applied to people who had been ritually defiled through contact with the dead).

²⁴ M. Gittin, 1, 5; Tos. Gittin, 1, 4 (ed. Lieberman: 246–7); BT, Gittin 10b; Oppenheimer 1991: 26–8. This is certainly evidence of a Jewish settlement whose inhabitants lived according to the laws of the sages, and may also indicate that Jews and Samaritans lived there together.

²⁵ See Tos., Demai 5, 23 (ed. Lieberman: 92–3).

From the sources presented here, we may conclude that a settlement by the name of Kefar 'Othnay existed as early as the second half of the first century CE and in the second century CE; however, it is unclear from these sources whether Jews continued to live there in the third century and thereafter. The information here indicates that expansion of Jewish settlement in Galilee toward the Jezreel Valley, on the border of Samaritan country, accelerated after the first Jewish revolt (66–73 CE) and necessitated the updating of the halachic “map.”

It is against this backdrop that we should examine the founding and growth of a Jewish village by the name of Kefar 'Othnay at this historical-geographical juncture and on the seam between the Jewish sphere in Galilee and the Samaritan sphere in Samaria.²⁶ The mention of this settlement on the border of Galilee on the road from Galilee to Judea, with the same wording used to describe the location of Antipatris – on the border of Judea and on the road from Judea to Galilee²⁷ – bolsters this assumption. Moreover, Rabban Gamaliel's journeys to Galilee and the mention of his visit to Kefar 'Othnay are consistent with the description of Kefar 'Othnay as a point on the southern boundary of Galilee for purposes of the laws governing divorce and as a settlement situated on the main road from Galilee to Judea. Not for nothing did Oppenheimer point out the similarity between the journeys of Rabban Gamaliel of Yavneh and those of Roman rulers of important cities.²⁸ It seems that this is another aspect attesting to the location and centrality of settlements on main roads in the Land of Israel in general and the centrality of the settlement at that spot in particular.

The name Kefar 'Othnay appears in its Latin form, Caporcotani, as a way station on the Peutinger Map (Fig. 16.2). The final version of that map is dated to the fourth century CE, although scholars agree that its sources concerning the Land of Israel date from the second century CE. The map places Caporcotani midway between Caesarea and Scythopolis,²⁹ further evidence of its importance in the Roman imperial road network. The settlement is also mentioned as one of the cities of Galilee in the second-century *Geographia* by Claudius Ptolemy (καπαρκοτνεϊ).³⁰ The appearance of the name on the Peutinger Map and in *Geographia* shows that the Jewish-Samaritan village (Kefar 'Othnay) had given its name to the legionary base –

²⁶ Oppenheimer 1991: 66–71; Shahar 2004: 200.

²⁷ See the sources in n. 21 and Lieberman 1955–73: *Nashim*, 878–9.

²⁸ Oppenheimer 1991: 28–9. For the Roman governors' journeys, see Marshall 1966: 233–8.

²⁹ Tabula Peutingeriana, Weber 1976, Seg. X. See also Finkelstein 1979: 27–34.

³⁰ Claudii Ptolemae, *Geographia*, ed. Nobbe 1843–5, V, 16, 4.



Figure 16.2 Peutinger Map – Caporcotani (Legio) along the Roman road between Caesarea and Bet She'an-Scythopolis (according to Weber 1976, Seg. X.).

Caporcotani/ Caparcotani.³¹ Other than a lone reference in Josephus' writings to a commander of Legio VI Fretensis who was killed in the Battle of the Bet Ḥoron Ascent during Cestius Gallus' failed campaign in Judea in 66 CE,³² we have no additional evidence, prior to the second century, of the presence in Judea of soldiers of the Sixth Legion, its commanders or headquarters.

The similarity between the name of the Roman legionary base and the name of the mixed Jewish and Samaritan village also emerges from burial inscriptions of soldiers of the Sixth Legion in their place of origin in Asia Minor. The name of the village in Latin appears on the Peutinger Map and in Ptolemy's *Geographia*. "Caparcotna" is also attested on inscriptions from Asia Minor.³³ One of the officers buried in Antioch of Pisidia is Gaius Novius Rusticus, son of Gaius Novius Prescus, who was consul from 165 to 168 CE. Thus, it seems that Gaius Novius served in Kefar 'Othnay

³¹ Isaac 1992: 432–3. ³² BJ, 2.19.7(544); and see also Tully 1998: 226–32.

³³ Ramsay 1916: 129–31; CIL III 6814–16; Levick 1958: 75–6; CIL. III: 6814; 6816.

sometime around the mid second century CE,³⁴ providing epigraphic confirmation of the historical information.

Furthermore, ancient milestones and inscriptions attest to the location of a legionary base on El Manakh hill at Legio,³⁵ showing that the Roman army did indeed reach Legio in the early second century CE.³⁶ According to a description by Cassius Dio, dating to the early third century CE, it appears that the Sixth Legion was still encamped in Judea at that time, in addition to the Tenth Legion,³⁷ and scholars concur that the Sixth Legion was indeed stationed at Kefar 'Othnay in Galilee (see next).³⁸ The Greek word cast[ron] ([ἀπό κάστ]ρων), engraved on a milestone found at the third mile from Legio, on the Legio-Scythopolis road, reconstructed by Isaac and Roll as “fortress” or “camp.” According to Isaac and Roll, in the inscription on another milestone along the Roman road from Legio to Diocaesarea (Sepphoris, see next), the word “legion” ([ἀπό λ]εγεωνος) appears. Both inscriptions probably refer to the legionary base.

Thus, another Roman legion, in addition to the Tenth, was stationed in Provincia Judaea at the second decade of the second century CE. Isaac and Roll suggested that this legion was Legio II Traiana.³⁹ The promotion of a provincial governor from the rank of procurator to consul meant that the region received an additional legion. Indeed, an inscription dated to 120 CE was found at Caesarea, honoring Lucius Cossonius Gallus, the twenty-eighth governor of provincial Judaea and consul (approx. 117–18 CE, after the execution of Lusius Quietus). The inscription from Caesarea proves that Lucius Cossonius Gallus was already consul during Trajan's reign (117 CE).⁴⁰ With regard to Isaac and Roll's arguments (see aforementioned), it should be noted that Lucius Cossonius Gallus had served only shortly before as the commander of Legio II Traiana.⁴¹

³⁴ See n. 33; Levick 1958. ³⁵ Isaac and Roll 1982a: 10, 79–80, 86, nn. 23–7.

³⁶ Isaac and Roll 1979a; 1979b: 149–56; 1982a: 9; Rea 1980: 220–1; Cotton 2000: 351–7.

³⁷ Cassius Dio, *Historia*, 23, 25. ³⁸ Stern 1974–84: 363–4, n. 3.

³⁹ Isaac and Roll 1979a; 1979b; Isaac and Roll 1982a. In contrast, Shatzman (1983: 323–9) proposed two theories by which to double the legionary presence in Judea. The first was that the legion transferred from Syria to Judaea was either Legio III Gallica or Legio VI Ferrata. The second was that Legio III Cyrenaica was the legion transferred to Judaea from Egypt. Ancient sources document the legionary presence in Judaea during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. These sources were extensively surveyed by Shatzman, who noted that the Third Legions – Cyrenaica and Gallica – had been brought in their entirety to Judaea to suppress the revolt, and that parts of the Second Legion and others were also transferred here for that purpose.

⁴⁰ Regarding Lucius Cossonius Gallus' *cursus honorum*, see CIL III: 6813; on the Caesarea inscriptions, see Eck and Cotton 2001.

⁴¹ Thanks to Yuval Shahar for the reference and possible connection mentioned earlier.

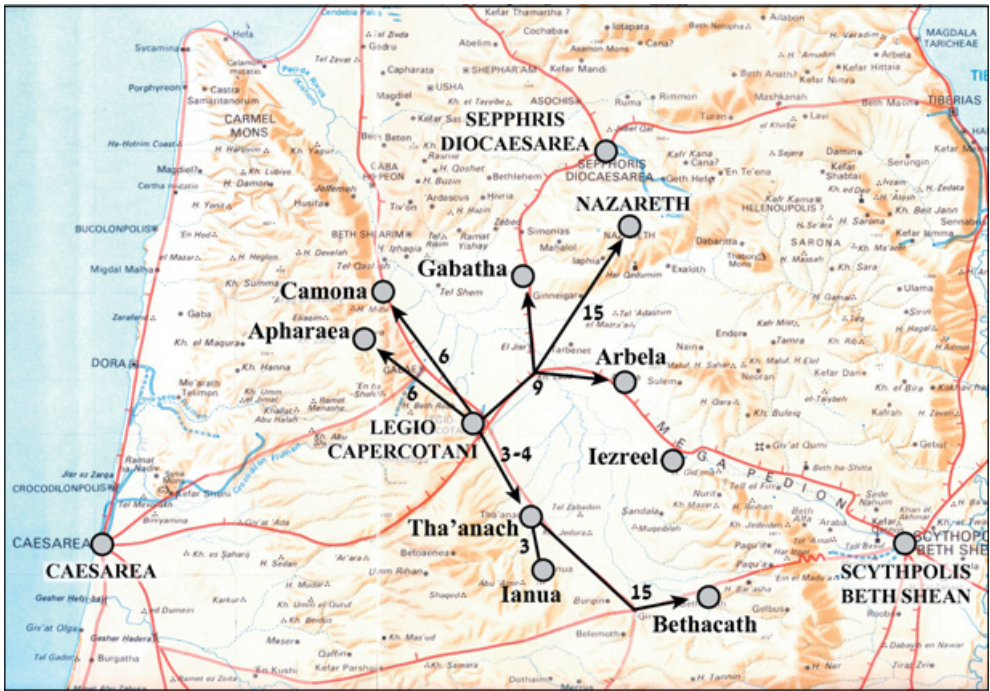


Figure 16.3 Map of sites in the Jezreel Valley and its environs showing connections to Legio, according to Eusebius (according to Roman Road Map, TIR 1994; Roll 1994; Eusebius, *Onomasticon*).

Thus, it would seem that the name Legio became entrenched as the name of the legionary base during the time the Roman legion was there; eventually this name replaced the name Caporcotani/Caparcotani, apparently at the beginning of the third century CE.⁴² The site was also called Legio (λεγεών) by Eusebius in his *Onomasticon* at the end of the third century CE, where he notes it as a point from which distances to settlements in Galilee were measured (Fig. 16.3).⁴³ Because Eusebius' writings are evidence of the presence of military units in a number of settlements,⁴⁴ including Aila ('Aqaba) as the base of Legio X Fretensis,⁴⁵ it seems that his failure to mention the name of the unit that was based or present at Legio might indicate that in his time the legionary headquarters was no longer there. As to when the headquarters left Legio, a construction inscription of the Sixth Legion found in Udrukh, Arabia⁴⁶

⁴² Isaac 1992: 432–3.

⁴³ Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, 1, 140; 21, 116, 21, 100; 14, 108, 8; 100, 10; 98, 10; 70, 10.

⁴⁴ Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, 13, 25; 122–3, 128; 120–1, 96; 118, 7; 8, 4; 50, 3, 42, 3.

⁴⁵ Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, 6, 20; see also Tsafir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 59–60.

⁴⁶ For the camp, see Gregory 1995–7: vol. 2, 383–9.

apparently attests that at the end of the third century the legion (or at least part of it) had moved eastward.⁴⁷ The absence of the name of the Sixth Legion from the legions posted in Palestine at the beginning of the fifth century CE⁴⁸ underscores the assumption that at that time the headquarters was no longer at Legio-Kefar 'Othnay. Ritterling claimed that the legion had already left by the time of Alexander Severus (222–35 CE),⁴⁹ and other assessments have been voiced for a later date for the departure of the Sixth Legion from Legio.⁵⁰

Shatzman recently suggested that the small size of the bases in Udruk and Al Lajjun (in Transjordan)⁵¹ supports the evidence of the presence of soldiers of Legio VI Ferrata in Egypt⁵² and attests that the legion was split when it was moved from the base in Judea and sent to two provinces, part to Arabia and part to Egypt.⁵³ Either way it is likely that by approximately the year 300 the legionary headquarters was no longer stationed at Kefar 'Othnay.

Hieronymus (342–420 CE), in his Latin translation of Eusebius' *Onomasticon*, calls Legio *oppido Legionis*,⁵⁴ which hints that a key civilian settlement developed at the site after the legion's departure from Legio or during the last stages of its presence there. The term *oppidum* indicates a regional administrative settlement center, not necessarily fortified, which under Roman influence gradually became an urban center of the type known in central and Western Europe.⁵⁵ In any case, during the Late Roman period, the name of the place was changed to Maximianopolis. Hence, even if until that time Legio had only the status of a regional settlement center, and assuming that it did not have the status of polis before then, the name change to Maximianopolis indicates that this status was granted to the settlement at that site. Abel suggested that the city was named after the Emperor Maximian Heraclius (286–304 CE).⁵⁶ Other scholars suggested that the name honored the Emperor Maximian Galerius (305 CE) at the latest.⁵⁷ Discussion of the regional urban center that developed at Legio in the Late Roman–early Byzantine period exceeds the boundaries of the matter at hand.

⁴⁷ Kennedy and Falahat 2008: 150–69; see also Tepper and Di Segni 2006: 42–54.

⁴⁸ The senior positions, *Notitia Dignitatus*, ed. Seeck 1962: 72–3; see also Tsafir 1982: 362–71; Amit 2002: 798–805.

⁴⁹ Ritterling 1925: 1593. ⁵⁰ See, for example, Barnes 2008b: 62; Cotton 2000: 351.

⁵¹ See Gregory 1995–7: vol. 2, 349–59. ⁵² Rea 1996: vol. 63: 4359, 30–4.

⁵³ Shatzman, in press (pers. comm.) ⁵⁴ Hieronymus, *De situ*, 59,1; 15, 20.

⁵⁵ Jones 2001: 46; Woolf 1993a: 223–5; McIntosh 2009: 159. ⁵⁶ Abel 1938: 175.

⁵⁷ Avi-Yonah 1966: 122–3; see also Isaac and Roll 1982a: 11; Barnes 2008b: 64.

Lajjun, Kefar 'Othnay and the Legionary Base at Legio

The name Lajjun appears on the Schumacher map (1908) alongside a bridge over Naḥal Qeni (Fig. 16.4).⁵⁸ On Mandate maps,⁵⁹ the name Lajjun is given to the three central villages that existed in the area until the first half of the twentieth century. At the very beginning of scholarly research, the accepted opinion was that the Arabic name preserved the Latin word *legio* and thus preserved centuries-old traditions going back to the time the Roman legion built its base here.⁶⁰ This toponymic association was known to Eusebius (262–340 CE), author of the *Onomasticon*,⁶¹ who notes distances from Legio (Legeon) to a number of settlements in Galilee (Fig. 16.3). As mentioned earlier, based on the distances between known milestones in the area around Legio, Isaac and Roll proposed identifying the location of the camp on El Manakh hill, north of Naḥal Qeni, northwest of the Megiddo Junction and southeast of Kibbutz Megiddo. The hill is mentioned by this name in both the Schumacher map (1908) and the Mandatory map,⁶² and El Manakh according to Sharoni means “place of encampment” or “place of camel encampment” (Sharoni 1987: 1266). This may indicate an area that had previously been used as an encampment and perhaps that the memory of the legionary camp was preserved in the Arabic name of the hill, the way the name Legio-Lajjun (above)⁶³ was preserved.

As noted earlier, in historical sources dated to the mid second century CE, the legionary base was called Caporcotani, after the name of the village (Kefar 'Othnay) next to which it was established. We identify the rural site excavated within the Megiddo prison compound, south of Naḥal Qeni, as Kefar 'Othnay. In that excavation we uncovered remains of the rural village and evidence that the population was mixed – Jews, Samaritans and the families of Roman legionaries, some of whom were Christian.⁶⁴ According to the milestones, a Roman legionary base, although established earlier (and called Caporcotani, see previous discussion), was called Legio

⁵⁸ Schumacher 1908: 7.

⁵⁹ Palestine Grid: 1:20,000: Megiddo, S.S: 16–22. 1942; Umm El Fahm, S.S: 16–21. 1942; 'Afula, S.S: 17–22. 1942; Silat El Hārtia, S.S: 17–21. 1942. 'Afula, S.S: 17–22. 1942; Silat El Hārtia, S.S: 17–21. 1942.fula, S.S: 17–22. 1942; Silat El Hārtia, S.S: 17–21. 1942.

⁶⁰ Guérin 1875: 232–5; Avi-Yonah 1949: 133–4; la Strange 1965: 380; Isaac and Roll 1982a: 79.

⁶¹ Eus. *Onomasticon*, ed. Klostermann, 1904, passim. ⁶² See n. 59.

⁶³ A similar phenomenon of the transfer of names appears at the site of Legeon in Transjordan. The site was called Beththoro, and following the establishment of the Fourth Roman Legion, Martia. Its name is preserved to this day as Lajjun, deriving from the Latin word *legio*. See Gregory 1995–7: 349–57; Parker 1993: 844–7.

⁶⁴ Tepper 2014a; Tepper and Di Segni 2006.

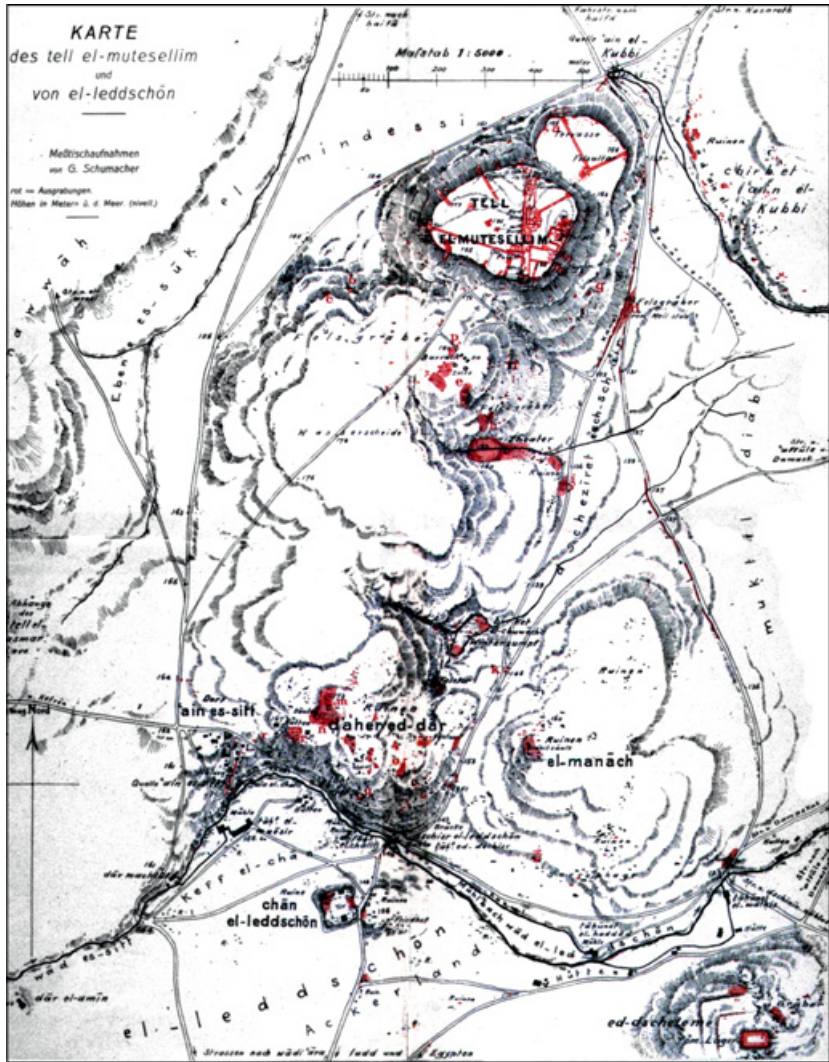


Figure 16.4 Schumacher map (1908), probes and archaeological excavations at Legio.

(“legion”) only after the beginning of the third century, and that was its name until the Roman legion left the site and the Byzantine polis was founded.

Roman military bases and fortifications, as well as Roman roads between main cities (*poleis*), are known as obvious elements of Roman state-sponsored construction in the Land of Israel.⁶⁵ The connection between the military camp and the nearby road network also manifests itself in the way standard Roman military bases were built. These legionary bases were usually

⁶⁵ Tsafir 1984: 40–1.

built around an orthogonal network of streets, with the main street running the length of the base, the “headquarters road” or *via praetoria*, intersected in the center by the main road running its width, the “commanders’ road” or *via principalis*. At the end of these main streets, in the middle of the base’s walls, four gates were built to provide convenient access to roads leading to and from the base. According to Isaac, the Roman military legionary base in the Land of Israel served as the starting points of roads leading to the imperial road system, and only from the Severan period and onward did six main cities (*poleis*) in the province serve as starting points for Roman imperial roads.⁶⁶ According to Roll, this network reached its greatest extent during the third century CE.⁶⁷ At that time the legionary base was already situated at Kefar 'Othnay, but served no more as *caput viae*.

From previous surveys conducted at the site and as-yet unpublished archaeological excavations,⁶⁸ we may suggest that this was a full-fledged legionary base of the type known in the Western Roman Empire, which we believe covered an area of at most 201.25 dunams (20.125 hectares). No Roman military base of this size from the second to third centuries CE has yet been documented in the eastern Roman Empire.

Roman Military Finds from Legio-Kefar 'Othnay

Research on the material culture of the Roman army as reflected in archaeological findings in the Land of Israel shows that, in addition to legionary-stamped pottery objects (such as roof tiles, bricks and pipes) and Roman weapons, bread stamps, tableware and amphoras, stone masks, gems and jewelry, architecture, cultic objects and burials all enable us to identify Roman military presence in general.⁶⁹ The findings, of three main types – tiles and bricks with military-legionary stamps, counterstruck coins and weapons identified with the Roman army – will be discussed later. They will assist us in examining Roman military presence at the site.

Stamped Tiles and Bricks

In Jerusalem, where the Tenth Legion was stationed, military stamps, bricks and pipes were uncovered, as was a Roman military workshop, although opinions are divided as to the precise location of the military

⁶⁶ Isaac 1998a: 63–6. ⁶⁷ Roll 1994; 2009. ⁶⁸ Tepper 2003a; 2003b; 2014a; nn. 12–14.

⁶⁹ Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2008, 91*–107.

camp.⁷⁰ This contrasts with the paucity of finds documented so far of military stamps of the legions stationed at Legio. Recently published comparative research, however,⁷¹ shows major differences in the quantity of military stamps among legionary sites throughout the empire. While in some cases legionary camps have produced a great many finds, excavations of other camps have unearthed no tiles or bricks with military stamps at all. At this stage of the research, therefore, it seems that no great significance should be attached to comparisons of the two sites in this regard.

Nevertheless, a number of tiles and bricks bearing Roman military stamps, or those of Legio VI Ferrata, have been documented from Legio. Schumacher (1908: 175) was the first to publish a tile with a Sixth Legion Ferrata stamp (LEG VI FER), which was found east of the theater at Legio. Other stamped tiles were discovered in Schumacher's excavations of the amphitheater south of the tell and in his excavations at e-Daher Hill.⁷² Sixth Legion-stamped tiles were also found at Tel Ta'anach, south of Legio,⁷³ and an additional tile was found in the hiding complex at Har Hazon.⁷⁴ Adan-Bayewitz reported tiles bearing the Sixth Legion stamp from the excavations at Kefar Hananya, on the border of the Upper Galilee, where pottery kilns were also found.⁷⁵ A Sixth Legion-stamped tile was also found in the excavations of the Roman procurator's palace at Caesarea.⁷⁶ Tiles bearing military stamps have also been documented in private collections and in the possession of communities in the area.⁷⁷ Recently a number of military-stamped tiles were found in a number of archaeological excavations in the Legio area, among them on the edges of the legionary base hill,⁷⁸ in the Megiddo Prison compound⁷⁹ and in the JVRP excavations of the legionary base.⁸⁰ The findings include stamps of two legions, as well as numerous private stamps and stamps of other units. The latter will not be described here.

⁷⁰ For details and additional bibliography, see Barag 1967b: 168–82; Mazar 1971, 5; Arubas and Goldfus 1995: 95–107; Adler 2000: 117–32; Be'eri and Levy 2013. See Wexler-Bdolach in this book (Chapter 17).

⁷¹ Kurzmann 2006: 26–9. ⁷² Schumacher 1908: 182. ⁷³ Tepper 2003a: no. 68.

⁷⁴ Bahat 1974: 160–9.

⁷⁵ Adan-Bayewitz 1987: 178–9; 2009: 1909–11. It is interesting to point out a Talmudic source that links Kefar Hananya and Kefar Othnay by mentioning Sepphoris between them (Tos. Bekhorot 7.3, ed. Zuckermandel, p. 541).

⁷⁶ See Gleason 1998; Burrell 1996. My thanks to Or Fialkov for this information. The tiles are in the IAA storeroom in Bet Shemesh.

⁷⁷ Tepper 2003a: 63–8; 2014: 47–56. ⁷⁸ Tepper 2017.

⁷⁹ The excavations were conducted on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) from 2003 to 2008. See Tepper 2006; Tepper and Di Segni 2006.

⁸⁰ See n. 14.

Roman Military Stamps of *Legio II Traiana*

Two stamps were found in excavations at the edges of El Manakh hill, identified as military stamps not of Legio VI Ferrata. In a preliminary report, it was proposed that they be identified as belonging to Legio II Traiana.⁸¹ On one of the tiles, the following stamped inscription survived: LEGII[], which we propose reconstructing as LEGII[T].

The preliminary assumption, that these were tiles of the Second Legion (Traiana), relies on the fact that this legion is mentioned on the milestone dated to the year 120 CE found along the Roman road from Legio to Sepphoris/Acco.⁸² The stamps on the tile found in the excavations at the edges of the hill are not intact, and we may propose reconstructing them as LEGIII[] or LEGII[]. This would mean the stamps could have belonged either to the Third Legion or the Second Legion (see discussion in the historical overview, n. 39). A new find of tiles of this type in the JVRP excavation of the legionary base,⁸³ of more intact stamps of Legio II Traiana, supports this proposal (Fig. 16.5).

Roman Military Stamps of *Legio VI Ferrata*

These stamps are divided into six main types. They are categorized typologically, and at this phase of the research it may be assumed that they were stamped at the site during the second to third centuries CE.

1. Well-executed, framed stamp. Top line: LEGVI (with a line above the number VI); bottom line: FERR (Fig. 16.6:1).
2. LEGVIF[ER], in a square frame.
3. LEGVIFE[R], in an elliptical frame.
4. LEGVIFE[R], with a line about the number VI.
5. LEGVIFER, carelessly executed, mostly mirror-stamped (negative; Fig. 16.6.2).
6. Tile with ligature (of the letters ERR) of the word Ferrata (Fig. 16.6.3).

Although a Roman military pottery kiln has not yet been found in the Legio area, the petrographic tests we conducted on a number of tiles bearing stamps of the two abovementioned legions revealed that they were all made from local

⁸¹ Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 14. See also Tepper 2017.

⁸² See Isaac and Roll 1979a; 1979b; Rea 1980; Isaac and Roll 1982b: 131–2. ⁸³ See n. 14.



Figure 16.5 Tile bearing the stamp of Legio II Traiana, from Legio-Kefar 'Othnay (JVRP Excavation).

clay typical of Nahal Qeni and the Megiddo area.⁸⁴ This is reasonable testimony to the presence of a workshop at the site, which would have operated to meet the construction needs in and near the legionary base, as shown by similar findings in Jerusalem⁸⁵ and elsewhere in the empire.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Tepper 2003a: 67; Tepper 2017; Shapiro 2017. ⁸⁵ Arubas and Goldfus 1995: 95–107.

⁸⁶ Trilla 2000: 107; Arubas and Goldfus 1995: 102, n. 9.

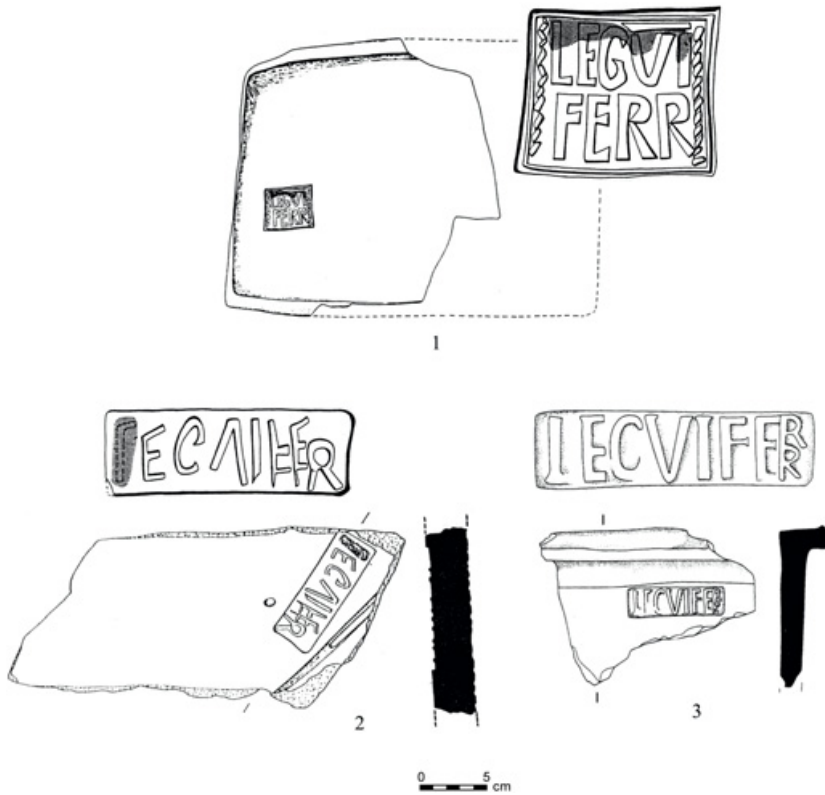


Figure 16.6 Stamps of Legio VI Ferrata stamps from Legio-Kefar 'Othnay (Tepper 2003).

The issue of whether this workshop operated parallel to a workshop not owned by the Roman army cannot be resolved at this time.⁸⁷ However, we note that the survey of the Legio area and in the excavations of Kefar 'Othnay revealed clay stands, which are typical of pottery workshop assemblages during the Roman period.⁸⁸ This demonstrates the existence of a local workshop here during the Roman period that would have also produced pottery objects. Another conclusion is that the production of materials for the Roman army at Legio, including bricks and tiles,⁸⁹ should

⁸⁷ See, e.g., Be'eri and Levy 2013: 203–10. ⁸⁸ See Be'eri and Levy 2013: 208.

⁸⁹ We have not yet found stamped pipes at Legio, or pipes with the VI Ferrata stamp elsewhere. Nevertheless, numerous pipes were found in the survey and excavations at Legio, including long pipes for aqueducts or water and drainage channels both inside and outside the legionary base (see nn. 12, 14, 15, 82). We assume that these pipes were also produced in a Roman army kiln that operated near the legionary base.

be dated to the first phase of the establishment of the camp at the site, in the second decade of the second century CE.

Countermarked Coins

Countermarked coins with legionary numbers or symbols were minted by the military authorities.⁹⁰ Thus, findings of this type can contribute to the identification of Roman presence at the site, as was also proposed with regard to the Tenth Legion Fretensis in Jerusalem.⁹¹ Howgego mentioned eleven coins with countermarks of the Sixth Legion (LVIF). The seals in question were overstruck on coins originally minted from 5 BCE to 117 CE. Overstrikes were also found on coins minted in the time of Claudius (41–54 CE), Nero (54–68 CE) and Domitian (81–96 CE), as well as on one coin from the time of Agrippa II (48–95 CE)⁹² from the same series, and Howgego posited that these coins were probably countermarked in Legio after the legion arrived there from Arabia.⁹³ In the Legio region survey, more than forty countermarked coins of the Sixth Legion were examined,⁹⁴ most of which were struck over worn coins. Of these, six coins could be identified as having been minted in Antioch, three from the time of Claudius, Domitian and Vespasian (69–79 CE), and two from the Iudaea Capta series, one of the latter from the time of Vespasian.

Our research confirms Howgego's conclusion that the VI Ferrata countermarks date no later than the second decade of the second century CE. We have found that the Sixth Legion stamps on the coins were divided into three groups: (1) stamps of the LVIF type; (2) stamps similar to the previous group, but with a line above the number VI (see Fig. 16.7); and (3) stamps of the FVI type. Their chronology is a subject for further study.

The letters on all the coins are very finely incised and clear. The average measurements are W: 0.5 mm; H: 2.0–2.5 mm. Of the additional dated countermarked coins, we note one from the time of Domitian and another from the time of Claudius. Interestingly, some of the coins revealed another, rectangular countermark, of a head facing right (see Fig. 16.7), measuring on average 3.5–5.0 mm. Among this type are additional coins

⁹⁰ See, extensively, Howgego 1985. ⁹¹ Barag 1967a.

⁹² According to a renewed assessment, there is no evidence of coins of Agrippa II after 86 CE; see Kushnir-Stein 2002: 123–31.

⁹³ Howgego 1985; 22, Ta. 1, 250–1; Pl. 27; see also Barag 1967a: 117, 121, n. 20, coin no. 25; Rosenberger 1978: 81, coin nos. 21–2.

⁹⁴ Tepper 2003a: Fig. 17; Tepper 2014: 62, 81–3.



Figure 16.7 Legio, Coin with two countermarks, the first of Legio VI Ferrata, the second of a head facing right (Tepper 2014a).

that do not feature the legion number; these will be discussed in a separate study. Furthermore, additional coins have recently been found bearing countermarks of the Sixth Legion in the excavations at Kefar 'Othnay and of the legionary base (not yet published).⁹⁵ Those that can be dated will contribute greatly to the discussion of the characteristics of Roman military minting activities at the legionary base at Legio.

In recent years, coins have been found with the countermark of Legio VI Ferrata at Sepphoris⁹⁶ and at Kh. Hammam in eastern Galilee,⁹⁷ two sites that have been identified as Jewish. Although it has been suggested that the coins from Kh. Hammam are part of emergency hoards from the Bar Kokhba Revolt, it is possible that the coins from both sites are evidence of commerce between the legionaries from the base at Legio, or Roman troops throughout Galilee, and civilian settlements in the area of their operations.⁹⁸ The coins from Kh. Hammam might represent a life of peaceful commercial interaction before the violent events. As we know,

⁹⁵ See nn. 12 and 14.

⁹⁶ Porath 2010, pers. comm., unpublished. My thanks to L. Porath and D. Syon for their help.

⁹⁷ Leibner 2010; Leibner and Bijovsky 2014.

⁹⁸ See papyrus Muraba'at 114 (Cotton and Eck 2002), which mentions a Jewish man apparently living in one of the villages in the Jerusalem mountains who borrowed (money?) from a soldier who served in the Tenth Legion Fretensis. Cotton and Eck suggested dating the papyrus to the year 115 CE (but no later than 130 CE). See also Cotton 2007.

countermarks of different types, including those of the Sixth Legion, show extensive economic-monetary activity, which included the minting of worn coins with countermarks so as to put them back into circulation. It is reasonable to assume that this activity was carried out by a central authority, apparently in the context of the Sixth Legion at Legio. Furthermore, coins bearing the countermark of the Tenth Legion Fretensis, which were also found at Legio-Kefar 'Othnay,⁹⁹ enable us to deduce the existence of commerce among legionaries and/or the movement of merchandise between the two legions in the province.

Weapons

In the Legio area survey and the excavations at El Manakh hill, a number of metal and stone objects were found that were identified as weapons and legionaries' equipment (Fig. 16.8).¹⁰⁰ Next, we will discuss a small collection of the metal finds only.

Helmet carrying handle (Fig. 16.8:1): Such handles were attached at the center of the neck guard. Examples of such handles are known from Masada as well as from Western Europe.¹⁰¹ They were also used at the time of the Republic.¹⁰² Handles of this type also served as mirrors and medicine boxes in Roman times.

Items for suspension on a sword frog (Fig. 16.8:2–3): The Roman sword frog hung from leather strips from a soldier's belt. The strips were connected to a round, suspended element that was inserted in a slit in the belt. Two items that could not be dated are known from the Legio area. The first (Fig. 16.8:2) is decorated with a typical Eastern-style rosette, which is not previously known on a western weapon. The second (Fig. 16.8:3) was coated with gold, remnants of which can be seen on the round element.

Belt decoration (*cingulum, balteus*), resembling a tack, with a flat, silver-coated head (Fig. 16.8:4): This item apparently adorned the leather bands that hung from a Roman legionary's belt.¹⁰³ Parallels are known from many sites in Western Europe (e.g., Vindonissa, Switzerland).¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Syon 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Tepper 2003a: 87–9; 2014: 64–70. The weapons were identified with the assistance of Guy Stiebel, Tel Aviv University.

¹⁰¹ Allason-Jones and Milet 1984: 424–5, no. 3. ¹⁰² Ulbert 1985: nos. 103–8.

¹⁰³ Bishop 1992: 96. ¹⁰⁴ Unz and Deschler-Erb 1997: nos. 2207–8, 2210–14.

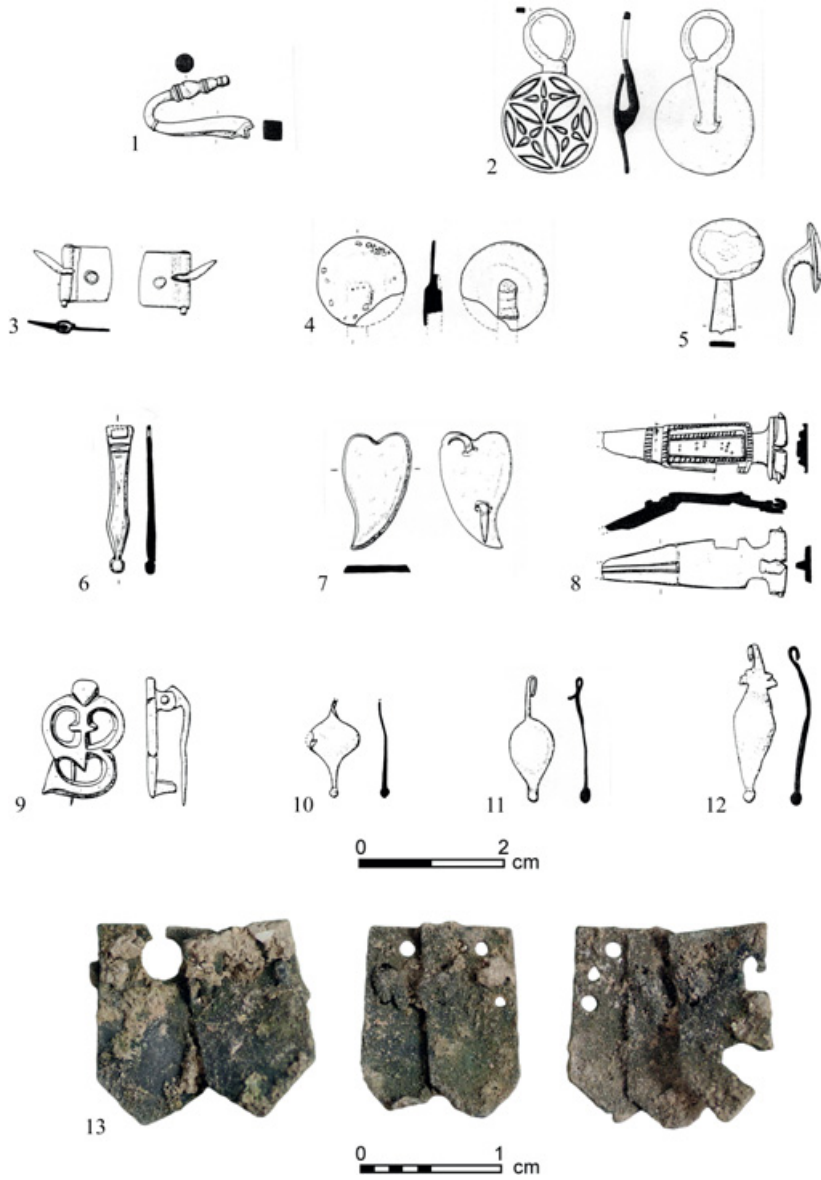


Figure 16.8 Legio, Roman military equipment: 1. Helmet carrying handle; 2-3. Object to be suspended from a sword frog; 4. Belt decoration; 5. Object from a segmented cuirass; 6. Strap terminals; 7. Belt mount; 8-9. Fibula; 10-12. Pendants; 13. Scale armor (Tepper 2003; no. 13 from JVRP excavation).

Belt buckle from a segmented cuirass (*lorica segmentata*: Fig. 16.8:5), used to attach chest and back bands of legionary armor,¹⁰⁵ dated according to parallels from Britain to the first and second centuries CE.¹⁰⁶

Strap terminals (Fig. 16.8:6): Droplike, elongated objects attached to the fringes at the end of a Roman legionnaire's leather belt. Some have associated this item with a horse's reins.¹⁰⁷ Many parallels dated to the second and third centuries CE have been found in Romania, Germany, Spain and Britain.¹⁰⁸

Belt mount (Fig. 16.8:7): Heart-shaped object apparently used as decoration on a legionary's belt or horse's bridle. Parallels from the fourth century CE are known from Spain¹⁰⁹ and Romania.¹¹⁰

Fibula (Fig. 16.8:8): Type of strip-bow brooch, dated to the first century CE. Parallels are known from Roman military assemblages in the West (e.g., from Germany).¹¹¹

Fibula in trumpet design (Fig. 16.8:9). The fibula is dated by parallels from Morocco and Germany to the third and fourth centuries CE.¹¹² Earlier parallels are dated to the first and early second centuries CE, also documented in Britain.¹¹³

Pendant (Fig. 16.8:10–12), including a teardrop pendant, which decorated horses' bridles. Similar pendants, known from Gamla in the Kingdom of Agrippa II as well as from Britain and Romania, are dated to the first and second centuries CE.¹¹⁴

Also worthy of joining this assemblage of metal weapons are sixteen pieces of scale armor (*lorica squamata*) found on the eastern slope of Tel Megiddo.¹¹⁵ The form of these scales is typical of scales from the Roman period that are dated to the second and third centuries CE.¹¹⁶ Another group of similar scales (Fig. 16.8:13) were found in the JVRP excavations in 2013 in the northern part of the camp.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁵ Bishop 1988: Figs. 22–4. ¹⁰⁶ Unz and Deschler-Erb 1997: 30–1, nos. 732–63, 765–90.

¹⁰⁷ Bishop 1992: 99.

¹⁰⁸ Dawson 1990: 7; Unz and Deschler-Erb 1997: 38: no. 1300; Lyne 1999: 51, 53, 76, 85; Oldenstein 1976: 142–4, nos. 291–304, Taf. 36, 47; Petculescu 1995: 115, Pl. 1: 3–4; Allason-Jones 1988: 213, 216, figs. 50b.2, 52a.9; Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: no. 3.3, 597.

¹⁰⁹ Fernández 1996: 105, pl. 6, figs. 4: 80–1, 10: 174–81.

¹¹⁰ Dawson 1990: 7, 11, figs. 3, 11, n. 7.

¹¹¹ Ulbert 1959: 68, Taf. 15: 16, 60: 12; Ulbert 1969: 38–9, Taf. 25: 15.

¹¹² Boube-Piccot 1994: 88, 89–90, no. 125, Pl. 70, nos. 53–5 and 116–26, Pls. 5, 70; Oldenstein 1976: nos. 897–940, Pls. 69–70; Ulbert 1969: Taf. 36, 15.

¹¹³ Brown 1986, 48–9, Figs. 31, 233.

¹¹⁴ Bishop 1988: 98, 156, Table 6, Fig. 49; Unz and Deschler-Erb 1997: no. 1515, nos. 1408–34, 1548.

¹¹⁵ Lamon and Shipton 1939: pl. 85:9–19, M 404/491. ¹¹⁶ Robinson 1975: Fig. 159.

¹¹⁷ See n. 14.

The variety of weapons and Roman military equipment described here dates from the first to the fourth centuries CE and includes objects that were part of the Roman legionary's equipment as well as from horses' bridles, which may also attest to the presence of a cavalry unit at or near the legionary base at Legio. The parallels to these items come also from sites in the eastern empire, but mainly from its western provinces, which is possible evidence of both the source of the manpower and the equipment of the legionaries stationed at the base at Legio-Kefar 'Othnay.

Summary

The evidence of Roman military presence in the area of Legio-Kefar 'Othnay found in roof tiles, coins and weapons augments the growing architectural-archaeological testimony from the excavation project of the legionary base at Legio-Kefar 'Othnay. Although we have not extended discussion to the detailed results of the excavations at the base, we can already propose that this was a legionary base whose plan and dimensions show that it was built in full Roman legionary style as it is known in the western Roman Empire.

The abovementioned military stamps on roof tiles and bricks reinforce the assessment that, during the lifetime of the base, two legions were stationed there, Legio II Traiana and Legio VI Ferrata, and they support Roll and Isaac's theory that Legio II Traiana was first to arrive there, followed by Legio VI Ferrata. We concur with their proposal that Legio II Traiana was there for only a short time, and that the Sixth Legion, which settled there only after the Second abandoned it, remained there until it was sent to Arabia at the end of the third century CE or the beginning of the fourth century CE, at the latest.

The weapons described here show the presence of Roman legionaries at the site from the end of the first century CE at the earliest and apparently more so only from the early second century until the end of the third century or the early fourth century at the latest. The dating of the evidence revealed by the weapons indicates a Roman military presence at the earliest before the permanent base at Legio was established and at the latest after the departure of most of the Roman forces from the site. This presence may have been in the form of relatively small units, stationed here because of the importance of the location both before and after the permanent base was built or abandoned.



Figure 16.9 Kefar 'Othnay – the northern panel of the mosaic in the Christian Prayer Hall. The floor was donated by Gaianus, a centurion (Tepper and Di Segni 2006).

The discovery of counterstruck coins in the Legio survey, the excavations of the base and the adjacent dwelling complex (see subsequent discussion) show commercial ties among the area's inhabitants, including between the population of Kefar 'Othnay and the Roman legionaries stationed in the base. The finding of these coins in other archaeological complexes in Galilee that are identified as Jewish settlements underscores this theory and expands the understanding of the legionary sphere of economic influence to additional areas of Galilee.

Additional evidence that reveals Roman military presence at the site emerged from a mosaic floor unearthed in the Megiddo Prison compound in salvage excavations by the Israel Antiquities Authority (2003–8; Fig. 16.9).¹¹⁸ A wealthy dwelling uncovered at the edge of Kefar 'Othnay

¹¹⁸ For the excavations, see n. 78. The Christian Prayer Hall, dating to the third century CE, with its colorful mosaic and three Greek inscriptions, has been published, including discussion of its dating and significance (Tepper and Di Segni 2006: 24–54). The site, buildings and mosaic were the subject of this author's Ph.D. dissertation (Tepper 2014a) and are now in preparation for final publication by the Israel Antiquities Authority.

revealed three inscriptions in Greek, one of which was dedicated to “the God Jesus Christ.” Another inscription notes that a Roman centurion generously donated the floor. His name, Gaianus, indicates a Semitic (Arab) origin. Additional names documented on two bread stamps found in the structure are of Roman centurions; one of these names was apparently of Nabatean origin. We may reasonably posit that these individuals served in Legio VI Ferrata, thus revealing another source of that legion’s manpower. The wealthy structure, whose inhabitants were Christian families of centurions in the Roman army, was built at the beginning of the third century CE and abandoned at the end of that century. We associate its abandonment with the departure of the legion from Legio-Kefar ‘Othnay,¹¹⁹ as was also clearly shown from the results of the archaeological excavation in the legionary base (n. 14).

The research presented in this chapter will be expanded in the future to include additional, still-unpublished findings from the excavation of the Christian structure in the Megiddo Prison compound and from the excavation of the legionary base (discussed earlier). These additional findings can shed new light on the complex relationship between legionaries and civilians in the eastern provinces in general and in the land of Israel in particular. Thus the current project enables a better understanding of the region of Legio-Kefar ‘Othnay, where a Roman legionary camp coexisted with a civilian settlement, and Roman legionaries and civilians, including pagans, Jews, Samaritans and Christians, lived in close proximity to each other.

¹¹⁹ Tepper and Di Segni 2006: 34–5; Stiebel 2006: 29–31.