Jerusalem and the Coastal Plain in the Iron Age and Persian Periods

Edited by
FELIX HAGEMEYER

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Jerusalem and the Coastal Plain in the Iron Age and Persian Periods

New Studies on Jerusalem's Relations with the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine (c. 1200–300 BCE)

Research on Israel and Aram in Biblical Times IV

Edited by

Felix Hagemeyer

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

Jerusalem's relations with the southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine in the Iron Age and Persian Periods (c. 1200–300 BCE) were of a dynamic and constantly changing character. These were at times peaceful-cooperative and at other times confrontational. The population of the Judaean mountains needed the ports on the Mediterranean coast as important access points to international trade networks. High-quality imports (e.g., perfumes, ointments) as well as raw and building materials (e.g., cedarwood) could only be acquired by sea. On the one hand, the favorable economic opportunities in the west were attractive and represented a decisive pull factor for migration from the Judaean hill country to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. On the other hand, the wealth of the thriving coastal cities such as Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Gaza, as well as Ekron and Gath in the Inner Coastal Plain, aroused envy and resentment in Judah, as illustrated by texts in the Hebrew Bible such as Neh 13:23–24 and Zech 9:5–7.

While Jerusalem has long attracted the attention of researchers from a wide range of scholarly fields, the southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine has received increasing attention only in recent decades. Several long-term archaeological projects, especially at Ashkelon, Tel Miqne-Ekron, and Tell es-Safi/Gath, are now in the process of publication, making more and more data available that shed new light on the relationship between Judah/Jerusalem and the coastal sites. The ten contributions of the present volume therefore deal with the diverse economic, social and cultural relations of the two regions from different perspectives (Archaeology, Biblical Studies and History) and offer a unique opportunity to trace their development in a longue durée perspective.

The majority of the articles edited in this volume were presented at the RIAB Minerva Center Colloquium "Jerusalem and the West: Perspectives from Archaeology, Biblical Studies, and History," held at Leipzig University on December 4–5, 2019, and were supplemented by additional invited essays. The colloquium was organized as a subproject within the larger research framework of the German-Israeli Minerva Center for the Relations between Israel and Aram in Biblical Times (RIAB [aramisrael.org]) co-directed by Aren M. Maeir (Bar-Ilan University) and Angelika Berlejung (Leipzig University) and funded by the Minerva Stiftung (Munich).

The organization of the colloquium and the publication of this book would not have been possible without the help of Angelika Berlejung and Aren M. Maeir, who encouraged me to undertake this project and supported me in many ways. I would also like to thank both of them, as well as Nils P. Heeßel and Joachim F. Quack, for including the volume in the series "Research on Israel and Aram in Biblical Times (RIAB)/Oriental Religions in Antiquity (ORA)." I am indebted to all the speakers who took part in the stimulating discussions in Leipzig and contributed to these proceedings. I would also

like to thank the authors who joined the project after the colloquium and agreed to publish their research results in the volume. Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude to the anonymous peer reviewers for their essential comments and helpful remarks, which have contributed decisively to the quality of the book and all its parts. Special thanks go to Gunnar Lehmann and Haim Gitler who hold the rights of reproduction for some drawings and maps presented in this volume and have permitted their use by the authors. Students Ole Depenbrock and Helena Lindner are thanked for compiling the indices, as are Thomas Hackl, Tillman Gaitzsch and Johannes Seidel for their help in preparing the camera-ready copy. I am also very grateful to the professional team of the Mohr Siebeck publishing house in Tübingen for their support.

I sincerely hope that this volume will provide a valuable basis for further scientific investigations on the extensive topic of Jerusalem's relations to the west and will be a promising starting point for further research projects.

Felix Hagemeyer
Leipzig, January 2022

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Abbreviations

ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary, D.N. FREEDMAN (ed.), 6 vols., New York 1992
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
ANES.Sup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Supplement Series
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATD.E	Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Ergänzungsreihe
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ʿAtiqot	ʿAtiqot: Journal of the Israel Department of Antiquities
BANEA.MS	British Association of Near Eastern Archaeology, Monograph Series
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BARIS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Biblica	Biblica: Journal of Pontifical Biblical Institute
BIFAO	Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale
BiKi	Bibel und Kirche
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BN	Biblische Notizen
BN.NF	Biblische Notizen, Neue Folge
BThS	Biblisch-Theologische Studien
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
DBAT	Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament und seiner Rezeption in der Alten Kirche
EBR	Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception, H.J. KLAUCK et al. (eds.), Berlin 2009ff.
ErIs	Eretz-Israel
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FAT II	Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 2. Reihe
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
GAT	Grundrisse zum Alten Testament
HA-ESI	Hadashot Arkheologiyot: Excavations and Surveys in Israel

HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HdA	Handbuch der Archäologie
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik, I. Abteilung – Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten
HeBAI	Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
IAA Reports	Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
ICAANE	International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
Iraq	Iraq: Journal of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBVO	Jenaer Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JHS	Journal of Hebrew Scripture
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOT.Sup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
Levant	Levant: The Journal of the Council for British Research in the Levant
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NEA	Near Eastern Archaeology
NEAEHL	The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land, E. STERN (ed.), 5 vols., Jerusalem/New York 1993ff.
NSKAT	Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar Altes Testament
NTG	Neue Theologische Grundrisse
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLB	Orte und Landschaften der Bibel
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PEF	Palestine Exploration Fund
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
Qadmoniot	Qadmoniot: A Journal for the Antiquities of Eretz-Israel and Bible Lands
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
Qedem	Qedem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Monographs of the Institute of Archaeology
RB	Revue biblique
SAHL	Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
Semitica	Semitica: Revue publiée par l'Institut d'études sémitiques du Collège de France
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
SIMA	Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament

SMNIA	Tel Aviv University, Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology, Monograph Series
TA	Tel Aviv
Talanta	Talanta: Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society
ThWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, G.J. BOTTERWECK/H. RINGGREN (eds.), Stuttgart 1970ff.
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
Transeu	Transeuphratène
UF	Ugarit-Forschungen
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VT.Sup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WdO	Die Welt des Orients
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

Introduction

Felix Hagemeyer[*]

"Whoever commands the sea, commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself."[1]

The sea and seafaring have always fascinated mankind. Rapid travel by water enabled extensive long-distance trade and also new cultural discoveries. But great dangers such as storms and rough seas were also associated with shipping. However, as the pottery finds from Jerusalem indicate, the economy of Judah was predominantly local for most of the Iron Age, with little evidence of imports.[2] After all, Jerusalem and the small Judaean hill country lay inland and thus farther away from the large coastal cities of southern Israel/Palestine such as Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod, as well as the trade routes on the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the kings and the elites of Judah needed the ports of the coast in order to obtain high-value luxury goods (e.g., perfumes, ointments) and building materials (e.g., cedarwood). However, since Jerusalem and its environs were a rather humble region for much of the Iron Age, the prosperity of the coastal cities aroused resentment and led to cultural and religious demarcation tendencies in Judah that can be reconstructed well from biblical literature.[3]

During the early Iron Age, the emergence of a new material culture, characterized by strong Aegean and Cypriot affinities, left its traces on the coast. Particularly characteristic in this regard is the appearance of locally made monochrome Helladic IIIC-style pottery types. The allochthonous influence on the new pottery repertoire (and other artifacts) was in older research approaches associated with large waves of immigration from the Aegean-Cypriot area and the arrival of warlike colonizers, the Philistines.[4] Today, however, it is widely accepted that southwestern Israel/Palestine was shaped over a long period of time by continuous (not only sea-borne but also land-borne) immigration of rather small groups of people. Recent studies show that the coastal area functioned as a contact zone that enabled the nonviolent interaction, mixing, and entanglement of diverse, ethnically, socially, and culturally inhomogeneous migrant groups with

[*] My thanks go to Gunnar Lehmann for providing me with the geographical map of southern Israel/Palestine.

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618). Cf. RALEIGH 1964:325.

[2] BEN-SHLOMO 2017; 2018; 2019.

[3] E.g., Neh 13:23–24; Zech 9:5–7. Cf. NIEMANN 2002:82–89; 2013:258–264.

[4] See, e.g., MACALISTER 1914; ALT 1944; ALBRIGHT 1975.

the local Semitic population.[5] As a result, there was a dynamic change of the material culture of the coast, the remains of which are now referred to as "Philistine culture."

According to the biblical Books of Judges and Samuel, which, however, do not date to the early Iron Age, the Philistines were perceived as a threat in Judah from the very beginning.[6] But as Aren M. Maeir demonstrates in the book's first contribution, the relationship between coast and highlands was considerably more complex. In his essay Maeir discusses the importance of Tell es-Safi/Gath in Iron Age I and Iron Age IIA as an important intermediate trading post and place of cultural exchange between Jerusalem and the west, i.e., the coast. After presenting and analyzing the archaeological evidence for imports from Phoenicia, Cyprus, and elsewhere, the author is able to show that Jerusalem's near and far relations appear to have been connected to or passed through the southern Coastal Plain. Moreover, he demonstrates that Gath exerted a great influence on Jerusalem and Judah until its destruction by Hazael of Damascus in the second half of the 9th century BCE.

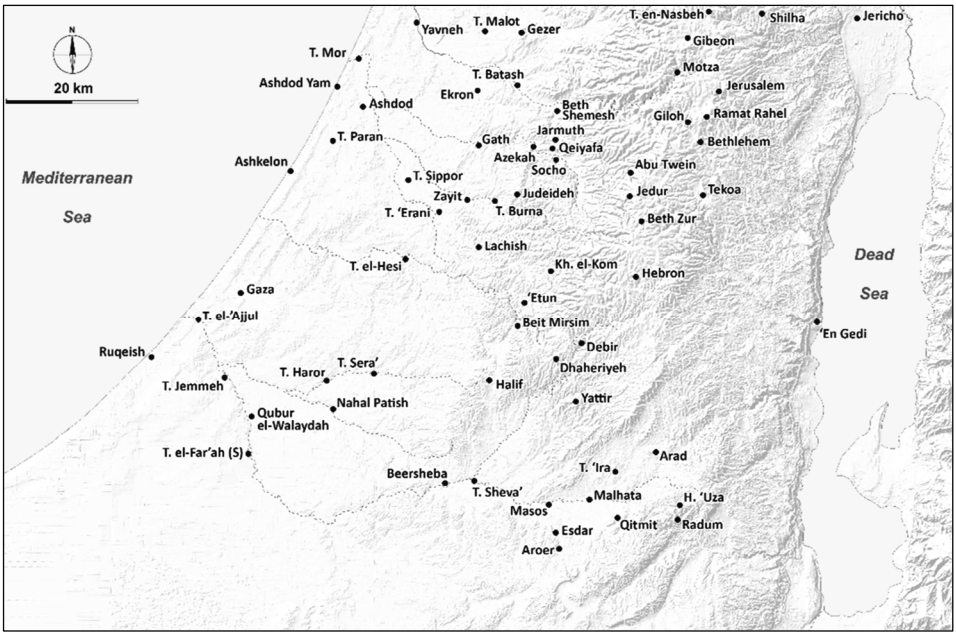

Fig. 1: Map of southern Israel/Palestine (© Gunnar Lehmann).

Following are two contributions by David Ben-Shlomo and Jesse Michael Millek, which are also dedicated to the southern Coastal Plain. David Ben-Shlomo studies the early Iron Age material culture of the coast and provides a detailed analysis of Philistine Bichrome Pottery, figurines, and also Late Philistine Decorated Ware (LPDW). On the

[5] E.g., HITCHCOCK/MAEIR 2013; MAEIR 2018; STOCKHAMMER 2018; HAGEMEYER in press.

[6] On the portrayal of the Philistines in the biblical texts on the emergence of the monarchy in Israel/Judah, see now KOCH 2020.

basis of the finds discussed, the author is able to (re-)construct the complexity of the economic, cultural, and social interactions between the coastal cities and the Judaean hill country for the period in question. Important preconditions for the developments in Judah and Philistia during Iron Age I and IIA are analyzed in the contribution by Jesse Michael Millek on the question of how severely the larger settlements and cities in the Levant were affected by destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The aim of the study is furthermore to investigate the impact of destruction on the cessation or near cessation of southern Levant's trade with Cyprus and Mycenaean Greece in the late 14th and 13th centuries BCE, as visible in the archaeological record.

After considering the southern Coastal Plain, the next two essays by Hermann Michael Niemann as well as Christian Locatell, Joe Uziel and Itzhaq Shai turn to the Judaean mountains. Hermann Michael Niemann discusses the development of the territory of the Davidic kings from the 10th to the early 6th century BCE, especially possible expansion attempts towards the coast. Niemann develops the hypothesis that the Davidides were essentially city kings who could only extend their territory beyond the highlands with direct or indirect help from outside. The significance of the Judaean border in Iron Age II is studied by Christian Locatell, Joe Uziel and Itzhaq Shai, who contrast Tel Burna and Jerusalem in a comparative analysis. The authors present an up-to-date synthesis of the archaeological finds from Tel Burna and reconstruct the administration, economy, agriculture and infrastructure of this border town. In addition, the interaction of Tel Burna with the capital Jerusalem is elaborated.

Two case studies concerning the archaeology of Jerusalem are contributed by Dieter Vieweger and Jennifer Zimni as well as Yuval Gadot. Vieweger and Zimni present the new results of the German excavations on the southwestern slope of Mount Zion. The excavated remains, which (possibly) date from the Iron Age II to the Middle Ages, reveal the strong changes in importance and function to which the investigated area was exposed. While in the early Roman and Byzantine periods wealthy inhabitants settled on the southwestern slope, the area seems to have served as an industrial quarter in the early Islamic period. In the following essay Yuval Gadot examines the influence and significance of Manasseh of Judah's rule on archaeologically verifiable building activity in Jerusalem and its environs under the conditions of the *pax assyriaca*, hitherto attributed at least in part to his predecessor Hezekiah. Gadot demonstrates that highly specialized land exploitation, erection of monumental landmarks, and construction of gardens and irrigation systems are expressions of a selective adaptation of aspects of Assyrian culture by Judaean elites in the first half of the 7th century BCE.

The last three contributions of the volume by Benedikt Hensel, Tilmann Gaitzsch and Manfred Oeming are devoted to the field of Biblical Studies. The essay by Benedikt Hensel deals with the Ark narrative of 1 Sam *4:1b–7:1 / 2 Sam 6* and the relations of the Philistine coast, Assyria and Judah reflected therein. A new historical contextualization and literary-historical classification is presented, leading to the identification of the Ark narrative as an anti-Assyrian account intended to legitimize Jerusalem as the new cultic center of "Israel" after 722 and 701 BCE, while opposing the influence of the southern Coastal Plain on Judah during the same period. The following contribution by Tilmann Gaitzsch examines the conceptual history of the term *taršîš* in the Hebrew Bible with a focus on the Book of Isaiah. The author is able to outline that *taršîš* initially

denoted an area of the western Mediterranean and was eventually used as a cipher for distant regions of the world. At the same time, a connection between the environment of the texts and those distant regions is postulated, expressed in the hope that YHWH worshippers will one day return to Jerusalem from there as well.

With regard to the reconstruction of Jerusalem's relationship to the coast, biblical texts such as Neh 13:23–24 and Zech 9:5–7 have increasingly come into focus in recent years.[7] In this respect, in the last contribution of the volume, Manfred Oeming gives a new approach to Neh 13:23–24 and the "language of Ashdod/Ashdodite" mentioned there. He identifies strong connections of Ashdod to the Greek world and proposes a post-chronistic dating of Neh 13:23–24 as an expression of the *Kulturkampf* of the conservative Judaean circles against an incipient Hellenization in Jerusalem and Judah in the early 2nd century BCE.

Overall, this book aims to open up new and multi-layered perspectives on Jerusalem's complex and dynamic relations with the west in the Iron Age and the Persian periods. Despite the multidisciplinarity and diversity of the individual contributions, the breadth of this multifaceted topic can only be barely touched upon here. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the reader will be inspired to further scientific work and that important desiderata for future research can be identified.

Now, however, it is time to set out, travel westward, and finally head for the ports of the Mediterranean!

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Map of southern Israel/Palestine (© Gunnar Lehmann).

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[7] E.g., BERLEJUNG 2021; HAGEMEYER 2021.

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Jerusalem and the West – Via Philistia

An Early Iron Age Perspective from Tell es-Safi/Gath

Aren M. Maeir

1. Introduction

The region of the southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine is termed "Philistia" in biblical geography, denoting the region in which the Philistine culture and Philistine cities existed during the Iron Age. Recent studies on the dating, appearance and development of the Philistine culture[1] indicate that the process of the development of the Philistine culture was much more complex and multi-faceted than previously thought. As opposed to many who saw this culture as a rather monolithic Mycenaean-related migration,[2] more and more evidence shows that the Philistine culture was in fact comprised of various elements, from various regions in the eastern Mediterranean, along with local Canaanite elements, and that this process was not the result of a short term migration event, but rather, a more extended process.[3]

In light of these results, it seems that early Iron Age Philistia might be defined a reception zone – that is an area in which multiple influences, and most likely, multiple peoples of various origins – came together. While without a doubt the intensity and level of inter-regional trade and contacts diminished in the early Iron Age (in comparison to the Late Bronze Age),[4] it is clear that both through the arrival of non-local populations, and from the evidence of trade during the early Iron Age,[5] that Philistia at the time continued to play a role in inter-regional connectivity.

Evidence of inter-regional contacts and trade, and in fact quite intensive connectivity, continue in Philistia in general, and at Tell es-Safi/Gath in particular, beyond the very early Iron Age. During the entire Iron Age I, and into the Iron Age IIA (up until the destruction of the site by Hazael, ca. 830 BCE), extensive evidence of these connections can be seen.[6]

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[1] E.g., MAEIR/HITCHCOCK 2017; MAEIR 2020; STOCKHAMMER 2017.

[2] E.g., DOTHAN 1982; SANDARS 1985; OREN 2000.

[3] MAEIR et al. 2019.

[4] E.g., ROUTLEDGE/MCGEOUGH 2009; SHERRATT 2016; MURRAY 2017.

[5] E.g., MASTER 2009; MASTER/MOUNTJOY/MOMMSEN 2015; MAEIR in press.

[6] MAEIR in press.

2. The Evidence

Let us start with evidence for connections between Phoenicia and Philistia. This includes:

1) Pottery imported from Phoenicia itself;
2) "Phoenician influenced" pottery deriving from Cyprus;
3) Objects that seem to indicate Phoenician influence;
4) Finally, a few objects may have originated in Phoenicia or arrived at Tell es-Safi/Gath through Phoenician-related trade.

The finds from Tell es-Safi/Gath illustrate this very well.

2.1 Phoenician Pottery

Examples were found in late Iron I and early Iron IIA contexts at Tell es-Safi/Gath, including:

– From Area A, Stratum A4, (late Iron I/early Iron IIA) a fragment of Phoenician Bichrome ware was recovered,[7] shown to derive Phoenicia.[8]
– Fragments of Phoenician Bichrome vessels were found in Stratum D3 in Area D, in the lower city, in association with the temple and metallurgical area dating to the late Iron IIA (destroyed in the "Hazael" destruction).[9]

2.2 Cypriote Pottery

Pottery of Cypriote style and origin was found in the Iron I and Iron IIA levels. This includes a fragment of Cypriote White Painted pottery from Area A, in a late Iron I/early Iron IIA context,[10] which is of Cypriote origin.[11]

Several examples of Cypriote Black-on-Red pottery, including several juglets and fragments of a bowl, were found in the late Iron IIA "Hazael" destruction level in Area A,[12] as well as in the lower city, in Areas D West and M (unpublished).

2.3 Phoenician Influences (?)

There are various objects that seem to hint to possible Phoenician influence at Iron Age I and IIA Tell es-Safi/Gath.

The "Late Philistine Decorated Ware" (LPDW) family,[13] is characterized by several shapes (whether entire vessels or vessel parts) and decorative patterns (in particular, thin

[7] ZUKERMAN 2012:299, fig. 13.15:6.
[8] BEN-SHLOMO 2012:412.
[9] WORKMAN et al. 2020.
[10] ZUKERMAN 2012:299, fig. 13.12:8.
[11] BEN-SHLOMO et al. 2008:964; BEN-SHLOMO 2012:412.
[12] SHAI/MAEIR 2012:340.342.350–351, fig. 14.19:JL 10–11 and pls. 14.9:8, 14.10:7, 14.12:7.
[13] BEN-SHLOMO/SHAI/MAEIR 2004.

painted horizontal lines, but occasionally other designs) which point to an influence of Phoenician pottery styles on the producers of this distinctive group. While Faust[14] has repeatedly insisted that this should be seen as evidence of strong Phoenician influence in Philistia in the Iron IIA, this influence is limited. This is evident since these shapes and decoration only partially imitate Phoenician forms. In addition, as previously noted,[15] there are distinct local Philistine traditions that continue at this time in pottery in Philistia, as seen in the LPDW (such as the iconic Philistine bird decorations) and in other contemporaneous types (e.g., decorated chalices).[16] Clearly then, while there is influence of Phoenician pottery traditions, the local potters chose to create a unique group of vessels, blending various local and foreign influences. No less important, the LPDW was traded with other areas, and at times imitated. For example, in addition to imports and locally made examples in Judah (see more on this below),[17] LPDW may have even reached as far as Phoenicia itself.[18]

Additional evidence of Phoenician influence can be seen in two fluted ceramic bowl, both found in the Iron IIA destruction level at Tell es-Safi/Gath, and clearly of local production, that most probably are local imitations of Phoenician style bowls (metal and ceramic) known during this period.[19]

Two bowls from the Iron IIA destruction level,[20] seemingly produced locally, are identical in shape to the so-called "Samaria Bowls," which are in fact Phoenician types termed "Red Slip Bowls."[21] These types are seen at Iron IIA sites in the southern Levant,[22] but a Phoenician influence on the shape and decoration is highly likely.

A possible connection with the region of Phoenicia during the late Iron Age I may be hinted in an ivory bowl from the late Iron I levels in Area A in the upper city.[23] As opposed to most of the ivories from early Iron Age Philistia which are local,[24] the parallels of this bowl (in particular from Megiddo) indicate that it derives from more northern regions of the southern Levant, perhaps Phoenicia.

2.4 Imports from other Regions at Iron Age I–IIA Tell es-Safi/Gath

In addition to the Phoenician objects and influence noted above, the Iron I and Iron IIA levels at Tell es-Safi/Gath have produced various finds indicating connections to other regions in the ancient Near East.

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[14] FAUST 2015; 2020.

[15] MAEIR/SHAI 2015.

[16] MAEIR/SHAI 2005.

[17] E.g., UZIEL/SZANTON/COHEN-WEINBERGER 2015; COHEN-WEINBERGER/SZANTON/UZIEL 2017; BEN-SHLOMO 2018; 2019:237–239.

[18] E.g., CHAPMAN 1972:fig. 29; SZANTON 2017:51, n. 62.

[19] MAEIR/SHAI 2007; SZANTON 2017:38–39, pl. 3:1.

[20] SZANTON 2017:34–37, pl. 2:3–4.

[21] STERN 2015:436–437, pl. 4:1.4–6.

[22] SZANTON 2017:34–37.

[23] MAEIR et al. 2015.

[24] BEN-SHLOMO/DOTHAN 2006; BEN-DOR EVIAN 2018.

Noteworthy is a portion of an early Protogeometic bowl from a late Iron I/early Iron IIA context in Area A, which as of now, is the earliest Greek Iron Age import known in the Levant.[25]

Several objects of apparent Egyptian origin (or influence) were found in various late Iron I and Iron IIA contexts at Tell es-Safi/Gath. This includes various types of seals and sealings,[26] as well as assorted faience amulets.[27] This fits in with other evidence of Egyptian imports and influence in Iron I and Iron IIA Philistia,[28] and in southern Phoenicia.[29]

Other regions are represented as well. Isotopic analysis of bronze objects found at Tell es-Safi/Gath point to a source in the Arabah.[30] The apparent role that Tell es-Safi/Gath played in the transportation of copper from the Arabah through Philistia,[31] is further strengthened by evidence of Arabah copper in Greece.[32] As previously argued[33] the transportation of copper from the Arabah through Tell es-Safi/Gath, was part of the extensive and broad ranging trade contacts in the eastern Mediterranean during the late Iron I and early Iron IIA (on this, see below).

All told, these finds indicate that during the late Iron I and Iron IIA, up until its destruction by Hazael (ca. 830 BCE), Tell es-Safi/Gath had trade and cultural connections with various parts of the western Mediterranean. Copper (and perhaps other materials) arrived from the south and southeast; ongoing connections exist with Judah, to the east (see further, below); Egyptian objects and influences from the southwest; Phoenician and Cypriot imports and influences in pottery and other objects from the north and northwest; and Iron Age Greece from the far west. Recent evidence of several olive oil presses from Iron IB and Iron IIA contexts at Tell es-Safi/Gath,[34] might hint that in addition to serving as a trade node for transfer of objects from various region, perhaps, just as in the later Iron Age at Philistine Tel Miqne-Ekron,[35] Tell es-Safi/Gath was a producer and exporter of olive oil.

These finds and influences indicate that Tell es-Safi/Gath were part of the extensive webs of connectivity that existed in the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean in the earlier Iron Age. Not only did the site play a role in the trade of copper from the Arabah (see above), but one can assume that it had a role in other facets of trade and connections of various kinds, in various materials, with various cultures and regions.[36]

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[25] Maeir/Fantalkin/Zukerman 2009; Zukerman 2012:298–299, pl. 13.12:15.

[26] Keel 2013:94–123; Münger 2018.

[27] Wimmer/Görg 2020.

[28] E.g., Dothan 1998; Ben-Dor Evian 2011; 2012; 2018.

[29] Waiman-Barak/Gilboa/Goren 2014.

[30] Eliyahu-Behar/Yahalom-Mack 2018:813.

[31] Fantalkin/Finkelstein 2006; Ben-Yosef/Sergi 2018; Eliyahu-Behar/Yahalom-Mack 2018; Workman et al. 2020.

[32] Kiderlen et al. 2016.

[33] Ben-Yosef/Sergi 2018; Ben-Yosef 2019; Maeir 2021; in press.

[34] Maeir/Welch/Eniukhina 2020.

[35] E.g., Gitin 2017.

[36] Ben-Yosef 2019; Maeir in press.

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