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"Jerusalem Ivories": Iron Age Decorated Ivory Panels from Building 100, Giv'ati Parking Lot Excavations, and Their Cultural Setting

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Introduction

Decorated ivory artifacts are among the most conspicuous items to be found in archaeological excavations. The rarity of the material, taken from large animals, and the highly elaborate artwork carried out in specialized workshops, make ivory items prestigious and expensive to this day. It should come as no surprise that in the ancient Southern Levant collections of ivory-made items were found only in prominent cities, such as Late Bronze Age Megiddo (Loud 1939) and Iron Age Samaria (Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938). Furthermore, they come from buildings recognized as part of palatial complexes. Within this context, we present a preliminary report on an assemblage of ivory items found in the City of David National Park (Fig. 1)[1] during the 2017–2019 excavation seasons conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority and Tel Aviv University. These items are the first of their kind to be found in Jerusalem. Apart from revealing the wealth of Jerusalem's elite in the city's heydays and on the eve of its destruction in 586 BCE, the findings also present an opportunity to discuss the cultural and economic role of the city's elite in the global network that connected courts and their agents across the ancient Near East.

[1] The excavations at Giv'ati Parking Lot (License Nos. G-71/17, G-11/18 and G-10/19) were conducted on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Tel Aviv University, and funded by the 'Ir David Foundation (El'ad). They were directed by Yuval Gadot and Yiftah Shalev, with the assistance of Efrat Bocher and Nitsan Shalom (area supervision) and Rikki Zalut Har-Tuv and Shiran Aber (registration). We thank Vadim Essman (surveying), Naama Earon (artifact drawing and reconstruction), Dafna Gazit and Sasha Flit (lab photography), Assaf Peretz and Vitali Fenik (field photography), Deborah Sandhaus and Liora Freud (pottery) and Diana Medellin (assistance with conservation). Special thanks go to Ilan Naor (conservation and restoration) and Orna Cohen (restoration and display).

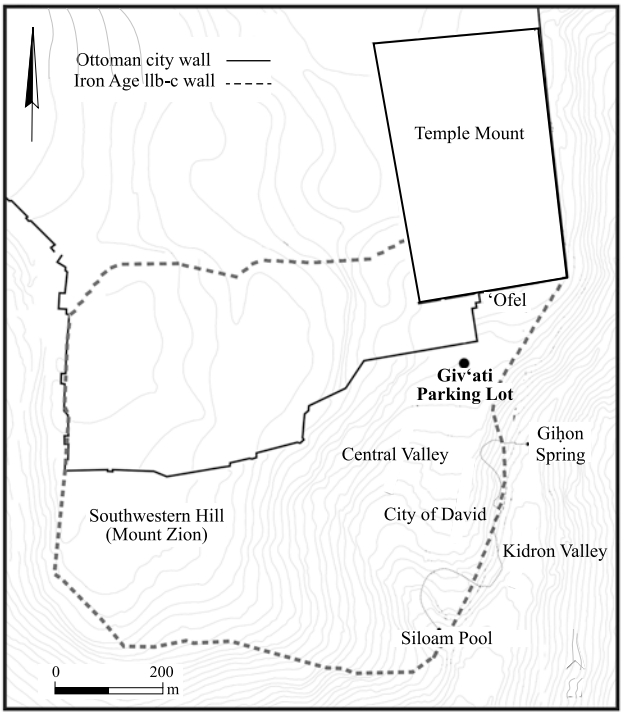
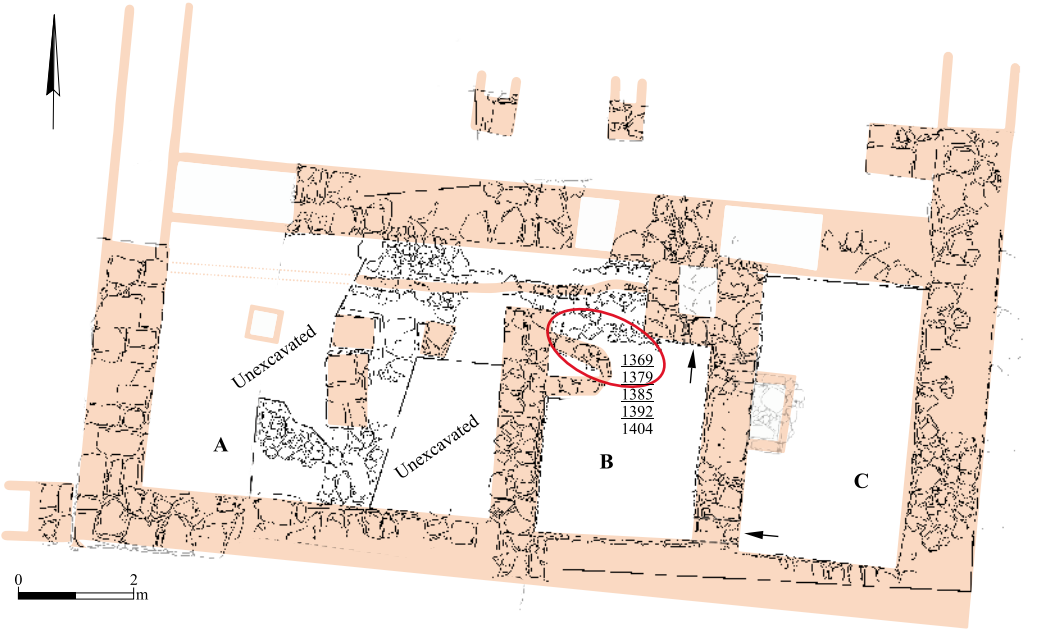


Fig. 1. Location map.

The Archaeological Context

The ivory panels from the Giv'ati Parking Lot site all originated in a single structure, Building 100 in Area 10, located on the western slopes of the southeastern ridge, also known as the City of David Ridge (Fig. 1; for more details, see Shalev et al. 2020). Although the building's construction date is unclear, it was violently destroyed during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BCE (Shalom et al. 2019; Vaknin et al. 2020). It was built on a broad rock-cut step along the western slope of the ridge, which had been modified specifically for its construction. The building measures at least 10 × 17 m and extends across the entire excavation area (Plan 1); however, its overall plan is of yet unknown, as only its southern part was exposed. This part consists of a row of three rooms (A–C) built along an east–west axis, which were found full of collapse debris that included ashlars and floor fragments made of plaster of exceptional quality. It seems, therefore, that these rooms formed part of the ground floor of a structure that had at least two stories (Vaknin et al. 2020). The high-quality plaster floor fragments indicate the splendor of the upper story, which was probably used for social events and/or as a "chamber".[2]

[2] The term "chamber" (לשכה in Hebrew) is taken from 2 Kings 23:11, where it is used to describe the offices of Nathanmelech, the king's servant. We use it here to emphasize the public function of the building, which was probably combined with domestic ones.



Plan 1. Building 100; the red ellipse marks the findspot of most ivory fragments.

Western Room A is large and rectangular (c. 6.0 × 4.5 m), with a stone-paved floor and two or three monolith piers, most probably designed to carry the weight of the upper story's massive floor. The room could be entered through a narrow passage via Room B to the east; there may have also been a direct entrance from the north, but the wall here was robbed down to its foundations.

Eastern Room C measures approximately 3.0 × 4.5 m. This room was cut into bedrock, which served as the foundation of the southern and eastern walls in its southeastern corner. The construction of the walls above bedrock was completed using ashlars and large, partly worked stones. The floor is also partly cut into bedrock and partly made of packed earth. A rectangular installation was built against the room's western wall. On its floor, beneath the debris, were found at least 15 complete but crushed storage jars and other, smaller pottery vessels (Amir et al., forthcoming). We presume, therefore, that the room served for storage.

Room B (Plan 1; Fig. 2) is the central room. It is the smallest of the three, measuring about 3.0 × 3.5 m, and it was entered from the north. The southern wall of the room was built of ashlar stones and was partly robbed out. Its western and eastern walls, separating it from Rooms A and C, were well-preserved, standing more than 2 m high. These walls were built of fieldstones, save for their northern edge that was built of ashlars. An opening, about one meter wide, connects Rooms A and B.

Room B was filled with ashlars and fieldstones, as well as a few decorative architectural elements, such as a stone-made basin, the fragment of a possible window frame and pieces of the second story's plaster floor (Shalev et al. 2020: Fig. 9). The debris lay on the room's packed-earth floor. Several installations were found in the room, including a rounded stone-

Fig 2. Collapsed stones inside Room B, looking east; most ivory fragments were found near the measuring stick.

lined installation built against the western wall and a small, rectangular, enigmatic cell closing off the room's northeastern corner, with a narrow opening leading south, into the room, to the east of the wide entrance. As this opening is too narrow to have been a doorway, it is unclear what this cell was intended for—perhaps it was a closet-like storage space.

Crushed ceramic vessels were found lying on the floor of the room, as well as in the small cell (Fig. 3). These items are dated to the late Iron Age, typical of the destruction layers of 586 BCE (Shalev et al. 2020). The assemblage, composed mainly of small serving vessels, such as cups and bowls, is functionally different from the assemblage retrieved from Room C; it includes only a fragmentary holemouth jar and no cooking pots. Another important item found in Room B is a scaraboid seal inscribed with "(belonging) to 'kar son of Matanyahu" (Mendel-Geberovich et al. 2019).

Most of the ivory fragments were found within the destruction debris in Room B (c. 850 out of 1500; Fig. 4); they were either handpicked while excavating or collected while wet-sieving all sediments originating in secure loci in the building and its surrounding. Thanks to this collection method, we are certain of the quantitative and spatial distribution of the fragments and have a fair indication of the items' original provenance within the building. Some 200 of the ivories were found in the area to the north of Room B; only eight were

Fig. 3. Restored pottery vessels from Room B.

Fig. 4. *In situ* fragment of a decorated ivory item.

found in Room A and two, in Room C. Of those retrieved in Room B, the lion's share (691 fragments) came from a sequence of five loci confined to a relatively small area in the room's northwestern side, near the entrance to Room A. These loci comprised a layer of debris directly on the floor (L1404, with 64 fragments), an ashy layer above it (L1392 and L1385, with 370 and 230 fragments, respectively), and collapsed stones (L1379 and L1369, with 22 and 5 fragments, respectively). It seems, therefore, that the items—most probably inlays decorating a furniture piece—were originally located either on the northeastern side

of the upper-story room above Room A or on the northwestern side of the room above Room B; they had fallen into Room B when the second-story floor collapsed, before its surrounding walls had toppled. Approximately 250 additional fragments were found mixed with Persian-period fill layers in the area to the north of Room B. This, however, is not much of a surprise, as the northern wall of these rooms was robbed out in the period that followed the destruction, and the area to its north was cleared of the debris and used for different activities. The remaining 150 fragments were found scattered in secondary deposits in different locations in this area, especially in Persian- or early Hellenistic-period soil layers.

The Ivory Panels

The ivory collection comprises about 1500 fragments of different sizes and states of preservation. This large number indicates the considerable size of the original assemblage. This being said, the decoration motifs are restricted to three main patterns (see below).[3]

Panel Nos. 1 and 2 (Figs. 5, 6)

The panels in the first group are nearly square (the sides measuring 47–50 mm, 2.5–3.0 mm thick). Twelve such panels were identified, of which two were fairly restorable. Each consists of a frame decorated with twelve incised rosettes set against a white-painted background, surrounding a stylized tree. The frame is delineated by a double line with traces of a reddish pigment (visible especially on the right and lower edges; Fig. 5). Each (complete) rosette has twelve petals surrounding a perforated circle. Some fragments are stained by a reddish pigment seen on the petals of the rosettes, similar to that on the frame border, while other fragments are colored by a dark gray pigment. Another double line, similar in color to the rosettes and the frame border, frames the inner motif—a stylized tree or palmette. Its top comprises five leaves issuing from a semioval core that is embraced by a pair of outcurving volutes, each of which ends with a white leaf; it is set on what appears to be a triangular-shaped, two-colored trunk. Also the stylized tree exhibits contrasting light and dark hues:[4] all five leaves alternate in light and dark colors; they are set above dark-colored volutes, and below them is a light colored pair of leaves, as is the base. These elements are all outlined by a single, light-colored line that separates them from the dark-colored background.

Ivories decorated with rosettes were recovered from various sites, such as Samaria (Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938: Pl. XXI:6) and Nimurd (Herrmann 1986: Pl. 222:868–874; 1992: Pls. 6:48–51; 7:52; Herrmann, Laidlaw and Coffey 2009: Pls. 1:7a; 6:40a; 29:199b,

[3] Here we describe the most complete, decorated and restorable items representing three recurring motifs in the assemblage. The other fragments are still being studied and will be fully published in the future. The analysis of the engraved motifs is part of Reli Avisar's Ph.D. dissertation, written at Tel Aviv University. We would like to thank Claudia Suter and Christoph Uehlinger for their valuable advice regarding the ivories, the motifs and the comparanda.

[4] The pigments will be analyzed in the IAA Analytical Laboratory.

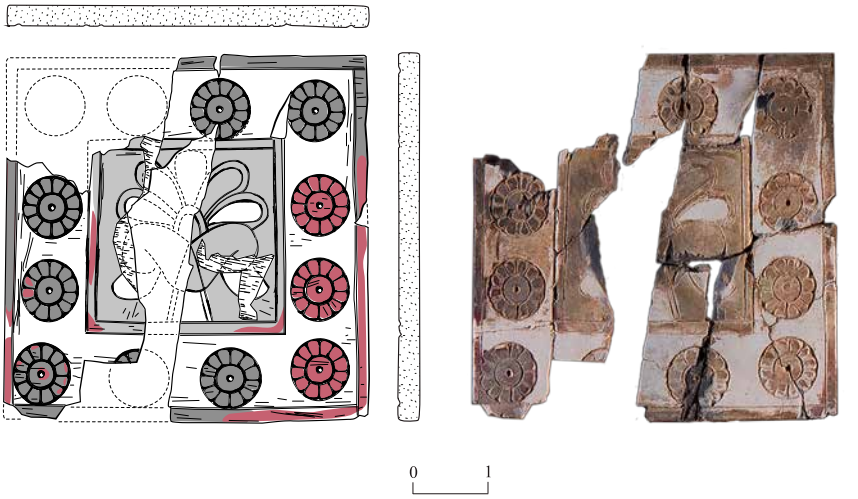


Fig. 5. Panel No. 1 after restoration.

Fig. 6. Panel No. 2 after restoration.

c). They feature diverse morphologies and styles, with variations in the number and shape of petals and in the shape of the frame surrounding them, which is usualy circular or square, but may also be rhombus-shaped (Herrmann, Laidlaw and Coffey 2009: Pl. 1:7a; see also Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938: Pl. XXIII:1). The rosettes from the Giv‘ati Parking Lot are most similar to those found on the panels from Nimrud (above; and see also Herrmann 1992: Pls. 52:287, 287a; 53:287b–e; Herrmann, Laidlaw and Coffey 2009: Pls. 125–131); they all display rounded petals encircling a broad circle that is incised on the panel.

The stylized tree is a common motif in the visual language of southwestern Asia, specifically on ivories. It has numerous variants (e.g., Nimrud: Herrmann 1986: Pl. 206:793; 1992: Pl. 54:296; Herrmann, Laidlaw and Coffey 2009: Pl. 11:72a, 72b, 73; Samaria: Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938: Pl. XVII:4, 7, 8, 10–14; Arslan Tash: Thureau-Dangin et al. 1931: Pls. xxiv:15, 16; xxviii:25; xxix:26, 27; and Salamis: Karageorghis 1974: Pls. B:1–4; D:1, 2). The closest in style to the trees from Jerusalem, exhibiting the same semioval core and five leaves, are known from Nimrud (Herrmann 1986: Pl. 320:1236) and Khorsabad (Loud and Altman 1938: Pl. 55:57, 62, 63).

The corners of Panel 2 were perforated, probably so that it could be nailed to the surface it had decorated. As these holes were drilled through the rosettes, they were likely a later addition (see *Discussion*, below).

Panel No. 3 (Fig. 7)

The second type of panel is a rectangular frieze of incised lotus flowers and buds set in a single-lined frame. At least two fragments of this panel type were found in the assemblage (height c. 31.5 mm, width at least 86.5 mm, thickness 4 mm, for the largest fragment). Each flower comprises three petals, rounded at their top and tapering toward the base, and flanked by two petals with a pointed top and a wider base. The inner petals are similar in style to the stylized tree’s inner leaves on Panel Nos. 1 and 2 (see above). Placed between the flowers, below the level of their outer petals, are lotus buds. The floral elements are darker in color than their background.

The lotus flower is also a common motif on the ivories of southwestern Asia. Examples were found at Nimrud (Mallowan and Herrmann 1974: Pl. CVIII:107; Herrmann 1986: Pls. 224:856–866; 302–321:1230–1235; 1992: Pls. 8:59, 60; 102:489), Samaria (Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938: Pl. XVI:1, 2, 7), Arslan Tash (Thureau-Dangin et al. 1931: Pl. xlvi:105–107) and Khorsabad (Loud and Altman 1938: Pl. 55:58, 59). In these and other representations of the motif, the lotus flowers all have pointed rather than rounded petals, rendering the panel from Jerusalem unique in this sence. An inlay from Samaria depicting a lotus frieze includes petals with rounded tops flanked by petals with pointed ones (Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938: Pl. XV:4a, 9); however, the petal arrangement is different from that of the Jerusalem panel. A strikingly similar motif was carved on a bone-made panel/inlay found in a public context at Tel ‘Ira and dating to Iron Age IIC (Goldsmith, Ben-Dov and Kertesz 1999: Fig. 14.5:2).

Fig. 7. Panel No. 3 after restoration.

Panel No. 4 (Fig. 8)

The third type of pattern is fragmentarily preserved, comprising a long and narrow frieze (height c. 8 mm, width 23.5 mm, thickness 2 mm) incised with a lattice motif and circles of two sizes at the intersection points. The background is painted black, contrasting with the natural color of the ivory, which shows through the incisions of two large circles that have a cross in their center. A similar composition is incised on another panel fragment in which the background was not painted and the original color of the ivory was maintained, though traces of reddish pigment can be seen in some of the incisions. A nearly identical lattice pattern was found at Nimrud (Herrmann 1992: Pl. 73:356).

Fig. 8. Panel No. 4, front (a, b) and back (c).

All panels and fragments in the assemblage had a flat, smoothed back, incised with thin, shallow, straight grooves, either parallel to one another or in two intersecting groups (Figs. 6–8). These incisions indicate that the panels were meant to be inlaid in another object using some sort of glue. As mentioned above, in a few cases, small holes were drilled into the corners of the panels (Fig. 6) so that they could be nailed rather than glued, disregarding the decoration patterns and cutting through them. This work of lesser craftsmanship may have been executed by a local artisan who lacked the skills or the means to perform this task. It is also possible that these panels had fallen off and were reattached to the furniture piece in a less elegant fashion.

Taxonomic Identification of the Raw Material[5]

In the ancient Near East both bone and ivory were used as raw materials to manufacture a variety of artifacts, including furniture ornamentations, such as thin decorated plaques (probably used as inlays; Barnett 1982; Moorey 1994; Krzyszkowska and Morkot 2000). Sometimes, the taxonomic identification of the raw material is easy, especially for the larger carved artifacts. Ivory was used when the dimensions of the compact bone part (in contrast to the less favored cancellous part) were not sufficient to carve a one-piece item (Krzyszkowska 1990; the most prominent local examples were found in the Late Bronze Age ivory cache at Megiddo; see Loud 1939: Pls. 32, 33). Unfortunately, there is a tendency to identify any luxurious or artistic artifact made of skeletal materials as ivory, and studies dealing with local repertoires rarely address this issue (for exceptions, see Maeir et al. 2015; Mazar 2020).

In late Iron Age Southern Levant, thin decorative panels were made of bone and ivory. Assuming that acquiring each type of raw material requires different means—that may imply the owner's political or socioeconomic status—it is essential to clearly identify the raw material. We applied a basic optical examination to identify the taxonomic origin of the material from which the artifacts were carved. A handful of fragments originally belonging to each of the reconstructed panels were inspected under a portable microscope (Dino-Lite AM4115t-FUW) to identify the raw material's unique micromorphological traits.

[5] This section presents preliminary results of analysis conducted by Harel Shochat in the framework of his Ph.D. research at the Department of Archaeology, University of Haifa.

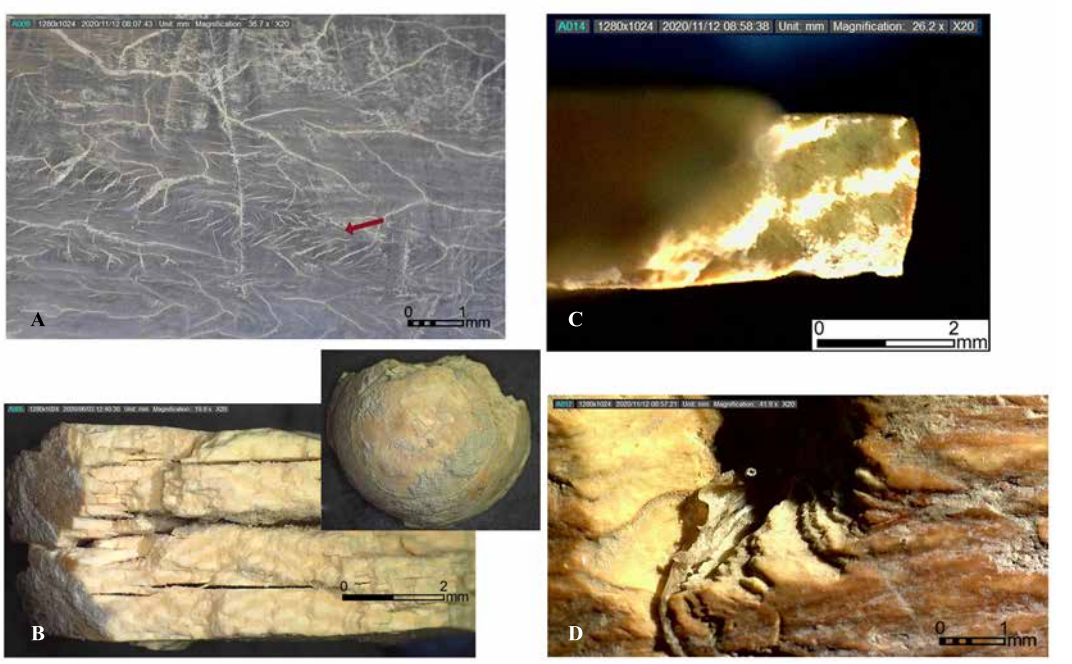


Fig. 9. Micromorphological breakage and cracking patterns characteristics of elephant ivory (tangential, radial and transverse planes relate to the original tusk's longitudinal axis), resulting from the helicoidal architecture of the elephant tusk (Locke 2008:423): (A) feather cracking pattern, typical of the tangential plane, close to the tusk core (Locke 2008: Fig. 15A) indicated by red arrow; (B) three-dimensional crosshatched breakage pattern typical of elephant ivory (following Schreger lines), indicating that it was made on the transverse plane of the original tusk (Virág 2012: Fig. 3)—a pattern clearly observed on a pommel-shaped fitting unearthed at the City of David (inset; see Mazar 2015:43, Fig. 1.19:20); (C) crosshatched pattern on the narrow facet of Panel No. 3; (D) terraced and sawtooth breakage patterns, also typical of elephant ivory (Heckel 2018: Table 2).

Although tusks (teeth) and bones are both hard skeletal tissues (sharing the same organic/mineral composition), ivory's unique anatomical microstructure enables straightforward and nondestructive identification down to the family level (Krzyszkowska 1990; Espinoza and Mann 1992; Locke 2008; Heckel 2018).

Most of the fragments were burned to some degree, and were either black or gray. This may be useful for determining their level of exposure to heat or fire (Robins et al. 1983), however, it made their micromorphology identification difficult, almost impossible. Some unburned or lightly burned items were identified as well and subsequently inspected.[6] The identified micromorphological characteristics indicate that all examined fragments were made of elephant ivory (Fig. 9). The raw material identification coincides with a previously

[6] Examined fragments were taken from Baskets 17146, 17217, 17230, 19373 and 20014, attributed to Panels Nos. 1, 2; Basket 17616 of Panel No. 3 was examined after initial restoration and an additional fragment from Basket 19609 was examined as well.

well-studied carving technique of thin panels, attesting that they had been carved parallel to the longitudinal axis of the tusk (Feldman 2014:49, Fig. 2.3).

Discussion

Engraved ivory inlays and panels were among the most desirable commodities in the Bronze and Iron Ages throughout southwestern Asia, displaying fine craftsmenship and attesting to their owners' affluence and exquisite taste. These artifacts are found in elite contexts, as part of furniture, containers, ceremonial outfits and various small items (Feldman 2014; 2015). Consequently, they were regarded as capital and therefore given as tribute—for example, to the Assyrian kings during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE—or looted by the Assyrians when they plundered a conquered city (e.g., during the days of Sennacherib; Layard 1853: Pl. 40).

Among the Iron Age "ivory centers", Samaria is second only to Nimrud in the number of artifacts; although found in disturbed contexts, the ivory inlays and panels clearly date to the Iron Age. Nevertheless, despite the hundreds of ivory panels and inlays, Samaria is an isolated case as far as current archaeological data suggest, since its rulers were exceptional among their South Levantine peers, whose capital cities yielded only scant evidence of such consumption. Instead, these courts consumed the products of local artisans specialized in meticulous bone crafts (Naeh 2015b:598). Thus, the finding of the ivories in Jerusalem in an early sixth-century BCE context is striking. A local production, as has been suggested for the ivories of Samaria (Naeh 2015a), seems improbable for Jerusalem. The resemblance of the engraved motifs on the Jerusalem ivories to those from Nimrud and Khorsabad may indicate an Assyrian origin. Although the circumstances of the ivories' arrival in Jerusalem are shrouded in mist, the decorated artifacts may have been sent from Assyria to the loyal vassal residing in the city[7]—perhaps in the form of decorated furniture pieces (Fig. 10), such as those depicted in wall reliefs as being looted by the Assyrian army and used by Assyrian kings, e.g., Sennacherib (see above, Southwest Palace at Nineveh; Barnett 1976:57, Pl. LXIV). Another possibility is that these items were imported as panels and inlaid in the furniture in Jerusalem by local artisans.

Despite the probable nonlocal origin of the ivory panels, it is remarkable that all three motifs depicted on the ivory panels from Jerusalem are well-attested in other media found in the city and throughout Judah in this period, such as stamp seals. At the same time, other popular motifs found at Samaria and Nimrud, such as hybrid creatures or anthropomorphic figures, are absent from the Jerusalem collection, attesting, undoubtedly, to a process of selection: specific motifs were chosen while others were rejected.

[7] On the possibility that Assyrian kings shared booty with their loyal vassals, see Di Paolo 2015:73. On the policy employed by Manasseh, King of Judah, in regard to the Assyrians, see Knauf 2001; Gadot 2022.

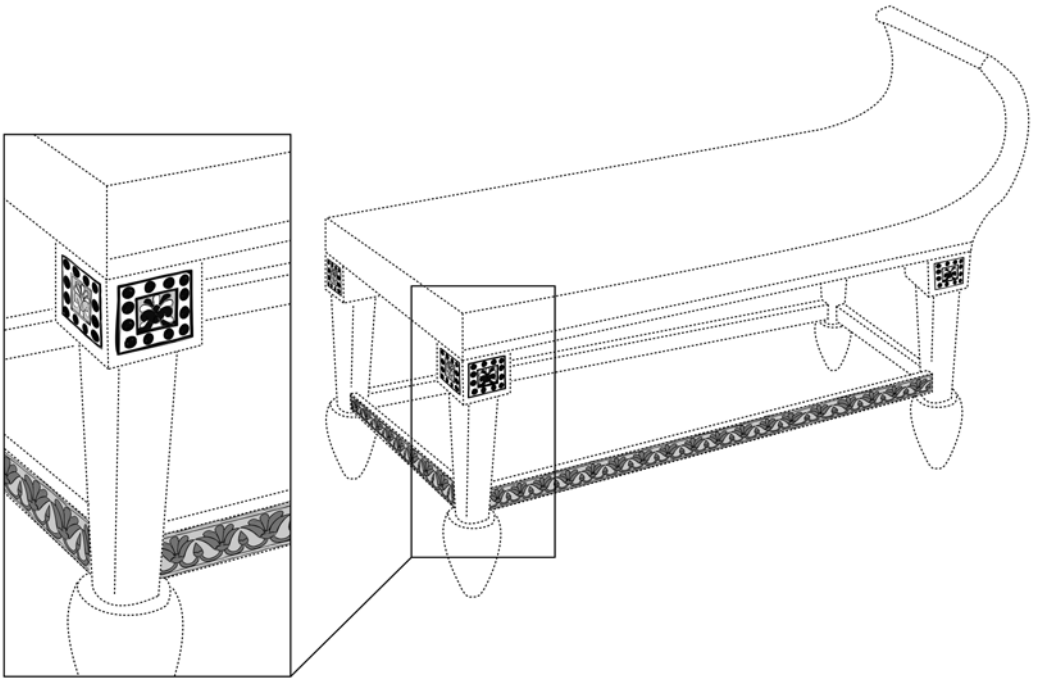


Fig. 10. Reconstruction of a furniture piece decorated with the Jerusalem inlays (Adapted from Barnett 1976:57, Pl. LXIV, by Naama Earon).

The earliest of the motifs in the Southern Levant was the lotus flower, which originated in Egypt as a symbol of creation and regeneration, and acquired royal connotations (Ziffer 2005:153; Ornan 2016:7; Schroer 2018:75). Royal figures are depicted holding lotus flowers, e.g., at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Ornan 2016: Fig. 1a.2) and lotuses are commonly featured on Levantine seals (Sass 1993:209–210). Chains of lotus flowers and buds symbolize an endless cycle of growth and regeneration and therefore, life (Keel and Uehlinger 1998:170; Winter 2003:257*; Ornan 2016:16; Schroer 2018:65–66). Such chains are present in royal connotations, such as on Aḥiram's sarcophagus, dating from Iron IIA (Ziffer 2005:155–156), and in the mural at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, dating from Iron IIB (Ornan 2016:16), as well as in the ivories mentioned above.

In the art of southwestern Asia, the stylized tree was a common motif and a symbol of life and prosperity (Keel and Uehlinger 1998:46). In second-millennium BCE Southern Levant, the tree image and its connotations were associated primarily with goddesses (Keel and Uehlinger 1998:20–21, 28–30; Schroer 2008:47–48; 2011:52; Ziffer 2010:411) and occasionally also with gods (Ornan 2011:264–272). Such associations endured during the Iron Age, although more closely with male gods (Keel and Uehlinger 1998:42–44; Ziffer 2011:420–421; Ornan 2016:15–16; Schroer 2018:70). At the same time, tree representations in Assyria were interpreted as the "tree of abundance," first appearing in the thirteenth century BCE (Porter 2003:23, 95; Winter 2003:253*). They were commonly painted on

walls and in reliefs. An important example comes from the palace of Ashurnasirpal II, which is understood as a visual metaphor for the king and his role as an intermediary conveying divine blessings of prosperity and fertility (Parpola 1993:168; Winter 2003:254*; Suter 2011:232). By the eighth century BCE, there was a decrease in the depictions of stylized trees in monumental architecture (Porter 2003:25–27), but the motif was depicted in other media, such as ivories.

The rosette was a common icon in southwestern Asian art since the third millennium BCE, originating in various regions with no apparent connection. In several places it acquired royal and divine associations, such as in Late Bronze Age Hatti and Assyria (Van Buren 1939), where it was a royal emblem that adorned royal architecture, clothing and artifacts (Cahill 1997:57–68; Albenda 2020). During Iron IIC, following the Assyrian impact on the Southern Levant, local rulers also adopted it as a royal symbol. At Tel Miqne-'Eqron, for example, a rosette was found engraved on a stone slab in the palatial monumental complex that combined local and Assyrian-style architectural traditions (Gitin 2012:223). A second example is a corpus of approximately 25 rosette-stamped storage jar handles from sites in Judah, charactersitic of the Iron IIC Judahite administrative system (Koch 2018:33; Koch and Lipschits 2021:292–294). The ivory panels from Jerusalem are thus an essential addition to this corpus, being the first provenanced artifacts to bear the rosette icon from Jerusalem apart from the common stamped jar handles.[8]

Conclusions

Building 100, centrally located within greater Jerusalem of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, probably served as the "chamber" of a high official in the Judahite palatial or cultic organization (for the Judahite elite, see Amir et al., forthcoming). The ivories described above were possibly inlaid in furniture pieces that stood on the upper floor (Fig. 10). Along with other prestige artifacts, they allude to the elite status of the residents of this building, reflecting both internationalism and local conservatism. The ivory items were not locally produced and were either exchanged as gifts or bought from an intermediary. Their rarity points to the high status of the chamber's resident, as a participant in a network connecting elites of different cities in the Assyrian Empire. Noteworthy is the fact that, the motifs decorating the panels demonstrate selectivity, exhibiting a clear preference of the Jerusalemite elite for vegetal icons, such as trees, branches and lotuses, that had been common in the Southern Levant for millennia and that become popular in Judah.

Decorated bone objects were found in other excavations in the City of David (Ariel 1990; Mazar 2015; Naeh 2015a), and the few examples of bone-made inlays and panels depict simple motifs (for example, repeating ring-and-dot incisions; Mazar 2015: Fig.

[8] A rosette is depicted on the unprovenanced seal of Ma'adana, the king's daughter (Avigad 1978); however, this seal has long been considered a modern forgery (see, most recently, Maurey and Fink 2016).

1.24:11; Naeh 2015a:592; Fig. III.10.1:44).[9] Ivory-made artifacts include mainly dome-shaped finials (identified by Ariel as furniture pieces; Ariel 1990: Figs. 11:BI 27, BI 28, BI 29; 12:BI 41; Mazar 2015: Figs. 1.19:20, 1.20:42, 1.51:3), an ivory dove perched upon a pomegranate (Reich, Shukrun and Lernau 2007:161, Fig. 10) and a few frame-shaped inlays (Mazar 2015: Fig. 1.37:4). These objects were probably produced locally. It seems that the imported decorated ivory items provoked a demand for such objects, prompting a local workshop to imitate them, albeit using a less expensive material (Shiloh 1984: Pl. 34.1).

The assemblage of ivory-made panels from late Iron Age Jerusalem is unique, featuring coherent imagery that raises questions regarding agency, selectiveness of motifs and the impact of imported luxurious artifacts on choices made by the local elite. This group of items is especially interesting when compared with the earlier, more extensive and eclectic assemblage from Samaria, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel (Suter 2011). These issues will be further explored in future publications.

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[9] Many of these decorated items were published as made of ivory; however, Harel Shochat recently identified them as made of bone (see n. 5).

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