



CAESAREA PHILIPPI

BANIAS, *The Lost City of Pan*

JOHN FRANCIS WILSON

OXFORD

Caesarea Philippi

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CITY OF PAN

John Francis Wilson

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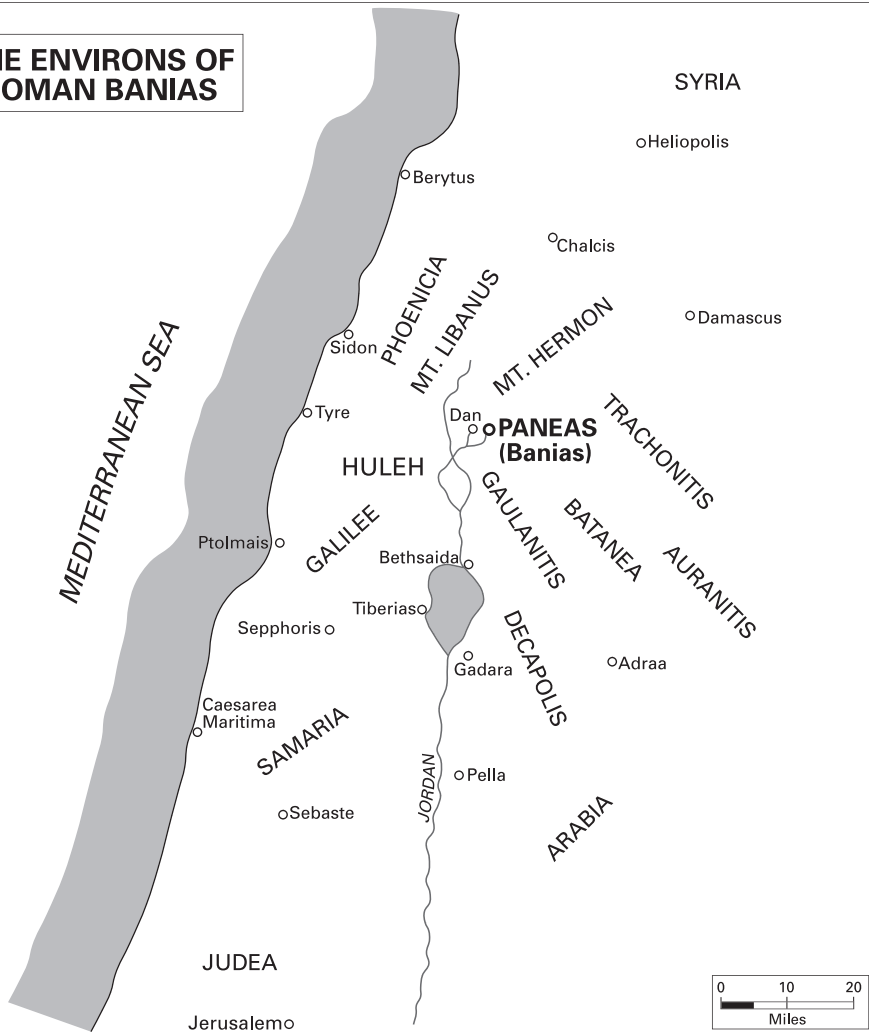
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**THE ENVIRONS OF
ROMAN BANIAS**



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Preface

Some time in 1997 the ancient city of Banias passed its two thousandth anniversary. There was no celebration. Although almost continuously inhabited for two long millennia, on its anniversary year not one permanent inhabitant remained. All that remained to memorialise the innumerable hosts who lived out their lives in this place were scattered stones within the archaeological squares, picnic tables set under a stand of old poplar trees to serve the ever-present hoards of tourists and schoolchildren, and the ancient sounds of nature – roaring waters and rustling leaves. This book has grown out of many years of association with the site of Banias as a part of the archaeological effort to open windows into the long and wonderfully eventful history of the place. It is not an archaeological report, though it makes use of the growing amount of archaeological data revealed over the last two decades and increasing yearly to the present day. It has been written mostly at Banias itself, over a period of more than a decade, after days of working in the archaeological squares, or walking along the banks of the river, or tramping through the Hellenistic, or Crusader, or twentieth-century battlefields (with careful attention to still-lethal fields of landmines!). It has taken form during quiet moments before the cave of Pan, or after looking down on the site from the heights of Subaybah, attempting to recreate in the mind a Roman city, or a medieval Islamic fortress, or a tiny nineteenth-century village. To these experiences has been added an ‘archaeology of books’, undertaken in great libraries such as those at the University of California at Los Angeles, the British Library, the Library of the Institute for Classical Studies at the University of London, and the tiny but historic rooms of the Palestine Exploration Fund. One chapter was drafted among the redwoods of California.

This is a book of history, with an emphasis on ‘story’. I have attempted to let the story itself provide the agenda. In order to look at a very long story, encompassing two millennia, I have painted with a broad brush on a very small canvas. Or, to alter the metaphor, I have sought to trace one small, multi-hued thread as it winds its way through the massive tapestry of the history of the Middle East – through empires, religions, languages and cultures, partaking of each, but also contributing its own colours and textures to the whole. There are obvious risks in such an exercise in broad synthesis, not the least of which is the appearance of impudence in moving so often and so far outside one’s own disciplinary boundaries. The broader the brushwork the more necessary are certain bold theoretic leaps across wide and deep chasms of uncertainty, and thus the more susceptible is the picture to learned criticism.

The subject of this story is the city itself, but cities without people are desolate and ultimately meaningless. I have tried to introduce the reader to more than the historical currents, or the geographical, social, or architectural aspects of Banias. History is story,

and so is this account: the story of a city, and the stories of those who gave it life. It is a matter of wonder that so many names have survived. Some survived, of course, because they were famous and powerful in their day, and left their names wherever they went: Antiochus III, Herod the Great and his sons (especially Philip and Agrippa II), Jesus of Nazareth, Vespasian and Titus, Constantine and Julian ‘the Apostate’, Nūr ed-Dîn and Saladin, even Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). But dozens of others somehow escaped the anonymity that is the usual fate of the not-so-famous-and-powerful, and this is also their story: Victor, son of Lysimachos, priest of Pan (second century AD); Rabbi Jose ben Kisma (second century AD); Bishop Philokalos, participant in the Council of Nicea (fourth century AD); Husayn ben Hillel, who signed a legal document at Banias on 11 July 1056AD; Ibn al-Nabûlusi, Sunni ascetic and rebel (eleventh century AD); Bahrâm, the Assassin (twelfth century AD); Renier Brus, Crusader Lord of Banias and his ill-fated wife, whose name, unfortunately, we do not know (twelfth century); Fakhr al-Dîn Jahârkas, friend of Saladin and Lord of Banias (thirteenth century); Fakhr al-Dîn (‘the Second’), the diminutive Druze and friend of the Medicis of Florence (seventeenth century); ‘Ismâ’îl, the genial village sheikh (nineteenth century) – the list goes on and on.

There is a tendency in the West to restrict research and discussion of Middle Eastern historical and archaeological sites to a rather limited and predetermined timeline (the Iron Age, perhaps, or the Greco-Roman or Byzantine periods) and thus to neglect the long centuries of Islamic superiority, the Middle Ages, and modern times. Banias’s story does not end in the ancient world; it is a place caught in the currents of Middle Eastern history as recent as today’s newspapers. As these words are written, discussions continue about the fate of the site in our own day and age. Its story furnishes a unique opportunity to learn something about the whole saga of the human habitation of this place and in a way, to reveal a microcosm of the story of the Middle East itself. I have been particularly interested in the transitional points – those moments when one culture is transformed into another. After all, our artificial charts of ‘historical periods’ (Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Modern etc.), fail to account for the linkages between one ‘period’ and another that characterise real history, and it is precisely those linkages that sometimes provide the most interesting and useful insights into human experience.

A list of all those persons and institutions that have made this work possible would be excessively long. Mention can be made only of my academic home, Pepperdine University, steadfast in support; Dr Vassilios Tzaferis and the Israel Antiquities Authority, along with all those colleagues in the field who are bringing the ancient city and its environs to light once again; friends and professional colleagues such as Professor James Russell, who provided many helpful suggestions and criticisms, and Claudette – whose support has been constant and ubiquitous.

And now, the story of Banias.

1 The Beginnings

CANAANITE TIMES

Crowning the southern extremity of the range of mountains known as the Anti-Lebanon stands Hermon, the Mountain of Snow, its pinnacle rising near the mid-point of a line stretched between the cities of Tyre and Damascus (Fig. 3). Hermon forms a formidable natural barrier between the homelands of the ancient cultures of the Phoenician coast and the Syrian hinterland. To the east, melting snows water the territory of Abilene and the plains of Damascus. To the west, the waters pass down the mountains and are caught in the valley between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges. There, instead of flowing on to Phoenicia and the Mediterranean, they turn southward. Soon they intermingle with other waters. First they join the springs that gush up out of the earth at ancient Dan, in the northern Huleh Valley. Then they connect with the cold, clear waters of springs originating further up the foothills of the snowy mountain, at a place of many names, which we will call by its modern name, Banias.

The springs of Banias pour from the foot of an imposing red-rock bluff (Fig. 4). They are abundant enough to be called a river at their very source. From a spot a few yards south of a large natural cave, they rush away rapidly, swirling through a jungle of trees and vines. Soon they roar over another bluff, creating a beautiful waterfall. Finally, at least in ancient times, they disperse into the marshes and swamps of the Huleh Valley. At the southern end of the Huleh the confluent waters of many streams, including those of Banias, emerge as the nascent River Jordan.

Banias looks down on the Huleh Valley, commanding a view all the way across it to the mountains of Naphtali on the west. Behind Banias the ancient road from the Phoenician coast to Damascus winds its way upward, and then down again into the Damascene plain. This road, which was to secure for Banias a place in the history of one successive empire after another, has continued to be used, and its control contested, until our own times. Countless generals have marched their troops past the springs of Banias on their way to or from the Mediterranean coast. Among them, no doubt, was the mighty Tiglath-pileser

of Assyria, on his way to a rendezvous with his Tyrian representative, in preparation for the destruction of nearby Dan, and the famous siege of the mound city of Hazor, for this was none other than the fabled 'Way of the Sea' mentioned by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 9:1).¹

There followed the Assyrian conquest of the cities and the exile of the peoples of the region (733–32 BC).² This catastrophe befell the people of the Kingdom of Israel, asserts the author of II Kings, because of 'the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin'.³ The most notorious of these sins was the institution of the cult of the 'golden calf' at Dan (biblical Laish), barely three miles from Banias, where additional springs broke forth. Extensive archaeological work at Dan has revealed the site of this cult,⁴ which no doubt had its origins in the simple nature worship of the local Canaanites: the golden calf is highly reminiscent of the bulls upon which the Canaanite Ba'als can be seen in surviving stelae. The amalgamation of the Canaanite deity with Israel's Yahweh, so highly offensive to the biblical writer, was but one example of a process common to the history of religion in this region. And beyond the fact of the amalgamation stands the remarkable persistence of the earliest forms of religious awe practised at such sites. It is the primeval gods of nature that form the chain binding the succeeding procession of deities, whose cultural identity and names tended to survive only so long as their cultural sponsors controlled the sites where the cults were practised. Thus, the ancient Ba'al cults of Hermon continued to flourish throughout the entire history of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah⁵ and, as we shall see, survived in one form or another through a succession of historical vicissitudes reaching into modern times.

From the very earliest times the Phoenicians, Syrians and nomadic peoples of the region knew the cave and springs of Banias well. Travellers on the 'Way of the Sea' must have often paused to stand and watch the waters pour forth, marvelling at the beauty and power of nature exhibited so dramatically before them. This was surely a place of special holiness, a place where one could sense the presence and the power of the Ba'als, the primeval lords of nature. Long ago, René Dussaud noticed significant similarities between Aliyan, son of Ba'al, the 'god of the sources' mentioned in the Ras Shamra tablets, and the sites and cults of Dan and Banias. There are striking similarities between the two deities. Aliyan's duty was to watch over and control the springs and underground waters, for example. Dussaud suggests that the Phoenicians had made this connection long before Banias became associated with the Greek god Pan, who, also a 'god of the sources', became for the Greeks the logical successor to the ancient Semitic deity.⁶

THE ARRIVAL OF THE GREEK GOD PAN

Alexander the Great may not have passed directly by this place on his way to Egyptian triumphs. We do know, however, that sometime after Alexander's march of conquest, during the time when his successors set about to Hellenise the East, the Canaanite god who was honoured at Banias merged with the Greek god Pan.⁷ There were sufficient reasons to connect the two based on no more than the similarities of their mythological

attributes.⁸ Banias was certainly not the only place where such syncretism occurred. There is good evidence for the introduction of Pan-worship at other existing holy places in the Hellenised East. In Egypt, from where the Ptolemaic successors of Alexander ruled the regions around Banias, Pan was identified with Khem, and worshiped at the latter's ancient temples in the desert. A town there even took upon itself the name Panopolis, as the centre of a district giving special honour to the god, and his goat-like image could be found in the Egyptian temples.⁹ At this stage, however, such syncretism was often quite superficial. The Greeks began the process of interpreting the local deities in terms of their own theological understanding, while the local population continued to think in traditional terms, despite the new names that the Greeks might have imposed on their pantheons.¹⁰ This process of syncretism may also be observed on the coinage of Phoenician cities of Canaanite heritage. To judge by the coins alone, we might conclude that the Canaanite gods had given way to those of the Greeks. In fact, however, in the minds and hearts of the Canaanite population, very little had changed, and in fact, the local traditional theology remained as a strong undercurrent even after many generations of Hellenism.¹¹

But it was not simply the personal characteristics of the local deity and Hellenic Pan that led to their amalgamation at Banias. To the Hellene, the place may well have been a more relevant factor. Pan was, after all, the god of forests and deserted places, of shepherds and of flocks. Originating in Arcadia, he had suddenly appeared to help the Greeks in their victory at Marathon, using his special talent for generating 'pan-ic' in an opposing army.¹² For this service he received a cave on the Acropolis of Athens itself, where his cult could be maintained.¹³ So ugly was he, according to the traditions,¹⁴ that his own parents abandoned him and a series of gentle maidens resoundingly rejected his advances, among them Selene (the moon), Echo, whose voice may be heard in his haunts, Syrinx, from whom came his reed pipe, which one may hear him playing sadly in the forests, and Pitys, whose symbol is the pine cone. Thus rejected, he turned to the grossest kinds of sexual adventures, forcing himself indiscriminately on maidens, young boys and even animals with amoral abandon. He is commonly depicted as a leering, bestial freak, though often in the company of beautiful forest nymphs.

Despite his distasteful appearance and habits, Pan lived in places of great beauty. The lush and bucolic imagery of his habitat is already present in Plato's *Phaedrus*, with its prayer to Pan,¹⁵ and continues to be repeated in Hellenistic and Roman times. The Homeric Hymn 19 speaks thus of him:

Muse, tell me about Pan, the dear son of Hermes, with his goat's feet and two horns – a lover of merry noise. Through wooded glades he wanders with dancing nymphs who foot it on some sheer cliff's edge, calling upon Pan, the shepherd – god, long-haired, unkempt. He has every snowy crest and the mountain peaks and rocky crests for his domain; hither and thither he goes through the close thickets, now lured by soft streams, and now he presses on amongst towering crags and climbs up to the highest peak that overlooks the flocks. Often he courses through the glistening high mountains, and often on the shouldered hills he speeds along slaying wild beasts, this keen-eyed god. Only at evening, as he returns from the chase, he sounds his note, playing sweet and low on his pipes of reed... At that hour the clear-voiced nymphs are with him and move with nimble feet, singing by some spring of dark water, while Echo wails about the

mountain-top... On his back he wears a spotted lynx-pelt, and he delights in high-pitched songs in a soft meadow where crocuses and sweet-smelling hyacinths bloom at random in the grass.¹⁶

This language, undoubtedly originally describing some Arcadian landscape, fits the setting of Banias perfectly. The 'dark-watered spring' brings quite naturally to mind the lovely river Banias, and the 'mountain's top', of course, snowy Hermon. In addition, this hymn introduces us to Pan's circle: his father Hermes, and grandfather Zeus, the nymphs, and Dionysus – all of whom will eventually enter the story of the cult centre at Banias.

At this stage, however, the cult of Pan at Banias seems to have been relatively undeveloped, certainly not to be compared to that of Alexandria, where, according to Strabo, Ptolemy II Philadelphus built a Paneion for the god (identified with the Egyptian Min) in order to include him within his dynastic cult of Dionysus.¹⁷ The evidence for this conclusion regarding Banias is archaeological. Excavations of the extensive group of sanctuaries that eventually lined the base of the red cliff beside the cave produced no buildings that can be dated to the Hellenistic period. There were definite signs of cultic activity, however. Small bowls and saucers, locally made, indicated a very modest attempt to offer honour to the deity, perhaps by the local peasants (Fig. 5). By the later second century BC the dedicatory vessels became 'abundant, varied in type, and quite sophisticated' and in some cases showed connections with the Phoenician coast, as might be predicted. The presence of a large number of cooking vessels from the same period suggests that ritual dining also took place at the site by this time.¹⁸ Ma'oz, the excavator, has made the interesting suggestion that a road may have run along the terrace and that 'at that time the site was merely a road-side sanctuary with activities focused around the natural grotto'.¹⁹

THE BATTLE OF THE PANEION AND SELEUCID DOMINATION

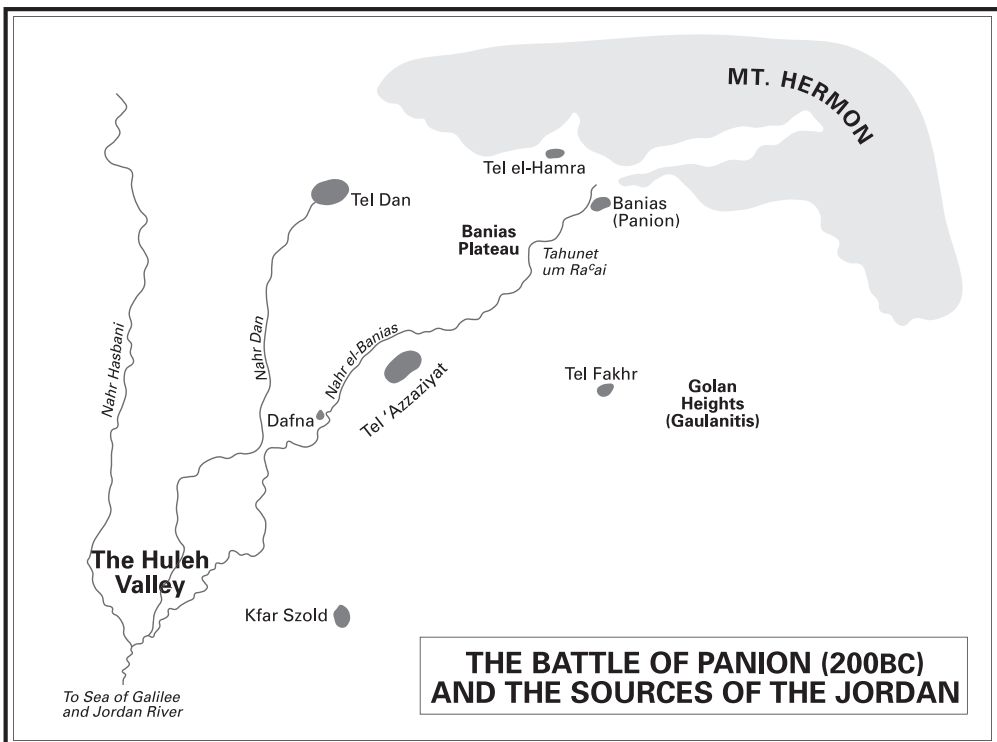
The first reference to Banias specifically, and by its Greek name, is in the work of the Greek historian Polybius. In the division of Alexander's empire, Ptolemy of Egypt and his successors controlled Palestine for a long time. As we have suggested, it was most likely during this period that the cave and spring at Banias, and the area around them, were first identified with the Greek as well as the Canaanite religion, just as the establishment of Panopolis and the Paneion at Alexandria in Egypt can certainly be attributed to Ptolemaic times.

Polybius describes in detail a battle between Scopas, an Aetolian officer serving as chief of staff in the Ptolemaic army, and Antiochus III ('the Great') of Syria. This battle took place, he says, at the 'Panium in Coele-Syria'.²⁰ It may be dated approximately 200 BC.²¹ Since Polybius wrote his account after the events he describes, it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions as to whether the name he gives for the site was already attached to it before the battle. It has even been suggested that the attribution of the power of Pan here came as a direct consequence of the battle, since the elephants of the Syrian army caused panic among the Egyptians.²² Even if, as seems probable, the grotto were already dedicated to Pan before the battle by the Ptolemaic Egyptians, nothing is likely to have existed at the

cave-spring site besides a simple altar, consistent with the tradition that this god was usually worshipped in unaltered caves in out-of-the-way places.²³

Polybius's account of this decisive battle mentions a number of geographical details about the battle site. The task of identifying them is made difficult, however, by the fact that his purpose in giving the account is to show the carelessness of his source, Zeno. Nevertheless, Bar-Kochva, in his work on the Seleucid army, has provided an interesting, if not entirely definitive, reconstruction of the battle that takes into account the topography of the area and provides a logical sequence of events (see map below). He suggests that since neither Polybius nor Zeno knew the topography, they both confused certain aspects of what happened and that the event should be reconstructed as follows:

Antiochus III occupied Palestine in 202 BC. In the winter of 200 BC, however, Scopas moved north and reoccupied Coele-Syria. Antiochus counterattacked in the following summer and Scopas, in an attempt to stop this incursion at the northern frontier of Palestine, advanced his troops toward what Polybius calls 'the Panium'. Before he arrived, however, Antiochus, accompanied by his two sons, took the old 'Way of the Sea' from Damascus and established himself near the spring of Banias, camping beside its waters. To the southwest of Antiochus's camp lay the crescent-shaped plain or 'platform' some 1.5km wide that would eventually be the site of residential quarters belonging to Roman and Byzantine Banias. The area now serves as agricultural land associated with the Israeli settlement Senir. On the west, this 'Banias Plateau' descends rapidly into the Huleh Valley.



On the east, it extends to the banks of the Banias river, which may be easily forded anywhere from its source to a spot some 1.5 km below called Tahunet um Ra'ai. At that point the river enters a deep ravine, too steep for armies to cross. To the north of the plateau Tel Hamra, a foothill of Mount Hermon, dominates the landscape. South of the river lies another more extensive, very uneven plateau dominated by two hills, Tel 'Azzazyāt on the west and Tel Fakhr on the east. Zeno's 'level ground' may thus be identified as the Banias Plateau, his 'river' with the Nahr El-Banyas, the 'commanding hill' with Tel Hamra, and the 'lowest slopes of the mountain' with Tel 'Azzazyāt.²⁴

Zeno says that Scopas placed the right wing of the phalanx, with a few horsemen, 'on the hills' and the left wing and most of the cavalry 'on the level ground'. Part of the other army, under the command of Antiochus the Younger, the son of King Antiochus, occupied 'the parts of the hill which commanded the enemy'. At daylight the king took the rest of his army 'across the river which separated the two camps and drew it up on the plain'. The Syrian army thus had its phalanx in one line opposite the enemy's centre with some of the cavalry to its left and some to its right.²⁵ Thus, the main Seleucid army, including elephants and a phalanx, left their camp, crossed the river and took up a position on the plateau, facing the Ptolemaic forces, who were stretched from the plateau on the left to the lowest slopes of Tel 'Azzazyāt on the right, divided by the river. Part of the Seleucid army on the plateau, consisting of heavy cavalry, under at least the nominal command of Antiochus the Younger, only about fifteen years old at the time, positioned itself on Tel Hamra.

Zeno next describes the actions of King Antiochus, who sent a contingent including a corps of elephants to occupy Tel Fakhr (Fig. 7). These were placed in front of his phalanx along with the Tarantines, with bowmen and slingers in the spaces between the elephants. Then the king and his horsemen and foot guards placed themselves behind the elephants. Now the younger Antiochus with his armoured cavalry charged down from the hill on which they were stationed, attacking the Egyptian Aetolian cavalry which had been stationed to the left of its own phalanx and north of the river. Then, as he saw his son winning in the northern area, the elder Antiochus also charged the Ptolemaic forces south of the river. In both arenas the Syrian elephants played a large role in their victory, perhaps, some have suggested, creating such a Pan-ic in the Egyptian army that the grateful Syrians identified, or at least confirmed the place as the domain of the goat-footed god. At any rate, the Ptolemaic forces fled toward the coast in defeat.²⁶

Regardless of the difficulties in reconstructing the details of the battle, its result was clear enough. Seleucid Syria would dominant Palestine and the region of Banias, from that time until the revolt of the Maccabees.²⁷

THE ITUREANS

After the Battle of Panium, the Syrians controlled the territory from Damascus to the Mediterranean and all of Palestine.²⁸ But within a few decades their power began to recede. Challenges came from the Jews of Palestine, summoned to independence by the

Maccabees, the Arab Nabateans further to the south, and the Aramaic-speaking Itureans centred to the west of Hermon in the Beka'a Valley. Far to the northeast the Parthians were putting on their own pressure, and by the first century BC Tigranes, the king of Armenia, dominated much of northern Lebanon.²⁹

The Itureans, known for their military prowess, shared with the Jewish kings an interest in weakening the Seleucid hold on the area. They were also competitors at times, since they shared a common border. References to Itureans can be confusing in the ancient sources, since the term may describe either an ethnic entity or a political one. Recent archaeological work has identified distinctive pottery, now designated 'Iturean', over a wide area stretching from the Beka'a Valley across the Anti-Lebanon, and throughout the district surrounding Banias.³⁰ The finds are consistent with the theory that the Itureans were Aramaic tribes who had ranged over a large area for many centuries and who seemed originally to be nomadic or semi-nomadic for the most part.³¹ The Iturean principality, on the other hand, developed during Seleucid times under the guidance of a series of indigenous, but Hellenised, petty dynasts who ruled over only a part of the territories inhabited by ethnic Itureans.³² The situation was remarkably parallel to the relationship of the Jews, also a wide-ranging ethnic group, and the Hellenised Hasmonians, who took advantage of Seleucid weakness to form an independent principality whose boundaries were constantly changing.³³

The founder of the Iturean dynasty was Ptolemy, son of Mennaues (*ca.* 85–40BC).³⁴ His capital seems to have been at Chalcis, possibly modern Anjar, overlooking the Beka'a Valley in Lebanon.³⁵ Already, before he came to power, the Itureans had lost parts of northern Galilee to the Jewish king Aristobulus I.³⁶ According to Timagenes (first century BC), Aristobulus I conquered 'a portion of the Iturean nation, whom he joined to them [i.e. the Jews] by the bond of circumcision' (104–3BC). Josephus, who preserved Timagenes's account, does not say that an Iturean kingdom was conquered, but only that some of the territory inhabited by Itureans was taken over and united with Judaea, and that its inhabitants converted to Judaism.³⁷ At least some of these converts may have resided in the Banias area.

At the death of Antiochus XII (84BC), who had succeeded to the Seleucid throne *ca.* 97BC, the power vacuum created by Seleucid weakness reached a stage of crisis. Ptolemy, son of Mennaues apparently took advantage of the situation to make himself ruler of the Itureans, and perhaps other local tribes, and thus began his long reign of over forty years (*ca.* 85–40BC).³⁸ Initially there was a clash with the Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus (103–76BC) who seems to have grabbed the Huleh Valley and perhaps the region of Banias as well, areas that had been increasingly under local control as the Seleucid power base deteriorated.³⁹ As so often its lot in consequent history, the area around Banias represented a disputed frontier – this time between the Iturean territories and Jewish state. The presence of a major Iturean cult centre only four kilometres north of Banias at Senaim suggests, however, that the area remained more Iturean than Jewish. This centre served local settlements as the Itureans' main cult place, according to its excavator.⁴⁰ It featured an impressive temenos with architectural features and inscriptions

dating from the third and second centuries BC to the fourth century AD. Coins found in the excavation parallel these dates as well.⁴¹ Ptolemy's coins proclaim him to be 'ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ' ('high priest' – a title also held by his neighbour and rival Alexander Jannaeus). But his priesthood was probably exercised at Baalbek, near his capital, rather than in the mountains of Baniyas.⁴² Since ceramic finds at Baniyas indicate at least modest cultic activity there during this period as well, we might attribute such activity to the remnants of the old Canaanite population who still inhabited the area and the Greek settlers who worshipped at the cave of Baniyas, while the Itureans established their own cult centre a short distance away.

Relations between the two rulers, Alexander Jannaeus and Ptolemy, were generally cordial, particularly as both watched warily the Roman advance to the east.⁴³ Ptolemy even got directly involved in the dynastic struggles of the Hasmonean family. When the Roman general Pompey appeared on his mission to pacify the area and organise the series of petty Eastern states according to Roman interests, he killed the father of the Hasmonaean prince Mattathias Antigonos, who fled with his two sisters to Askelon. Ptolemy sent for them and gave Mattathias Antigonos protection within his own principality, even marrying Alexandra, one of the sisters. This action got him in trouble with Pompey, who undoubtedly saw it as provocative.⁴⁴ Pompey reduced Ptolemy's territories and forced him to pay a huge bribe for his life.⁴⁵ Apparently he did clarify the situation regarding control of Baniyas in Ptolemy's favour, however,⁴⁶ and allowed him to use the titles 'tetrarch' and 'high priest' but not 'king'. He was also allowed to continue to mint coins in his own name. These coins were thoroughly Hellenised – featuring portraits of Artemis, Hermes, the Dioscuri, Zeus and Athena.⁴⁷

Rome understandably took great interest in the Anti-Lebanon region, in particular its southeastern end, stretching from the Beka'a Valley to Damascus, and reaching southward to the Golan Heights, the headwaters of the Jordan, and the hills of Galilee. This was, in the words of Millar, 'an inner "frontier" [between Rome and the east] possibly more real than that which lay along the fringes of the steppe'.⁴⁸ It was populated, even high into the mountains, by people who valued their independence and could be a potential source of difficulties for the Romans. Indeed, some seventy years after the founding of the Roman province of Syria, in the early part of the first century, it was still necessary to conduct large military operations in the area against the rebellious mountaineers.⁴⁹

Under Ptolemy and his successor, Lysanias (40–34 BC), who bore the same titles as his father, the fortunes of his tetrarchy declined even further. Lysanias issued coins soon after his reign began, in the year in which he helped Antigonos take the Jewish throne. Antigonos's rival, Herod, was forced to flee the area. One of these coins depicted Nike (Victory), holding a wreath and palm branch.⁵⁰ However, Lysanias was then held culpable for his support of the Persians during their invasion of the Levant, and executed by Mark Anthony. His territory was divided into four parts – a considerable portion going to Cleopatra.⁵¹

Cleopatra leased the principality, presumably including the Paneion, to a man named Zenodorus, who was most likely also Lysanias's rightful heir.⁵² Though at least one inscription calls Zenodorus the son of Lysanias, extant coin portraits of the two show little resemblance and Josephus does not make such a connection. He may have been a more

distant relative. Coins of Chalcis minted during this period feature portraits of Cleopatra and Mark Antony.⁵³ However, shortly after the defeat and subsequent deaths of these two at Actium on 2 September 31 BC, an anonymous coin was minted depicting Nike – most likely a not-so-subtle celebration of this turn of events.⁵⁴ Upon Cleopatra's death, Zenodorus assumed the titles of his predecessors, as seen on his coins: 'ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΩΣ' ('tetrarch and high priest').⁵⁵ These coins feature portraits of Zenodorus on the reverse and Octavian on the obverse – clearly placing the Iturean principality within the sphere of Rome's new 'first citizen' (Fig. 8).

Included in Zenodorus's territory was Trachonitis, where a primitive and unruly population made its living in banditry, preying on the people of Damascus and, according to Strabo, 'robbing the merchants of Arabia Felix', who were forced to travel through their bailiwick.⁵⁶ Zenodorus encouraged the Trachonitines in this activity and took his share of the spoils. For this complicity the Romans deprived him of Trachonitis, and of Batanaea and Auranitis as well, and turned these territories over to his rival, Herod, who was by this time (23 BC)⁵⁷ secure in his place as Rome's client ruler over Palestine.⁵⁸ Herod's assignment from Rome was not only to suppress the brigands, but also to provide a system of consistent order and security to the whole area. Having long served as a battleground between the Ptolemies and Seleucids, the Golan, Trachonitis and Batanea were only sparsely settled prior to Herod's reign. These regions were subject to the disorder and violence characteristic of nomadic cultures unchecked by the discipline of strong external control. Under his patronage, however, they would now flourish.⁵⁹ Although Strabo attributes the pacification of the area to 'the good government established by the Romans' and 'the security established by the Roman soldiers that are kept in Syria', it is obvious that the major agent in this process was Herod himself.⁶⁰

When Zenodorus died in 20 BC his remaining lands were also bestowed upon Herod by the emperor Augustus.⁶¹ This was, Josephus says, a 'substantial piece of good fortune' for Herod, for Zenodorus's remaining territory was extensive. It lay between Trachonitis and Galilee 'and contained Ulatha and Paneas⁶² and the surrounding country'.⁶³ Ulatha designates the marshy lowland region known also as the Huleh⁶⁴ and Paneas refers to the nearby territory at higher elevation that derived its name from the cultic site at the cave of Pan, the Paneion of Polybius and the other Greeks. These territories were to remain more or less under the control of Herod's family for more than a century.⁶⁵

HEROD THE GREAT (37–4 BC)

Herod was one of the dominant personalities not only of the East, but also of the empire. Through skilful and diplomatic machinations, and considerable luck, he ingratiated himself to Augustus and gradually gained more and more power, territory, wealth and glory for himself. The territories north and east of Palestine came under his control, as we have seen, as a reward for pacifying the robber bands of Trachonitis and then as the heir to the territories of Zenodorus. The latter came to a tragic end in Antioch of Syria,

bleeding to death in consequence of a ruptured intestine.⁶⁶ Augustus, who happened to be in the East at the time, seems to have made the presentation of Zenodorus's domain to Herod personally. Thus Herod's triumph over his old rival was complete. By this time he was well into his second decade as king and enjoying Augustus's warm support. 'There was no one after Agrippa whom Caesar held in greater esteem than Herod,' says Josephus.⁶⁷

These were the circumstances under which Roman Baniyas enters history. Having escorted Augustus back to the sea, Herod returned home and 'erected to him a very beautiful temple of white stone in the territory of Zenodorus, near the place called Paneion'.⁶⁸ In the mountains here Josephus continues,

there is a beautiful cave, and below it the earth slopes steeply to a precipitous and inaccessible depth, which is filled with still water, while above it is a very high mountain. Below the cave rise the sources of the river Jordan. It was this most celebrated place that Herod further adorned the temple which he consecrated to Caesar.⁶⁹

Josephus provides a second description of the place in *The Jewish War*:

When, later on, through [Augustus] Caesar's bounty he received additional territory, Herod there too dedicated to him a temple of white marble near the sources of the Jordan, at a place called Paneion. At this spot a mountain rears its summit to an immense height aloft; at the base of the cliff is an opening into an overgrown cavern; within this, plunging down to an immeasurable depth, is a yawning chasm, enclosing a volume of still water, the bottom of which no sounding-line has been found long enough to reach. Outside and from beneath the cavern well up the springs from which, as some think, the Jordan takes its rise...⁷⁰

Josephus's account is, as usual, both illuminating and somewhat confusing, partially due to his proclivity toward colourful and exaggerated, rather than precise language. The Paneion, in the *Antiquities*, seems surely to refer to an entire district. In *The Jewish War* the term is applied quite specifically to the Pan cave itself and the spring before it. Josephus's insistence in both accounts that within the cave there is a very deep pool of still water is problematic to anyone who has visited the site, since today the floor of the cave seems quite solid and shows no evidence of such a limitless chasm. There is little or no water in the floor of the cave today, and the spring emits from the ground several metres down the hillside from the cave opening. Josephus says that the waters originated partially outside and partially from 'beneath the cavern'. Allowing for some exaggeration in the matter of depth, it is quite possible that the cave contained a pool that communicated in some way with the spring outside. When the American missionary William Thomson visited the site in 1843 he speculated that the water did in fact originate inside the cave and that the Romans had constructed an arched passageway, now covered with ruins and debris, through which the waters flowed.⁷¹ Modern excavations seem so far at least partially to confirm Thomson's theory.⁷² It is likely that the waters flowing from the cave via the arched passageway were captured in some sort of 'sacred pool' outside the cave as well, situated approximately where the springs burst forth today.⁷³ An illustrative parallel is the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem, created by waters that flowed from a cave (in this case, actually the famous 'Hezekiah's Tunnel'). Another is the cave spring, channel and collecting pool at Sataf.⁷⁴

Josephus's assertion that the temple was built of 'white marble' has been questioned. At the most, some decorative elements and facings may have been of marble. More likely the basic construction material was 'white' limestone, such as the elaborately carved architectural fragments that have been found in considerable numbers at the site, reused in later buildings.⁷⁵

We have no specific evidence that Josephus himself ever visited Baniyas, though it is hard to imagine that he had not done so, given its fame and the fact that he had served as governor of nearby Galilee. What he would have seen on such a visit was the imposing city of Caesarea Philippi built in Hellenistic style as it existed before and during the Jewish Revolt (64–70AD), almost a century after the construction of Herod's temple to Augustus. It is noteworthy that even so he refers to the cavern of Pan as 'overgrown'. Apparently, despite elaborate ornamentation of the area by a series of Herodian rulers, the cave itself was left in a natural state, as befitted a sanctuary of the god Pan. Josephus mentions no other buildings or installations of any kind at the Paneion, in this case a term referring specifically to the immediate area of the cave and spring. Nor does he allude to an active cult of Pan there. Since Pan grottos were traditionally left in a natural state, this omission by Josephus might lend credence to the possibility that in his time the area immediately around the grotto was still a relatively untouched site, albeit it a 'celebrated' one.⁷⁶

THE TEMPLE OF AUGUSTUS

Josephus's terse reference to the structure as a 'temple to Augustus' must be placed in the context of contemporary developments, particularly the rise of the cult of Augustus and Roma, and more particularly the Eastern manifestations of the cult. The Paneion temple could not, by Augustus's own decree, be dedicated to himself alone, but only to himself alongside the goddess Roma.⁷⁷ This duality is explicitly mentioned in the case of the temple Herod built at Caesarea Maritima,⁷⁸ and must be presumed in all references to 'Augustus temples' in the East during the emperor's lifetime. In this connection, a marble helmeted head, found among a cache of smashed statuary from the sanctuary at Baniyas, has been interpreted as possibly representing Roma.⁷⁹

Why did Herod build a temple in honour of Augustus 'near the Paneion'? Certainly this project was consistent with his general policy of giving 'flattering attention' to Caesar and other influential Romans. Josephus complains that Herod ran roughshod over the customs and sensitivities of his Jewish subjects and 'founded cities and erected temples – not in Jewish territory, for the Jews would not have put up with this, since we are forbidden such things, including the honouring of statues and sculptured forms in the manner of the Greeks – but these he built in foreign and surrounding territory'.⁸⁰

But the motives behind the construction of this temple extend beyond an act of obeisance to the imperial family.⁸¹ This project should also be seen as part of a strategy in the political and economic development of the area. As Urman suggests, the site provides an 'axis connecting Herod's territories in the northern sections of Western Palestine with

the new territories given him by Augustus in Batanaea and Trachonitis'. Thus the Paneion becomes both a symbolic and an actual keystone for a geographic and economic arch stretching from northern Transjordan to the Galilee.⁸² Archaeological surveys of the area, particularly the Golan to the south, indicate a dramatic increase in the number of settlements during this early period of Roman supremacy. The uncertainties and dangers created by the struggles between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, and the resulting lawlessness in the region, disappeared. Herod sponsored and supported the establishment of many new settlements by introducing an influx of immigrants, many of them Jewish. The area known as the Paneion, with its central location and reputation as a cult site, and now with its dramatic white Augusteum, was the ideal symbol for the changes wrought by Rome through its vassal Herod.⁸³

Herod's temple to Augustus at Baniyas was one of a series of three such structures that he caused to be erected, all well north of the concentration of Jewish cultural and religious conservatism in the province of Judaea, all during approximately the same period (*ca.* 25–10BC), and all with clearly political implications. Indeed, the cities that grew up around the three temples were all named after the Roman emperor: Caesarea Maritima, with its port of Sebastos; Samaria-Sebaste; and Caesarea Philippi or Paneas.⁸⁴ Since the Augusteum of Caesarea Maritima and that of Samaria-Sebaste have been thoroughly excavated and studied, it is useful to examine these, hoping by this means to learn something of the situation in Baniyas by analogy.

The most prominent of the Augustan temples was the centrepiece of Herod's magnificent window to the west, the port of Caesarea Maritima. Rivalling the famous ports of Alexandria and Carthage, Herod's artificial harbour on the Mediterranean was a marvel of engineering and an aesthetic *tour de force*. There, rising above a line of marble buildings tracing the harbour, 'was a mound on which there stood a temple of Caesar, visible a great way off to those sailing into the harbor, which had a statue of Rome and also one of Caesar'.⁸⁵ The statue of Augustus was modelled after the Olympian Zeus, and the goddess Roma was depicted as Hera of Argos, for, as we have seen, according to Suetonius, Augustus would only allow himself to be worshipped in combination with Roma. Fragments of this building have been excavated and are now on display at the site.⁸⁶

The second in the series of Augustus temples was erected in Samaria-Sebaste. Herod had completely rebuilt this ancient site, once the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and populated it with his veterans and other (pagan) supporters. He renamed the city Sebaste in honour of Caesar. 'Within it, at its centre, he consecrated a precinct of one and a half stades (in circumference), which was adorned in a variety of ways, and in it he erected a temple which in size and beauty was among the most renowned'.⁸⁷ The general character of this temple is well known.⁸⁸ It was built on a great platform with massive retaining walls at the highest point on the western end of the city's summit. In order to construct this platform, Herod's architects levelled old Israelite and Hellenistic buildings, as well as newer houses standing on the site. The temple was thus provided with a large forecourt (approximately 50 metres wide by 70 metres long). An altar stood in the centre of the southern side of the forecourt. Behind the altar were 24 steps leading up to a

colonnaded portico that was equal in width to the temple's facade. The Corinthian-style columns continued down the side of the temple on the east and west. Next to the temple stood an apsidal building with three rooms that apparently had some use in connection with the imperial cult.⁸⁹

Since their characteristics have up to now been far better known than the one in Baniyas, the temples at Caesarea and Sebaste may provide some idea of the form, style, placement and environment of the Baniyas temple. So may other temples dedicated to Augustus that were constructed throughout the empire during the same period (Fig.10),⁹⁰ and, to a lesser extent, other temples associated with Herod.⁹¹ Significant information may also be found via the series of coins minted in Baniyas over a period of more than three decades by Herod's son and heir in the region, Herod Philip II.⁹² The series is widely understood by numismatists to depict the very temple mentioned by Josephus (Fig.9). The temple always appears as the reverse on coins either featuring members of Augustus's family: Augustus, his wife Livia, his adopted son Tiberius, or else Philip himself. No better symbol than the Baniyas temple could be found to associate Philip with his father's favoured status in the imperial household, and to remind both his subjects and the Romans of his own loyalty as a client of the imperial family.

The same temple is obviously depicted on many of the coins of Philip, though they differ in some minor decorative details.⁹³ This consistency argues against the idea that the building depicted is a symbol only, that is that it does not represent the actual structure.⁹⁴ There is nothing particularly remarkable in its design; it is a simple tetrastyle building (that is having four columns in its facade), standing on a high platform with steps leading up, having capitals and bases consistent with, if not certainly identifiable as, the Corinthian style. An altar stood in front of the temple, in a prominent position at the foot of the stairs.⁹⁵ No cult object or statue appears between the central columns, as is often the case with coins depicting temples, but only the dates of issue, interspersed between the columns.⁹⁶ This omission may have been a gesture to the large Jewish community in Baniyas during Philip's reign, though the existence of the temple itself was certainly scandal enough from their point of view.

Herod's strategy in erecting this temple extended far beyond the symbolism represented by the structure itself. He was among the first of all provincial rulers in the empire to commit to the cult of Augustus. His Augustan temples, and the elaborate priesthood they required, may even have been influential in setting the course of imperial worship throughout the Eastern empire. While ostensibly the act of erecting these temples represented loyalty and commitment to Rome, it also furnished a basis for the social and political organisation of diverse populations such as those in Herod's kingdom. At the same time, because the new cult left the traditional local cults intact, it represented no threat to them. In fact, it symbolised an interest in protecting the local culture. In following this policy Herod was likely accepting the advice of his friend and counsellor Nicolaus of Damascus, a strong advocate of loyalty to Rome and a clever strategist.⁹⁷ The aristocracy thus created was, of course, solidly pagan and, as we shall see, since the Jewish population of the area seems to have had its own independent governmental system, the stage was set for the dramatic

conflicts between the ‘Syrians of Caesarea’ and the ‘Jews of Caesarea’ during the Jewish Revolt almost a century later.⁹⁸ The Jews would certainly have balked at repeating the loyalty oath required of those who attended the ceremonies at the Augusteum: ‘I swear by Zeus, Ge, Helios, all the gods and goddesses and the Sebastos himself to be loyal to Caesar Sebastos and his children and his descendants.’⁹⁹

The question of the location of the temple at Banias is not settled. The excavator of the Pan sanctuary complex believes it stood directly in front of the cave.¹⁰⁰ This conclusion is based primarily on an Augustan analogy in Rome, namely the Lupercal or Lycaenum described by Dionysius of Halicarnassas. The analogy is in fact an intriguing one. Dionysius of Halicarnassas claims that the ancient Arcadians established a Pan cult in archaic Rome at ‘a large cave under the hill overarched by a dense wood’ and that ‘deep springs issued from beneath the rocks, and the glen adjoining the cliffs was shaded by thick and lofty trees. In this place they raised an altar to the god and performed the traditional sacrifice, which the Romans have continued to offer up to this day in the month of February.’¹⁰¹ Here, according to legend, Romulus and Remus were suckled by the wolf. ‘The grove, to be sure, no longer remains,’ Dionysius says, ‘but the cave from which the spring flows is still pointed out, built up against the side of the Palatine hill on the road that leads to the Circus, and near it is a sacred precinct in which there is a statue commemorating the incident.’¹⁰² This site received some sort of architectural adornment – at least a dignified entrance, and is listed in the *Monumentum Ancyranum* (19.1) among the public buildings repaired by Augustus.

At first sight this passage appears to be valuable in establishing a point of contact between the Hellenistic and Roman worlds where the worship of Pan is concerned. Physically the sites were strikingly similar. Since earliest Banias was essentially a Roman city, not a Greek one, this story shows how a Hellenistic shrine to Pan could be quickly assimilated into a Roman context, the city of Rome itself purportedly having done precisely the same thing. The interesting similarities do not provide sufficient basis for locating the Herodian Augusteum in Banias in front of the cave of Pan, however. The Lupercal carried important dynastic meaning in Rome that did not exist in Banias. Augustus had strong reasons for placing his ‘mark’ on the ancient site in the centre of Rome, not because of its ties to the Arcadian Pan, but rather because of its mythic connection to Romulus and Remus. There is no obvious connection to be made between Pan and Augustus, and so the cave at Banias carried none of the political significance associated with the one in Rome. There seems to be little motivation for literally covering a time-honoured and celebrated local cult site with a cult to the Roman emperor. To do so would invite local hostility and imply a sort of suppression of the ancient cult of Pan, both of which would contradict the Roman and Herodian strategy. The Herodian dynasty not only refrained from suppressing the worship of Pan, it eventually even seems to have encouraged it.¹⁰³

Furthermore, the archaeological remains in front of the cave at Banias, while impressive, are not consistent with those of a temple facade. The excavations in front of the cave revealed two parallel walls running north–south, perpendicular to the rock scarp, standing approximately 10.5 metres apart. Almost nothing remains of the Eastern wall, but the

western one is described as 18 metres long, 2 metres thick, at least 4 metres high and built of *opus quadratum*, rubble and concrete faced with limestone ashlars. Incorporated into this wall were five alternating semi-circular and rectangular niches that had originally been lined with marble. These walls may be dated to the late first century BC, and thus might well have been commissioned by Herod.¹⁰⁴ But the archaeological evidence points to their belonging to some sort of monumental entrance to the cave, perhaps even a passageway open to the sky, along which various statues were placed in niches, rather than to a Roman-style temple with a raised podium approached by a staircase, such as that depicted on the coins of Baniyas. Such an entrance way, built on arches spanning the prodigious water flow coming from inside or in front of the cave, would have provided worshippers with a way of approaching the sacred pool inside the cave without having to wade through cold and turbulent waters. It would also have preserved the cave entrance in such a way that Josephus could describe it as ‘an overgrown cavern’.

Herod’s other temples to Augustus stood on high ground, visible from a great distance, and were each surrounded by an impressive temenos and, most likely, a complex of related structures. Finding a place to fit such an arrangement into the area in front of the Baniyas cave is awkward to say the least, as speculative artists’ conceptions of such an arrangement show.¹⁰⁵ Nor do Herod’s other temples replace or infringe on earlier cult sites as this one would seem to do if it stood in front of the Pan Cave.¹⁰⁶ A careful reading of Josephus reveals that he does not say that the temple stood in front of the cave, but rather simply at a spot ‘near the sources of the Jordan’.¹⁰⁷ We have already noted how his use of the word *Paneion* included more than simply the cult site itself. His language allows the possibility of locating the temple at a variety of sites within what became the city centre of Roman Baniyas, or even somewhere outside the city. Some of these sites seem more appropriate than the area in front of the cave, particularly in that they allow for a temple complex more consistent with those at Caesarea Maritima and Sebaste.

In cities possessing well-developed centres, one might expect the temple to the emperor to be constructed in the most prominent location possible. Indeed, given the political nature of the emperor cult, such a location would normally be absolutely necessary.¹⁰⁸ If a site for the temple were to be sought within what eventually became the city centre, one might suggest the area later occupied by a large Byzantine church some 250 metres southwest of the cave entrance. Tzaferis, the principal excavator of the church, believes it was built on the ruins of a Roman structure, possibly a Nymphaeum. It is even possible that the apse of the church is an *in situ* remnant of that structure. The church, described in detail below, was obviously built upon the ruins of Herodian-period buildings, parts of which were incorporated into the construction. Many of these reused stones exhibit elaborate decoration, and are very light coloured – thus possibly originally belonging to the ‘white’ Augusteum. The practice of building churches at the site of earlier temples is relatively common. The placement is appropriate and logical, since the building would have stood along the long ceremonial way (*Cardo Maximus*) that ran from the southern gate of the city to the cave of Pan, opening onto the *cardo* itself. Between the temple and the cave would have been the large ceremonial pool mentioned above, created by collecting

the spring waters flowing from inside and below the cave. This thesis, like that proposing to identify 'Herod's Palace' as actually the temple site (see below), remains to be tested by excavation.

But the situation in this case may be exceptional. Unlike the old cities of Asia Minor, for example, this was not a situation in which there was an existing civic leadership wishing to express its loyalty to the emperor. Rather, this Augusteum was the expression of the loyalty of a despotic local client king. Nor is there presently any evidence of a 'city centre' at this point in the history of the site; at most, the existence of a village near the cave and springs might be hypothesised. The remains of a temple that seem to fit Josephus's description have recently been found at Omrit, a site a short distance south of the city (Fig. 11). These may in fact be the remains of the famous Herodian Augusteum. The excavators found a podium on which a temple stood, rising 9 feet above the ancient street level. Inside this podium was an earlier one, belonging to an earlier temple – a 'perfectly drafted, mortarless structure made of ashlar – a signature of Herod's grand building projects'. This earlier temple measured 75 × 48 feet and was tetrastyle (i.e. had four columns on the front, as does the temple on the coins of Philip). Ceramic evidence suggests that the first temple at Omrit be dated to the last quarter of the first century BC, and that the second, larger temple built over it be dated to the late first or early second century. If this dating is sustained, it fits well with the chronology of the city developed below.¹⁰⁹

'HEROD'S PALACE' AT BANIAS

Herod's other temples to Augustus featured auxiliary structures adjacent or nearby the sanctuary itself. One structure of this type at Banias was studied by Netzer in 1977.¹¹⁰ He examined the remains of walls of a building that stood on the ridge above and 100 metres southwest of the cave. These walls were constructed in an *opus reticulatum* style so similar to walls in the Herodian palace at Jericho that Netzer concluded they were likely built at the same time (Fig. 6). He concluded that they are either 'remains of the temple which was built here in honour of Augustus, or remains of other buildings built here by Herod which Josephus did not mention at all'.¹¹¹ Excavations revealed, to the north of these walls, remains of a large hall (11 by 16 metres, at least) partially cut into the rock that seems to be related to the *opus reticulatum* walls. Holes chiselled into the rock proved that this building had once been decorated with marble. The site is dramatic, providing a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside and itself visible from miles away and thus reminiscent of the temple sites at Caesarea Maritima and Sebaste. Because they also might be interpreted as belonging to some palatial structure these remains are sometimes called 'Herod's Palace'. Further excavation is needed to settle the question of their identity. Until the matter is settled, this site remains a candidate for the location of the Augusteum as well.¹¹²

Whatever the original purpose of this building, it provides evidence that Herod's building programme at Banias, while centred on the Augusteum, was not limited to the

temple itself. A major centre for emperor worship would necessitate an accompanying bureaucracy, priests and other personnel, and thus we cannot think of some isolated shrine, standing alone and empty in the oak forest at Banias. And given the larger political purpose of the temple, it is quite likely that Banias was in some sense an administrative centre as well as a cult centre. In addition to the temple, we might expect the construction of buildings necessary for administering Herod's northern territories (including a 'palace'). Josephus's emphasis on the most impressive building, the temple itself, does not preclude the possibility of other structures as well, though whether we can describe the complex as a 'town' at this point remains problematic.

2 Herodian Baniās

HEROD PHILIP (4 BC–34 AD)

When Herod died, his extensive hegemony was divided between three of his sons: Archelaus, Antipas and Philip.¹ Historians ancient and modern have neglected Philip in favour of his dynamic father, his more famous brothers and his successors the two Agrippas (his nephew and grand-nephew). In this he suffered the fate that a mischievous history often assigns to those who quietly do the work assigned to them with skill and wisdom, in a time and place where relative tranquility prevails.² In this case, Philip's assignment from the Romans was to maintain peace and security along a very important 'frontier' between the East and West, while keeping the vital trade routes open and safe. From the Roman point of view Philip was an important man indeed. Nevertheless, biographical details are hard to come by. He was born *ca.* 26 BC, the son of Cleopatra the 'Jerusalemite'.³ Around 14 BC he was sent to Rome, where he received a good education and formed the same intimate relationships with the empire's ruling elite as had his more famous relatives. Josephus says that he had a brother ('Herod') and that he married Salome, the daughter of Herodias (the wife of his brother Antipas).⁴

Philip's territories consisted of that group of diverse geographical entities that constituted the northeastern part of Herod's kingdom. These territories, with populations equally diverse, had been hammered into a single administrative unit through the administrative skills of Herod I, serving as an agent of Roman policy.⁵ The temple complex at the Paneion was, as we have seen, the keystone of these diverse territories, both figuratively, through the presence of the Augusteum, and literally, through its geographical location. But this area was a relatively small part of Herod's kingdom. By separating it and placing it under the tetrarchy of Philip (except for Galilee, which went to his brother Antipas), the Romans recognised the area as a political entity. And in point of fact, though *de facto* no more than a subdivision of the province of Syria, and despite its ethnic diversity, Philip's 'kingdom' hung together with enough integrity to survive for another century.

It is no surprise then, that Philip established his capital at Banias. He could hardly have done otherwise.

THE FOUNDING OF 'CAESAREA PHILIPPI'

Dates on coins minted in the city of Banias during the second and third centuries AD, when compared to the regnal dates of the rulers depicted on them, suggest that the era of Philip's capital began in 3 BC, during the second year of his reign.⁶ Among the coins which Philip himself minted in the city is one (dated 'Year 34', that is 30/31 AD) which calls him 'ΚΤΙΣ[ΤΗΣ]', 'founder'. This title might be understood to refer to the founding of Banias, and to suggest that Philip created a city near the Paneion where none had existed before. Josephus had asserted, after all, that 'Philip built ['κτίζει', founded] Caesarea near the sources of the Jordan, in the district of Paneas'.⁷ At first glance, these facts would seem to furnish sufficient evidence that the city beside the fountain of the Jordan near the cave of Pan did not exist prior to the beginning of Philip's tetrarchy.

In fact, however, this evidence is not entirely conclusive. The title 'founder' was often used by rulers in reference to cities which they had enlarged, or reorganised, or embellished, but which already had long histories. So-called 'founder coins' showing the Roman emperor following a plough, the symbol of 'ground breaking', often appear more than once in the history of a city. Nero is called 'founder' on a coin of Ptolemais-Akko,⁸ for example, Jerusalem, was 'founded' in this sense by Hadrian, and named Aelia Capitolina, despite the fact that these cities had already existed for centuries.⁹ Caesarea Maritima was likewise 'founded' more than once,¹⁰ as were many other cities in the Roman Empire, though admittedly the practice became more common from the second century forward than during the Julio-Claudian period.

Josephus's testimony regarding the foundation of Banias, or 'Caesarea Philippi' is ambiguous to say the least. The quotation above is in the context of the accession of Tiberius to the throne, following the death of Augustus: 'On his accession, Herod (Antipas) and Philip continued to hold their tetrarchies and respectively founded cities: Philip built Caesarea near the sources of the Jordan, in the district of Paneas, and Julius in lower Gaulanitis; Herod built Tiberias in Galilee and a city which also took the name Julia, in Perea'.¹¹

The city of Tiberias was indeed apparently founded at that time. The situation with Banias is somewhat more complicated. Philip minted a number of coins featuring the Augusteum and carrying dates during the reign of Augustus, whose portrait prominently appears on them. These coins were certainly minted before the accession of Tiberius and the founding of the city of Tiberias.¹² If, as is usually assumed, these coins are attributed to the mint of Banias, the city must have existed prior to 14 AD. The city coins of Banias, minted from the mid-second century AD forward, use the same era as the coins of Philip. This would seem to suggest that the city considered its founding to have taken place in 3 BC. In a parallel passage in the *Antiquities*, Josephus remains ambiguous. Antipas fortified

Sepphoris to be the ornament of all Galilee, he says, while Philip ‘made improvements at Paneas’, and called the city Caesarea. In addition, he ‘raised the village of Bethsaida on Lake Gennesaritis to the status of city by adding residents and strengthening the fortifications. He named it after Julia, the emperor’s daughter.’¹³ This is a summary statement and not a chronologically precise one. It should not be taken to mean that work on these cities took place at the same time, though it does seem likely from this statement that all three existed prior to Tiberius’s accession. Sepphoris was ‘fortified’, Bethsaida was ‘raised in status’, and Paneas was ‘improved’ and named Caesarea. The naming of the city probably had already occurred at the beginning of Philip’s tetrarchy, and thus the era of Baniyas/Caesarea Philippi coincided with the era of Philip. Josephus’s imprecise statements may be understood to imply that on the accession of Tiberius, Philip ‘improved’ what he had ‘founded’ earlier.

Meshorer has suggested that Philip issued a series of three coins in 29/30AD, the purpose of which was to commemorate the founding of the city of Caesarea Philippi.¹⁴ The largest of these depicts Tiberius on the obverse and the inscription ‘under Philip the Tetrarch, Founder’ on the reverse. The middle denomination depicts Livia on the obverse, a hand holding ears of grain on the reverse, along with the inscription ‘fruitbearing’ (‘ΚΑΡΠΟΦΟΡΟΣ’). This may be a reference to the prosperity of the capital city and of the kingdom in general. The smallest denomination has a portrait of Philip himself on the obverse and the date on the reverse.¹⁵ If this attribution of purpose is correct, it further strengthens the theory that the city was founded in 3BC.¹⁶

Although Josephus gives no hint of a city existing near where Herod build his temple of ‘white marble’, neither does he mention the city of Caesarea Philippi when he describes the cave and spring as they appeared in his own day. Since a city certainly stood on the site in the latter case, there is at least the possibility that the same is true in the former case. Temples such as the one Herod had built near the Paneion required extensive staffing – priests, custodians etc. Civic councils generally administered them, and the presiding priest was an important figure in local society.¹⁷ In fact, the construction of temples connected with emperor worship was often preceded by the formation of local cults dedicated to the Caesars. At Samaria-Sebaste, the large population of pagan veterans formed a natural constituency for the Augusteum there. Nevertheless, in that city the presence of the temple and ‘the superficially religious paraphernalia of an imperial cult in no way interfered with the exercise of those native instincts which found their true expression in the solemnities of the Kore ritual or the abracadabra of a Simon Magus’.¹⁸ We might imagine a similar situation at Baniyas, where the venerable local traditions of Pan-worship could continue to exist among the resident populace and thrive side-by-side with the imperial cult.

In the immediate vicinity of Baniyas one would expect to find at least some of the descendants of the Greek military colonists who had settled there during the days of Seleucid control. Itureans, by now rather thoroughly Hellenised, and various other groups of Bedouin origins, would have been present as well, along with Syrians and Phoenicians of old local stock. Within a generation Baniyas had a large Jewish community, and we may presume that the forebears of this community were already in the area at the time of