

Numismatic Evidence from the Persian Period from the Sharon Plain

by Robert Deutsch

The Phoenician and Aramaic votive inscriptions from the 5th century BCE published in 1994

originate from the site of Eliachin in the central Sharon plain in Israel.¹ These inscriptions reveal strong evidence of the Phoenician and Persian presence in the Sharon. As it is known, the inscription of Eshmunazor, king of Sidon, testifies to the legal claim of the king of Sidon to the Sharon plain.² The Sidonian rule over the Sharon is dominant, as the Samarian coins show which are imitations of the Sidonian prototypes in the Persian period.

We shall present some of the coins from the Persian period, dated to the 5/4th century BCE, found at the site of Eliachin.³ The group includes fifteen coins: nine Phoenician -- six minted in Sidon, two in Tyre, one uncertain -- five minted in Samaria (?), and one Athenian or pseudo-Athenian (probably struck at Gaza). All the coins are fractions made of silver.

The Sidonian coins

Uncertain king, end of 5th century



Figure 1: AR; 0.6g; axis: 12h.⁴ *Obv.*: War-galley before fortress with three towers ; in ex., lion I. *Rev.*: Bowman standing r., shooting with bow and arrow; on r. incuse head of goat r.; on l., incuse head of Bes facing (1. ex. off the flan).

Ba'alsillem II, 407/402-372/368 (?)



Figure 2: AR; 0.4g; axis: 6h. *Obv.*: War-galley r., below, two waves; above, Phoenician letter: *b*. *Rev.*: Bowman running r. with lance.

Figure 3: AR; 0.7g; axis: 12h.⁵ *Obv.*: War-galley l., below, two waves, but the inscription (b ?) off flan. *Rev.*: Man slaying lion; Phoenician letter: ' between the man and the lion.

'Abd'astart I/Strato, 371/367-357/354



Figure 4: AR; 0.8g; axis: 12h.⁶ *Obv.*: as no.3; above, date: III. *Rev.*: as no.3; between the man and the lion, Phoenician letters: 'b.

Figure 5: AR; 0.8g; axis: 12h. *Obv.*: as no.4, but date illegible (10?). *Rev.*: as no.4.

Tennes, 356/353-351/349



Figure 6: AR; 0.7g; axis: 12h. *Obv.*: War-galley l., below, two waves; above, date: III. *Rev.*: Man slaying lion; between them, Phoenician letters: 't'.

The Tyrian coins, ca 400-333



Figure 7: AR; 0.6g; axis: 6h.7 *Obv.*: Dolphin r.; cable border. *Rev.*: Owl standing r., head facing; over l. shoulder, crook and flail; cable border.

Figure 8: AR; 0.4g; axis: 6h. *Obv.*: Dolphin r.; dotted border. *Rev.*: Hippocamp r.; dotted border.

Uncertain workshop (Phoenician ?)



Figure 9: AR; 0.7g; axis: 12h. *Obv.*: Dolphin r. (?) ; cable border (overstrike ?). *Rev.*: as no.3.

The Samaritan coins IVth century (Pl. V, 10-14)



Figure 10: AR; 0.6g; 6h.⁸ *Obv.*: Persian King seated on throne r. smelling a lotus flower and holding scepter in his l., in front (off the flan) Achaemenian fire altar; above: "Bagabat". *Rev.*: Persian King sacrificing bull; he holds its horns in l. and is ready to stab it with dagger in r.

Figure 11: AR; 0.8g; axis: 6h.⁹ *Obv.*: Head of satrap r. wearing Persian tiara. *Rev.*: Head of young satrap r. wearing Persian tiara.

Figure 12: AR; 0.5g; axis: 6h. *Obv.*: same die as no. 11. *Rev.*: same die as no. 11

Figure 13: AR; 0.6g; axis: 12h.¹⁰ *Obv.*: Bridled horse walking r., above: *dy* *Rev.*: Persian royal sphinx r., above: letter, if any, off flan.

Figure 14: AR; 0.8g; axis: 6h. *Obv.*: Horse walking l., above: *d/r*. *Rev.*: Persian royal sphinx r., above: *d/r* inverted.

The Athenian or pseudo-Athenian coin, 4th century BCE (?)

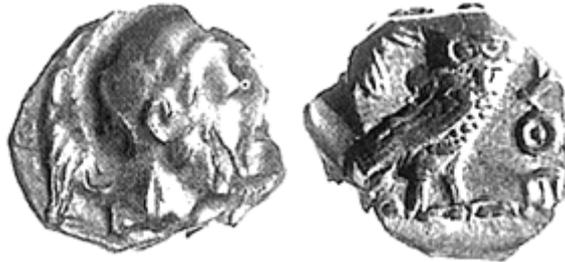


Figure 15: AR; 0.8g; axis: 12h. *Obv.*: Head of Athena r. *Rev.*: Owl standing r.; on l., olive spray and crescent; on r.: *AdeltaE*.

This material gives us also some historical evidence. a) The similarity between the Samaritan and the Sidonian coins shows a possible dependence of Samaria on Sidon.¹² b) The dating of the coins in the Persian period is clear and we have here an additional confirmation concerning the presence of a religious-administrative (?) center in Eliachin at that time.

Notes

¹ R. Deutsch and M. Heltzer: *Forty New Ancient West Semitic Inscriptions*. Tel Aviv-Jaffa, 1994, Pp. 69-89. The inscriptions are engraved on five bowls, one oil lamp fragment and one cymbal, all made of bronze.

² *ibid.*, p.72.

³ The coins were found years ago as a result of construction activities at the site and today are kept in 3 private collections. We would like to express our gratitude to the collectors for the permission to publish the coins in this paper. Cf. *Hadashot Archeologiot*, Vol 14, 1965, p.10; Vol 17, 1966, p.13.

⁴ G. F. Hill: *BMC Phoenicia*. London, 1910, p 142, nos. 15, 16, pl XVIII, nos. 10, 11. For the datations, cf. j. Elayi, *Sidon, cite autonome de l'Empire perse*, Paris 1990, pp. 207-214.

⁵ *BMC Phoenicia, ibid.*, p. 147, nos. 37-44, pl. XIX, nos. 1014.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146, no. 34, pl. XIX, no. 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.227-8, nos. 4-7, p 1.

⁸ Y. Meshorer and S. Qedar: *The Coinage of Samaria in the Fourth Century BCE*. Jerusalem, 1991, p. 50, no. 33, pl. 5, no. 33.

⁹ Unpublished.

¹⁰ Hill published the coin as Philisto-Arabian: G. F. Hill, *BMC Palestine*, London, 1914, p. 180, no. 27, pl. XIX, no. 27; and Narkiss published the coin as: struck in Ako? under Mazaeus: M. Narkiss, *Coins of Palestine*, Part Two, Jerusalem, 1938, p. 102, no. 72, pl. B, no. 13 (Hebrew).

¹¹ Unpublished variant with horse to l. and with this letter.

¹² See: Meshorer-Qedar, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 20