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# The Date of the Kfar Monash Hoard

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IN 1962, a chance find brought about the discovery of a hoard of metal tools and weapons on a hill not far from Kfar Monash. In a thorough study of this hoard, published by Ruth Hestrin and Miriam Tadmor the following year,<sup>1</sup> the authors concluded, ... 'we consider the Monash finds to be contemporary with the late pre-dynastic period and the First Dynasty in Egypt. In terms of Palestinian chronology, this corresponds to the Early Bronze Age I or the beginning of the Early Bronze Age II — that is c. 3200–2750 B.C.'<sup>2</sup>

This conclusion is based on various considerations, the most important of which is typological. For some of the objects the authors find parallels in late pre-dynastic and early dynastic contexts in Egypt. For others, Palestinian finds of the same period are quoted. The Egyptian parallels pertain mainly to the adzes, chisels, saw and small knife — i.e., to that part of the hoard which does not consist of weapons. The authors support their general conclusion with circumstantial and historical considerations.<sup>3</sup>

In 1968, R. Gophna published a crescent-shaped axe, found several hundred metres from the spot at which the Monash hoard was discovered.<sup>4</sup> Although the axe was not found together with the hoard, there were several factors which made it highly probable that the axe was originally part of the Monash group, for the following reasons: It was uncovered near the find spot of the group; neither the hoard nor the axe were unearthed on an ancient mound, for no remains of a settlement or even pottery were found; finally, a trace-element analysis proved that chemically the axe is virtually identical in composition with some of the Monash objects.<sup>5</sup>

Thus a re-examination of the hoard is called for in order to arrive at a more precise dating.

*Axes.* According to Hestrin and Tadmor, these are of a Canaanite type and differ from Egyptian tools. All the Palestinian parallels refer to objects dating to the Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age I periods,<sup>6</sup> but the authors admit that some of

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Hestrin and Miriam Tadmor: A Hoard of Tools and Weapons from Kfar Monash, *IEJ* 13 (1963), pp. 265–288.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 285–288; see also S. Yeivin: Additional Note on the Early Relations Between Canaan and Egypt, *EI* 8 (1967), pp. 211–215 (English summary, p. 74\*).

<sup>4</sup> R. Gophna: A Crescentic Axehead from Kfar Monash, *IEJ* 18 (1968), pp. 47–49.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47, n. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Hestrin and Tadmor, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), notes 3–7.

these are uncertain.<sup>7</sup> The type of axe under consideration lasted very long. Axes resembling the Monash type were discovered at Soli, where they form a considerable part of a hoard dated, at the earliest, to the last third of the third millennium B.C.<sup>8</sup> Three of the Monash axes bear incisions, very similar to those which appear on one of the Soli axes and on one of the daggers from the same hoard.<sup>9</sup> The 'herring bone' incision on one of the Monash axes appears also on a comparatively late axe from Egypt.<sup>10</sup> Similar axes were found in Cyprus, in contexts dating to the second half of the third millennium.<sup>11</sup> Still later are similar axes from foundation deposits at Byblos.<sup>12</sup> Axes resembling the Monash type in every respect are known also from contexts dated later than the third millennium B.C.<sup>13</sup> It seems, therefore, that the life-span of this type of axe cannot serve as a chronological criterion; on the contrary, such axes should be dated according to their contexts.

*Adzes.* In many reports, section drawings of metal tools are, unfortunately, missing. This makes it difficult to differentiate, in many cases, between axes and adzes. It seems, however, that what holds true for the axes is true for the adzes as well. Hestrin and Tadmor are correct in stating that Egyptian adzes similar to the Monash types should be dated not later than the Second Dynasty. However, as Hestrin and Tadmor admit, 'similar blades have been found on various sites and are known to have existed in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Cyprus throughout the third and second millennia, without recognizable changes in shape'.<sup>14</sup>

*Chisels.* Chisels resembling the Monash type are known from Egypt not only from late pre-dynastic contexts but also from the beginning of the early dynastic period. Similar chisels have been dated to the Second and Third Dynasties as well.<sup>15</sup> Even later chisels of similar type are known from the Byblos foundation deposits.<sup>16</sup>

*Saw.* Two aspects of this tool should be discussed: Firstly, the saw itself from a typological point of view, and secondly, the design which appears on the blade in *pointillé* technique. Regarding its shape, the saw from Abydos, mentioned by Hestrin and Tadmor, has heart-shaped shoulders, in contrast to the Monash saw. The time span

<sup>7</sup> For example, the five axes found at Meşer, M. Dothan, *IEJ* 7 (1957) pp. 220, 226, Pl. 37: D.

<sup>8</sup> K. Bittel: Der Depotfund von Soli-Pompeiopolis, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 46 (1940), Pl. V: s3459, s3452, s3456; Fig. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Figs. 4, 12.

<sup>10</sup> W. M. F. Petrie: *Tools and Weapons*, London, 1917, p. 17, Pl. xvii:92.

<sup>11</sup> E. Gjerstad: *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition I*, Stockholm, 1934, Pls. xxiv:95; xxv:6; xxx:4,21; xxxi:163.

<sup>12</sup> M. Dunand: *Fouilles de Byblos I*, Paris, 1939, nos. 2142, 2144, 2145.

<sup>13</sup> Hetty Goldman: *Excavations at Gözli Kule, Tarsus II*, Princeton, 1956, p. 289, Fig. 424:24-26.

<sup>14</sup> Hestrin and Tadmor, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), p. 270.

<sup>15</sup> Petrie, *op. cit.* (above, n. 10), p. 20, Pl. xxii:47, 51.

<sup>16</sup> Dunand, *op. cit.* (above, n. 12), Nos. 2193, 2200.

of saws resembling ours is long, and it is definitely not restricted to the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third millennia; similar saws are known from as late as the New Kingdom in Egypt.<sup>17</sup> Mesopotamian parallels date to the middle of the third millennium.<sup>18</sup> The only Early Bronze Age saw discovered so far in a stratified context in Palestine was found at Hazor, where it is dated with certainty to the end of the period.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that the 'raised top bases' found on the floor of the building on the acropolis at Ai were formed by a saw, 'and copper saws which could achieve this operation were used in Egypt in the period of the third Dynasty'.<sup>20</sup>

The saw from Abydos, mentioned by Hestrin and Tadmor,<sup>21</sup> bears an incised design not made in the *pointillé* technique. Metal tools and weapons bearing incised designs are known also from Soli,<sup>22</sup> Ur<sup>23</sup> and Byblos.<sup>24</sup> In Byblos, these are a chisel and an axe (or adze?). The archaeological context to which these two tools belong is not sufficiently clear, but it seems that the adze, at least, cannot be dated to the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. The motif incised on these two tools is that of the head of a horned animal, shown *en face* in a schematic manner. The motif on the Monash saw should be interpreted likewise, though there are different opinions on this.<sup>25</sup> It seems that the number of examples of this technique of design found so far in clear-cut stratigraphic contexts, is too small to allow us to draw definite conclusions about the time span of this technique.<sup>26</sup>

*Spear-heads.* Only a small number of spear-heads of the Early Bronze Age have been discovered, so far, in excavations. Artistic presentations give but a vague idea of their shape, as these are in many cases conventional, and the tang is never shown.<sup>27</sup> The spears held by some of the figurines from Judeideh G exemplify this difficulty.<sup>28</sup> There is also some basis for thinking that the whole group should, in fact, be dated to later than phase G.<sup>29</sup>

The Monash spear-heads are characterized by pronounced midribs, slanting shoulders and massive hooked tangs. So far, no exact parallels are known from anywhere

17 Petrie, *op. cit.*, (above, n. 10), p. 43, XLVIII:10, Pls. L:9.

18 Hestrin and Tadmor, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), n. 25.

19 This saw was discovered in Area A during the 1968 season and has not yet been published. I am indebted to Prof. Y. Yadin for permission to mention this find.

20 J. A. Callaway: *BASOR* 178 (1965), p. 37.

21 Hestrin and Tadmor, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), Pl. 28:D.

22 Bittel, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), Figs. 4, 12.

23 C. L. Wooley: *Ur Excavations II, The Royal Cemetery*, London, 1934, Pls. 189:a; 190:d, e.

24 M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos II*, Paris, 1954, Nos. 9803, 11598.

25 Hestrin and Tadmor, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), pp. 273-275; S. Yeivin *op. cit.*, n. 3, p. 211.

26 The *pointillé* technique is known from Egypt even as late as the Coptic period, cf. Petrie, *op. cit.* (above, n. 10), pp. 10-11, Pl. VIII:189.

27 Hestrin and Tadmor, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), notes 40, 41, 43-45.

28 R. J. and L. S. Braidwood: *Excavations in the Plain of Antioch I*, Chicago, 1960, p. 313, Pl. 56:C.

29 Ora Negbi, *Qadmoniot* 3 (1970), p. 80 (Hebrew).

else. Another characteristic of the Monash spear-heads is their comparatively large size (the biggest of them is 66 cm long). In this respect, a good parallel is the spear-head from Megiddo stratum xviii.<sup>30</sup> Though different from the Monash type in details, the Megiddo spear-head is 60 cm long; it too possesses a pronounced midrib and a hooked tang. Some features resembling those of the Monash spear-heads can be noted in finds from Cyprus<sup>31</sup> and Soli.<sup>32</sup> Even though exact parallels to the Monash spear-heads are not known, the bulk of spear-heads which have been found, and which show features resembling those of the Monash type, are dated to the Early Bronze Age II–III.

*Daggers.* Compared with spear-heads, many more daggers are known from Early Bronze Age contexts, yet not one of these furnishes an exact parallel to the Monash daggers. They are characterized by a pronounced midrib, triangular shoulders, rounded tops and no tangs. The Tell en-Naşbeh<sup>33</sup> and Giv'atayim<sup>34</sup> daggers are entirely different from the Monash ones, and so are the rest of the Palestinian Early Bronze Age daggers. The Nagada dagger, dated 'before 3000 B.C.',<sup>35</sup> is closer to the Monash daggers, although its outlines are softer and less angular than those of the Monash daggers. The same is true for the daggers from the 'nécropole énéolithique' at Byblos.<sup>36</sup> The closest parallel to the Monash daggers is type 8 in the classification of Rachel Maxwell-Hyslop.<sup>37</sup> The resemblance of the dagger from the Royal Cemetery at Ur to the Monash daggers, mentioned by Hestrin and Tadmor,<sup>38</sup> should also be noted.

*Copper plates.* These present a difficult problem, particularly since their definition as such is not yet universally accepted. The scarcity of finds of similar type complicates any discussion of both definition and date of the 'copper plates'. Similar objects from Tel 'Erani ('Gath') are, as yet, unpublished.<sup>39</sup> According to Yadin, the coat of mail appears in the second half of the third millennium.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>30</sup> G. Loud: *Megiddo II*, Chicago, 1948, Pl. 283:1.

<sup>31</sup> P. Dikaios and J.R. Stewart: *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition IV*, Part 1A, Lund, 1962, Fig. 97:2, 7; 98:1–3.

<sup>32</sup> Bittel, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), Pl. IV: s 3412.

<sup>33</sup> C.C. McCown: *Tell En-Naşbeh I*, Berkeley and New Haven, 1947, Pl. 104:1.

<sup>34</sup> Varda Sussman & Sara Ben-Arieh, 'Atiqot (Hebrew Series) 3 (1966), p. 39, Fig. 10.

<sup>35</sup> W.M.F. Petrie and J.E. Quibell: *Nagada and Ballas*, London, 1896, p. 48, Pl. LXV:3.

<sup>36</sup> M. Dunand, *op. cit.* (above, n. 12), pp. 434 ff. It should be noted, however, that some of the 'tombeaux énéolithiques' at Byblos should in fact be dated to the Middle Bronze Age I, see Ruth Amiram *IEJ* 10 (1960), pp. 221–223.

<sup>37</sup> *Iraq* 8 (1946), pp. 11–12.

<sup>38</sup> Hestrin and Tadmor, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), p. 283.

<sup>39</sup> S. Yeivin, *op. cit.* (above, n. 3), p. 214. In the *Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Ramat Gan, 1970, p. 600 (Hebrew), Yeivin states that the scales found at Tel 'Erani are made of bronze (!). In such a case it would be difficult to accept the early date ascribed to them.

<sup>40</sup> Y. Yadin: *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands I*, New York, 1963, p. 49.

*Mace-head.* The Monash mace-head is, so far, unique. No similar finds are known from the Chalcolithic period at Beersheba and the 'Cave of Treasure',<sup>41</sup> or from later contexts.

It seems, therefore, that among the Kfar Monash objects there are some that have no exact known parallels. Such parallels as do exist for other objects of the hoard cover quite a long time span. The historical interpretation suggested, according to which the Monash hoard consists of tools and weapons belonging to a group of Egyptian soldiers and workmen,<sup>42</sup> is attractive but is not necessarily the only one possible. It is not absolutely necessary to connect the Monash hoard with Egypt. Most of the parallels mentioned are drawn from countries north of Canaan; on the other hand, the Monash hoard does not include even one object peculiar to Egypt alone. It would seem that there is no possibility of fixing a precise date to the Monash group on grounds of internal evidence. Some of its characteristic features, e.g., hooked tangs, pronounced midribs, triangular shoulders, are familiar from metal objects dating not earlier than the middle of the third millennium B.C. The upper limit of the range suggested by Hestrin and Tadmor (3200 B.C.) seems, therefore, to be too high.

Assuming that the crescent-shaped axe discovered near the find spot of the Monash hoard was originally part of the group<sup>43</sup> (it is difficult to think otherwise), a more precise date for the Monash hoard may be suggested.

The Monash crescent-shaped axe is a clear prototype of the axes from Tell el-Hesi, Jericho and Bab ed-Dhra',<sup>44</sup> which are to be dated to the Early Bronze Age III,<sup>45</sup> since it lacks the 'knob' typical of these axes. Therefore, a date probably towards the end of the Early Bronze Age II seems appropriate for the Monash axe.

In 1929, a fragment of an Egyptian stone vase, decorated in relief, was published in the catalogue of the Berlin Museum.<sup>46</sup> The relief depicts a man carrying a battle axe, which clearly belongs to the crescent-shaped type. This object was acquired from a dealer who claimed that it came from Hamadi. It was dated by Scharff on considerations of style to the First Dynasty in Egypt.<sup>47</sup> Schäfer dated it to the pre-dynastic period on similar considerations.<sup>48</sup> Frankfort mentions the same object while discussing the connections between Mesopotamia and Egypt, and remarks on the difficulty for assigning a pre-dynastic date to the object because of the shape of the axe, 'which is otherwise unknown in Egypt before the Middle Kingdom, but occurs in the early Dynastic period at Kish and Ur'.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *IEJ* 5 (1955), p. 79, Pl. 15:A; *IEJ* 12, (1962), p. 219.

<sup>42</sup> Hestrin and Tadmor, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), p. 288.

<sup>43</sup> See above, n. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 48-49, and references.

<sup>45</sup> Y. Yadin, *op. cit.* (above, n. 40), p. 149.

<sup>46</sup> A. Scharff: *Die Altentümer der Vor und Frühzeit Ägyptens*, (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Mitteilungen aus der ägyptischen Sammlung v), Berlin, 1929, pp. 78-79, Taf. 22:108.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> H. Schäfer: *Von ägyptischer Kunst*, Wiesbaden, 1963, pp. 154, 286, 287, 289, Pl. 2:3.

<sup>49</sup> H. Frankfort: *Archaeology and the Sumerian Problem* (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 4), Chicago, 1932, p. 55, Fig. 7:39.

The vase fragment under consideration was ignored in all studies made so far on the development of weapons, except one by Wolf, who stated that the axe depicted on it is the earliest of its type known, and that similar ones do not appear in Egypt before the Middle Kingdom.<sup>50</sup> The Egyptian axes of the third millennium B.C. belong to a completely different type, while the homeland of the crescent-shaped axe is in the Syro-Mesopotamian area. The depiction of such an axe in Egypt on an object dated to the Gerzean period seems very strange indeed. On the basis of all known evidence there is no good reason to date the invention of the crescent-shaped axe type, including that from Monash, before the late Early Bronze Age II. It seems that among the Monash objects there are none which would not fit such a date. There may be objects which were produced earlier, but the depositing of the Monash hoard most probably took place towards the end of the Early Bronze Age II.

<sup>50</sup> W. Wolf: *Die Bewaffnung des altägyptischen Heeres*, Leipzig, 1926, p. 9.