

THE ASHLAR WITH THE RELIEF BULL'S HEAD: THE CULT OF ZEUS / HADAD IN ANCIENT SHILOH (SAMARIA)?

SVETLANA TARKHANOVA

Department of the Treasury of the Israel Antiquities Authority
svetlanat@israntique.org.il

ABSTRACT. This article examines a unique and impressive architectural find – a monumental ashlar with the short side decorated with a relief bull's head, carved in a laconic yet forceful manner. It was revealed in secondary use in the late terrace at Tel Shiloh in 2011, near the Late Northern church. In the local and broader regional Roman tradition (Trans-Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Asia Minor, Greece, Gallia, etc.), depictions of bull's heads/skulls as part of bucrania compositions on the walls and covers of sarcophagi were common, while solitary depictions on portable altars and in Doric friezes were relatively rare. Selected parallels are presented and briefly analyzed. Specifically, in the Syro-Palestinian region (modern Israel, Lebanon, and Syria), several temples were decorated with ashlar bearing relief images, such as lions or haloed figures (Baetocaece/Hössn Suleiman, Kal'at Faqra/Qalaat Faqra, Niha/Nihata, and Nebi Safa). However, ashlar with bull's heads, similar to the one from Shiloh, have been found so far only at Castellum Tidditanorum/Tiddis in Numidia (modern Algeria). In most of the samples, the depiction of the bull's head is associated with the cults of Zeus/Jupiter and with its local personifications, like Hadad (the main center of Hadad was in ancient Aleppo, but the cult was widespread in the Land of Israel), or, more rarely, with the cult of Mithras. This led us to suppose that in the “urbanized” Roman settlement of Shiloh, the temple of Zeus/Hadad (or Mithraeum) was built. This sanctuary was of great importance to the region's paganization in the wake of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-136 CE). It reflected connections with the nearest influential cult centers at Mount Gerizim and in Aelia Capitolina devoted to Zeus/Jupiter, as well as many other more remote ones, including, of course, the broader Imperial context.

KEYWORDS: Tel Shiloh, Samaria, Paganism, relief bull's head, bucrania, decorative ashlar, sarcophagi, altars, Roman temples, cult of Zeus/Hadad, Mithraeum.

Introduction: Shiloh in Biblical and Roman periods

Tel Shiloh (Silo, Sailūn, Kh. Seilūn; Seilūn; Kh. Seilūn; Kh. Siloun, Ḥirbat as-Sailūn) is located in Samaria, 13 km southeast of modern Ariel, 4.5 km east of the ancient

Roman road connecting Jerusalem and Neapolis (*Fig. 1*)¹. It is a very well-known sacred site whose holy status was preserved for thousands of years, shifting from Biblical through Second Temple to Rabbinical Judaism, to Byzantine and Medieval Christianity, and to Early and Late Islam². In Biblical times, it was where the Ark of the Covenant stayed after the Israelites had conquered the Canaanites and until the days of Samuel, from around 1258 BCE to approximately 889 BCE (for 369 years). According to the archaeological data, the settlement existed until the destruction of the First Temple, and afterward, it was resettled only during the Second Temple period (Hellenistic-Early Roman), what is confirmed by archaeological data³.

Tel Shiloh appears in the accounts list from the Murabba'at cave (gentilic Σειλωνει)⁴. According to E. Klein, approximately a century after the Bar Kochba revolt, the site was repopulated by Pagan inhabitants from Phoenicia, Syria, and Arabia⁵. Apparently, a ritual site was established, as in some other places in the same period⁶. To date, it remains difficult to determine archaeologically whether the Pagan settlement truly existed here and, if so, what its scale, character, and appearance were. This article is devoted to the impressive and crucial architectural artifact found at Shiloh, which apparently belonged to the most important edifice of the Pagan settlement and sheds light on its cultic traditions and cultural roots.

Ashlar with the bull's head

The ashlar with the relief bull's head was revealed in secondary use within the Late Islamic terrace to the north of the Late Northern church in 2011 during the excavations of H. Hizmi and M. Haber on behalf of the Staff Officer of Archaeology–Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, Israel Antiquities Authority. The ashlar is rectangular, elongated, and monumental (*Figs. 2, 3, 4*). The relief bull's head decorates the short side of the ashlar (hidden and incorporated into the terrace in the reverse position). The location and orientation of the bull's head, along with other features of the ashlar, indicate its initial placement and use in the anticipated edifice. The bull's head was carved on the short frontal side. The lower and right sides

¹ Tsafir et al. 1994, Map Iudaea – Palaestine, Eretz Israel during the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods

² Limor 1998, 9; Schwartz, Shemesh 2019, 2.

³ Zissu 2001, 26–29; Klein 2007; 2009; Kagan 2009; Klein, Zissu 2010; Magen, Aharonovich 2012, 161, 164; Gat 2016; Raviv 2018, 75–80; Livyatan Ben-Arie, Hizmi, 2014, 121–125; Raviv, Stripling et al. 2023.

⁴ Benoit et al. 1961, 222f, no. 92 l. 5

⁵ Klein 2011, 321–322; Klein 2010.

⁶ Schwartz and Shemesh 2019, 6.

were carefully chiseled and smoothed. The rear and left sides were unfinished, and their surfaces remained uneven. On the back of the upper side, there was a recessed field and a two-stepped recessed molding intended to affix the upper ashlar, thereby strengthening the bond between the masonry rows. The ashlars of Roman monumental buildings frequently featured such recessed surfaces, ensuring wall stability in mountainous terrain. The wall rows were not strictly horizontal and could be stepped and uneven. On the lower facet of the ashlar under consideration, there are clear traces of *anathyrosis*: the edge is more prominently chiseled, and narrow, accurate claw marks are visible. The relief bull's head is carved in a blocky, laconic, and symbolic manner, deliberately omitting final refinement and detailing. The features of the head are rather general yet well recognizable, with a flat nose, widely opened eyes with tiny, dotted pupils, pointed lanceolate ears, and short, thick horns. The physiognomic features convey the impression of a furious animal. The image's style is geometric and far from realistic, and it was apparently designed for long-distance viewing at considerable height. Summarizing the technical and artistic features of the ashlar and its decoration, it can be concluded that it was placed in the right corner of the anticipated monumental building (temple, temenos enclosure?). The bull's head was oriented toward visitors and formed part of the building's frontal decoration. Over the ashlar, there was at least another row of masonry (as the upper stepped surface of the ashlar was intended to receive the upper block). The masonry technique consisted of two ashlar's facets (*opus quadratum*) (as the lateral (inner) surface of the ashlar was roughly chiseled and the external one was polished).

Bull's head in Greco-Roman art

Bucrania on sarcophagi

The depiction of the bull's head (whether living or as a bare skull) was common in Greco-Roman art. Bucrania compositions originated in the ritual practice of displaying garlanded sacrificial ox or bull heads (often skulls) on temple walls. The bucrania were used to decorate the walls of sarcophagi (numerous examples were found throughout the Mediterranean region). In local Holy Land tradition, garlanded bull's heads were frequently used to decorate the walls of Roman sarcophagi. For example, such sarcophagi were discovered in the mausolea in 'Askar in Flavia Neapolis (modern Nablus), in Siris in northern Samaria⁷, in Nesher Ramle

⁷ Magen 2009, 295-303, Figs. 7.15-7.17, 7.23-7.24. The 3D scan of the sarcophagus is available on the free online resource of the Palestine Archaeological Project, URL: <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/mausoleum-askar-92bc4379762c4ca3b47e8e5505a-f8die>, no. 5.

(presented at the open-air exhibition in KKL Givat Yeshayahu near Beit Guvrin; unpublished, *Fig. 5a*), and in Ascalon (modern Afridar, presented in the open-air museum Courtyard of Sarcophagi, *Fig. 5b*). The bull's heads on these samples held the sagging garlands between them. In contrast, on the walls of the Roman sarcophagus found in Beit Shearim, bull's heads were located within the garlands; bull's heads without garlands decorated the lateral walls of the sarcophagus's cover⁸. The blocked-out, coarsely carved bull's head, merged with the serpent's body, decorates the walls of the trough-burial, so-called Bucranium tomb, in Horvat Burgin⁹. The hybrid composition is only remotely reminiscent of Classical bucranium. In the last three samples (Nesher Ramle, Beit Shearim, and Horvat Burgin), the relief compositions are carved in a two-dimensional, schematic style, whereas in Samaria and Ashkelon, they are made in a more realistic, finer artistic manner. As it was noted: "In the eastern part of the Empire, and especially in Syrian and Nabataean art, the bucranium was associated with the god Adad/Zeus Heliopolitanus¹⁰, as a symbol of power and fertility (Cook 1914-40, 576-582, 633; Avi-Yonah 1948, 145; Glueck 1965, 205-206)".¹¹

Solitary bull's head on altars and friezes

The solitary bull's head, not festooned (as on the ashlar from Shiloh), appears on a variety of artifacts and architectural elements. Many of them are Roman portable altars or incense burners. A small Hellenistic portable cuboid incense burner with horned corners and a bull's head on one of four sides was recently found in Horvat 'Amuda¹². The locally found altar from Caesarea, now on display at the Sdot Yam

⁸ Avigad 1971, 102, Pl. XLII:1-3. Images of the sarcophagus are available on the free online resource of the Center of Jewish Art, URL: <https://cja.huji.ac.il/?mode=set&id=1681>

⁹ Zissu et al. 2013, 45-49, Fig. 11.

¹⁰ Hadad was worshipped in the ancient Mesopotamian/Syrian region as a supreme Pantheon god of storm, weather, and agriculture (also known as Ramman or Baal; Cook 1914-40: 576-582, 633; Niehr 2024). Thus, Hadad/Zeus was a syncretic deity in which the cults of the Greek and Semitic gods were fused.

¹¹ Zissu et al. 2013, 4. The depiction of the bull together with the serpent is connected to the Dionysiac mystic cult, rather than to the cult of Zeus.

¹² Haber et al. 2022, 238-239, Fig. 9.8a-b. The image of the altar is also available in free online resource – URL: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/drone-survey-reveals-ancient-temple-at-israeli-military-grounds/>

museum¹³ (*Fig. 6a*), and the altar of unknown origin in the IAA collection (unpublished; IAA number 2014-143) – each bears a bull's head on one side. In regional traditions, Roman altars with bull's heads were found in Il-Ghariyeh, Syria (one item; *Fig. 6b*¹⁴) and in Aquora, Lebanon¹⁵, dedicated to the Syrian god Hadad or Jupiter Heliopolitanus. At least three altars featuring bull's heads were identified in Kozlu, Phrygia¹⁶. These altars were reused in Late Islamic and modern houses, and all bore Greek vows to Zeus Akreinenos, indicating the presence of such a local cult. Near Kozlu, in Gürleyik, the remains of the temple of Zeus Sarnendenos have been identified¹⁷, but other epigraphic and archaeological findings suggest the spread of cults dedicated to Zeus Sarnendenos, Akreinenos, and Narenos beyond Phrygia.

Several outstanding Roman altars depicting bull's heads and whole bulls were discovered in Roman Gaul¹⁸. Among them, the most famous and most lavishly decorated is the so-called Taurobolium altar, discovered in Lugdunum (modern Lyon) in 1730 and now on display at the Museum of Gallo-Roman Civilization in Lyon (*Fig. 6c*). The finely carved bulls' heads decorate two sides of the altar, and the other two sides feature a ram's head and a curved sacrificial knife. The bull's heads are depicted similarly but not identically. Their foreheads and ears are adorned with dangling bead chains¹⁹. The altar is topped with a concave plate for collecting ritual liquids. The altar bears a Latin inscription dedicated to the Great Idaean Mother of the Gods (*Mater Deum Magna Idaea*, i.e., Cybele)²⁰. Another noteworthy altar from the same museum's collection depicts bull's and ram's heads (also with dangling

¹³ Rivka, Gendelman 2010, 35, Fig. 11. Note the stuck-out tongue hinting that the bull is slaughtered.

¹⁴ Butler 1919, 136, Ill. 114.

¹⁵ Cumont 1927, 166, Pl. XXXIX.

¹⁶ Güney 2019, 161, Fig. 10; 162, Fig. 15; 163, Fig. 18.

¹⁷ Güney 2019, 166-168.

¹⁸ Darblade-Audoin 2006.

¹⁹ Espérandieu 1907, 1737; Darblade-Audoin 2006, Nr. 337.

²⁰ *CIL* XIII, 1751. See the illustrations in open access resource on Wikimedia Commons: <https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/M074006/Taurobolic-altar-found-at-Lyons-on-the-Fourvieres-Hill-in-1704-front-and-Side-Views> (early drawing of the altar); https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taurobolium#cite_note-1 ; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taurobolic_Altar_\(Lyon\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taurobolic_Altar_(Lyon)) (modern photographs of the altar); <https://lupa.at/20117> (inscription); https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Autels_tauroboliques_de_Lyon#/media/File:Autel-Lyon-CIL-XIII-1751.jpg

bead chains), with a knife over them on one side and a Latin dedicatory inscription on the other²¹.

The aforementioned examples demonstrate the variability and distribution of depictions of the bulls' heads and skulls across Hellenistic and Roman portable artifacts (sarcophagi and altars), and their primary connection to the cult of Zeus/Jupiter and his local personifications. Beyond these, relief bulls were frequently incorporated into the architecture, for example, in the friezes. The frieze compositions often included bulls' heads, protomas, or whole figures, reflecting the actual ritual practice of displaying the sacrificed animals on the temple walls. For example, they might be found on the metopes or triglyphs of Doric friezes of the Archaic temple in Sicily (presented in the Antonino Salinas Regional Archaeological Museum²²), in the Stoa of Antigonos Gonates (built around 250 B.C.E.²³) and the proscenium of the theatre (built around 290 BCE²⁴; *Fig. 7a*) in Delos²⁵, as well as the friezes of the ancient theatre in Arelate, modern Arles²⁶ (built in 90 CE, incorporated into the Renaissance building²⁷). The porticos of the stoa of the Asklepion at Messene in Sicily are decorated with "alternating *bucranii* (bull-heads) and *phiae* (round vessels for libation), which were festooned continuously" (stoa was built in the late 3rd – early 4th century CE, near the Archaic temple²⁸). In Kharab Shems, the bulls' heads decorate the lintel of the Roman edifice²⁹. Friezes of Ionic and Corinthian sanctuaries in Rome also contained bucrania or taurobolium

²¹ CIL XIII, 175. See the illustrations in open access resource on Wikimedia Commons: <https://lupa.at/20118?author=9> (inscription); <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lyon-Autel-CIL-XIII-1753.jpg> (modern photographs).

²² Loth, without year, Fig. 2. The depictions on this Doric frieze are painted in different colors, imitating their realistic features. The skull has large, prominent eye sockets, like those of the bull's head on the ashlar from Shiloh.

²³ Moretti 2015, 101-103, Fig. 22. See the illustration in open access resource on Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Relief_of_a_bull%27s_head,_Delos.jpg

²⁴ Moretti 2015, 98-101: Fig. 20.

²⁵ The myth of Delos centers on it being the sacred birthplace of the twin gods Apollo (god of light/music) and Artemis (goddess of the hunt), born to Zeus and the Titaness Leto, who fled the jealous goddess Hera and found refuge on the island.

²⁶ In the Roman period, the cult of Mithras was spread in Arelate.

²⁷ Espérandieu 1907, 160-161, nos. 211-212; Lemerle 1996; Lemerle 2018, 195-196, Fig. 8.5.

²⁸ Hayashida 2002, 31-40; Themelis 2010, 5-25 (and other works of the last-mentioned author).

²⁹ Butler 1920, 322, Ill. 359.

scenes, for example, on the Arch of Titus³⁰, Temple of Vespasian and Titus³¹, and many others.

Ashlars with relief decoration in Roman architecture

Notably, the bull's head in Shiloh is carved on the ashlar, not on the frieze, and this type of decorative architectural element implies a different artistic meaning and order. In the Syrian and African Roman architectural traditions, solitary mythological and zoomorphic figures were sometimes depicted on temple walls. For example, two symmetrically placed relief lions decorated the northern wall of the precinct of the Large sanctuary of Zeus in Baetocaece (modern Hössn Suleiman), in Syria³² (built in 258-260 CE; *Fig. 7b*). The solitary lion's face decorated the gable of the same temple³³. According to the proposed reconstruction, the doorway of the second colonnaded range of the Tower of Claudius in Kal'at Faqra (Qalaat Faqra) in Lebanon is flanked by two winged figures (built in 43 CE–44 CE³⁴). In the Great Temple in Niha/Nihata, the right-side anta pier was decorated with a relief of an anthropomorphic, haloed bust (angel (?), *Fig. 7c*). The walls of the podium of the adyton and other parts of the temple bore many other relief images and scenes, located sporadically (built in the 1st-3rd century CE³⁵). Two square ashlars with figurative reliefs (resembling portraits) belonged to the tympanum of the Temple in Nebi Safa (2nd century CE³⁶). Thus, in the regional Roman architectural tradition, the decoration of the walls or antae of sacred edifices with solitary scenes or symmetrical motifs was practiced, though not widespread.

³⁰ Cassanelli 2002, 86-87.

³¹ De Angeli 1992, 52, Fig. 31b; 54, Fig. 34.

³² Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 67, Abbs. 92-93, Tafel 33; Steinsapir 1999, 190; Segal 2013, 78-80. The collection of digital photographs of the monument is available in the Manar-al-Athar digital archive, on behalf of Oxford University. URL: <https://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk/pages/search.php?search=%21collection3822> (accessed on 11/01/2026).

³³ Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 83, Abb. 117; Segal 2013, 84, Fig. 25.

³⁴ Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 41, Abb. 61. The collection of digital photographs of the monument in its current condition (no restoration was conducted) with relief scenes and images is available on the online resource: URL: <https://www.livius.org/pictures/lebanon/faqra/faqra-tower-of-claudius/faqra-tower-of-claudius-4/>.

³⁵ Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 109, Abb. 142; 111-115, Abbs. 155-156; Segal 2013: 144, Figs. 112-113. The collection of digital photographs of the monument with relief scenes and images is available on the online resource: URL: <https://www.livius.org/articles/place/nihata-niha/nihata-large-temple/>

³⁶ Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 208, Abb. 308-309.

However, the closest parallel to the bull's ashlar in Shiloh emerged in the Mithraeum at Castellum Tidditanorum/Tiddis in Numidia (modern Algeria³⁷; **Fig. 8a-b**). Supposedly, there was an adjacent temple in front of the Mithraic cave. Among the other architectural items and the Latin inscription, two monumental, squared ashlars, decorated on their front faces with solitary bull's heads (above one of the heads, there is a tiny *infula*³⁸), were discovered at the site. Supposedly, these bulls' ashlars have flanked the doorway on the temple facade.

Based on the row of various samples and parallels, it might be suggested that the ashlar with the bull's head in Shiloh decorated the wall of the Roman temple or mausoleum. Such a tradition might be considered Syrian or broader, as no parallels are known in local Roman architecture so far.

Conclusions: Symbolic meaning of the bull's head depiction and the anticipated Roman temple of Zeus/Hadad (or Mithraeum) in Tel Shiloh

What could be the symbolic meaning of the bull's head, and does it contribute to determining the dedication of the edifice to which it belonged? The motif of the bull as a divine symbol had a broad and profound sacrificial and cultic meaning in the ancient world from the earliest times. As Goodenough noted, "The bull was universally used as a religious figure in antiquity".³⁹ It appeared in different Greco-Roman and Near Eastern religions, usually as a storm god (with different names), as a symbol of the sun, and as an emblem of fertility. It was presented in the religious traditions in Khanaan (assimilated with Hadad), the Land of Israel (Yahweh⁴⁰), Egypt (Apis), Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria⁴¹, Crete, Greece, Ancient Italy

³⁷ Vermaseren 1956, 98, no. 162. Fresh photographs of the Mithraeum in Tiddis are available on numerous open-access websites (URL: <https://www.romeartlover.it/Tiddis.html>; accessed on 02.01.2026).

³⁸ "INFULA, a flock of white and red wool, which was slightly twisted, drawn into the shape of a wreath or fillet, and used by the Romans for ornament on festive and solemn occasions..." (Smith 1875, 637; URL: https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA*/Infula.html#:~:text=I%E2%80%B2INFULA%2C%20a%-20flock%20of,Georg.).

³⁹ Goodenough 1953-1968 (7), 6.

⁴⁰ In the Land of Israel, "...the bull seems in ancient times to have been regarded as the symbol, if not the form, of Yahweh" (Goodenough 1953-1968 (7), 6).

⁴¹ The main sanctuary of Hadad was built in Aleppo, Syria, during the Early Bronze Age (3300–2200 B.C.) and remained for millennia (Kohlmeyer 2009). On one of the reliefs, the bull-man is depicted next to the image of Hadad. The bull has been sacrificed to Hadad (Niehr 2024, 174). At Baalbek, Zeus Heliopolitanus was represented as a storm-god holding ears in his right hand and accompanied by two bulls (Niehr 2024, 179).

(Zeus/Jupiter⁴², Dionysus, Poseidon, Mithras), and so on⁴³. The bull's figure or head, solitary or as part of the scene, was an integral part of such compositions as *Tau-roctonous* (bull-slaying), *Taurobolium* (bloody ritual sacrifice of a bull), and *Tau-rophorous* (bull-bearing). These rituals were primarily associated with the Mithraic cults⁴⁴.

Thus, the ashlar with the bull's head in Shiloh belonged to the wall or the anta of the monumental temple, dedicated to Zeus/Jupiter/Hadad (?) or, less likely, to Mithras. The other find in Shiloh – a portable octagonal altar – was also supposedly connected with the cult of Zeus/Jupiter and its local personification⁴⁵. The status of Zeus/Jupiter as the primary god was reinforced throughout the Roman Empire following the construction of the Temple of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva on the Capitoline Hill in Rome. He was considered the patron of the Emperor's Power. Thus, the erection of temples devoted to Zeus/Jupiter in the provinces expressed loyalty to the Roman Empire⁴⁶. In this way, the cult of Zeus/Jupiter spread in the Syro-Phoenician region, where it was identified with Hadad, Baal, or Baalshamin. Archaeological data indicate the existence of the cult of Zeus/Jupiter in several poleis of the Decapolis: Abila, Beth Shean/Scythopolis, Capitolias, Damascus, Dion, Gadara, Gerasa, Hippos/Susita, and Pella⁴⁷. In Samaria, the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos was erected on Mt. Gerizim (Tell er-Ras).⁴⁸ The Pagan complex devoted to Jupiter and the Capitoline Triad was also erected in Aelia Capitolina on the site of

A pair of bulls near Hadad was also depicted on the tetradrachms from the period of Antiochus XII (87–84 BCE) (Niehr 2024, 179).

⁴² In Greek mythology, the bull was a sacred animal of Zeus (together with the eagle). As a bull, Zeus seduced Europa (<https://www.theoi.com/Olympios/Zeus.html>). At Crete, he was transformed into the Cretan Bull (LMC online). Also, Zeus/Jupiter required an ox as his sacrificial animal (<https://www.classicist.org/articles/classical-comments-bucrania/>).

⁴³ Malten 1928; Goodenough 1953–1968 (7), 1–28, Pls. 1–18, 23, 26, 204, 207, 210; Goodenough 1953–1968 (12), 132–133;

Unterberger, 2018.

⁴⁴ Cumont 1903, 134; Goodenough 1953–1968 (7), 22; Rutter 1968; Duthoy 1969. Note also the solitary depiction of the bull near the scene of *tauroctonous* on the Dionysiac altar from the Acropolis in Athens (Goodenough 1953–1968 (7), Pl. 11).

⁴⁵ Tarkhanova, Submitted for editing.

⁴⁶ Riftin 1998, 646–647.

⁴⁷ Ovadiah, Mucznik 2007a.

⁴⁸ Ovadiah, Mucznik 2007b.

the Jewish Temple of Yahweh, which was destroyed in 70 CE⁴⁹, though other theories concerning its location were also advanced⁵⁰. The cult of the supreme Roman god merged with the Jewish monotheistic cult.⁵¹ It might be supposed that the temple in Shiloh was also connected to the cult of Zeus/Jupiter and was apparently intended to serve as a model for other temples with similar dedications, including the one in Aelia Capitolina on the Temple Mount.

To add some extra details to the appearance of the anticipated temple, it may be noted briefly that, except for the ashlar with the relief bull's head, the other Roman monumental details were either scattered at the site or reused in the walls of Late Islamic buildings. As evidenced by their scale, technique, materials, and style, they belonged to the same sanctuary, built in the Near-Eastern Roman style with parallels from the Syro-Palestinian region (Trans-Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria). These include the large ashlars with the segments of the wall pilasters and their caps, antae or entrance elements, plain cornices, and a fluted frieze. The octagonal altar mentioned above might have stood in front of the temple. The other urbanistic architectural remains of the Roman period in Shiloh, such as the modest Hippodamian street grid, Pagan trough-burials in the vicinity (also of Syrian or Nabatean style), and some sporadic small capitals and shafts⁵², were also revealed. It gives us the impression of a modest 'polis,' or, better to say, an 'urbanized' village, built in accordance with Roman traditions of town planning. Although the anticipated temple has not yet been archaeologically detected, it was the settlement's cultic center and should be located near the intersection of the streets.

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⁴⁹ Tsafrir 2009, 77–83; Newman 2014; Isaac 2010, 18–26; Sharon 2015, 300–303, Pls. 4–6; Weksler-Bdolah 2020, 116–122.

⁵⁰ Murphy-O'Connor 1994.

⁵¹ As it was hypothesized in the article of M. Sharon, the planning of the enormous temple complex of Jupiter on the Temple Mount repeated the planning of the temple complex of Jupiter in Baalbek, where the hexagon and basilica are joined into one architectural space by a courtyard (Sharon 2015, 300–303, Pls. 4–6). The author proposed that the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa (Friday mosque) were built over the Roman foundations. The resemblance between the two complexes is definitely striking.

⁵² Tarkhanova, Submitted for editing.

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Ancient Source Collections

CIL = *Inscriptiones Trium Galliarum et Germaniarum Latinae*. Ed. O. Hirschfeld, K. F.

W. Zangemeister, A. von Domaszewski, Th. Mommsen, O. Bohn, É. Espérandieu, P. Steiner, H. Volkmann, and E. Stein. Berlin: Königliche Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1899–1943.

Murabba'at = Benoit, P., Milik, J. T., and De Vaux, R. (1961) *Discoveries in the Judean Desert II: Les Grottes de Murabba'ât*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

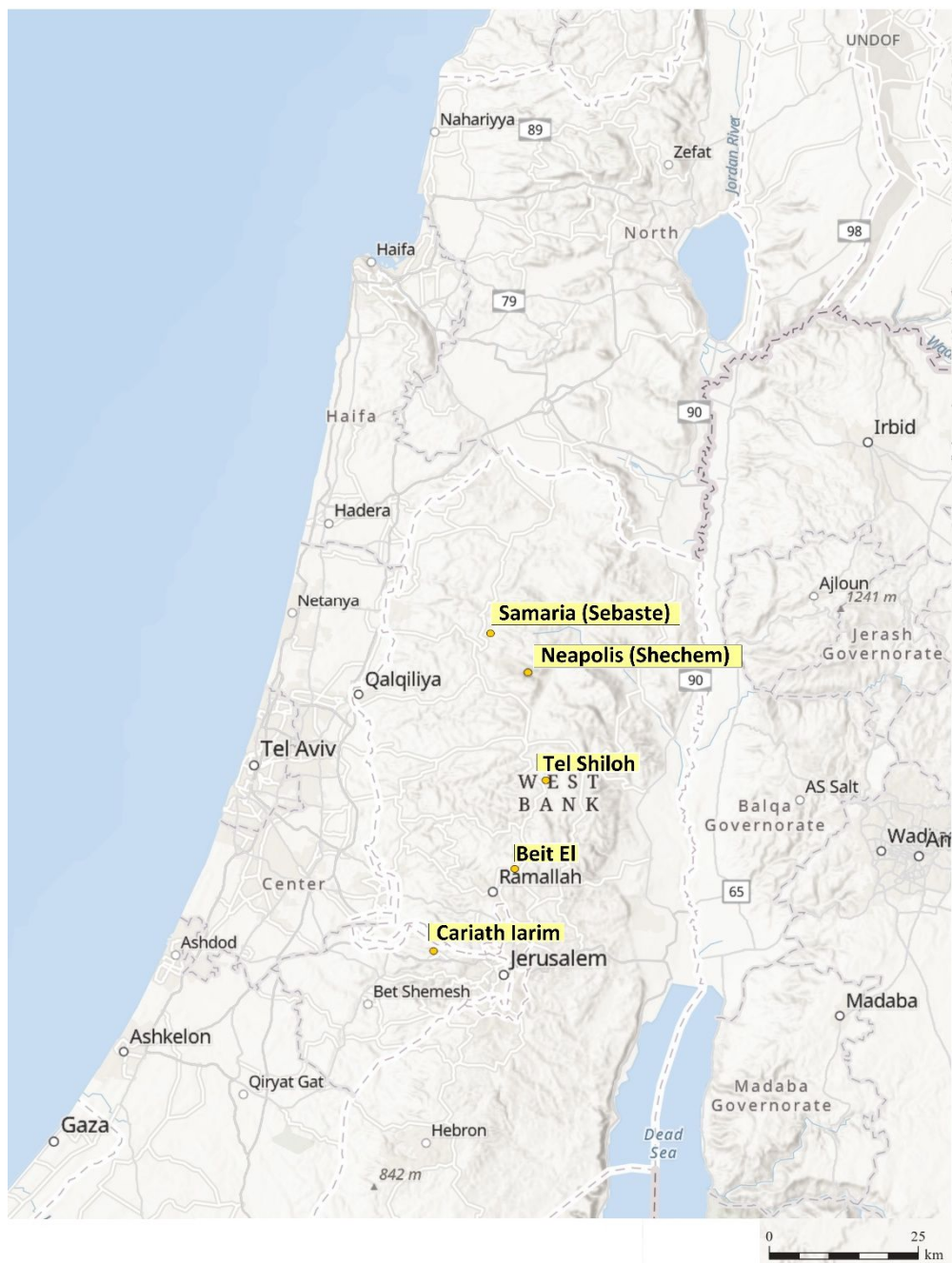


Fig. 1. Location of Shiloh on the modern map of Israel with selected sites mentioned in the text. Processing of S. Tarkhanova based on the topography map from the ArcGIS free online resource.

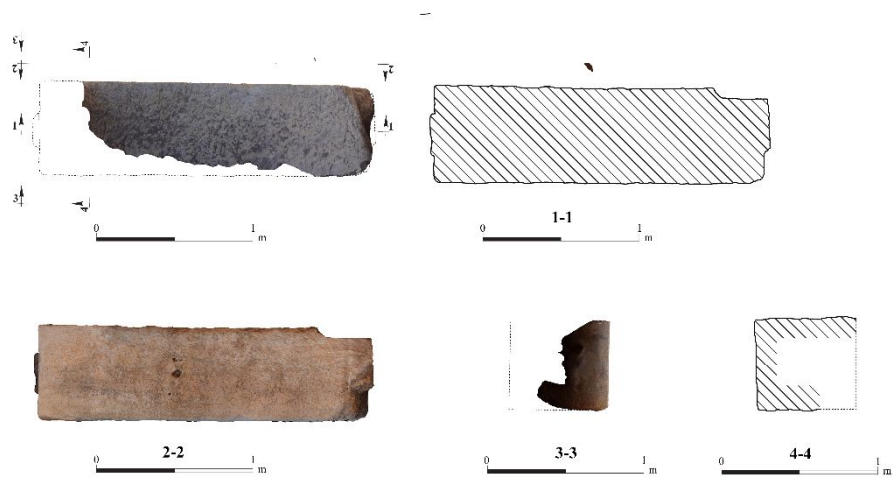


Fig. 2. The scanning of the ashlar with the bull's head in Shiloh (only available sides and segments are scanned). Scanning and processing of Y. Schmidov (Israel Antiquities Authority).



Fig. 3. The relief image of the bull's head with partial reconstruction of the parts that can't be observed (the proportions are slightly distorted). Scanning and processing of Y. Schmidov (Israel Antiquities Authority).

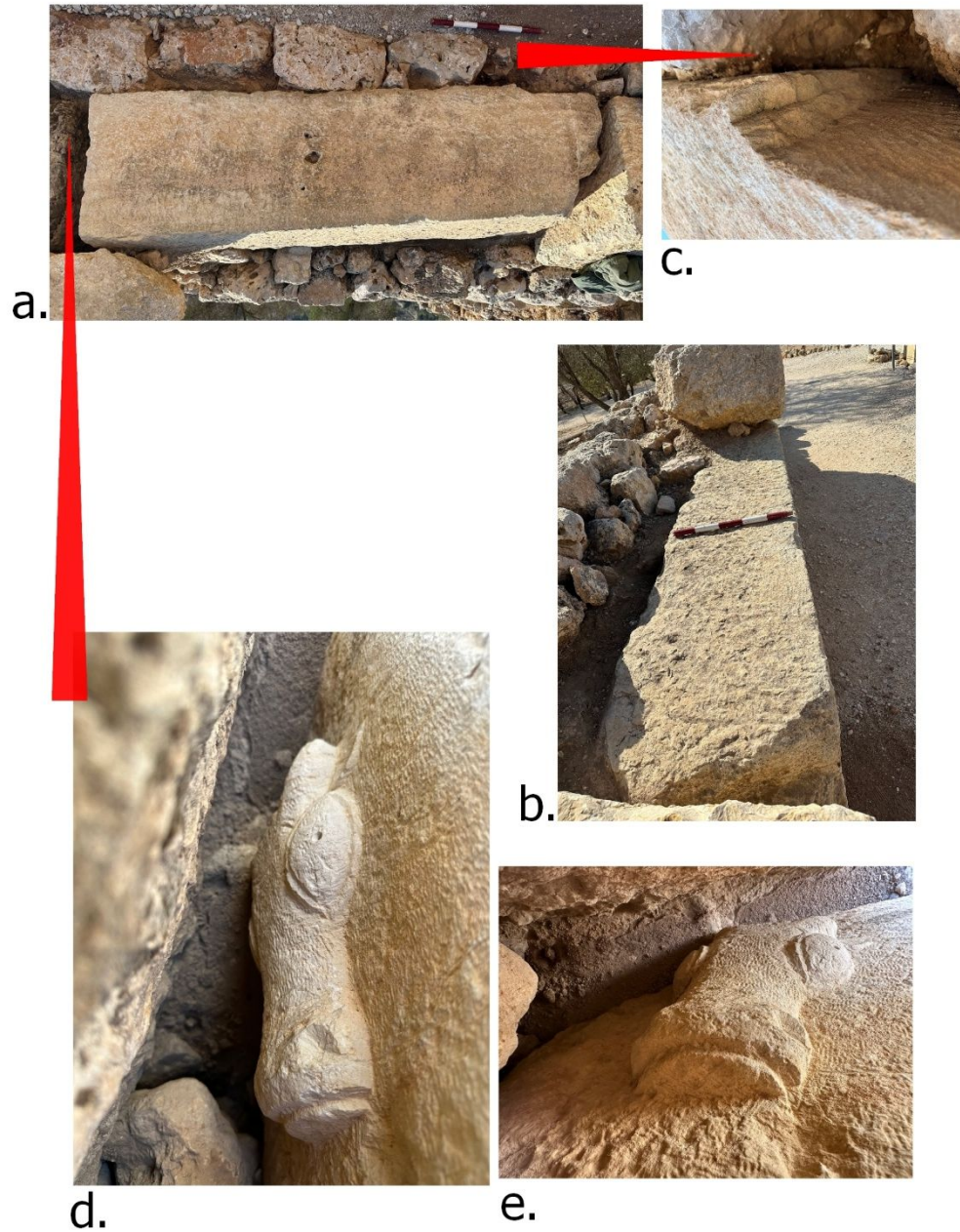


Fig. 4. Photographs of the ashlar in its current position within the terrace (the photos are inverted in accordance with the technical and compositional characteristics of the ashlar): a. long left lateral facet; b. long lower facet (not inverted; note *anathyrosis*); c. two-stepped recessed molding on the upper long facet; d-e. relief bull's head on the frontal short facet (note claw chiseling). Photos of S. Tarkhanova.



Fig. 5a. Roman sarcophagi with bucrania in Nesher Ramle (presented at the open-air exhibition in KKL Givat Yeshayahu near Beit Guvrin); 5b. in Ascalon (modern Afridar, presented in the open-air museum Courtyard of Sarcophagi). Photo credit: S. Tarkhanova.

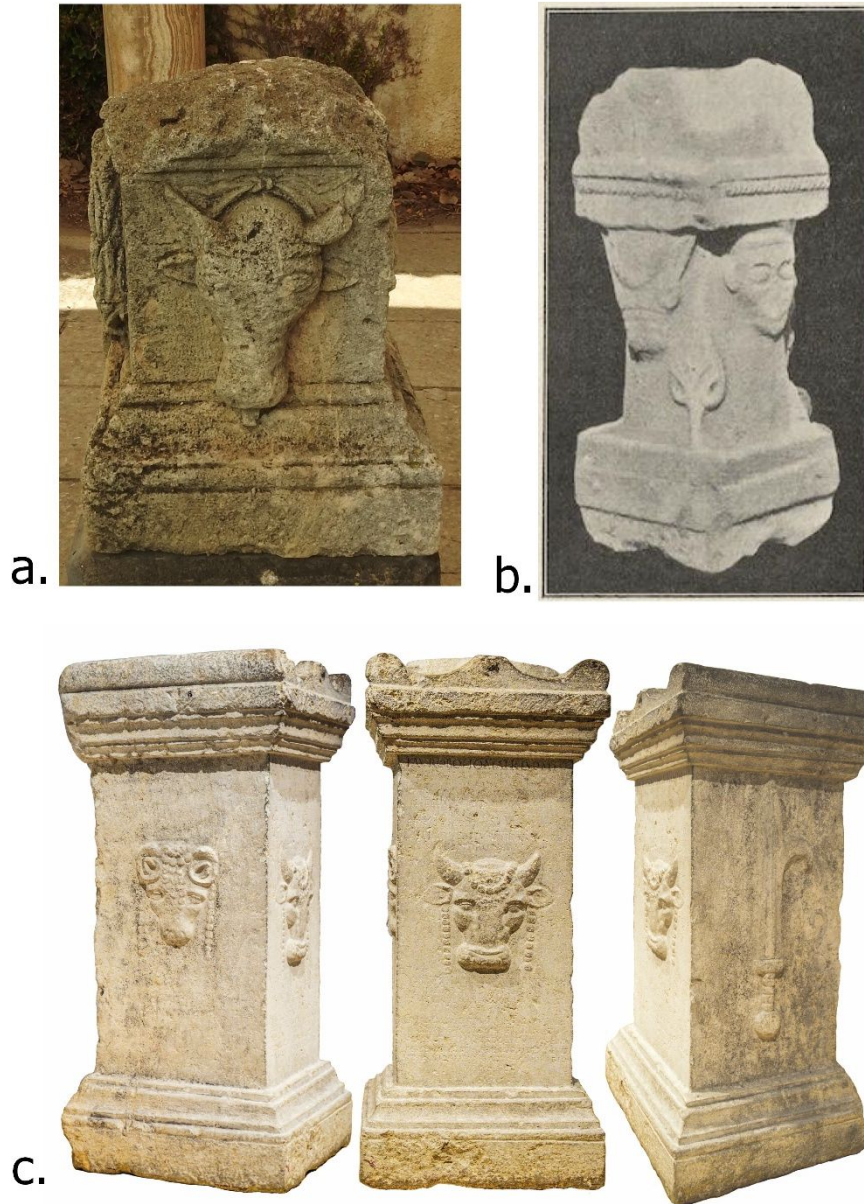


Fig. 6a. Altars with the solitary bull's heads in the Sdot Museum. Photo credit: S. Tarkhanova; 6b. from Il-Ghariyeh, Syria. After: Butler 1919, 136, Ill. 114; 6c. Taurobolium altar, discovered in Lugdunum (modern Lyon) in 1730 and now on display at the Museum of Gallo-Roman Civilization in Lyon. (@Wikimedia Commons).

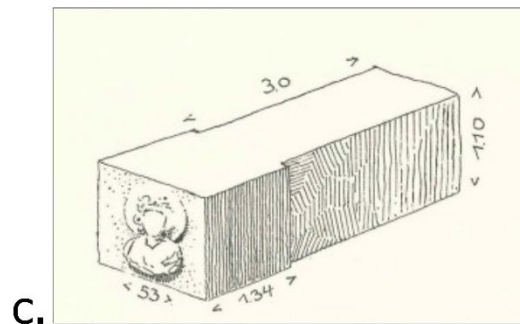
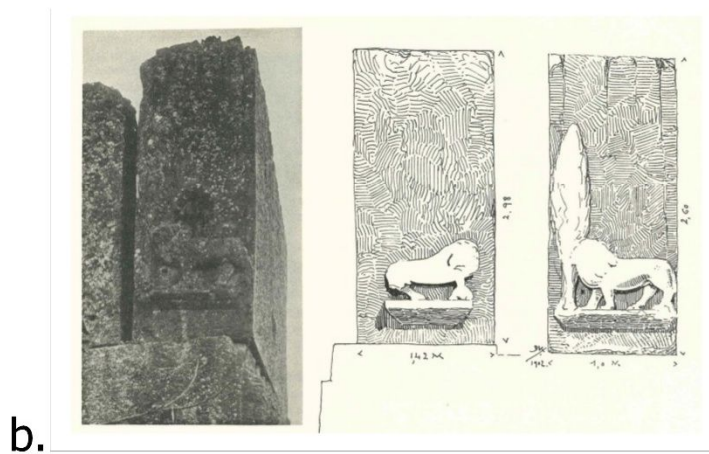


Fig. 7a. Doric frieze with the bull's skulls in metopes. Delos. Photo credit: S. Tarkhanova;
7b. The ashlars with the relief lions decorating the northern wall of the precinct of the

Large sanctuary of Zeus in Baetocaece (modern Hössn Suleiman), in Syria.

After: Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 67, Abbs. 92-93, Tafel 33; 6c. The ashlar of the anta decorated with a haloed bust in the Great Temple in Niha/Nihata. After: Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 109, Abb. 142.



Fig. 8a-b. Two ashlars with the relief bull's head in front of the Mithra's temple (Mithraeum) in Castellum Tidianorum (modern Tiddis in Algeria).
Photo credit: Dan Sloan (@WikimediaCommons).