'Atiqot 110, 2023

Sidonians at Marisa (Maresha)

Dalit Regev[1]

One of the most important epigraphical finds of ancient Idumea, which has led scholars to believe that a Sidonian/Phoenician community was present in Marisa during the Hellenistic period (fourth–second centuries BCE), is the well-known inscription uncovered at the site in 1905, reading "Apollophanes son of Sesmaios, Chief of the Sidonians at Marisa." This inscription was discovered in a large, lavishly painted tomb in the city's necropolis, allegedly supporting a presence of a Sidonian/Phoenician community in Marisa. Following a comprehensive examination of the material culture from Marisa vis-à-vis that of other Phoenician sites, this commonly-held assumption is put to question. Phoenician pottery, very common in Phoenician cities of the Hellenistic period, such as 'Akko and Ashqelon, is absent from Marisa, and the Greek onomasticon of Hellenistic Marisa also lacks Phoenician names and includes mainly Idumean and Greek names common in the East. Also, the numismatic evidence from Marisa does not seem to support a Sidonian presence. In this paper I argue that the term 'Sidonians' in the Hellenistic context at Marisa implies an instrumental context rather than an ethnic one.

Keywords: Shephelah, Phoenician, Sidonians, ethnicity

Introduction

Marisa was an important city in the inland foothills (Shephelah) of the Southern Levant during the Persian and Hellenistic periods, the capital of ancient Idumea. The *Campaignolis* of the city is certain; it was overtaken by the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus in 113/112 BCE, and mostly deserted thereafter, while the final destruction by the Parthians took place only in 40 BCE (Gera 2009:125, 146). A substantial body of epigraphical evidence was uncovered at the site, together with a wealth of other finds, owing to the extensive investigations at the site and to the fact that the city was ransacked by the Parthians in 40 BCE and never resettled. The data gleaned from the inscriptions found at the site, and the mentioning of Marisa in ancient texts, offered scholars a unique glimpse into the city's social and ethnic

[1] Dr. Dalit Regev, Israel Antiquities Authority.

makeup. Marisa is mentioned three times in the Zenon papyri from 259–258 BCE (P. Cair. Zen. I: Nos. 59006, 59015; IV: No. 59537) and by Flavius Josephus (*Antiquities* 12). Taken together, these sources suggest that Idumeans dominanted the region's population, holding an independent and strong position in the town's political and commercial life. Also indicated by the sources is that Marisa was the center of a flourishing slave trade, primarily of children, and the seat of Greek officials, possibly in charge of its administration and trade network. This is not surprising, as the Greek administrative divisions in the Levant, including the region of Idumea, are known to have closely corresponded to preexisting regional ethnic subdivisions (Levin 2020; Lemaire 2021; Bienkowski 2022). The historical evidence is reinforced by the prevalence of Idumean names in the Greek and Aramaic onomastica of Marisa. And yet, Hellenistic-period Marisa is also believed by many scaholars to have been the site of a well-established Phoenician community, for which hardly any material evidence apart from Apollophanes' inscription has surfaced.

Apollophanes' Inscription and the Claim for a Sidonian/Phoenician Presence at Marisa

The well-known inscription, reading "Apollophanes son of Sesmaios, archon of the Sidonians at Marisa" (Peters and Thiersch 1905:3839, Tomb 1: Inscription 1.r), was discovered in a large tomb, lavishly decorated with frescoes, in the necropolis of Marisa.[2] Since its discovery in 1905, the inscription remains a fundamental piece of evidence of the presence of a Sidonian/Phoenician community in Marisa, believed to have formed an important part of the city's upper class, governing its political and economic life.

Apollophanes son of Sesmaios was a member of a well-to-do family, of which eight other individuals are known by name from tomb inscriptions at Marisa, comprising five men and four women (Fig. 1). Of the nine names, five are of an Idumean-Nabataean origin (Sabo, Kosnatanos, Baba, Babata and Ammoios), while the others are of Semitic and Greek origin. The name Apollofanes was a common Greek name, deriving from the name of the god Apollo combined with the Greek word *phanes*, 'appearing.'[3] This name is known from the Zenon papyri, where it appears with the ethnic label Αραψ, and was likely to have been adopted from Greek by Idumeans as much as Phoenicians (La'da 2002: No. E156). The widespread adoption of Greek names at that time has been widely discussed as evidence of the Hellenization of Marisa's population (Hengel 1974:62).

[2] The tomb's date has been debated (see Gera 2017); however, the author does not accept the proposed revision.

[3] Another meaning of this Greek word may have been shine/rise (Axel Knauf, pers. comm.), as in the biblical name Zeraḥyah, drawn from the verb *zaraḥ* (Ezra 7:4, 8:4; Chr. 6:6; for the occurrence of the name Zaraḥ in the Idumean onomasticon, see Lemaire 1996: Nos. 9:2; 135:1; 2002: No. L58:4; Porten and Yardeni 2016: A126.3).

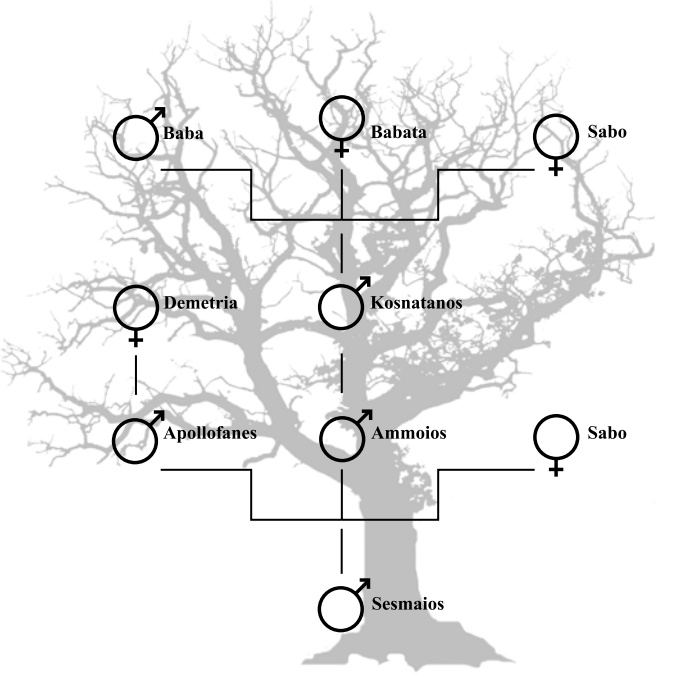

Fig. 1. The family tree of Apollophanes (illustration: Anna Harel).

The name Sesmaios was a common Semitic name, containing the element *šmš* (shemesh) and meaning "the one belonging to the Sun (god)" (Aramaic *šešmayā*; Arabic *šamsī*).[4] The name Sesmaios appears twice in fifth–fourth-century BCE Aramaic ostraca from Marisa, alongside other Semitic and Idumean names (Porten and Yardeni 2006; 2016; Porten and Yardeni 2014:1967, 2404). In the study of names originating from burial contexts, it is commonly postulated that the deceased were of local origin, unless proven otherwise (Rey-Coquais 1977:174; Sartre 1985:142). Hence, the name Sesmaios is more likely to have been used by an Idumean rather than a Phoenician in Marisa, and the title 'Sidonians' possibly refers to people of Idumean origin and thus, should not be understood literally.

The fact that members of this family bore Idumean names casts significant doubt on the claim that they were of Phoenician origin, an observation apparently overseen by some of the earlier scholars. Apollophanes' sister, Sabo, bore an Idumean name, while his brother, Ammoios, bore a Nabataean name. Kosnatanos, the name of both Sesmaios' grandchild and Apollophanes' nephew, is a theophoric Idumean sentence-name, with the deity Kos as

[4] This name was the Hebrew or Aramaic form of the Babylonian Shamash-aba-ucur, or Shamash-bana-ucur: "Oh Shamash, protect the father" (Ezra 1:8, 2:2; see also Hag. 1:12; Zech. 4:6), a linguistic influence which entered Aramaic in the Imperial and post-Imperial periods, cf. the biblical Sheshbazzar, and characterized by the spelling of words with one 'm' instead of two.

the subject. All of Kosnatanos' known children have distinct Idumean names (Peters and Thiersch 1905:62).

In addition, all the female names in this family, except for Apollophanes' daughter, Demetria, are Idomean-Nabataean. As it is well-known that even in Hellenized families, females continued to be given traditional or native Semitic names (Rey-Coquais 1979:176–177), it seems highly unlikely that a Hellenized Phoenician family would adopt Idomean names, let alone an Idumean name with a theophoric element. This would suggest an implausible attempt of a Phoenician family to assimilate into Idumean society, for which no substantiating evidence exists. Even as Idumeans constituted the majority of Marisa's population, it was customary at the time, in this city and elsewhere in the region, to adopt Greek names. In the case of Sesmaios' family, the Greek theophoric names were translations of Semitic theophoric names, frequently occurring in the region's onomasticon.

Regarding the use of the gentilic form 'Sidonian' as a surname, it may not have been used to indicate the person's origin but rather, his profession, or in certain cases, a connection with trade or military service. It is also possible that it had been used to indicate social standing (see below). The title 'Sidonian' occurs in two other burial inscriptions from Marisa (Peters and Thiersch 1905:66, Tomb II, Inscription 7; Abel 1925:275, Tomb 7:12; *SEG* XXXVI: No. 1560)—"Philotion the Sidonian" and "Eikonion the Sidonian"—wherein the names of the deceased are clearly Greek, not Phoenician. The inscriptions employ the feminine singular form of the names, and their use of a gentilic form for the first names suggests that these women were slaves, among which this naming practice was commonplace (Abel 1925). This possibility is reinforced by the fact that women's fathers' names are not indicated and thus, cannot be associated with the family trees of their burial caves. Alternatively, they may have been prostitutes. Another Hellenistic-period example of a woman with the title 'Sidonian' is known from a Jewish necropolis in Egypt, which contained the burial of the daughter of a Jewish man (*CPJ* I: No. 1430; *CPJ* III: No. 176); this inscription clearly demonstrates that the use of the label 'Sidonian' does not necessarily suggest an ethnic affiliation.

Another alleged source of evidence for a Phoenician presence at Marisa is the testimony of Ptolemy the Historian (*Historia Herodis, apud Ammonius, De Adfinium Vocabulorum Differentia*: No. 243), whose writings span the end of the first century BCE and the second century CE. In reference to the Idumeans, Ptolemy states that they "were not originally Jews but Phoenicians and Syrians," a statement which has been interpreted as a confirmation of the presence of a considerable Phoenician element among the population of Hellenistic-period Idumea (Stern 1974:355–356); however, no other mention of the Idumeans being part of the Phoenician and Syrian peoples is known from the ancient sources, before or after Ptolemy's time. Furthermore, Ptolemy's text was written more than 100 years after the conversion of the Idumeans to Judaism and the destruction of Marisa, when any remaining knowledge of the Idumeans as an independent ethnic group would have been scant. A different explanation may be that Ptolemy's use of the terms 'Phoenician' and 'Syrian' refers to geographical areas rather than ethnic affiliations, as is often the case in the geographical literature of the Roman period (Honigman 2002).

Josephus' 'Sidonians'

Other examples referring to "the Sidonian(s)" in ancient texts in a non-ethnic sense are known from two passages in Josephus' work (*Antiquities* 11:344; 12:257–258):

> And when they [Shekhemites] petitioned that he [Alexander the Great] would remit the tribute of the seventh year to them, because they did but sow thereon, he asked who they were that made such a petition; and when they said that they were Hebrews, but had the name of Sidonians, living at Shekhem, he asked them again whether they were Jews.
>
> And they [Samaritans] now said that they were a colony of Medes and Persians; and, indeed, they were a colony of theirs. So they sent ambassadors to Antiochus and an epistle, whose contents are these: To king Antiochus the god, Epiphanes, a memorial from the Sidonians, who live at Shekhem… Now, upon the just treatment of these wicked Jews… make us liable to the same accusations, although we be originally Sidonians, as is evident from the public records.

In both cases, Samaritans describe themselves as Sidonians at Shekhem while asking for economic favors from the ruling authority of the time. It is apparent from the excerpt from *Antiquities* 12 that Josephus did not see a paradox in referring to this group of people as both Sidonians and of Median/Persian origin, implying that the former label did not carry an ethnic connotation in this instance. Josephus' reference to the Sidonians at Shekhem has been understood as an indication of the ruling class of the city. Stern (1981:123, 162) and others (Bickerman 1980:118–123; Isaac 1991:143, n. 45) noted the sociological context and suggested that these 'Sidonians' were not Phoenician in origin but rather Hellenized locals attempting to affiliate themselves with the Canaanite-Phoenicians rather than with Jews. The latter association could have proved harmful in the days of Antiochus IV's conflict with the Jews, the time when the narrated events purportedly took place, and the context in which Josephus wrote the book.

A similar use of the term 'Sidonians' is known from an inscription dated to 163 BCE from the ancient town of Jamnia (Yavneh-Yam) on the Mediterranean coast of Israel. Here, as in the case of the Samaritans from Shekhem, a group of locals describe themselves as Sidonians while asking for economic favors from the king. The inscription reads: "Petition to Antiochus Eupator, from the Sidonians in the port of Iamnia" (Isaac 1991:137–141). Contrasting this text with *Antiquities* 12:258, Isaac observed that the Sidonians attested to in both Jamnia and Shekhem are locals who claim and receive special favors from two Seleucid kings due to their loyalty. Nonetheless, he infers from the inscription the existence of a Sidonian *politeuma* in Jamnia and suggests that there were other such *politeumata* in Judea as well (Isaac 1991:137–141).

The reference in *Antiquities* 11, allegedly describing events that took place at the time of Alexander the Great, is even more revealing, as they seem to indicate that the Samaritans assumed an identity that would favor them in the eyes of the ruler. It seems quite clear that Josephus' use of 'Sidonians' was in the context of social status rather than an ethnic identify.

The similarity between Josephus' use of 'Sidonians' and their mentioning in the inscriptions from Jamnia and Marisa, strongly suggests that these are not true Phoenician people from Sidon but rather, local people using this term as a status-conveying title, a pseudo-ethnicity which apparently entitled them to a reduction in or exemption from taxation (Kasher 1992:20). Although it is certainly possible that unlike inland Shekhem and Marisa, coastal Jamnia was indeed settled by a Phoenician population, all cases appear to use the label 'Sidonian' to indicate a social rather than ethnic affiliation of a group of people, possibly referring to a merchant class.

Unambiguous references to Phoenicians in ancient inscriptions are identified by the nomenclature, the dating system and the social context implied in the text. Phoenician communities are known to have resided in Greek cities in the classical period, as attested, for example, in two bilingual, Phoenician-Greek inscriptions from Athens/Piraeus. One of the inscriptions, from the third century BCE, mentions 'M SDN (the Sidonian people) and the Sidonian, public cultic association (*koinon*; *KAI* 60), undoubtedly attesting that these people were Phoenicians, certainly from Sidon (Gibson 1982:147–151).

Further reinforcing the possibility that the term 'Sidonians' was often employed in a non-ethnic context in classical antiquity is the preponderance of the term in Greek inscriptions referring to Phoenicians in the Aegean world (see references to *SEG* in this paper). The apparent implication that Sidonians were a prevailing element among Phoenician colonies of the Aegean is unlikely. The title 'Sidonian' served as a synonym of 'Phoenician' as early as the period of the Homeric poems, in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. If not all the 'Sidonians' in the Aegean were true Sidonians originating from Sidon, it stands to reason that some of the references to Sidonians were in fact connoting a non-ethnic affiliation, possibly that of a merchant class or groups of a specific tax category.

It is hereby proposed that the label 'Sidonians' was interchangeable with the notion of merchants, or more broadly, with individuals involved in commercial activity. The city of Sidon was renown in antiquity for its international trade, seamen, craftsmen, mathematicians and astronomers. Tyre, in contrast, was identified in the Greek world with imperialism (Millar 1983:66; Amitay 2002); it was destroyed by Alexander the Great, perhaps due to conflicting religious views. The Sidonians were in fact perceived as more Hellenized than the Tyrians. It is, therefore, possible that the assumption of a Sidonian identity reflects an aspiration to be associated with the cosmopolitan Phoenician culture, which was highly esteemed by the Greeks, who considered them nearly equal in status; this is despite the occasionally encountered negative Greek attitudes toward the Phoenicians.

THE ONOMASTIC EVIDENCE FROM MARISA

Marisa yielded the largest onomasticon of Greek names compared to all other Hellenistic-period sites in Israel. The corpus contains about 120 names, mostly known from burial inscriptions from tombs within and around the city, dating between the third and second

centuries BCE; additional inscriptions were found, e.g., on ostraca and lead weights. The burial inscriptions usually include the name of the deceased, the father's name and the date. These names may present a somewhat biased picture of the ethnic composition of the city's population as many of the uncovered inscriptions were not deciphered due to their poor state of preservation; also, this archive does not represent the lower classes of the population.

The Marisa Greek onomasticon comprises mainly Greek and Semitic names, while one name is of Egyptian origin and several of the names are of unknown origin (data from this study; for a description of the analytical methods involved in studies of such onomastica, see Rey-Coquais 1979; Sartre 1985). The Greek names in the onomasticon were mostly common Greek names, often those of Hellenistic kings and Hellenized Semitic names, while a few rare Greek names were also identified. The process of adoption of Greek names in the East, addressed by Josephus Flavius (*Antiquities* 1:121), would have been especially appealing to members of the elite, who wished to be part of the ruling class in Hellenized cities (Rey-Coquais 1979:175, 179). Hellenized Semitic names are sometimes difficult to identify, as in many cases this involved a translation of the meaning of the native name into Greek, with theophoric names using the common Greek suffixes *theos* and *doros*, and many of the major Eastern deity names exchanged for the Greek god Apollo (Rappaport 1977). Rarely, Greek names seem to have derived from geographic place names in Greece and the Mediterranean Greek colonies, likely reflecting the presence of Greeks at Marisa, possibly soldiers.

Names of Semitic origin written in Greek comprise as much as 25% of the Marisa onomasticon, although it is highly unlikely that these names represent individuals of Phoenician origin. Some of the Semitic names were widely used and could not be assigned to one of the Semitic languages. The names that could be thus assigned were those which included a theophoric component, a particular suffix (e.g., the 'w' at the end of Nabataean names) or a verbal root (e.g., *ntn* in ancient Hebrew, and *yhb* in Aramaic). Nabataean and Idumean names were mostly indistinguishable due to the close affinity of both languages (see Negev 1991:203), unless a theophoric component was employed, mentioning Nabataean Allah or Dushara (Dusares) versus the Idumean Kos. Other, rarely occurring Semitic names appear to have indicated a city of origin or were of unclear ethnic affiliation.

Unlike the Greek onomasticon of Marisa, the Phoenician onomasticon, known from Phoenicia and from the Greek world, includes mostly native names written in Phoenician and Punic scripts, and Greek names written either in the native script or in Greek, while no examples of Phoenician names written in Greek are known (Ameling 1990; Osborne and Byrne 1996). This preference may have reflected an entrenched Phoenician epigraphical tradition and a tendency to separate the private family practice of name giving, which may have remained conservative among the Phoenicians, from public life wherein Hellenistic influences were stronger. The Semitic-speaking people of Syria, Nabataea and Idumea used both common Eastern Greek and Semitic names in their Greek-written onomastica. This

particular combination, also characterizing the Greek onomasticon of Marisa, is typical of inscriptions in Greek from the latter regions.

It is further noted that no distinctive Phoenician names were found at Marisa. Phoenician names were usually composed of elements taken from a variety of as many as nine theophoric and nine linguistic components, of which only the three linguistic components ‘M, BD and NTN (=MTN) form part of names from Marisa, and they are not unique to the Phoenician Semitic onomasticon (Benz 1972). Of all the known theophoric elements associated with Phoenician names, only B‘L is found in the Marisa onomasticon. B‘L, however, is the name of a common Semitic deity that was not specific to the Phoenicians (unlike TNYT, MLQRT and ’ŠTRT; Jean and Hoftijzer 1965:40; Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995).

The Idumean onomasticon, known from ostraca written in Aramaic in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, generally does not include names that can unquestionably be attributed to Phoenician origin, although a few names with the theophoric component *Ba‘al* at Marisa were interpreted as Phoenician (Eshel 2010:57). Out of about two dozen known common Phoenician names reported by Benz (1972), only one—Meerbalos—is found at Marisa (Peters and Thiersch 1905, Inscriptions 4 and 20). One other name in Marisa’s Aramaic onomasticon, Merzedek/Marzedek, whose reading is uncertain, may have a Phoenician affiliation, represented by the component MR, although this name was rendered together with the clear Idumean name Kosinkom (Porten and Yardeni 2014:1703; Eshel 2007) and hence, its attribution to a Phoenician origin is questionable.

The absence of genuine Phoenician names at Marisa was strangely believed to be merely coincidental (Masson 1969; Rey-Coquais 1979:174; Oren and Rappaport 1984:151). As with the names Apollofanos, Sesmaios, Eikonion and Filotion, which were mentioned above in connection with the title ‘Sidonian,’ another Greek name from Marisa, Stratonos, was suspected to have been of Phoenician origin. This name is typical of Hellenized Semites, although not specifically of Phoenicians (Peters and Thiersch 1905; Abel 1925). The names Badonos, Balsalo and Patrobalaos are of Semitic origin and have been recorded in the Levant, Egypt, Arabia and elsewhere.

The absence of Phoenician names within an otherwise Semitic context was also noted in a Hellenistic-period Idumean onomasticon from Memphis, where a temple was founded by Idumeans fleeing from Marisa after it was ransacked by the Maccabean forces of John Hyrcanus in 112 BCE. The absence of Phoenician names here was explained by the considerable time that had elapsed between the third century BCE, when ‘Sidonians’ are attested at Marisa in Apollophanes’ inscription, and the late second century BCE, presumably long after such names were used in the city (Rappaport 1977:77). This convoluted explanation sidesteps a simpler one, according to which Phoenician names were never in fact widespread among the Idumeans, and neither was a Phoenician community present in the city.

The Ceramic Evidence

Excavations conducted at Marisa over the years yielded many thousands of pottery vessels, the majority of which were dated to the Hellenistic period and were of local rather than imported provenance, many found complete within subterranean complexes (Regev 2003; on the use of pottery for identifying ethnicity, see Regev 2020:7–18, 56–57).[5] Thus, the near absence at the site of wares of definitive Phoenician affinity should be taken as strong evidence that no Phoenician community was established in Hellenistic Marisa. Phoenician coarse ware was very rarely exported outside Phoenicia, with the exception of the amphoriskos (Fig. 2:1) that is found across the Levant and beyond. Phoenician vessels are not only absent in Idumean Marisa, but also at Judean sites of the Hellenistic period. Only one example of a Phoenician vessel (Fig. 2:2) was found at Marisa, a table amphora recovered from Cistern 70 (Regev 2003: Form 9).

The coarse Phoenician pottery of the Hellenistic period is well-known from Levantine coastal sites. Its distinctive closed shapes include amphoras, table amphoras, jugs, unguentaria, juglets and amphoriskoi—all made of the local Taqiya Formation material, usually fitted with twisted handles and bearing ribbing on their exterior. Sherds of Hellenistic-period, Phoenician coarse vessels are easily recognizable by their form and ware (Regev 2020: Fig. 4). The absence of Phoenician amphoras at Marisa, and the distinct stamped handles thereof, is especially revealing as these vessels (Fig. 2:3) were used to transport a variety of liquids and solid foods, mainly wine, and are a dominant component of pottery assemblages in all the coastal and inland Phoenician sites in the Hellenistic period.

The well-known pottery group of Eastern Terra Sigillata A (ESA), abundantly present in Phoenician settlements, as well as at Marisa, cannot be used as an indication of a Phoenician presence in the city as such pottery was very common in all settlements of the Mediterranean *koine* of the Hellenistic period (Regev 2020:79–92).

It is noteworthy that no distinctive Phoenician figurines were found at Marisa among the hundreds of such items uncovered at the site, all made in the common Hellenistic-period style well-known across the Eastern Mediterranean (personal observation). One Tanit pendant of clear-cut Phoenician origin, retrieved from an unstratified fill at the site, is the only exception (Stern, Wolff and Erlich 2018).

[5] Excavations at Marisa since Regev's (2003) publication have not changed what is described here.

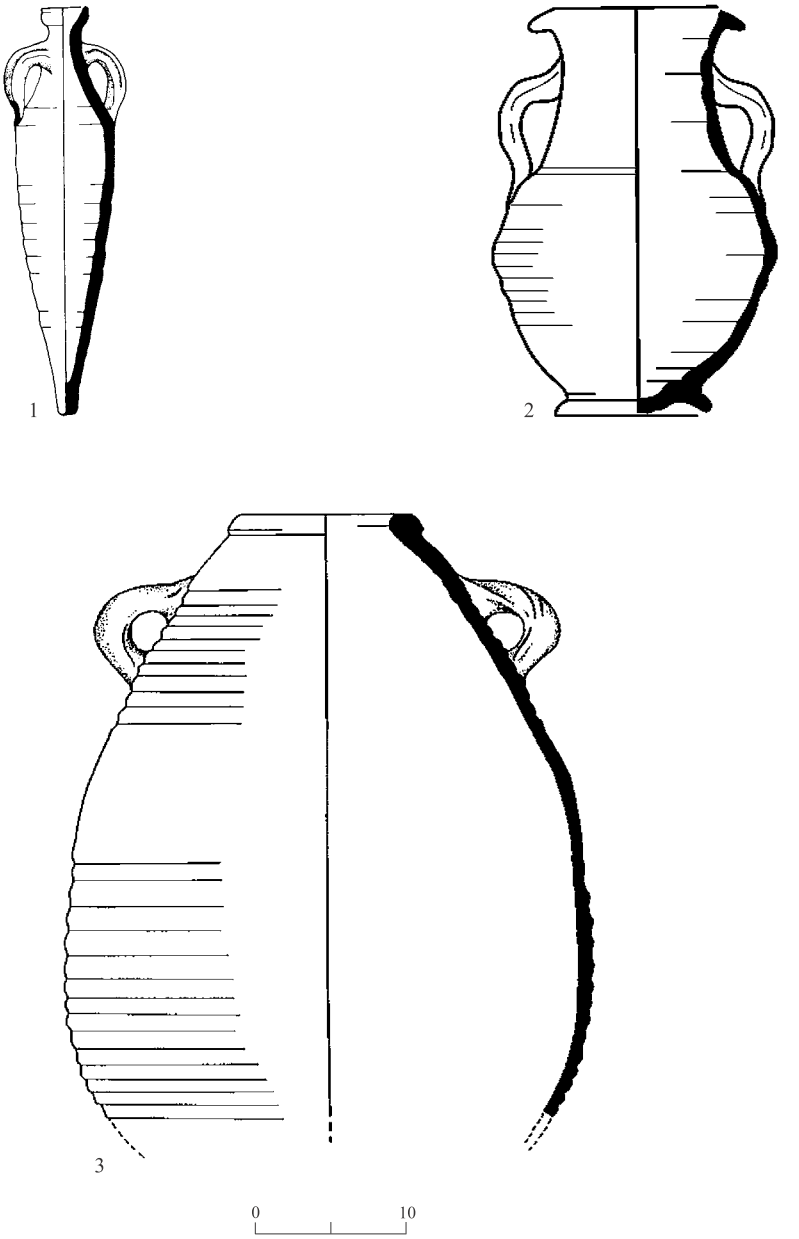

Fig. 2. Representative examples of Phoenician vessel types: (1) amphoriskos; (2) table amphora; (3) amphora (illustration: Anna Harel).

The Coins[6]

Based on an examination of the coin finds from Marisa in the IAA National Coin Database, it was found that about two-thirds of the third–second-century BCE coins uncovered at Marisa—some 953 coins—were minted in the Phoenician cities of Tyre, Sidon, Arados, Berytus, ʻAkko and Ashqelon. This corpus represents an appreciable quantity, especially considering that only 200 coins of these mints were found at each of the important Phoenician cities of ʻAkko and Ashqelon. However, the presence of such a large number of Phoenician coins at Marisa does not necessarily indicate a presence of Phoenicians, but rather that during the Hellenistic period, Phoenician currency arrived at the city as part of the vigorous slave trade between Arabian peoples, among them Idumeans, and the Phoenician coastal cities, as described in the Zenon papyri (see above). Marisa may have been an important trade hub along the routes connecting Arabia to the coastal cities of Ashqelon and Gaza, operated by the Arabians. This suggestion is in line with the known importance of Marisa as a regional trade center at this time (Ecker et al. 2017:187).

A small amount of the coins from Marisa, 109 coins, are third-century Ptolemaic (11%; Fig. 3), most of which date to the reign of Ptolemy III and originate from the Tyre mint—the largest of its time; one (possibly two) is from Sidon; one from Berytus; and one from ʻAkko (Fig. 4). Tyrian coins were not restricted to Phoenician sites at the time that this mint was at its peak (Betlyon 2019). An identical number of Sidonian coins as found in Marisa was retrieved from Hellenistic-period Jerusalem, certainly not a Phoenician city at any time in its history. Appreciable quantities of Sidonian coins are known from Persian-period sites of the late sixth–early fifth centuries BCE in Philisitia, while the only Hellenistic-period site yielding a relatively large quantity of such coins in the region is fourth-century BCE Gan Soreq (32 coins; Ariel 2016:20; forthcoming). Although coins continued to be minted in Sidon into the Seleucid era of the second century BCE, they were of a restricted circulation by that time, found mainly around Sidon and Tyre (Iossif 2011:219–220). Data retrieved from the IAA National Coin Database confirms this observation, revealing that most Sidonian coins in Israel are from the north of the country and usually occur one per site. Provided that the presence of Sidonian coins can be taken as an indication of a Phoenician presence, as Ariel (2016; forthcoming) suggested for Gan Soreq, this is certainly not the case with the one or two such coins from Marisa.

By far, the majority of Marisa's coin assemblage is second-century Seleucid (see Fig. 3). The Seleucid coins represent 14% of all second-century Phoenician coins found in licensed excavations in Israel. This means that the proportion of such coins at Marisa is indeed appreciable, although it may partly reflect the extensive excavation efforts invested at the site over time. Of these coins, 760 (90%; Fig. 5) are from the ʻAkko mint, 74 from

[6] I thank my colleagues at the IAA Coin Department, Robert Kool and Donald T. Ariel, for their generous collaboration and assistance.

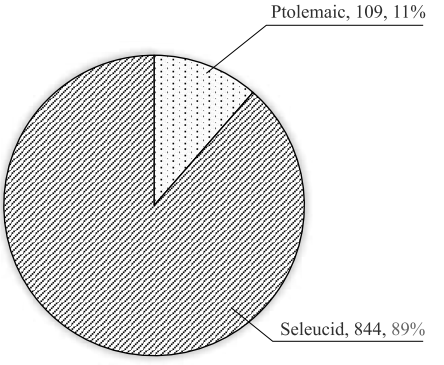

Fig. 3. Proportions of Hellenistic-period Phoenician coins at Marisa, according to period of issue.

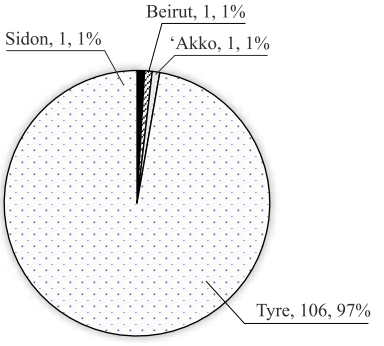

Fig. 4. Proportions of Ptolemaic Phoenician coins at Marisa according to the different mints.

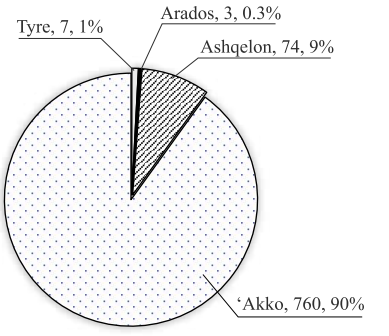

Fig. 5. Proportions of Seleucid Phoenician coins at Marisa according to the different mints.

Ashqelon, 7 from Tyre and 3 from Arados. It is noteworthy that the 'Akko coins date to as late as 139 BCE, and that the later currency is dominated by the coins from Ashqelon. From the data considered here it seems that the provenance of the Phoenician coins of Marisa changed in accordance with the known periods of activity and prominence of the different mints, closely reflecting regional economic trends, as would be expected from a city deeply involved in regional trade.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

It is proposed that the use of the term 'Sidonians' within the Hellenistic-period context at Marisa was instrumental rather than an indication of ethnic identity. The evidence from Marisa's Greek onomasticon of personal names and its material culture does not support a presence of Phoenicians in the Hellenistic city. Almost no such finds of indisputable

Phoenician origin, including almost none of the distinctive wares of this regional culture, are known from the many excavations in the city. The near absence of Sidonian coins further reinforces this conclusion. The substantial presence of Tyrian coins in third-century Marisa must not be understood as an indication of Phoenician connection, as Tyre housed the largest, most productive mint of this period, and its coins were widely distributed across the region.

The non-ethnic fictitious use of ethnic labels, a pseudo-ethnos, is a well-documented phenomenon in military contexts of the Hellenistic world (Clarysse 1994a; 1994b; Honigman 2002; 2003). Third-century BCE Marisa, from where the occurrence of the term 'Sidonians' is known to us, was part of the Ptolemaic Empire, and maintained close cultural and administrative ties with Ptolemaic Egypt. The fictitious use of ethnic labels is well-known in Ptolemaic Egypt, as well as in other parts of this Empire. It seems to have begun with Alexander the Great, during whose time many non-Greeks were recruited into the Macedonian army (*Anabasis* 7.23.3–4; see also Bickerman 1938; Bosworth 1988:170).

The fictitious use of ethnic labels is also well-documented in civilian contexts in third-century BCE Egypt. Census lists from this time reveal that Egyptians, Thracians and Jews could use the label 'Hellenes' in an instrumental manner (Clarysse 1994a; 1994b; Thompson 2001; Clarysse and Thompson 2006a; 2006b). A Demotic text (*P. dem. Lille* III 99) includes the terms 'Persians', 'Arabs' and 'Hellenes' alongside categories of occupation, exempted from what was known as the obol tax (Honigman 2002:43; 2003:82). Egyptian Ptolemaic texts contain over 170 different ethnic labels in Greek and a smaller number in Demotic, among which are the labels Sidonian and Tyrian, always appearing in the singular form (Thompson 2001:304–311; La'da 2002:284, 298). The ethnic label in these sources denoted the formal juridical rather than the ethnic affiliation of different individuals. The 'Hellenes' in the Ptolemaic papyri apparently paid fewer taxes than the local Egyptians. A similar use of a pseudo-ethnos as a taxation category is found in Josephus, in three different texts (*BJ* 2.487–8; *Antiquities* 12.8; *Against Apion* 2.35–36), where he refers to Jews in Egypt as Macedonians, in some instances described as deserving exemptions in taxation. It is highly likely that such fictitious use of ethnic labels in an economic or fiscal civic context was the practice in Idumea as well.

It is in this realm that the label 'Sidonians' was used in the Marisa inscriptions. It appears that certain individuals of Idumean descent, or a certain segment of the Idumean population of Marisa, wished to be associated with the Sidonians, perhaps to acquire a Hellenized status for economic, social and legal purposes. Collective identities of a non-exclusive nature employed among the Greeks involved labeling according to either genealogical, political/civic, ethnic, federal, colonial, intra-Hellenic, and Pan-Hellenic status (Malkin 2001:3–4). Within the Greek mainland, a decree uncovered in the Athenian Acropolis, near the Parthenon, records the granting of tax exemptions to Strato, King of Sidon, for his assistance in negotiating an Athenian mission to the Persian King Artaxerxes II, most likely dating to 367 BC (Tod 1948: n. 139). The decree also extends to the granting of rights of permanent residence in Attica to Sidonians. The placement of this decree at the

most prestigious public location of Athens, where it could have been seen by each and every Athenian, speaks volumes of the esteem with which the Sidonians were held by the Greeks. It is not improbable that knowledge of this decree reached the Greek officials at the Ptolemaic and Seleucid courts and exerted influence on regional governance and social and economic activity as early as the mid-fourth century BCE. By the third century BCE, the term 'Sidonians' was probably widely used as a label proffering an official taxation status to its bearers, notwithstanding their true ethnicity.

No support was found for the existence of a Phoenician, or specifically a Sidonian, colony in Marisa, nor a Phoenician politeuma. As the main Idumean city, Marisa was inhabited largely by Idumeans during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Also present in the city at that time were various foreign officials, stationed to secure the interests of the governing power of the period, whether Achaemenid, Ptolemaic or Seleucid. As with the Egyptian 'Hellens', the 'Sidonians' of the Southern Levant received tax benefits, standing apart from others of the local Semitic population. Those who behaved according to a more 'Hellenic' code of conduct apparently gained more favors from the ruling power, and communities of different ethnicity, religious affiliation or social status were variably considered as more or less 'Hellenic' (Eddy 1961). It is, therefore, likely that the title 'Sidonian' was highly coveted by various individuals and communities in the Southern Levant, including the Idumeans of Marisa. It may, thus, be concluded that the Greek onomasticon of Marisa represents the ruling class of the Hellenistic city, which consisted mostly of Idumeans. According to Zadok (1998:8–9), Hellenic names were at the top of the hierarchy of prestige, as reflected from the use of personal names in the Southern Levant between the Hellenistic and the Byzantine period, with Aramaic and then Arabian anthroponyms coming next; this author suggested that some bearers of Aramaic names were in fact Arabs, while the reverse was hardly ever the case. This observation reinforces the impression that Idumeans would have adopted Greek and common Semitic names, while Phoenicians and Aramaeans would not have taken on Idumean/Arabic names. Although Marisa had some low-level Greek, Egyptian and other Semitic presence, its population as attested by the available data was no doubt predominantly composed of local Idumeans.

REFERENCES

Abel F.-M. 1925. Tombeaux récemment découverts à Marisa. *RB* 34:267–275.

Ameling W. 1990. Koinon tôn Sidôniôn. *ZPE* 81:189–199.

Amitay O. 2002. *Alexander Mythistoricus*. Ph.D. diss. University of California. Berkeley.

Ariel D.T. 2016. The Circulation of Locally Minted Persian-Period Coins in the Southern Levant. *Notae Numismaticae* 11:13–62.

Ariel D.T. Forthcoming. Gan Soreq Coins.

Benz F.L. 1972. *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions: A Catalog, Gramatical Study and Glossary of Elements* (Studia Pohl 8). Rome.

Betlyon J.W. 2019. Coins. In B.R. Doak and C. López-Ruiz eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Phoenician and Punic Mediterranean*. New York. Pp. 385–400.

Bickerman E.J. 1938. *Institutions des séleucides* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 26). Paris.

Bickerman E.J. 1980. Un document relatif à la persécution d'Antiochos IV Épiphane. In E.J. Bickerman. *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* II (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums IX). Leiden. Pp. 105–135.

Bienkowski P. 2022. Edom in the Persian Period, Relations with the Negev and the Arabian Trade: The Archaeological Evidence. In B. Hensel, E. Ben Zvi and D.V. Edelman eds. *About Edom and Idumea in the Persian Period: Recent Research and Approaches from Archaeology, Hebrew Bible Studies and Ancient Near East Studies* (Worlds of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean). Sheffield–Bristol, Conn. Pp. 48–79.

Bosworth A.B. 1988. *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation.* Oxford.

Clarysse W. 1994a. Greeks and Persians in a Bilingual Census List. In E. Bresciani ed. *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 17 (*Acta Demotica: Acts of Fifth International Conference for Demotists, Pisa, 4th–8th September 1993*). Pisa. Pp. 69–77.

Clarysse W. 1994b. Jews in Trikomia. In A. Bülow-Jacobsen ed. *Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists, Copenhagen, 23–29 August 1992*. Copenhagen. Pp. 193–203.

Clarysse W. and Thompson D.J. 2006a. *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt* 1: *Population Registers*. Cambridge.

Clarysse W. and Thompson D.J. 2006b. *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt* 2: *Historical Studies*. Cambridge.

CPJ I: V.A. Tcherikover ed. *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum* I. Cambridge, Mass. 1957.

CPJ III: V.A. Tcherikover, A. Fuks and M. Stern eds. *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum* III. Cambridge, Mass. 1964.

Ecker A., Finkielsztejn G., Gorre G., Honigman S. and Syon D. 2017. The Southern Levant in Antiochos III's Time: Between Continuity and Immediate or Delayed Changes. In C. Feyel and L. Graslin-Thomé eds. *Antiochos III et l'Orient (Actes de la rencontre franco-allemande, Nancy 6–8 Juin 2016)*. Nancy–Paris. Pp. 163–209.

Eddy S.K. 1961. *The King is Dead: Studies in The Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334–31 B.C*. Lincoln, Neb.

Eshel E. 2007. The Onomasticon of Mareshah in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods. In O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers and R. Albertz eds. *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century* B.C.E. Winona Lake. Pp. 145–156.

Eshel E. 2010. Inscriptions in Hebrew, Aramaic and Phoenician Script. In A. Kloner, E. Eshel, H.B. Korzakova and G. Finkielsztejn. *Maresha Excavations Final Report* III: *Epigraphic Finds from the 1989–2000 Seasons* (IAA Reports 45). Jerusalem. Pp. 35–88.

Gera D. 2009. Olympiodoros, Heliodoros and the Temples of Koilē Syria and Phoinikē. *ZPE* 169:125–155.

Gera D. 2017. Some Dated Greek Inscriptions from Maresha. *PEQ* 149:201–222.

Gibson J.C.L. 1982. *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* III: *Phoenician Inscriptions, including Inscriptions in the Mixed Dialect of Arslan Tash*. Oxford.

Hengel M. 1974. *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. London.

Hoftijzer J. and K. Jongeling. 1995. *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Handbook of Oriental Studies, I; The Near and Middle East 21). Leiden–New York–Cologne.

Honigman S. 2002. Les divers sens de l'ethnique Ἄραψ dans les sources documentaires grecques d'Égypte. *Ancient Society* 32:43–72.

Honigman S. 2003. *Politeumata* and Ethnicity in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. *Ancient Society* 33:61–102.

Iossif P.P. 2011. Seleucid 'Eagles' from Tyre and Sidon: Preliminary Results of a Die-Study. In N. Holmes ed. *Proceedings of the XIVth International Numismatic Congress, Glasgow, September 2009* I. Glasgow. Pp. 213–229.

Isaac B.H. 1991. A Seleucid Inscription from Jamnia-on-the-Sea: Antiochus V Eupator and the Sidonians. *IEJ* 41:132–144.

Jean C.-F. and Hoftijzer J. 1965. *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest*. Leiden.

KAI: H. Donner and W. Röllig. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (rev. and enlarged ed.). Wiesbaden 2002.

Kasher A. 1992. A Second-Century BCE Greek Inscription from Iamnia. *Cathedra* 63:3–21 (Hebrew; English summary, p. 190).

La'da C.A., ed. 2002. *Foreign Ethnics in Hellenistic Egypt* (Studia Hellenistica 38; Prospographia Ptolemaica 10). Leuven–Paris–Dudley, Mass.

Lemaire A. 1996. *Nouvelles inscriptions araméennes d'Idumée au Musée d'Israël* (Transeuphratène Suppl. 3). Paris.

Lemaire A. 2002. *Nouvelles inscriptions araméennes d'Idumée* II (Transeuphratène Suppl. 9). Paris.

Lemaire A. 2021. The Fourth-Century BCE Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea: Problems and Tentative Solutions. In A.M. Maeir, A. Berlejung, E. Eshel and T.M. Oshima eds. *New Perspectives on Aramaic Epigraphy in Mesopotamia, Qumran, Egypt and Idumea (Proceedings of the Second Joint RIAB Minerva Center and the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center of Jewish History Conference, Leipzig May 14 2018).* Tübingen. Pp. 139–164.

Levin Y. 2020. The Religion of Idumea and Its Relationship to Early Judaism. *Religions* 11:487.

Malkin I. 2001. Introduction. In I. Malkin ed. *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity.* Washington, D.C. Pp. 1–28.

Masson O. 1969. Recherches sur les Phéniciens dans le monde hellénistique. *BCH* 93:679–700.

Millar F. 1983. The Phoenician Cities: A Case-Study of Hellenisation. *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 29:55–71.

Negev A. 1991. *Personal Names in the Nabatean Realm* (Qedem 32). Jerusalem.

Oren E.D. and Rappaport U. 1984. The Necropolis of Maresha–Beth Govrin. *IEJ* 34:114–153.

Osborne M.J. and Byrne. S.G. 1996. *The Foreign Residents of Athens; An Annex to the Lexicon of Greek Personal Names: Attica* (Studia Hellenistica 33). Leuven.

Peters J.P. and Thiersch H. 1905. *Painted Tombs in the Necropolis of Marissa (Marêshah).* London.

Porten B. and Yardeni A. 2006. Social, Economic, and Onomastic Issues in the Aramaic Ostraca of the Fourth Century B.C.E. In O. Lipschits and M. Oeming eds. *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*. Winona Lake. Pp. 457–488.

Porten B. and Yardeni A. 2014. *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea* I: *Dossiers 1–10; 401 Commodity Chits.* Winona Lake.

Porten B. and Yardeni A. 2016. *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea* II: *Dossiers 11–50; 263 Commodity Chits*. Winona Lake.

Rappaport U. 1977. Les Iduméens en Égypte. *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes* 43:73–82.

Regev D. 2003. Typology of The Persian and Hellenistic Pottery Forms at Maresha: Subterranean Complexes 70, 21, 58. In A. Kloner. *Maresha Excavations Final Report* I: *Subterranean Complexes 21, 44, 70* (IAA Reports 17). Jerusalem. Pp. 163–183.

Regev D. 2020. *New Light on Canaanite-Phoenician Pottery* (Worlds of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean). Sheffield.

Rey-Coquais J.-P. 1977. *Inscriptions grecques et latines découvertes dans les fouilles de Tyr (1963–1974)* I: *Inscriptions de la nécropole* (*BMB* 29). Paris.

Rey-Coquais J.-P. 1979. Onomastique et histoire de la Syrie gréco-romaine. In D.M. Pippidi ed. *Actes du VII^e^ Congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine, Constantza, 9–15 September 1977*. Bucarest–Paris. Pp. 171–183.

Sartre M. 1985. *Bostra: Des origines à l'Islam* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 117). Paris.

Stern I., Wolff S. and Erlich A. 2018. A New Tanit Pendant from Maresha: The Sidonian-Phoenician Connection. *Eretz-Israel* 33:229–237 (Hebrew; English summary, p. 191*).

Stern M. 1974. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* I. Jerusalem.

Stern M. 1981. *Hellenistic Period and the Hasmonean State (332–37 B.C.E.)* (History of Eretz Israel 3). Jerusalem (Hebrew).

Thompson D.J. 2001. Hellenistic Hellenes: The Case of Ptolemaic Egypt. In I. Malkin ed. *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity.* Washington, D.C. Pp. 301–322.

Tod M.N. 1948. *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* II: *From 403 to 323 B.C*. Oxford.

Zadok R. 1998. The Ethno-Linguistic Character of the Semitic-Speaking Population (Excluding Jews and Samaritans) of Lebanon, Palestine and Adjacent Regions during the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods—A Preliminary Survey of the Onomastic Evidence. *Michmanim* 12:5*–36*.