

OFFSHORE ARTIFICIAL STRUCTURES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE ISRAEL AND SINAI MEDITERRANEAN BEACHES

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Israel Mediterranean shore forms a gentle curve from an almost easterly direction in north Sinai to an almost northerly direction in Israel. This shore forms the southeastern corner of the Levantine Basin which itself forms the extreme eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. The length of the Israel shoreline from Rosh Hanigra near the Lebanese border to northern Sinai in the south is about 230 km, while the Sinai coast from Rafah to Port Said (Fig. 1), is almost 200 km long. The coastline region consists largely of Quaternary carbonate cemented quartz sandstone, known by local name "kurkar". Recent faulting is responsible for the shape and, to a certain extent, for the morphology of large parts of the central coastline, which is characterized by kurkar cliffs (Neev *et al.*, 1973 & 1978). Wide sandy beaches are found in the southern parts, while an abraded rocky platforms occur mainly in the central and northern parts, where the beaches are narrow having kurkar cliffs at their backshore side.

Four different morphological sections can be found in the Israel Mediterranean shore. (Nir, 1982). These differ in their beach and inland morphology on one hand, and in their sedimentological properties on the other. The four different sections from north to south are:

1) Rosh Hanigra to Akko. A sedimentologically isolated region, bounded on both the south and north. Beach sediments are mostly of local calcareous material of marine origin. Akko promontory is the most northern limit of Nile derived sands and plays as the recent edge of the Nile sedimentary cell (Nir, 1980). 2) Haifa Bay. Wide sandy beaches, bounded on the north by the Akko promontory, and by the Carmel "nose" on the south. 3) Mount Carmel coastal plain, is sedimentologically somewhat isolated region with relatively narrow beaches and small kurkar cliffs. Sediments consist of both local and imported components. 4) The kurkar cliffs and sandy beaches from Caesarea to Rafah. Beaches of differing width having quite uniform petrographic components, mostly quartz grains originating from the Nile river and transported along the Sinai beaches to the Israeli beaches. Some of the present beach components are derivated from the abraded kurkar cliff.

Quartz sand dunes cover relatively large areas of the nearshore regions of the Coastal Plain of Israel. The majority of the dunes are located in the southern part, connected with the north Sinai enormous sand dune sea. The origin of their quartz grains, which make up the primary component of the beach, has been investigated mineralogically (Shukri and Philip, 1960; Pomerancblum, 1966; and Nir, 1973 & 1982). Certain conclusions can be drawn: 1) Nile-derived sediments are transported along the beaches of the Nile Delta, Sinai and Israel by waves and wave generated longshore currents and the counterclockwise East Mediterranean current. 2) A relatively minor amount of sandy sediments are also introduced by local rivers (wadis), which are active only during winter floods.



Fig. 2a. Steep kurkar cliff south of Netanya. The beaches are narrow, but show maximum development in this photo.



Fig. 2b. Kurkar cliff near Hadera. Most of the cliff is composed of soft friable red loam ("Hamra") and sand. Landslides are typical on these cliffs, causing talus of huge blocks at their base.

In the cliff regions, beaches are very narrow, reaching a width of only 10-20 m and much less during winter time (Fig. 2a). The sandy beaches are relatively wide in regions where kurkar cliffs are absent, in some parts reaching widths of 60-80 meters.

Large quantities of beach-sand were quarried until 1964, at an estimated annual rate some 10 to 20 times larger than the naturally occurring annual sand replenishment. This quarrying produced a sand deficit along many beaches, causing an accelerated erosion of the beaches and nearby cliffs.

SEDIMENT TRANSPORT ALONG THE BEACHES

Artificial constructions such as groins, breakwaters, barges, etc. found along the Sinai and Israeli shores trap some of the longshore sand drift, causing damage downstream and sometimes enabling us to ascertain the qualitative and even quantitative net sand drift at a certain point.

These shores on a whole belong to the large sedimentary cell which starts at the two Nile Delta outlets at Rosetta and Damietta, and extends along the Sinai shores as far north as Akko in Israel (Nir, 1980). Zenkovich (1971) shows a very clear easterly directed sediment transport along most of the Nile Delta beaches.

Two channels ("Bughaz") were dug in the outer Bardawil bar in order to maintain its water connection with the open sea. Groins were constructed to keep the channels from silting up. As a result, sand accumulated on the western side of these groins and Inman and Harris (1970) estimated the yearly net easterly sand transport at the western outlet (Boughaz I) to be on the order of 300-800,000 m³/year.

The El Kals temporary harbour and sand mining close and west of El Arish caused severe erosion to nearby dunes and summer houses respectively (Fig. 3).

Wadi El Arish drains practically all of northern and central Sinai. The beach near the outlet of this ephemeral wadi is straight and usually conforms with the regular shoreline. In a very short period of time, at the end of February 1975, a voluminous flood transported several hundred million cubic meters of water and sediment to the sea. These clastic sediments formed a large new delta more than 400 m offshore with a large submarine extension. This new delta partially dammed the sand drift, resulting in a sediment accumulation on the delta's western flank, on the one hand and a very effective abrasion on the down-drift shores east of the outlet on the other (Fig. 4). The sediments of this delta were transported eastwards quite quickly and the delta changed shape, reaching an almost straight and regular shoreline (Fig. 5).

All the obstacles east of El Arish up to Rafah show a clear net easterly drift, while those northwards almost up to Tel Aviv show a northern drift. These obstacles are: a barge east of El Arish (Fig. 6), two groins and the wreck between them in Gaza Harbour (Fig. 7), a harbour with two groins on its southern and northern sides at Ziqim (Fig. 8), and the huge Ashdod Harbour, whose main breakwater reaches 18 m water depth. This last structure impedes sand transport and accumulates sand in large

quantities in the offshore at relatively great depths (Dornhelm, 1972; Kran, 1980; and Finkelstein, 1981).



Fig. 3. Summer houses at El Arish, N. Sinai. The collapse was a result of the sand deficit caused by quarrying of beach sand ("Zifzif") nearby.



Fig. 4. Roots of palm groves were exposed to wave action east of El Arish as a result of the provisional damming of the regular eastward sand transport by the delta of Wadi El Arish in Feb. 1975.

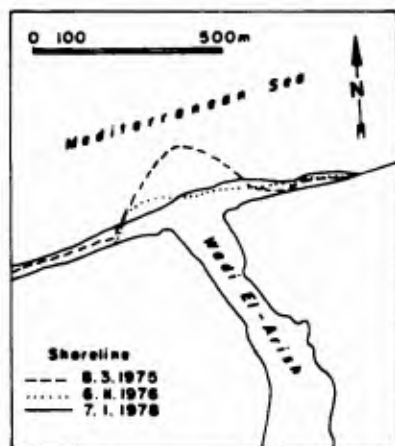


Fig. 5. Schematic map of Wadi El-Arish Delta, drawn from aerial photographs, showing its different development and disappearing stages.

Dornhelm (1972), and Kran (1980) who reanalysed Dornhelm's charts show that the Ashdod Harbour's main breakwater interrupted about 80% of the annual northward transport of sand. Finkelstein (1981) also shows a



Fig. 6. A barge at N. Sinai beach east of El Arish accumulates sand on its western side, thus clearly illustrating the easterly sand transport.

tremendous offshore sand accumulation during 13 years which reaches perhaps 4 million cubic meters at the main breakwater and westwards. Northwards he shows accumulation close to the lee breakwater and a large area of erosion farther north. By and large this agrees with the main trend of northerly drift. He also estimated the net annual northerly transport at Ashdod to be on the order of 560,000 m³, which is a very high value.



Fig. 7a. Aerial photo showing Gaza Harbour, which is made of two groins, about 120 m long and about 500 m apart.

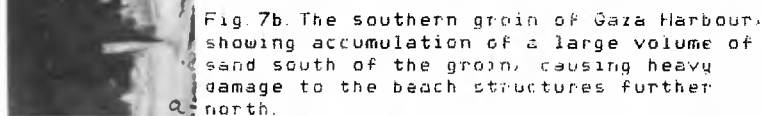


Fig. 7b. The southern groin of Gaza Harbour, showing accumulation of a large volume of sand south of the groin, causing heavy damage to the beach structures further north.



Fig. 8. A map of Ziqim Harbour, drawn from an aerial photograph. Note the extreme widening of the beaches to the north. These are now almost totally exposed of their sand cover gearround. Prior to harbour construction beaches to the north had normal sand quantities and normal widths even during severe winter storms.

The old site of Yavneh Yam show northerly drift in the form of a large retreat of the seashore which has caused damage to the old site (Fig. 9).

Northwards from [e] Aviv the net transport decreases significantly, and at the Carmel Head transport is to the east and to the south, and the region between here and Atlit is to a certain extent isolated.



Fig. 9. The beach north of Tel Yavneh-Yam ("Minnet Rubin"), suffers from heavy abrasion due to the sand deficit and the protruding promontory of the Tel. Beaches here have withdrawn about 50 m during the last 50 years. In Early British Mandatory topographic maps almost no promontory was shown here.

Emery and Neev (1960), assumed a northerly sand transport for the southern Israel beaches and a southerly one for the central and northern beaches. A northerly directed offshore current and sediment transport of mostly fine grained sediments was also suggested. This transport is responsible for most of the present influx of fine sand to Haifa Bay.

On the basis of theoretical studies Migniot (1974), Sauzy *et al.*, (1974) and Manoujjan and Migniot (1975) show that the annual resultant sediment transport is always directed to the north and reaches about 400,000 m³ at Gaza, 215,000 m³ at Ashdod, 100-150,000 m³ at Hadera and only 80,000 m³ at Atlit.

Goldsmith and Golik (1978) summarized the Israel Mediterranean wave climate and constructed a longshore sediment transport model for these beaches. In general they support the conclusions of the earlier studies regarding sediment transport.

OFFSHORE STRUCTURES OF THE ISRAEL MEDITERRANEAN SHORELINE

Prior to 1960 with the exception of a few ancient harbour sites such as Akko, Haifa, Caesarea and Yaffo (Jaffa), the Israel Mediterranean shore did not have any large offshore structures (Kravitsky, 1966).

The main stage of offshore construction for recreational purposes took place in the late sixties and the early seventies when 25 structures (15 breakwaters and 10 groins) were built along the beaches from Gaza in the south to Akhziv in the north (Fig. 1). The environmental impact of these structures were studied in the field, by successive aerial photos, and by bathymetric and topographic maps of the sites and their vicinity. They were also studied with regard to their engineering characteristics (Fried, 1975 & 1976; Tauman, 1975 & 1976). Vajda (1975) investigated their sedimentological development in the laboratory in order to limit as much as possible their erosional effect. Nir (1976) gives a

detailed description of the different offshore structures with their sedimentological characteristics and their relationships to the nearby beaches. Spar (1976), and Sofer and Sass (1982) studied in detail the sedimentology of the Netanya twin breakwaters.

Most of the structures have developed a tombolo at their "shaded" landward side. These tombolos typically have a trapezoidal shape (Figs. 10 & 11). They reach a mature stage (at which significant size changes cease) about 5 years after the end of construction (Fig. 12). The sand accumulated in these tombolos comes mostly from the nearby beaches and shallow sea. In most cases these beaches have therefore suffered severe erosion during the first 3-4 years after the construction, while in some cases this erosion even continues beyond maturity.

Many of the detached breakwaters and groins were built in very populated areas in order to increase the amount of beachfront and to calm the relatively rough seas occurring during the bathing season in July and August. These problems were partially solved by the tombolo which was formed in the shaded area of the breakwater and by the attendant of areas of quiet water.

These breakwaters were mostly constructed about 200 m offshore of the original shoreline, mostly on a submarine exposed rocky strip in about 3-4 m water depth. This rocky strip (Fig. 13) was chosen for the practical economic purpose of reducing foundation costs. As their length almost equals their distance offshore, huge tombolos started to grow out from shore which later joined with the breakwater. Figure 12 and the following table show the aerial development with time of these tombolos, following their completion. Most of these tombolos reached almost one half of their final size within a period of one or two years. There is a sharp decrease in the rate of expansion of the sand area in the second year after the end of the construction.

Site	Time (years) for tombolo volume to go from		Total years
	0-50%	50-100%	
Carmel Beach	3.23	2.60	5.83
Netanya (south)	1.06	3.52	4.58
Netanya (north)	1.56	2.10	3.66
Tel Aviv 1	1.50	4.07	5.57
Tel Aviv 2	3.15	2.66	5.81

Table 1. Time needed (yrs) for tombolo volume to develop from 0-50% and from 50-100%. The averages show that the tombolo reaches its half volume in about two years and that it takes another 3 years to reach the mature stage.

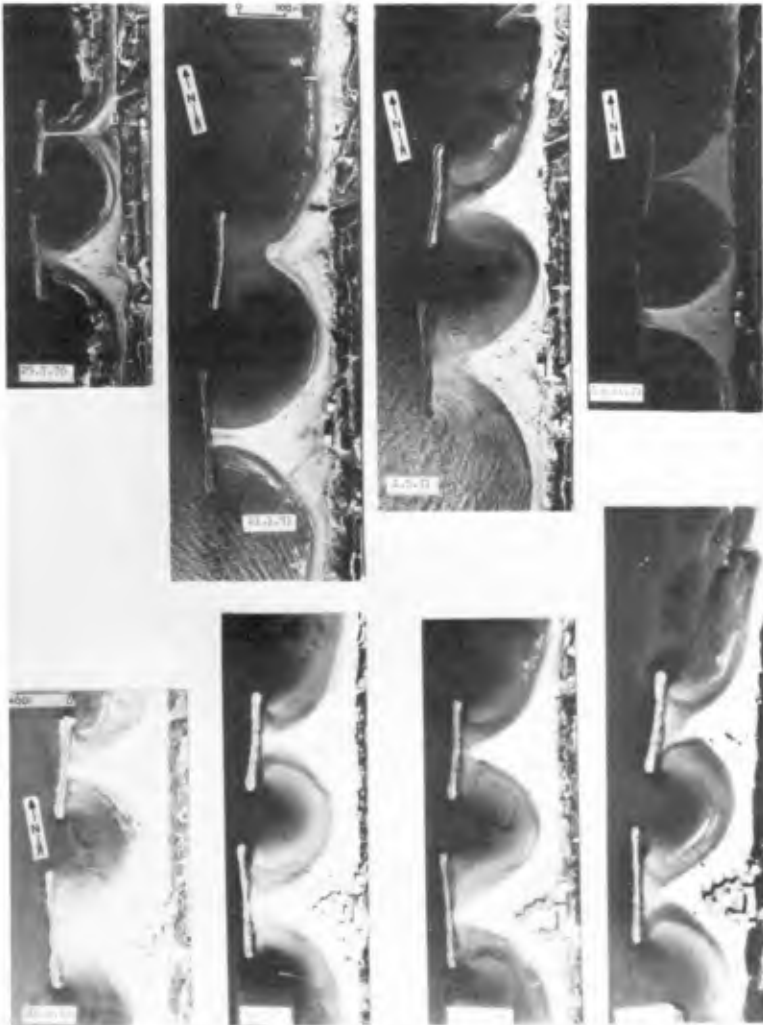


Fig. 10. The twelve year history of the twin tombolos off the Netanya beaches. The tombolos reached their first maximal stage at the end of 1973, and since then they show seasonal fluctuations. Winter storms usually open a channel between the tombolo and the breakwater.

This slowing in sand accumulation is primarily because the nearby beaches, which are the main suppliers of sand to the tombolos, have already suffered an enormous sand deficit due to sand capture by the newly built structure, and also because of the increase in water depth around the tombolo. In sites where two structures were built, the tombolo of the most recently built structure reached its 50% sand volume in a much longer time than the first structure. In Netanya, this time difference is about 50% while in Tel Aviv it required more than twice as long to reach the 50% sand volume stage, this probably due to the general deficit of sand in the Tel Aviv beaches. The Netanya case on the other hand, at the second stage of its development, shows faster accumulation at the northern structure which is the younger, with probably preferred southerly directed longshore transport.

Most tombolos reached their mature size between the 5th and the 6th year after construction. Thereafter the only changes are seasonal with maximum tombolo size at the end of summer, or more precisely just before the first storm at the end of autumn. Some decrease in size occurs during winter and early spring (Fig. 10). This fits very well with the regular winter to summer variations in beach width. In his study of the shallow Ma'agan Mikhael beach Eitam (1975) also found that the accretion period extends over the autumn.

Aerial photographs of the different sites where one or more detached breakwaters were constructed, taken before, during, and after construction, show the different stages of tombolo growth on the one hand and the fast erosion of the nearby beaches on the other (Fig. 15). At the Carmel Beach site the nearby beaches were almost totally stripped of their sands. A large beach area, just next to and south of the tombolo, disappeared 12 years ago and has not been rebuilt (Fig. 14). The Carmel Beach structure was chosen to represent a single breakwater tombolo while the Netanya structures typify twin tombolos. Fig. 10 illustrates the different stages of tombolo growth as they attain their mature stage in 4-5 years time.

In Netanya tombolos began to grow during the construction activities, and about 70,000 m³ of sand were attracted from the nearby beaches and shallow sea in 3-4 years time. Prior to construction, Netanya's beaches were already in very bad shape and waves were reaching the base of the steep kurkar cliffs. This was among other morphological and stratigraphic reasons due to the enormous quantities of sand being quarried all along Israel's Mediterranean beaches up to 1964; for example, Emery (1963) estimated that about 1/3 of the beach sand reserves had by that time already been quarried. Following formation of these tombolos, abrasion in the

nearby kurkar cliffs was accelerated, so that measures had to be taken to protect the cliff. Recently Ron (1982) has proved enormous cliff retreat in the region of Netanya during the last 35 years.

Table 2 summarizes the sand quantities that accumulated in the aerial parts of the seven first built tombolos at the different sites. These account for about 270,000 m³ of sand. It is assumed that about the same quantity or more of sand was deposited underwater in the vicinity of the tombolos. Therefore, altogether these offshore structures (with the exception of the huge quantity deposited near Ashdod Harbour), captured about 600,000 m³ of sand in a period of 4-5 years. This volume is much larger than the actual sand available from the annual import from the Sinai beaches. The volume of sand at each separate site was calculated using the following formula (derived by John K. Hall):

- volume of sand $V = dc(2a+b)/3$; where:
 $2a$ - is the length (in m) of the tombolo's offshore edge (taken parallel to the shoreline).
 b - is 1/2 of the length of the base of tombolo (in m).
 c - is the distance between the base and the seaward edge of the tombolo (in m).
 d - water depth (m) at the seaside edge of tombolo.

Site	Quantity of accumulated sand (in m ³)
Nahariyya	20,000*
Shavey Zion	5,000-18,000
Carmel Beach	55,000
Netanya (north)	34,000
Netanya (south)	38,000
Tel Baruch	15,000
Tel Aviv 1	45,000
Tel Aviv 2	20,000
Bat Yam	26,000
Total	258,000-271,000 m ³

Table 2. Sand quantities which were accumulated at the different offshore structures along the Mediterranean coasts of Israel (including only the subaerial sand bodies within the tombolos).

* Some sand was quarried from the tombolo.

Figures 10, 12 and 14 show the developments that occurred around the twin detached breakwaters in Netanya. The different shorelines were drawn from aerial photos of the site, taken at various time intervals. Comparison between the areas of the successive tombolos and the quantities of accumulated sand shows that one of the main



Fig. 11. The different stages of tombolo development for the Carmel beach structure, from the very early stages of construction (11a), to the formation of an enormous tombolo (11d) some 5 years later.

factors affecting the sand quantity is the ratio between the length of the breakwater and its distance from the original shoreline. The smaller the ratio - the smaller the tombolo that develops.

Empirical study shows that there is a direct relationship between a structure's distance from shore and its length (or its projection onto the shoreline): the larger this ratio the smaller the sand volume accumulated in the tombolo. Accretion is very little, or does not occur at all, if this ratio has a value of 2 or more (Fig. 16). This value is somewhat smaller than that of Inman and Frautschy (1966), who studied the Californian beaches showing that non-depositional conditions prevail only when this ratio reaches a value of 3: "pronounced accretion does not occur if the structure is situated offshore a distance equal to or greater than 3 to 6 times the length of the detached breakwater". Although there are no structures in Israel with these high ratios, it is apparent that no accretion occurs here if the ratio is smaller.

The area of the mature tombolo ranges between 40 and 75% of the rectangular area between the breakwater and the original shoreline. Beach area for that particular section of shoreline has been increased, but on the other hand the protected bathing area has been commensurately decreased; among other reasons are dead algae accumulations at the protected areas. The regions of turbulent water around the edges of the breakwater are dangerous for bathers and present another major problem resulting from the construction.

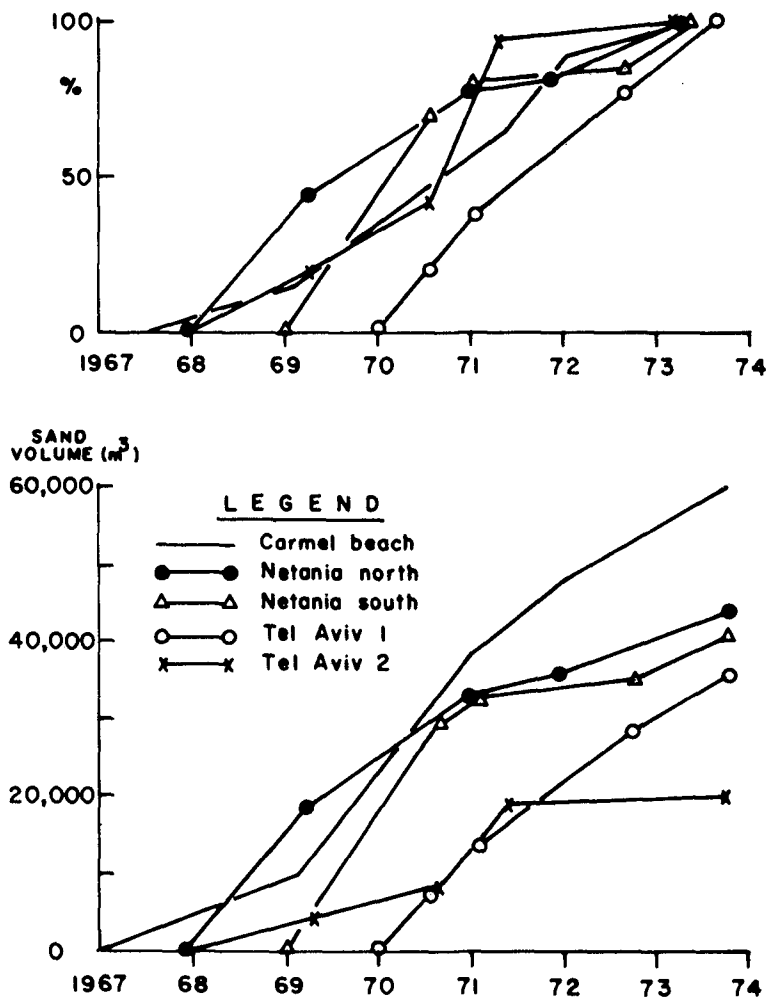


Fig. 12. Tombolo development at the different sites: Carmel beach, Netanya and Tel Aviv. The upper graph shows the cumulative percentage of the tombolo's area while the lower one shows cumulative sand volume both show the relatively quick sand accumulation at the early life stages of the structures.



Fig. 13. Central Israel - underwater relicts of kurkar strata showing the clear outlines of two submerged ridges and a wadi (dry creek) between them.



Fig. 15. Severe beach erosion near offshore structures. Fig. 15a. Heavy destruction on the beaches south of Tel Baruch structure (16/6/80). Fig. 15b. Shore buildings north of the Gaza Harbour groins have suffered heavy damage. Small nearshore structures parallel to the beach were erected here to prevent further collapses. Fig. 15c. Exposed beach basement at Bat Yam, after a severe storm (19/4/71). Damage was greater here because marine construction on a half closed pool in shallow water caused buildup of water during storms. Fig. 15d. Small bay north of King Herod's ancient harbour in Caesarea. While in operation this now submerged harbour caused heavy damage to the Roman aquaduct and therefore measures should have been taken to protect the aquaduct whose broken remnants appear in the foreground.

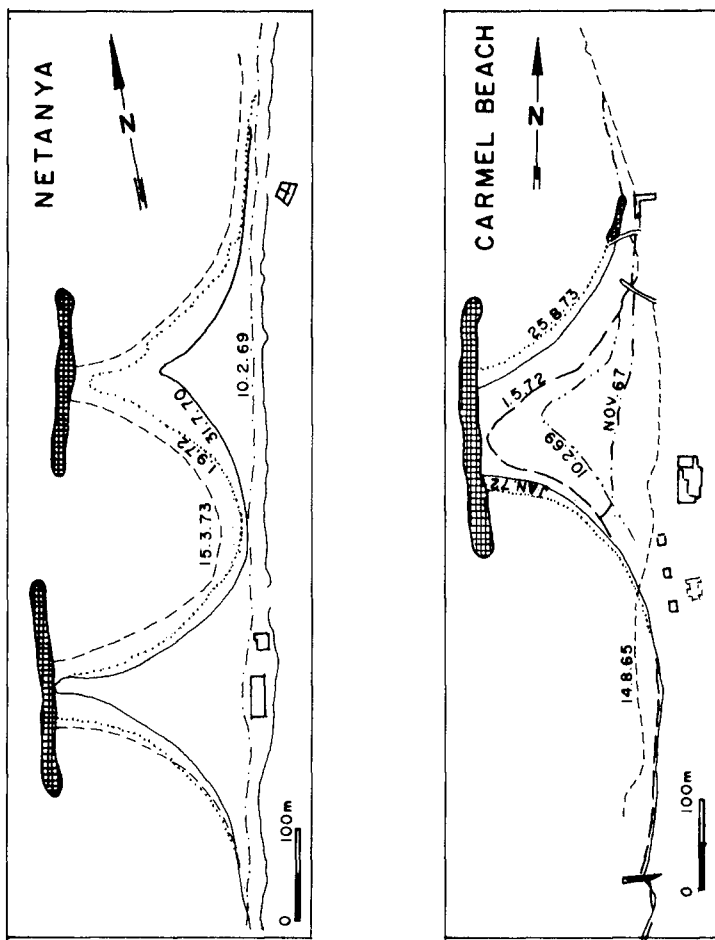


Fig. 14a. A map of Netanya's twin breakwaters and tombolos, showing the "step by step" growth of the twin tombolos and the formation in the internal of a new small bay between them. In the first few years the cliff at the backshore by the space between the tombolos suffered serious abrasion.

Fig. 14b. Map of Carmel Beach tombolo development from its early stages to maturity. Note the original shoreline of August 1965, south of the tombolo, which shows the missing beach which has not since recovered.

Site	Distance from shore (m)	Length of breakwater (m)	Distance ----- Length
Nahariyya	70	180	0.38
Carmel Beach	200	280	0.71
Netanya (north)	200	207	0.97
Netanya (south)	216	240	0.90
Tel Baruch	100	200	0.50
Tel Aviv 1	200	310	0.64
Tel Aviv 2	200	240	0.83

Table 3. Dimensions, distance to length ratio, and the average sand layer thickness for the different sites.

The data given in Table 3 above was used to determine the relationship between the distance to the length ratio and the average tombolo sand layer thickness. The graph in Fig. 16 shows that the sand layer equals zero (i.e. that there is no sand accumulation at all) when the distance to length ratio is somewhat larger than 2.

The equation for the least squares straight line through the data in Fig. 16 is:

$$Y = 1.786 - 0.809x$$

where: Y is the average sand layer thickness of the tombolo (in m), and
X is the distance to length ratio.

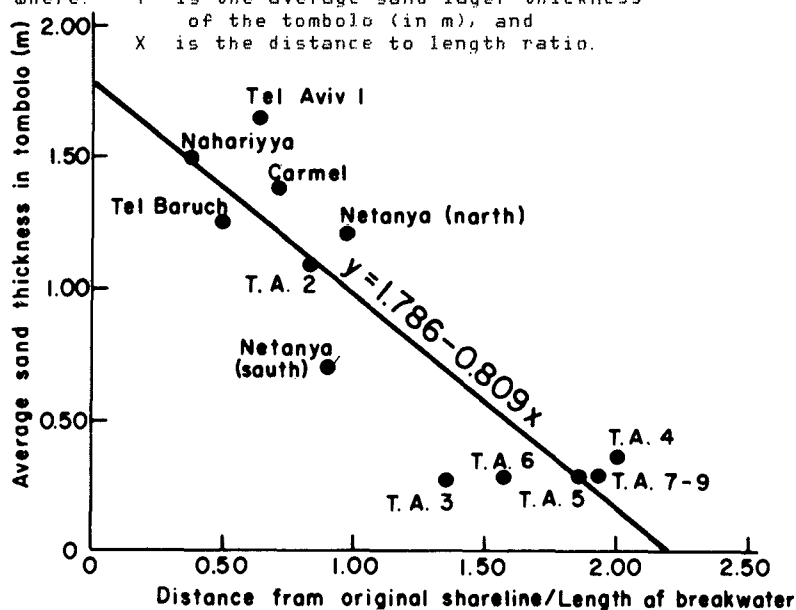


Fig. 16. A graph showing the relationship between length of the breakwater, its distance from the original shoreline and sand accumulation in the different tombolos.

This empirical formula is supported by the latest measurements of the size and quantity of sand accumulated in the tombolos developed in the more recently built breakwaters (Nos. 3-9) in Tel Aviv. These new breakwaters' dimensions and distance offshore came from laboratory model studies by Vajda (1975). The ratio of distance from shore to breakwater length was enlarged to 1.85 and more, with the result that tombolo sizes were much smaller than the ones developed on the original structures (Fig. 17). Extrapolating the sand quantities accumulated in the modeled structures, excellent agreement was found with the above formula. It should be noted that the model studies hypothesized an unlimited sand supply to the sites, which perhaps is not the case at present in the Tel Aviv beaches.

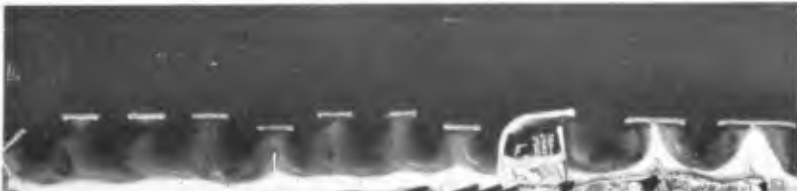


Fig. 17. Offshore structures at the Tel Aviv beaches. The northern (right) are long and relatively close to the shoreline, so that huge tombolos developed. The chain of 7 breakwaters south of the marina (left) have shorter lengths than the northern ones, and are found at somewhat larger distances offshore so that the sand accumulation in their "shadows" is much smaller.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A very large number of detached breakwaters, groins, harbours and other marine structures were constructed along the Israeli Mediterranean shore during the late sixties and up to the mid-seventies.

Sand accumulated rapidly in the "shaded" areas and up-current, causing heavy damage to the nearby and downcurrent beaches. This erosional sand deficit was in addition to the large deficit caused by the heavy mining of sand for construction purposes up to 1964.

As most of the detached breakwaters were constructed relatively close to the shoreline, large tombolos have developed. It was found here that accretion is very small or negligible when the distance of the breakwater from the original shoreline is more than twice the breakwater length.

The southern beaches provide an excellent demonstration of downcurrent erosion; beaches north of structures were heavily damaged, with their sand cover almost totally removed and the backshore cliff starting to collapse (Fig. 8).

As there was almost no distinctive sand accumulation south of the main breakwater of Ashdod harbour, it appeared as if this gigantic structure did not interfere with the longshore sand transport. Recently Finkelstein (1981) showed that huge amounts of sand are being accumulated next to and off the deep parts of the main breakwater. This accumulation is equal to the transport of many years which is removed from the cycle, and the beaches north of Ashdod thereby suffer from increased erosion.

Due to the heavy damage and other environmental problems that these structures create, measures should be taken to minimize downcurrent erosion as much as possible, mainly by a continuing artificial replenishment to the affected beaches. On the other hand, if beach conditions are bad then offshore structures should be either improved or not permitted.

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