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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AASOR</i>	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>ADAJ</i>	Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan
<i>AJA</i>	American Journal of Archaeology
<i>AfO</i>	Archiv für Orientforschung
<i>ANET</i>	Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament ³ , ed. J.B. Pritchard, Princeton, 1969
<i>BA</i>	The Biblical Archaeologist
<i>BASOR</i>	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>BT</i>	Babylonian Talmud
<i>CAD</i>	Chicago Assyrian Dictionary
<i>CIS</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum
<i>DJD</i>	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
<i>DSD</i>	Dead Sea Discoveries
<i>EI</i>	Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies
<i>ESI</i>	Excavations and Surveys in Israel
<i>IAA Reports</i>	Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
<i>IEJ</i>	Israel Exploration Journal
<i>JAOS</i>	Journal of the American Oriental Society
<i>JBL</i>	Journal of Biblical Literature
<i>JCS</i>	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
<i>JEA</i>	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
<i>JNES</i>	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
<i>KAI</i>	W. Donner and W. Röllig: <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> 1–3, Wiesbaden, 1962–1964; 1 ^s , 2002
<i>NEAEHL</i>	The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (English Edition), Jerusalem, 1993
<i>PEQ</i>	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
<i>PT</i>	Palestinian Talmud
<i>QDAP</i>	Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine
<i>RA</i>	Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale
<i>RB</i>	Revue Biblique
<i>RE</i>	Pauly-Wissowa's Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
<i>RQ</i>	Revue de Qumran
<i>VT</i>	Vetus Testamentum
<i>ZA</i>	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
<i>ZDPV</i>	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins

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Provenance and Political Borders: A Phoenician Inscription of the Hellenistic Period ‘Strays’ across Modern Borders*

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In memory of Moshe Yedaya (Dohovny)

ABSTRACT: A Phoenician temple inscription (222/221 BCE), owned and exhibited by the Louvre Museum, was originally acquired by the museum in the late nineteenth century. The artefact is incorrectly attributed by the Louvre to Ma'achouq, a suburb of ancient Tyre in modern Lebanon. The archives of the French national museums and the original reports of the artefact clearly place the provenance at Kh. Ma'sub in the Upper Galilee of modern Israel, at the gateway of an ancient strategic mountain pass between Akko and Tyre. The correct provenance of the artefact suggests a system of Phoenician temple complexes serving travellers at each end of the hazardous mountain route.

INTRODUCTION

IN the spring of 2017, the first author visited the small museum at Ḥanita, a kibbutz located at the strategic Ladder of Tyre pass on the northwest border of modern Israel. The pass overlooks the Akko Valley to the south stretching across the western Galilee to Akko (Josephus, *Wars* II.188).

The kibbutz was established in 1938, during the Arab revolt, in an effort to block the infiltration of militants from the north. The ancient Jewish town of 'Ḥanita' is mentioned in third- and fourth-century CE Talmudic texts and in the Late Byzantine period Rehov inscription (t. Shvi'it 4:9 [Zuckerman edition, p. 66]; y. Dma'i 2: 1, 22: d [= Hebrew Academy edition, p. 122]; Klein 1967: 149–153; Sussman 1973; 1976; Safrai 1977: 16; Vitto 1975; 1980; Weiss 2000: 35; s.v. Ḥanotha in Tsafir, Di Segni and Green 1994: 139). The name of the ancient town was preserved in the local Arabic name for its ruins, Kh. Ḥanutah. The name, derived from the Hebrew *ḥaniyah*, hints at the purpose of the town since ancient times — to guard the strategic pass on the road between Tyre and Akko (Shiller 1988: 37).

* This article was prepared with the generous support of the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center for Jewish History at Bar Ilan University.

The archaeology museum, housed in a sixth-century church, was founded in 1952 by Moshe Yedaya to exhibit archaeological finds from the area (Yedaya 1961: 71–72; Biber 1966: 43).¹ The museum's collection includes a plaster cast of an 11-line Phoenician inscription inscribed on a stone plaque (fig. 1), describing the dedication of a portico in the temple to Astarte (Gibson 1982: 118; *KAI* no. 19). The inscription is dated internally by the 26th year of Ptolemy III Euergetes and the 53rd year of the Era of Tyre, which equals 222/221 BCE.



Fig. 1. Plaster cast of the Ma'sub Inscription made by the Louvre Museum for the Ḥanita Museum (photograph by Reuven Friedman)

Yedaya corresponded with the Louvre Museum in a letter dated March 14, 1957, requesting photographs and information regarding the inscription, on the basis of the *editio princeps* that reports that the inscription was purchased in the nearby village of el-Baṣṣa (encompassing the ancient and modern Bešet [בִּצֵּת] and the modern Shelomi) and originated from the ruins adjacent to that village

¹ Kletter reports that the museum was founded in 1956 (Kletter 2017: 102).

known as Kh. Maʿṣub (מצובה).² The ruins of Kh. Maʿṣub are located just south of the Jebel el-Mushakkah mountains, in the Ladder of Tyre ridge, which can be crossed at the Ḥanita pass (fig. 2; Meyer 1931: 4; s.v. Pi Maṣoba in Tsafirir, Di Segni and Green 1994: 203–204). Hence, the inscription was known for years as the ‘Maʿsub Inscription’ and the Deputy Curator of the National Museums of France described the provenance of the inscription as Maʿsoub (Maʿṣub) (Ledrain 1888: 62, cat. no. 129).

The Louvre Museum confirmed to Yedaya that it possessed no additional information regarding the inscription beyond that reported by Clermont-Ganneau.³



Fig. 2. Location map of el-Bassa and Kh. Maʿṣub (MWP Sheet 3)

2 Yedaya's letter cites Clermont-Ganneau 1888: 81–86 and Lidzbarski 1898: pl. 5:3. The original of this letter and copies of the related internal correspondence between the Directeur des Musées de France and the Conservateur en chef des Antiquités Orientales are on file at the Archives Nationales, Archives des Musées Nationaux, Département des Antiquités Orientales du Musée du Louvre (Série B), Renseignements (B21), Reference Code: 20144777/18.

3 Archives Nationales, Archives des Musées Nationaux, Département des Antiquités

This was reconfirmed to the first author in 2018 (personal communication).⁴

The original inscription is in the collection of the Louvre Museum, and the plaster cast was provided to the Hanita Museum by the Louvre⁵ following the correspondence between Yedaya and the Louvre Museum (Yedaya 1961: 72). Despite Clermont-Ganneau's clear report regarding the origin of the inscription, scholarly speculations changed the attribution of its provenance twice during the more than a century since its acquisition. We intend to reinstate the attribution of provenance made by its first editor.

As of 2002 this Phoenician Hellenistic building inscription, now identified as the 'Inscription of the 53rd Year of Tyre', is attributed by the Louvre to 'Ma'achouq' (معشوق, Ma'ašūq), a site 1.5 km east of ancient Tyre (fig. 3; Gubel 2002: 128–129, cat. no. 125; personal communication).⁶

According to the current attribution, the inscription was acquired by the Louvre in 1885 from J. Løytved, the Danish consul serving at the time in Beirut, who purchased the artefact in 'Ma'achouq'. The mosque of that village, 'immortalised by Bartlett' along with numerous nearby Phoenician tombs, was subjected to illegal excavations and looting. The Ma'achouq provenance suggests that the Hellenistic building inscription was looted from the site of the Ma'achouq mosque or the nearby Phoenician tombs. Gubel claims to base this attribution on information from the archives of the French national museums (Gubel 2002: 128–129, cat. no. 125).⁷

By placing the inscription near ancient Tyre, Gubel rejected not only Clermont-Ganneau's attribution but also that of Dunand and Duru, who excavated the temple complex of Milkastarte and Astarte at Umm el-ʿAmed between 1943 and 1945. The latter asserted, in their final report, that the ruins identified by Clermont-Ganneau as the provenance for the artefact had nothing but Late Antique remains, suggesting instead that the provenance of the inscription is in fact Umm el-ʿAmed, located some 7 km northwest of Ma'sub, just across the ridge (Dunand and Duru

Orientales du Musée du Louvre (Série B), Renseignements (B21), reference code 20144777/18.

4 Communication from Marianne Cotty, Chef du service d'études et de documentation, Département des Antiquités Orientales du Musée du Louvre.

5 Personal communications from Igal Gozlon and Joseph Weiss, former director and assistant, respectively, of the Hanita Museum. Copies of the correspondence between Yedaya and the Services Techniques & Commerciaux de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux de France were provided to the first author from the archives of the Hanita Museum.

6 See also the description of the inscription on the presentation enclosure in Room 312, Sully Wing, http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=25997 (accessed June 25, 2018).

7 'Les archives des Musées nationaux ne laissent par contre aucun doute sur l'achat de cette pierre inscrite par le consul danois Løytved au village de Ma'achouq à 1.5 km de Tyr sur la route de Tebnine' (Gubel 2002: 128–129, cat. no. 125).

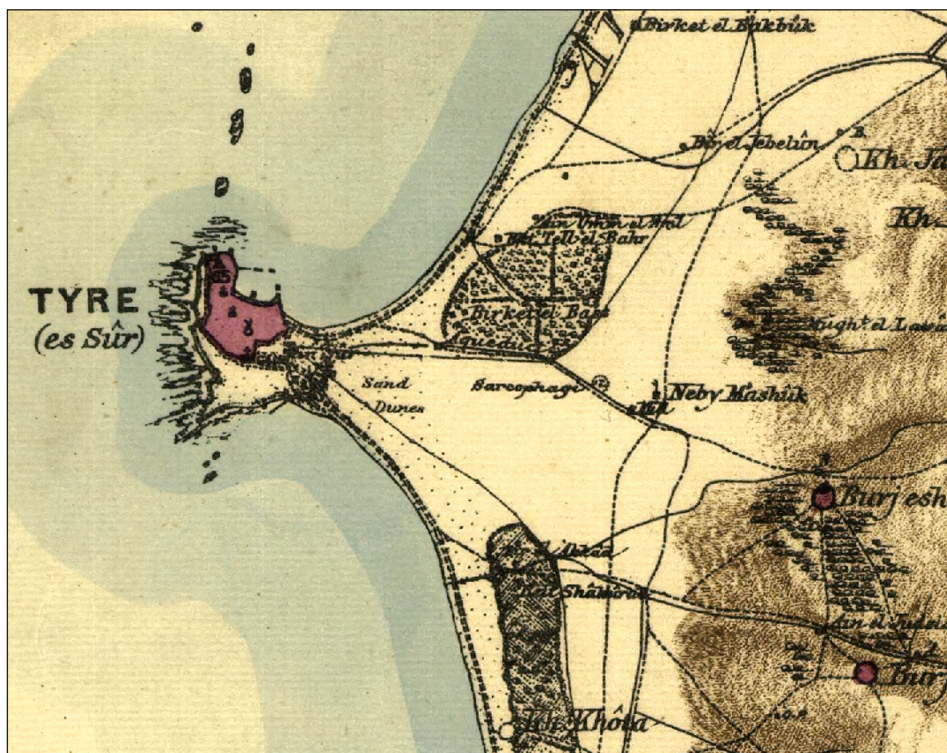


Fig. 3. Location map of Tyre and Neby M'ashak (Ma'achouq) (MWP Sheet 1)

1962: 185). According to Dunand and Duru, the inscription was apparently carried off from there by Ma'sub villagers,⁸ who sold the inscription to Løytved.

Following Dunand, scholars began to attribute the provenance of the Ma'sub inscription to Umm el-'Amed.⁹ Following Gubel 2002, the inscription is now reidentified in the recent literature as the 'Ma'shuq (Ma'achouq) Inscription' (Briquel Chatonnet 2011: 22–25).

The cited illustration by Bartlett is described as taken from a bold hill, two miles distant on the plain, crowned with a village and mosque (Carne 1836: 38a–39). Neby Ma'shûk (Ma'achouq) appears on the 1880 PEF Map of Western Palestine (MWP)¹⁰ (MWP 1880: sheet 1; fig. 3) and is identified by Conder in

⁸ It should be noted that Ma'sub was not, in fact, a village, but a *khirbe* ('ruin'), an unsettled archaeological site, while the villagers who sold the inscription were from the adjacent village of el-Baṣṣa.

⁹ Milik 1963; 1972: 423; *KAI* no. 19; Peckham 1968: 76, n. 28; Gibson 1982: 118–121; Dothan 1985: 120, n. 2; Briquel Chatonnet and Gubel 1998: 46; Greenstein 2012: 87.

¹⁰ Map of Western Palestine, in 26 sheets, from surveys conducted for the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, by Lieutenants C.R. Conder and H.H. Kitchener, R.E.,

his 1881 *PEF* report¹¹ as the shrine of Neby M'ashûk (Ma'achouq), standing on a perpendicular cliff on the southeast extremity of a mound of rock rising in the plain due east of Tyre, with two domes and a courtyard containing a palm, with a few hovels north of the building (Conder 1881a: 83; 1881b: 185–186).¹² Conder's 1881 report precisely describes the structure in the 1836 Bartlett illustration, and it is quite clear that the 1885 village of Ma'achouq cited in the Louvre attribution is the shrine of Neby Ma'shûk (Ma'achouq)¹³ and its adjacent hovels.

The area is known today as the necropolis of Tyre–al-Bass, where recent excavations uncovered an Iron Age Phoenician cemetery (Aubet 2010). The discovery of a Phoenician cemetery at al-Bass, adjacent to Ma'achouq, confirms the earlier reference to the looting of Phoenician tombs at Ma'achouq (Gubel 2002: 128–129, cat. no. 125).

THE REPORTED PROVENANCE

The provenance of the artefact was first identified by Clermont-Ganneau, who reported that the Hellenistic building inscription had been discovered by J. Løytved, the Danish vice-consul in Beirut, at el-Baṣṣa, but that the actual provenance of the artefact was Ma'soub, a site contiguous to el-Baṣṣa located between Acre and Umm el-ʿAmed (Clermont-Ganneau 1885a: 380; 1885b: 482; 1885c: 47; 1887: 503–504; 1888: 81). Following Clermont-Ganneau's identification and report, scholars attributed the provenance or findspot of the inscription to el-Baṣṣa/Ma'soub.¹⁴

Umm el-ʿAmed is located about 20 km south of Tyre, and Acre is located another 22 km or so south of Umm el-ʿAmed. Accordingly, the actual provenance for the artefact should be over 20 km south of Tyre, not at Ma'achouq, located just 1.5 km east of Tyre.

during the years 1872–1877, photographed and printed for the committee under the superintendence of Lt. Coll. Carey, R.E. at the Ordnance Survey Office Southampton, Colonel Cooke, C.B., R.E., Director, by Permission of the First Commissioner of H.W. Works. London, 1880 (MWP 1880).

11 *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, London, 1869–1937.

12 The village of Neby Ma'shûk (Ma'achouq) is described as 'stone houses, containing about 30 Moslems, round the Neby, situated on a slight hill' (Conder and Kitchener 1881: 50).

13 Johannes Sepp, who led an archaeological expedition to Tyre in 1874, is reported to have recognized the shrine of Neby Ma'shûk (Ma'achouq) as a shrine of Baal and Asarte (Conder and Kitchener 1881: 69).

14 Frothingham and Marsh 1885: 427; Bloch 1890: 7; Cooke 1903: 48–51, n. 10; Lagrange 1905: 488–489; Lidzbarski 1907: 23–24, no. 16; Chabot 1916: 10–12, no. 1205; Meyer 1931: 2–4; Seyrig 1957: 93, n. 6; Dunand and Duru 1962: 185, pl. LXXXVIII:1; *KAI* no. 19; Peckham 1968: 76, n. 28; Gibson 1982: 118; Bonnet 1988: 125.

The village of Bassa, identified by Clermont-Ganneau as the site of the discovery, is el-Baṣṣa, located some 7 km south of Umm el-ʿAmed. At the time of the discovery, el-Baṣṣa was the largest village in its area, with a total population of about 1,050 (Conder and Kitchener 1881: 145; Araf 1975: 30; Frankel and Getzov 1997: 91–92). Adjacent Kh. Maʿsub was an uninhabited ruin used by the villagers of el-Baṣṣa as a quarry for building stones (Renan 1864: 750; Conrad and Kitchener 1881: 179; Frankel and Getzov 1997: 91–92). The church at el-Baṣṣa is constructed of ashlar blocks, and a structure at the east of the village, adjacent to the ruins of Kh. Maʿsub, incorporates ancient architectural elements and perhaps even walls from earlier periods (Frankel and Getzov 1997: 91–92).¹⁵

The site of Maʿsub, identified by Clermont-Ganneau as the actual provenance of the artefact, is the ruins of Kh. Maʿsub (מצורבה), adjacent to el-Baṣṣa, in northern Israel.¹⁶ It is unclear whether Clermont-Ganneau attributed the actual provenance of the artefact to Kh. Maʿsub on the basis of a report by the el-Baṣṣa villagers or due to their intensive looting of the ruins of neighbouring Kh. Maʿsub.

All additional references in the literature also identify the artefact as the ‘Maʿsub inscription’.¹⁷ The identification of the inscription as the ‘Inscription of the 53rd Year of Tyre’ and its attribution to Maʿachouq is unique to the Louvre (cf. Gubel 2002: 128–129, cat. no. 125).

The village of el-Baṣṣa and the contiguous ruins of Kh. Maʿsûb appear on MWP 1880 (fig. 2) between Acre and Umm el-ʿAmed, about 27 km south of Tyre. Kh. Maʿsub is clearly the site of Maʿsoub identified by Clermont-Ganneau as the provenance for the Hellenistic building inscription acquired and owned by the Louvre.

Dunand and Duru state that the inscription was purchased by Løytved from residents of the village of Maʿsub, and the provenance was attributed by Clermont-Ganneau to the neighbouring site of el-Baṣṣa because there are ruins only in el-Baṣṣa (Dunand and Duru 1962: 185). Dunand and Duru challenge

15 Although the archaeological survey at el-Baṣṣa yielded pottery dated to the Byzantine period, the survey reported pottery dated to the Hellenistic period at the adjacent ruins of Maʿsub (Frankel and Getzov 1997: 82). The findings of the archaeological survey support Clermont-Ganneau’s original attribution of the inscription to Kh. Maʿsub.

16 Sluchtz 1942: 44–45; Haltrecht 1948; Dothan 1985: 120, n. 2; Dunand and Duru 1962: 185 n. 3; Frankel and Getzov 1997: 82.

17 Clermont-Ganneau 1886: 1,3; 1892: 394; 1898: 276, 280; Six 1886: 105; Halevy 1886: 109–111; Ledrain 1888: 62, cat. no. 129; Lidzbarski 1898: 419 (no. 419, pl. 5:3); Rouvier 1899: 364, 374, n. 1; Berger 1901: 146 n. 1, 153; Cowley 1921: 10; Ingholt 1923: 144; Franklin 1926: 220; Dussaud 1923: 147; 1931: 72; 1932: 218; 1938: 143, n. 1; 1946a: 229, n. 4; 1946b: 304b, n. 2; Pritchard 1943: 91, 94; *KAI* no. 19); Caquot 1965: 33; Xella 1991: 143, n. 3. Even Briquel Chatonnet (2011: 22) notes that the inscription is known as ‘Maʿsub inscription’, although she attributes its provenance to Maʿachouq.

Clermont-Ganneau's attribution, misidentifying his identified provenance as el-Baṣṣa and asserting that the ruins at el-Baṣṣa are Byzantine (Dunand and Duru, 1962: 185). In reality, Clermont-Ganneau reported that the artefact was purchased from residents of el-Baṣṣa and he attributed its provenance to the adjacent ruins of Ma'sub, where Hellenistic period pottery was found (Frankel and Getzov 1997: 82).

The Ma'sub inscription indicates the establishment of a temple to Astarte in the third century BCE on the southern edge of the Ladder of Tyre ridge just south of the strategic pass at Ḥanita. This temple is likely a sister temple to the contemporary Asharte shrine excavated at Umm el-ʿAmed, located at the corresponding strategic pass on the northern edge of the Ladder of Tyre ridge. The inscriptions indicate corresponding temples of Astarte, the deity of Tyre, at each entrance to the strategic Ladder of Tyre route connecting the two major cities of Tyre and Akko.¹⁸

Perhaps the Ma'sub inscription is related to a public structure excavated at adjacent Kh. el-ʿAbbasiyah built in the Phoenician style and identified as a likely temple by M. Prausnitz, district archaeologist for the Western Galilee (Prausnitz 1976).

CONCLUSIONS

Dunand and Duru inadvertently confused the originally reported purchase and provenance sites of this important Phoenician inscription. They assumed that Ma'sub was a village without ruins and that el-Baṣṣa was a site of ancient Byzantine ruins, leading them to conclude that the provenance of the Hellenistic period artefact could not be in Ma'sub/el-Baṣṣa and should be attributed to Umm el-ʿAmed.

Subsequently, Gubel rejected the Dunand and Duru attribution, but apparently inadvertently confused the originally reported purchase site of el-Baṣṣa village and the attributed provenance site of adjacent Kh. Ma'sub, both located within the borders of the modern state of Israel, with al-Bass and Ma'achouq, boroughs of the modern city of Tyre located within the borders of the modern Lebanese republic. The 'Ma'sub Inscription' was reidentified as the 'Inscription of the 53rd Year of Tyre' and began appearing in the literature as the 'Ma'achouq Inscription'.

This essay unequivocally proves that Clermont-Ganneau's original attribution of provenance to the ruins of Ma'soub is supported by the proximity of the adjacent purchase site of el-Baṣṣa, by the looting of the ruins of Kh. Ma'sub by the villagers of el-Baṣṣa, by the findings of the 1997 archaeological survey of

18 A Hellenistic period Astarte-Atargatis temple inscription was also uncovered at Kfar Yassif, northeast of Akko (Avi-Yonah 1959).

Maʿsub and by the archives of the Louvre Museum in the National Archives of France.

Despite clear indications of a Phoenician influence in Hellenistic Galilee, there is still only minimal and sporadic evidence for Phoenician activities there (Berlin 1997: 75). Correcting the forgotten provenance of this important artefact will contribute to a better understanding of the Phoenician presence and influence in Hellenistic Western Galilee, the strategic importance of Hellenistic period Maʿsub, its relationship with Umm el-ʿAmed and the role of these two strategic sites at either end of the Ladder of Tyre Ridge in the cultural, economic and political interaction between the major southern Phoenician cities of Tyre and Akko in the third century BCE.

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