

HACKSILBER TO COINAGE:

NEW INSIGHTS
INTO THE
MONETARY HISTORY
OF THE
NEAR EAST AND GREECE

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THE SILVER HOARD FROM TEL DOR

EPHRAIM STERN

HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

DURING THE MID-11TH CENTURY BCE, or a bit earlier, the Sikil town of Dor was destroyed. Shortly afterwards a new Phoenician town, built in its place, was overthrown by the Israelites under David (Raban 1987, 118-126, fig. 1). A hoard of silver was found in a space between two large buildings, part of the south harbor complex, which functioned as the town's main harbor during this period; these harbor remains are among the oldest known throughout the Mediterranean Sea. During underwater excavations in the harbor, A. Raban (1987, 126) concluded "... the harbor installations are the first in Palestine that can be definitely attributed to one of the Sea Peoples." He also noted their resemblance to harbor installations at the Minoan site of Mallia in Crete and at Kition in Cyprus.

The silver was found in a clay jug in excavations in Area D2 (fig. 1.1) supervised by Ayelet Gilboa. It had been inserted into a pit excavated in the floor of a structure dating to the late 11th or early 10th century BCE (pl. 1.1). For several years we had been excavating parts of the structures belonging to the southern harbor. Currently, we are excavating structures dated to the late 11th and early 10th centuries BCE which belonged to the Phoenicians and early Israelites. In the near future we hope to reach those levels of the harbor structures dating to the time of the Sea Peoples and perhaps even earlier in the Late Bronze Age.

The jug containing the hoard was discovered in a pit close to the foundations of one of these buildings. Although it had been first discovered at the end of the 1995 season, we left it *in situ* (having no idea of its contents!), until we had reached the associated floor and uncovered the entire locus during the next season. It then became clear that the jug had been hidden in a pit penetrating beneath floor level, its owner perhaps anticipating an impending catastrophe. Indeed, he or she appears to have acted with foresight, but was clearly unable to return to retrieve the contents of the hoard.

The stratigraphic position of the pit indicates association with a structure dating to the late 11th or early 10th century BCE. In one of these buildings we uncovered a beautiful assemblage of pottery belonging to the Phoenician Bichrome Ware family, typical of the early stages of Phoenician material culture. These vessels were probably produced in Tyre or Sidon. From these production centers, the ware was distributed southward: to the Galilee and the northern coast of Palestine, where it constitutes the main decorated pottery group.

Sherds of imported Cypriot Ware groups were uncovered upon the same floors, both in Area D2 and elsewhere. A few sherds of Greek vessels were also found, the earliest imported Greek pottery found so far in Palestine. Both groups of sherds strengthen the dating of the Phoenician vessels. The Greek vessels are from Euboea, the main trading center in central Greece at the time. They provide proof that maritime trade with the West had already been restored at this point. Prior to this discovery, it had been thought that maritime trade did not resume until a much later date.

The late 11th century renewal of trade relations with the West gained momentum during the 10th century BCE. The recent find of a large Euboean bowl at Tel Hadar, located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (Kochavi 1993, 26-7), furnishes further evidence of this. The bowl was found in a huge storage building destroyed at the end of the 11th

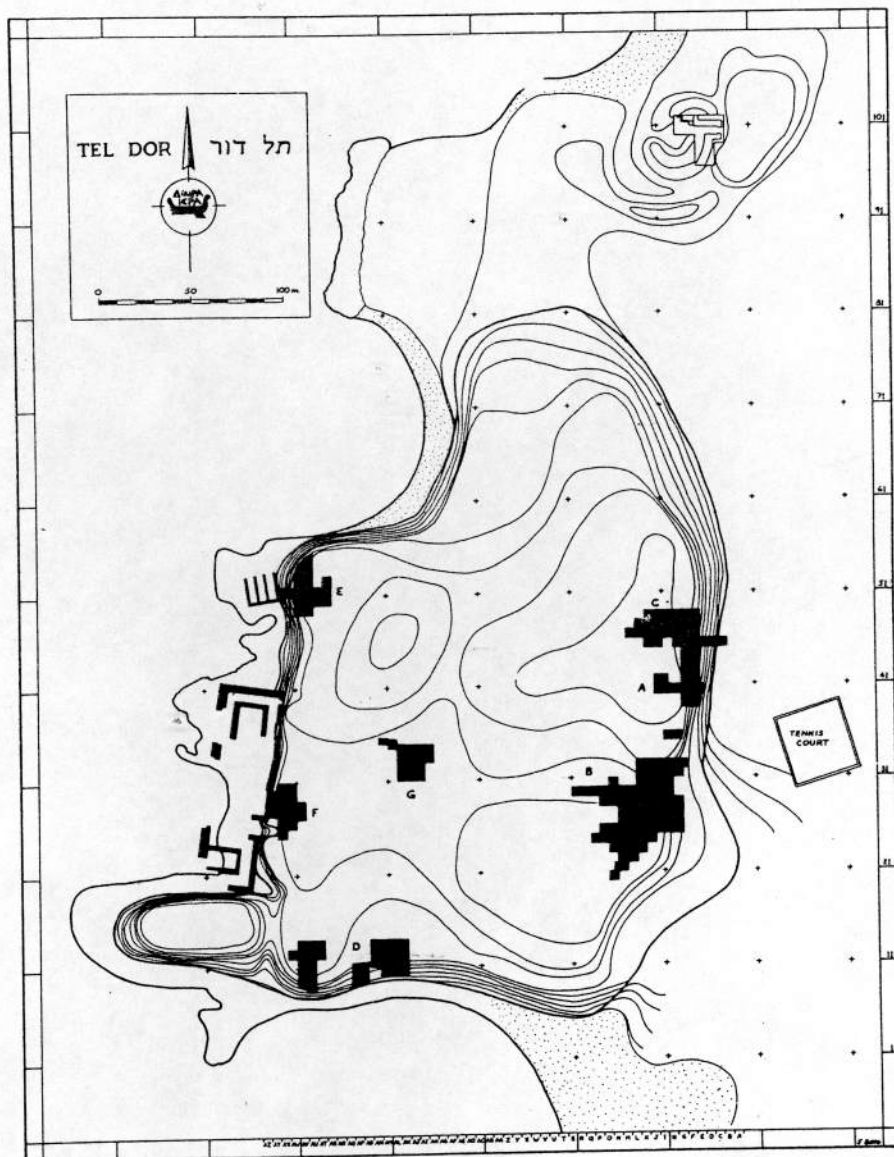


FIGURE 1.1 *Tel Dor: plan of excavated areas and view of area D2*

century BCE which, like Dor, contained many local wares including early Phoenician Bichrome Ware jugs. More Late Protogeometric Euboean vessels are now known from Tyre and from Cyprus (Coldstream & Bikai 1988, part 2.35; Waldbaum 1994, 53-66).

The Greek sherds from Tel Dor were shown to two experts. Prof. J.N. Coldstream of the Department of Greek and Roman Archaeology at University College London dated them roughly to the 10th century BCE, presenting numerous parallels from the main Euboean site of that period, Lefkandi. He referred to these wares as "Euboean Late Protogeometric." The second expert, Dr. Irene S. Lemos, of the Department of Classics at the University of Edinburgh, a student of Prof. Coldstream's, even designated one of the sherds from Dor as "Middle Protogeometric" and suggested a date around 950 BCE! The Dor and Tel Hadar stratigraphy and dates combine to suggest that Euboean pottery specialists may have to



PLATE I.1 *The Silver Hoard jar in situ*

move the date of their material back to the late 11th/early 10th century. The imported wares from Cyprus and Greece, as attested at Dor, therefore, illustrate the renewal of trade connections between East and West as early as the beginning of the Iron Age, the so-called "Dark Age."

The net weight of the Phoenician silver hoard, after cleaning, is approximately 8.5 kg (around 19 lbs). This represents a large sum of money. We do not yet have a basis for calculating its comparable present-day value. Somewhat later, during the 8th-7th centuries BCE, one royal Judean shekel weighed 11.5 g (a royal Judean limestone shekel-weight was indeed found at Dor) and assuming that 60 shekels were one maneh and 60 maneh equal 1 talent (kikkar), we have a hoard consisting of *ca.* 12 maneh or one sixth of a talent (Stern 1971).

