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The Iron Age at Sidon has been excavated since 2003 and was found to be relatively well preserved in trench 28* (fig. 1). A 5th century pit and a 4th century wall were found in the SE part of the trench. No coherent architectural outline could be discerned from the series of four plaster floors 1 with a mortar layer underneath dating back to between the 9th and early 8th century BC.

This article will discuss the evidence level by level.

The Late Iron Age

Wall 1042/1043 (fig. 2-3) is a north-south wall lying in the south-east corner of the trench. It measures 1.66 m long, 2.62 m wide on its western face and 1.15 m on its eastern face. The wall is 1.38 m high. It is composed of four courses (only three remaining on the section of the wall) of limestone blocks of different sizes and irregular shapes. Stones are shaped and bonded with pink mortar and rounded pebble inclusions. No surface was found associated with this wall.

* Trench 28 was excavated by Emma Markiewicz, Surveyor, Guy Hopkinson.

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The Early Iron Age

No consistent architectural remains survive. Instead several surfaces were found (fig. 7-8). As part of the settling process, each floor found was levelled off and as part of this process a mortar layer and another layer that was consistently flattened were laid in preparation.

Floor 1077 (fig. 9, 14, 15, 17) at 12.96/12.98 and floor 1090 at 13.22 m. Floor 1077 is a firm patched limestone floor measuring 1.84-2.26 m long, 3.46 m wide and 2 to 5 cm thick. This very firm floor is the first in a series under wall 1042/1043. It is of an irregular shape and consists of levelled limestone mortar with plaster patching most likely used to repair every day wear and tear. It was cut by pit 1078 at a higher level. A mixed yellowish sandy mortar layer (1147) below it contained very few potsherds indicating it was a mortar specially mixed during the laying of the floor. Both floor and mortar layer were deliberately placed on another construction layer (1164), a thin light brownish grey soil as ground preparation for the floor. This layer was so thin it could be "trample" on top of floor 1088. Floor 1090 measuring 1.50 m long, 1.20 m wide and 3 cm thick is higher but seems to be contemporary with floor 1077. This floor also sits on a sandy yellow mortar layer.

Floor 1088 (fig. 10-12, 14, 15, 17) at 12.83-12.86 m is the second major limestone floor below 1077. With its plaster patches it measures 2.59 m long, 2.28 m wide and 1.5 to 2 cm thick. It is a quite firm floor and, like floor 1077, was cut by pit 1078 at a higher level. A yellowish brown earthy layer (1173) below it contained a mixed yellowish sandy layer (1171) that was cut into the Early Iron Age levels. The fill of pit 1088 contained very few potsherds indicating it was a mortar specially mixed during the laying of the floor. Both floor and mortar layer were deliberately placed on another construction layer (1164), a thin light brownish grey soil as ground preparation for the floor. This layer was so thin it could be "trample" on top of floor 1088. Floor 1090 measuring 1.50 m long, 1.20 m wide and 3 cm thick is higher but seems to be contemporary with floor 1077. This floor also sits on a sandy yellow mortar layer.

Stone-lined pit 1078 (fig. 4-6) is a sub-circular pit with vertical sides measuring 1.17 m long, 1.25 m wide and 1.13 m deep. There is an east-west wall (1080) built adjacent to it. Some of the stones from this adjacent wall were incorporated on the northern side into the pit's stone lining. The pit cuts into the Early Iron Age levels. Large pieces of masonry at its bottom may have dictated its depth. The fill of the pit (1079) is yellowish brown earth with sandy silt and was replete with late Iron Age pottery and various Attic vessels. The maximum size of lining stone is 25 cm long x 23 cm wide and the minimum is 12 cm long x 25 cm wide. Both walls and pit can be dated quite precisely by the Attic ware.
long, 2.96 m wide and was 2 cm thick. Roughly square and extending further then 1077 it was quite badly damaged. A small circular post hole (1165) with vertical sides (fig. 10-12) measuring 30 cm long, 24 cm wide and 92 cm deep, was cut through it down to plaster floor 1171. A yellowish mortar layer (1170) was used as a base for the floor. Below this another very compacted mortar layer was found (1172); a probable preparation for floor 1088.

Floor 1171 (fig. 13, 14, 15, 17) at 12.59-12.75 m was the most substantial white plaster floor (below 1172). It was cut by a robber trench (605) (fig. 7, 17) from which it extended both east and west. This uneven floor, thicker towards the west, was found to be preserved in three patches measuring respectively 0.90 x 0.90 m, 0.68 x 0.78 x 0.34 m, 1.80 x 1.44 m and 0.5 cm to 1.4 cm thick. It was covered by a thin layer of dark brownish clay-like red sandy material (1173). It had also probably been repaired several times as the floor below 1261 also had the same pattern of patching or strengthening with the same brownish clay-like material. There was a thick levelling layer (1255) below it which was relatively compact and homogenous with few inclusions. It contained a large amount of pottery. Below 1255 was another levelling layer (1260/1264). This was fairly compacted, very mortar-like and
Pottery

The Late Iron Age

Most pottery imported to the Near East during the 5th-4th centuries is found, as it is in Sidon, almost only on habitation sites. Local pottery of the Persian period was found alongside Attic imports. Rarely are pieces found intact. On the contrary, as is the case with this excavation, some fragments are so small they defy interpretation. The Attic pottery is the material that holds the greatest potential for obtaining absolute dates for Persian Period levels. Attic sherds were identified by Prof. Brian A. Sparkes to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for his contribution.

Floor 1171 abuts a robbed out wall (1119) of which some large, rectangular and very solidly constructed foundations remain. It is possible this two course wall was re-used around the time floor 1171 was built as it is very substantial and seems to be of an earlier construction. It measures 4.40 m long and 1.40 m wide. At its northern extent only foundation stones remained which were roughly cut in different sizes.

Floor 1961 (fig. 16, 17) is a very patchy, thin, uneven plaster surface. A mortar layer on top of it (1966/1968) measuring 3.42 m long, 3 m wide and 2 cm thick was in poor condition. It was probably a temporary surface and does not extend into the north facing section at the eastern end of the trench due to the bad preservation but can be seen in patches further west.

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The pit is a fill of earlier material such as a Myc. IIIC sherd and early Iron Age common ware. Pottery from the 5th century BC however delineates the closing of it.

Bowls
- Straight-sided bowls or rounded bowls with plain rims are usually quite deep (fig. 18: 1-2). The most popular shape of rim is the inward slanting rim coated with red paint or red slip, a popular shape in the early Iron Age (fig. 18: 5-17). As all sherds are fragmentary, only a few diameters ranging between 13 and 17 cm are known.
- Carinated bowls (fig. 18: 19-21) are found early in the Iron Age but remain in use until the end of the 5th and beginning of the 4th century at Tell Hesi. Bowls with an upright rim or with a sharp incurved rim are also paralleled in the early Iron Age (fig. 18: 3-4, see p. 18).

Mortaria
These heavy bowls are the most common type of bowls found in the Persian period (fig. 18: 22-25) similar to those found in strata Vb and Vc at Tell Hesi. The thick flat base with grooves cut into its underside (fig. 19: 4) is sparsely represented at Tell Hesi.

Jars
Jars are without neck but with rims attached to flat-shoulders (fig. 18: 27-29). Rims are “slightly pronounced” in the 5th and 4th century BC and more flat-topped in the 6th to 5th century BC and are also found in Beirut and Dor. One specimen (fig. 18: 29) with a slightly grooved rim is paralleled at Tyre. Jars with an upright rim popular from the 10th century BC onward are common in Beirut (fig. 18: 26).

Cooking pots
Cooking pots are the most common type found in the 5th to 4th centuries in Palestine and Phoenicia and are characterized by rims that are angled straight outwards and called “shelf rims” or “flanged rims” (fig. 18: 33-38). An absence of handles on Sidon’s relatively small size vessels should be noted. Most of the angled rims from Sidon found parallels in Beirut (470-350/300 BC), at Tell Hesi stratum Vd (1st half of the 5th century BC) and the more rounded version appear in stratum VC (middle of the 5th century BC). They are also found at Tell Kazel.
Attic pottery from the pit

Fig. 20: 1 – This bowl fragment is an Agora XII’s shallow wall with convex-concave profile. There is no real division between the wall of the bowl and the foot. Near the centre there is a raised ring. It is dated to the last quarter of the 5th century BC. Cf. fig. 20: 9.

Fig. 20: 2 – Skyphos, Type A, Attic type – the curve of the wall suggests a mid 5th century BC date.

Fig. 20: 3 – Same as fig. 20: 2 but a little later. There is a slight concave profile above the foot typical of the late 5th century BC.

Fig. 20: 4 – As with fig. 20: 3, this example dates to the late 5th century BC. The traces of a reserved line suggest it may have been figured.

Fig. 20: 5 – This Kylix with its traces of a black palmette above a tripe car- rie-no incision dates to the 5th century BC.

Fig. 20: 6 – This Kylix with its traces of black pattern or figures but with no incision suggest a 5th century BC date.

Fig. 20: 7 – Lip fragment of Type A skyphos with start of handle. 5th century BC.

Fig. 20: 8 – Skyphos, Type A, Attic type handle – 5th century BC.

Fig. 20: 9 – Floor of bowl, shallow wall, convex-concave profile, cf. fig. 20: 1. Same date.

Fig. 20: 10 – Skyphos, Type A, Attic type. Mid 5th century BC.

Fig. 20: 11 – This looks rather like the fragment of a Bolsal. The shape of the foot is similar to early examples and there is a ridge at the top of the fragment which some early bolsals have. ca. 430 BC.

Fig. 20: 12 – Skyphos, Type A, Attic type. 5th century BC.

Fig. 20: 13 – Skyphos, Type A, Attic type. Late 5th century BC because of a slight concave curve in the wall above the foot.

Fig. 21: 10 – Footed Saltcellar. Unusual in that only half the outside is black. The thin and slightly incurved shape of the rim indicates a fairly early piece, dating to the 5th century and becoming more popular in the 4th.

Fig. 21: 11 – Large skyphos of the Attic type with simple curve of the body, middle 5th century.

One jar stopper fig. 21: 12 was also found.

Pottery from wall 1042/1043

Along with the common ware vessels Attic sherds give the chronological framework for this wall which was in use after the pit was sealed. The latest pottery from this level includes several pieces of Attic ware dating back to the 4th century BC.

Bowls

Straight-sided deep bowls (fig. 22:1-4), rounded shallow bowls with plain (fig. 22: 5-8) or upright rims (fig. 22: 9-11) are found (see p. 10). The inward slanting rim is common (fig. 22: 12-20). As all sherds are fragmentary the few diameters known range from 13 to 17 cm.

Deep bowls with a slight carination in the middle as well as heavy bowls with everted rim flattened on the outside end are found. Bowl fig. 22: 27 with an incised ridge on the outer edge of the rim is found in Tyre in the 8th century BC.

Jars and jugs

Flat-shouldered jars with “a short straight neck” first appear around the 7th-6th century BC (fig. 22: 99-32) and those with a more flattened top and short rims are very similar to the jars found in the pit (fig. 22; 33-38, see also p. 10). One jar with a folded over rim (fig. 22: 38) is comparable to a jar from level 4 (mid-7th century BC) at Tell Keisan. Others have a straight neck (fig. 23: 11-12) with a handle stemming from just under the plain rim (fig. 23: 11).

The simple everted rim type is paralleled at Tell el Hesi (fig. 22: 39-40). Other shapes ending in a rounded thickened lip exhibit a variety of form, namely a smooth junction with the neck (fig. 23: 1-3), an angular sharp junction with the neck (fig. 23: 4-6) and a flattened thickened rim with
Local pottery from wall 1042/1043.
a straight outside face (fig. 23: 7-9), slightly grooved both on the inside and outside (pl. 23: 10).

Bases
Flat, disc and ring bases are found as well as one large base of a jar (fig. 23: 21).

Handles
Include the typical Persian handle (fig. 23: 22) as well as the double red slip handle (fig. 23: 23) from the early Iron Age.

Lamps
One lamp with a flat wide rim was found (fig. 23: 24). This type of lamp was common throughout the period. Subtypes can be distinguished but because this example is broken, it is difficult to assign a more exact date.

Attic pottery
Fig. 24: 1a-b – These may belong to the same vase. A probable 4th century Attic one-handler. The one-handlers at this time have a black underside which comes to a point in the middle, and many carry stamped palmettes within rouletting.
Fig. 24: 2 – This could be the rim.
Fig. 24: 3 – This appears to be an Attic plate from the 4th century. It is however heavier and bigger than similar plates of that date.

The Early Iron Age

Although the area of excavation was small the earliest clearly defined Iron Age installation was found in trench 98. Most of the pottery is in a fragmentary state and the division into types is based almost exclusively on rims. Surface treatments and decoration are also taken into account.

Pottery from floor 1077.

Black on Red bowl from floor 1077 (see fig. 25, 17).

Skyphos from floor 1077 (see fig. 25, 19).
Bowls

Are the most common type of pottery found.

- Bowls with a simple rounded or squared rim (fig. 25: 1-3; fig. 28: 1-2, 5, fig. 29: 1-23, fig. 31: 1-9) with grooves (fig. 29: 20) on the outside. Some bowls have an upright rounded or sharp incurved rim belonging to either straight-sided bowls or sometimes very shallow rounded bowls (fig. 28: 6-7, 29: 24-36; see also fig. 18: 3-4). The rim diameter varies from 15-20 cm. Bowls with a simple rounded rim (fig. 25: 15-16) and black paint applied on a white slip on the rim could be of Cypriote make.

- Bowls of various depths with inward slanting rims and a round or rectangular profile belong to either straight-sided bowls or rounded bowls (fig. 28: 4; 31: 10-99; see also p. 13). Both types of bowls have applied bichrome decoration (fig. 29: 24, 25; fig. 31: 16, 23) sometimes applied on a white slip. Similar bowls are found at Tyre in stratum VIII (850-800). Others have black bands or striations in black on the rim (fig. 29: 36). Some fine bowls have a red slip decoration (fig. 25: 7-9).

- Bowls with a triangular-thickening on the exterior (fig. 25: 3-6) are comparable to bowls found at Sarepta from stratum D1, at Tyre from stratum 8 and in stratum 8 (10th century) and 7 (900-850 BC) at Tell Keisan. At Sidon two bowls (fig. 25: 5-6) have a decoration of red slip.

- Round carinated bowls with a diameter between 5 and 10 cm. Bowl fig. 31: 33 with plain sides and no rim treatment corresponds to Bikai's type 13 dated to the 10th century with a possible extension into the 9th. This style is dominant at Dor until 900 BC. Two bowls (fig. 31: 30, 31) have a flaring rim. Bowl fig. 31: 31 with horizontal handles is paralleled at Tell Keisan in stratum 8 (10th century). The high upper wall of bowl fig. 31: 35 with a diameter of 9.5 cm compares to a similar example found in Megiddo in stratum V.

- A deep bowl (fig. 28: 10) with red paint finds a parallel in Tyre stratum 1171.
pendant semi-circles was found on floor 1077 (fig. 25: 19; 27). It belongs to Keasley’s 45 types 4-5 and was also found in Cyprus and in the Near East 66. It was dated to around 800-750 BC by Nicholas Coldstream to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for his input.

The Cypriote Pottery
It remains very difficult to determine the type of Cypriote vessels without having the whole form. Cypriote sherds (fig. 25: 14-18; fig. 28: 16-18; fig. 35: 1-7) were identified by Vassos Karageorghis to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for his input.
of gratitude for his contribution.

The amphora (fig. 35: 1) has strap-handles edged with vertical lines enclosing a zigzag band. Its neck is decorated with the wavy line motif with widely spaced undulation. Wavy lines around the neck of large closed vessels are first encountered on LCIII A pottery and the single wavy line found at Sidon is paralleled in Cypro-Geometric III (850/900/950 BC for the CG II/III transition). A black horizontal band is found at the junction of neck to shoulder. The broad flat rim is also covered by a black band.

- The necks of barrel shaped jugs (fig. 35: 2-4) belong to type II (Cypro-Geometric II 950-850 BC) or III.
- Black on red bowls were also found (fig. 25: 17; 26; 35: 6) along with one grey polished ware base (fig. 25: 14).
The influx of Cypro-Geometric pottery fragments at Dor was uncovered in the first half of the 10th century and consisted mainly of open vessels. At Sidon mainly closed vessels were found at this stage of the excavation.

Summary and conclusion

Distinguishing an evolution of pottery types from this small assemblage has proven difficult because most types are not confined to one chronological horizon. In each case every floor level by its very nature has accumulated over a period of time. The assessment however at this stage of the timespan between each occupation remains very difficult. Open forms are the most common type of vessel found. The pottery found on floor 1077 is scarce and consists mainly of bowls. The quantity of material from floor 1088 is also limited and consists of bowls and only two juglets. The Cypriot pottery points to a Cypro-Geometric III date. The local pottery shows comparisons with Tyre not later than IX-VIII and Sarepta D2 and D1.

Much work still remains to be done to establish a definite ceramic chronology for the Iron Age. It is important to note that these conclusions are still preliminary since the excavation is still on-going.
1 It has been established that the floors are made of limestone and are not silicate minerals produced by phytoliths cells.

2 All heights are given from site height which is approximately 2.7 m above sea level.

3 The pottery from this floor will not be discussed in this article.

4 B. B. Shefton, 2000, p. 76.

5 Tell Keisan stratum 9c (1050-1000); J. Briend, 1980, pl. 79, 11 & A. Chamron, 1980, p. 177 & pl. 41, 6 a-b, level 5, second half of the 8th early 7th century BC); Y. Yadin, 1956, pl. LXIII, 9 str. V (800) at Tyre; J. Balensi, 1980, pl. XIX, 18, str. VIII (800) at Tyre; J. Balensi, 1980, pl. 6, 12, (fer I -fer IIa) at Tell Abu Hamam.


7 See A. Gilboa & I. Sharon, 2003, p. 55, table 21, for the cross-dating with Tyre X-IX and Sarepta, D2 & D1.
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Abbreviations
BASOR: Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
IEJ: Israel Exploration Journal

Drawings by Norma Ster-Khouri, scanning and plate arrangement by Ramy Yassine.