

A Contribution to the Problem of the Persian Period at Beth-Shan

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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF THE PERSIAN PERIOD AT BETH-SHAN

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The Plate for this article is between pages 104 and 105

Beth-Shan city level IV — called 'Late Ramesside, Philistine, Israelite, Scythian, New Babylonian, Old Persian, etc.' according to the excavations undertaken by the University of Pennsylvania Museum at Philadelphia — included no structural remains typical of the Persian period (Rowe, 1930, 38-48). FitzGerald later published some figurines of the Persian period 'from the southern edge of the Summit, about 1.70 metres below the late Arab floor level' (FitzGerald, 1931, 33, pl. XXIV: 2-3; James, 1966, 130-9, fig. 116). An amphora

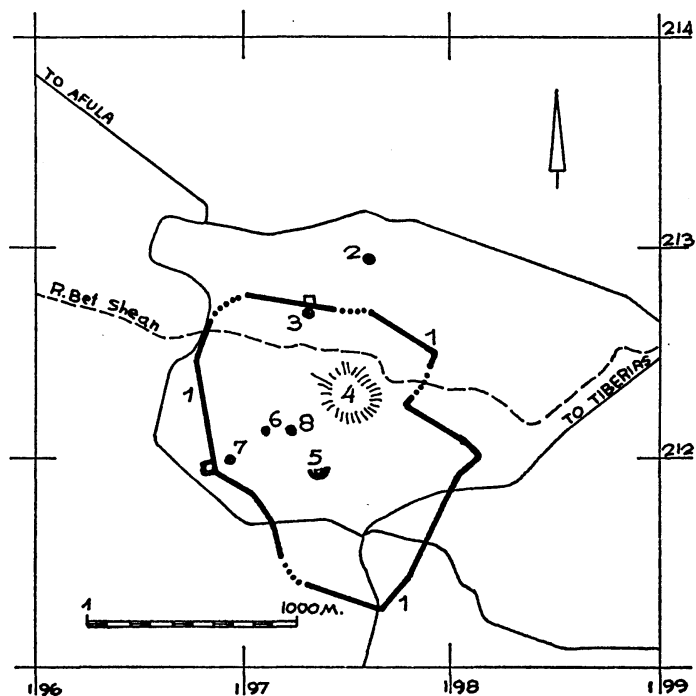


Fig. 1. Plan of Beth-Shan

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. City Wall | 5. Theatre |
| 2. Synagogue A | 6. Mansion |
| 3. Monastery of Lady Mary | 7. House of Leontis |
| 4. Mound of Beth Shean | 8. Cistern |

typical of the Persian period was also published (FitzGerald, 1931, pl. XXXII: 14) and was classified by E. Stern with the material culture of the Persian culture (Stern, 1973, 9 and 112).

In the course of the archaeological survey undertaken by the author in the Beth-Shan valley, forty-four Persian sites were discovered (Tsori, 1958, 50; Tsori, 1962, 135-98); three of the sites were found within the modern city of Beth-Shan, on both sides of the river (Tsori, 1962: site no. 43, p. 152; no. 86, p. 171; no. 143, p. 188). At the Mansion (Fig. 1, no. 6) five levels were dug (Tsori, 1962: site no. 143, p. 188). The fourth level contained Persian and Hellenistic pottery, including a basket-jar handle (Fig. 2), typical of the Persian period (Stern, 1973, 113-14, photos 156-8). About 100 metres to the east of the Mansion, a water cistern (Fig. 1, no. 8) was found in a deep depression. Inside it were found hundreds of complete vessels as well as other objects, including an amphora (Fig. 3) of the Persian period, of a type commonly found in Palestine, Egypt and Rhodes (Stern, 1973, p. 95, photo 110 at the right and pp. 109-10, photo 148).

A pottery figurine was picked up nearby. The find is part of a terracotta, 7 cm. in height, depicting a woman's head (Pl. VII). The head is decorated by a curled wig, the features worn. The reddish clay of the figure includes a few small white grits and the colour of the clay pales into yellow near the face. The figurine is similar to a terracotta found at Tel Šippor (Negbi, 1966, 14, nos. 15, 17, 42, pls. V: 15, 17; VIII: 42).

At other sites (Tell Šippor, Achziv, etc.) broken figurines of the Persian period have been found in pits, sometimes described as 'refuse pits' (Stern, 1973, 9 and 169: 1). It seems that these pits served as deposits — *favissa* — for broken ritual objects from nearby sanctuaries. This would also serve to explain the finds from both Tell Beth-Shan and from Shikun Aleph.

In the Roman-Byzantine period the pit was deepened and a water cistern was installed; during the fifth century C.E., the valuables of the House of Leontis (Tsori, 1966, 123-34, pls. 9-13) were hidden in it.

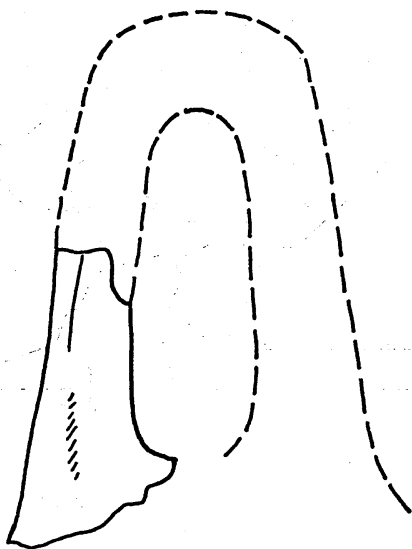
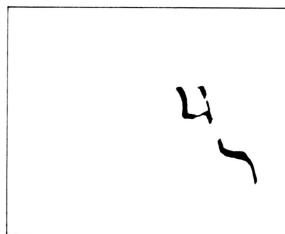
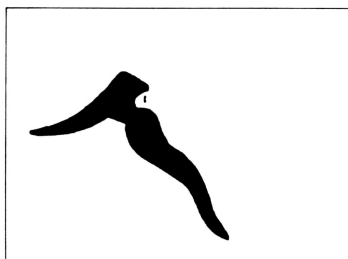
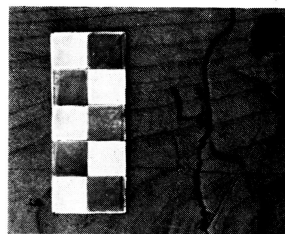
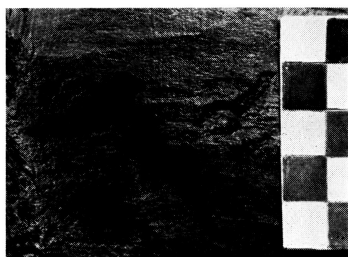
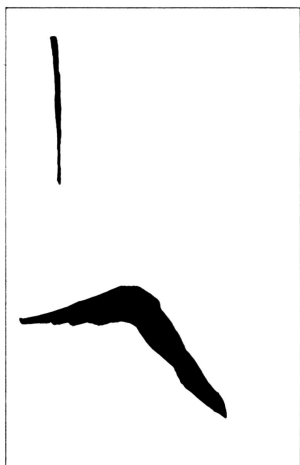


Fig. 2

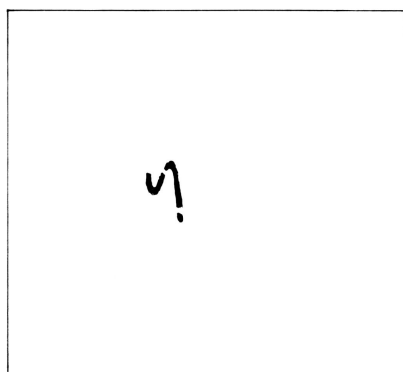
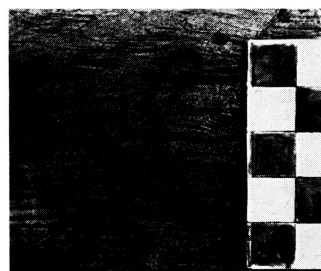


(ii)

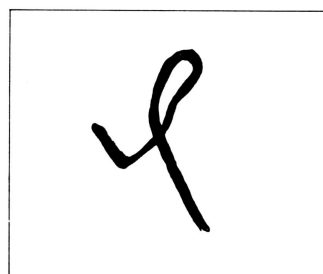
(iv)



(i)

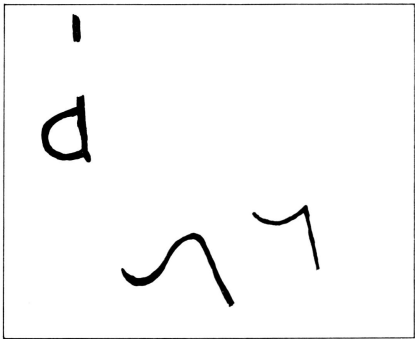
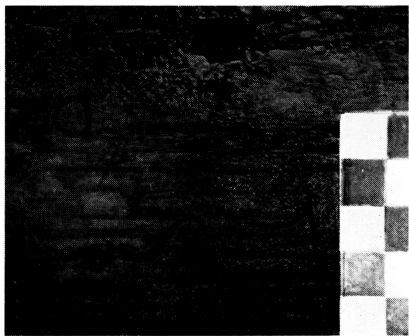


(iii)



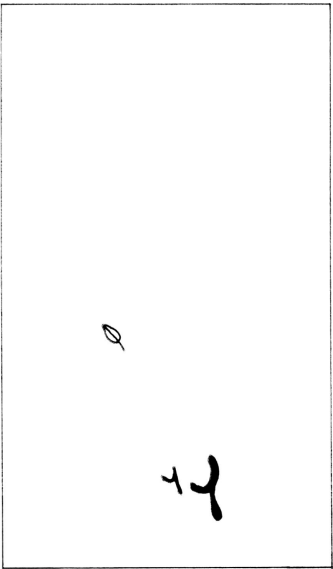
(v)

Examples of the letter *waw* on the 'Punic Ship' (i)–(iv) written on the side of the keel, (v) on the interior of Strake 2 port



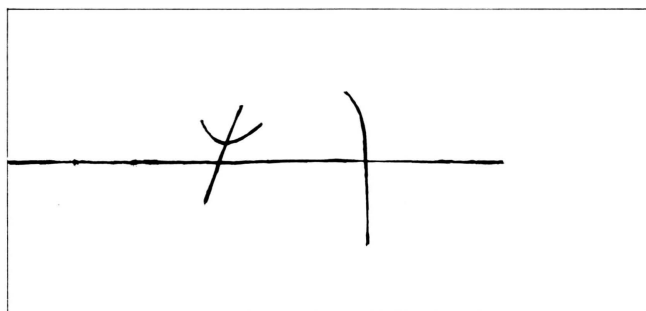
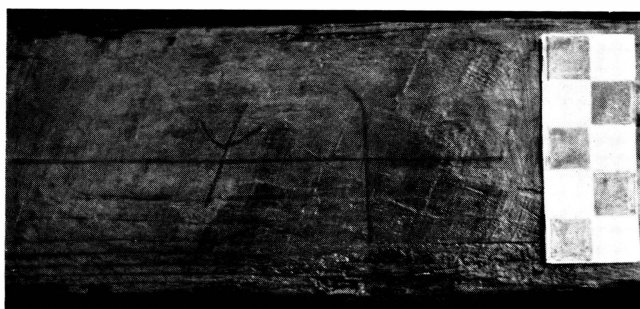
(i)

The word *waw* on the interior of strake 3 starboard (the nail-hole can be seen at the extreme left edge of the photograph)

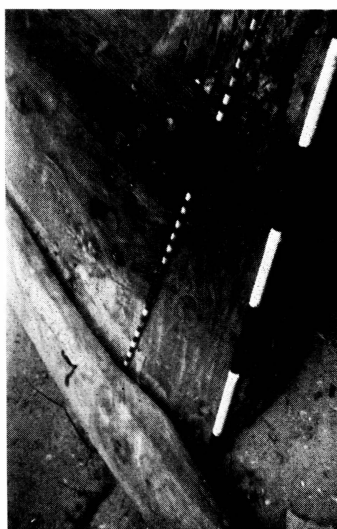
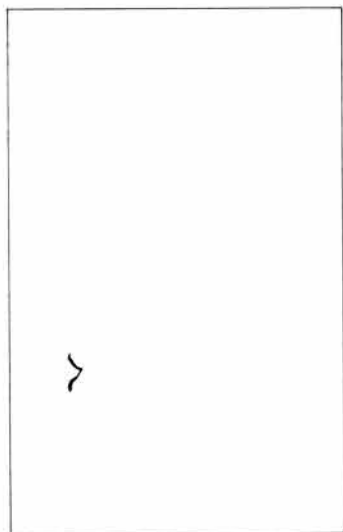


(ii)

The word *waw* on the interior of strake 9 port at the seating of rib 20 (underwater photograph by H. Frost)



(i) The 'bird's-foot' sign.



(ii) The letter *wâw* painted on the starboard 'tusk' of the ram of the 'Sister Ship'
(underwater photograph by H. Frost)



Figurine from Beth-Shan (Photograph: N. Tsori)

Our survey and the recent discoveries of the Classical period indicate that Classical Beth-Shan, Scythopolis, extended on both sides of the river (Avi-Yonah, 1962, 123-34). Further excavations on the tell and in the enlarged city of the Classical period will contribute to solving the problem of Beth-Shan of the Persian period.

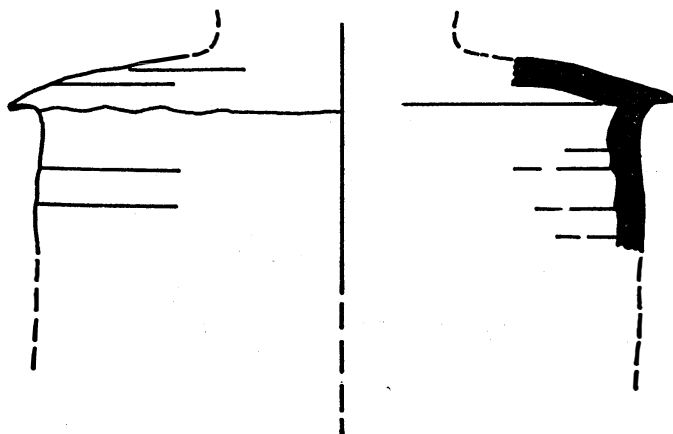


Fig. 3

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