

FIFTEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT ON THE
EXCAVATION OF GEZER.

Second of the Second Series.

10 May—10 August, 1907.

By R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A., F.S.A.

PRELIMINARY.

SHORTLY after the completion of the previous report the harvest of the winter crops began. Under the first permit I had kept the work going through the harvest, but the results had not justified the trouble of finding able-bodied labourers, as only the very young or the aged were available. Accordingly, during the six weeks of the harvest I suspended the work on the mound itself, and kept a small selection of the labourers, whom I succeeded in persuading to remain, at work on the slopes of the hill and the surrounding valleys, searching for and examining tombs. When the harvest was over the work on the hill-top was resumed.

The result of the examination of tombs was on the whole disappointing, as few details of special interest were added to the facts already established in the previous excavation of the Gezerite cemeteries (see the ninth report, in the *Quarterly Statement* for October, 1904). Several wine-presses, and evidence for the existence of a church and Byzantine houses with mosaic pavements, were found in the course of this examination of the surrounding country; but the chief discovery made in the valley was that of the foundation of a fine Roman bath. On the hill itself the most interesting discovery has been that of a series of *massëbôth*, evidently in connexion with the temple-like structure described in the last report of the previous permit; and the usual small objects.

I.—TOMBS.

No tomb of the Pre-Semitic, and but one of the First Semitic Period was found; but several cave-sepulchres of the Second Semitic Period (contemporaneous with Egyptian history from the XIIIth to the XVIIIth dynasty) were brought to light. These consisted (like those already described) of rude chambers, more or

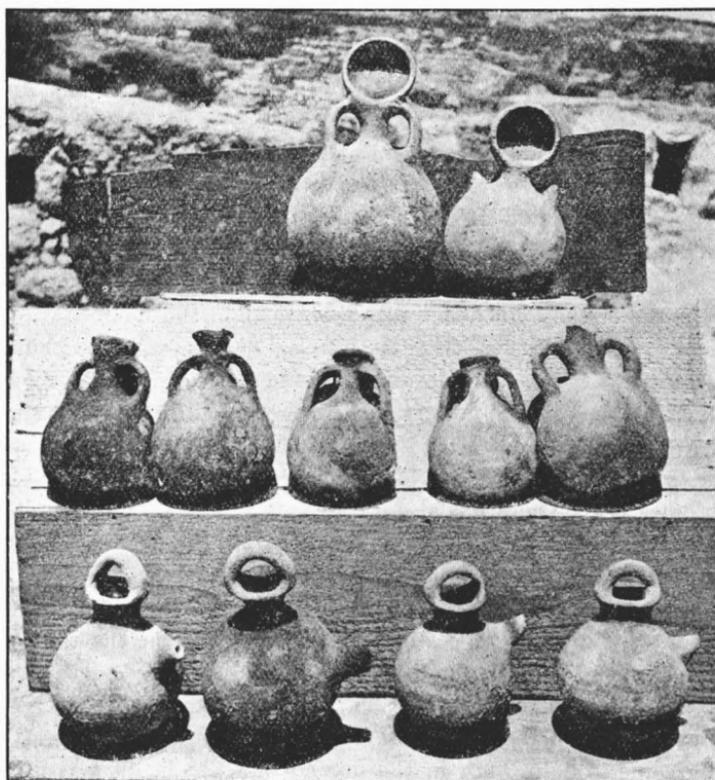


FIG. 1.—Pottery from Tombs, Second Semitic Period.

less circular, and contained bones, pottery, and a limited number of ornamental objects, scattered about, without any special order, through the earth filling the cave. In some of these caves the deposit was meagre, but others contained a considerable quantity of pottery vessels. In two caves a receptacle had been made for the

reception of bones from previous interments, and into these not only the bones but the pottery had been thrown.

Specimens of the typical pottery of this series of tombs will be seen in Fig. 1. The most remarkable vessel is the lentoid bottle with lip projecting into a vertical cup (Fig. 1, upper row). So far as I know, this type of vessel—fairly frequent in the series of tombs under consideration—has, as yet, been found nowhere else in Palestine. The lamps which were found show a considerable variety of shape, though the spouts have all more or less *parallel* sides. This I was previously inclined to put to a later date: it is, however, in any case later than the type of lamp with a slight *triangular* spout, which belongs to an earlier stage of the same period.

The tombs of this period were all grouped on the eastern slope of the hill, where a cluster of them had already been found in the previous examination of the cemeteries. One tomb of the series, however, was discovered in a rocky field between the mound and the village of el-Kubâb, and almost a mile from the former place. This is the farthest ancient tomb discovered in the neighbourhood. It is a rudely cut cave, with a platform of stones laid within it, on which was a considerable quantity of pottery (including a large number of the crooked-necked jugs formerly called "Phoenician"), and a collection of XVIIIth dynasty scarabs, one of them a handsome scaraboid bearing various devices and the cartouche of Thothmes III. There was also a fragment of a seal cylinder. The few bones that were worth preserving from this tomb presented Egyptian rather than Semitic characteristics, and it is not improbably the sepulchre of an Egyptian settler in the town.

Nor was anything specially remarkable found in the tombs of the Hellenizing period; the most interesting deposit in any of them was a *dea nutrix* figure, which probably belonged to the Syrian occupation ended by Simon Maccabaeus. Several early Christian tombs came to light, both in the mound of Gezer itself and in the surrounding hills. A good many of these had been previously rifled in the perfunctory way carried out before the fellahin unhappily learnt that *all* antiquities were of value. A number of lamps, some of them very fine specimens, were found; it is unnecessary for the present to illustrate these, as a selection of typical examples has already been published in a previous report (see *Quarterly Statement*, October, 1904, Plate III). In several tombs of

this period little pendant crosses, of bronze and silver, were found. They are all of the pattern shown in Fig. 2 :



FIG. 2.—Cross from Byzantine Tomb.

On the centre is a small hollow, which in one example contained a piece of glass. One tomb contained several of these crosses, and a die, with the points distributed exactly as in modern dice.¹ A strange combination !

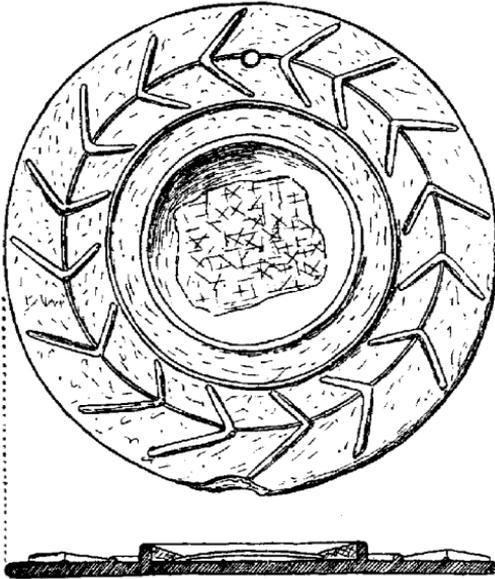


FIG. 3.—Pottery Object—perhaps a Reliquary—from a Byzantine Tomb.

The most curious object from any of the Christian tombs is illustrated in Fig. 3. It is a circular disc of pottery, the ware identical with that of the common type of Byzantine lamps,

¹ It may be worth a passing notice that gamesters in Palestine use the *Persian* numerals in reckoning the points of dice. This is an indication of the source from which dice have been imported

measuring $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter. Around the margin is a band of chevrons in relief, united by a faint line,¹ and there is at one point a hole for suspension. A raised collar surrounds the middle portion, which is closed with a disc of glass, held in place by a lime composition worked round the edges exactly like modern glazier's putty. I have not, elsewhere, seen such an object as this, and can only guess that it may be a reliquary. The glass is too opaque to see through, and without raising it from its position—which I am unwilling to do—it is impossible to say whether anything is covered by it or not.

None of the other tomb deposits found during the six weeks of work in this important branch of the excavation call for special notice in the present report.

To the east of the mound of Gezer, and south of 'Ain Yerdeh, is a knoll of rock known as *el-Kus'a*, on which some excavations for tombs were made. Besides tombs—one of which contained the "reliquary" and cross above illustrated—a fine wine-press was noticed. There was also evidence that a church once existed here. The Kubâb people told me that they had long since removed many fine cut stones from this place, and completely destroyed a mosaic that had here existed. The one relic of the building left behind was a large stone cross, which, by some strange oversight, they had allowed to remain on the surface of the ground, marking the spot where the building once stood to which it had belonged. The height of this cross is 2 feet 3 inches, and its thickness 6 inches.

II.—ROMAN BATH.

My attention was drawn to a spot on the south side of the road from Abû Shûsheh to 'Ain Yerdeh,² about midway between the latter point and 'Ain et-Tannûr, by seeing some of the natives of el-Kubâb excavating there for building stones. With the help of the Imperial Commissioner this vandalistic work was stopped, and I myself directed excavations to be made in order to determine what manner of building had formerly existed here. That it was of some importance was suggested by traces of mosaic, revealed by

¹ A conventional olive wreath?

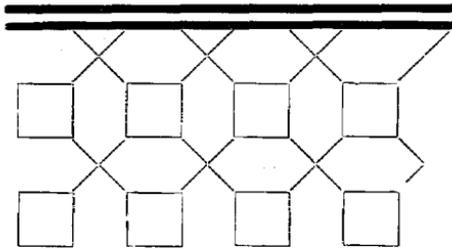
² See the map accompanying the ninth report, October, 1904, Plate I. The position is about the word "*Yerdeh*" in the inscription "*To 'Ain Yerdeh and El-Kubâb,*" but on the other side of the road.



FIG. 4.—View of the Roman Bath (facing S.W.).

the illicit excavations referred to. After a week's work the building lay revealed as a fine Roman bath establishment. It had been much injured by the quarrying operations, both recent and previous, but enough remained to show the arrangement of the greater part of the plan. This has been drawn; unfortunately, owing to its size, it is impossible to reproduce it on the small page of the *Quarterly Statement*. The photograph sent herewith (Fig. 4) will, however, give an idea of the disposition of the building. I have indicated by writing on the photograph the mound of Gezer, and the hollow in which the modern village of Abû Shûsheh is hidden: the footpath running through the photograph is the road from Abû Shûsheh to 'Ain Yerdeh. Along this road, in the distance, the now dry 'Ain et-Tannûr is marked. In the foreground is the excavation of the bath, to the various features of which reference numbers have been added.

The total dimensions of the building are 68 feet 6 inches by 59 feet. The *atrium* (I), or hall, occupies about a quarter of the whole building. This was a fine apartment, well built of squared stones, and floored with mosaic. The following diagram will, for the present, sufficiently indicate the pattern of the design:—



—lozenge-shaped dots occupying each of the squares and intervals. The colours are black and red on a white ground. This pavement was so fragmentary, that a considerable amount of measurement and comparison was necessary before it was possible to be sure of the design. Some fragments of marble slabs lying about (without any ornament upon them) indicated that the walls had been lined with this material.

A doorway (*a*), of which one jamb remains, leads into a chamber (II) 9 feet by 6 feet 9 inches, paved with tesserae of white mosaic. An apse in its south-eastern side (*b*) adds 4 feet to its length. This

apse was also paved with white mosaic, but a ridge (probably a step, or the basis of a bench) separates it from the rest of the mosaic floor. In all probability this chamber was the *apodyterium*, in which the bathers undressed.

From this chamber another doorway (c) gave access to an apartment (III) 11 feet by 9 feet 5½ inches, likewise paved with white mosaic. A small orifice will be noticed in the threshold of the door, no doubt to allow water to pass through from one chamber to another. The proximity of this chamber to the *hypocaust*, and analogy with the plans of bath establishments elsewhere, indicates that this apartment was the *tepidarium*. There was no bath in this chamber.

The *caldarium* had completely disappeared: the tile piers and arches of the *hypocaust*, however, remained in fairly good order. It occupies the space between rooms II, III, and the road. The furnace was to the right-hand side of the table which stands in the photograph—a little more towards the foreground—a large semicircular structure, much ruined, yet still retaining a certain quantity of ashes to show its original purpose. From this furnace a built pipe directed the hot air into the *hypocaust*.

Underneath the earth marked IV, in Fig. 4 (still unexcavated when the photograph was taken), is an area 24 feet 9 inches by 15 feet, subdivided by smaller walls into a number of compartments, which were probably *latrinae*. Beneath the level of these cross walls were the remains of a drain which apparently ran from the *caldarium* to a large *cloaca*, presently to be noticed.

The *frigidarium* (V) occupied the south-west corner of the building. Unfortunately this part of the bath was a good deal ruined, but enough remained to make its main outlines traceable. The northern end was occupied by a *piscina*, or basin, paved with white mosaic, and lined with cement. Its maximum dimensions were 7 feet 3 inches by 8 feet. A hole in the side opened into a drain that ran through a platform of solid masonry occupying the whole of the southern end of the chamber, and, passing through an opening in the wall, entered a finely built *cloaca*. This drain was built of well squared blocks of stone: when complete it was roofed with cover slabs. It ran outside the bath, following (so far as the excavation permitted its course to be traced) a serpentine line directed southward, perhaps towards the "winter water-course" that will be seen in the map already referred to.

No trace of any architectural ornament was found among the ruins.

Not many objects were found in the bath. There were a number of roofing tiles, and tubes of pottery which were probably inserted in the holes for light and air made in the roof of the building. There was a considerable number of fragments of glass vessels, but only one in any way perfect. These were, no doubt, receptacles for ointments and cosmetics used by the bathers. In the drain was found a hoard of much corroded small Roman copper coins, which will require chemical treatment before any attempt can be made to identify them.

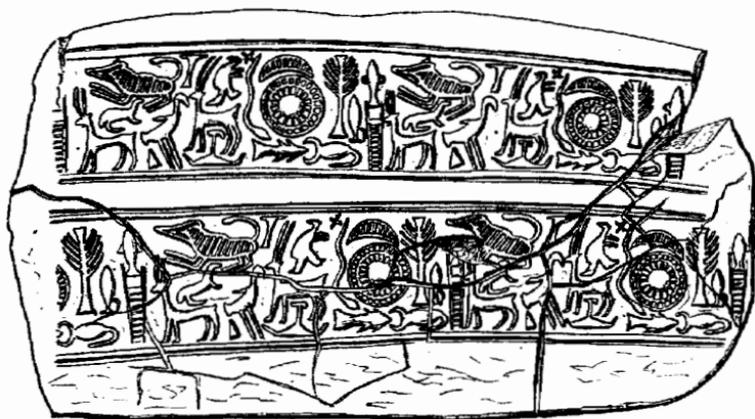


FIG. 5.—The Zodiac Tablet.

It will be seen that these discoveries considerably widen the field that it would be necessary to work over in order to set forth a complete statement of the life and civilization of Ancient Gezer at all periods of its history. As there seems little prospect of the resources of the Society being equal to the execution of so gigantic a task, I must be content with these fragments of Roman and Byzantine Gezer, confining my attention for the rest of the time available to the more important earlier periods of the city's history.

III.—A ZODIAC TABLET.

No tablets have been found during this year, but the object illustrated in Fig. 5 bids us not despair yet of some such discovery.

It was found in debris contemporary with the Tell el-Amarna period. It is a half cylinder of unbaked clay, $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches long, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches broad, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches thick.¹ It has two bands of figures in relief upon it that have evidently been impressed by rolling a seal cylinder, with a design much more elaborate than usual: the complete design appears twice in each band. It displays the sun and moon, with a series of figures which are recognizable as a zodiac, though the signs are not in proper order. Some of the zodiacal signs I cannot identify with certainty, not having at hand any representation of an ancient zodiac for comparison; but the significance of others is fairly clear. Commencing at the left-hand end of the upper line (after the ladder-like object here partially impressed) is a horned animal, which there can be little doubt is *Aries*. The clumsy ribbed figure above is either *Leo* or *Taurus*; but I am not certain what significance to attach to the smaller quadruped between, or to the bird which follows. Next comes an animal with ibex-like horns, which can hardly be anything but *Capricornus*, and above it a distorted creature, evidently the artist's conception of *Cancer*. The T-like objects above and below the ibex, and the small star above and to the right of *Cancer* I take to be marks filling up blank spaces—though it may be that the inverted T-mark under the ibex is meant for *Libra*. The wedge underneath the bird may also be a mere block, but it possibly is intended to indicate an egg. The crab is followed by a vertical serpent; if the guess just made as to the identification of *Libra* be not correct, it may be that this indicates *Serpens*, substituted for *Libra* (to which constellation it is adjacent in the heavens). Under the sun are *Pisces* and *Scorpio*, both unmistakable: above *Scorpio* is an object that looks like a palm-tree, but which I take to be an ear of corn, typifying *Spica*, the principal and only conspicuous star in *Virgo*.² Next to this is an inverted amphora, no doubt meant for *Aquarius* (also called *Amphora*: compare the modern Arabic name "the bucket"). Last comes a peculiar object on the top of a ladder, which I can but guess has something to do with *Sagittarius*.

That the identification of this interesting object with a zodiac has been proved will, I think, be admitted, but I must leave to those more versed than I in ancient astronomical symbolism the

¹ The drawing is to an enlarged scale for the sake of clearness.

² The modern Arabic name of this constellation is "the ear of corn."

task of completing the identifications, and the assigning of the Gezer zodiac to its proper place in astronomical history.

The order of the signs seems quite arbitrary, and probably depends entirely on the space the artist left for himself.

IV.—A HEBREW JAR-HANDLE STAMP.

In the previous report I stated that I proposed continuing the excavation to the east of the place where the supposed Philistine graves had been uncovered, in the hopes of bringing to light further tombs of this interesting cemetery. None, however, were discovered; if there be any other graves of this series in Gezer they must be elsewhere on the mound.

The pit east of the Philistine graves was curious in some respects. No remains of houses appeared till, just on the rock, was found a stratum referable to about 2000 B.C. Above this was some sixteen feet of earth, which represented a rubbish heap of late date. Large numbers of Rhodian jar-handles were found, and with the exception of a very few objects—none of them of sufficient importance to call for special notice at present—all the associated fragments were of the contemporary Hellenizing period.

The Rhodian jar-handle stamps will find their place in the already lengthy catalogue of such inscriptions being prepared for



FIG. 6.—Potter's Stamp.

the final *Memoir*: at present we need only refer to the far more interesting stamp illustrated in Fig. 6. This bears four Old Hebrew letters, which read—

פ
ד

Palaeographically this short inscription is of great importance, as it gives us a form, I believe unique, of the rare letter פ. This

character does not happen to occur in any of the early Palestinian authorities for the Old Hebrew alphabets, such as the Siloam inscription, and the jar-handles of the Judæan potters. In the "Baal Lebanon" inscription, however, the character is found with two cross-bars (which is also the earliest form of the Greek θ , derived from it), and the second cross-bar persists, in an attenuated form, down to the time of Eshmunazar of Sidon, in whose epitaph the letter is found, with double cross-bar and an open top. The *single* cross-bar, so far as I know, is not found in Phœnician inscriptions till we reach the degenerated alphabet of the early Mauretanian coins of Spain, where the letter appears in the form \cup . It is unfortunate that the letter is not found on the Maccabean and other Jewish coins, so that we have nothing for comparison, and are unable to determine whether the Greek-like form of the character on this inscription is due to the influence of the later-developed form of the letter θ , affecting the shape of the letter from which it took its rise. The monumental appearance of the other characters, all of which are of the normal Old Hebrew shape, is against the hypothesis of such an influence.¹

The interpretation of the inscription is not easy. No doubt it is the name of the potter: but whether the letters are to be read continuously, and if so in what order, and whether we have one complete, or two contracted names, are questions which it is difficult to decide. At first sight it looks like one name, דורט, of which, however, I can find no trace elsewhere. Then the collocation of letters in the upper row suggests a boustrophedon reading רטיה which would give the common theophorus affix, though the explanation of the whole name would remain a mystery. Perhaps a more probable interpretation is that each line is to be taken by itself: that the interpretation is "H. son of R."—די being an abbreviation for some name such as דימן (1 Kings v, 11; Eng. Version, iv, 31), and רט the initial of a name perhaps derivative from the root רטב, "to be damp, fresh, green."²

[See below, p. 319].

² The possibility has occurred to me that the ט might really be a degenerated form of the old Hebrew *kheth*. But, in the first place, I cannot find a trace of evidence that the corners of the ט ever became rounded, even in the most degraded of Semitic alphabets: and in the second, the substitute of ט for does not make the inscription any more easy to deal with.

V.—SCARAES AND SEALS.

The usual crop of scarabs and seals has been reaped: but all are of the types already fully illustrated in previous reports, and, with one exception, none of them call for special record at present.



FIG. 7.—Cylinder.

The exception is a very fine cylinder of steatite, illustrated in Fig. 7. It was found in debris of 1200–1000 B.C., and seems to represent the meeting of four persons for sacrifice. One of the four, clad in an embroidered robe, is represented carrying just such a scimitar as was found in one of the Gezer tombs of the same period (see *Q.S.*, October, 1904, p. 335). The execution of the seal is remarkably delicate.

AN INSCRIBED WEIGHT.

In Fig. 8 will be seen a drawing of a weight found in connexion with objects of about 500 B.C. It is of marble, and is of the usual

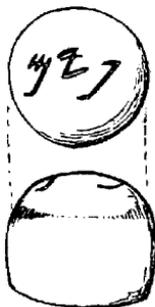


FIG. 8.—Inscribed weight.

domed shape. The weight is 7.27 grammes, so that it represents one-third of the standard of which the זעף weights represent a

half: that is, one-third of the silver shekel. The word inscribed on it, פִּיִם, must therefore mean "one-third." The weight of a one-third shekel is referred to in Nehemiah x, 33 (*v.* 32, Eng. Version), but is mentioned by a circumlocution.¹

VI.—A NEW HIGH PLACE.

Toward the end of the first permit a building was discovered, a plan of which will be found in *Q.S.*, 1905, p. 197. There is



FIG. 9.—Alignment of Standing Stones (facing Northwards).

a photograph of it in "Bible Sidelights from the Mound of Gezer," and I there endeavoured to show how a restoration of this building offered the simplest explanation of the attendant circumstances of the death of Samson. This suggestion was received in some quarters with a certain amount of scepticism; but at least the explanation of the building as a temple has been confirmed by the

[See below, p. 320].

unexpected discovery of a row of *masséboth* in close connexion with it. Excavating to the south of the site in question a long narrow courtyard was found, in which four stones and the stump of a fifth were standing. That there had once been more is indicated by a feature in the photograph (Fig. 9) where the stones and surrounding buildings are shown. The walls in the foreground evidently belong to a much later date; and it will be seen that some of them are built, not of the usual small field stones, but of fragments of long pillars resembling the monoliths that still survive. Another had been used in this later period as a lintel of the only door yet found complete on the mound. This accounts for the long gap between the first and second of the stones. The monoliths are roughly squared, and therefore (in accordance with a principle I have myself suggested) are *à priori* more likely to be mere pillars for constructional purposes; against this must however be set their irregularity of height, the weakness of their foundations—which are not adapted for carrying a heavy superstructure—and the unevenness of their tops, on which no superstructure would remain in equilibrium. The broken stump, which is unfortunately hidden in shadow, is in the middle, between the second and third. The position of the line of pillar bases, to which special reference was made in the previous description, is indicated by the marks + +.

The total length of the row of stones as at present standing is 44 feet 4 inches: the dimensions of the largest stone are 7 feet 6 inches by 1 foot 6 inches by 1 foot 5 inches. The alignment, like that of the great high-place, is north and south. No objects of cult were found in the precincts.

A curious foundation sacrifice was, however, found under a corner of a wall immediately west of the angle of the courtyard. Here was found a small pit, dug under the seat of the corner stone, lined with potsherds mingled with charcoal: some of the potsherds showed marks of fire. The pit was about 1 foot 9 inches in diameter. There were two or three mutton bones in it, and a fragment of the leg bone of a cow, the edges of which seem to have been trimmed with a knife: and on the potsherds was laid the head of a little girl, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ years of age.
