

Tel Dor, 1993: Preliminary Report

EPHRAIM STERN ILAN SHARON
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

TEL DOR is excavated by a consortium of four institutions, directed by E. Stern on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Exploration Society. The thirteenth season, conducted for six weeks during the summer of 1993, included teams from the California State University, Sacramento, directed by H.P. Goldfried; the University of California, Berkeley, directed by A. Stewart; and the University of Saskatchewan, directed by C.M. Foley.¹

Seven areas were excavated (Fig. 1): Areas B1 and B2 on the eastern side of the mound, Areas D1, D2 and D3 on the southern side, Area F2 on the western slope and Area G in the centre of the 8.5 hectare mound. Remains from the Iron Age I to the Roman period were excavated.

Iron Age I

The Iron Age I is a period of lively urban activity at Dor, as in several other coastal sites. Remains of this period, previously excavated mainly in Area B1, were found in 1993 in Areas G and D1, and comprise several distinct occupational phases, the earliest of which was destroyed by a violent conflagration, around the mid-eleventh century B.C.E.

Evidence of this catastrophe (found in previous seasons in Area B1, and possibly in Areas E and F) was uncovered in 1992 in one unit (AI 32) of Area G.² Whereas some of the adjacent units exposed this season (particularly AI 31) show direct continuity with AI 32, others display a slightly different stratigraphic sequence, and no distinct destruction layer was found in them. It is still unclear whether we have not yet

1 For a review of the first 12 seasons, see E. Stern: *Dor — Ruler of the Seas*, Jerusalem, 1994. For a preliminary report of the eleventh season, see E. Stern, Ayelet Gilboa and I. Sharon: Tel Dor, 1991: Preliminary Report, *IEJ* 42 (1992), pp. 34–46; of the twelfth season, see E. Stern and I. Sharon: Tel Dor, 1992: Preliminary Report, *IEJ* 43 (1993), pp. 126–150.

The senior staff also included Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom, I. Sharon, Bracha Zilberstein, Ayelet Gilboa, J. Berg, J. Zorn, Gilah Benadiva-Zionit, Patricia Cason, R. Talman, S. Dahan, Y. Hirshberg, Vered Rosen and R. Gross. Some 20 junior staff members and 200 students and volunteers participated in the field season. The expedition lodged at Pardess Hanna Agricultural School and was aided by the Centre of Nautical and Regional Archaeology at Kibbutz Nahsholim.

2 Stern and Sharon (above, n. 1), pp. 149–150.

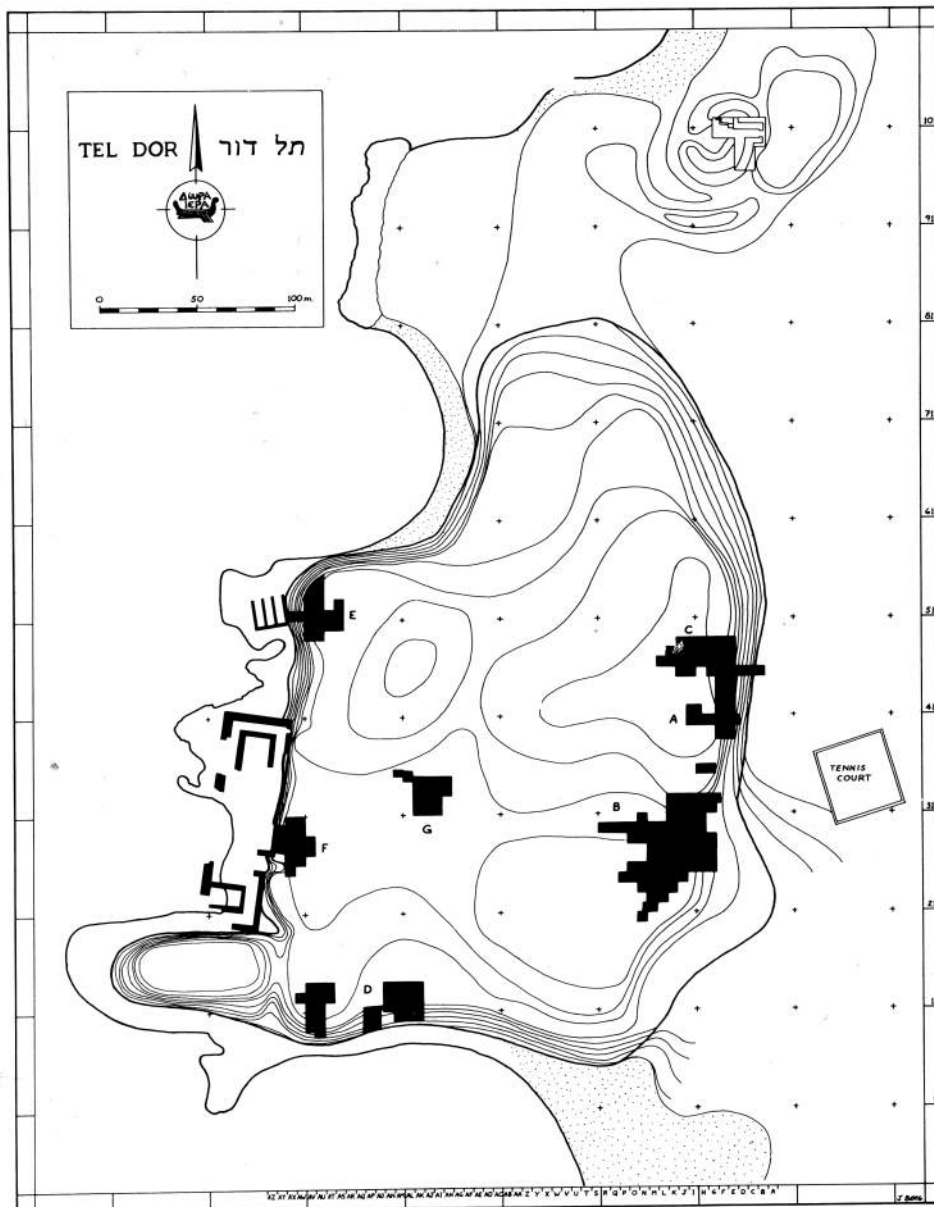


Fig. 1. Tel Dor, 1993: general plan.

reached the appropriate phase in these units, or whether the fire was limited to some of the houses.

Remains of the later Iron I strata consist of a residential quarter in Area G, with modest houses and walls built either of mudbrick on stone foundations or

of medium-sized fieldstones. These buildings collapsed at least once during the second half of the eleventh century. This season we set out to excavate the rest of the room where the body of a 30–40-year-old woman was found on the last day of the 1992 excavation.³ We found that the stone fall under which the woman was buried filled the entire room, which was apparently some kind of pantry, and crushed half a dozen storage jars. The house was immediately rebuilt, much along the same lines, and continued to be used well into the Iron Age II.

Another significant discovery dating from the Iron Age I is a cultic assemblage found in one of the rooms in Area G. It consists of half a dozen bowls, two of which are tiny votive ones and the rest of regular size; a goblet decorated with red lines; a chalice decorated with thin white slip and a red band with two horizontal handles; and a small cult stand consisting of a bowl attached to a four-sided fenestrated stand, about 20 cm. high. On the one complete side of the stand the shape of a dancing(?) human figure is cut out; the fenestrations on the other sides are also figurative. Although they have not been sufficiently restored to identify the figures, it is clear that they are not identical. This vessel has no close parallel in the local repertoire, although both the cut-out technique and the 'dancing figure' motif do appear on a cult stand from Tell Qasile,⁴ but in a reverse technique in which the cut-out part forms the background. A more distant comparison may be the 'musician's stand' from Ashdod.⁵

Whereas some of the above-mentioned artifacts are of types appearing in Iron Age cult places at various sites, the latter two are unique, and their closest parallels come from sites known to be inhabited by 'Sea Peoples'. Thus, a claim might be made to a unique glimpse into a 'Sikil' cult. In the coming seasons we aim to remove the overburden of later periods around the find-spot of this remarkable assemblage in order to elucidate the architecture of the cultic installation to which it belongs and to clarify its stratigraphic connections with previously excavated structures.

Iron I levels were also reached in a deep stratigraphical trench being cut in the southern slope of the tell in Area D1. Exposure is not yet wide enough, however, to offer any interpretation of these remains.

Iron Age II

The excavation of Iron Age II remains was concentrated in Area B1, where the outer gate to the city was exposed, and in Area D2, where a monumental public structure is being excavated. In previous seasons we excavated a complex of Iron II gate

3 Stern and Sharon (above, n. 1), pp. 146–149; A. Stewart: A Death at Dor, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19/2 (1993), p. 36.

4 A. Mazar: *Excavations at Tel Qasile, Part I, The Philistine Sanctuary: Architecture and Cult Objects* (Qedem 12), Jerusalem, 1980, pp. 87–89.

5 M. Dothan: The Musicians of Ashdod, *BA* 40 (1977), pp. 38–39.

structures, consisting of two superimposed gatehouses: a two-chambered gate (dated to the eighth–fifth centuries B.C.E.) above a four-chambered one (ninth–eighth centuries B.C.E.). The construction of the four-chambered gate has been attributed to the Omride dynasty⁶ and its destruction, as well as the construction of the two-chambered gate, to the Assyrians.

We assumed that these gates were associated with a fortified entrance ramp and an outer gate at its bottom, like most other Iron Age fortifications in the country. Remains of the surface of the ramp leading up to the two-chambered gate were uncovered in the first seasons of excavation at Dor, and its exposed area was much enlarged in the 1991–1992 seasons. In addition, traces of the massive foundations of the outer gate itself and of a 5 × 5 m. square tower at the south-eastern corner of the ramp were uncovered, together with many details of a complex system of glacis surfaces and revetments associated with these structures.⁷

Work this season was confined to several stratigraphical probes around these two structures. In the first we attempted — unsuccessfully — to locate the surface of the Iron Age ramp leading up to the earlier (four-chambered) gate. It appears that, at least at the point we chose (adjacent to the remains of the outer gatehouse), there were Persian period disturbances reaching down all the way to the foundations of the Iron Age outer gate. Indeed, the assertion that these foundations date from the Iron Age is still supported only by architectural evidence, without clear-cut association with artifactually datable deposits.

Our other probe was next to the corner tower, and its purpose was to obtain more evidence from the system of glacis surfaces related to it. We found two sets of surfaces, each composed of several resurfacings, separated by about 1 m. of sand. An interesting point is that one of the resurfacings of the earlier glacis was with mudbricks.

In Area D2, huge walls of a monumental building have been visible since the beginning of excavation, where the sea eroded the southern side of the tell.⁸ Large-scale exposure of this building was delayed for many years, however, because of the considerable overburden of later strata, and we only embarked upon this endeavour in 1993. Massive walls, built partly of ashlar headers and partly of boulders, came to light; they apparently date from the tenth/ninth centuries B.C.E., but do not form a coherent plan yet. In the late Iron Age the entire area was paved with a very thick white plaster floor and possibly served as a courtyard. This was pockmarked by many pits of what seems to be an industrial nature, dated to the seventh–fifth/fourth centuries B.C.E. (see below).

A stone basin embossed with a lotus-leaf motif in Phoenician style (Fig. 2), which

6 E. Stern: The Walls of Dor, *IEJ* 38 (1988), pp. 6–14.

7 Stern and Sharon (above, n. 1), pp. 138–141.

8 A. Raban: The Harbor of the Sea Peoples at Dor, *BA* 50 (1987), p. 124.

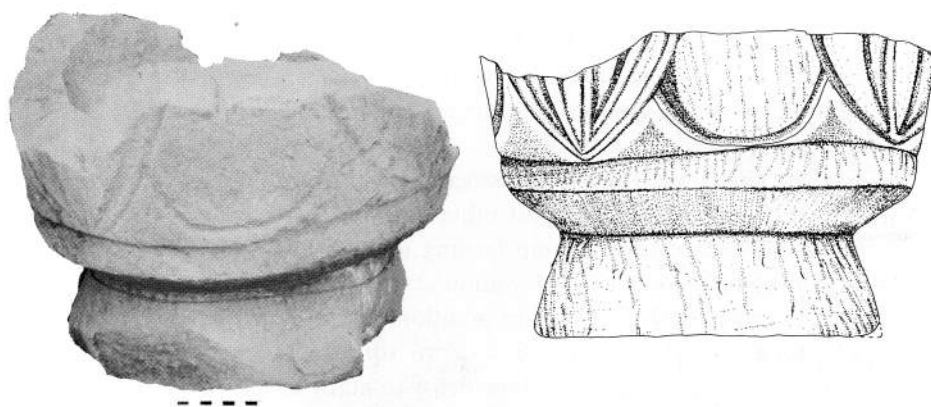


Fig. 2. Iron Age column-capital (?) found in secondary use as stone basin in a Roman period stratum, Area D3.

may date from the ninth–eighth centuries B.C.E., was found in secondary use in a Roman period stratum in Area D3. It is possible that originally this was used as a column-capital of the type found at Tel Dan.

The Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods

The only area in which we directly aimed at excavating Persian remains this season was Area D1, although finds were made *en passant* in Areas B1, D2 and G as well. In Area D1 there is a large structure built early in the Persian period and used well into Hellenistic times.⁹ The layout of later Hellenistic, and even Roman, strata in this area was influenced by (and reused some walls of) this buried structure. Half of one large hallway was already exposed some years ago, and we cleared most of the other half in 1992 and 1993 and began to disentangle the lines of the building from those of succeeding structures in several other rooms.

In the aforementioned pits in Area D2, which date from these periods, several Greek-style pottery figurine heads (e.g., Fig. 3) were found, as well as a Phoenician 'Bes-vase' (Fig. 4). Another spectacular object found in one of these pits (15066) is a bone, inscribed with a maritime scene in Phoenician Egyptianizing style (eighth–sixth centuries B.C.E.) on its obverse and a unique Cypro–Syllabic inscription on its reverse.¹⁰ The pit was filled with potsherds, many of them mendable, dating from the Persian period, as well as a Phoenician ostrakon, dated to the same period.¹¹

9 Stern and Sharon (above, n. 1), pp. 137–138.

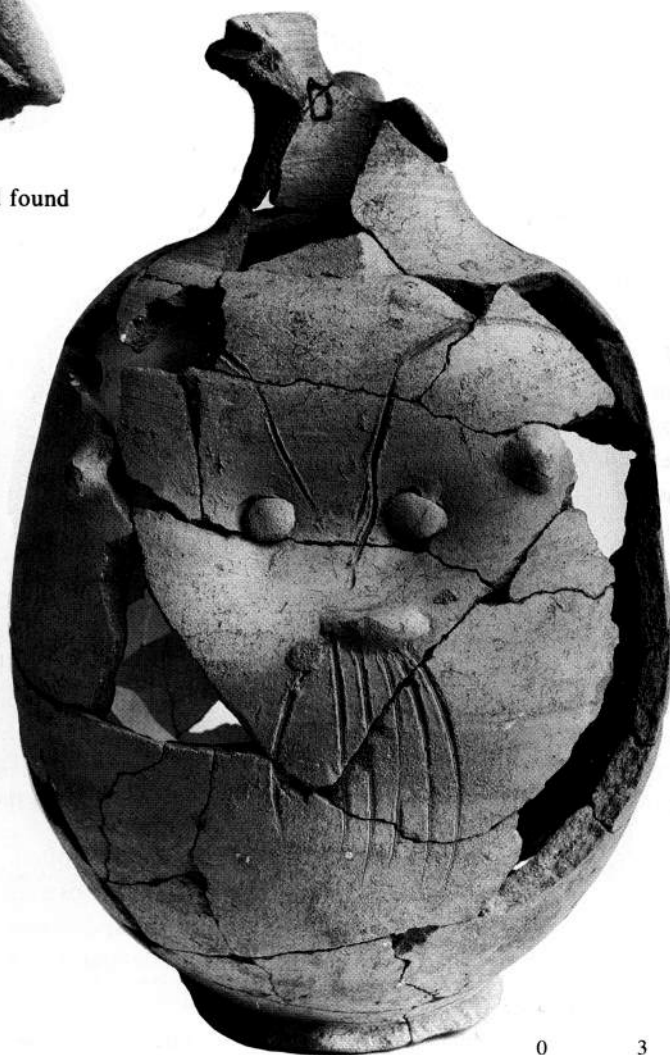
10 E. Stern: A Phoenician–Cypriote Votive Scapula from Tel Dor: A Maritime Scene, *IEJ* 44 (1994), pp. 1–12.

11 Stern (above, n. 10), p. 3 and Fig. 5.



0 2 cm.

Fig. 3. Clay figurine head found in Persian pit, Area D2.



0 3 cm.

Fig. 4. Phoenician 'Bes-vase' found in Persian pit, Area D2.

The Late Hellenistic and Roman Periods

In Areas B2, F and D3 we were mainly concerned with Roman remains. Two distinct strata of the second and third centuries C.E. are visible in most areas, as well as an intermediate late Hellenistic/early Roman phase (first century B.C.E.–first century C.E.), which architecturally is a continuation of the Hellenistic city.

Last year we started excavating in Area B2 a public building with a hallway or a forecourt floored with *opus sectile* tiles. This building belongs to the later of the two Roman strata, but is a reconstruction of an older building of a somewhat different plan, the nature of which is not yet clear. Last year we considered the possibility that the hallway was a separate feature, but it became clear this season that it merely forms part of a larger complex, located to its west.

In Area D3 we found a large industrial installation with several large kilns (or vats?) and many small drainage channels. No slag or other wastes have yet been found, however, making it difficult to determine its specific use.

In the same area we found an amulet of green jasper, incised on both sides (Fig. 5). It belongs to a well-known group of Greco-Egyptian gems of the Roman era, supposed to relate to the cult of the Egyptian deity Chnoubis, who presides over one third of the Zodiac. These amulets were worn as a remedy against indigestion.

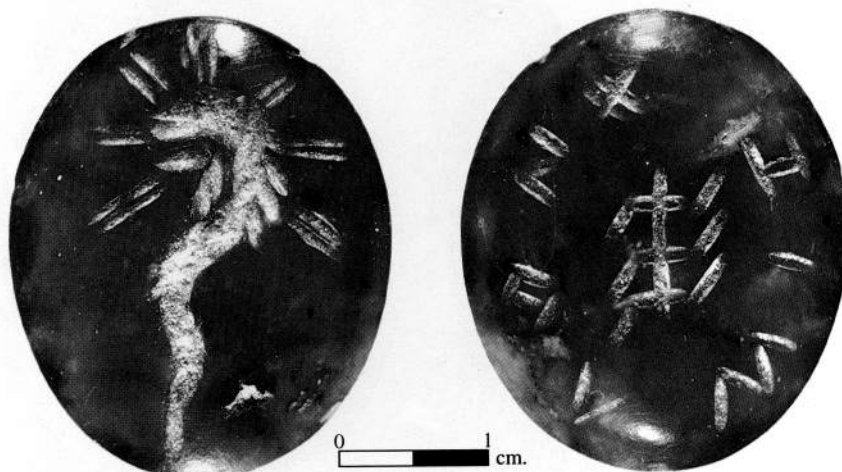


Fig. 5. Green jasper amulet found in Area D3, of a type dated to the second century C.E.

A serpent is depicted on one side of the amulet found at Dor; the other side features an emblem encircled with an unintelligible pseudo-Phoenician inscription. The type is dated to the second century C.E., and several of these amulets were found at nearby Caesarea.¹² The prophylactic nature of these amulets and the 'phoenicianizing' elements may form one aspect of the Eshmun-Asklepios cult.

¹² Anita Hamburger: *Gems from Caesaria Maritima 'Atiqot* (English Series) VIII (1968), p. 15; Pl. V:110–111.

In Area F we continued the excavation of the core of the temple podium and also began a 5 m. wide stratigraphic trench across the temple complex, from the podium to the street east of the temple. These new units confirmed some of our earlier hypotheses about the temple, but also provided a few surprises, which may entail basic changes in our understanding of the structure and the history of the sacred precinct. All previous reconstructions of the temple assumed that it was a south-facing prostyle longroom temple erected on a high podium, surrounded by a sunken courtyard on all four sides¹³ (Fig. 6). The main entrance into the precinct would have been, in this case, at the centre of its southern wall, and both gates in the eastern temenos wall would have been considered secondary entrances.

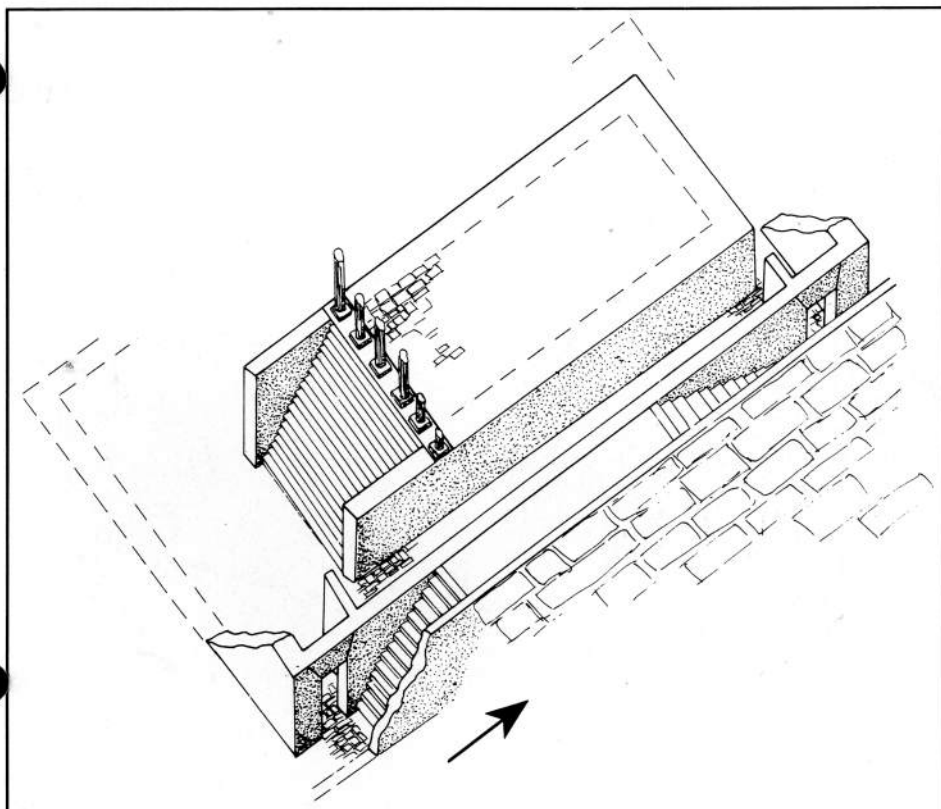


Fig. 6. Tel Dor, Area F: previous reconstruction of Roman temple.

13 J. Garstang: Tanturah (Dorah), *Bulletin of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem* 6 (1924), p. 67; J.E. Berg: *The Temple at Tel Dor, Israel* (M.A. thesis, California State University), Sacramento, 1985, p. 67; Stern and Sharon (above, n. 1), pp. 131–136.

The new east-west stratigraphic trench, located at the only spot where Garstang did not excavate (this was probably his dirt removal accessway), did not, in fact, reveal any structural remains of the temple building. Both the temenos wall and the eastern podium wall had been thoroughly robbed at this point. The floor level of the temple and the courtyard may, however, be estimated by the elevation of the pre-temple remains that were found. These remains indicate that there was no sunken courtyard east of the temple at all, but that the podium extended all the way to the line of the temenos wall and was thus three-sided: it was raised only in relation to the courtyard north, south and west of it, but was directly connected to the street to its west (Fig. 7). Therefore, it is most probable that the main gateway into the complex was at the centre of the eastern temenos wall. This raises several new options regarding the layout of the temple itself, including the possibility that it was actually of an east-facing broadroom plan.

Excavation inside the podium confirmed that it was constructed, together with the massive ashlar walls of the temple and the temenos, in the later of the two Roman

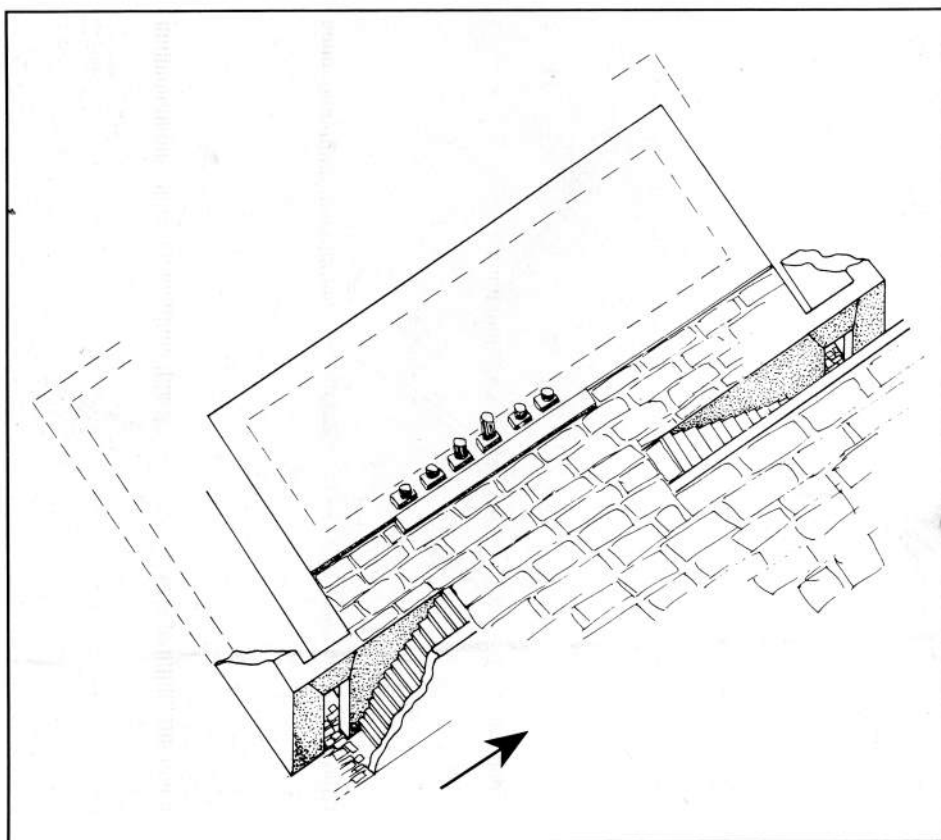


Fig. 7. Tel Dor, Area F: new reconstruction of Roman temple.

strata, and that remains dating from the Roman and late Hellenistic periods are buried inside it.

One of the early walls buried under the podium, however, has a very curious construction. On its outside face, it has a revetment with a jagged offset-inset façade for no apparent constructional reason, as well as two niches, one with a simple lintel and the other with a gabled one. Neither is moulded or decorated in any way, and no small objects of special significance were found by them. Nevertheless, these features once again raise the possibility that the monumental Late Roman temple was built over an earlier edifice. The floor reaching the 'niche wall' is datable to the late Hellenistic/early Roman stratum mentioned above, but the construction of the wall may well be earlier.

Two small art objects found in Area F and dating from these periods are noteworthy. One is a votive lead plaque showing a horse and rider (Fig. 8). Similar plaques were found in the vicinity of temples (e.g. at Ba'albek) and at pools or water installations attached to temples or of a supposedly hallowed nature, where they



0 1 2 cm.

Fig. 8. Votive Roman lead plaque depicting horse and rider, found in Area F.

were apparently tossed for luck. They usually depict deities, and were particularly popular in Roman legionary cults. One of the excavation directors is of the opinion that some of the horse trappings and details of the rider's armour are typically Macedonian.¹⁴ It is therefore possible that it is evidence of an Alexander cult, which is known among Roman legionaries.

The other find is a circular bone token (Fig. 9), with three towers depicted on one side and on the other the Greek word *baris* ('tower', 'fortress') and the number seven in both Latin and Greek symbols. Similar tokens were found in other Roman cities in Palestine and elsewhere, and are usually described as theatre tickets, although they are more likely to be gaming pieces (*calculi*) of a set of 15, played on a board (*abacus*).¹⁵



Fig. 9. Circular Roman bone token found in Area F.

14 Oral communication: A. Stewart.

15 Oral communication: Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom.