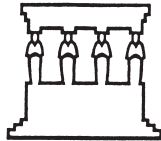


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ON MOBILITY IN THE EASTERN  
MEDITERRANEAN

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## **Engraving the ships. Shared ideas and practices**

*Katarina Streiffert Eikeland*

Traces of ships can be seen on rock engravings, i.e. carvings or graffiti, along the coasts of Cyprus and the Levant. These engravings are frequently interpreted on religious grounds, however, the interpretation of these maritime images must be distinguished from different perspectives and reconsidered as a more complex phenomenon. Trans-maritime navigation was one of the prime mechanisms behind the complexity of Bronze Age society and it is therefore likely that the seafarers themselves had a great impact on the iconography. What we see is a shared local practice that mediates intrinsic ideas involving images of ships and mariners. This type of maritime image is represented in many parts of the coastal area of the Eastern Mediterranean, yet the images show a clear variety in contextual placement and are found in opened landscapes, sanctuaries, as well as within the household. The contextual variety of the maritime engravings has hitherto not been discussed and, furthermore, the reason(s) for the variety are unclear and need to be elucidated. Above all, the important and neglected issue of whether these maritime images were restricted to specific groups or accessible for all members of a society will be taken into account and reconsidered. In terms of global perspectives, contextual variety will also be highlighted from a Southern Scandinavian point of view.

### *Maritime practice – the setting*

Trans-maritime navigation was one of the prime mechanisms behind the complexity of Bronze Age society. It gave rise to a highly complex network of trade as well as cultural connectivity on a whole. Nautical ventures, however, had a down-side. Every route was a dangerous undertaking for the crew as well as the ship and its cargo. It was not just the construction of the ship that was crucial for the security of those on board, the anchors were of just as much importance. According to Honor Frost:

“...the security of any sailing ship, ancient or modern, when storm-driven towards shore, depends on its anchors. Only their hold stands between a ship and destruction coupled with the possible death of the crew, hence the retention throughout recorded history of the anchor’s sacred significance.”<sup>1</sup>

The archaeological record from Canaanite and Phoenician contexts let us understand that maritime votives are noticeable in the dedicatory anchors and model ships from the temples of Byblos. The offering of anchors can also be found in the Temple of Ba`l in Ugarit, and the temples at Kition-Bamboula (Cyprus) and Tell Sukas, today’s Syria.<sup>2</sup> Whether you were a fisherman, a merchant at sea or a sailor, the maritime lifestyle at sea was a dangerous venture and gave rise to a set of preventative practices. Consequently, the uncertain lifestyle at sea generated a specialised maritime religion.<sup>3</sup>

How can we study maritime culture, frequently associated with religious practice, in archaeological terms? One way is to look at stone anchors from adequate contexts, but ship engravings, i.e. graffiti or carvings, are an additional aspect of utmost importance. They are suggested to have been a form of worship, or ex-voto, and some kind of cultic offering devoted by mariners in order to show gratitude for past successes as well as safe journeys in future endeavours.<sup>4</sup> Ships are considered to have been imbued with a protective spirit and also contained sacred spaces.<sup>5</sup> Following this line of thought, it is not difficult to picture the need to manifest and integrate the ship as a maritime symbol in the surroundings of the ancient seafarers.

Ancient ships have been conveyed with multiple representations through time. In the Mediterranean area ships are frequently depicted on painted vases, as small clay models, and as carved images on stone. Since this study focuses on the specific subject of ship-carvings/graffiti and its accessibility, it is necessary to reconsider the notion of whether the engravings were only for mariners.

Aaron Brody states that: “*The dangers of navigating on the Mediterranean and the seeming whimsy of its winds and tides generated religious needs of seafarers that were not shared by members of society who never left dry land*”<sup>6</sup> However, the question is whether the archaeological record can offer us another picture than that of a purely mariner cult. By looking at the contextual placement of the images, is

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1. Frost 1985, 281.

2. Brody 1998.

3. For seafarers’ religion see Brody 2008.

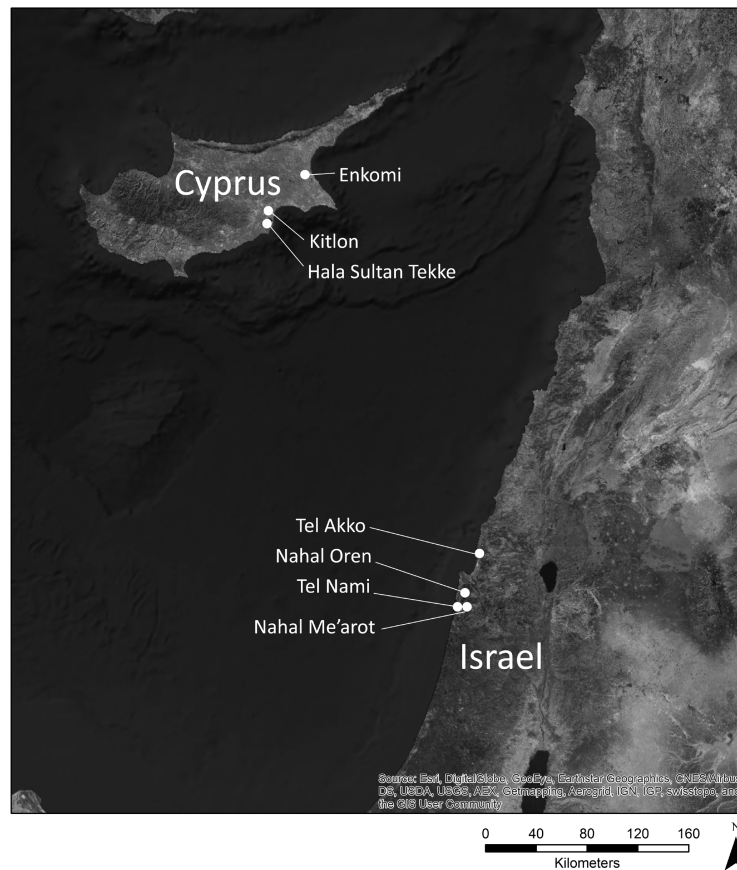
4. Bash and Artzy 1983, 322; Artzy 2003, 244.

5. Brody 2008, 444.

6. Brody 2008, 444.



it possible to discuss whether the images were accessible to non-mariners within the society? Ships in the form of carvings can be seen in prehistoric sanctuaries as well as in much later periods. A plethora of these images are also seen on Christian churches.<sup>7</sup> The sacred value of the ship is thus rooted to what seems to be a sacral tradition. From this point of view, is the idea that the maritime carvings were only associated with mariners' religious practice due to this long-lived tradition, and consequently, our preconceived notions? Furthermore, do we have evidence to outline alternative settings concerning accessibility to the maritime images? In order to elucidate these issues, a number of sites showing maritime engravings from Cyprus, the Levantine area, and Scandinavia will be dealt with.



**Fig. 1:** Map over the sites with maritime engravings mentioned in the text (map revised by Gülbin Kulbay).

7. Basch and Artzy 1985, 322.

## *Cyprus*

### *Kition*

Kition was one of eight major coastal towns on Cyprus during the Late Bronze Age. Today one finds the remains of ancient Kition below the modern town structure of Larnaca (c. 2-4m). The town was fortified and *may* have had an inner harbour.<sup>8</sup> The archaeological data presents a settlement filled with workshops (copper workshops for instance) and temples. Particularly noteworthy is the relationship between copper production and religion on Cyprus, a hypothesis based on the close spatial relationship between bronze-working facilities and religious structures.<sup>9</sup>

### *The anchors at Kition*

There are two temenos and five temples at Kition. Temples 2 and 3 belong to the LCII period: temple 2 was reused in LCIII forming one unit with temple 1, while temple 4 and 5 constitute another sanctuary unit.<sup>10</sup> It is noticeable that all of the temples (with the exception of temple 3 which was small and damaged), as well as the temenos, contained a number of stone-anchors that were used as part of the building construction; a fact of great interest to this study.

The walls of temple 4 (in area II) contained anchors with incisions: find no. 5130, 5131 and 5140. This was also evident in temple 2: find no. 2618. Some of these incisions have been interpreted as arrows, but the marks seem to display the part where the oars were placed in the vessels. It is interesting that these anchors all lack use-marks which tells us that they were never used at sea.<sup>11</sup> Following Honor Frost, no temple anchor shows signs of wear<sup>12</sup> which suggests their votive significance.<sup>13</sup> The temple-anchors have had cupules cut into their top surface, rendering rough-hewn backs (i.e. the downwards facing side was not intended to be seen) as well as fresh chisel cuts and unfinished piercing sets. All this suggests that these temple anchors had been made *ex-votos*.<sup>14</sup> The intrinsic religious meaning of placing stone anchors in temple-walls should perhaps be put in relation to the fact that they were also deposited in tombs.<sup>15</sup> Since the anchors

8. Demas 1985.

9. Knapp 1986.

10. Karageorghis 1985, 253.

11. Frost 1985, 282.

12. Frost 1985, 282.

13. Frost 1985, 290.

14. Frost 1985, 284.

15. Frost 1985, 281.

lack use-marks, it is possible that they were placed in a ritual environment in order to integrate a maritime feature as a complement to the religious contexts.

#### *Ship graffiti at Kition*

There are additional examples of maritime practice associated with a seafaring cult at Kition. Ashlar blocks, rendering numerous graffiti of ships, were found in the southern wall of a temple with two or three additional inscriptions found on blocks from the altar of temple 4. Since the blocks are found within structures of religious association, the temples are suggested to have been dedicated to a deity who protected navigation.<sup>16</sup> The contextual placement of these images, in relation to the site's geographical position in the bay, is an additional factor strengthening the possibility of finding "*mariners' influence on the cult*".<sup>17</sup> Their sacral association located in a temple area is hard to question.

#### *Ship graffiti in Temple 1, Area II and Temple 4*

Nineteen engraved ships are depicted on the orthostat of the southern wall of temple 1.<sup>18</sup> The wall consists of eight ashlar blocks, each of which measure approximately 1.5 x 3m.<sup>19</sup> The wall has been exposed to severe weathering which has unfortunately given rise to a range of interpretations when it comes to reading the images.<sup>20</sup>

One of the images in temple 1 is ship no. 13 (see Fig. 2a-c) which is currently interpreted as a long boat<sup>21</sup> or perhaps a ram carrier long ship.<sup>22</sup> Looking at the picture there seems to be a circular cavity within the carvings (see Fig. 2a). There are examples in Scandinavia of ram carrier long ships which contain a cup mark that has been interpreted as an eye. Following Aaron Brody, the eye, placed at the ship's prow, could guide the vessel and ward off harm.<sup>23</sup>

16. Basch and Artzy 1985, 323.

17. Basch and Artzy 1985, 323.

18. Basch and Artzy 1985, 324; Wachmann 2009, 147.

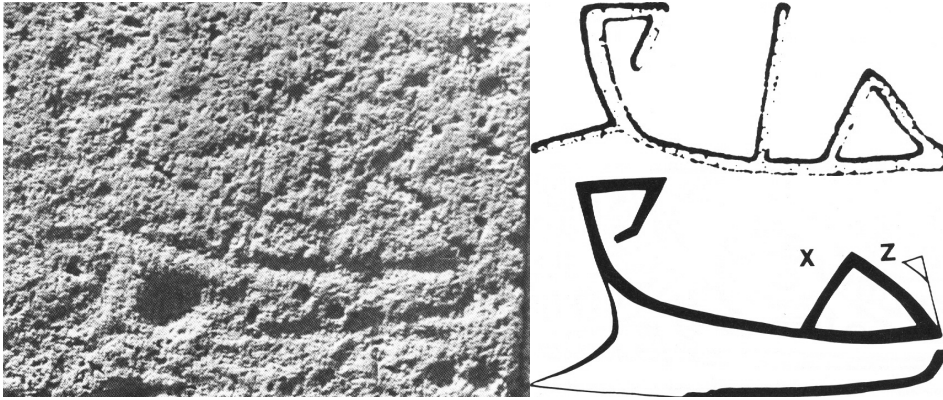
19. Westerberg 1983, 17.

20. Basch and Artzy 1985, 324.

21. Artzy 2003, 238.

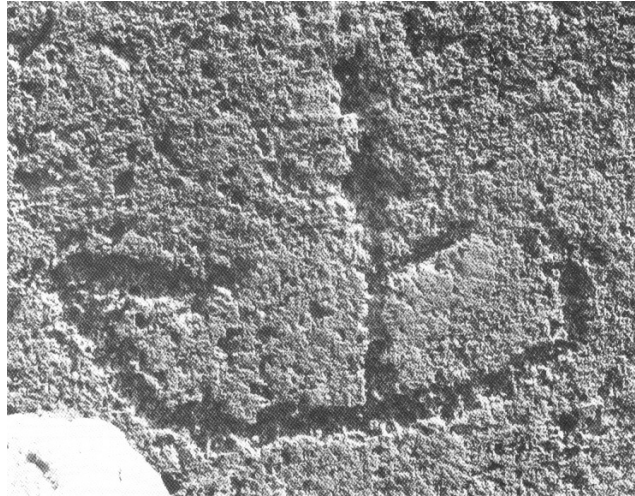
22. Basch and Artzy 1985, 328.

23. Brody 2008, 448.



**Fig. 2a, b and c:** From the left ship graffiti no. 13, temple 1, drawing of ship and alternative “reading” of the motif (after Artzy and Basch 1985).

The maritime engravings in temple 4 are found on the two vertical limestone slabs which make up the altar or table of offerings (see Fig. 3). A seafaring cult is suggested due to the numerous finds of anchors in the same area, possibly with the temple dedicated, as mentioned, to a deity who protected navigation.<sup>24</sup> Some of the ships, or more precisely the “round ship” from Kition, are linked to the Tel Akko graffiti in Northern Israel which is suggested to be of Sea People origin.<sup>25</sup> The same type can also be labelled as a “fan type” boat.<sup>26</sup>



**Fig. 3:** Ship on altar (after Artzy and Basch 1985).

24. Basch and Artzy 1985, 323.

25. Wachsmann 2009, 148.

26. Artzy 2003, 232.

*Miscellaneous traces of cult activity*

In the temple area at Kition, among anchors and engraved ashlar blocks, there is material evidence associated with opium. For instance, one ivory pipe, no. 4267, found in and associated with temple 4, is suggested to have been smoked in temple 5. The last suggestion is strengthened by the presence of a cylindrical vase, no. 4219,<sup>27</sup> which has parallels with the sanctuary of the goddess of Gazi in Crete.<sup>28</sup> It is also believed that the twin temples 4 and 5 were dedicated to divinities connected with fertility. One ivory plaque, no. 4252, found in temple 4, also has an association to fertility since it depicts Bes – the god who helps women in pregnancy. Vassos Karageorghis raises the question of whether the drug was only used as a tranquiliser or if it was used in combination in order to “*create a mood of euphoria.*”<sup>29</sup> The association between opium and pregnant women is an unpleasant thought in my opinion, and hopefully wrong since there is no need to make this association given that pregnant women seldom need drugs during pregnancy, but they can of course be useful when a woman is in labour. In this case a temple is most probably, but conclusively, the wrong arena for drug use. Bearing in mind that although the god Bes was mainly the protector of households and in particular mothers and children, he was also a symbol for music, dance and sexual pleasure. These activities are perhaps more naturally connected with opium use due to its relaxing quality. The temple area was accordingly probably not only for mariners as the artefacts imply it was also open to others – perhaps also women.

*Hala Sultan Tekke*

The closest neighbouring settlement to Kition is Hala Sultan Tekke. The geographical proximity of Hala Sultan Tekke (about three kilometres), as well as to the many harbour towns which prospered around the Larnaca Bay during the Late Bronze Age e.g. Pyla, Arpera and Livadhi, might indicate some kind of commercial team-work between these sites. This hypothesis is based on a second possibility; that they shared the natural resources of the region, e.g. copper, salt and access to land. This in turn supports the idea of organized trade in the area.<sup>30</sup>

27. Demas 1985, 131.

28. A figure of a “goddess of narcotic” (c. 1300 BC) was found in the sanctuary of Gazi. Source: Wikipedia. Another name for this Minoan goddess is “goddess of poppies, patronage of healing.” She wears a crown (or hairpins) displaying three standing poppy capsules. This was found in connection with a simple smoking apparatus, i.e. a cylindrical vessel.

29. Karageorghis 1985, 329-333; Karageorghis and Demas 1975, 259.

30. Karageorghis and Demas 1985, 3.



The town shows strong evidence for commercial links with many other regions in the Mediterranean area. Hala Sultan Tekke was a wealthy harbour town during the Bronze Age – a prosperity that may be related to its location. The Salt Lake we can see from the site today was once a lagoon that opened out to the sea giving the adjacent settlement the benefit of the largest natural harbour in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Focusing on the topic of engravings, or graffiti for that matter, there are also examples at Hala Sultan Tekke, however, these are not represented in the temple areas at the site; they are instead located in contexts interpreted as living-areas.

#### *Ship graffiti in Room 4, Area 22*

Area 22 is located in the most southern part of the excavated area of the site. One ashlar block with maritime connotations was found in room 4, N4014 (see Fig. 4). The ashlar block depicts a man with a pointed cap and a spear in his outstretched hand who is standing in a boat with a high prow.



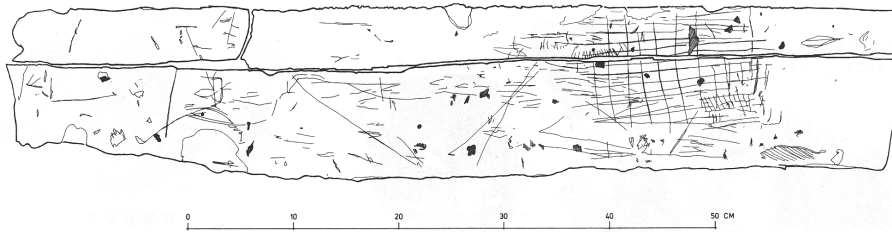
**Fig. 4:** Detail of graffiti on N 4014. The image is a part of a larger block, see Fig. 4 (courtesy of Öbrink 1979).

The slab was lying on its narrow, incised long side when it was found and was not *in situ*.<sup>31</sup> The incised ashlar block was found close to another block, F6079 (without incisions), which was also resting on one of its narrow long sides; this block was *in situ* however. It seems reasonable to suggest that the position of N4014 may have had a similar position to F6079. The blocks could have served as pillars or aniconic stones near the entrance or gate, as suggested by Ulla Öbrink.<sup>32</sup> If they were, then they consequently constitute markers of an entrance into an area of perhaps maritime importance.

The original position of the two ashlar blocks in the room is not self-sufficient; they were surrounded by a wall-structure. It has not been determined whether they were vertically or horizontally integrated. The image on N 4014 is best seen from a horizontal orientation which may also indicate the original horizontal positioning of the slab (see Fig. 5).

31. Öbrink 1979, 5.

32. Öbrink 1979, IV.



**Fig. 5:** Ashlar block N 4014. The man with a spear in his hand who is standing in a boat (detail on Fig.3) can be seen in the first left quarter of the block (courtesy of Öbrink 1979).

It is also possible that the block was deposited in the way it was found in order to hide the incisions that perhaps gave a divine or cultural status. If this is in fact the case, then it is *the hidden presence of a maritime image* that is the most interesting fact - not its actual physical position. In the following text a similar hidden motif will be discussed. It was rendered on another slab, F 1093 in area 8, and may provide evidence towards this ritual practice.

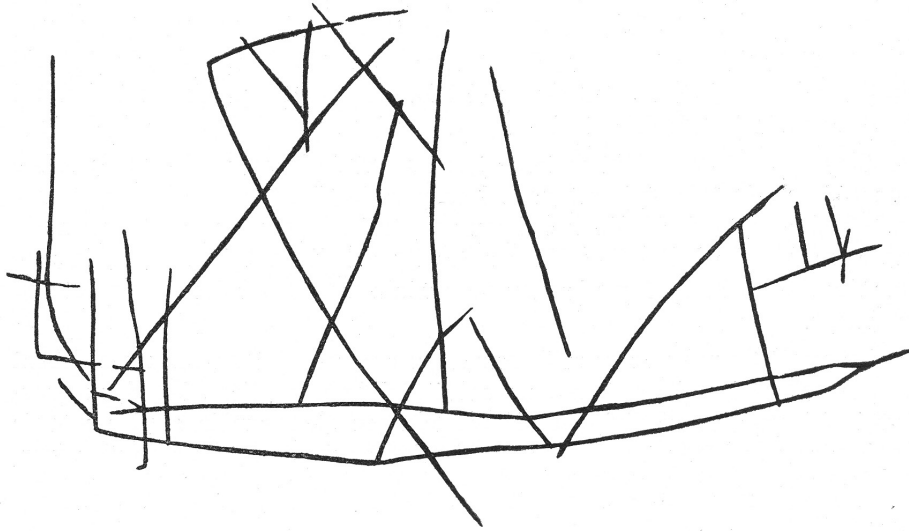
There are some researchers within the Scandinavian archaeology of rock carvings who frequently connect the images to ideological and cosmological aspects.<sup>33</sup> Following Kristian Kristiansen “...*the placing of settlement, barrows, cemeteries, sanctuaries or rock art can be understood as meaningful in relation to the cosmological and religious order of life.*”<sup>34</sup> The images on N 4014 may connect to ideological or cosmological considerations, but it could just as well connect to more specific, practical aspects like maritime trade or the fishing industry. Both are reckless enterprises that require a great deal of care – before and after an excursion. The presence of a maritime image within a household may offer a closer relation between the members of the household(s) in area 22, and perhaps the sharing of a social practice that some of the household members may have been a part of. The possibility that room 4 accommodated fishermen may be strengthened by the 34 drilled net-weights found in the same room. From this point of view the consideration made by Aaron Brody about the protective spirit the ships were imbued with, as well as the sacred space procured by its very presence, seems to be a reasonable assumption for room 4.

The images on N4014 (see Fig. 4) are paralleled by Enkomi-Alasia (see Fig. 6). This specific image is discussed by Lionel Casson who considers it to reproduce “*every feature of the Syros ships down to the projection at the stern. It also includes a sail – presumably the mast was stepped and sail stowed away in*

33. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005; Fredell 2003.

34. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 135.

*all the other representations – which is shown bellying toward the high end.*<sup>35</sup> The graffiti is damaged, particularly on the upper part of the image. It is hard to tell whether the ship was a warship under sail in the Helladic tradition, or an Aegean long ship – which has never been seen with a mast before.<sup>36</sup>



**Fig. 6:** *Graffiti from Enkomi 1200-1100 BC (after Schaeffer 1952, fig 38).*

The scene depicted on slab N4014 (Fig. 4), may have a second parallel on another stone slab from a Late Bronze Age building in the Canaanite city Lachish, in the southern part of modern Israel.<sup>37</sup> Like in Kition, a temple has also been located in Lachish which belonged to the Late Bronze Age period.<sup>38</sup> In 1975 two large hewn slabs were found showing a series of ancient interwoven graffiti. The central image rendered the head and upper torso of a deity armed with a lance. Similar to the man with the pointed cap found on the block from Tekke (N 4014), the god is depicted with a long beard and large eyes. However, it is the conical

35. Casson 1995, 31.

36. Wachsmann 2009, 143.

37. Öbrink (1979, 17) referring to the parallel in C. Schaeffer, *Enkomi-Alasia*, Paris 1952: 102, fig. 38, pl. X. (cf. D. Ussishkin, Lachish renewed archaeological excavations, Expedition 20:4, 1978: 20.22).

38. Christa Clamer and David Ussishkin 1977, in *The American School of Oriental Research. Source Biblical Archaeologist* vol. 40:2, May 1977. A Canaanite temple in Tell Lachish, 71-77.



cap he is wearing<sup>39</sup> that may be comparable with the graffiti from Hala Sultan Tekke.<sup>40</sup> Lachish, like many other sites, was destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Age<sup>41</sup>— just like Hala Sultan Tekke.

Parallels within the site are difficult to find, but one other ashlar slab F1291, in the nearby area 8, has chiselled marks on its narrow side.<sup>42</sup> The marks may represent the *wavy* lines of the sea. Perhaps the most important aspect for making the maritime association is the contextual circumstances; the slab was found close to a stone anchor (F1254). A second parallel from Tekke is F 1093, also found in area 8.<sup>43</sup> This block has a number of circular cavities and regular *undulating* chiselled grooves. According to Gunnel Hult the marks are “...*difficult to explain [...] purely as the marks of quarrying tools. If they were made for some ritual purpose, this must be in connection with a secondary use of the stone, since the other sides, except one long narrow side, are well dressed and very smooth and would rather have been meant to be visible.*”<sup>44</sup> It was found with the cavities turned downwards – they were hidden just like the slab in room 4, area 22. There are parallels for this practice in Scandinavian contexts. Some burials contain stones with cup-marks, deposited with the cup-marks upside down. There are also examples of burials with figurative motifs hidden inside the grave. This phenomenon is also detectable in the Israeli grave context of burial cave 557 at Maresha. The ships found here are of later date e.g. the Hellenistic period.<sup>45</sup> Hidden maritime associations are probably an important aspect to highlight. In Scandinavian contexts there are ship-burials from the Early Bronze Age *c.* 1300-1100 BC which were constructed underground, hence avoiding exposure. In later periods the monuments were instead much more available in open terrain. The function of the ship as a symbol is thus expressed in two different social contexts<sup>46</sup> where the social expression seems to be linked to a specific period.

Other parallels can be traced to Enkomi- Alasia and to Lachish<sup>47</sup> but also to Kition.<sup>48</sup> At Kition, however, the ashlar blocks rendering numerous graffiti of ships were found in the south wall of temple 1 with some two or three additional

39. Clamer and Ussishkin 1977, 76.

40. See also Öbrink 1979, 17.

41. Clamer and Ussishkin 1977, 71.

42. Hult 1981, 16, and fig. 134.

43. Hult 1978, 4, fig 24.

44. Hult 1978, 4.

45. Artzy 2011.

46. Cf. Artelius in Streiffert Eikeland and Miller 2013.

47. Öbrink 1979, 17.

48. Begg 2004; Karageorghis and Demas 1985.

found on blocks of the altar in temple 4. The religious or ceremonial contexts for this maritime type of images connected to Kition may also give the incised ashlar block in room 4 another intrinsic meaning than the ordinary household perspective. Although room 4 seems to constitute a higher level of social complexity compared to many other rooms in area 22 due to the variability of the material culture, it may still be interpreted as a household unit. The maritime incisions in this specific area connect with the maritime activity within the harbour site. The incised image N4014, interpreted by Öbrink as a man with a pointed cap and a spear in his outstretched hand who is standing in a boat with a high prow, may here be given associations to maritime religious or ceremonial practices. In a recent article Aaron Brody discussed the protective spirit the ships were imbued with as well as the sacredness they procured by their very presence.<sup>49</sup> Öbrink also speculates on the meaning of the blocks. She raises the possibility of them to being stelae (since N 4014 has a rounded top) or aniconic representations of divinities.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Ship graffiti in Room 10, Area 22*

Room 10 is an additional room within area 22 in which ashlar blocks, depicting maritime images, were found. The graffiti motif, rendered on the intact long side of the ashlar block N 4007 (see Fig. 7), shows part of a roughly drawn ship.<sup>51</sup>

The best preserved part of the image depicts the upper part of the prow. Just like the block in room 4 and the block in area 8, the image on N 4007 (Fig. 7) was found with the motif turned upside down.

At the edge of one narrow long side, a semi-circular depression surrounded by a worn area, could be seen. The block also had four cavities which were irregularly placed, yet represented on all four long sides. They have been interpreted as mortises (?)<sup>52</sup>

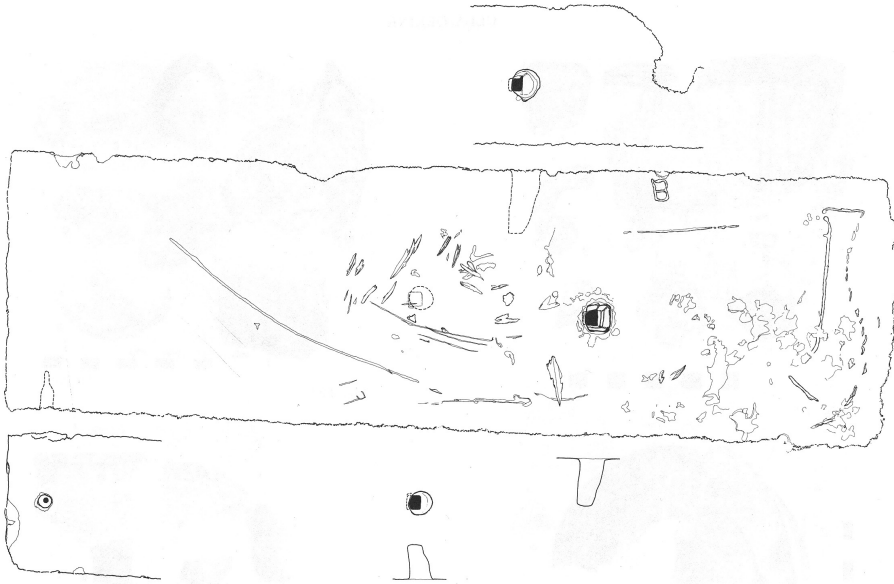
Parallels for the prow on N4007 can be found on a relief in Babylonian that depicts the Phoenicians delivering cedar from Lebanon. Important circumstances in this room are the high representation of Canaanite pottery and the ashlar block with an image that may be connected to Canaanite identity. The question raised is whether this is material evidence of a Canaanite household? Without any connection to the many examples of Canaanite pottery, but simply looking at the

49. Brody 2008.

50. Öbrink 1979, IV.

51. Öbrink 1979, 16.

52. Öbrink 1979, 16f.



**Fig. 7:** *Ashlar block N 4007. At the right side of the block the upper part of the prow is rendered (after Öbrink 1979).*

iconography, Shelley Wachsmann suggests the graffiti on the ashlar block N4007 displays a Syro-Canaanite ship.<sup>53</sup>

Room 10 was also the only room that contained sherds of the highly unusual ware of Late Minoan oat meal fabric. Of the 111 sherds found in area 22, 100 were found in room 10 and formed a stirrup (?) jug of LC III1A date.<sup>54</sup>

### ***The Carmel Ridge, Northern Israel***

The Late Bronze Age Canaanite settlement of Lachish, modern Israel, was previously shown to as a link between the maritime symbols at Hala Sultan Tekke and the Levantine area. The following text will exemplify the existence and location of maritime rock carvings among some coastal sites at the Carmel Mountain in Northern Israel.

53. Wachsmann 2009, 49f.

54. Öbrink 1979, 42.

### *Tel Akko*

Tel Akko is situated in the northern part of the Israeli coast. The site was situated in a considerably sized fertile agricultural hinterland, but above all it was a prospering harbour town. Geological data shows that the site was surrounded by water on the north-west, west and south. An estuary could easily reach the site from the sea.

Tel Akko had an advantageous location since it lay at the intersection of maritime and terrestrial routes that encouraged trade and traders to the site which functioned as the administrative and trading centre for Southern Syria, Poenicia and Eretz-Israel.<sup>55</sup> Its importance is demonstrated in the Amarna letters in which Akko is mentioned at least 13 times.<sup>56</sup> From the Middle Bronze II, Tel Akko was continuously inhabited until the Hellenistic period.<sup>57</sup> The ancient structures of Akko were situated 10-12 meters above the present shoreline.<sup>58</sup>

### *Area H*

Within the settlement, on the northern rampart (Area H), a unique cultic area was detected.<sup>59</sup> A small altar with carvings (ca 24 x 26 x 30cm) was discovered (see Fig. 8) that depicts a scene representing four ships. It is suggested that it would have been portable and initially used on board a ship but eventually ended up at the site of Tel Akko where it was later unearthed. The engraving – composed of a mixture of techniques including grooving and drilling along plain incisions - depicts four boats of the so called “fan type” similar to the example that was visible on the outer wall of temple 1 and 4 at Kition.<sup>60</sup> The fan type boat has a prow which bends inwards. The Akko graffiti is linked to Aegean ship representations.<sup>61</sup> According to Artzy, the fan on the altar, was “... possibly exaggerated to accentuate its ritual importance. It served as a way of identifying the group that built the ships and those who engraved them on this altar and on the altar and wall at Kition.”<sup>62</sup>

On the altar, mixed with ash, three quartz stones (about the size of an orange) were deposited. Two of them were engraved: on one of the stones a boat engraving

55. Beeri 2008.

56. Artzy 2006, 50.

57. Artzy 2006, 60; Artzy and Beeri 2010.

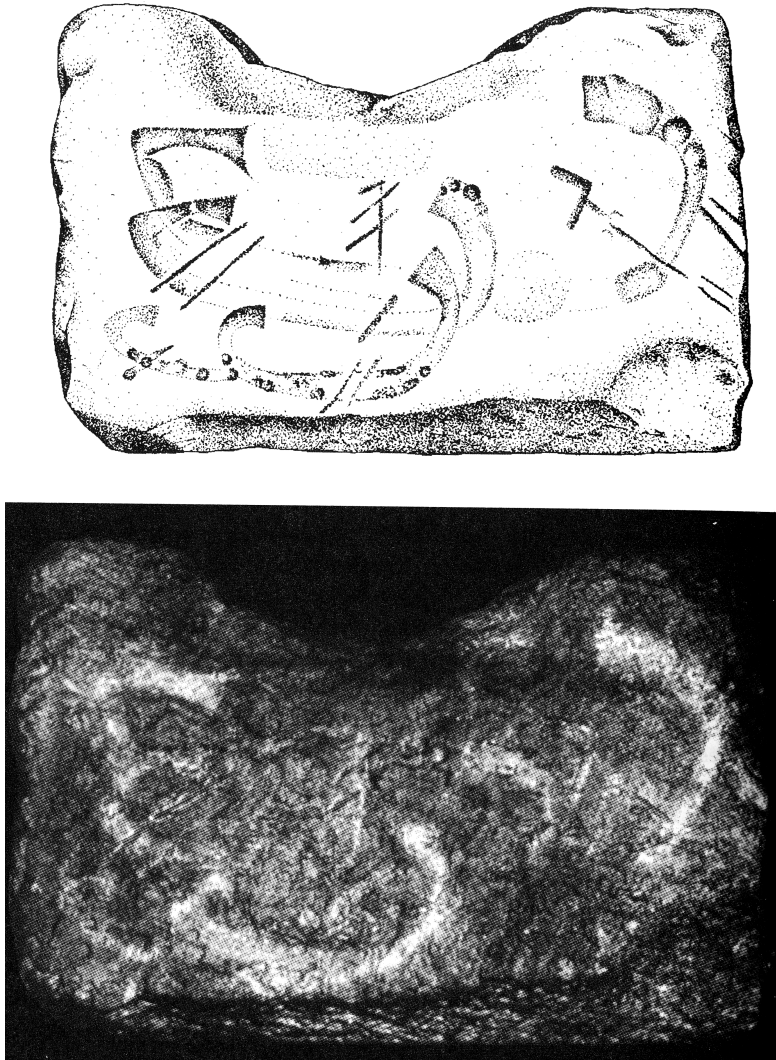
58. Raban 1991, 138.

59. Artzy and Beeri 2010, 18.

60. Artzy 2003, 232; Artzy 1987, 76f.

61. Wachsmann 2009, 203.

62. Artzy 1987, 77f.



**Fig. 8:** *The engraved ships on the Akko altar (courtesy of Artzy).*

was found. The image is less than 2 cm in width, showing a boat with everted stempost.<sup>63</sup> Three figures can be seen on board the boat with a dolphin (or a tuna) swimming below it.<sup>64</sup> A dolphin is depicted on the other stone.<sup>65</sup>

63. Artzy 2003, 239.

64. Artzy and Beeri 2010, 18; lecture given by Michal Artzy 2010.02.11.

65. Artzy 2007, 185; Artzy and Beeri 2010, 18.





**Fig. 9:** *Tel Akko, Area H. Pottery in situ, associated with the altar (courtesy of Artzy).*

The altar was found on the tell itself within the occupation-area designated as area H, Square L-7, and dated to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> early 12<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>66</sup> In the earliest habitation-area, a pit filled with an abundance of imported pottery, especially from Cyprus, was found. The altar, which was connected by a row of stones to a partially lined *bothros*, was found approximately 5 meters from the pit (see Fig. 9). There are no architectural elements that associate with the altar, but it is possible that the altar may have been covered with some type of temporary construction.<sup>67</sup> It is also likely that the *bothros* was once roofed.<sup>68</sup> The ceramic material confirms that Tel Akko was an active maritime trading partner, particularly with Cyprus.<sup>69</sup>

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66. Artzy 1987, 75.

67. Artzy 2007, 184f.

68. Artzy 2006, 117; Artzy and Beeri 2010, 18.

69. Artzy and Beeri 2010, 18.

*Tel Nami and Nahal Ha-Mearot*

The anchorage settlement Tel Nami is located on the southern coast of Carmel. Nami, an international maritime trading center, was initially occupied in the Middle Bronze Age IIA period (c. 13<sup>th</sup> century BC), as well as in the final part of the Late Bronze IIb period.<sup>70</sup> The site is located ca 3-4 km west from where Nahal Me'arot - the river on which Nami was dependent – leaves the Carmel Ridge. Despite the lack of evidence of an anchorage, Nami should somehow be connected to the outlet of the river.<sup>71</sup> Nahal ha-Mearot is also the area where most of the engravings have been found (see Fig. 10 and Fig. 11).<sup>72</sup> Numerous boat representations were discovered here during a regional survey by Michal Artzy and her team.

When approaching Nami from the sea, ancient mariners must have used navigational landmarks to be able to accomplish a safe anchorage. One of the landmarks in the area was most probably the cavity in the Carmel Mountain carved out by the Mearot River rising from the limestone rock. The location of Nahal ha-Me'arot must have stood out to travellers at sea and it is likely that the site once served as a landfall. The environment of the site is described as “(t)he southern cliff drops sharply in an almost straight edge while in the northern area, there is a triangular form which can best be described as a pyramid-shaped rock. The complete composition, which from afar looks much like a crevice, might have lent the name *mgr* (*Mugar*), a Semitic word meaning ‘cave’, to Nami.”<sup>73</sup> Graffiti of boats are cut onto the cliffs. Looking at the contextual placement of the engraved ships, one finds one on the outcrop of rocks in Nahal ha-Me'arot north of the ‘pyramid’. This carving is of particular interest due to its size and the depth of the carving.<sup>74</sup> The image rendering of an Aegean longboat finds parallels in a number of 1200 BC contexts.<sup>75</sup>

An additional carving is found on the pyramid-shaped rock on the northern bank of the Nahal ha-Me'arot crevice (see Fig. 12). The carving, only 6 cm in length, shows a mast, a yard and a rolled sail. The prow may render the head of a bird or an animal. This, and many other carvings on this rock, face the sea. One boat-carving depicts a mast, yard and a furled sail.<sup>76</sup> On the rock of the exit of the Mearot River, there are ex voto incisions of a boat. These are interpreted as bench-marks for approaching mariners.<sup>77</sup>

70. Artzy 1997, 7; Artzy 2003, 244; Artzy 2007, 13.

71. Artzy personal comment.

72. Artzy 2003, 244.

73. Artzy 2003, 234.

74. Artzy 2003, 234.

75. Artzy 2003, 237.

76. Artzy 2003, 241.

77. Artzy 2010.





**Fig. 10:** Entrance to the Nahal Me'arot. The circle encloses the concentration of the ship engravings (courtesy of Artzy).



**Fig. 11:** Nahal Me'arot the area of ship graffiti. The circle encloses the concentration of the ship engravings (courtesy of Artzy).



The fan type boat is also found in other areas like Nahal ha-Me'arot, located on the western side of the Carmel Ridge. Next to Nahal ha-Me'arot are the Carmel Caves, which have been inhabited in various prehistoric and historic periods. Engravings from Epipaleolithic and Neolithic periods are frequent, however, few figurative engravings have been distinguished from these early periods.<sup>78</sup>

In 1967 E. Wreschner and M. W. Prausnitz discovered one ship graffiti near the top of the valley's northern bluff.<sup>79</sup> According to Artzy:

“it is likely that these engravings were made by mariners, familiar with other parts of the eastern Mediterranean who inscribed the images of their trade on the landmark to which they owed their safe arrival, a form of ex-voto practice, or a terrestrial bench mark by the mariners to indicate a proposed route used as a supplementary path connecting the Carmel coast and the hinterland.”<sup>80</sup>



**Fig. 12:** *Fan type boat on cliff in open terrain, Nahal Me'arot (photo M. Artzy).*

### *Nahal Oren*

Nahal Oren is a large valley located less than 4 kilometres west of Nahal ha-Me'arot. On the lowest slopes of the Carmel Ridge, on the northern bank of Nahal Oren, there is a carving depicting a boat. The image finds parallels in the carving from Nahal ha-Me'arot depicting a prow with an animal or bird.<sup>81</sup> Like the carving at Nahal ha-Me'arot, this example also faces the western sea.<sup>82</sup>

78. Wreschner 1971.

79. Wachsmann 2009, 202.

80. Artzy 1997, 8f.

81. Artzy 2003, 241.

82. Artzy 2003, 242.

### ***Bohuslän, The Swedish West Coast***

#### *Tanum*

The tradition of engraving boats can be traced back to the Mesolithic period. Maritime carvings on blocks are evident in a Norwegian context as early as 8000-4000 BC and are consequently the oldest in the world.<sup>83</sup> Although we have some early examples of this tradition, it does not advance in number until the later periods. Looking at the Nordic status it is clear that Bohuslän, on the Swedish west coast, is the richest rock carving area: 10 000 ship engravings have been located.<sup>84</sup> In a European perspective only the Italian site Valca Monica is comparable in number. This alpine location matches every Nordic figurative carving, with the exception of ship graffiti. The lack of ship representations may naturally question the cosmological meaning of the ship as a global phenomenon, or for that matter, a transformer of knowledge.

The ship, often in combination with other figurative images, is a central motive on the rock panels in Bohuslän. A discussion concerning the maritime significance of the area could therefore be of relevance. A great amount of research has been invested in these depictions, mainly focusing on the symbolism. An alternative approach has been outlined by Johan Ling who studies Bronze Age shore displacement. By examining the shorelines of the Bronze Age in relation to the ship motifs, he has concluded that 65-70% of the carvings in Tanum, Northern Bohuslän, were situated close to the Bronze Age shoreline.<sup>85</sup> Independent of their geographical placement in the landscape, the areas with rock carvings in Bohuslän are the most concentrated in Europe, but furthermore, they are also the areas with the most complex iconography. The carvings on the rocks of Bohuslän are additionally considered to be the most eminent for drawing parallels to iconographic comparisons and the symbology of the Eastern Mediterranean<sup>86</sup> due to the many similar features in the iconography, chronological correspondence, and the interaction and trade of metals<sup>87</sup> – directly or indirectly – between these areas. Due to these factors, maritime engravings from Bohuslän, and the discussions of these engravings, will be adopted in the following discussion as an analytical tool and a door opener to see the ship engravings from the Eastern Mediterranean in another perspective.

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83. Persson 2013, 166.

84. Hygen and Bengtsson 1999, 92.

85. Ling 2008, 4.

86. Olsson 1999, 146f.

87. According to Johan Ling (*et al.* 2014), the lead isotopic analyses of metal items from Scandinavian contexts disclose Cyprus as one of the major areas that delivered copper to the Scandinavian area during the Bronze Age.

### ***Mediterranean and Bohuslän***

#### *Accessibility to the maritime carvings – global contextual variety*

It can therefore be established that the Mediterranean and Scandinavian ship-carvings are depicted in a plethora of contextual environments. In order to highlight the circumstances concerning the location of the Mediterranean carvings it is important to view them in a broad perspective. In this case they will be discussed and compared in relation to the contextual accessibility the Scandinavian carvings seem to have had.

The range of motifs on rock carvings is considerable in Scandinavia, but the most frequent figurative motives are the ship-representations. According to Kristiansen and Larsson, Scandinavian ship-images from the early Nordic Bronze Age correlate in form and construction with the Mediterranean ships. The maritime resemblances suggest that they are the result of direct long distance contact in which the Nordic chiefs were personally involved.<sup>88</sup> Most of the ships have a coastal position that may indicate the emergence of maritime chiefdoms.<sup>89</sup> The ships demonstrate the sea voyagers – the members of the coastal network and, following Kristiansen, “*visiting chiefs would often carve a ship in their local style (which thus became a foreign ship type) to mark their visit, and by marking these “foreign” ship types and their area of origin on a map a network of long distance sea journeys can be reconstructed.*” Through an expanding maritime network, a new ideology, cosmology and skilled craft were spread and adopted throughout Southern Scandinavia. The new cosmological approach included the ship as a symbol, as a transmitter and a transformer of knowledge.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, we are talking about a cosmological space or room.

A central question to consider is who had access to the carvings, made by either visiting chiefs or mobile mariners, and the possible intrinsic cosmological space they form a part of? Nordic rock art may be considered to be more profound than, for instance, the Minoan frescos, since the northern images have been cut in the rock in open terrain, and not placed on the interior walls of temples, sanctuaries or palaces,<sup>91</sup> but is it a fact that the Swedish rock art panels were meant to be accessible, or at least visible, for the public? Take for instance the monumental panels in the heritage area at Vitlycke in Bohuslän, or the Himmelstalund in Östergötland. These are places where thousands of people could have viewed the varied nature of the figurative carvings as well as participated in the religious

88. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 208.

89. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 198; Ling *et al.* 2014.

90. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 198f.

91. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 335.

performances executed by priests or chieftains. Since many of the images are interpreted as gods, a worship of the deities could also have been accomplished.<sup>92</sup> Although the rock panels seem to be easily assessable in the landscape of today, it is not necessarily the case that members of Bronze Age society were unimpeded or given free access to the cosmological space. Whether the rock panels were exposed in opened or closed areas is not yet certain. There may be evidence of fencing around one of the rock panels in Norway with a line of stones. A large number of sherds have been found between the line and the panel indicating ritual activity inside the “fenced area”. This quite unique example indicates that the area might have been closed to the public.<sup>93</sup> In general, further evidence of restrictions in relation to the Nordic carvings, are not established.

Looking at the Mediterranean area, there seems to have been a quite restricted process associated with deities rendered on wall paintings or rock reliefs. Only kings, queens, priests, priestesses, nobles or other elite persons were involved in these ceremonies.<sup>94</sup> Looking at the general picture of the rock art in Bohuslän, most of the panels have:

“...an open, communicative, coastal location. Moreover, the general, innovative and mobile conduct of the rock art does not agree with the normative ideologies connected with Bronze Age elites (cf. Kristiansen & Larsson 2005). In this respect the rock art panels do not seem to provide the spatial, expressive or social conduct or criteria of control or privacy that chiefly agency demands. They seem to reflect ‘public’ rather than ‘private’ or restricted affairs.”<sup>95</sup>

Fenced areas for carvings are hardly the general picture in the Nordic area and must be treated as an exception; carvings in general cannot be associated with fencing, on the contrary, many ship representations were easy to detect from the sea and guided the seafarers, mentally and geographically, on their journey.

What about the maritime engravings in the Eastern Mediterranean region; is this genre filled with restrictions when it comes to accessibility? Looking at the examples presented here, the answer is complex. The obvious sacral contexts are evident in the case of Kition as well as in Tel Akko. Yet, Cyprus, as well as the Carmel coast, possesses maritime images that are represented in open air terrain

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92. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 335.

93. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 336.

94. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 336.

95. Cornell and Ling 2013, 262.

as well as in households. The notion of Nordic rock-art being more profound, since they are not placed on the interior walls of temples, may thus be valid for many of the maritime images in the Eastern Mediterranean as well. With knowledge of the contextual placement of the maritime images, is it therefore possible to measure accessibility or inaccessibility in temples and the landscape?

In order to highlight this issue, interpretations concerning accessibility and inaccessibility at rock art sites becomes a useful tool. One interpretation is outlined by Richard Bradley who has considered accessibility and inaccessibility at rock art sites in relation to their location and content in a study on British islands.<sup>96</sup> His criteria for accessible sites are defined by their communicative location in the landscape, meaning visible vantage points, trails and paths, but furthermore the complexity of their design and the composition of the carvings. Inaccessible sites are defined on the basis of their inaccessible location in the landscape, close to a settlement and distant from collective communicative spaces, but also by the less complex composition and content of the images.<sup>97</sup> Applying the criteria of Bradley, Johan Ling concludes that in Tanum, Bohuslän, the majority of the sites displaying ship carvings seem to have been located in accessible places in this seascape, but sites with an inaccessible location and content also exist.<sup>98</sup> Ling emphasizes the importance of taking the transformation of the sea level into account, pointing to the fact that the much higher sea level during the Bronze Age connected and united several panels, and consequently, most likely made some panels more accessible. With the sea in mind, Ling develops the criteria of accessible sites being possible to reach from the sea as well as land while at the same time being visible from both the sea and the land. Inaccessible sites “*could then only have been reached, made and perceived from the sea.*”<sup>99</sup> Looking at the slopes and orientation of the carvings, however, only a minority of the panels in Tanum could have functioned as communicative signs over a wide area. To be visible from the sea the carvings must be placed vertically, or at least placed on panels with a 45 degree incline.<sup>100</sup>

Among the open air ship carvings at Carmel ridge, there are examples of images visible from land as well as the sea. In the area of Nahal Mearot, Tell Nami and Nahal Oren the ship carvings are accessible from the sea due to their vertical placement on rocks which have an incline of over 45 degrees. Furthermore, some

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96. Bradley 1997, 6.

97. Bradley 1997, 6.

98. Ling 2008, 157.

99. Ling 2008, 157.

100. Ling 2008, 156.

of the ships are rendered on important bench-marks, like that on the exit of the Mearot River.

The shore displacement process, indicating the maritime location of ship-carvings in Tanum, is naturally not an isolated phenomenon for the Scandinavian area, but includes the Mediterranean as well. The now dried-out inlet to the harbour town at Hala Sultan Tekke, as well as the ancient dock in Kition, which is today far away from the coastline, are only two of many examples showing the existence of change in the sea levels during the period between the Bronze Age and present day. An accurate shore displacement process in Cyprus or the Levant Bronze Age landscape is, to my knowledge, not fully accomplished,<sup>101</sup> but it would naturally be highly interesting to discuss these ship-carvings in relation to the varied sea levels. Although the curve of the shore displacement process in the Eastern Mediterranean area is therefore excluded in this study, a study of the accessibility of the ship-carvings is still possible through other aspects.

According to Artzy it was probably the mariners who were the artists behind the ships,<sup>102</sup> but it is not their artistry that is of interest here, it is the maritime cult that they practiced. Looking at the contextual placement of the ship graffiti at Hala Sultan Tekke, it is not farfetched to suggest that the rest of the society, or at least the relatives of the mariners, were given access to the maritime images just by being members of the same household. In this case it is perhaps appropriate to consider accessibility as well as inaccessibility since the images were probably seen by people other than mariners, but not by all members of the society. The archaeological record also does not reveal any evidence of a pure maritime cult in the rooms at Hala Sultan Tekke.

The notion of a pure masculine maritime cult can also be questioned. In the case of the temple area at Kition, a female presence can be linked to the maritime structures by the material remains. One ivory plaque, depicting Bes, was located within the area and associated with fertility. Is this an indication that men and women shared the same sanctuary? Were women allowed to participate in cult activities on a general base, or were they given access to the shrine solely because they were linked to a mariner? However possible, this is not necessarily the case. Perhaps the mariners had other concerns or other ways of expressing their concerns here than seen at other sites.

In the case of Tell Akko, area H, it is suggested that the bothros, as well as the adjacent altar, may have been roofed. Was the altar a part of a restricted cultic

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101. Holocene sea level changes have been discussed for the Israel coast in Sivan *et al.* 2001, indicating a process of another nature than for Northern Europe.

102. Artzy 2003, 233.

area in which the ship representations were hidden? Was it a restricted area for mariners only or did it include others? Could women be defined as mariners and subsequently included in the maritime sphere?

Including the altar from Akko, the obvious variety in contextual placement and accessibility of the maritime images may consequently be discussed in terms of local tradition. Within each locale a maritime iconography is manifested in different contexts, perhaps due to religious need, navigation, social tradition, professional identity or gender belonging. A blend of these factors in any specific area is naturally not excluded.

Following Michal Artzy “*It should be kept in mind that the mariners who created the carvings of the boats, whether on altars, walls or rocks, might not have been great artists, but very fully cognizant of the shapes of their own vessels and presented them and their most important elements as they intimately knew them.*”<sup>103</sup> The obvious consciousness that the mariners seem to express in the design of the maritime images opens up for the idea of a similar consciousness when it comes to finding a suitable place to carve. The *variety* of find spots of maritime engravings – in public and intimate environments - is obvious. Due to the contextual variety it is not far-fetched to propose that the placement of the engravings depends on multiple variables. Maritime religious practices of a varied nature, along with the visualization of important symbols of connectivity and mobility within the seascape, can be seen as motives for choosing different places for the engravings. It may also be relevant to include the requirement to express the different group identities of people such as chiefs, seafarers, men and women as participants of a society, as the motivation for the maritime carvings contextual variety - perhaps in combination with a time aspect.

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103. Artzy 2003, 233.



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