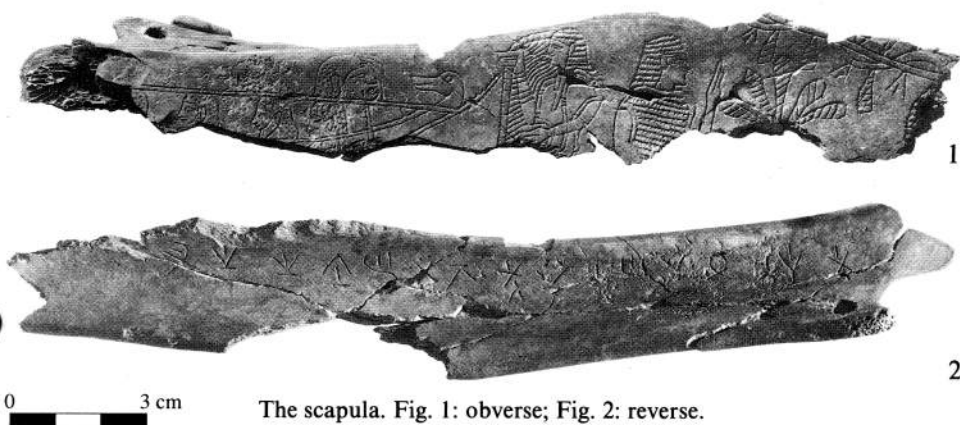


## A Phoenician–Cypriote Votive Scapula from Tel Dor: A Maritime Scene

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DURING the thirteenth season of excavations at Tel Dor (1993), the right scapula (Figs. 1, 2) of a large mammal, probably a cow, was unearthed in a Persian period pit in Area D2.<sup>1</sup> The scapula was found in numerous fragments, and was restored by Anna Cohen. It is decorated on one side with an incision, depicting a unique maritime scene, while its other side bears an inscription in a Greek Cypro-Syllabic



The scapula. Fig. 1: obverse; Fig. 2: reverse.

<sup>1</sup> Areas D1-3 were supervised in the 1993 season by Ayelet Gilboa. Area D2 in particular was supervised by Robyn Talman, and Mindi Goldin was the square supervisor. Bracha Zilberstein was in charge of the pottery from the pit; the drawings of the scapula and pottery are by Vered Rosen; Gila Ben Adiva prepared the plan of the area; and Z. Radovan photographed the finds.

script. This find, which has no parallel among the country's archaeological artifacts, is the subject of the present report.

### *Provenance and Stratigraphy*

The scapula's provenance and stratigraphy are described by Ayelet Gilboa as follows:

The incised bone (Reg. Nos. 105631 and 150673) was found in Area D2, on the southern slope of the mound in Locus 15066, which is the lower part of a c. 60 cm. deep pit (Fig. 3). The bone was found towards the end of the season, and the excavation of the immediate surroundings has not yet been completed.

This pit is situated in a street running east-west between two buildings of the Persian period commercial/industrial complex, uncovered here in previous seasons. Both buildings had two or even three constructional phases, spanning most of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., but on stratigraphic grounds it is impossible to correlate the pit to any particular phase, as the stratigraphy of the street does not necessarily conform to that of the buildings. This correlation will have to await the final publication.

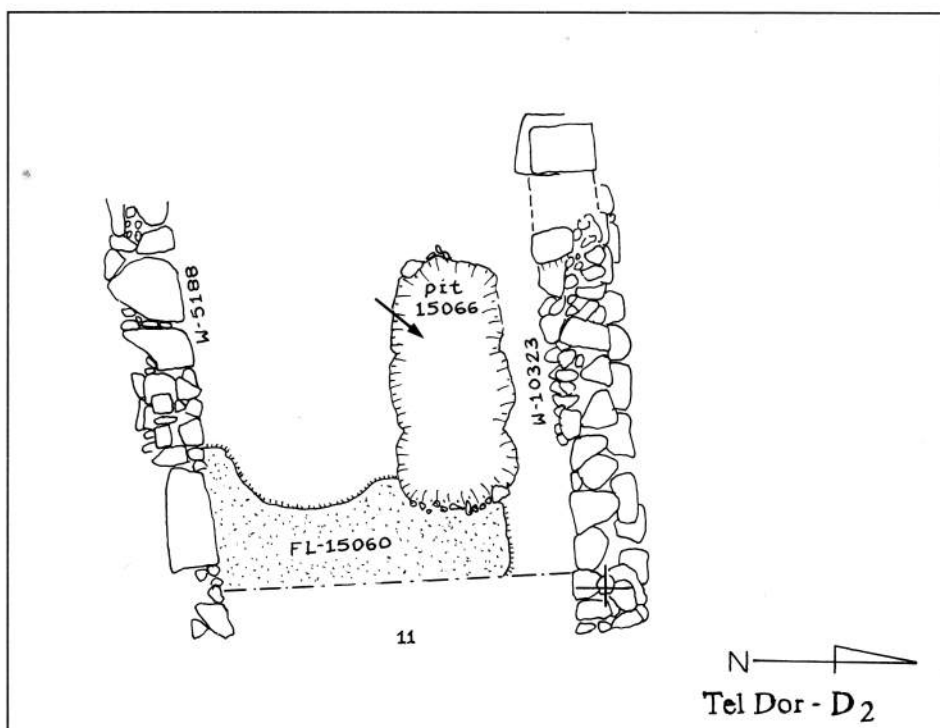


Fig. 3. Tel Dor, Area D2: plan showing find-spot of the scapula.

The pit clearly cuts a street surface (Floor 15060), which may be its original surface as it reaches the façade of the southern building (Wall 5188) exactly at the transition between foundation and superstructure (the sealed material under this floor dates from the Iron Age). On the other hand, the pit was clearly sealed by a stone tumble that certainly originates in the façade of the northern building (Wall 10323), and probably belongs to its initial phase. It thus seems that the pit is contemporaneous with the initial phases of the Persian period complex here.

The pottery found in the pit has not yet been mended; only a small representative sample is presented in this report. The assemblage, containing two groups of pottery, is typical of the Persian period at Dor. The first group of vessels, imported from the East Greek islands, is represented by an amphora, an amphora handle bearing the stamp of the island of Thasos (Fig. 4:2–3) and by two bowls. One bowl is decorated with painted bands (Fig. 4:1), and the second is the heavy 'mortarium' type, which in our opinion originates from the same region (Fig. 4:6). The second group contains local Phoenician vases typical of the coastal region of Palestine during the Persian period. One of these vessels is a common Phoenician 'flat-shouldered' jar (Fig. 4:8), or the 'torpedo' jar (Fig. 4:7).

Among the other finds, a Phoenico-Egyptian faience amulet (Fig. 4:4) of the type common in Dor during the same period is noteworthy.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the assemblage discussed above, the pit yielded an ostrakon written in ink on a large jar sherd (No. 150674/1; Fig. 5). The ostrakon bears the remains of three lines of text, which have been read by Prof. J. Naveh and are to be published by him. In a letter to us, Naveh wrote that the first line apparently contains the word כר = 'jar', written in formal Phoenician letters. In the second line the Phoenician script is cursive. The first letter appears to be *he* (perhaps the article); it is followed by [ עפ ], which does not comprise a clear word in this context. The letters in the third line seem to be Aramaic, perhaps [ כר-ר ] = jar r[ ]. Naveh dates the ostrakon to the fifth century B.C.E., 'but late sixth to early fourth century B.C.E. cannot be excluded'.

### *The Scapula*

The bone has been examined by Liora K. Horowitz, a palaeozoologist in the research division of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Her analysis is presented below:

The worked bone from Area D2, L15066, was identified as a right scapula of a large mammal, most probably cattle (*Bos taurus*).

2 On such vases and amulets, see E. Stern: *The Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period*, Warminster, 1982, pp. 96–98, 107–114, 136–142; *idem*, *Dor, The Ruler of the Seas*, Jerusalem, 1992, pp. 88–90, Figs. 116–119 (Hebrew).

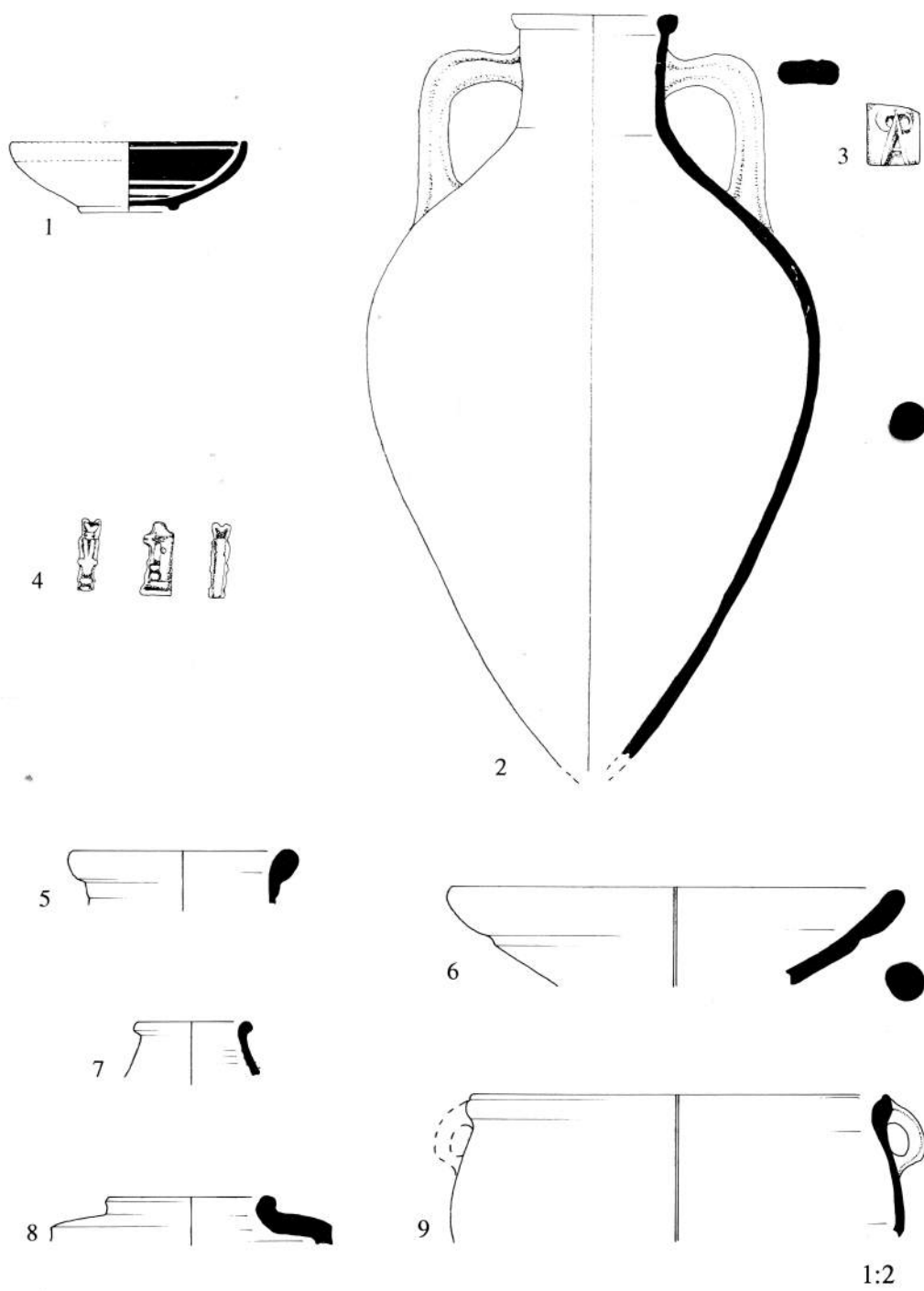


Fig. 4. Tel Dor, Area D2: finds from Pit 15066.

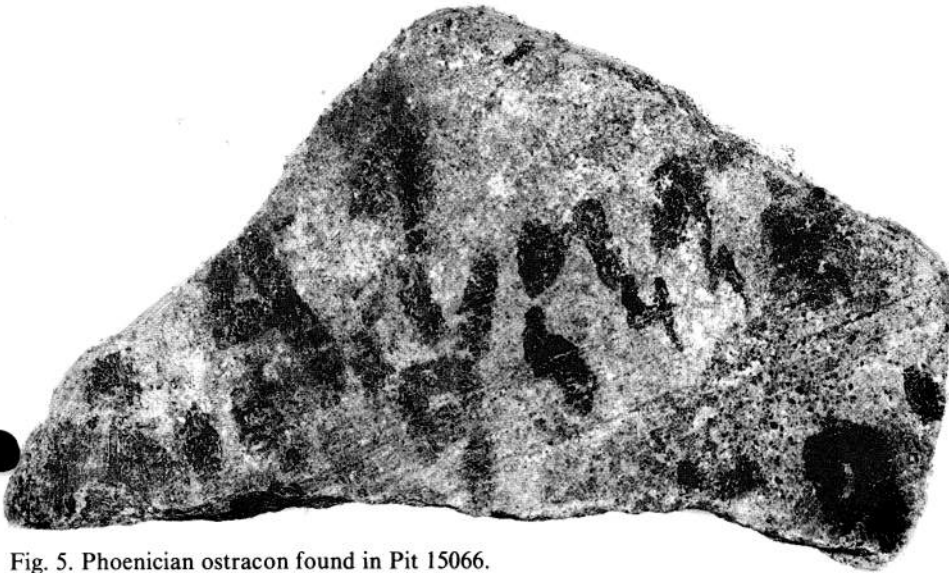


Fig. 5. Phoenician ostrakon found in Pit 15066.

Only some 1/3 of the original scapula is present, the remaining portion having been broken in antiquity. The artifact comprises part of the scapula blade and spina scapulae. The distal portion of the scapula (i.e. collum scapulae and glenoid process), proximal portion and most of the scapula blade are missing, so that species identification is based on very general morphological characteristics, as well as the size of the remaining bone. Comparison of the artifact with scapulae from similar sized domestic mammals — donkey, horse, camel and cattle — indicated that despite the small portion of the bone that has been preserved, the landmarks present bear a close resemblance to those of domestic cattle (*Bos taurus*). I feel confident that this is the correct identification of the species represented.

The lateral and medial aspects of the scapula and ventral and dorsal sides have been worked and smoothed. Likewise, the spina scapulae have been smoothed and in places the trabecula bone is exposed. As a result of smoothing the bone has a very polished appearance. In addition, the distal portion of the spina scapulae has been perforated. The script has been engraved on the lateral aspect of the bone, while the drawing has been engraved on the medial aspect. Due to breakage of the bone, parts of both the script and the drawing have been lost.

The small perforation in the edge of the scapula proves that the bone was originally attached to something.

Scapulae of cows and camels have been found in many sites spanning various periods and were employed for a variety of functions. At Dor, for example, a

scapula was uncovered decorated with many incised parallel lines along its upper edge (Fig. 6).<sup>3</sup> No less than five similar scapulae have been discovered recently at the twelfth-century B.C.E. Philistine temple in Ekron<sup>4</sup> and many others have been found in temples, tombs and settlements of various periods in Cyprus.<sup>5</sup> With respect to these finds, we are inclined to accept the Ekron excavators' premise that the scapulae were brought by the Philistines from Cyprus in their wanderings. Scholars are divided over the question whether they were used as musical instruments in cultic ceremonies or, more likely, as instruments of prophecy in the temples.

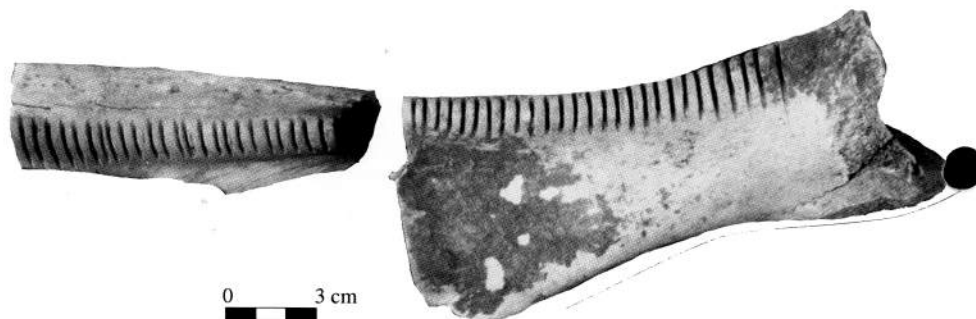


Fig. 6. Scapula of cow found at Dor. Note decoration of incised parallel lines on its upper edge.

Similar bones found at other sites were evidently used as writing material for inscriptions. Mammalian scapulae were most commonly used as writing boards during the Nabatean and Roman periods; examples have been found at sites including Nessana, Oboda and 'En Raḥel.<sup>6</sup> In all cases, the scapulae are from camels, with the medial aspect of the bone polished and inscribed with details of commercial transactions. The spina scapulae were also smoothed. In at least one example, the blade (not the spina scapulae, as in the case of the Tel Dor artifact) has been perforated. Lastly, scapulae found at the Byzantine period Samaritan settlement at Qedumim have been interpreted as implements used for cleaning the floor of oil presses.<sup>7</sup>

3 Cf. E. Stern: The Many Masters of Dor, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19/1 (1993), p. 31.

4 Trude Dothan: Ekron of the Philistines, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16/1 (1990), p. 28.

5 J.M. Webb: The Incised Scapulae, in V. Karageorghis (ed.): *Excavations at Kition V, Part II*, Nicosia, 1985, pp. 326–327.

6 A. Negev: Excavations at Avdat, 1975–1976, *Qadmoniot* 10 (1977), pp. 27–29 (Hebrew); *idem*, Nabatean Cities in the Negev, *Ariel* 62–63 (November, 1988), p. 126 (Hebrew); D. Hakker-Orion: Faunal Remains from Sites along the Frankincense and Myrrh Route, in H. Buitenhuis and A.T. Clason (eds.): *Archaeozoology of the Near East*, Leiden, 1993, pp. 77–87, esp. Fig. 3.

7 I. Magen: *The Archaeological Discoveries at Qedumim-Samaria at the Qedem Museum*, Qedumim, 1982, *passim*.

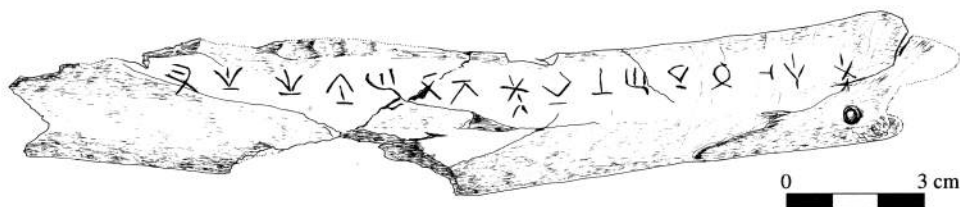


Fig. 7. Drawing of Cypro-Syllabic inscription on the scapula.

### *The Inscription (Fig. 7)*

As noted above, the scapula found at Dor is decorated on one side with a maritime scene and with a Cypro-Syllabic inscription on the other. The inscription was examined by Prof. O. Masson, Paris, and, in a letter to us, he concludes:

'It is surely good Cypro-Syllabic script (not archaic, probably classical), written from right to left and complete. On the left the last word with four signs = four syllables is easy to read as the Greek verb (aorist) *ka-te-te-ke*, 'dedicated'. The beginning consists evidently of the dedicant's name, followed by article and father's name, thus: nominative, article, genitive, but is more difficult to read because of one or two difficult signs. For the moment, I propose:

*a-ri-?-ko-ni-se* = Ἀρί...ς

*pu-wa(?)to-ro-se* = ...τορος

*ka-te-te-ke* = κατέθηκε

The script is Cypriote, but in the occidental or Paphian variant.'

Masson published two other Phoenician inscriptions in the same Cypro-Syllabic script: one from Sarepta and the other from Sidon. He interprets them as dedicative inscriptions of Cypriote pilgrims to Phoenician temples. One of the inscriptions mentions Asklepios, the god of medicine, who was identified by the Phoenicians with Eshmun, the Phoenician god of Sidon. Another inscription, which was found many years ago in the ruins of the temple of Eshmun at Sidon, mentions his consort Astarte.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted here that during the Persian period Dor was under Sidonian patronage.<sup>9</sup> Masson believes that the Dor inscription may have been dedicated to Astarte, whom the Paphians worshipped in accordance with the tradition that Paphos was the goddess's birth-place.

In our opinion, the inscribed dedication should be dated to 400–380 B.C.E., during the reign of Artaxerxes II, when the Persian empire began to disintegrate.

8 O. Masson: *Pélerines Chypriotes en Phénicie (Sarepta et Sidon)*, *Semitica* 32 (1982), pp. 45–49, Pl. VII.

9 On this matter, cf. Stern (above, n. 2, *Material Culture*), pp. 241–243; *idem* (above, n. 2, *Ruler*), pp. 73–75. See also S. Yizre'el: Two Fractional Phoenician Inscriptions from Apollonia, in I. Roll and E. Ayalon (eds.): *Apollonia and Southern Sharon*, Tel Aviv, 1989, pp. 254–267 (Hebrew).



The Egyptians, headed by Pharaoh Amyrteus (404–399 B.C.E.) of the Twenty-eighth Dynasty from Sais, rose in rebellion and succeeded in throwing off the Persian yoke for some 60 years, until 343 B.C.E. Shortly after their successful rebellion, the Egyptians set out on an expedition against the Persians, through the Sinai peninsula and the coastal plain of Palestine, and it appears that they gradually occupied this territory. At Gezer, a stamp impression and a broken stone tablet bearing the name of Pharaoh Nephertites I (399–393 B.C.E.), the first king of the Twenty-ninth Dynasty from Mendes, were found. Nephertites' successor, Pharaoh Achoris, formed alliances with the Cypriote king of Salamis, Evagoras I, and with the Athenians. They seized the northern part of the coastal plain of Palestine, and for a brief period also held Tyre and Sidon. Two inscriptions of Achoris have been discovered, one at 'Akko and the other at Sidon.<sup>10</sup>

In 385 B.C.E., when Abrocamus was the Persian satrap of Abar Nahara, peace was concluded with Athens and the Athenians withdrew their armies. Abrocamus joined forces with the satraps Pharnabazus and Tithraustes, and together they expelled the Egyptians and Cypriotes from Phoenicia and Palestine. By 380 B.C.E. they had completed this task.<sup>11</sup>

#### *The Maritime Scene (Fig. 8)*

The boat appears as the central motif in the maritime scene incised on the obverse side of the scapula. A row of heads is depicted in the boat; they rise just above

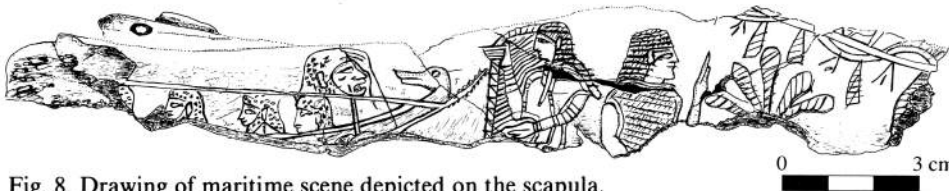


Fig. 8. Drawing of maritime scene depicted on the scapula.

10 On Evagoras I and his activities along the Palestinian–Phoenician coast, see E. Stern: *The Persian Empire and the Political Social History of Palestine in the Persian Period*, in W.D. Davies and I. Finkelstein (eds.): *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, I, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 75–76.

11 While searching for similar votive Phoenician artifacts, we came across the finds from the Phoenician temple of the Persian period at Mizpe Yammim in Lower Galilee (*NEAEHL*, III, s.v. Mizpe Yammim, pp. 1061–1063; figs. on p. 1063). At this site, a bronze situla (a cultic vessel used for libation) was found. It was decorated with Egyptian motifs arranged in four registers. This situla, like our scapula, is Egyptian in character and may also be Egyptian in origin, or, more likely, may be a Phoenician imitation, since these vases and the Egyptian deities depicted on them were standard in the Phoenician cult. In any case, the situla bears two Phoenician inscriptions that are clearly later additions. One is a dedication to the goddess Astarte by a person named עכבר בראשמן, i.e. a Sidonian.



the boat's *parodos* (gangway). Although only four have survived, we have no doubt that originally more were depicted. Three of the heads are almost complete, while only a fraction of the fourth remains. Above them a larger man faces the opposite direction, his details barely distinct. Like the other men, he is bearded and wears a similar Egyptian headdress, but his exaggerated large size demonstrates his importance, suggesting that he is the boat's captain. He faces the direction of the land from which the boat pulls away, and he is portrayed in a typical Egyptian expression of devotion or blessing, with his hands raised to his forehead (Fig. 9). A priestess, standing opposite him on the land, is depicted performing some ritual acts for the sailing craft (see below).

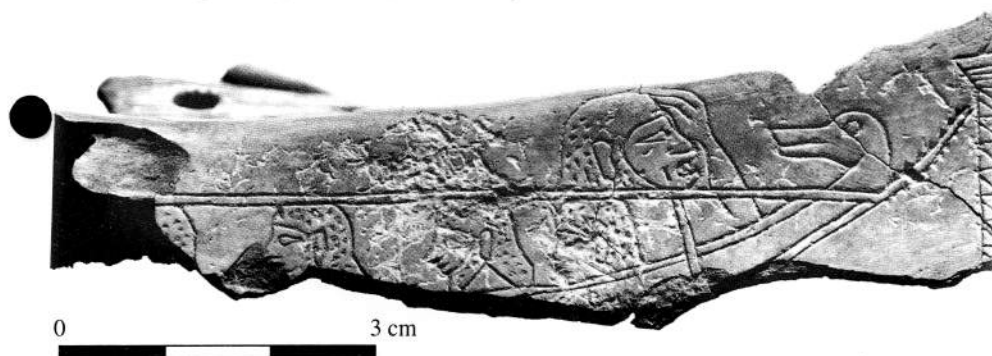


Fig. 9. The boat scene on the left of the scapula.

The duck's head, turned inward, is identified by us as the decoration of the boat's stern. This accords with the direction of the heads. It is possible that the bow of the boat (which has not survived) also contained an ornamentation, most probably in the shape of a horse's head (see below). A long pole(?) seen extending from the stern to the bow may be interpreted as the steering oar.

Prof. A. Raban of the Center for Maritime Studies at the University of Haifa, wrote preliminary impressions of the scene<sup>12</sup> (he has yet to complete his research of the boat). He believes that this is a description of an eighth–sixth-century B.C.E. boat, demonstrating the hybrid of influences typical of the eastern Mediterranean, i.e. Phoenician, Egyptian and Cypro–Aegean. Comparing our boat's stern to others that also bear inward-facing ducks' heads, he concludes that this type of ornamentation originated in the Late Bronze Age, and was revived in the Aegean not before the Archaic period (seventh–sixth centuries B.C.E.). Later, after 520 B.C.E., this style changed into a more abstract decoration, such as an Aphlaston with two edges.

<sup>12</sup> I wish to thank Prof. A. Raban for his cooperation.

Our type was especially popular in Cyprus during the seventh century B.C.E.<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that we have discovered a broken clay boat model at Dor (No. 55459; unstratified; cf. Fig. 10) similar to that depicted on the scapula.<sup>14</sup>

Among the few depictions of Phoenician boats, that have survived mainly on Assyrian reliefs, most are decorated with horses' heads (and, indeed, this is supported by Pseudo-Aristotle, 136, and Strabo, 2:3–4). These boats were called *hippoi*, i.e. 'horse boats'. The seal of 'Oniyahu of the eighth century B.C.E., the only known Hebrew seal depicting a boat, bears a horse's head, and, in the opinion of Prof. Avigad, who published it, is an Israelite boat from the harbour at Dor (Fig. 11).<sup>15</sup> We may therefore assume that our boat had a similar decoration.

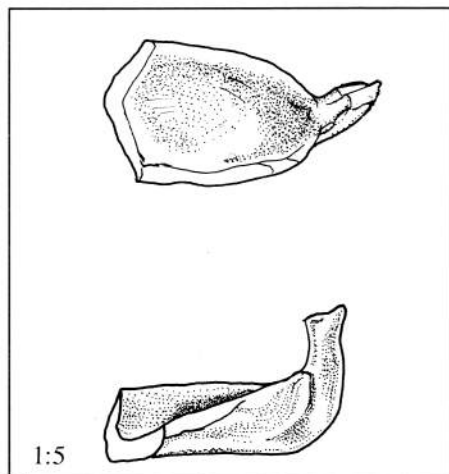


Fig. 10. Clay model boat from Dor. Note animal's head.



Fig. 11. The seal of 'Oniyahu.

To the right of the boat two scenes are partly preserved. As aforementioned, a priestess, dressed in a long, elaborate robe, stands immediately to the right of the sailing boat. She wears an Egyptian wig, and the details of her face, most notably her

13 On similar boats from Cyprus and elsewhere, see Karin Westerberg: *Cypriote Ships from the Bronze Age to c. 500 BC*, Gothenburg, 1983; and L. Basch: *Le Musée Imaginaire de la Marine Antique*, Athens, 1987. Cf. also J.B. Pritchard for Phoenician boats depicted on Assyrian reliefs, *ANEP*, Princeton, 1954, *passim*.

14 Other clay models have been found at various Phoenician sites, such as Tel Keisan. See J. Briand and J.B. Humbert: *Tell Keisan (1971–1976)*, Paris, 1980, p. 348, Pl. 106:60–61.

15 N. Avigad: A Hebrew Seal Depicting a Sailing Ship, *BASOR* 246 (1982), pp. 59–61.

eyes, are imitative of the Egyptian style. She stands within the doorway(?), perhaps in the harbour gate or the gate of a temple located in the vicinity of the harbour, and blesses the sailing ship with her upraised right hand, in which she holds a libation bowl. Her out-stretched left hand probably held an artifact of some kind, now lost. Thus, it seems that the scapula depicts some kind of a cultic ceremony relating to the departure of boats from the harbour. The second part of the ceremony is conducted by the boat's captain standing opposite and facing the priestess.

To the right of the priestess, a man in an Egyptian wig stands with his back to her; he raises his hand before the 'tree of life'. The latter is a common motif indicating the sanctity of a structure in the Phoenician school of art during the eighth–sixth centuries B.C.E., and is also found on Phoenician ivories,<sup>16</sup> Cypro-Phoenician metal bowls,<sup>17</sup> and on Phoenician stone vases of the period.<sup>18</sup> The praying figure and the sacred tree inscribed on the scapula may therefore identify the construction as a temple (Fig. 12).

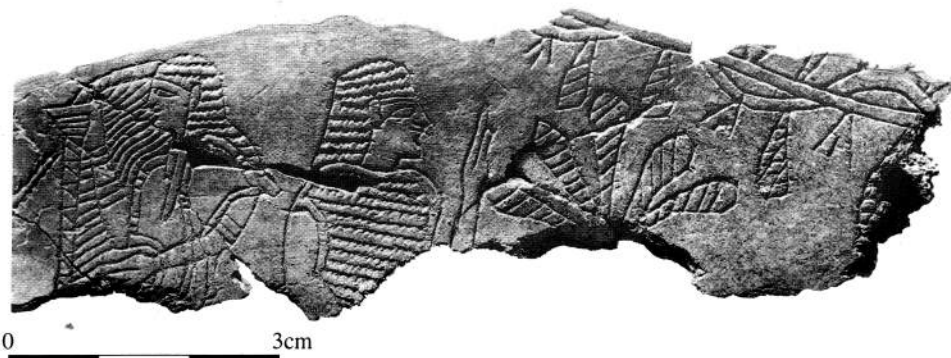


Fig. 12. The scene to the right of the boat.

It should be pointed out that the tree with its five branches is executed in a typical Assyrian manner, as seen also on the metal bowls. To the right of the tree, a small section has survived which looks like a long wavy design with unidentified

16 R.D. Barnett: *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories in the British Museum*, London, 1957, Pls. 3, 8, 19.

17 E. Gjerstad: *Decorated Metal Bowls from Cyprus*, *Opus Arch* IV (1946), pp. 1–18; G. Markoe: *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean*, Berkeley, 1984, pp. 259, 371.

18 D. Barag: *Phoenician Stone Vessels from the Eighth–Seventh Centuries BCE*, *EI* (1985), pp. 215–232, esp. Fig. 11 on p. 224 (Hebrew).

decorations hanging from it. No interpretation of the nature of this design can be offered at this time.

In summary, we may conclude that our scene is purely Phoenician in the details of the dresses, beards and faces, also displaying an imitation of Assyrian, Egyptian and Cypriote styles. The boat, too, exhibits a hybrid style typical of the eastern region of the Mediterranean.

Such a mixture of styles is a well documented phenomenon in contemporary Phoenician art, as evidenced in the many ivories, metal bowls and stone vases mentioned above, as well as on decorated seals and Tridacna shells.<sup>19</sup> We can therefore conclude that our scapula was originally decorated by the Phoenicians at Cyprus, Dor or elsewhere in Phoenicia during the seventh–early sixth centuries B.C.E., and was later used by the Cypriote Greeks, who added their votive inscription on the reverse when they brought the bone to the sanctuary at Dor.

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<sup>19</sup> See above, nn. 16–18. See also R.A. Stucky: The Engraved Tridacna Shells, *Dedalo* 19 (1974), *passim*.