

Tumuli (plural: tumulus)



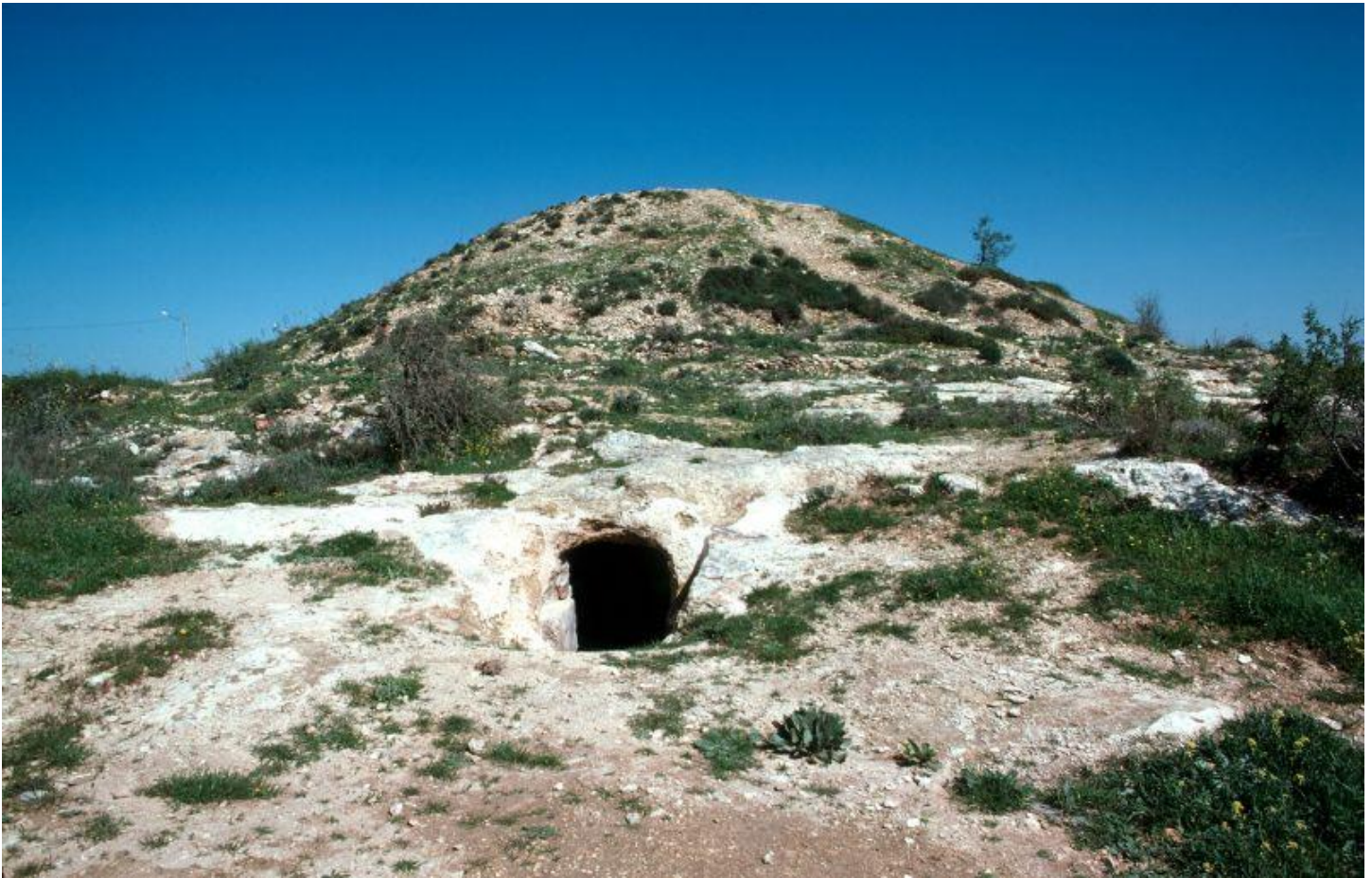
View of one of the 19 tumuli that are located in west Jerusalem. The tumuli vary in size from 12 to 15 ft. [3.7 to 4.6 m.] in height and from 15 to 50 ft. [3.7 to 15 m.] in diameter. (Carl Rasmussen's photos and comments.

Funeral Ceremonies for Israelite Kings (From a website)

From long ago Jerusalem was surrounded by fields and orchards but west of the city arose 20 mysterious earth and stone mounds. Albright excavated mound #2 in the 1920's and found them to contain Early Iron pot sherds which he attributed to 1100 BC. Later digs by Ruth Amiran determined the three mounds she exposed were of late kingdom of Judah times. So we read: "Hezekiah slept with his fathers and they buried him with the sons of David, and all of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death." [2.Chr. 32:33; Jeremiah 34:5] The `honor' paid by all of Judah and Jerusalem is mentioned after the king was buried, so it apparently does not refer to the funeral. Giving honor is a separate matter. On the death of king Asa he was buried, "in his own sepulcher ... A very great fire was made in his honour." [Ibid. 16:14] On the death of [<http://www.specialtyinterests.net/tutankhamun.html#cdata>]

Concerning Jehoram, "His people made no fire for him ..." [Ibid. 21:19]

These `mounds of burning' were protected in that people were not allowed to take stones from them for their own projects. When a king died, a month or so later, after the king was buried in the City of David, a ceremony took place for all the people (2.Chr. 32:33). There was no space for them in the narrow streets of Jerusalem. To avoid damaging agricultural plantations that ringed the city, they gathered on the barren hills outside the city. The entire ceremony took only a few hours. A platform was built around which the crowd stood in sorrow. Perhaps there were a few speeches, then a huge fire was ignited in memory of the deceased king. Afterward each participant took a basket of stones and dirt and piled the material within rings of stone walls in order to cover the place of burning, forming a large artificial memorial mound. (Jeremiah 34:5) **It is interesting that there are 19 (or 20) of these mounds. Between king David and Zedekiah, there were 21 kings.** [Gabrial Barkay, Mounds of Mystery in BAR, Vol. 29, May/June, 2003, p. 32-39f.]



Nineteen or twenty tumuli (tumulus [singular] = a mound of dirt) have been found in what are now the western portions of modern Jerusalem. Gabriel Barkay, drawing upon parallels from Cyprus, has argued that these mounds mark the locations of the places where ceremonial burnings (2 Chron 16:14; 21:19; 32:33; Jeremiah 34:5) were made to lament the death of the Judean kings and/or dignitaries. The tumuli date from the eleventh through the sixth centuries B.C.

Barkay has suggested, based upon the archaeological finds and parallels from Cyprus, that (straw) effigies of the deceased were ritually burned on a stone platform, and then a mound of dirt (tumulus) was deposited over the site by the participants in the ritual. Please see his recent article noted below.

Barkay, Gabriel. "Mounds of Mystery — Where the Kings of Judah Were Lamented." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, vol. 29, no. 3 (May/June, 2003): 32–39, 66, and 68.