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# Unpublished Phoenician Inscriptions from Palestine

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In the Persian period, although Aramaic script became dominant throughout the Achaemenid empire, and the use of the old Hebrew script in Judah and Samaria was very limited, Phoenician settlers and merchants in various towns and villages in Palestine employed the Phoenician language and script. The short inscriptions published here represent a small contribution to the Palestinian Phoenician inscriptions already known from the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. These include ostraca and jar inscriptions found in 'Akko,<sup>1</sup> Shiqmona<sup>2</sup> and Bat Yam<sup>3</sup> on the Mediterranean coast, and at Tell el-Kheleifeh near Elath.<sup>4</sup> This paper deals with four texts; two of them come from archaeological excavations at Tel Anafa and Tel Dor, while the other two were bought in Gaza.

1. At Tel Anafa in Upper Galilee, fragments of a jar (TA 80 P 68) were unearthed, on whose handle was an elongated seal impression (Pl. I: C, D), measuring about 3 × 1 cm.<sup>5</sup> and reading as follows:

גרמלקרת      Germelqart

An impression of the same seal was already known from a jar handle found in 1923/24 in Byblos.<sup>6</sup> The name Germelqart occurs in an incised jar inscription from Sarepta<sup>7</sup> and it is known from two Phoenician texts from Cyprus (*CIS* I, 47–48) and many Punic inscriptions.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. Dothan: A Phoenician Inscription from Akko, *IEJ* 35 (1985), pp. 81–94.

<sup>2</sup> F.M. Cross: Jar Inscriptions from Shiqmona, *IEJ* 18 (1968), pp. 226–233; B. Delavault and A. Lemaire: Les inscriptions phéniciennes de Palestine, *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 7 (1979), pp. 14–16, Nos. 25–27.

<sup>3</sup> J.B. Peckham: An Inscribed Jar from Bat-Yam, *IEJ* 16 (1966), pp. 11–17; Delavault and Lemaire, above (n. 2), p. 22, No. 45.

<sup>4</sup> J. Naveh: The Scripts of Two Ostraca from Elat, *BASOR* 183 (1966), pp. 27–28; Delavault and Lemaire (above, n. 2), pp. 28–29, No. 56.

<sup>5</sup> My thanks are due to S.S. Weinberg, Gladys Weinberg and Sharon Herbert, who excavated Tel Anafa on behalf of the Universities of Missouri and Michigan, for entrusting me with the publication of this stamp.

<sup>6</sup> Ch. Virolleaud: Les travaux archéologiques en Syrie, *Syria* 5 (1924), p. 119.

<sup>7</sup> J. Teixidor, in J.B. Pritchard: *Sarepta*, Philadelphia, 1975, pp. 99–100.

<sup>8</sup> F.L. Benz: *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions*, Rome, 1972, p. 104.

The script of the stamp is generally formal in style, but there are two cursive traits: the headless *resh* and, in particular, the X-shaped *mem*. The results of the palaeographic analysis of this inscription agree with the archaeological dating proposed by the excavators: 'The jar was used as the lining for a stove which was built into a floor of the last phase of the late Hellenistic stuccoed building. The floor and the construction of the stove (locus 7909) should date to the first quarter of the 1st century B.C.E. — 100–80 B.C.E. The jar is of course in reuse in the stove and could originally come from any level earlier than the floor. Similar hole-mouthed jars have been found in the 3rd and early 2nd century contexts at Tel Anafa and elsewhere.'<sup>9</sup>

2. Among the remains of a fourth century B.C.E. building excavated at Tel Dor was found a sherd, 85 × 55 mm., and 8 mm. thick<sup>10</sup> on which letters were incised after firing (Pl. 1:E). The text reads:

[...מלכנ]    Milkn[...]  
[...נער אש]    servant of Esh[mun...]

The word נער, meaning 'youth, servant, squire', is known from Biblical Hebrew,<sup>11</sup> Ugaritic<sup>12</sup> and Phoenician (*CIS* I, 86). The construction of this inscription, PN<sub>1</sub> n' PN<sub>2</sub>, occurs in some Hebrew seals, a Moabite one and an Ammonite one,<sup>13</sup> as well as on a Hebrew ostrakon from Arad.<sup>14</sup>

This fragmentary Phoenician text from Tel Dor<sup>15</sup> fits in with the historical description in the funerary inscription of Eshmunazor king of Sidon (*CIS* I, 3), lines 18–19:

\*    ועד יתן לן אדן מלכם אית דאר ויפי ארצת דגן האדרת אש בשד שרן

'Furthermore, the lord of kings (i.e. the Persian emperor) gave us Dor and Yafo, the great corn-lands which are in the field of Sharon.'

3. In 1976 two inscribed jars were bought in Gaza, which were said to have been

<sup>9</sup> From a letter from Sharon Herbert, 22 June, 1982. See also Sharon Herbert: Tel Anafa, Notes and News, *IEJ* 31 (1981), pp. 105–107; *IEJ* 32 (1982), pp. 59–61.

<sup>10</sup> See E. Stern and I. Sharon: Tel Dor, Notes and News, *IEJ* 33 (1983), p. 118. I would like to thank E. Stern for allowing me to publish this sherd.

<sup>11</sup> See J. MacDonald: The Status and Role of the Na'ar in Israelite Society, *JNES* 35 (1976), pp. 140–170; A.F. Rainey: Three Additional Ostraca from Arad, *Tel Aviv* 4 (1977), pp. 97–98.

<sup>12</sup> C.H. Gordon: *Ugaritic Textbook*, Rome, 1965, p. 445.

<sup>13</sup> N. Avigad: New Light on the Na'ar Seals, in F.M. Cross et al. (ed.): *Magnalia Dei, The Mighty Acts of God; Essays on Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G.E. Wright*, Garden City, N.Y., 1976, pp. 294–300; idem, Titles and Symbols on Hebrew Seals, *EI* 15 (1981), p. 303 (Hebrew).

<sup>14</sup> Rainey (above, n. 11); idem *apud* Y. Aharoni: *Arad Inscriptions*, Jerusalem, 1981, No. 110, pp. 122–123.

<sup>15</sup> For another short Phoenician inscription from Tel Dor see Delavault and Lemaire (above, n. 2), No. 39.

found in or near the town.<sup>16</sup> One (Pl. 1:F) bears an inscription in a formal handwriting:

עבדבעל 'Abdba'al

4. The other jar inscription (Pl. 2:A, B) is much more cursive; it reads as follows:

א	A
דנג	wax
ין עז שבח	improved wine of Gaza <sup>17</sup>
ב[///] למלך	in (year) 4 of the king

Before discussing this inscription, let us consider five other Phoenician jar inscriptions of a similar nature, found in Egypt, Cyprus and Palestine.

A. A fragment of a jar found at Saqqarah, Egypt. On it was inscribed in ink the following Phoenician text.<sup>18</sup>

מלכמחר	Milkmaḥar (?)
העכי	the 'Akkoite
א	A

The reading of the first word is doubtful, but it is probably the name of a person who came from 'Akko.

B. From Idalion, Cyprus comes a jar inscribed:<sup>19</sup>

כלבנ[...]	Kalbn[...]
א	A

The text comprises an incomplete personal name and the letter *alef*.

C. The following jar inscription was found in Larnaca, Cyprus:<sup>20</sup>

𐤀	(a mark)
א	A
צדקא	Ṣidqa

<sup>16</sup> These jars were purchased by R. Hecht; Y. Meshorer drew my attention to them. My thanks are due to both of them for asking me to publish these inscriptions. The jar published here as Inscription No. 4 has been donated by Dr. Hecht to the Israel Museum (No. 80.3.4).

<sup>17</sup> For an alternative rendering see below, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> N. Aimé-Giron: *Adversaria Semitica*, *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 38 (1939), pp. 18–19, Pl. 1:2.

<sup>19</sup> O. Masson and M. Sznycer: *Recherches sur les phéniciens à Chypre*, Paris, 1972, p. 112, Pl. XIII:2 and the bibliography there.

<sup>20</sup> N. Avigad in V. Karageorghis: *Chronique de fouilles à Chypre en 1966*, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 91 (1967), pp. 292–293; Masson and Sznycer (above, n. 19), p. 121, Pl. XV:2–3.



'There is no difference in opinion: in the place where one of the differing teachers lives they line the jars with wax, which does not absorb much, whereas in the place of the other teacher they line the jars with pitch, which absorbs much.'

Line 3. The first word,  $\text{ין}$ , is clear, but the two following words need some discussion.

The identification of the fourth letter as *zayin* is not entirely certain. Only two other examples of this form are known, in two Phoenician jar inscriptions from Elephantine.<sup>24</sup> Whereas on Elephantine jar No. 5 the identification of the *zayin* seems to be substantiated in the name  $\text{בעלעזר}$ , on jar No. 45 Lidzbarski read  $\text{לעכוסמסך}$ , remarking 'Die Lesung ist sicher, aber erklären kann ich den Namen nicht'.<sup>25</sup> Peckham copied both *zayins* and described them as follows: 'The left arm is drawn downward, the pen-stroke continues upward from the base and downward in a vertical right arm'.<sup>26</sup> The letter in our jar inscription does not seem to possess a left arm at all. Nevertheless, even if this form is exceptional, any letter other than *zayin* is less likely.

$\text{ין עז}$  may be understood either as 'wine of Gaza', or as 'strong wine'.<sup>27</sup> On the contemporary coins struck in Gaza the name of the city is indicated as  $\text{עז}$  in formal Phoenician letters,<sup>28</sup> or as  $\text{עזה}$  in the Aramaic script.<sup>29</sup> The rendering 'strong wine' corresponds to the Aramaic  $\text{חמר עשין}$ <sup>30</sup> (Targum Psalms 75:9) and to Akkadian *karanu dannu*.<sup>31</sup> Although both translations are possible, I prefer 'wine of Gaza', not only because the jar was probably found there, but also because it was (and is) very common to name a wine by its place of origin: cf. the Shiqmona jar inscription E mentioned above, 'wine of Gat Carmel', as well as  $\text{יין חלבון}$ , 'wine of Helbon' (Ezek. 27:18, also known from Mesopotamian and classical sources),<sup>32</sup>  $\text{חמר צידן}$ , 'wine of Sidon' and  $\text{חמר מצרין}$ , 'wine of Egypt',<sup>33</sup>  $\text{היין השרוני}$ , 'the wine of Sharon' (Mishnah,

<sup>24</sup> M. Lidzbarski: *Phönizische und aramäische Krugaufschriften aus Elephantine*, Berlin, 1912.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Peckham (above, n. 23), p. 144.

<sup>27</sup> The rendering 'strong wine' was first suggested to me by A. Demsky.

<sup>28</sup> G.F. Hill: *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, Palestine*, London, 1914, pp. 177-179, Nos. 5, 13, 15, 16; *Sylloge Numorum Graecorum*, VI: Palestine and South Arabia, New York 1981, Nos. 1, 35-36. The abbreviation  $\text{ע}$  also occurs.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Catalogue, p. 176, Nos. 1-2; *Sylloge*, No. 31. My thanks are due to Y. Meshorer for these references.

<sup>30</sup> See J.C. Greenfield (in D. Ussishkin: Excavations at Tel Lachish 1973-1977, *Tel Aviv* 5 [1978], pp. 83-84) who interpreted the inscription  $\text{יין עשין}$  found in Lachish on a decanter as 'strong wine', whereas Demsky translated the same words 'smoked wine'. See also A. Demsky: A Note on 'Smoked Wine', *Tel Aviv* 6 (1979), p. 163.

<sup>31</sup> See S.M. Paul: Classifications of Wine in Mesopotamian and Rabbinic Sources, *IEJ* 25 (1975), p. 44, n. 15.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> A. Cowley: *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, 1923, No. 72.

*Niddah* 2:7) כרמלי (יין), 'wine of Carmel' (*BT Niddah* 21a) and יין קפריסין, 'wine of Cyprus' (*BT Keritot* 6a).

The expression 'wine of Gaza' has not yet been attested before the Byzantine period. There is a fourth century C.E. mention of Gazan wine by an anonymous writer, who says that 'Ascalon et Gaza ... mittunt omni regioni Syriae et Aegypti vinum optimum' (Ascalon and Gaza ... send the best wine to all the regions of Syria and Egypt).<sup>34</sup> During the fifth and sixth centuries C.E., the term *vinum Gazetum* became a *topos* used by poets and a symbol of quality used by writers.<sup>35</sup>

The last word in this line, שבח, probably describes the 'wine of Gaza' — the contents of the jar. The root שבח was hitherto unknown from Phoenician texts, but occurs in Aramaic and in later Biblical Hebrew in the *pi'el* form, meaning 'to praise'. Thus שבח may indicate 'praiseworthy', though here one would rather expect a passive (*pu'al*) participle, i.e. משבח. In Jewish Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew, however, this root, generally in the *qal* and *hif'il* forms, has another meaning: 'to improve, rise in value'. In fact, Mishnah, *Terumot* 11:1 and *BT Baba Batra* 20b say that smoking or boiling improves wine<sup>36</sup> and use the word משביחו.

*Line 4.* The mention of the year, counted from the accession of a certain king, follows the formula X למלך as in the jar inscriptions from Shiqmona and Alassa (Nos. D and E above). The year is also indicated on the eighth century B.C.E. Samaria ostraca and in the first century B.C.E. ostraca from Nisa, the Parthian capital, which also deal with wine.<sup>37</sup> Although these two groups of inscribed sherds were unearthed in two excavations which were a long way apart in distance, time and culture, they had the same function. In the wine cellars of Nisa over two thousand ostraca were found, written in Aramaic (or in Parthian, in Aramaic ideographic writing). The Nisa texts generally begin with כחותא זנה 'in this jar (there is) ...', followed by the quantity of wine, its quality and origin, and the year (of the Arsacid era, reckoned from 247 B.C.E.). The ostraca from Nisa and from Samaria were labels placed near the wine jars in the royal store-rooms,<sup>38</sup> where the wine was brought as a tax. On these ostraca the mention of the fiscal year seems to be plausible.

It is not likely that the short Phoenician texts written in ink on jars had a similar function to that of the ostraca discussed above. The jar inscriptions were rather commercial notes describing the contents of the jar. The information brought to the attention of the consumer was generally the name of the wine (i.e. its origin), and/or the name of the vinegrower, the quality (*alef*) and the year of the vintage.

<sup>34</sup> *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* (ed. J. Rougé), Paris, 1966, p. 162; Y. Dan: The Foreign Trade of Palestine in the Byzantine Period, *Cathedra* 23 (1982), p. 17 (Hebrew).

<sup>35</sup> P. Mayerson: The Wine and Vineyards of Gaza in the Byzantine Period, *BASOR* 257 (1985), p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> See Demsky (above, n. 30); Paul (above, n. 31), p. 44.

<sup>37</sup> I.M. Diakonoff and V.A. Livshits: *Parthian Economic Documents from Nisa*, London, 1976, *passim*.

<sup>38</sup> J. Naveh: The Aramaic Ostraca, in Y. Aharoni (ed.): *Beer Sheva I*, Tel Aviv, 1973, p. 82, where this subject was discussed.