CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE
ISTITUTO PER LA CIVILTÀ FENICIA E PUNICA

NOTIZIARIO

E. STERN – Jerusalem

PHOENICIAN FINDS FROM TEL DOR, ISRAEL

(*Estratto da*: RIVISTA DI STUDI FENICI - Vol. XIX, 1 - 1991)

1991
CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE
ROMA

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TAVV. IX-XVI

A. *A Limestone Plaque*

The limestone plaque fragment described here was discovered in the tenth (1989) season of excavations at Tel Dor. It was found in Area B1 on the eastern side of the mound ([1]). Only one-third of the upper part of the plaque has survived. The fragment is 5.4-6.0 cm. long, 6.0 cm. wide and 1.5-2 cm. thick. The sides of the plaque were smoothly worked and reinforced. We can assume that the total length of the complete plaque was about 16-18 cm. It was uncovered in Locus 11130, which was actually a layer of earth fill below a fortification wall dated by us to about the mid-4th century B.C. This fill, which contained many potsherds of the Persian period, separated the foundation of the wall from a well-preserved stone pavement of the underlying stratum. The stone pavement belongs to a wide, sloping road leading from an outer gate (not yet excavated) to an inner two-room gate dating from the Assyrian period to the late Persian period, i.e., from the late 8th to the mid-4th century ([2]).

Because of the fragmentary state of the plaque, and its discovery in a layer of earth which was merely a fill, it can be stated with certainty that it was brought from elsewhere, a fact which is of some importance in establishing the plaque's date. The context of the find clearly points to the Iron Age, for the extensive area excavated around this locus and below it did not yield a single potsherd which could be attributed to the earlier Late Bronze Age. This, however, does not solve the problem of its exact date within the Iron Age.

One possibility is to attribute the plaque to the upper level, i.e., to the stratum of the two-room gate (late 8th or 7th century B.C.). But stylistically a second possibility is more plausible, i.e., that the layer of earth fill containing the plaque had been

(1) The excavations at Tel Dor have been conducted by the writer since 1980. In the tenth season, Area B1, where the plaque was uncovered, was supervised by I. Berg and Ayelet Gilboa, assisted by E. Ben Ari. The number of the plaque in the excavation's register is 111076. The photo was made by Z. Radovan and the drawing by Ziv Arad.

(2) Cf. E. STERN, *Hazor, Dor and Megiddo in the Time of Ahab and Under Assyrian Rule*: *Israel Exploration Journal*, 40 (1990), pp. 12-30.

removed from the debris of a previous stratum, namely, the stratum of the four-room gate dating to the period of the Israelite Kingdom (9th-8th centuries B.C.) which underlies it (3).

The plaque is made – as was mentioned above – of limestone, and depicts a man's head in low relief. The head is shown in profile, but the body is in a frontal position in the typical Egyptian fashion. The details of the face were artistically executed by a well-trained hand. On the man's head is set a closefitting cap which also covers the forehead. Only an ear projects outside the cap. The other facial features emphasized are the eyes and eyebrows, the elongated nose and the fleshy lips. The man is clean-shaven although it is clear that he is an adult. The elongated neck terminates in a deep incision which probably indicates that the shoulders were covered with a garment from wich it projected. Of the hands or the lower part of the body nothing has survived, and one can reconstruct the complete figure as one wishes (see below).

It seems that this figure with its headgear, ear, cleanshaven face, and especially its posture, resembles Egyptian prototypes, but at the same time many of its details are foreign to the pure Egyptian tradition. This kind of composition, however, is typical of the Canaanite-Phoenician world, and it can be stated with confidence that this small relief indeed originated in their territory.

The only part of the garment completely preserved is – as was noted above – the headgear which covers the entire head, giving it an elongated, pointed shape. While the origins of this headgear is no doubt in Egypt, it had also been adopted by the Canaanite population of Palestine and Syria, and became the standard headgear of the region as early as the Late Bronze Age.

Of the many analogies known at present, the closest, and an almost identical, example is a beautiful bronze plaque discovered in Stratum 2 (LBA I) in Area H at Hazor. The discoverer – Y. Yadin – was of the opinion that it depicted the figure of a Canaanite nobleman (4). Almost all the other analogies, with the exception of one or two, are ivory plaques of the same period. Especially numerous are the depictions on LBA II ivory plaques discovered at Megiddo. In these, the headgear is shown worn by the king and his officials, as well as by soldiers, servants and the common people (5). It should also be noted that on another well-known ivory plaque of the period, found by F. Petrie at Tel el-Fara'h (South), this same headgear is worn by one of the officials standing behind the king's throne (6). In this ivory, however, all the other parts of the figure's dress, as well as of the king and his attendants, are typically Egyptian.

(3) *Ibid.*, n. 2.

(4) Y. YADIN, *Hazor, The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible*, New York 1975, pp. 116-17.

(5) G. LOUD, *The Megiddo Ivories*. Chicago 1939, Pls. 4, 32-33.

(6) F. PETRIE, *Beth Pelet I*, London 1930, Pl. LV.

Other Canaanite ivory plaques depicting people wearing the same headgear have been discovered in northern Canaanite centers. Two plaques, for example, have been found at LBA Ugarit ([7]), and more will no doubt be uncovered if a through search is made among the other LBA ivories unearthed in the area.

In addition to the LBA bronze and ivory plaques mentioned above, we also possess plaques made of limestone. Of these, one uncovered at Tel el-'Ajjul depicts a similar male head ([8]).

On some of the Megiddo and Tel el-Fara'h (South) ivories of the LBA, we can often observe scenes of daily life in the palaces of the local governors. In these, the governor is usually depicted sitting on his throne behind which stand one or more stewards, and in front of him is a table with dished and food. A long line of attendants, officials, soldiers, captives or fishermen are shown carrying tributes in their hands. These motifs – and many other Canaanite motifs – continue to appear from this period up to the Iron Age as, for example, the well-known relief on the sarcophagus of Ahiram King of Byblos in the 10th century B.C. ([9]) and the Nimrud Ivories of the 9th-8th centuries B.C. ([10]).

An additional example which also proves that this motif was still common in the Iron Age is an ivory plaque from Samaria which is important enough to merit – in our opinion – a separate discussion ([11]). (The Samaria Ivories date, as is well known, from 870 to 720 B.C., i.e., from the establishment of the city to its destruction).

Of this ivory only a small part has survived, but it clearly depicts the figure of a Phoenician governor sitting on a throne. Behind him stands the «Tree of Life» and an attendant, of whom only the head of the man and the lower parts of his feet and of the tree have survived. No doubt the complete scene depicted a royal banquet, like that

(7) C. F. A. SCHAEFFER, *Les Fouilles de Ras Shamra Ugarit 1951-1953*: *Syria*, 31 (1959), Pls. VIII-IX.

(8) First published by W. F. M. PETRIE, *City of the Shepherd Kings and Ancient Gaza V*, London 1952, Pl. XX: 2 (only a schematic drawing), later by a photo in *Qadmoniot*, 22 (1989), p. 105, in the Hebrew version of this article, with the kind permission of the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israel Museum. The plaque had been attibuted to the Amarna Age (14th century B.C.) and is probably included with a group of other plaques of a type found in Tel el-Amarna itself. Petrie and other scholars called them «trial pieces» and believed they served as small models for sculptors, so that only the head was usually depicted in these «pieces» and cf. W. F. M. PETRIE, *Tell el Amarna*, London 1894, p. 11, Pl. XI; C. ALDRED, *Akhenaton and Nefertiti*, New York 1975, p. 96.

(9) Cf. J. B. PRITCHARD, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton 1954, p. 157, fig. 456.

(10) Cf., for example, R. D. BARNETT, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories*, London 1957, Pl. III: C1, C4, or S. MOSCATI (ed.), *The Phoenicians*, Milano 1988, p. 567.

(11) Cf. J. W. CROWFOOT - G. M. CROWFOOT, *Early Ivories from Samaria*, London 1938, Pl. XI.

shown on the Megiddo and Tel el-Far'ah (South) ivories or on the Ahiram sarcophagus. The resemblance between the attendant's head and headgear with that of the figure on the Tel Dor plaque is striking. The governor's headgear, however, has several grooves which, in our opinion, are intended to imitate the grooves on an Egyptian wig. It is also clear that in this period the above headgear was also worn by Horus-Harpokrates, as he is protrayed on some of the Samaria Ivories ([12]) and elsewhere ([13]). In this context we should also mention that similar figures with the same headgear often appear on Phoenician metal bowls as, for example, on the Phoenician bronze bowl of the 8th century B.C. found at Olympia in Greece, where the familiar scene of a governor sitting on a throne before a laden table is again depicted ([14]).

From the surviving part of the shoulders of the Tel Dor plaque, it seems that they were covered with a loose garment – a kind of cape. This may be the reason for the deep groove incised between the neck and the shoulders. A similar garment described by Y. Yadin as «poncho-like» covers the shoulders of the Canaanite dignitary from Hazor mentioned above ([15]) i.e., the figure is clad in a robe ending in wrappings at the bottom, which is the traditional Egyptian-Canaanite robe ([16]). On top of it he wears the «poncho».

In many scenes in Iron Age ivories from Nimrud one can find a similar two-piece garment ([17]). One of these portrays a clean-shaven Phoenician nobleman executed in Phoenicio-Egyptian style, which was discovered in Mallowan's excavations in Fort Shalmaneser ([18]). Generally speaking, the two figures, although differing from one another in details, are very similar.

The Plaque's Use

Even at first sight our plaque is almost identical in size and general appearance to the ivory ones. Flat and elongated, the relief is executed on one side only; the other side is plain but worked. The glyptic technique is also similar in both cases.

(12) *Ibid.*, n. 11, Pl. I: 1-3.

(13) Cf., for example: M. E. L. MALLOWAN, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, II, London 1966, p. 567, fig. 509, p. 569, fig. 515, p. 533, fig. 528.

(14) G. MARKOE, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean*, Berkeley 1985, pp. 316-17 (G-3).

(15) YADIN, *op. cit.*, n. 4.

(16) YADIN, *op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 117. Cf. also PRITCHARD (*op. cit.*, n. 9), p. 14, fig. 43, p. 18, figs. 54-56.

(17) Cf. BARNETT (*op. cit.*, n. 10); Pl. III: C1, C4; cf. also MOSCATI, (*op. cit.*, n. 10), p. 414.

(18) Cf., for example, MALLOWAN (*op. cit.*, n. 13), p. 529, No. 440.

The LBA and Iron Age ivory plaques, which were discovered in the large ivory assemblages throughout the Near East, as for example, at Nimrud, Khorsabad, Ugarit, Arslan Tash, Salamis, Megiddo and Samaria ([19]), were generally used for decorating wooden furniture; the larger ones, mainly for beds, thrones and seats. Some furniture was uncovered intact. Most of it seems to have been produced in a series which constituted a complete motif only when fitted together. Each individual plaque formed only one part of a composite scene, the most common of which consisted of a procession of figures approaching a sacred central emblem from opposite sides. Many such examples have been found, as was noted above, also on intact pieces of furniture.

Indeed, when the bronze plaque from Hazor was uncovered, Y. Yadin at once recognized its resemblance to the contemporary ivory plaques in both its shape and function, and he describes it as follows: «The piece is a bronze plaque of particularly beautiful execution. It is made of a thin bronze sheet, 9.4 centimetres long. The rivets on its back indicate that it was at one time fastened to a wooden panel; and its position suggests that it may have been part of a whole procession» ([20]).

It seems to us that the Dor plaque, as well as perhaps the earlier Tel el-'Ajjul example, which are similar in size, had the same function, i.e., both were designed as inlaid decorations of wooden furniture and clay brick walls (they were set into the clay coat covering them). There can also be no doubt that our plaque is but a single element of a complete scene which probably included a procession of several figures, walking toward a central emblem with one of their hands raised in a gesture of prayer or held at the sides of the body, and resembling figures depicted on similar ivory plaques from the N. W. Palace and Fort Shalmaneser at Nimrud ([21]). Another close example is also known from Beth Zur in Judaea ([22]).

In addition to the ivory and bronze plaques that once decorated wooden furniture of the LBA and Iron Ages and the new stone plaques described above, there were probably similar plaques made of other materials. We can safely speak of plain wooden plaques dating to the 7th century B.C., some examples of which were recently uncovered in the excavations at the City of David, Jerusalem ([23]), and also *clay* plaques, including a beautiful example dating to the 6th century B.C. found in Ibiza,

(19) BARNETT (*op. cit.*, n. 10), and also R.D. BARNETT, *Ancient Ivories in the Middle East* (= *Qedem*, 14), Jerusalem 1982.

(20) YADIN (*op. cit.*, n. 4).

(21) MOSCATI (*op. cit.*, n. 10), p. 414.

(22) Cf. O. R. SELLARS, *The Citadel of Beth Zur*, Philadelphia 1933, pp. 57-58, figs. 48-49 (wrongly attributed to the MBA). Should probably be redated to the 9th-8th centuries B.C.

(23) Y. SHILOH, *Excavations at the City of David, I 1978-1982* (= *Qedem*, 19), Jerusalem 1989, Pl. 34.

Spain; the mould from which it was made, however, was executed in a pronounced Phoenician style ([24]).

The scene protrays a typical Phoenician sphinx standing beside the usual «Tree of Life» symbol. The entire appearance of the plaque is almost identical with some Phoenician ivories from Nimrud, Salamis, Samaria and elsewhere. We may safely assume that the mould – as well as the artist himself – came from the Phoenician homeland. It is also possible that the date of its production was somewhat earlier than the 6th century B.C. In any case, this plaque is also merely one of several units which only when assembled together depicted a complete scene. We suggest here that this clay plaque, too, served as a small decoration, this time not for inserting into the wall but for hanging *on* it, as is attested by the pierced hole still visible inside. The size of the similar plaque from Ibiza is close to that of Dor; its length is 19 cm. and width 12.5 cm.

It has long been recognized that the white ivory plaques were all originally painted in colorful hues and decorated with semi-precious stones of different colors ([25]). In Palestine and elsewhere, many ivories were found on which the remains of paint is still visible and we may assume that our white stone plaque was similarly painted.

Summary

At first glance, and considering its many analogies, the Tel Dor plaque should have been considered a Canaanite product of the LBA. On the basis of its archaeological context, however, and the fact that not a single find from this period had turned up in the entire area, and assuming the continuation of the LBA Canaanite art into that of the later Phoenician, we must conclude that it should be dated to the 9th or 8th century B.C., i.e. the date of similar Phoenician ivories.

The plaque is but a single unit of a scene which when assembled presents a composite whole: perhaps a procession which is approaching a central sacred emblem from the two sides.

Unlike the ivories, which decorated wooden furniture, the stone plaque was a wall decoration.

We should not be surprised to find such an attractive plaque at Phoenician Dor; on the contrary, what is surprising is that after so many years of digging in Phoenician sites along the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean, as well as in Cyprus, it is still a unique find and the almost sole evidence of the Phoenician custom of decorating walls

(24) A. M. BISI in MOSCATI (*op. cit.*, n. 10), pp. 346-47. She says nothing here about its function, but calls in «unique and intriguing» and compares it to Phoenician ivory carving of the 8th century B.C.

(25) CROWFOOT - CROWFOOT (*op. cit.*, n. 11) and also BARNETT (*op. cit.*, n. 19).

with small stone plaques ([26]), which, in our opinion, was quite widespread during the LBA in the Canaanite world and later during the Iron Age among the Phoenicians.

B. *The Clay Figurine*

The second Phoenician find from Tel Dor to be discussed here belongs to a later period. This is a clay figurine of pleasant artistic appearance. It was uncovered in a stratum dating to the end of the 4th or beginning of the 3rd century B.C., i.e., the transitional period between the Persian and Hellenistic Ages ([27]).

The figurine is that of a sitting child, leaning on its left hand. This hand and the shoulder are covered by a small coat. The child's body is naked and has a pronounced navel. The head is very large in comparison to the size of the body and is completely bald. The head is raised and is smiling as if receiving instructions from an adult. There is a deep depression in the center of the chin.

We may assume that this figurine was originally painted in the usual colors which sometimes survive on clay figures of the period: white, red and black. Here, however, none of the paint is preserved.

Our figurine belongs to a well-known type of Phoenician group which was quite common during the Persian and Hellenistic Ages throughout the Phoenician world. At Tel Dor itself we have found another example ([28]). Additional clay figurines of the type were found along the Phoenician coast, including a beautiful stone example discovered at Sidon which also included a Phoenician dedicatory inscription ([29]). The type later spread from Phoenicia to Cyprus ([30]) and to the Punic settlements in the

(26) Up to now we had evidence mainly of their custom of decorating the lower part of the walls with curved stone orthostats, as has been attested by the curved Phoenician stone orthostats found in coastal cities, such as those published in: S. MOSCATI, *The World of the Phoenicians*, London 1968, pp. 55-57, figs. 9-11, Pl. 7.

(27) The figurine was found in Area D2, Locus 10323, No. 102649 in the excavation register (6.4 cm. high). Area D2 was supervised by Nancy Heidebrecht and Ayelet Gilboa.

(28) Cf. E. STERN, *A Favissa of a Phoenician Sanctuary from Tel Dor*: G. VERMES – J. NEUSNER (eds.), *Essays in Honor of Y. Yadin, Journal of Jewish Studies*, 33 (1982), p. 42; p. 49, Fig. 2.

(29) MOSCATI, (*op. cit.*, n. 10), p. 285. It was discovered in the Ashmun Temple at Sidon dating to the 4th century B.C.

(30) Cf., for example: M. DUNAND, *Bulletin de Musée de Byrouth*, 7 (1944-45); 8 (1946-48), Pls. 3-5; cf. A. WESTHOLM, *The Cypriot "Temple Boy"*: *Opuscula Atheniensia*, 2 (1955), pp. 75-77; D. HARDEN, *The Phoenicians*, Harmondsworth 1971, Pl. 103; («limestone statuette of a "Temple boy"; *apparently a religious prostitute* who *also* acted as an assistant in a temple»); cf. M. DUNAND, *Le Statuaire de la Favissa du Temple d'Echmoun à Sidon*: A. KUSCHKE - E. KUTSCH (eds.), *Archaologie und Altes Testament, Festschrift fur Kurt Galling*, Tübingen 1970, pp. 61-67.

Western Mediterranean: Carthage, Sicily, and even Spain ([31]). Aside from the clay, metal and stone figurines, this type is also known from depictions on burial steles ([32]).

When the first boy figurines were uncovered, none with identifiable sacred emblems, they were assumed to depict a «Temple boy», i.e., a small boy who was given by his parents to serve (a lifetime?) in a temple, like Samuel who was sent to serve in the Temple of Shiloh by his mother Hannah. It is also quite tempting to identify the small coat covering the shoulder and back of our figurine with the coat mentioned in I Samuel 2: 19: «His mother (Hannah) would also make a little robe for him and bring it up to him every year». But a detailed examination of the evidence both old and new clearly indicates an altogether different interpretation.

The image of this boy is actually known from other finds in Israel from the Iron Age. It also appeared on the Samaria Ivories, where, however, a small difference can be detected ([33]): the bald head which here too is disproportionately large in comparison with the body had a lock of hair added to it. Moreover, additional emblems portrayed here clearly testify that he should be identified with the child-god Horus-Harpokrates. The image depicted on the Samaria Ivories shows him in the traditional pose, sitting on a lotus flower. His navel, too, is pronounced and one of his hands is stretched out and pointing to his mouth, while the other is touching his chest in the same way as the Dor figurine. The pointing to the mouth and the lock of hair on the bald head are also considered characteristics of Horus-Harpokrates. The origin of Horus is certainly in Egypt, but in this period he became one of the sacred triad of Phoenicia ([34]), together with Ba'al and Ashtoret, and his image was extremely popular in the entire region. In addition to the Samaria Ivories he also appears on Phoenician ivories found elsewhere: Nimrud, Arslan Tash, etc. ([35]), as well as Phoenician metal bowls ([36]), and on Hebrew and Phoenician seals ([37]).

We should also mention here that even at Memphis in Egypt, where a large Phoenician population was concentrated, many Horus figurines were recovered which – if the Phoenician dedication inscriptions had not been added to them – we would have believed to be pure Egyptian ([38]).

A complete clay figurine was recently found at Kibbutz Merhavia in the Jezreel Valley. It was made using a different technique: the figurine is hollow, moulded in

(31) J. FERRON, *El Niño Horus en les estelas votivas de Cartago: Homenaje a Garcia Bellido*, I, 1976, pp. 113-26.

(32) FERRON (*op. cit.*, n. 31).

(33) CROWFOOT - CROWFOOT (*op. cit.*, n. 12).

(34) Cf. STERN (*op. cit.*, 28), p. 46.

(35) MALLOWAN (*op. cit.*, n. 13), and also MOSCATI (*op. cit.*, n. 24), pp. 413, 524.

(36) Cf., for example: MARKOE (*op. cit.*, n. 14), pp. 248-49.

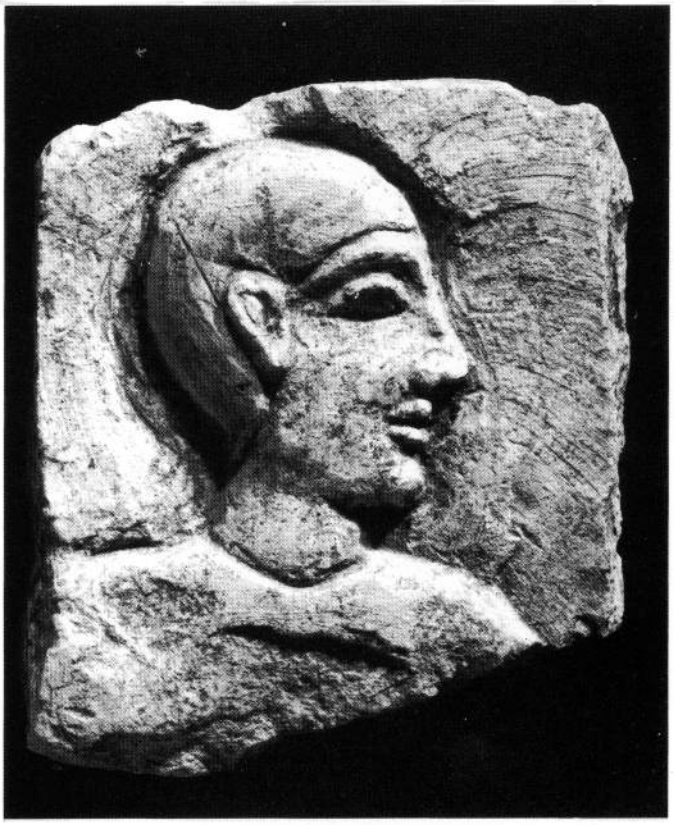
(37) MOSCATI (*op. cit.*, n. 24), pp. 385, 396.

(38) J. FERRON, *La inscription cartaginesa en el Arpocrates Madrileno: Trabajos de Prehistoria*, 28 (1971), pp. 359-84; ID. (*op. cit.*, n. 31).

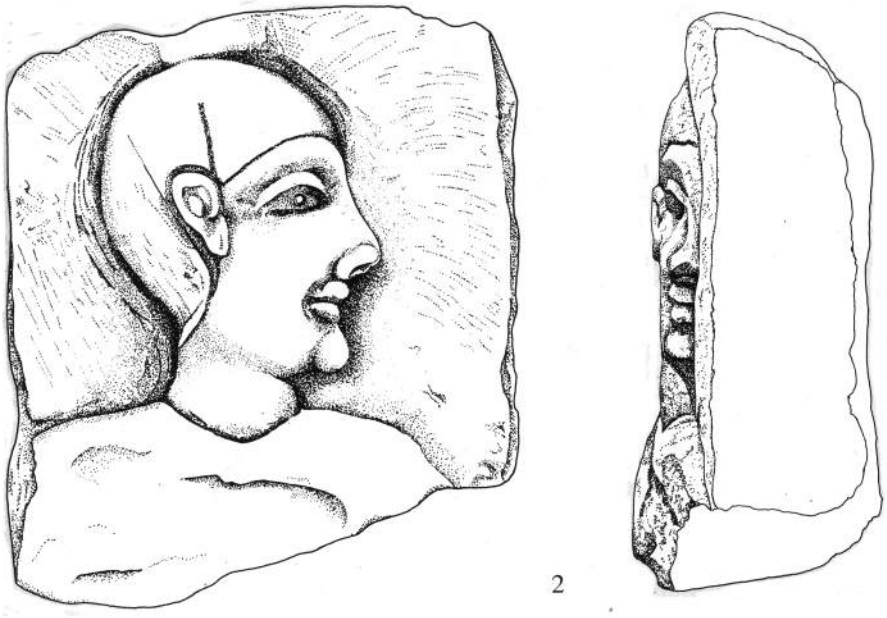
front and the back is plain, but it still closely resembles the Tel Dor figurine in its general type. It depicts a sitting young boy, leaning on one hand while the other is clearly pointing to his mouth, combining in this way the Horus of the Samaria Ivories with the Tel Dor figurine ([39]).

We therefore suggest that this type of figurine should be considered as symbolizing the god Horus-Harpokrates and not the «Temple boys».

(39) N. ZORI, *The Land of Issachar: Archaeological Survey*, Jerusalem 1977 (Hebrew), Pl. 15:3.



1

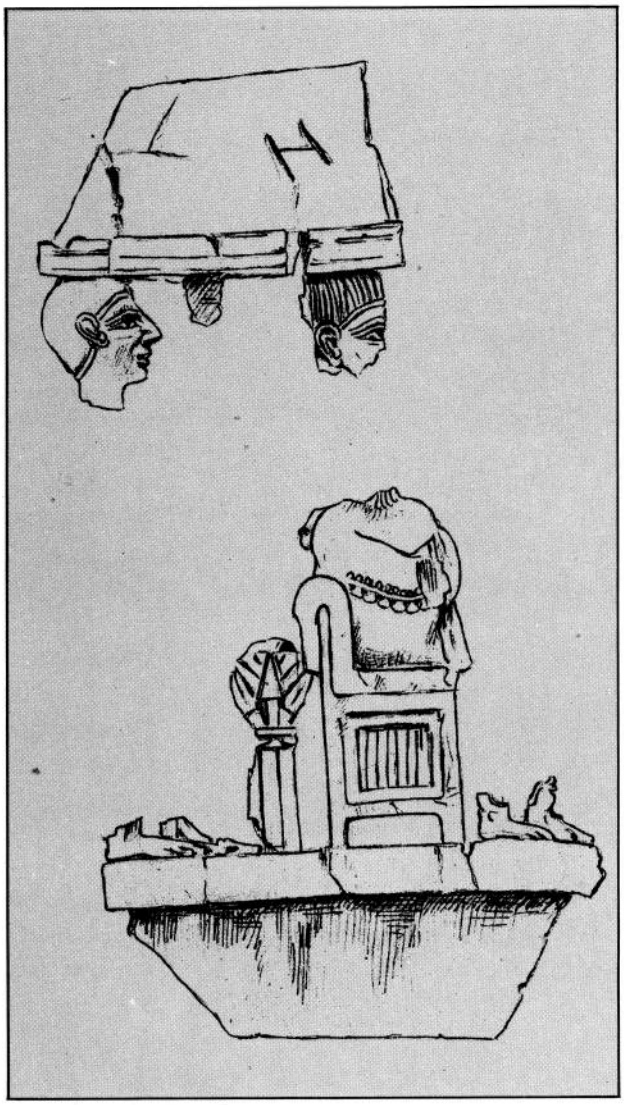


2

1-2. The Tel Dor Limestone Plaque.

Late Bronze Age Bronze Plaque from Hazor, compare the headgear of the Canaanite Nobleman.

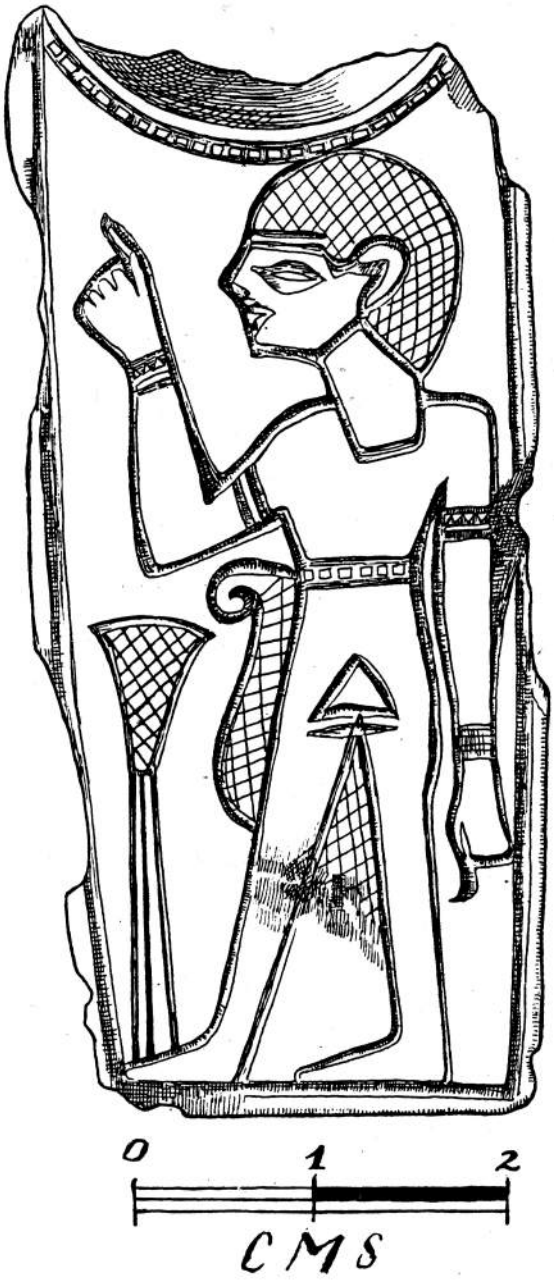
Late Bronze Age Limestone Plaque from Tel Ajjul.



1

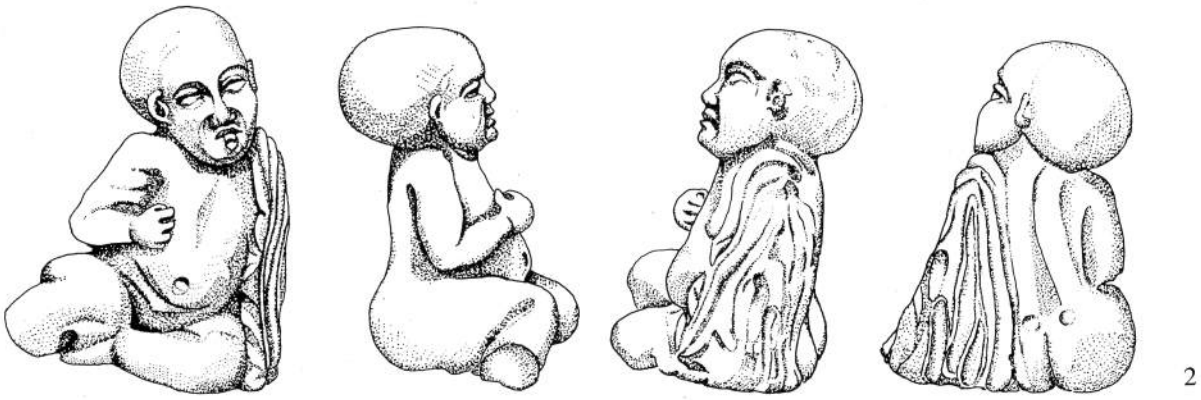
2

1. Ivory from the Israelite Palace at Samaria; Compare the headgear of the figure standing behind the seated governor. 8th cent. B.C.
2. A Scene on a Phoenician Bronze Bowl: 7th cent. B.C.



Beth Zur: Iron Age «Bird Nest» Ivory.

1



2

1-2. The clay Figurine from Tel Dor.

1

2

1. Horus Ivory from Samaria.
2. The Horus clay figurine from Merhavia.