In Centro

Collected Papers
Volume II

Memory

Editors:
Guy D. Stiebel
Doron Ben-Ami
Amir Gorzalczany
Yotam Tepper
Ido Koch

רשות העתיקות
ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

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רשות העתיקות
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Central Region

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
The Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology
The Jacob M. Alkow Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures
The Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies and Archaeology
The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities

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Sailing Memories: Graffiti of Ships from Maresha

Elie Haddad | Israel Antiquities Authority
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Introduction

Maresha (Marissa), identified with Tell Sandahanna, is situated in the Judean Shephelah, 35 km east of Ashkelon and about 2 km south of Beth Guvrin (Fig. 1). It is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (Josh 15:44; 2 Chron 2:7–9; Micah 1:13–15), as well as by Josephus (*AJ* 8.246). Maresha is also mentioned in the Zenon papyri (P. Cairo 59015, 58537), recording the journey undertaken by a Ptolemaic tax collector, Zenon, in 259 BCE. It is also mentioned later by Eusebius, who located the site near Beth Guvrin (*Onom.* 130:10). Tell Sandahanna has been identified as Marissa through an inscription found in a necropolis mentioning Sidonians residing in Marissa (Peters and Thiersch 1905: 36–40, Fig. 7). This identification has been verified by two Aramaic ostraca mentioning the eponym "Maresha" discovered in the subterranean complexes (Eshel 2010: 82). The site was partially excavated in 1900 by Frederick J. Bliss and R.A. Stewart Macalister

* We dedicate this article in memory of the late Professor Amos Kloner, pioneer excavator and researcher of Maresha/Beth Guvrin. We wish to thank several individuals, all of the IAA, for their work on the preparation of the images of ships in Figs. 4 and 7: Dr. Avshalom Karasik (3D imaging), Assaf Peretz (photography) and Dr. Davida Eisenberg-Degen (RTI). We are grateful to Svetlana Zagorski (Hatter Laboratory, RIMS, University of Haifa), Amitai Stern (Archaeological Seminars) and Michal Birkenfeld (IAA) for their graphic work on the illustrations.

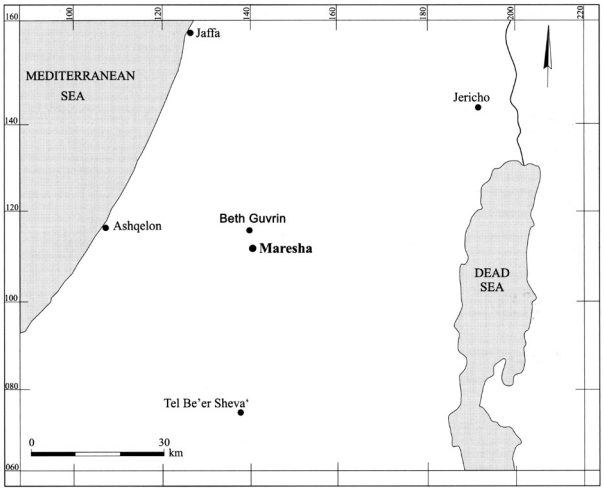


Fig. 1: Location map of Maresha (prepared by Svetlana Zagorski, University of Haifa)

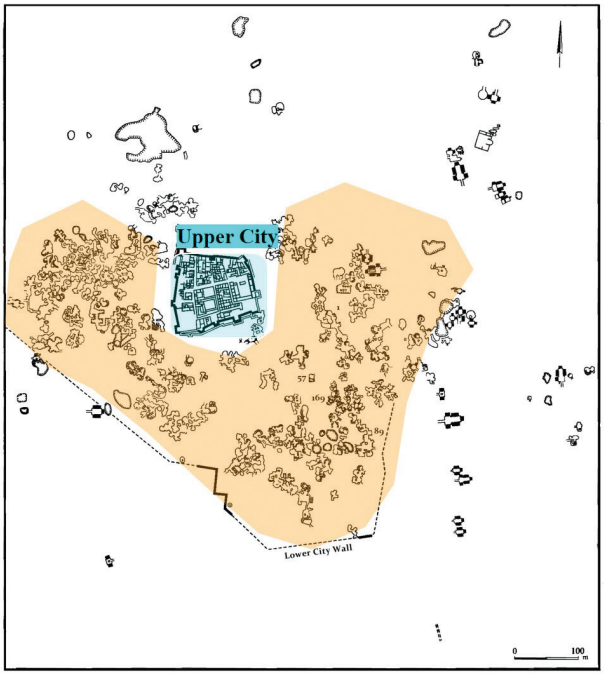


Fig. 2: General plan of Maresha's Upper City (in blue) and Lower City (in brown) with subterranean complexes (prepared by the Maresha Project, courtesy of the late Amos Kloner)

(1902: 52–61). Renewed excavations have been undertaken since the 1980s under the direction of Amos Kloner and since 2000 directed by Ian Stern and Bernie Alpert (Haddad, Stern and Artzy 2018).

The 24-acre Upper City (Fig. 2) was founded during the Iron II and continued to exist until ca. 107 BCE. After the Babylonian conquest of the region at the beginning of the 6th century BCE, several ethnic groups began to settle the area of southern Judah, including Maresha. During the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods, this process intensified with the infiltration of Arab tribes, Idumeans, Phoenicians and Greeks, who brought with them cultures that gradually adopted a Hellenistic character. During the Hellenistic period, the city expanded beyond the boundary of the tell and the Lower City was established. Bliss and Macalister (1902: Pl. 15) identified at least 60 subterranean complexes. Starting in the 1980s under the direction of Kloner, an additional 85 subterranean complexes were identified. Today, close to 150 subterranean complexes have been identified. The vast majority were originally created as quarries supplying the building material for the dwellings above. Among the thousands of subterranean rooms within these complexes are columbaria, cisterns, storage areas, tombs and oil presses.

One of the unusual finds in Maresha are ship graffiti that were recently discovered by Ian Stern (in Cave 557 and in Subterranean Complex 89, Fig. 3). Maresha's location 35 km from the Mediterranean Sea raises the question of the reasons for the appearance of such graffiti, as well as how this reflects the memory of the local inhabitants who produced them.

This article presents the repertoire of ship graffiti from Maresha. They were etched into the soft chalk walls of the subterranean complexes with sharp, pointed tools. Seven ship graffiti have been discovered and published to date (Gibson 1992; Haddad and Artzy 2011; Haddad, Stern and Artzy 2018; Fig. 4). In 1900, Bliss and Macalister discovered a stone slab of local limestone bearing a ship graffito (Brindley 1919; Gibson 1992), which was dated to the late second century BCE (Gibson 1992: 29). Two more ship graffiti from Burial Cave 557 were published in 2011 (Ship A and Ship B, Haddad and Artzy 2011). All of the graffiti

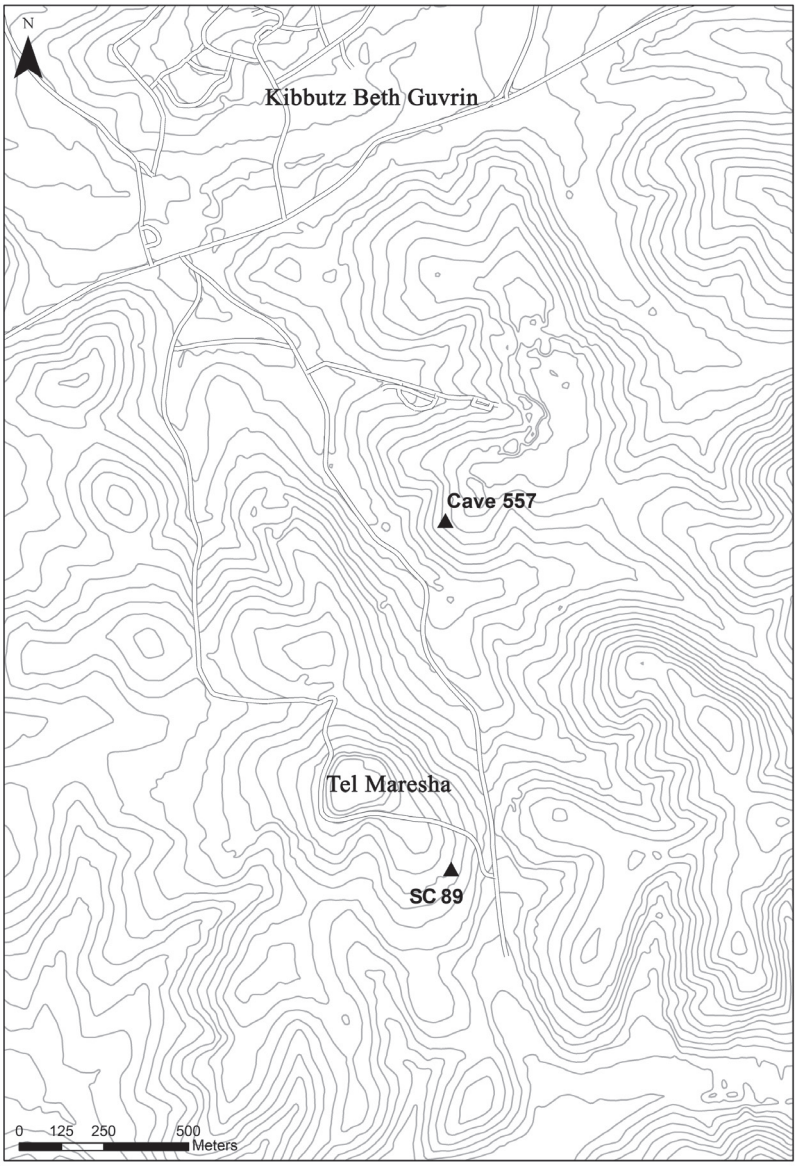


Fig. 3: Location map of Subterranean Complex 89 and Cave 557
(prepared by Michal Birkenfeld , IAA)

mentioned thus far have been of merchant ships whose shape represents a general Mediterranean type dating to the Hellenistic period. Four additional ship graffiti were recently published (Haddad, Stern and Artzy 2018). Three of them are graffiti of warships (Ships C–E) and one of a merchantman (Ship F). These are the first examples of graffiti of warships at Maresha.[1]

Our story begins with a small stone slab (23 × 15 × 6 cm; Fig. 4:1) on which a small sailing ship is engraved. The stone was discovered in the 1900 excavations and forgotten on the site of the expedition. Three years later, in 1903, Macalister returned to visit the site with the aim of checking the famous Apollophanes Cave No. 551. When at the site, he suddenly remembered that the stone slab had not arrived in London and realized that it had been inadvertently left there. He returned to the camp area, which remained abandoned following the departure, in hopes of finding the stone slab. Luckily, while searching around the dirt piles left by the excavators, the stone was located where it had been left, and Macalister returned to London with the stone slab.

The ship is depicted on the starboard side, with its stern on the left and the bow with its vertical stempost on the right. Its sail is folded on its yard. The rigging is very schematic; five lines slant down from the yard and two anchors extend out from the bow, indicating that the ship is anchoring. Brindley (1919: 77) claimed that the stern is on the right side and the bow is on the left side. Gibson (1992) examined the stone in the 1990s and sent it to be cleaned by the British Museum. He later consulted with Lucien Basch, who confirmed that the right-hand side must be viewed as a straight-edged bow.

The slab depicts six oars slanting down from the line of the keel. After it was cleaned, it became evident that five of them contained rectangular blades. The last line on the far left is probably the steering oar, which has a large rectangular blade at its tip (Gibson 1992: 28).[2] The rigging system is very schematic.

1 Only the graffiti that appear on walls are listed alphabetically.

2 The blades are not seen in Brindley 1919: 76. Gibson (1992) was able to identify them following the cleaning by the British Museum.

The perpendicular lines on the body of the ship, as Brindley suggested (1919: 77), are a description of the ship's ribs and not of oarports as suggested by Gibson (1992: 28). This is due to the fact that the oarports are usually described as circular portholes, as depicted in Ship F from Subterranean Complex 89 (see further below). Gibson also noticed that the *oculus*, an eye figure, appears in the stylus, which was a feature not detected by Brindley.

However, an *oculus* usually appears on the front section of the ship, in the area of the bow but never on the stern, as depicted in this case. Therefore, the question arises: Is it really an *oculus*? Gibson argues that it was impossible to say what motivated the graffiti maker and that it is difficult to determine whether the graffito was created by a sailor without artistic talent or by a man whose knowledge of seafaring was limited (Gibson 1992: 28).

The Graffiti from Burial Cave 557

This is a large burial cave (Fig. 5:1) that is entered via a dromos leading into a central space, the walls of which have been hewn into two floors. The tomb contains 28 loculi, most of which have gabled sections and a few of which have square sections.

Two graffiti of sailing ships were noted in this cave. They include basic details such as the hull shape, rigging and steering gear. They appear as solitary ships rather than parts of a larger composition. The first graffito (Ship A; Figs. 4:2, 5:2) displays the hull's starboard side. The hull is elongated and slim, so the gunwale is just above the keel. Waves are clearly shown below the vessel. The graffito is situated clearly at the lower end of the dromos of the burial cave. The other graffito (Ship B; Figs. 4:3, 5:3) was placed on the lower frieze above the single niche with a flat top dividing the two levels of burial niches. This ship is depicted on its portside, with its bow pointing to the left. Its hull is rounded with an upraised curved stem just above the gunwale level. The steering oar is prominently displayed.

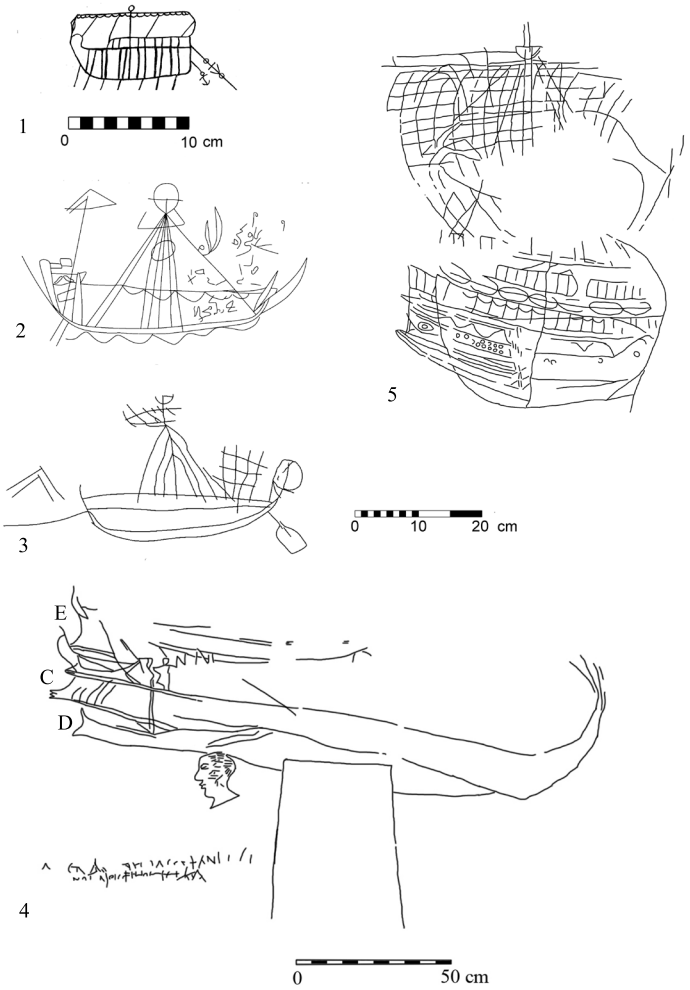
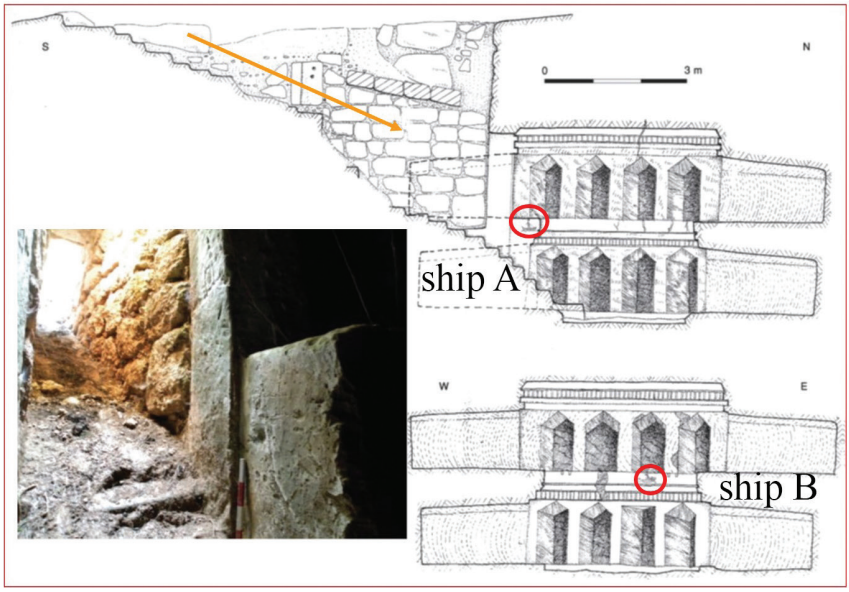


Fig. 4: Drawings of Maresha ship graffiti: 1) sailing ship engraved on a small stone slab from Maresha (published by Brindley 1919: 76; courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund); 2) Maresha Ship A graffito from Burial Cave 557 (prepared by Svetlana Zagorski; see Haddad and Artzy 2011); 3) Maresha Ship B graffito from Burial Cave 557 (prepared by Svetlana Zagorski; see Haddad and Artzy 2011); 4) graffiti of Maresha Ship C, a long warship, and the prows of two additional warships—Maresha Ships D and E (prepared by Avshalom Karasik and Elie Haddad; see Haddad, Stern and Artzy 2018); 5) graffito of Maresha Ship F, a single merchantman (prepared by Avshalom Karasik and Elie Haddad; see Haddad, Stern and Artzy 2018)



1

2

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Fig. 5: Maresha graffiti in Burial Cave 557: 1) Burial Cave 557, cross section and location of graffiti (courtesy of the late Amos Kloner) and dromus on the left (photo by Elie Haddad); 2) graffito Ship A (photo by Elie Haddad); 3) graffito Ship B (courtesy of the late Amos Kloner)

Ship Graffiti in Subterranean Complex 89

Subterranean Complex 89 is located within the southeastern part of Maresha's Lower City (Fig. 1). The location of a burial area within the Hellenistic city suggests that this area was hewn before the city expanded into the immediate vicinity. During the excavations of this complex, four ship graffiti were discovered. The western wall of Room 50 (Fig. 6) contained three graffiti of ships, include a graffito of a long warship (Maresha Ship C; Figs. 4:4, 7:1) and the prows of two additional warships. There is one prow beneath Warship C (Maresha Ship D; Figs. 4:4, 7:1) and another one above Warship C (Maresha Ship E; Figs. 4:4, 7:1). On the lintel is a graffito of a single merchantman (Ship F; Figs. 4:5, 7:3). All of the ships can be dated typologically to the Hellenistic period (3rd–2nd centuries BCE).

Graffito Ship C

The ship (1.9 m in length; Fig. 7:1) is depicted on its port side and faces south. The hull of the ship is sketched in a schematic manner, while the prow is presented with more detail. The ship has a straight keel that continues upwards on the stern section in a slightly curved line towards the bow. In the lower section of the prow there is a three-bladed ram (Fig. 7:2). The continuation of the keel towards the bow is the lowest portion of the ram. This ram resembles the ʿAtlit ram (Casson, Steffy and Linder 1990), albeit in a schematic manner. A second projection is visible on the stempost. This projection is a small upper ram containing two blades (*proembolion*).

There is no steering gear or any sign of an *oculus,* a typical visible decoration on these types of Hellenistic warships. There is no depiction of a mast or sail. The gunwale turns downward from the tholos towards the stern, although the continuation of the gunwale is not quite clear. The sternpost turns inward and is adorned with a triple open-branched *aphlaston*.

In addition to the lack of a steering gear, no oars are clearly discernable on the stern. However, it is possible that the curved lines drawn between the gunwale and the keel symbolize several oars.

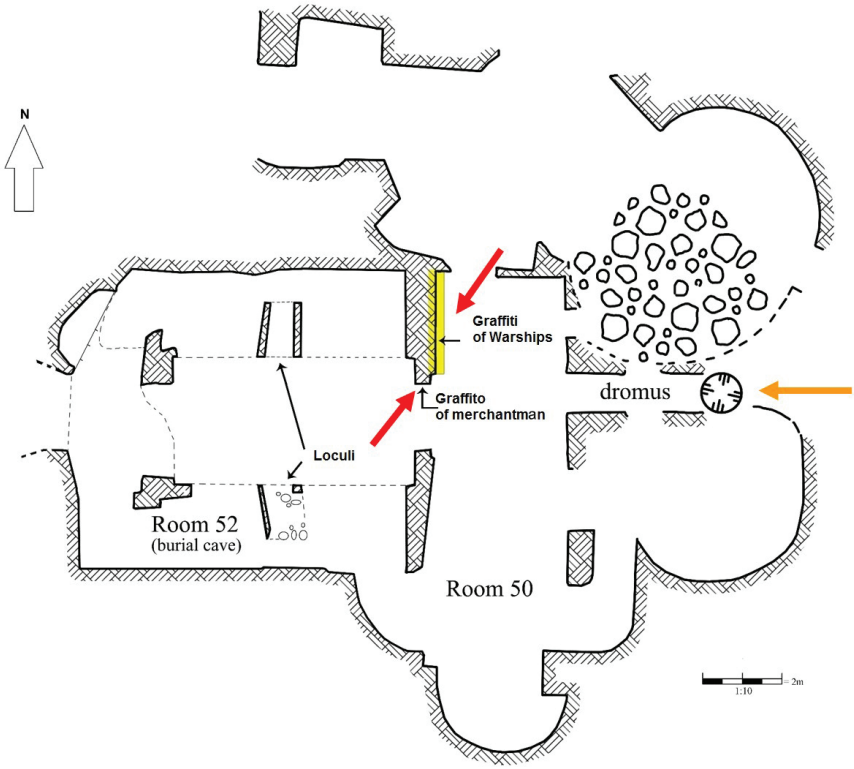

Fig. 6: Plan of Rooms 50 and 52 in Subterranean Complex 89 and the location of the ship graffiti (prepared by Amitai Stern, Archaeological Seminars)

In times of conflict, this type of warship would have been driven by the force of the rowers with the goal of damaging the enemy ship in a way that detaches the planks and causes water to seep into the attacked vessel. The damage would not allow the crew to contain the leakage and would cause the boat to be flooded and sink.

It appears that the artist focused his attention primarily on the bow of the ship. The stern lacks details such as steering gear and rudder. The prows of two additional ships (Ships D and E) can be discerned, but unfortunately almost no other details of these ships are visible.

Fig. 7: Ship graffiti in Subterranean Complex 89 in Maresha; 1) 3D scanning and digital investigation of the graffiti on the western wall of Room 50; black lines highlight the warships' graffiti (illustration by Avshalom Karasik and Elie Haddad); 2) closeup of the stern of Warship C (RTI photograph by Davida Eisenberg-Degen); 3) Maresha Ship F, merchantman; black lines highlight the illustration (drawn by Avshalom Karasik and Elie Haddad according to a photo made by Assaf Peretz, IAA)

The vessel is neither a Phoenician type nor a classical Greek trireme. According to Basch (1987: 387–390), this vessel is a typical Macedonian warship. The tholos of a classical trireme extends outwards, while the tholos of Ship C extends inward on the bow resembling the horn of a rhino. This type of prow first appears on coins minted in Arwad (Arados) by King Strato after 332 BCE in honor of Alexander the Great. Relevant to our understanding in this case are coins of Demetrius Poliorcetes, king of Macedonia (Basch 1987: 387, 341; Newell 1927: 25, No. 20), following his victory over Ptolemy I Soter at the sea battle of Salamis in 306 BCE. The coins depict a prow with a three-bladed ram but without the hull of the ship. There is a proembelion and a tholos curving inward.

Maresha Ship C can be compared to the hull of the modern replica of the trireme Olympias, launched as a Hellenic Navy ship in 1987 (Morrison, Coates and Rankov 2000). The closest parallel to Graffito C is the Isis fresco of Ptolemy II Philadelphus in the shrine of Aphrodite and Apollo in the Nymphaeum, in Crimea near the Black Sea (Basch 1987: 493). The fresco dates to the second quarter of the 3rd century BCE. The warship there is depicted with oarports on three superimposed levels.

Maresha Ship C is the largest known graffito of a warship from this period. This ship is similar to graffiti of several large Hellenistic warships found in Delos (see Casson 1971: Figs. 109, 110; Basch 1987: 351, Figs. 737–739). Another example occurs in a mosaic in Italy (Palestrina), which displays a scene of an open area in the Nile with the mountains of Ethiopia in the background (Friedman 2011: 68–88). There are nine ships in the lower section of the mosaic, including one warship. Another depiction, this time in the southern Levant, was found in Jason's Tomb in Jerusalem (Rahmani 1967: Fig. 3:1–1, Pl. 20A).

Graffito Ship F: Merchantman

This graffito depicts the port side of a large vessel, from its masthead to the keel (Fig. 7:3). On the bow, an elongated *oculus* can clearly be discerned. The oarports, depicted as small circles, are visible from the *oculus* to the center of the ship. The image of the long mast is partially damaged by the crack in the

wall as well as by a later indentation. A crow's nest in the shape of a basket is situated on the mast, which continues slightly above it. The sail seems to be opened, and the wind direction is from stern to bow.

Maresha Ship F is similar to the Tarquinia ship (Tomba della Nave), dated to the 5th century BCE (Casson 1971: Fig. 97; Petrarulo and De Leeuw 2012: Figs. 2–4). This is a large merchantman also depicted with a large sail and is the largest known depiction of a ship.

Conclusion

These graffiti of ships were most likely made by seafarers who had knowledge of their crafts, probably sailors who were familiar with and operated such vessels. Their depiction of details such as the battleship's three-bladed ram and the secondary ram (*problemone*) reflects an intimate and sophisticated knowledge of seafaring vessels and warships. In addition, Merchant Ship F, unlike Ships A and B and Brindley's ship, is an impressive ship containing details of the ship's plates and oars and the *oculus* that appears in the bow.

The question who carried out the actual hard labor of quarrying these subterranean complexes is relevant here. Since it is unlikely that the local inhabitants of Maresha were acquainted with the minute details of seafaring vessels, we suggest that captives or slaves (for reference to slaves in Maresha, see Zenon papyri [P. Cairo 59015]) were among those unfortunate to be involved in the hard labor. This explains the presence of these unusual graffiti at this terrestrial site. These are more likely memories, visual recollections of the ships' appearances, perhaps based upon the personal memories of sailors who drew the image of their ships on the cave walls. As discussed above, there are differences among these ships, some of which are very schematic and others very accurate. In some cases, the description is meticulous, as in the case of the merchant ship. Engraving, especially of such a complicated subject, starts with an image and a plan in one's mind. The outcome is purely a reflection of memory and usually does not completely duplicate the original template.

Once the graffito is engraved, there is no way to correct it, just as a ship sailing at sea can never travel along the exact same path twice. It is all within the inspired mind of the sailor/engraver. As such, memory is free and independent of talent. A graffito is the product of a one-time activity with no room for repairs or deletions. An example of "hanging" memory is Augustus' Victory Monument commemorating the Battle of Actium in Nicopolis, displaying bronze rams hanging on the retaining wall in memory of his victory.

As shown above, the graffito of the warship (Ship C) is very large (1.9 m). Is this an example of a "big ship," in William Murray's (2012: 3–12) terminology? From the time of Alexander the Great's successors (in the 4th century BCE), "big ships" or "large ships" began to appear in the Mediterranean basin (Murray 2012: 3–12). The concept of naval warfare had changed from "maneuver-and-ram" battle tactics common in the Athenian navy to the "grapple-and-board" tactics preferred by the Romans. A "big ship" can carry numerous fighters who can board and raid the enemy ship (Murray 2012: 4).

However, the larger a ship is, the slower and more difficult it is to maneuver. The Achilles' heel in large ships is their vulnerability to smaller, faster and more maneuverable ships. Until the discovery of the ʿAtlit ram in 1980, it was thought that large ships did not use rams in naval warfare—yet the ʿAtlit ram is dated to the end of the 3rd century BCE. Murray (2012: 5, 17) wrote that big ships had big rams at their bows and that they used frontal ramming as a battle tactic. He also provided Augustus' Victory Monument from the Battle of Actium as an example of "traces of large warship rams which are still preserved in stone" (Murray 2012: 38–47).

Do graffiti and depiction of ships symbolize the desire for protection from evil spirits, as Friedman (2011: 1, 28) claimed? What is the significance of an image of a ship? Zissu (2015: 513–514) briefly summarized the various interpretations of ship paintings in his article on the graffiti discovered several years ago in the Herodium. He mentioned that the passage to the underworld in mythology was made by the ferryman, Charon, which might explain the appearance of graffiti and ship paintings in burial systems. He concluded "that ships and boats

depicted in tombs may symbolically suggest redemption, reverses of fate, and resurrection of the dead" (Zissu 2015: 514).

However, often, as Basch contended (1987: 381), ship engravings discovered on walls of abandoned dwellings where maritime squatters resided were engraved out of boredom (the idea reflected in these engravings might well have been an attempt to relate a message understandable to the viewer at that time but lost to the modern viewer). The merchantmen may have been a mariner's memory of long-gone days of youth and freedom. Ships C, D and E could well have represented to the engraver and viewer some large-scale event experienced by a group of people sailing with several battleships in a specific naval battle. War boats also served as a symbol of a sea victory, both on coins such as those of Demetrius Poliorcetes and on monuments such as the one built by Augustus Caesar in Nicopolis to commemorate his victory at the Battle of Actium. These were graffiti designed to perpetuate the memory of special events.

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An Inscription from a Byzantine Cemetery in Yafo (Jaffa)

Ayelet Dayan | Israel Antiquities Authority
Leah Di Segni | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Introduction

Most burial caves exposed in the complex date to the Persian period. However, some Byzantine tombs were also discovered, including one burial cave containing more than 40 Byzantine-era oil lamps. The lamps are decorated with patterns such as crosses that are characteristic of a Christian population (Dayan and Levy 2012; Dayan, Nagar and Gendelman 2020). A mosaic floor was exposed near the burial caves and contains a Greek inscription.

The Excavations

Archaeological excavations in Jaffa began in the 1940s and, since then, have uncovered remains from the Late Bronze Age to the present (Peilstöcker and Burke 2011: 21). From 2007 to 2009, four seasons of salvage excavations were conducted within the precincts of the St. Louis Hospital in Jaffa prior to the construction of a hotel and luxury residential units (Fig. 1).[1] Directly to the

1 The excavations, undertaken on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and funded by the Yefet 36 Company, were directed by Amit Re'em, Yossi Elisha, Peter Gendelman and Ayelet Dayan. A separate excavation was carried out in 2010 by the Israeli Institute of Archaeology, directed by Meir Edrey, under the scientific auspices of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University.

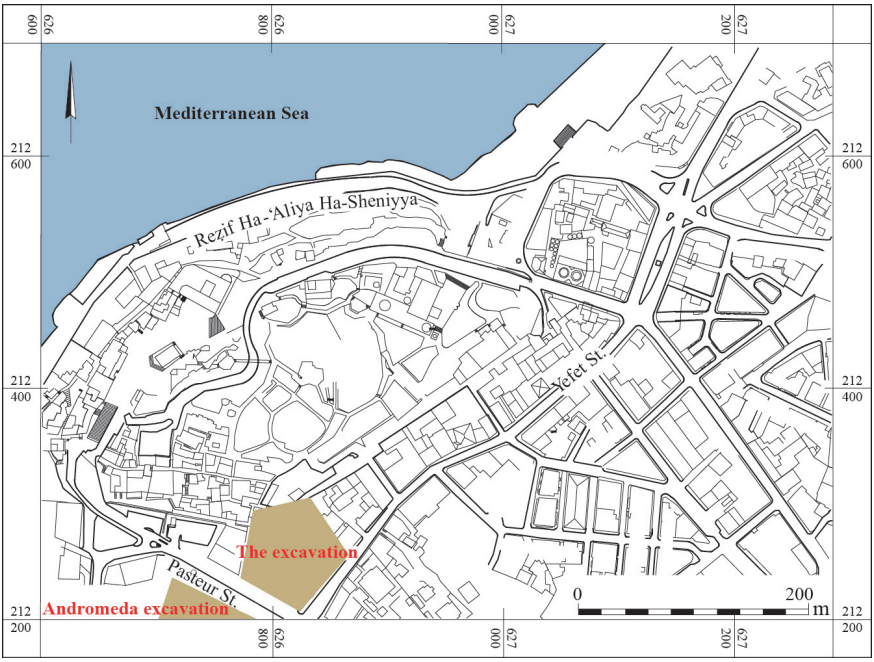

Fig. 1: Location map of the excavation

south, in the Andromeda compound (Avner-Levy 1998), a cemetery dating from the Persian to Byzantine periods was exposed, as well as an infant jar burial from the Middle Bronze Age II (20th–18th centuries BCE). The burial customs and finds from the Andromeda cemetery point to a pagan population.

The Byzantine Period

A burial cave hewn in the *kurkar* bedrock was exposed (Fig. 2). It was accessed via a square vestibule: a large stone decorated with a cross sealed the entrance to the cave. In this room, we found pottery sherds, animal bones, approximately 40 lamps, fragments of glass vessels and an iron nail, all dating to the 6th–7th centuries CE. The burial cave itself was filled with modern concrete that penetrated the cave during nearby construction activity.

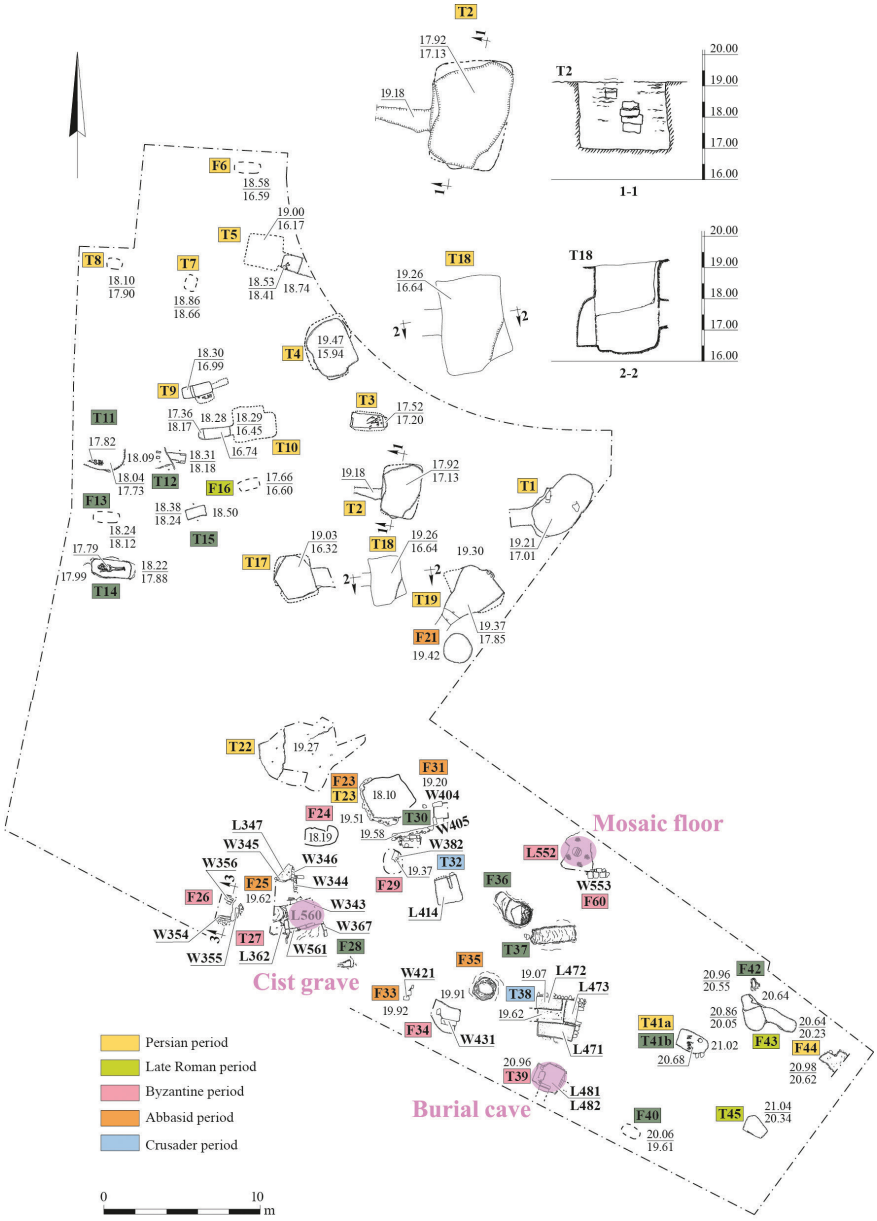

Fig. 2: Plan of the excavation (courtesy of the IAA)

Fig. 3: The mosaic floor (photo by Niki Davidov, IAA)

Between the mosaic floor (see below) and the cave described above, another cave was found that was filled with broken bones and some pottery from the Crusader period. The bones may have been relocated into this one cave by the Crusaders after construction of a glacis destroyed some of the burials. On one of the burial benches was a fragment of Byzantine lamp, possibly an indication that this chamber was also used in the Byzantine period. This cave is also very close to the mosaic.

The Mosaic Floor and the Inscription

The excavations exposed the remains of a mosaic floor. In the center of the mosaic is a round medallion measuring 76 cm in diameter and containing a three-line inscription traced in black tesserae, with a decorative ivy leaf underneath. The inscription reads: Εὐψυχ[ε]ίτω|σαν πάντες | οἱ ὧδε· ταῦτα, "Be of good courage, all who (are buried) here. This (is it)!" (Fig. 3). The text makes use of two formulae, "Be of good courage" and "This (is it)," both of which are in funerary style, common in pagan epitaphs of the Late Roman period as well as in early Christian epitaphs (Dahari and Di Segni 2009: 126*–127*; Di Segni 2020). The use of these particular formulae, the shape of the letters and the lack of a cross all point to a date in the 4th or early 5th century.

Conclusion

The wording of the inscription indicates that it belonged to a mausoleum, to a chapel or to the cemetery itself. While it was addressed to the dead, it also served to remind visitors of their own mortality. Similarly, literary inscriptions are more common in pagan than in Christian contexts and in the 4th century more than the 5th century CE. In the present case, it is impossible to establish with certainty whether the inscription was dictated by and addressed to Christians or others.

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