

RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN ISRAEL

A View to the West

Reports on Kabri, Nami, Mique-Ekron, Dor, and Ashkelon

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Tel Dor: A Phoenician-Israelite Trading Center

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INTRODUCTION

The excavations at Dor (fig. 5.1) were undertaken by an expedition of the Hebrew University and the Israel Exploration Society headed by the writer with the participation of California State University, Sacramento, the University of California at Berkeley, McMaster University, and other institutions.¹ By now we have concluded a series of twelve seasons (1980-1992) in the course of which we have opened seven areas on the mound (fig. 5.2). The stratigraphic evidence with which we intend to deal in the following discussion comes, however, mainly from two of these: Area B1 and Area G which are located on the eastern side of the mound and its center. Some additional material has been uncovered also on the western side of the mound (Areas F and E), as well as south of the mound as the result of the underwater survey headed by A. Raban.

In the course of these excavations (fig. 5.3) a great deal of new and significant information was uncovered concerning the Iron Age as well as the Persian Period. This information gave us a rare opportunity to examine anew the waves of expansions or regressions of trade between settlements of the Eastern Mediterranean coast with the West, mainly Cyprus and Greece, from the late second millennium B.C.E. to the end of the Persian Period. Here we intend to discuss the general picture as it already emerges from our dig.

THE BRONZE AGE

Although we have not yet excavated strata of settlement of the Bronze Age, we have reached, in a few limited areas, the levels of this period. In other places we have reached layers of sand which were used as fill for later

constructions and originally had been taken from strata belonging to the Bronze Age. It is, however, already clear after examining the finds of these levels (figs. 5.4, 5.4A) that even though the areas were quite small, the number of vases found in them was large and that statistically

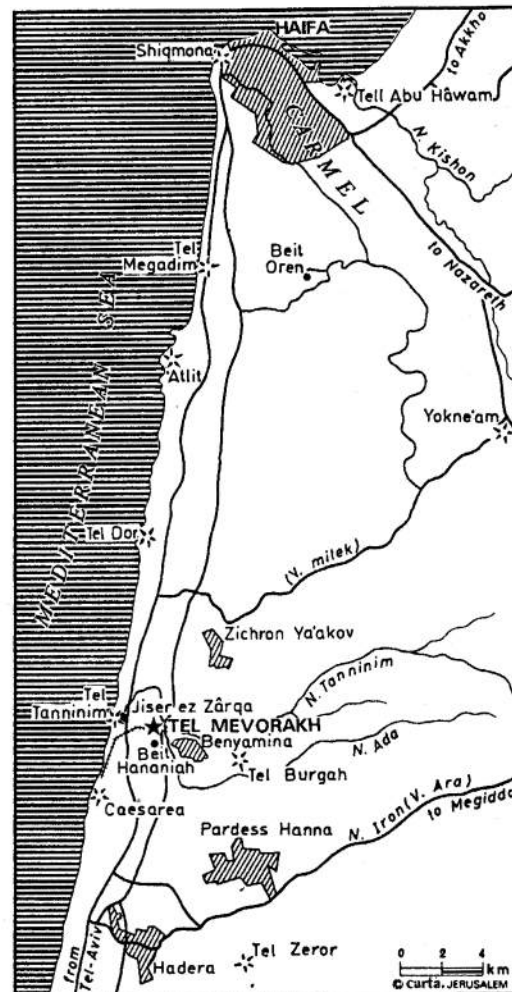


FIGURE 5.1 Tel Dor: map of region.

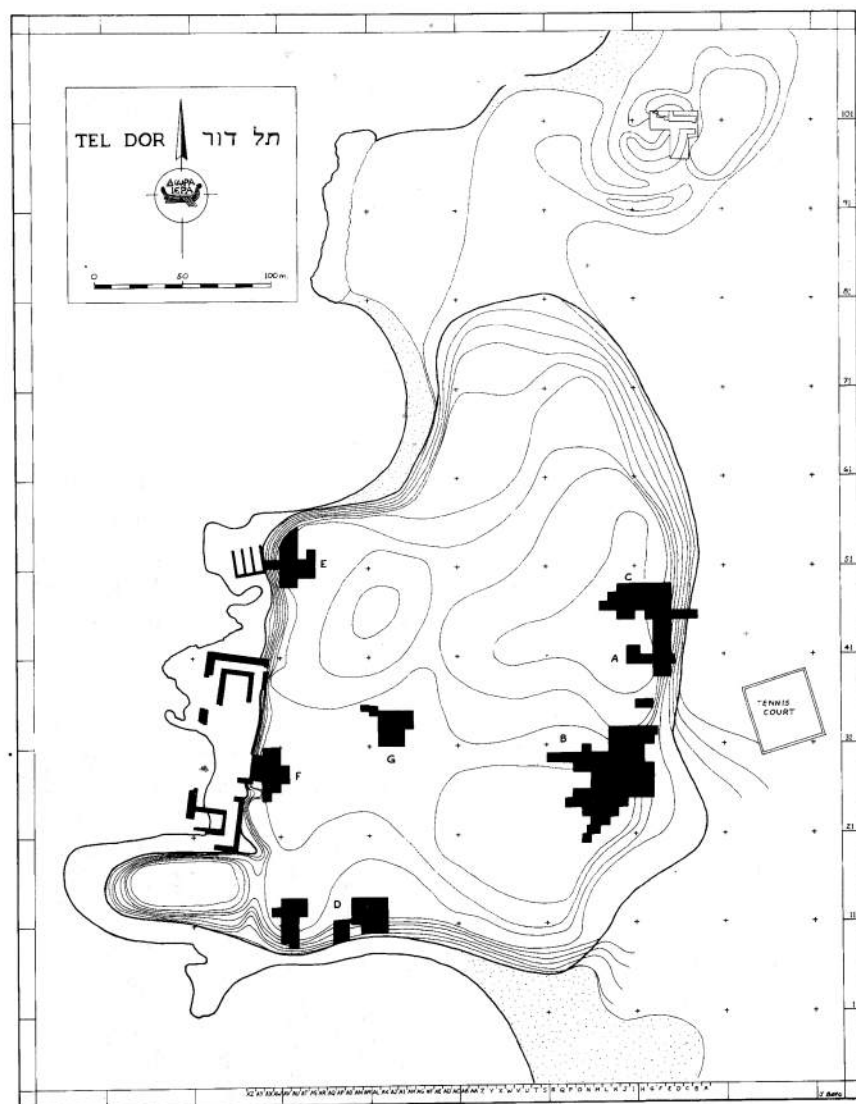


FIGURE 5.2 Tel Dor: topographical plan with excavated areas.

the number of imported vases found here was larger than that of the local ware. Evidently, almost all of the known imported vase-types were represented in those small assemblages: Minoan and Mycenaean and all known imported Cypriote families recognized in Palestinian finds such as White Painted I-II, Bichrome and White Slip I-II, and White Shaved. This phenomenon repeated itself whenever we came upon even the smallest layer belonging to this age.² From all this it becomes clear that Dor was in this early age already a central harbor town for the import of vases from the West.

The Canaanite city was destroyed, according to the best of our knowledge, by the Sikils³ (a tribe of the Sea Peoples), by the beginning of

the 12th century B.C.E. The Sikils built the city and fortified it in the middle of the same century (we have not uncovered up to now any sherd of the Mycenaean IIIC family), and we have no evidence of any import during this age, usually called "The Dark Age." This stratum at Dor was numbered XII and was uncovered mainly in Area B1 (east side) and G (central part of the mound) (fig. 5.2). It was composed of a thick layer of heavy destruction and ashes. The strong fire had burned the clay bricks to red and the limestone of the houses had crumbled. This accumulation of debris was sealed by floors above in which were found Cypriote and Phoenician vases of the second half of the 11th century B.C.E. The depth of this layer was more than two meters.



FIGURE 5.3 Tel Dor: air view looking northwest and showing the excavated areas.



FIGURE 5.4 Tel Dor: imported Mycenaean and Cypriot Late Bronze Age sherds.

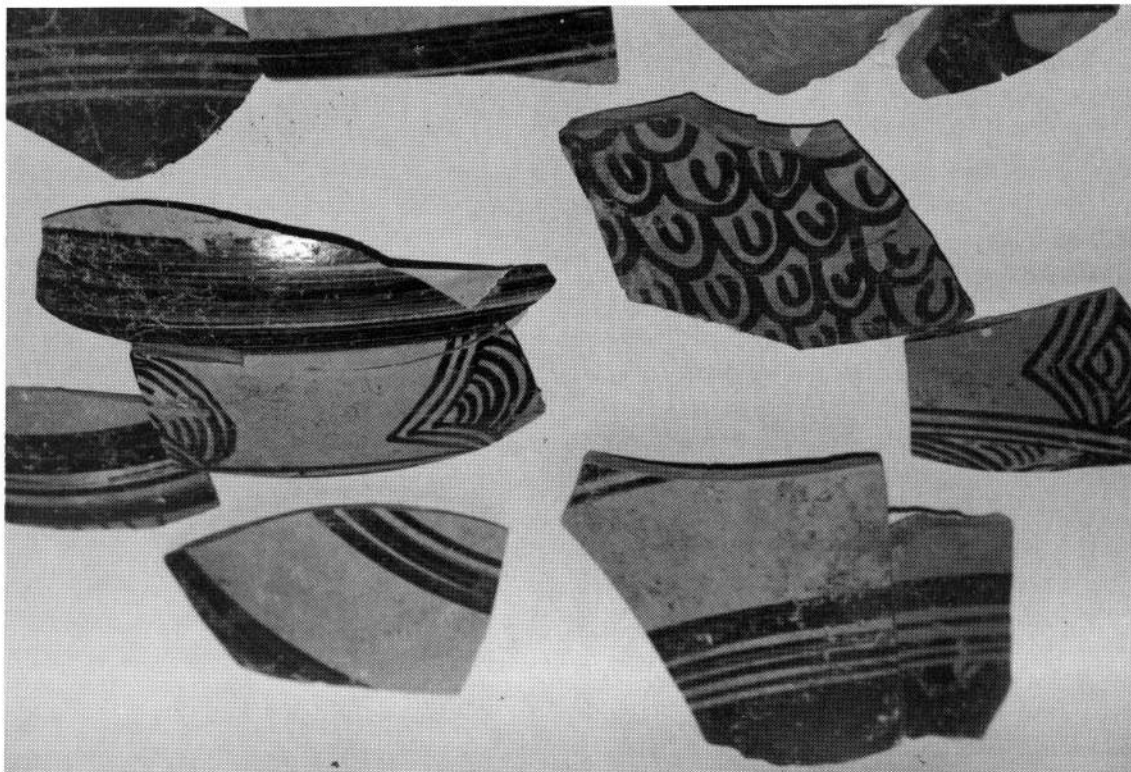


FIGURE 5.4A Tel Dor: imported Late Bronze Age Mycenaean sherds.

The same layer of destruction and ashes was also reached in a deep pit excavated in Area F, that is, on the western side of the mound; but here we have not yet found its floor. During the last seasons, parts of two rooms were uncovered in Area E, also located on the western side of the mound. These two discoveries point to the fact that, in this period, the town covered the entire area of the mound. We should also remember that during the undersea survey done by A. Raban at the southern harbor of the town, some more remains of the period came to light.⁴ Thus the Dor of the Sikils covered the entire area of the present mound.

Even though we know from the Egyptian historical records⁵ that Dor was also an important harbor town in this short period, no import of any kind has been uncovered in this "Dark Age" stratum. Except for the local pottery, we have thus far uncovered from this stratum only some sherds belonging to the typical bichrome decorated pottery (fig. 5.5), also considered to be of local manufacture, and usually attributed elsewhere to the Philistines, as well as a decorated lion's head rhyton of the type known from other Philistine sites⁶ such as Ashdod, Tel Mique (Ekron), Tell es-Safi, Tel

Gerisa, Tell Qasileh,⁷ as well as from Megiddo⁸ and Tel Zeror near Hadera.⁹ To this short list we should perhaps add a cow scapula, a shoulder blade incised with parallel lines along the upper edge, a type that was also found in a Philistine connection, namely, in the Philistine sanctuary uncovered lately at Ekron, as well as in Cyprus. We should agree perhaps with the Ekron excavators' assumption that it was probably used by the Philistines—or the Sikils, in our case—to divine a message from a god. Although the purpose of the notches is uncertain, they may have been cut to produce a musical sound. According to the Ekron excavators, these instruments were brought by the Sea Peoples from Cyprus "after their journey across the Mediterranean to Palestine."¹⁰

According to the evidence of Dor, the renewal of the imports from the West (Cyprus) started only in the late 11th century B.C.E. The archaeological evidence comes from strata XI and X-IX; that is, the second half of the 11th century B.C.E. has more abundant imports. This period falls, in historical terms, between the destruction of the city of the Sea Peoples and the conquest of the city of Dor by David. Since no historical sources for this period are



FIGURE 5.5 Tel Dor: Philistine bichrome sherds.

available—neither Biblical nor external—all our information comes from the excavations.

For this period as well we have so far only excavated a limited section in Areas B1 and G below a white lime floor of the later stratum. Several long walls, mostly mudbrick and oriented north-south, were preserved here, and more than 15 m have been exposed with several partition walls oriented to the west. Between the partitions and the outer walls was a succession of tightly packed clay floors. The size of the structures, though the complete unit has not yet been uncovered, indicates that they were public buildings. The floors of these two phases yielded a small quantity of Phoenician Bichrome Ware. Especially noteworthy is a group of Cypriote potsherds of extremely rare types uncovered on the floors of the large buildings (figs. 5.6, 5.6A, 5.6B). Very few of them appear among the wares imported to Palestine, and only isolated examples have been found at other sites, and somewhat more on the Phoenician coast. These sherds belong to two main groups: White Painted I and White Painted/Bichrome I.¹¹ Parallels to the Dor vessels in Cyprus are found mainly in Cypro-Geometric I contexts in the second half of the



FIGURE 5.6 Tel Dor: White Painted I Cypriot ware from the late 11th cent. B.C.E.

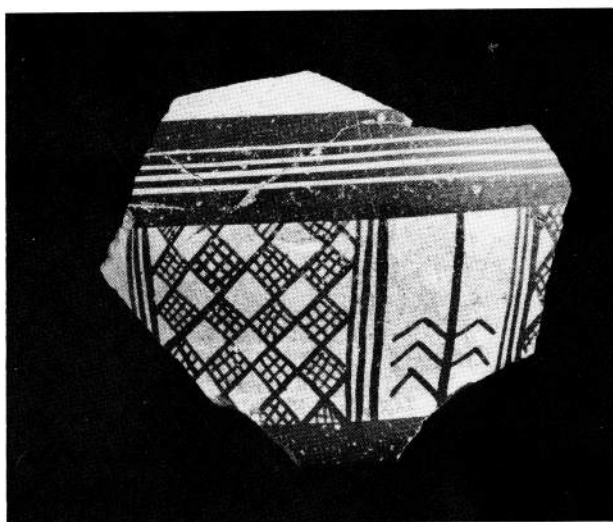


FIGURE 5.6A Tel Dor: White Painted I Cypriot bowl of the later 11th cent. B.C.E.

11th century B.C.E. or slightly later. Thus, these vessels confirm the date assigned to this phase which ends at about 1000 B.C.E.—a date deduced independently from local pottery.¹² Their main importance is, however, in pointing out the renewal of Cypriote imports to Palestine in the Late Iron Age I, that is, after a gap of about 150 years since their cessation at the end of the Late Bronze Age.

The town that was built on the ruins of the Sikil town has been attributed by us to the Phoenicians who at the same time had settled also in Cyprus¹³ and were responsible for the renewal. The import of Cypriote material at Dor continued through the 10th and 9th centuries B.C.E. (figs. 5.7-5.9). To the White Painted and Bichrome families were now added Phoenician Bichrome pottery as well as the Black on Red group also known as "Cypro-Phoenician Ware." These groups continued to be imported during the Iron and Persian Ages, but their number and quality decreased. During the Iron Age II, the imports from Greece were also renewed. The first Greek sherd found in stratigraphy was a bowl (figs. 5.10, 5.10A) belonging to the late Geometric period which was uncovered on the floor of the City Gate of the Israelite Kingdom Period, which was destroyed by the Assyrian armies in 733 B.C.E.¹⁴ In addition to the fact that it confirms the historical date of the destruction of the Israelite town, this sherd raises the date of the beginning of Greek imports to Dor and probably to the entire coast of Palestine; as far as we know, there are no earlier Greek sherds in the country found *in situ*.¹⁵ From this time on more Greek imports start to stream into

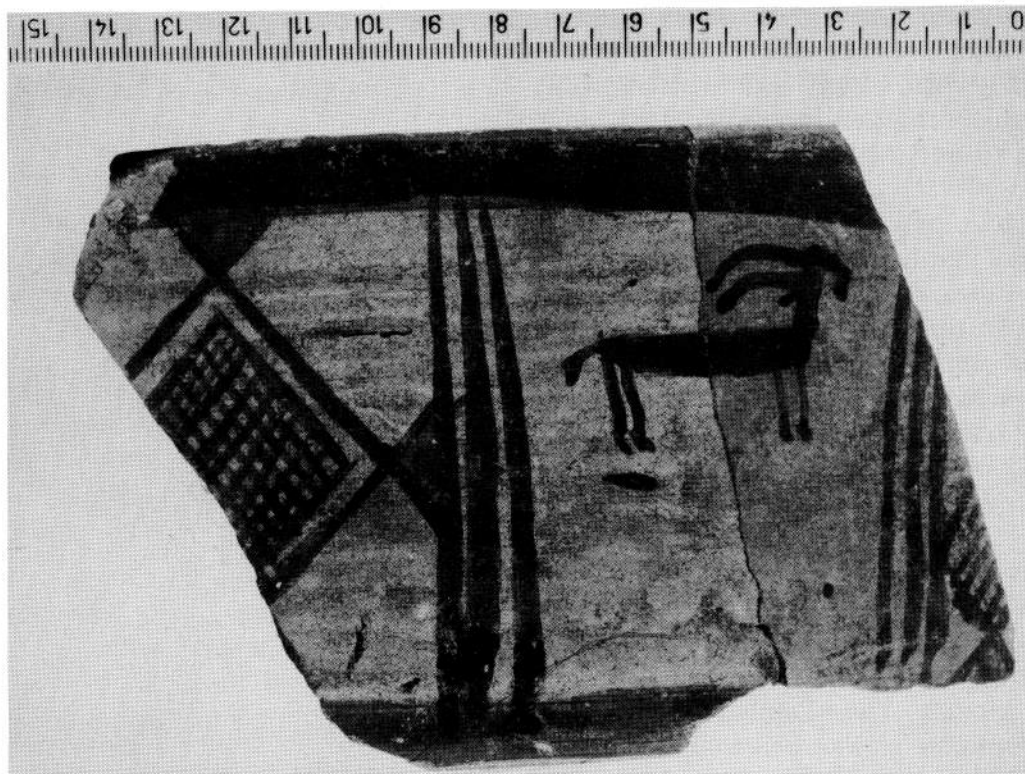


FIGURE 5.6B Tel Dor: Bichrome jug from the late 11th cent. B.C.E.



FIGURE 5.7 Tel Dor: Early Phoenician bichrome jug from the late 11th cent. B.C.E.

Dor. We should mention here that during the 7th century B.C.E. and later, Proto-Corinthian imports start to arrive, but the main imports are brought from the East Greek Islands (fig. 5.11). In this period, from the 7th century B.C.E. on, these two types of Greek pottery are the most common imports to Dor. It is evident, however, that the number of Proto-Corinthian sherds is meager, but not so the case with East Greek material of which we have, so we believe, the largest and most complete assemblages of all the settlements along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, including Al Mina, Sarepta, Mezad Hashvoyahu, and even Tel Sukas.¹⁶ These vases come from various sites in the islands of East Greece, such as Lesbos, Samos, Kos, Chios, Knidos, and Rhodes, as well as sites along the Anatolian and Cilician coast. The material has been handed to experts for study. It is already clear, however, that even though pottery imports flourished in Dor in the 7th-6th centuries B.C.E., they continued to be



FIGURE 5.8 Tel Dor: Cypriot pottery dating to the 10th-7th cent. B.C.E.

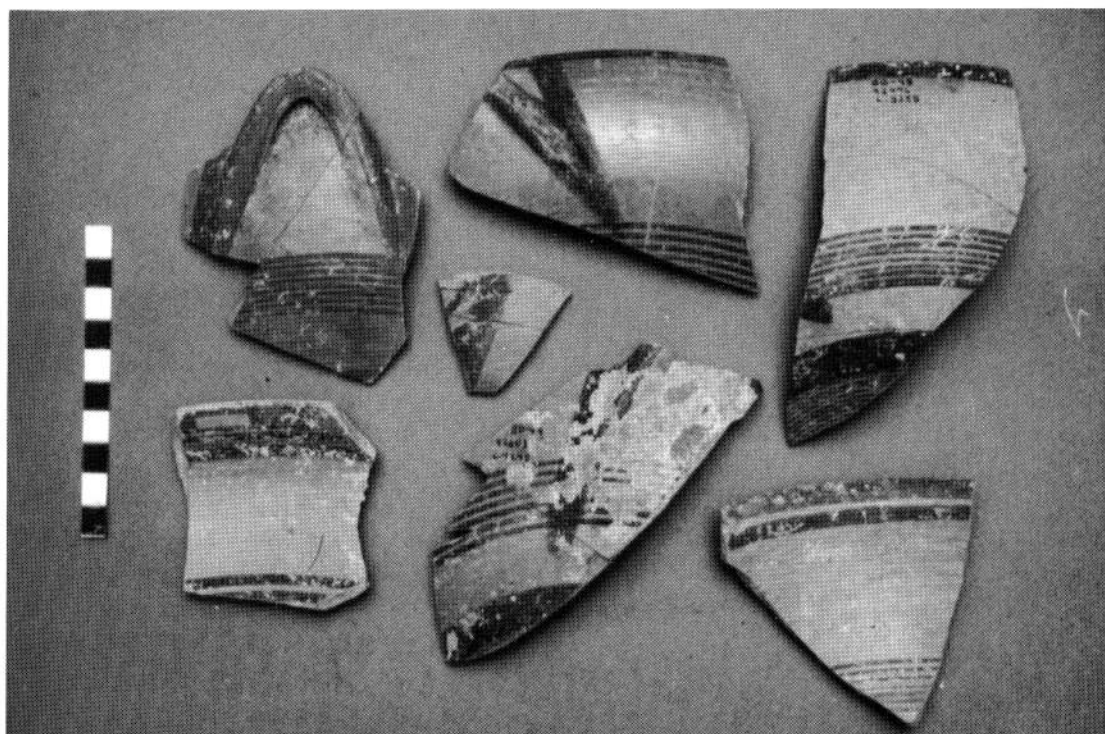


FIGURE 5.9 Tel Dor: Cyprott "black-on-red" sherds from the 10th cent. B.C.E.

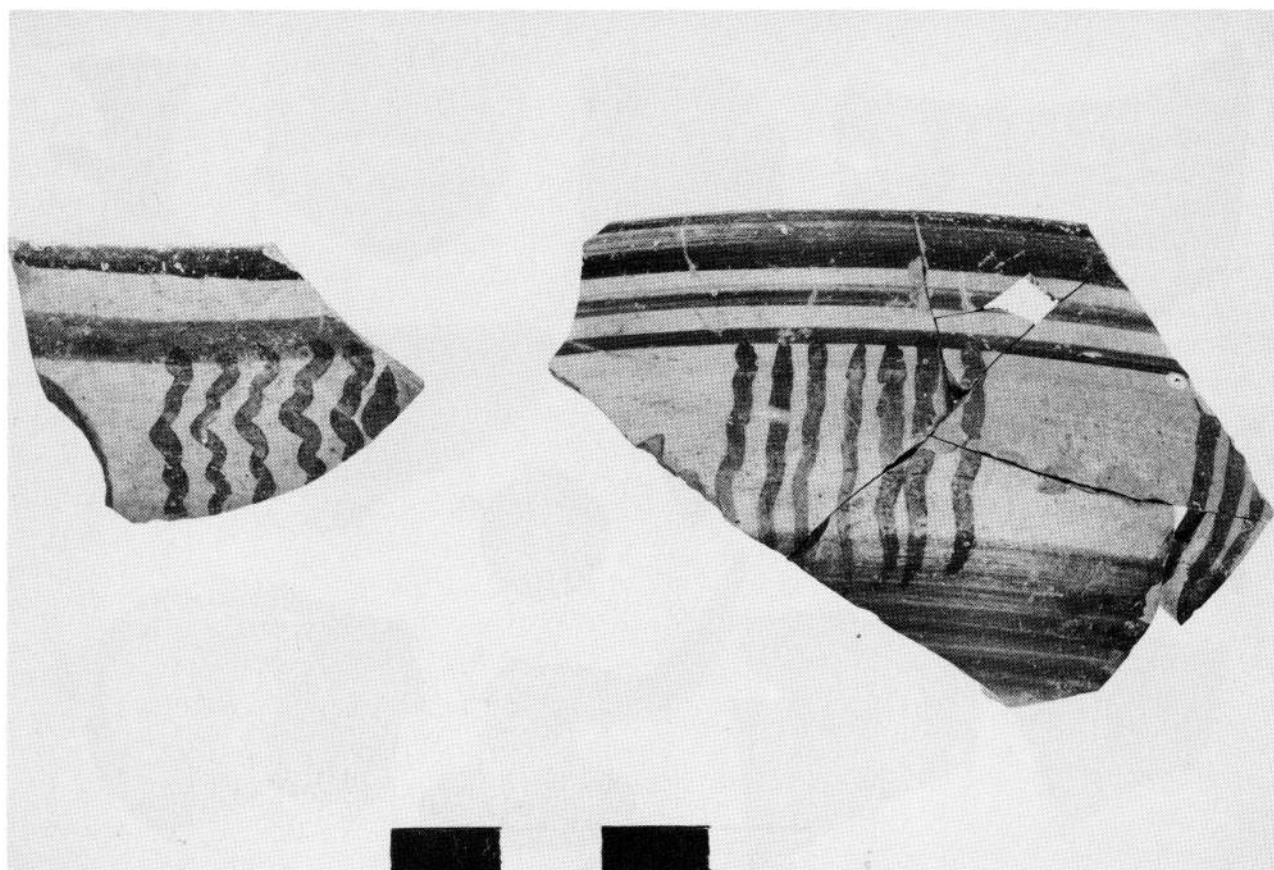


FIGURE 5.10 Tel Dor: Late Geometric Greek bowl, second half of the 8th cent. B.C.E. (Photo: G. Laron).



FIGURE 5.10A Tel Dor: Late Geometric bowl sherd, second half of the 8th cent. B.C.E.
(Photo: G. Laron)

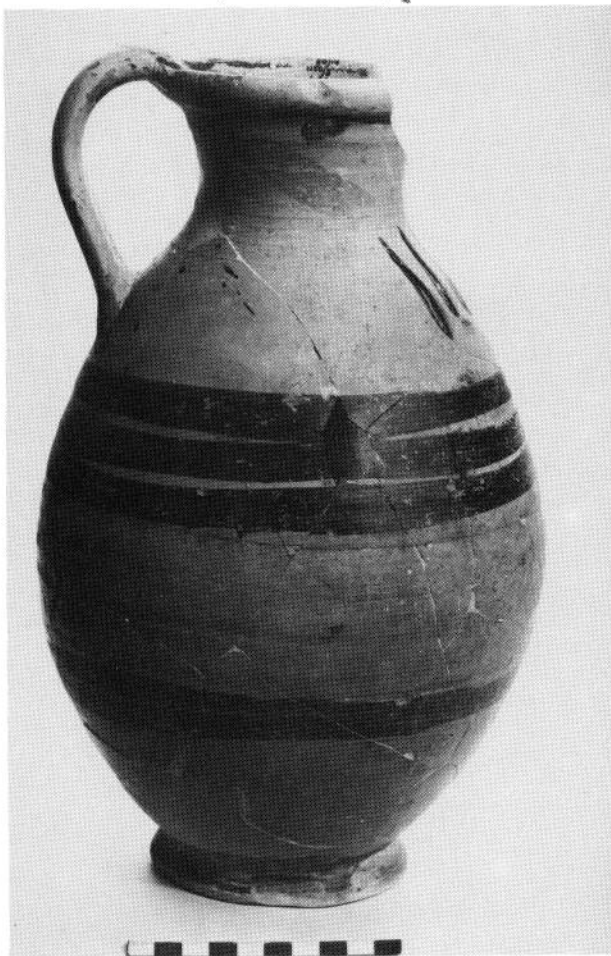


FIGURE 5.11 Tel Dor: East Greek jug of the Persian Period.

imported here during the 5th century also (fig. 5.12).

The picture found at Dor is by no means unique but is the usual situation found at all sites along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and Cyprus.¹⁷ Although the imports from East Greek sources continued down to the 5th century B.C.E., by the later part of the 6th century they formed only an insignificant part in relation to the Attic Ware which began to flow during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E. They further decreased in number until they were superseded in Dor by an almost total Attic monopoly. Aside from scattered Greek sherds which can be found from other sources, (fig. 5.13), for example, Boeotian and South Italian, the Athenians had entirely captured the demand for imported Greek ware. This change in source of the imported Greek wares and the absolute dominance of the Attic pottery

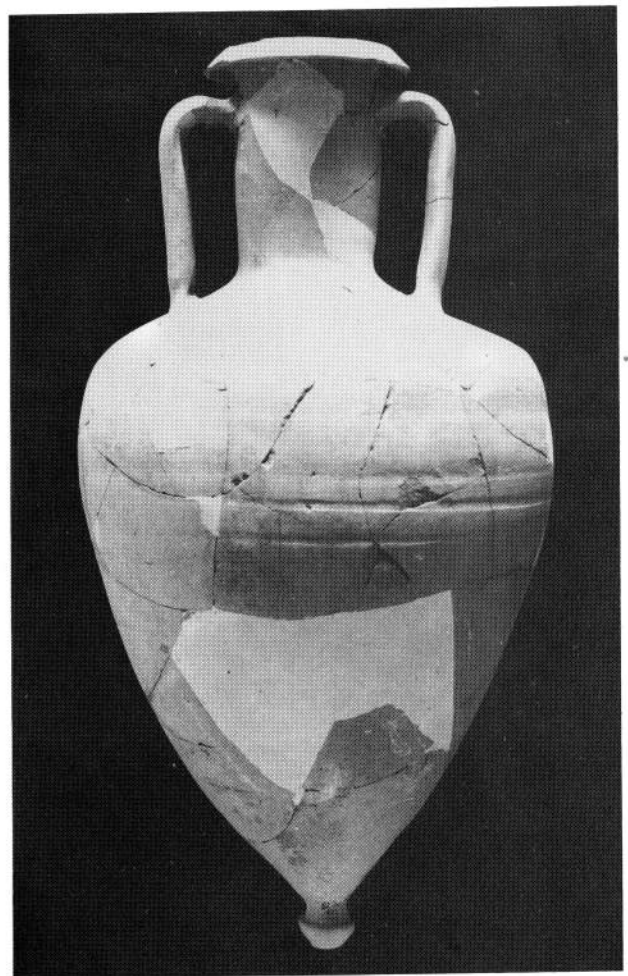


FIGURE 5.12 Tel Dor: Greek wine amphora of the Persian Period.

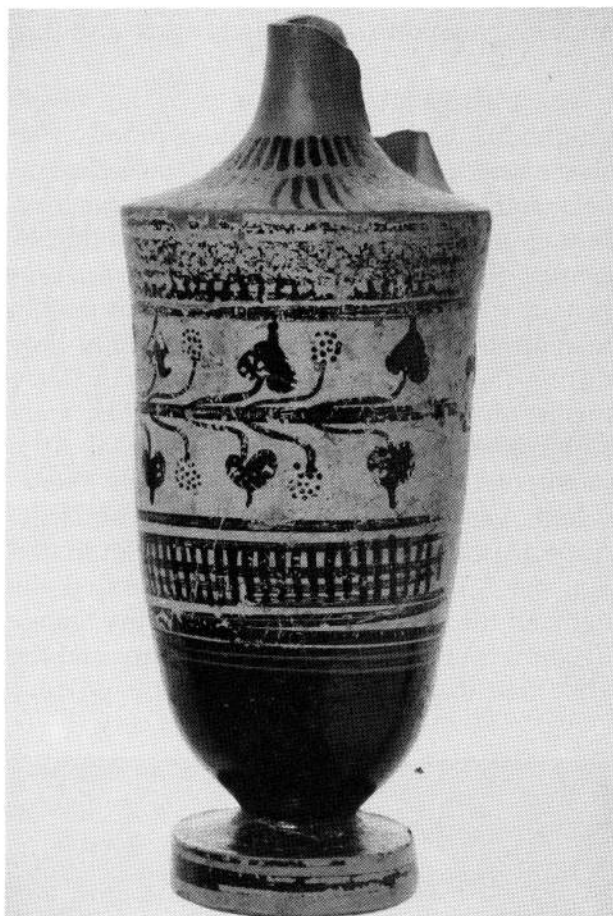


FIGURE 5.13 Tel Dor: Attic white ground lekythos of the 5th cent. B.C.E.

throughout the late 6th and early 5th centuries B.C.E. is not unique to Dor, but was recognized elsewhere along the Phoenician and Palestinian coast and Cyprus.¹⁸

The Attic wares, both earlier Black Figure, Red Figure, and Black-glazed Ware, in Dor and in Palestine and neighboring lands, has been well classified according to the decoration, typology of vessels, and their dates (figs 5.14, 5.14a); therefore we do not intend to discuss them here. However, with the Attic wares and somewhat earlier wares came also undecorated vases such as wine jars, mostly from the East Greek islands as well as ceramics for everyday use as lamps, bowls, and even cooking pots; and both kinds of imports soon had their imitations among the local pottery represented at Dor (figs 5.15, 5.15A).



FIGURE 5.14 Tel Dor: Attic Red Figure sherds from the 5-4th cent. B.C.E.



FIGURE 5.14A Tel Dor: Attic Red Figure sherds from the 5-4th cent. B.C.E.



FIGURE 5.15 Tel Dor: Attic black glazed skyphos of the 4th cent. B.C.E.



FIGURE 5.15A Tel Dor: Greek black glazed lamp.

NOTES

- 1 E. Stern, "The Excavations at Tel Dor," in E. Lipinski, ed., *The Land of Israel: Cross-Roads of Civilizations*, OLA 19 (Leuven 1985) 169-192; "Excavations at Tel Dor—A Canaanite-Phoenician Port-City on the Carmel Coast," *Qadmoniot* 20 (1987) 66-81 (Hebrew); "New Evidence from Dor for the First Appearance of the Phoenicians along the Northern Coast of Israel," *BASOR* 279 (1990) 27-34; E. Stern, J. Berg, I. Sharon, "Tel Dor, 1988-1989," *IEJ* 41 (1991) 46-61; E. Stern, A. Gilboa, I. Sharon, "Tel Dor 1991," *IEJ* 42 (1992) 34-46, and cf. E. Stern, *Dor, the Ruler of the Seas: Ten Years of Excavations in an Israelite-Phoenician Harbor Town on the Carmel Coast* (Jerusalem 1992) (Hebrew). Photographs for this paper are by Z. Radovan.
- 2 It should also be mentioned here that during a small trial dig made by Michal Artzy on the coast on the mound's west side (see A. Raban, M. Artzy, "Dor Yam (Sea and Coastal Dor, 1980)," *IEJ* 32 [1982] 256-259), a layer of MB II was uncovered close to bedrock. Here too, even though a very small and limited area was excavated, it became clear that the Cypriote MB imported pottery sherds made up a large part of the entire find. Later we too observed a similar phenomenon in the Area E dig where many MB Cypriote sherds were uncovered, among them at least one of the shiny red family hitherto unknown from this country.
- 3 A.F. Rainey, "Toponymic Problems," *Tel Aviv* 9 (1982) 133-134.
- 4 A. Raban, "The Harbor of the Sea Peoples at Dor," *Biblical Archaeology* 50 (1987) 118-126.
- 5 See A.H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica I* (Oxford 1947); J.A. Wilson, "The Journey of Wen-Amon to Phoenicia," in J.B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton 1969) 25-29; H. Goedicke, *The Report of Wenamun* (Baltimore 1975); M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, "Das 'Seefahrende Volk' von Sikila," *Ugarit Forschungen* 10 (1978) 53-56; N. Hlessondra, *Wenamun and Alashia Reconsidered* (Oxford 1985); see M. and T. Dothan, *Peoples of the Sea* (New York 1992).
- 6 T. Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (New Haven 1982) 229-234.
- 7 A. Mazar, "Excavations at Tell Qasile II," *Qedem* 12 (1980) 101-103.
- 8 Dothan (supra n. 6) 230, pl. 14.
- 9 O. Kiyoshi, *Tel Zeror III* (Tokyo 1970) pl. LIX:6.
- 10 T. Dothan and S. Gitin, "Ekron and the Philistines," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16 (1990) 28.
- 11 A. Gilboa, "New Finds at Tel Dor and the Beginnings of Cypro-Geometric Pottery Import to Palestine," *IEJ* 39 (1989) 204-218.
- 12 M. Iacovou, *The Eleventh Century B.C. Pictorial Pottery of Cyprus* (Ann Arbor 1987); J. Yellin, "The Origin of Some Cypro-Geometric Pottery from Tel Dor," *IEJ* 39 (1989) 219-227.
- 13 See E. Stern, "Phoenicians, Sikils and Israelites in the Light of Recent Excavations at Tel Dor," in E. Lipinski, ed., *Studia Phoenicia XI: Phoenicia and the Bible* (Leuven 1991) 85-94 and "New Evidence from Dor for the First Appearance of the Phoenicians along the Northernmost Coast of Israel," *BASOR* 279 (1990) 27-33.

- ¹⁴ The sherd was sent to J. Boardman, J.N. Coldstream, and Jane Waldbaum who dated it to the second half of the 8th century B.C.E.
- ¹⁵ We should mention here the Euboean subgeometric dinos found recently at Tel Qiri dated to about 700 B.C.E. See A. Ben-Tor and Y. Portugali, "Tel Qiri: A Village in the Jezreel Valley," *Qedem* 24 (1987) 110, fig. 50; there may also be some more samples in other sites. It should, however, now be mentioned that Greek imported sherds (all from Euboea) have been recently found at Tyre on the Lebanese coast. They all date as early as the 10th century B.C.E. See J.N. Coldstream, "Early Greek Pottery in Tyre and Cyprus: Some Preliminary Comparisons," *RDAC* 53 (1988) 35-48.
- ¹⁶ See Grunhild Ploug, *Sukas II: The Aegean, Corinthian and Eastern Greek Pottery and Terracottas* (Copenhagen 1973).
- ¹⁷ See E. Stern, *The Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period*, (Warminster 1982) 136-42.
- ¹⁸ C.J. Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas* (Harmondsworth 1964) 29-30, 138-142; C.L. Woolley, *A Forgotten Kingdom* (Harmondsworth 1954) 184; E. Gjerstad, *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition* Vol. IV:2 (Stockholm 1948) 317.
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