

History runs deep at Tel Dor—45 feet deep to be exact! Layer upon layer of ancient cities, each built on the ruins of its predecessor, have formed this immense mound on Israel's Mediterranean coast, about 12 miles south of Haifa. As extraordinary as the mound's size is the large number of different peoples who have occupied or controlled the site. Following the Canaanites, who led Dor in a coalition of cities opposing Joshua (Joshua 11:1-15), the city experienced a series of conquests by Sikils—a Sea People tribe—Phoenicians, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians. Despite this succession of conquests, the Phoenicians remained the dominant cultural force at Dor, which preserves one of the best records of their culture yet found.

In this first installment of a three-part article, Ephraim Stern, director of the Dor excavation, describes the Canaanite city's rise, its conquest by the Sikils and its reconquest by the Phoenicians. Part II, next issue, will examine the Phoenician-Israelite city at Dor until its fall to the Assyrians in 733 B.C.E. Part III, in the May/June issue, will look at the succession of absentee landlords—Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian—who ruled Dor until the city's complete Hellenization in the third century B.C.E.

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EPHRAIM STERN



STERS OF DOR

WHEN CANAANITES BECAME PHOENICIAN SAILORS

If you want to learn about the Phoenicians, come to Dor.¹ But Dor, you may say, was not part of Phoenicia proper. True enough. Thereby hangs my tale.

Actually, the Phoenicians were late Canaanites—Canaanites of the first millennium B.C.E.* "Phoenician" was the name given to these people by the Greeks. The name apparently denotes the dark red or purple dye for which the Phoenicians were famous. The Phoenicians, however, continued to refer to themselves as Canaanites, or by the names of their principal cities—Sidonians, Tyrians, Biblans, Arwadians.

During the second millennium B.C.E., the Canaanites controlled not only Palestine, but Transjordan and Syria as well, all the way from Ugarit in the north down to the Egyptian border in the south. Beginning in about 1200 B.C.E., they were squeezed out of most of this area by numerous peoples of various origins: Arameans penetrated from the northeast, Hittites from the northwest, Israelites and Sea Peoples (Philistines, Sikils, Sherden, etc.) in the south and Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites in the east. By about 1150 B.C.E., Canaanite territory was reduced to the narrow coastal strip of Lebanon between Arwad

and Tyre. Most of the Canaanite population lived in four main cities—Arwad, Byblos, Sidon and Tyre. From this point on, historians refer to this area as Phoenicia and to the people as Phoenicians.

If contraction characterized the 150-year period beginning about 1200 B.C.E., expansion characterized Phoenician history beginning about 1050 B.C.E.—not so much by conquest, however, as by colonization and cultural influence. This is what we are learning largely from archaeological evidence uncovered in recent decades.

The direction of Phoenician expansion was, for the most, part, westward: The Phoenicians became sailors, some of the most renowned in the world. First they reached Cyprus; then they journeyed on to the coasts of Sicily, Sardinia and Malta, subsequently to southern Spain and, particularly important, to northern Africa, thereby creating a vast commercial empire with its capital at Carthage. The Phoenician colonists in the western Mediterranean were later described by the Romans as "Punic"; in the three Punic Wars, Rome attacked and defeated Carthage, ending Punic domination of the western Mediterranean, including

Sicily, Sardinia and the Punic province in Spain. In the last of the Punic Wars, Carthage itself was, as Cato had so often demanded, destroyed.

Carthage was destroyed in 152 B.C.E. The Phoenician empire had lasted almost a millennium.

Tel Dor, where we have been digging for 12 seasons, is located on the eastern Mediterranean coast about 12 miles south of the Carmel spur and the modern Israeli city of Haifa. The rectangular tell itself lies on the seashore, enclosed by natural bays on the north and south. A third, smaller bay washes into the center of the western side of the tell. According to Israeli marine archaeologist Avner Raban, who has studied the coastline of the mound, a lagoon originally existed on the eastern side of the mound, so that the tell was almost completely surrounded by water, with the exception of a narrow passageway to the east. In the course of time, however, this lagoon was blocked with silt. Today the mound extends into the sea on three sides.

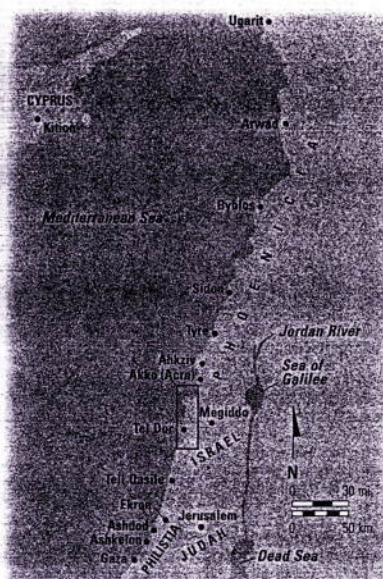
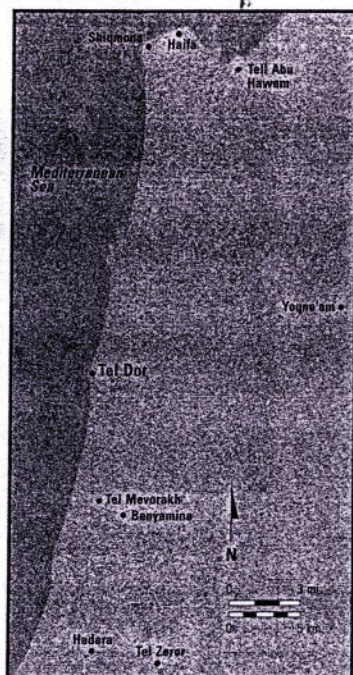
Nearly flat on top at present, Tel Dor rises over 45 feet above sea level. Most of this is artificial accumulation. In other words, to get to the earliest stratum, we will have to dig, in places, as much as 45 feet below the surface!

In antiquity, the tell apparently extended farther west, but from time to time the sea level has risen and the western side of the mound has washed away. In this way about 15 percent of the tell has disappeared.

Although Dor is mentioned in the Bible, the earliest reference to the city appears in an inscription of Pharaoh Ramesses II (13th century B.C.E.) that contains a list of settlements along the Via Maris, including its western branch running from the Sharon plain to the Acre plain. The archaeological finds, however, indicate that Dor was founded as early as the 20th century B.C.E. (Middle Bronze Age IIA). This was the Canaanite city that occupied the site for nearly a thousand years—until about 1200 B.C.E. Until about this time the Canaanites dominated the entire region—Palestine, Phoenicia, Syria and Transjordan. Canaanite material culture, well known from scores of excavations throughout the region, is exceedingly rich and varied. This was especially true during the Late Bronze Age (1500-1200 B.C.E.), after the Egyptian conquest of Palestine, when far-flung international trade and Egyptian domination had a strong influence on local culture. The most prosperous representatives of this culture seem to have been concentrated in the coastal cities and their immediate hinterland, cities like Ugarit, Byblos, Megiddo—and Dor. One day we will find more evidence of Canaanite Dor; however, because of the great depth of these remains, the present

PRECEDING PAGES: Nearly surrounded by water (the strips of green at upper center are freshwater fish ponds on the site of an ancient lagoon), Tel Dor occupies most of the peninsula at center. The excavation areas, visible as the lighter-colored places where the surface has been stripped away, cover only a small portion of the tell after 12 years of work, so much remains to be discovered.

* B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), used by this author, is the alternate designation corresponding to B.C. often used in scholarly literature.



TEL DOR

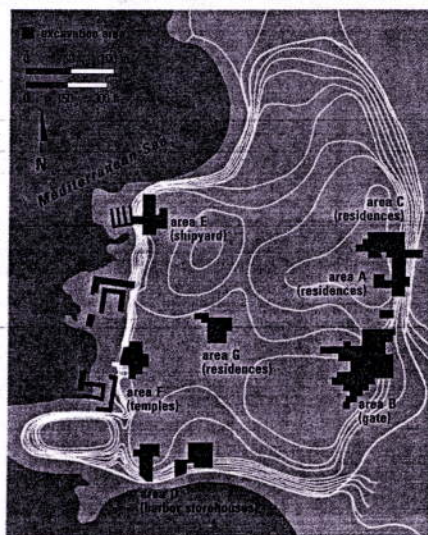
Although a Phoenician city, Tel Dor, about 12 miles south of Haifa, was not part of Phoenicia proper.

Below, a plan of the site shows the excavation areas.

excavations have not yet reached the strata in which they lie. Even after 12 excavation seasons, we have little information about the Canaanite city, except in a few spots near the sea that helped us establish the existence of the city at such an early date. The finds from these levels include not only much Middle and Late Bronze pottery, but also some Egyptian seals (see photos, p. 26). More than 50 percent of the pottery was imported, mostly from the west—Minoan, Mycenaean and Cypriot ware.

The next culture to make its appearance at Dor—in about 1200 B.C.E.—is that of the Sikils, one of the Sea Peoples, a collection of tribes of which the best known is the Philistines, who settled on the Mediterranean coast south of the Sikils. The Sikil culture at Dor provides a kind of 150-year interlude between the Canaanites and their Phoenician descendants.

Unlike the research on their brothers the Philistines, about whom we know a great deal, research on the Sikils is in its infancy. According to Egyptian literary sources, the Sea Peoples who attacked Palestine and Egypt at the beginning of the 12th century B.C.E. included several tribes: Philistines, Sikils, Sherden, Shekelesh, Denyen and Weshesh. Three or perhaps four of these tribes settled in Palestine: Philistines, Sikils and Sherden (from south to north),



floor consists of a layer of plaster. The structure abuts the eastern city wall, which is large and strongly built (see photo, opposite). The city wall is composed of a base nearly 10 feet high, built of very large stones, and nearly that wide at the bottom, although narrower at the top. This stone base supported a stout wall made of flat, square mudbricks and preserved to a height of about two feet. A sand rampart was piled against the outer side of the wall to protect the foundations. This rampart was covered with a thick layer of clay to protect it from erosion and rain.

We initially dated this wall to the Middle Bronze Age II (1800-1550 B.C.E.) because of the Middle Bronze Age sherds we found in the rampart built against the wall and also because tremendous fortifications with ramparts like this (the so-called Hyksos rampart) were common in the Middle Bronze Age. However, we found 12th-century pottery all the way down to the bottom of the wall. We were forced to conclude that this entire massive fortification was built in the 12th century. It is the strongest fortification system from this period discovered in Palestine!

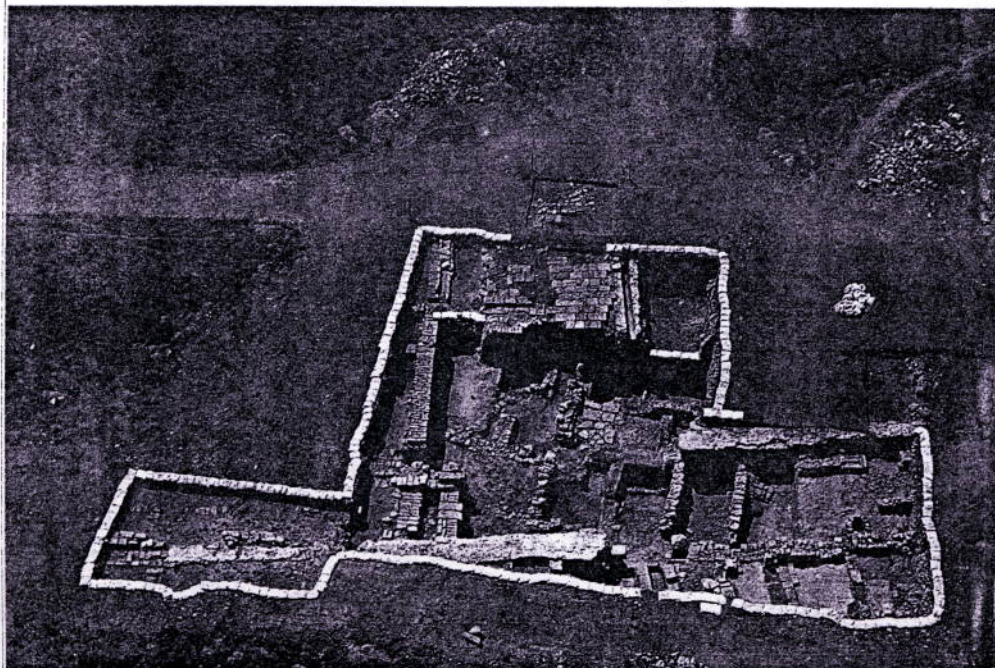
The same thick destruction layer resulting from a violent conflagration appeared on the other (western) side of the mound (our area F). Although we have

not yet reached a clear floor level, this is enough to conclude that at this time (mid-12th to mid-11th centuries B.C.E.) the city extended over the entire mound and was violently destroyed. In our last season (1992), we also found the remains of the same fierce conflagration in the city center (our area G).

The burning question—if we may make a bad pun about a terrible disaster—is to whom did this large, fortified, and now-destroyed city belong? And by whom was it destroyed? Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence does not give us a clear answer. For example, we found a *pythos* (storage jar) decorated with wavy lines in relief; this form is known from the Upper Galilee, from the Syro-Palestinian coast and especially from Cyprus, but it may well have originated in the West. Could this be a Sikkil vessel? Other vessels include a flask decorated with red concentric circles (see photo, p. 30), several storage jars that continue the Canaanite storage-jar tradition and some small bowls. Although this pottery unquestionably dates this stratum to the second half of the 12th and first half of the 11th centuries B.C.E., it gives no clear indication of the identity of the builders of the city.

Other potsherds include Philistine bichrome ware (see photo, p. 30) and part of a rhyton (formal drinking cup) in the shape of a ram's head. This was decorated with painted patterns of a type found at Philistine sites such as Ashdod, Tell es-Safi (Gath), Tel Miqne (Ekron), Tell Qasile and Tell Jerishe on the banks of the Yarkon, as well as at two sites closer to Dor (Tel Zeror and Megiddo).

A FIERCE CONFLAGRATION consumed the Sikkil city, leaving behind shattered limestone, oxidized mudbricks and abundant ash. In this aerial photo, sandbags outline excavation area G, the center of the Sikkil city, where archaeologists in 1992 found evidence of the fire. The exposed structures are all regular residential buildings.





THE CITY WALL (above). Excavation has exposed this glimpse of the Sikil city's eastern wall, at center. A 2-foot-high superstructure of flat, square mudbricks rests on a 10-foot-high base of large stones. The outlines of the bricks can be seen most clearly on the left side of the wall. Potsherds found beneath the wall date the wall's construction to the 12th century B.C.E. Despite having the strongest fortification of this period yet discovered in Palestine, the city was conquered about 1050 B.C.E. by the Phoenicians. The remains of the burnt Sikil city lie to the right of the wall.

The Sikil destruction layer in area B1 (left) shows blackened, charcoal-laden earth and broken pottery at center.

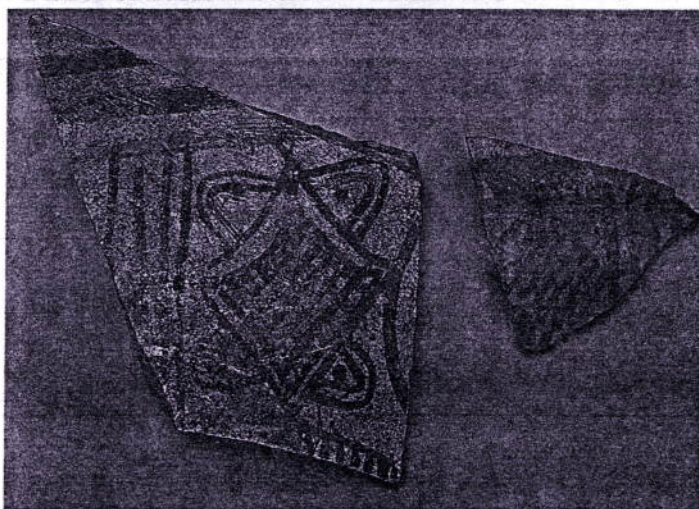


A final, somewhat more exotic find from this period was a bovine scapula (a cow's shoulder blade) with incisions along its edges (see photo, p. 31). Five similar scapulas have recently been discovered in a Philistine temple at Tel Miqne (Ekron). Many other examples are known from contemporaneous temples in Cyprus. The Ekron excavators suggest that their specimens were brought by the Philistines from Cyprus. The function of these scapulas is not clear. Some scholars think they formed part of a musical instrument; others more plausibly suggest that they were used in some kind of divination for foretelling the future.

All this at the very least hints that Dor was a Sikil

city. This conclusion is also supported by the literary evidence, especially "The Tale of Wen-Amon." Although no certain conclusions can be reached at this time, it does appear that the city belonged to the Sikils and was destroyed by someone in about 1050 B.C.E. The Sikil city had been captured from the Canaanites about 150 years earlier. The Sikils, however, formed only a small part of the population. They therefore had less impact on the local culture of the city than was the case farther south, where the Philistine tribes settled in much larger numbers.

Our underwater colleague Avner Raban has investigated Dor's harbors and their associated installations. Adjacent to the southern harbor, he discovered



SIKIL POTTERY. Painted in two colors, red and black, these pottery sherds (lower photo) from the Sikil city are identical in style to Philistine bichrome ware of the late 12th and early 11th centuries B.C.E. Such pottery bears figurative designs of birds, other animals and humans and geometric designs that differ from those on Mycenaean ware. Other pottery remains discovered in the Sikil occupation level include an elegant, 16-inch-high flask decorated with red concentric circles (upper photo).

what he believes was a quay built by the Sikils when they controlled the city. The harbor installations at Dor, according to Raban, are the earliest in Palestine that can definitely be attributed to one of the Sea Peoples. Several of these installations resemble harbor installations at the Minoan site of Mallia in Crete and at Kition in Cyprus.

All this suggests a Sea People presence at Dor, although we cannot yet confidently distinguish between the material culture of the Philistines and that of the Sikils.

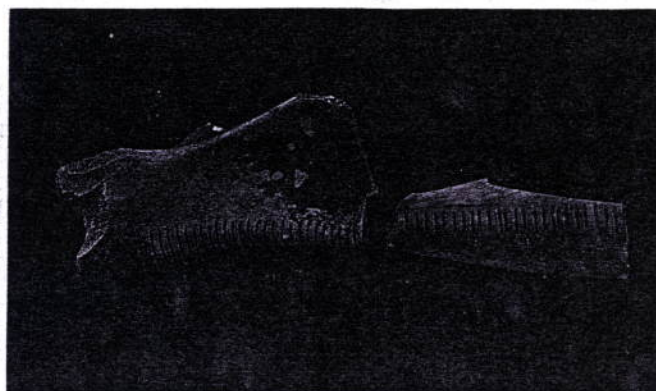
Who destroyed the Sea People city of Dor is also difficult to tell. The archaeological evidence suggests a date in the mid-11th century B.C.E., about 50 years before King David ascended to the throne. Whoever destroyed Dor was probably responsible for the contemporaneous destruction of a number of sites in the Acre valley and on the northern coast, such as Akhziv, Tell Keisan, Tell Abu Hawam, Megiddo, Yoqne'am, and Tel Mikhel. In all of these sites, Phoenician material suddenly begins to appear in the mid-11th century B.C.E.

The principal Phoenician cities—Tyre, Sidon, Byblos and Arwad—never fell to the Sea Peoples. Indeed, this was the only area of Canaan, whose culture had flourished in the second millennium B.C.E., that remained unconquered. Undoubtedly many Canaanite refugees made their way here, and these

cities experienced a rapid expansion and cultural growth. They soon began to spread their influence to adjacent regions, using the natural resources of the territory left to them—wood and harbors. This small Phoenician enclave in effect constituted a cultural island. As its population increased, its influence expanded—initially to the coast of Cyprus, where the first Phoenician colonies were apparently founded, then along the northern Palestinian coast, where a struggle for control

of the marine trade routes ensued.

In my opinion, Dor was attacked and destroyed by the Phoenicians in the course of this struggle, as undoubtedly happened also at the Sea People city of Acre and at other coastal cities held by the tribe of the Sherden. In the coastal cities south of the Yarkon, where the Philistines held sway, the Phoenicians came



BONE OF CONTENTION. Scholars disagree as to the function of this fragmentary cow scapula, or shoulder blade, which is incised with short parallel lines of unknown meaning. Found in the Sikkil occupation level (1150-1050 B.C.E.), it resembles five other incised scapulas discovered in a Philistine temple in Tel Miqne (Ekron) and many others from Cyprus. Although some scholars believe these scapulas were pieces of a musical instrument, the Ekron examples suggest to other scholars that they probably served a cultic purpose.

in peace as traders.

After King David united the Israelite tribes in about 1000 B.C.E., he attacked the Philistines in the south. According to the Bible, he also captured the northern coast, including Dor, taking it from the Phoenicians who had wrested it from the Sea People tribe of Sikkil. But either he or his son Solomon decided to withdraw from some of the coastal areas in the north in return for economic and commercial cooperation with the Phoenicians. This was, in short, a recognition of Phoenician cultural superiority in art, in building construction, and especially in shipbuilding, harbors and trade.

The destruction of the Sea People city of Dor as well as other contemporaneous cities in the area—and their rapid revitalization—were part of the Phoenician expansion. If, in the course of their expansion south, the Phoenicians had not come up against a united Israelite kingdom led by King David—which of course prevented their further expansion in this direction—they might not have turned so quickly to colonize the western Mediterranean. But they did—and they did as far west as Spain.

Phoenician culture soon became dominant at Dor and remained so for 800 years—even after the city was conquered by the Israelites and then by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonians. Formally it may not have been Phoenician after these conquests, but culturally it was.

In contrast to the Philistines, about whom we learn so much from the Bible, the Phoenicians are not even mentioned by name. We hear of them in some ancient royal inscriptions (principally of Assyrian kings) and from Greek sources, but the latter are mostly hostile: Beginning in about 650 B.C.E., Greeks and Phoenicians competed for over 500 years for control of the Mediterranean. The Phoenician sources themselves consist mostly of dedicatory inscriptions that contain no significant historical facts.

Another anomaly: For many years, most of the

archaeological data on the Phoenicians came not from the Phoenician center (excavations at their four major cities—Arwad, Byblos, Sidon and Tyre—have not yielded much information because of changes in sea level and long sequences of occupation from antiquity to modern times), but from excavations outside of the Phoenician motherland.* Recently, important archaeological discoveries have been made at sites along the northern coastal strip of modern Israel, which forms the southern end of Phoenicia proper. Among these sites are Akhziv, Acre, Tell Keisan, Rosh Beth Zayit, Tell Abu Hawam and Shiqmona. But the most important site in this region is Tel Dor—the largest, most complete and best preserved Phoenician city yet excavated on the entire Phoenician coast. Aside from these excavations along the eastern rim of the Mediterranean, the richest and most beautiful Phoenician finds have been uncovered in Cyprus and in some Greek islands like Samos and Crete, in the Assyrian palaces at Nimrud and Khorsabad (as booty captured by the Assyrians) and in the western Phoenician colonies, such as Carthage, Motya (Sicily) and Tarsos (Sardinia).

Thus, from both the historical and the archaeological viewpoints, we are forced to rely on foreign sources and on excavations outside Phoenicia to learn about the Phoenicians!

The Phoenicians are of course important to students of the Bible. Here, too, the Phoenicians are special. They were the nearest people to the ancient Israelites in every respect. They spoke the same language, wrote in the same script and even practiced a very similar religion, at least in the First Temple period. They and the Israelites built Jerusalem together (Hiram helped Solomon build the Temple [1 Kings 5:1-18]), as well as several other cities, and went on joint trading expeditions (1 Kings 10:22). Their work-

* Important exceptions are the excavations at smaller sites, such as Ras Basir, Ras Ibn Hani, Tell Sukas and Sarepta (Biblical Zarephath).

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