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An Aramaic-Inscribed Cultic Object from Tulûl Mas'ud, Elyakhin

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A copper-alloy object bearing an incised Aramaic inscription in lapidary script was found on the surface, about halfway up the hill of Tulûl Mas'ud, in the Sharon plain. The object was recently studied by a multidisciplinary research group of specialists in archaeology, epigraphy, forensic science and analytical archaeology to better understand the artifact in its original cultural and spatial setting. The results attest that the object was probably connected with a nearby Persian-period sanctuary.

Keywords: Persian, Hellenistic, cult, epigraphy, Phoenician, ethnicity, copper alloy, metal workshop

Introduction

A copper-alloy object incised with an Aramaic inscription in lapidary script was discovered by chance by one of the authors (R.Y. Lewis) in 1993. It was found on the surface, about halfway up the hill of Tulûl Mas'ud, in the southwestern part of Moshav Elyakhin in the Sharon plain (map ref. 701596/192556). It was handed over to Yosef Porath of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) for safekeeping, at which time it was registered and conserved in the IAA Metal Conservation Laboratory; it was relocated in the IAA laboratory in July 2021.[2]

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History of the Site

The site of Tulûl Mas‘ud (Tell Mas‘ud; Conder and Kitchener 1880: Sheet XI) is located in ‘Emeq Ḥefer, in the central Sharon plain, on a red loam (*ḥamra*) hill (44 m above sea level) that dominates the landscape (Fig. 1).

The site originally encompassed two hills, but houses and a school belonging to the modern settlement were built on the eastern hill, almost entirely covering it (Tulûl Mas‘ud, File No. 14-20/21, Survey of Israel, IAA Archive). The site was frequently mentioned by surveyors in the late twentieth century as a possible location of a Persian-period sanctuary; however, it was never excavated. During the Persian period, the Sharon plain, including ‘Emeq Ḥefer, was part of the Province of Dor, which was under Sidonian hegemony, as attested by King ‘Eshmon‘azor II of Sidon’s coffin inscription (KAI §14.1.1.9), dated to the last third of the sixth century BCE (Elayi 2006). The vast grain-lands of Dor and Jaffa (Joppa) were most probably given by the Great Achaemenid King as tribute for the participation of the Sidonian fleet during Cambyses’ and/or Darius I’s successful campaigns in Egypt (c. 525 and 517 BCE). An important historical testimony for Sidonian and Tyrian Palestinian land division and political affiliation is the Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax, dated to the year 338/337 BCE—the end of the Persian period (Shipley 2012:122–123). The Province of Dor featured many settlements, including secondary administrative centers, towns, villages, fortresses, agricultural estates and lands. Its population was ethnically and culturally diverse, although primarily comprising Phoenicians from the Sidonian heartland, who boosted the region’s demography and attracted other Western Semitic ethnic groups, in contrast to the preceding Neo-Babylonian period (cf., e.g., Stern 1982:15–18; Lemaire 1990:56–59; Tal 2019a:395–400).

The site was badly damaged in the mid-1950s, after being levelled by a bulldozer as part of construction operations to install a concrete water tank on top of the hill (Fig. 2). Inspectors visiting the site reported the existence of an ancient occupation layer about 0.5 cm below ground level, to the west of the water tank (Tulûl Mas‘ud, File No. 14-20/21, Survey of Israel, IAA Archive).[3]

In 1965, a former resident of Elyakhin notified the authorities of finding a limestone statue with a plank-shaped body on the hill. The inspectors arriving at the site reported the finding of pottery dated to the Persian and Hellenistic periods, as well as an ashlar stone wall with several scattered stones nearby, which seemed to have originated from the construction works that had taken place a decade earlier. Additional ancient objects, including another statuette, were also noted at the site (Busheri 1965; Porath, Dar and Applebaum 1985:138–140); unfortunately, these had since gone lost.

[3] Additional information on the site’s recent history was kindly provided by Eli Yannai. He noted that installing the water reservoir had stimulated the search and retrieval of artifacts over the years. Children of the Elyakhin Transit-Camp (*Ma‘abara*), as well as local antiquarians, used to scavenge for finds in a creek created by a seasonal rivulet.

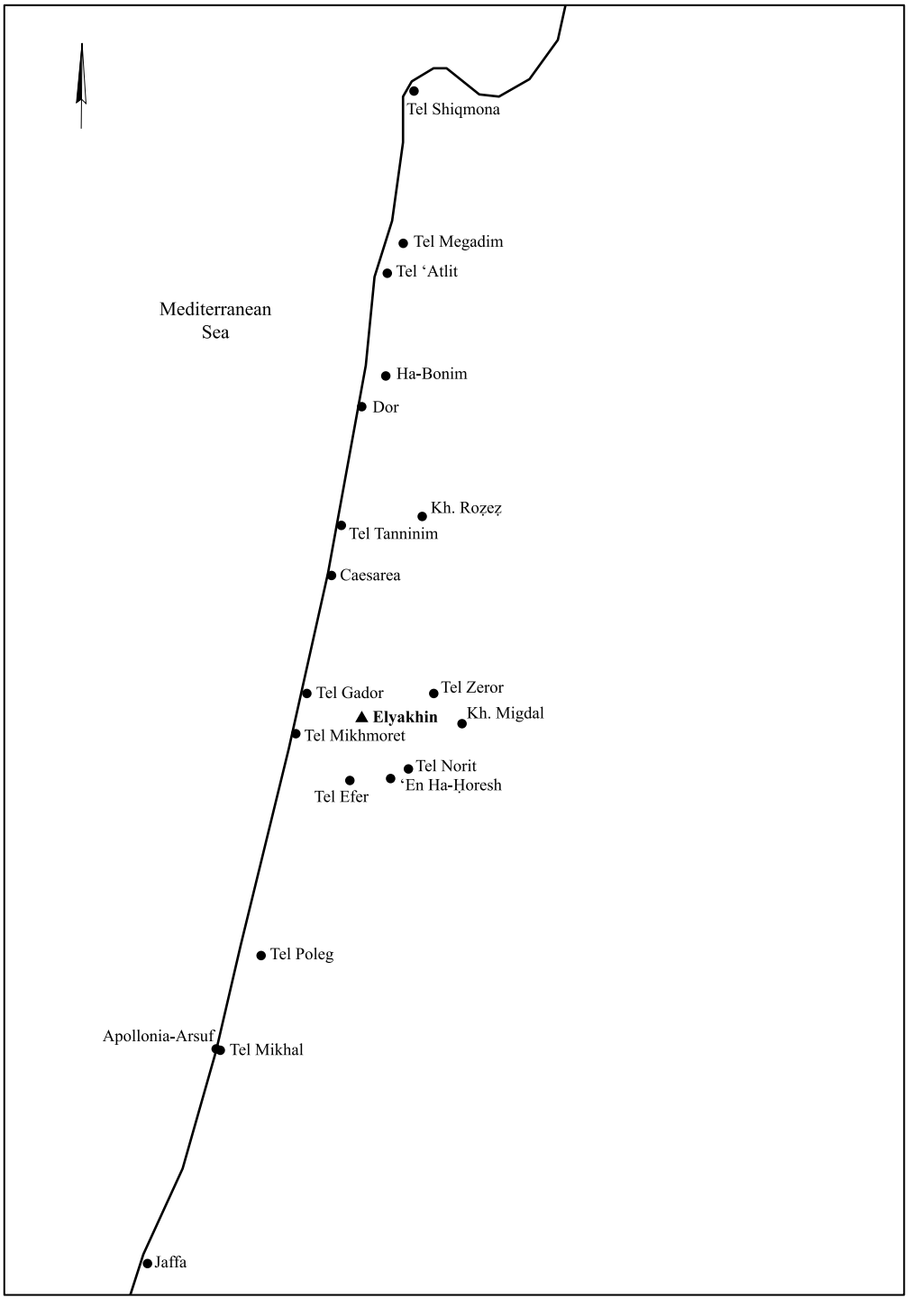

Fig. 1. Location map of Tulûl Mas‘ud (Elyakhin) and other Persian-period sites in the central Mediterranean coastal plain.

a

b

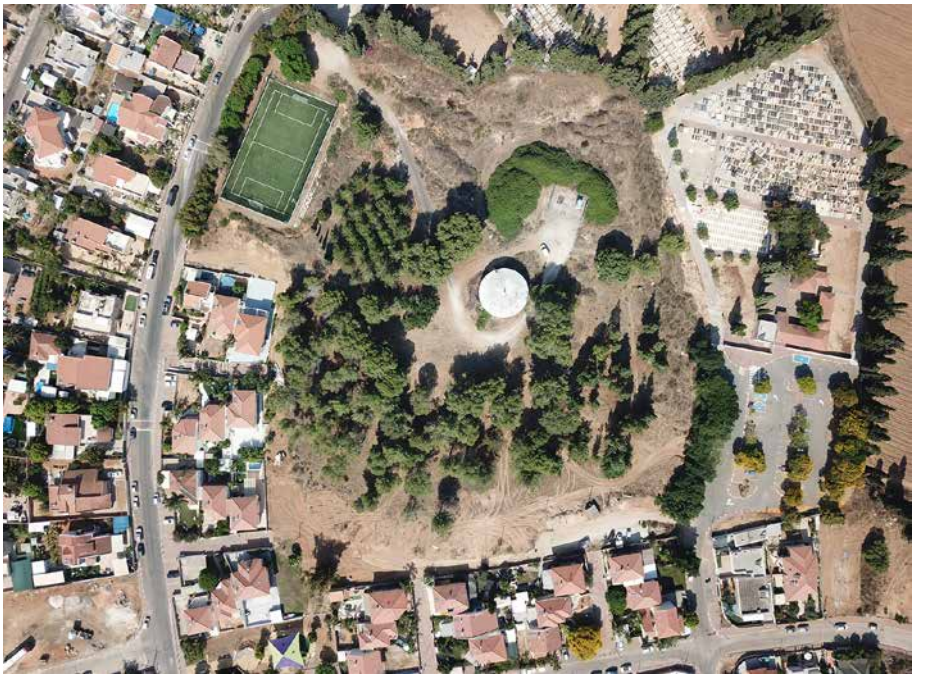

Fig. 2. Tulûl Mas‘ud (Elyakhin): (a) looking east; (b) aerial view.

Between 1964 and 1966, the Sharon-plain survey team conducted a survey at the site in the framework of the Map of Ḥadera (53; Site 94). They reported that a sanctuary similar to the one at Tel Mikhal might have existed there. The surveyors documented scattered hewn *kurkar* (fossilized dune) sandstones and potsherds over an area of four dunams on two hills covered with sand. The pottery was dated to late Iron Age III, and to the Persian, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods (Gophna and Kochavi 1966a; 1966b:144; Ne'eman, Sender and Oren 2000: Site No. 94, see also Site Nos. 84–86).[4] In the mid-1960s, the site was surveyed by Eli Yannai, who collected pottery dating from the Persian and Hellenistic periods (Figs. 9, 10; see below). The local inhabitants also handed over to Yannai an object made of alabaster, a mortarium, an Irano-Scythian arrowhead and a coin.

In 1967, a black stone statue of Osiris with a hieroglyphic inscription on the back, dated to the Hellenistic period, was found at the site by a schoolboy from Elyakhin (Giveon 1967; 1984:153–158). Several other artifacts have also been found at the site, albeit again disassociated from any stratigraphic context: five bronze bowls, a bronze cymbal and a bronze (oil lamp?) fragment—all bearing Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:69–89);[5] fifteen Sidonian, Tyrian and Samarian silver coins from the late fifth, and especially the fourth century BCE (Deutsch and Heltzer 1997:17–20); fibulae; arrowheads; and gold, silver and bronze jewelry (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:69). The site is still undergoing significant development, and traces of modern construction activities are visible in many areas.[6]

The Object

The object is a copper-alloy tube-shaped artifact, measuring 8.3 cm long and 3.6 cm in diameter; it weighs 176.8 g.[7] Close to the upper end of the tube is a small perforation (diam. 3 mm, 2 mm wide depression), probably for a small nail to secure it to a handle (Figs. 3, 4). The thickness of the plate is 2 mm at the shaft and 4 mm at the flattened broken end. The plate that makes up what appears to be the front of the tube is rounded, while the back is hammered with one side of the plate partially folded over the other side where they meet. A two-line inscription was incised on its front. Each line is nearly 8 cm long, with the upper line reaching a maximum width of about 1 cm and the lower line, a maximum width of 1.5 cm. The tube seems to have been part of a larger cultic object, a firepan or an incense shovel, or even the socket of a ceremonial weapon dedicated to the divinity/divinities of a sanctuary (see below).

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4 See also the Sharon plain Survey; The Khan Museum Archives: Ne'eman 5-333-9, File 2.

5 One of the objects is now in the possession of a private collector, and the other six are part of the S. Moussaieff collection, London (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:9).

6 Including the planting of groves of pine trees, the building of houses on the slopes of the hills, the construction of a tennis court to the east of the ancient site and the flattening of the peak of the site with a bulldozer, while evacuating an illegal horse ranch (Israel Land Authority, 14.11.2011).

7 Precisa BJ 2200C electronic wait, Max = 2200g and d = 0.01g.

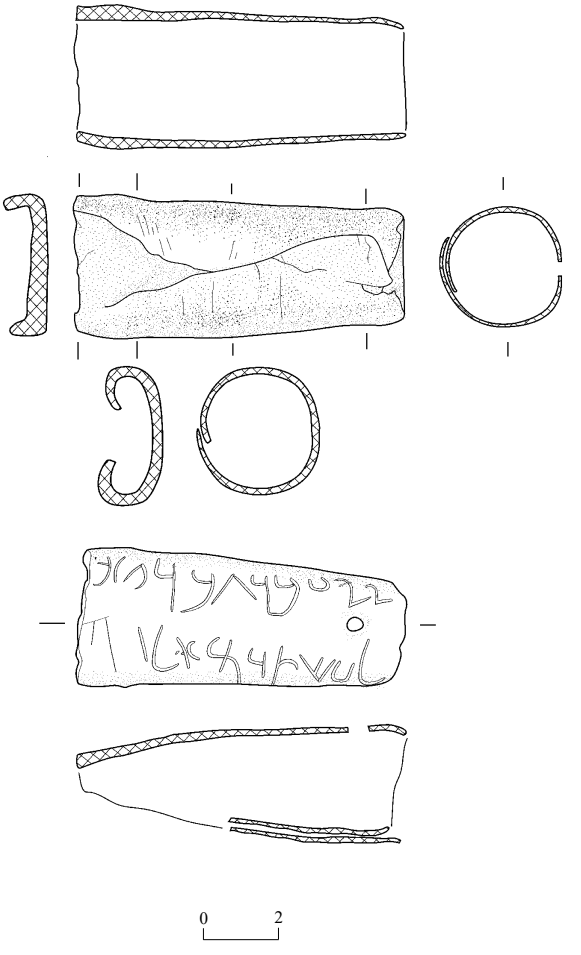

Fig. 3. The tube-shaped object.

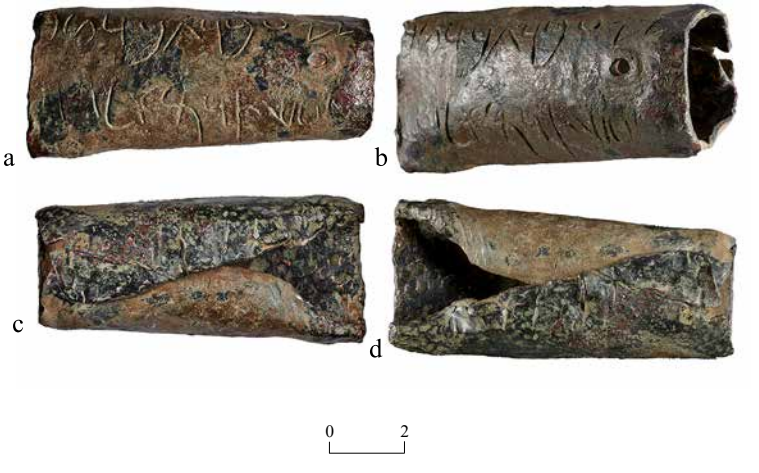

Fig. 4. The inscription on the tube-shaped object: front (a, b) and back (c, d).

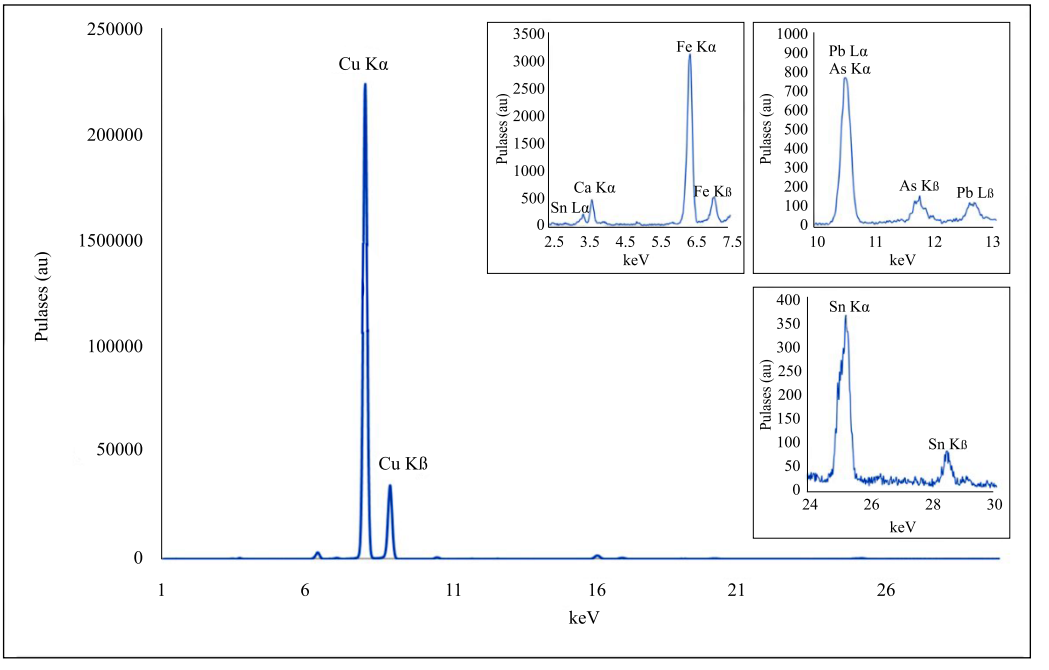

Fig. 5. Representative XRF spectrum of the object with inserts showing enlarged sections of the spectrum with minor elements.

X-Ray Fluorescence Analysis

The inscribed object was examined by X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) with a Bruker Tracer 5i portable XRF spectrometer in "Ancient Bronze Mode."[8] Two spots, 8 mm in diameter, were measured at the external surface of the object and the results were similar, suggesting that beneath the external surface the alloy is relatively homogeneous. Figure 5 provides a representative spectrum, revealing the object to be almost entirely made of pure copper (Cu). Minor elements, including tin (Sn), iron (Fe), arsenic (As) and lead (Pb), were also detected by XRF (Fig. 5). The object could perhaps be considered tin-bronze, but the very small amount of tin differentiates it from most bronze-made artifacts. Calcium (Ca) and other trace elements, including Br, Si, K, Ti, V and Mn, were detected, but they most probably derived from the corrosion layer on the object.[9]

[8] Bruker's Ancient Bronze Mode defines the following measurement conditions: 30 seconds measurement at 40kV with a current of 7µA, using Ti 25µm and Al 300µm filters.

[9] If a provenance study of the object will be undertaken in the future, it is recommended that a non-corroded sample should be used (Nørgaard 2017). Additional archaeo-metallurgical analyses were performed on the object (see Ashkenazi et al. 2022).

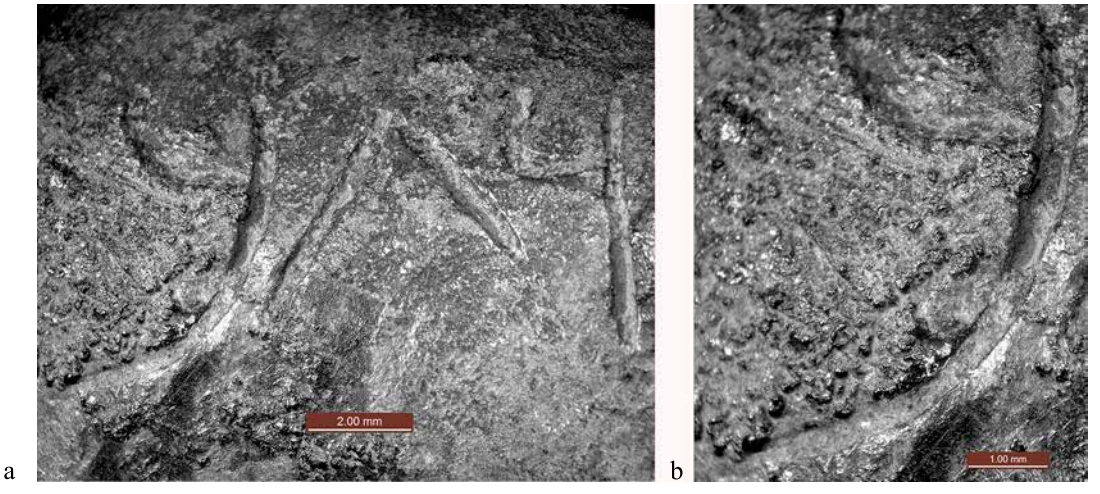

Fig. 6. The width of the letters indicates that the scribing was done at least with two strokes (photography: N. Finkelstein).

Forensic Analysis

The forensic study contributed to our understanding of several aspects related to the manufacturing process of the object, the method employed to inscribe it and the consequences of its breakage.[10] The manufacturing process involved heating the metal, hammering it to obtain a sheet and then folding it (by hammering) around a tube-shaped object, probably of the same circumference as the analyzed object, and later mounting it on a round pole.

The inscription seems to have been engraved using a sharp tool before the hammered sheet was folded into a tube, possibly while the copper-alloy was hot. This method is similar to the one used to manufacture the inscribed bronze bowls and cymbal from Elyakhin (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:69–89), which, together with the fact that the object was probably broken during use (see below), may suggest the operation of a nearby metal workshop, possibly specializing in the production of ritual offerings related to a sanctuary. The letters vary in depth from 0.1 to 0.7 mm; their width ranges between 0.30–0.45 mm, suggesting that the scribe went over the letters more than once (Fig. 6). Scratches visible on the hammered inner surface of the object, resulting from friction between the pole and the mounted metal tool, indicate that the object was in use before it was broken. Based on the observation of an uneven break line (Fig. 7), the object was probably broken due to stress-strain behaviour in bending. It seems reasonable to suggest that it had broken due to use rather than being

[10] The study results were obtained with the help of a scanning electron microscopy (SEM) Leica DMC; scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) Leica M205C Stereo Microscope; a fast-curing two-part silicon rubber compound for flexible high-resolution replicas, RepliSet-F1 Struers UK.

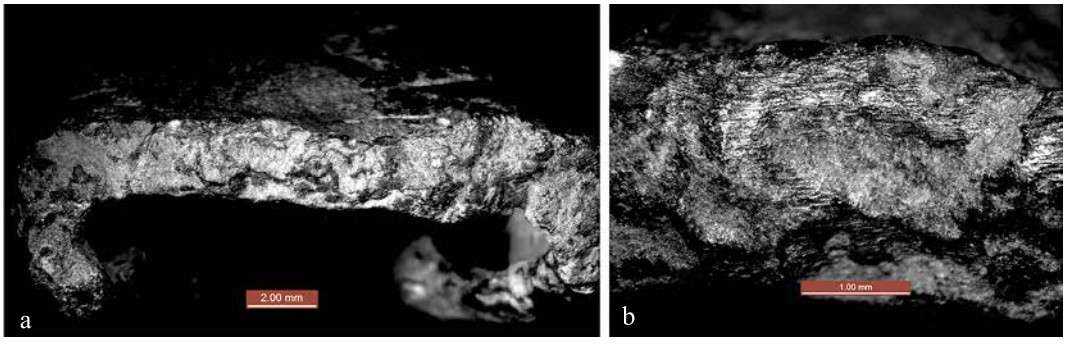

Fig. 7. An uneven (in height) line of breakage indicating that the object was probably broken as result of use and not intentionally destroyed (photography: N. Finkelstein).

intentionally destroyed; the single abrasive mark on the break may support this suggestion. The break probably began on the inside of the tube continuing outward, with the final tearing of the material reflected in the 0.5 mm of surplus material on the exterior.

The Inscription

Epigraphy

The inscription comprises two partly preserved lines in Aramaic lapidary script (Fig. 8). The beginning of the inscription is preserved, while its end is missing. Most of the inscribed letters are clear and easy to decipher, the partly preserved letters at the end of the lines are less clear due to the break.

The post-Iron Age corpus of Aramaic lapidary inscriptions was summarized by Lemaire (2014; 2015). Although the term “lapidary script” is usually applied to inscriptions on stone that served official purposes, it is also used to describe inscriptions on other materials (cf. Eshel, in press). Among the Persian-period Aramaic lapidary inscribed metal objects, those published from Elyakhin (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:69–89) can serve as reference material given their provenance and the fact that most of them feature contemporary Aramaic script and refer to the same divinity/ies, namely *‘strm*.

The inscription reads as follows:

1 [...] זי עבד גברטֹב

2 […] °°לעשתרמ אל

Fig. 8. The inscription: (a) the first line; (b) the second line.

Translation:

1 That which *Gbrṭb* made […]

2 To *ʿstrm ʾl* °° […]

The Script

Aleph (א). The reading of this letter is uncertain. Its shape differs from the regular star-shaped *aleph*, closer resembling the *aleph* on the Saqqara funerary stela (*KAI* §267; Porten and Yardeni 1999:254–255, D20.3; Lemaire 2014:242, Fig. 2) and those known on coins from Ashdod (Gitler and Tal 2006:80, Type II.Ashdod.1D, 307).

Bet (ב). The letter is rounded, similar to many other such letters on contemporaneous coins from Samaria and Philistia (Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79; Gitler and Tal 2006:307).

Gimel (ג). This letter is shaped like the Greek *lambda*, the right stoke is more vertical and shorter than the left one (cf. Gitler and Tal 2006:162, Type XI.Imitation.9D, 308).

Dalet (ד). This letter usually has the same shape as the *resh* (ר), but here the vertical line is longer (Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79; Gitler and Tal 2006:308).

Zayin (ז). The head is rounded, and it has a straight line at the bottom (Gitler and Tal 2006:309).

Ḥet (ח). The letter is not clearly preserved. It is broad and rectangular at the top, but this part is not very clear due to damage to this section of the object. The two vertical lines are clear (Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79; Gitler and Tal 2006:309).

Ṭet (ט). The tentative reading of a *ṭet* is based on the assumption that its lower part is missing (see Lemaire 2014:242, Fig. 2).

Yod (י). The head of the letter is rounded, like a *zayin*, with an added left middle stroke. The lower part has a straight line (Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79; Gitler and Tal 2006:309).

Lamed (ל). This letter is written low in the line, as a rounded L, resembling the early type (Yardeni 2000:192–193, Type 5), but without a "tail," and dated to the fourth century BCE, as attested in the coinage of Samaria (Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79).

Mem (מ). The *mem* starts with a serif; it is concave with a long downstroke that does not curve to the left at the bottom. This type usually featured until the late fifth/early fourth century BCE. It has a vertical right leg, resembling Yardeni's Type 5 (2000:192–193).

‘Ayin (ע). This letter is a semicircle that opens upward. The *‘ayin* in Line 2 is larger and deeper than the one in Line 1 (cf. Gitler and Tal 2006:114, Type V.Gaza.1D, 310; Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79).

Resh (ר). This letter usually has the same shape as the *dalet*, but here the vertical line of the *resh* is shorter than in the *dalet* (cf. Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79; Gitler and Tal 2006:308).

Shin (ש). The letter is written as a relatively large *vav* with an interior diagonal stroke almost parallel to the right stroke, partly slanting to the right at the base (cf. Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79; Gitler and Tal 2006:311).

Tav (ת). The letter is written with a long vertical stroke and a relatively short curve to the right (cf. Meshorer and Qedar 1999:78–79).

Commentary

Line 1. The phrase זי עבד should be translated as "this which he made," compared with the formula זי יהב, "this which is offered," which appears in four of the other Elyakhin Aramaic inscriptions (Nos. 2 and 3, and reconstructed in Nos. 4 and 5; cf. Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:73–79). It can also be compared with the phrase אש יתן, "that which gave (offered)," in Elyakhin Aramaic Inscription No. 1 (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:69–73).

The word עבד means "made," similar to its use in two other inscriptions: the Elephantine documents, עדיא וטבתא ז[י] עבדו אלהן (see *KAI* §222 B 2:2); and an inscribed offering table dated to the early fifth century BCE, written in Aramaic lapidary script, reading לקרבת בנת לאוסרי חפי עבד אביטב בר בנת לה יעבד קדם אוס>ח<רי חפי, translated as: "Offering table as an offering table of Banit to Osiris-Ḥapi (Serapis) (which) made Abiṭab son of Banit for him so that he (Banit) may be (Or: he [Abiṭab] will make [offerings] before Osi>h<ris-Ḥapi" (Porten and Yardeni 1999:252, D20.1).

The root גבר means "be strong, mighty; prevail." It is found as part of subject + predicate names in Hebrew, as well as in Aramaic (Zadok 1988:23), in names such as גבריהו or גבריאל. See the biblical name גבר in the place name עציון גבר (e.g., Numbers 33:35); or גבר Giber, (Ezra 2:20) בני גבר, "the sons of Gibbar." The root גבר is also found in Phoenician, meaning "warrior" or "man" (Krahmalkov 2000:135). It is also known in Arabic: six times as a Safaitic name and once each as Thamudic and Sabean (Harding 1971:151); see also גברנ, גברמ and גברי (Harding 1971:151–152). It is noteworthy that the bowls and cymbal from Elyakhin mention additional names, among them Phoenician, Hebrew, Persian and Babylonian names, and possibly even an Arabian one.[11]

[11] This anthroponym consists of a predicative element which derives from G-B-R. An interpretation of the name as a verbal sentence (perf. 3rd sg. m.) seems less likely as G-B-R is not recorded as a verb in Phoenician-Punic and does not produce names there but is so far extant in the nominal forms *gbr*, viz. "man; warrior" and *gbrt* "might, power" (cf. Krahmalkov 2000:135, s.vv. *gbr* I, II and *gbrt*). G-B-R is productive in other West Semitic onomastica, cf. the compound names Bibl. *Gbry'l* (name of an angel which may originally be an anthroponym) (Loewenstamm 1954:420–421), NA < Aram. *Gab-ri-ìl* (M.P. Streck, PNA 1:417a, s.v. with lit.) (and NB/LB GN < PN *Gab-ri-il-lu* (Zadok 1978:81), as well as (with an inverted order of the components) NA *Qa-uš-gab-ri* (< Edomite *Qwsg*[*br*] if the restoration is correct) (Zadok 1998:785:II, 1, a, 3 and J. Llop, PNA 3:1011a with lit.). The same predicative element follows the theophorous elements in NA *Ìl-gab-ri* and *Na-áš-hu-gab-ri*, as well as in NB/LB *Abi-gab-ra*, *I-lu-gab-ra* (Tarasewicz and Zawadzki 2018:357, rev. 6') and *Adad-gab-ri* which are West Semitic (practically Aramaic) (Zadok 1978:29, 80–81, 262, and see references and discussion therein). NB *Ga-ba-ri-Adad* (^{d}IŠKUR) (Zadok 1984:38; 2003:264:1.3.7, 7; Tarasewicz and Zawadzki 2018:681b) has the same denotation as Αδαδγαβαρ/Αδαγγαβαρος (i.e., *Αδαδγαβαρος with assimilation) and Αδαγαβαρος from Dura Europos (with an inverted order). Their predicative element is G perfect 3rd sg. m. of G-B-R, i.e., "Adad has prevailed" (Zadok 1987:252; Grassi 2012:17, 126) like that of LB (< West Semitic, practically Aramaic) *Il* (DINGIR^{meš})-*ga-bar*, -*ga-ba-ri* "God/El has prevailed". The name-type predicative *qtl* + DN is less common in Phoenician-Punic, where most sentence names with a perfect verb have the order DN + *qtl*, like the sequence in the various Aramaic onomastica. However, Aramaic has also *Gbrd* (Maraqten 1988:74–75, 147), i.e., *qtl* + an abbreviated form of *(H)adad/(H)addu*. It cannot be excluded that Aram. *Gbrhdd* (Beyer 1998:157 *ad* 63:H 177; Marcato 2018:45–46 with lit.) from Hatra, which has the same sequence as *Gbrpnbʕl*, may attest to Arabian influence (his son was named *Tmlt*, i.e., < *Tym'lt*, i.e., Arab. "Allāt's servant") (Marcato 2018:132). However, both components are explicable in Aramaic terms. It may be pointed out that merely the sequence might have been influenced by the Arabian milieu, but I would not prefer an Arabic rendering of the name as "Hadad ist wiederhergestellt" as suggested by Beyer (1998:157 *ad* 63:H 177). Regarding the comparison between *Gbrpnbʕl* and *Gbrhdd* (and earlier *Gbrd*), it should be remembered that historically Baal was an appellative "lord" used as an epithet of the storm god *Hadad/Haddu*, and names with *Haddu* were still current in Phoenicia and Canaan in general as late as the Amarna period. Later on (from the first millennium BCE onward), the epithet replaced the original theonym in the Canaanite realm (R. Zadok, pers. comm.).

The element טב in Aramaic means ‘good’ (to be compared with Hebrew טוב), and is known in the name טבאל (also documented in Ugaritic), a Persian official in Samaria (Ezra 4:7), and also from Elephantine, in the name [ם]טבשל (Porten and Yardeni 1993:234; C3.15, Col. 8, Line 138); to be compared with Arabaic *ṭb*, which means “to be completed,” known as an element in various names, among them the Safaitic name טבאל, as well as אלטב (Harding 1971:142). If we are to accept its Arabic origin, it accords with the theory of a North Arabian name as suggested by Lipiński (see below).

Line 2. The first word, לעשתרמ, meaning “to the god/dess/es ‘strm,” can be compared with the seven other Elyakhin Aramaic inscriptions (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:73–83). The god *‘štrt* was the principal Phoenician-Punic female deity in the first millennium BCE (Krahmalkov 2000:390; for a study of the goddess *‘strt* in Ugaritic, Phoenician and Hebrew, see Wyatt 1995). Regarding the *-m* ending of *‘strm*, Zadok (1977:34–38) had suggested that it was a plural form. Lipiński, in his study of the cult of ‘Ashtarum in Achmaenian Palestine, disagreed, saying that “The divine name *‘strm* is certainly no plural. It is ‘Ashtar’s name with the mimation” (1999:315), to be compared with the Ammonite divine name Milkom. Further, he argued for “the North Arabian origin of the deity worshipped as ‘Ashtarum in the Southern plains, during the Persian Period,” supported by his new readings and interpretation of the Elyakhin Aramaic bronze bowl’s Aramaic Inscription No. 6 (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:81–83; see also Kottsieper 2011; Prioletta 2012:312–313, n. 22).

The next letter is probably an א, to be compared with that of the Saqqara funerary stela, dated to c. 482 BCE (Porten and Yardeni 1999:254–255; TAD D20.3; Lemaire 2014:242, Fig. 2). Then appears a clear, large ל, followed by thin remains of two vertical lines that could be read as a ח. However, the surface is damaged and we can therefore only suggest, based upon parallels from the other Aramaic inscriptions found at Elyakhin, that it is the beginning of the phrase [לחי]י נפשה, “for the life of his soul” (see Inscription Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5 in Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:73–79; for a discussion, see esp. pp. 86–87). If this reconstruction is accepted, then the א before the ל was written by mistake.

The inscription זי עבד גברטב [...] לעשתרמ אׄ לח[יי] נפשה, “That which GBRṬB [‘L] made […] To *‘STRM’*, for the li[fe of his soul …],” is only the beginning of a dedication made by גברטב, while the end of the line is missing and cannot be reconstructed. The inscription mentions the divinity *‘STRM*, to whom the object was dedicated for the life of its owner’s soul. Based on palaeographic considerations, including inscriptions on coins recovered from the site, this inscription can be dated from the end of the fifth to the mid-fourth century BCE.

The Object in Context

Although the architectural remains found at the site of Tulûl Mas‘ud, Elyakhin, have never been documented or studied, the overall number of cultic artifacts originating from the site suggests the existence of a Persian-period sanctuary (Stern 1982:159), or at least a favissa, on site. It is noteworthy that during the Persian period, very few such temples are

known in the country (cf. Tal 2008; in press). Contemporary temples discovered in the Province of Dor are mostly confined to Makhmish, e.g., at Tel Mikhal, which was defined as a Phoenician sanctuary based on the great variety of cultic objects found within it (only partly published), including ceramic and stone figurines and statuettes, and incense altars. The sanctuary at Tel Mikhal was built on a hilltop 400 m north of the mound, where the main settlement of the Persian period was located (Avigad 1960; 1993; for its plan, see Tal 2019b:360, Fig. 10). Some of these finds bear a close resemblance to those recovered from Elyakhin (cf. Stern 1982:16, Fig. 21).

Pottery Finds from Surveys at the Site

The potsherds presented in Figs. 9, 10 were collected by Eli Yannai during the above-noted survey. As potsherds from the site have rarely been illustrated (cf. Porath, Dar and Applebaum 1985:139, Fig. 32:1, 2 [identified as Hellenistic]; Ne'eman, Sender and Oren 2000: Site Nos. 94, 70, Fig. 94:1–8 [identified as Iron Age III, but some are probably Persian or Hellenistic, e.g., Nos. 3, 5]), the following figures and description tables supplement our knowledge regarding the finds from this now-destroyed site. The potsherds can be attributed to two periods: Persian and Hellenistic. Most, if not all types, have parallels at other sites in the central and northern coastal plain, especially those with large assemblages of Persian and/or Hellenistic pottery, such as Dor and Apollonia-Arsuf.

Fig. 9 ▸

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Discription	Parallels
1	Plate	18-110	Flat infolded rim, dark brown slip	Guz-Zilberstein 1995: Fig. 6.3:7, 8 (Dor)
2	Plate	18-115	Everted rim, dark gray-brown slip	Guz-Zilberstein 1995: Fig. 6.3:25, 26 (Dor)
3	Bowl	18-101	Incurved rim, dark red slip	Guz-Zilberstein 1995: Fig. 6.1 (Dor)
4	Bowl	18-91	Incurved rim, dark gray-brown slip	As No. 3
5	Bowl	18-81	Incurved rim, blackish slip	As No. 3
6	Bowl	18-85	Incurved rim, dark brown slip	As No. 3
7	Krater	nn1		Tal 1999: Figs. 4.22:10; 4.36:2 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
8	Krater	nn2	Wedge-decorated lip	Stern 2015: Fig. 5.1.26:2 (Tel Mevorakh)
9	Krater, handle	18-5	Concentric circles impressions	
10	Krater	18-34		Tal 1999: Fig. 4.22:8 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
11	Krater	18-60		Stern 1995: Fig. 2.3:10 (Dor) Tal 1999: Fig. 4.36:4 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
12	Krater	18-37		Tal 1999: Fig. 4.22:4 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
13	Krater	18-66		Tal 1999: Fig. 4.36:6 (Apollonia-Arsuf); Stern 2015: 5.1.4:7 (Tel Mevorakh)

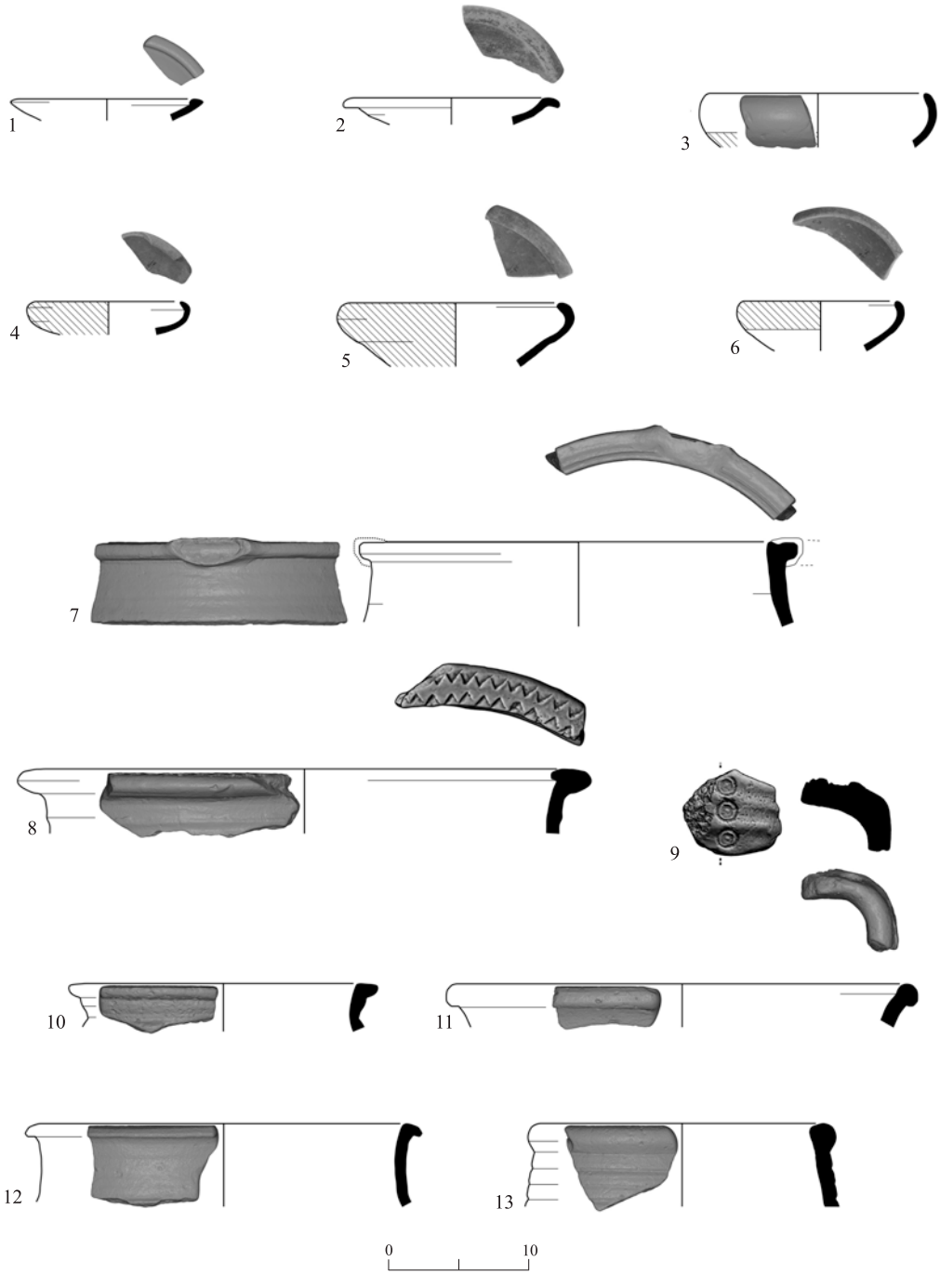

Fig. 9. Surveyed potsherds: plates (1, 2), bowls (3–6) and kraters (8–13).

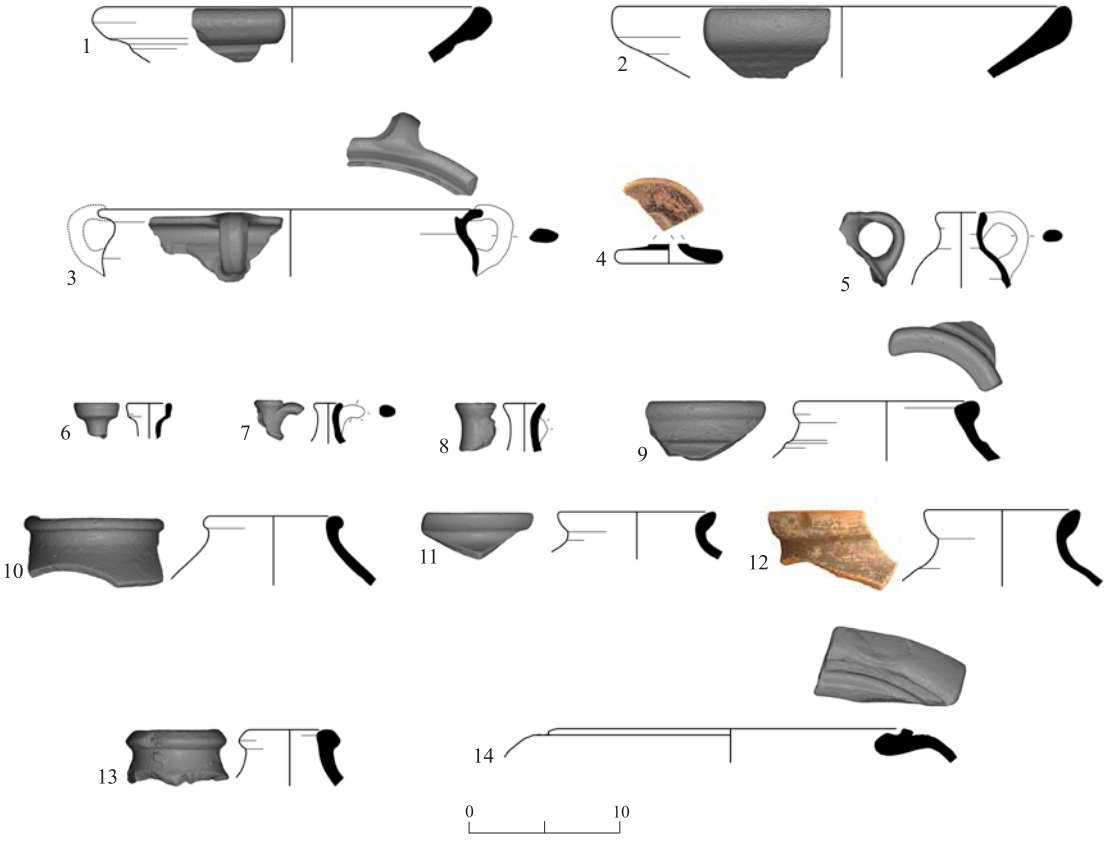

Fig. 10. Surveyed potsherds: heavy bowls/mortaria (1, 2), casserole (3), lekythos base (4), juglets (5–8), storage jars (9–13) and holemouth (14).

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Parallels
1	Heavy bowl/mortarium	18-50	Tal 1999: Figs. 4.11:7–16 passim; 4.21:11–14 passim (Apollonia-Arsuf)
2	Heavy bowl/mortarium	18-97	Tal 1999: Figs. 4.11:17; 4.21:16 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
3	Casserole, lid device	18-92	Guz-Zilberstein 1995: Fig. 6.20:6, 13 (Dor)
4	Lekythos (base), Attic, remnants of black glaze	nn4	Sparkes and Talcott 1970: Nos. 1115–1119, Fig. 11, Pl. 38 (Athenian Agora)
5	Juglet (possibly dipper)	nn3	Stern 2015: Fig. 5.1.19:2 (Tell Abu Hawam)
6	Juglet (perfume)	18-26	Stern 2015: Fig. 5.1.19:3 (Tell Abu Hawam)
7	Juglet (perfume)	18-58	Stern 2015: Fig. 5.1.19:7 (Megiddo)
8	Juglet (perfume)	18-18	Stern 2015: Fig. 5.1.19:11 (Tel Mevorakh)
9	Storage jar	18-25	Tal 1999: Figs. 4.13:2; 4.39:14, 15 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
10	Storage jar	18-38	Tal 1999: Fig. 4.25:1 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
11	Storage jar	18-15	Tal 1999: Fig. 4.25:12 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
12	Storage jar	18-87	Tal 1999: Fig. 4.40:3 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
13	Storage jar	18-12	Stern 1995: Fig. 2.9:1 (Dor), Tal 1999: Fig. 4.21:5 (Apollonia-Arsuf)
14	Holemouth jar	18-105	Tal 1999: Fig. 4.24:12, 14 (Apollonia-Arsuf)

Conclusions

The original appearance of the object remains unclear due to its breakage. It is possible that it was part of the handle or socket of a larger cultic object. The inscription on the handle, incised during its production, indicates that it was not only used as a cultic object, but rather produced to serve a cultic offering, probably in a nearby workshop given the larger assemblage of inscribed copper-alloy artifacts from the site.[12] The results of the forensic study further indicate that the object had been broken as a consequence of use rather than intentionally destroyed.

This object is an important addition to the other cultic items previously retrieved from the site (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:69–89). Together, they point to the site's cultic nature, possibly a roadside sanctuary, and not just a *favissa* (such as that of Makhmish or Mount Miẓpe Yammim, although the latter was detached from nearby routes being high on top of a mountain), located on a hilltop overlooking and controlling the route that led eastward from the central coastal plain to the Province of Samaria and its capital city, Samaria. The use of Phoenician and Aramaic script on the bowls and cymbal found at the site, and the varied ethnic connotations reflected in the personal names of their dedicators (Deutsch and Heltzer 1994:69–89), as well as the recovery of Sidonian, Tyrian and Samarian silver coins (Deutsch and Heltzer 1997:17–20), may suggest a multi-cultural sanctuary in the fifth–fourth centuries BCE in the Sharon plain.

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[12] A similar phenomenon may be seen in one of the *favissae* of Dor, where numerous mold-made adult-head figurines of 'western' style were unearthed; their heads were pressed onto the same molds and then their headgears were fashioned by hand, probably per demand (cf. Stern 2001:500–503; 2010:14–16). This evidence may suggest a local workshop connected to a nearby sanctuary.

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