Philistia and the Philistines in the Iron Age I: Interaction, Ethnic Dynamics and Boundary Maintenance

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Abstract: Until recently, the scholarly consensus held that the Philistines, whatever their origins were, assimilated into the local Levantine cultures in the early Iron Age II. Following Stone (1995), however, it is clear today that the while Philistine culture changed and the settlers ceased to use most of their unique, foreign traits in the Iron II, the Philistines still maintained their unique identity, and did not assimilate. In 2011 we drew attention to the fact that the decline in the use of these "unique" traits was not gradual, as one might expect from a slow process of culture change. Instead, the Philistines increased their usage of some of their most distinct traits during the first 150-200 years of their settlement, before abandoning many of their significant traits in the Iron Age II. We explained this "increased" usage of foreign traits (and to a more limited extent also its subsequent "decline") as part of the Philistines' interaction with their neighbors. Maeir et al. (2013) have recently attempted to refute our arguments and conclusions. While we are happy that the Philistines are again at the center of scholarly discussion, it is unfortunate that their article suffers from some major drawbacks, in terms of both theory and data. In light of the recent discussion, this article will revisit the processes that followed the Philistine settlement in Canaan, and especially the nature of their interaction with their neighbors.

Keywords: Philistia, Philistines, Ethnicity, Identity, Boundary Maintenance

Introduction

Until about 20 years ago, the scholarly consensus held that the Philistines - whatever their origins were – lost their identity about 200 years after their settlement on the coast of Canaan. Both the understanding of their foreign origin and of their later assimilation were based on what was seen as a straightforward interpretation of the archaeological record, in the spirit of the dominant culture history school. Many foreign traits, Aegean in nature, were easily discerned in Philistia during the Iron Age I, whereas most of those traits disappeared during the Iron Age II, leading to the conclusion that the Philistines were of foreign origin on the one hand, but were assimilated and lost their unique identity after some 200 years on the other hand.

While the foreign origins of the Philistines are still accepted by almost all, Stone's (1995) ground-breaking work changed the scholarly understanding of the Philistines in the Iron Age II. Stone showed that despite the drastic changes in material culture, the Philistines continued to maintain their separate identity throughout the Iron Age (also Gitin 1998; Mazar 1992: 328). The disappearance of the unique "Philistine" traits was explained by Stone as acculturation rather than assimilation, and this understanding is now widespread, although some scholars attempted to refine that understanding of this process, and labeled it fusion or creolization (e.g., Uziel 2007; and even Ben-Shlomo, Shai and Maeir 2004). Thus, there is an agreement today that although the Philistines ceased to use most of their unique, foreign traits, they did not lose their identity.

In our (Faust and Lev-Tov) 2011 article, we drew attention to the fact that the decline in the use of these "unique" traits was not gradual, as one might expect from a slow process of culture change. Instead, the Philistines increased their usage of their distinct traits (e.g., pork consumption and the use of Philistine, Aegean-inspired decorated pottery) during the first 150-200 years of their settlement, before abandoning many of their significant traits in the Iron Age II (i.e., completely abandoning the Aegean decoration style, and greatly reducing their consumption of pork within most of their settlements). The main thrust of our article was to explain this pattern of "increased" usage of foreign traits (and to a more limited extent also its subsequent "decline") as part of the Philistines' interaction with their neighbors.

Maeir et al. (2013) have recently published a long article in which they attempted to refute our arguments and conclusions, arguing that we presented an "old" narrative, whereas it is time to move forward to new narratives and multivocality. While we are happy that our article drew attention and brought back the Philistines to the center of scholarly discussion, it is unfortunate that their article suffers from some major drawbacks, in terms of both theory and data.

Maeir et al.'s (2013) detailed article challenges us, apparently, on three major issues:

1. The origins of the Philistines.
2. The traits which were used by the Philistines as part of their ethnic negotiations, if at all.
3. The changes in Philistine society and material culture in the Iron Age II.

As we will presently see, some of this disagreement is based on misrepresentation of our views, whereas in practice Maeir et al. (2013) follow the path we originally suggested in our article. In other cases their arguments are based on misguided theoretical concepts, and in some cases also on incorrect data.

1. The Origins of the Philistines

A discussion of Philistine origins looms large in Maeir et al.'s (2013) article. In an attempt to delineate the difference between "their" historical reconstruction of Philistine's origins, and "ours", Maeir et al. (2013: 1) begin their article (first sentence!) with a quote from us (the quote from us is in bold):

> "(I)n a recent study in this journal, Faust and Lev-Tov (2011) present a traditional narrative, arguing that '**the Philistines were one group of the so-called "Sea Peoples" that settled in Israel's southern coastal plain during the twelfth century BC**' (p. 14)…".

They, subsequently, challenge "our" view, and devote a lengthy discussion to show that the Philistines came from diverse backgrounds and origins.

The entire discussion, however, is puzzling, for a number of reasons:

1) The quote was taken out of context, and in the original it explicitly referred to views of others, and not to ours.

2) We did not discuss the question of Philistine origins in the article, and this, too, was explicitly noted.

3) Though briefly, we clearly raised the possibility (not very original, below) that the Philistines had diverse origins, and were composed of various groups when they first settled down in Canaan – this is what Maeir et al. (2013) present as "their" novel contribution, in contrast to our "old narrative".

The "quote" that Maeir et al. (2013) bring does not represent our views, and is only half a sentence, originally written in a section in which we summarized previous research (p. 14 in our article). This is the whole sentence (with the omission of references; the section that Maeir et al. quoted is italicized):

> "Although the exact timing and process of their settlement, as well as their social and ethnic composition and place(s) of origin(s) are debated, most scholars agree that *the Philistines were one group of the so-called 'Sea Peoples' that settled in Israel's southern coastal plain during the twelfth century BC.*"

We are at loss as to what led Maeir et-al. to open their article with this misquote.

Furthermore, although we didn't discuss the issue in the article,[1] we carefully suggested in passim that it is possible that the Philistines had diverse origins – just the argument Maeir et al. (2013), are advocating as a novel idea. Thus, we explicitly wrote that (pp. 26-27 of our article, emphasis added):

> This is not the place for an extensive discussion concerning the possible implications of the present argument for our understanding of the first phase of Philistine settlement, *as it is not within the main focus of the present article*. Nonetheless, the possibility should be mentioned that the Philistines did not arrive as a homogeneous group with a single identity, and regardless of their origins and composition, the confrontation with their neighbours was a decisive factor in the creation of a Philistine identity.

And we added a footnote (p. 27), saying:

> It is likely that at least some portion of the Canaanite population was assimilated into this group (cf. A. Mazar 1986; Bunimovitz 1990; Stager 1998). If this was indeed the case, and the groups that arrived at the southern coastal plain of Israel did not have a common identity before their arrival, then the situation in which they found themselves, confronting other groups, is precisely the context in which new identities are expected to be created (see also Stein 2005: 27–8).

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[1] Not only wasn't the question of the Philistines' origin and even initial settlement discussed in our article, but we couldn't have discussed it as we are not in agreement between ourselves on the issue.

Hence, we explicitly raised the possibility that the Philistines came from various backgrounds and diverse origins (hardly our original idea, see e.g. Yasur-Landau 2010). Clearly, had Maeir et al. (2013) read our article carefully, they would have credited us for suggesting (even if briefly as the issue was beyond the scope of our article) what is in their view the right approach to the question of Philistine origins.

But there are bigger problems in Maeir et al.'s recent article.

Origins and Identity

Maeir et al., confuse the questions of "origin" and identity, and believe that by identifying "origins" they can learn about "identity". They meander throughout the article between the two concepts (esp. pp. 2-15). Thus in their conclusion (p. 25), "(A)s detailed here, the diverse range of cultural influences…. Precludes any attempt to identify a single, unified origin of the Philistine culture" (this is also relevant to point 2, below) (and to reiterate, we explicitly did not discuss Philistine origins!).

As the vast anthropological and archaeological literature clearly indicates, the questions of "origin" and "identity", although related, are two different questions that should not be confused. From the moment a certain people view themselves as distinct from other groups it is indeed so (e.g., Barth 1969; Emberling 1997: 304). The question of their origin, as interesting and important as it may be, is a different issue, and might not have much influence on the course those people take, nor necessarily on the material traits they use, consciously or unconsciously, to signal their identity. As Abner Cohen (1974: 3) wrote: "(T)he history of a cultural trait will tell us very little about its social significance within the situation in which it is found at present". After all, "objects are not what they were made to be but what they have become" (Thomas 1991: 4; see also Goody 1982: 211; Dietler 2010: 190). Thus, Stager (1985: 86), when discussing Israelite ethnicity has explicitly called for the separation of the two issues: "(A)s for the elusive problem of Israelite 'origins'… I prefer… to adopt the stance of the French sociologist Francois Simiand, who nearly a century ago chided the historians for bowing down before the 'idol of origin,' that is, showing an obsessive concern for when a phenomenon first began to appear rather than when it became important". And the famous French historian Marc Bloch summarized his discussion of the "idol of origins" (1953: 29-35) with the following statement:

> "In a word, a historical phenomenon can never be understood apart from its moment in time… As the Arab proverb has it: "Men resemble their time more they do their fathers." Disregard of this oriental wisdom has sometimes brought discredit to the study of the past" (p. 35).

Maeir et al.'s (2013) unfortunate confusion of "origin" for "identity" is very problematic from a methodological point of view and, if we may use Bloch's words, "discredit" their "study of the past" (we will return to this issue later).

2. Philistine "Traits" and Philistine Identity

This is where Maeir et al., in their article, refer to our main arguments. Unfortunately, they do not really address the data we presented, their arguments are to a large extent misguided, and they present a very simplistic understanding of what identity encompasses.

Working with trait lists

Maeir et al. bring forth a long list of traits, in order to define "Philistine ethnicity" (pp. 2-15). They discuss (in different subheadings of that section) ceramics, dietary practices (including pork consumption, eating dogs, and grass pea lentils), cooking techniques (cooking on hearths and using cooking jugs), technology, architecture, textual evidence (language, etc.), ritual, religion and iconography. Indeed, any study of society should refer to all aspects of life, including some that are missing here like settlement patterns, socioeconomic hierarchy, and more. But Maeir et al. (2013) are not attempting to write an introduction to Philistine society, nor are they trying to learn about their social structure, ideology, cosmology, etc. They are trying to learn about "Philistine ethnicity". Ethnicity, however, is not the sum total of traits that are found within a certain region, and the ethnic boundaries of a group are not defined by the sum of cultural traits. Instead, a sense of group belonging is defined by the idiosyncratic use of specific material and behavioral symbols as compared with other groups (e.g., McGuire 1982: 160; see also Kamp and Yoffe 1980: 96; Emberling 1997: 299; Barth 1969: 14, 15; Hall 1997: 135; Faust 2006, and references). The study of ethnicity should focus on those traits, either ethnic markers or behaviors that were meaningful at a specific time and were used in the boundary maintenance between the groups. Maeir et al. (2013), in looking for a trait list, are implicitly following the tradition of the culture history school, which is still quite dominant in some circles of biblical or Near Eastern archaeology.

Indeed, while some traits inevitably continued into the Iron II (though the relevant ones are not necessarily addressed by Maeir et al.), as we are discussing the very same population (more below), most of the "traits" they bring forth are irrelevant for the issue at hand. Do they really mean to suggest that the use of plaster (Maeir et al. 2013: 9, 17) is ethnically meaningful? Even if the use of plaster were unique to Philistia (and this assertion is incorrect, as plaster is found in other Iron II sites) this would be irrelevant for the study of the *identity* of the inhabitants. And the same applies to what they label "technology" in general (p. 17).[2] What are important are traits that are ethnically sensitive, and were used in ethnic negotiation. As far as Iron I Philistia is concerned, relevant traits include, among others, the use of the Aegean inspired decoration[3] on pottery (as argued by most scholars today [e.g., Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau 1996; Bunimovitz and Faust 2001; Faust 2006; Gilboa, Cohen-Weinberg and Goren 2006; Killebrew and Lev-Tov 2008: 340-341], and as they themselves acknowledge, p. 4)[4] and the consumption of pork (below). These traits in fact demonstrate a drastic change in Philistine boundary maintenance by the end of the Iron Age I.

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[2] Technology can, on occasion, be connected to identity, but this needs to be demonstrated, and cannot be assumed.

[3] For the term, see for example Killebrew 2005: 173.

[4] We are accused (Maeir et al. 2013:3) of privileging "the pottery evidence". This is not true, of course, as we discussed various lines of data, but on p. 4 Maeir et al., agree that Philistine pottery was one marker of identity. However, if this was the case, then it should indeed be "privileged".

Thus the argument of Maeir et al. (2013: 15) that the Israelites adopted "Philistine" cooking jugs is not an argument relating to ethnicity. In fact they seem to miss the point on how identity is expressed materially. There were no physical barriers between Israelite and Philistine settlement areas, and most traits and artifacts crossed those ethnic boundaries quite easily. As a cautionary note we can mention the Azande and Belanda (Braithwaite 1982: 84-85). The two groups share many similarities, sometimes live together, and the Azande buy pottery from Belanda potters. The ceramic assemblage is likewise very similar, and most of the pottery of both groups is decorated. Neither group decorates the Man's small drinking pots, but the Belanda in addition don't decorate the large beer-making pot (which the Azande do decorate). Although the two groups interact and the Azande buy all other types of pottery from the Belanda, Braithwaite (1982: 85) stated that she "found no examples in more than one hundred homesteads of a Belanda beer-making pot being used by the Azande". Both groups are aware of this ware, but only members of one group have it. This example demonstrates that it is not the overall assemblage that is necessarily significant, nor is it the movement of items that is necessarily relevant to the question of identity in any given moment (for another cautionary tale, see Hodder and Hutson 2003: 8). Only those traits that were deemed ethnically sensitive by the groups involved, did not cross the group boundaries, and were not adopted by the "other" group. Hence, the mere fact that Israelites did not use decorated pottery supports its validity as an ethnic marker, whereas the adoption of the cooking jugs show that the latter was not. Maeir et al. (2013), work within the culture history framework, looking for archaeological cultures, but this hinders their understanding of the complexity of material culture.

Does Territory Equal People? Or: Where were the Canaanites? [5]

Maeir et al. (2013) bring data that seem to suggest that some traits that most scholars regard as Philistine, should not be understood as such. Thus the rarity of pork in sites like Qubur el-Walayda leads them to conclude that pork consumption was not a Philistine trait. This approach reveals another major methodological problem in Maeir et al.'s understanding of early Iron Age Philistia, i.e. the implicit assumption that all the inhabitants of Philistia (a geographical/political entity) were Philistines (by default). This assumption led them to misunderstand and, sometimes even to disregard the data.

Thus, sites like Qubur el Walayda – a small rural site some 18 km. south of the modern city of Gaza – are assumed to be Philistine (Maeir et al. 2013:2, 6) because they lie within Philistia, a geographical area so defined by many archaeologists based mainly on an interpretation of passages in the Hebrew Bible.[6] Since many traits that are regarded by mainstream scholarship to be Philistine (especially the tendency to consume a large amount of pork, as well as the use of hearths) are missing at this site (pp. 6, 8), Maeir et al. conclude that these traits are not ethnically sensitive (e.g., pp. 4-6). But the latter authors simply ignore the local groups, and simplistically dichotomize sites as either

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[5] We use the term Canaanite as a generic name for the indigenous groups of the southern Levant, and it is clear that there were many of them (and that they knew the distinctions between themselves).

[6] Similarly, on p. 24, Maeir et al. (2013) refer to Tel Zayit's material culture as similar to that of Gath. Not only is that conclusion incorrect (see below), but it also shows a very simplistic understanding. Does material culture equal political affiliation?

Philistine or Israelite.[7] Thus, when analyzing the "problematic" finds in Qubur el Walayda, they (p. 6) ask whether the site should be regarded as an Israelite site. After ridiculing this "alternative", they of course conclude that it was Philistine. This is clearly the wrong conclusion, driven from a misguided procedure. The simple and straightforward conclusion should be that Qubur el Walayda was simply not inhabited by Philistines, akin to the settlers in Ashkelon or Ashdod, but rather by Canaanites or local non-Philistine groups. The site could have been under political control by the Philistines without having been inhabited by them.

Such a conclusion should not come as a surprise, and even before the results of the faunal remains were analyzed, the excavator of the site was careful and noted that "(T)he ethnic identity in this area remain uncertain" (Lehmann 2011: 291). The absence of pork from the inhabitants' diet (Maher 2010) only shows that the excavator's doubts were justified.

And the same problem is expressed by their association of Kh. el-Alya (p. 16) with Kh. Qeiyafa and the Israelites. They write that:

> "To stress this point further one can note that while Kh. Qeiyafa is usually identified as an Israelite site with relatively small amounts of Philistine decorated pottery, a tomb with significant amounts of late Iron Age I/early Iron Age IIA decorated Philistine pottery was found at Kh. el-'Alya, located 3 km to the north-east of Kh. Qeiyafa (Dagan 2010, 195–201), supposedly in an area that should have been under Israelite control. In other words, the distribution of 'Philistine' pottery cannot be used reliably to define cultural and ethnic affiliation. As such, the data do not support the view of intentional 'avoidance of the Philistine decorated pottery of the Iron Age I – pottery that was ethnically significant at the time' (Faust and Lev-Tov 2011, 18)."

This suggestion is misleading on a number of grounds, both factual and methodological: (1) Maeir et al., might not be aware of that fact, but between Kh. Qeiyafa and Kh. el-Alya there is another, large site – Tel Yarmouth. Whatever was the nature of the burial at Kh. el-Alya, it is to be associated with Yarmouth, and NOT with Kh. Qeiyafa; (2) Tel Yarmouth was probably Canaanite (cf. Faust 2012; Faust and Katz 2011), and Philistine pottery was found in the site itself (Philistine pottery is found in all Canaanite sites, but in small quantities; ibid.).[8] The tomb, therefore, fits nicely with the general distribution of Philistine pottery, if one remembers that there were also Canaanites present and so does not simply define sites as either Israelite or Philisitne.[9]

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[7] Ignoring also the possibility that within one site it was possible that more than one ethnic group formed its population.

[8] Maeir et al. also did not mention the fact that the pottery does not belong to the bichrome Philistine pottery, which we discussed in the article, and is later in date, which makes it irrelevant to our original discussion.

[9] We would like to comment on another factual error. On p. 3 Maeir et al. refer to Edelstein and Schreiber 2000 as indicating a south-central European "source" for Philistine "practices". But the finds described by Edelstein and Schreiber have nothing to do with the Philistines! They were reported as coming from in a tomb below Tel 'Eton, and although Philistine pottery was supposedly unearthed in the tomb, this pottery was quite clearly used by Canaanite population which dwelt at the site (Faust 2012: 134-135; Faust and Katz 2011; for the Canaanite population in the region, see also Greenberg 1987; Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011). We should add, for the record, that the finds were unearthed in tomb C3 (from the Iron Age IIA) and not from Tomb C1 (the Iron I tomb), but Maeir et al. had no way of knowing that, so this, at least, is not a shortcoming of theirs.

This is also the situation in Nahal Patish, and even at Tel Qasile, where a number of groups (and not only Philistines) probably resided, as was explicitly suggested by Mazar in the report (Mazar 1985a: 123; see also Bunimovitz and Faust 2001: 4-5; Faust 2006: 206-207, 213-215; Mazar 1985b: 131).

Maeir et al. find that the data do not to fit the "traditional" view of Philistine ethnic traits (p. 6) noting that "the number of 'non-typical' Philistine sites… is now almost equal to that of 'typical' Philistine sites…". When giving the Canaanites their due, the "non-typical" cases disappear, and ALL Iron I Philistine sites behave as expected.[10]

There were local indigenous groups in the region, and those groups negotiated their identity with the Philistines, as well as the Israelites, and even between themselves. Those groups have received growing attention in recent years[11] (inter alia, Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011; Faust and Katz 2011; Faust 2012). Maeir et al. (2013) are aware of this literature, some of which they quoted (on other matters), but continuously ignore the Canaanite groups. Their artificial division of the region between Israelites or Philistines, while ignoring other groups, is a major shortcoming that is responsible for many of their errors.

How is identity constructed?
Maeir et al. criticize the idea that the Philistine identity was created in contrast to local Levantine societies, and that the interaction between groups shaped much of their identity (p. 3). They write (p. 3): "we will argue that Philistine identity was initially focused on maintaining cohesion and preserving continuity with its own past and not with the establishment of identity vis-à-vis local Levantine populations." This understanding of how identity is formed is most puzzling, and runs against the common consensus in studies of ethnicity which views ethnicity (and probably any identity for that matter) as something that is not created in a vacuum, but rather is always negotiated with "others", and is relational. As Bourdieu (1984: 497) wrote: "social identity lies in difference". Indeed, the study of ethnicity is always involved with the study of more than one group, and terms like "ascription by others", "cultural differentiation", "contrastive quality", "opposition", etc., are always used when studying this concept (e.g., Barth 1969; Bank 1996; McGuire 1982; Emberling 1997; Jones 1997; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Blok 1998; Faust 2006; Hodos 2006: 17-18; Weisman 2007; Metcalf 2010; Eriksen 2010; van Binsbergen and Woudhuizen 2012; Wimmer 2013).

Thus, Eriksen (2010: 23) wrote: "(T)he first facet of ethnicity is the application of systematic distinction between insiders and outsiders; between us and them". Wimmer (2013: 3), in a similar vein, states that his comparative study is based on four characteristics, the first of which is that "(S)ocial and symbolic boundaries emerge when actors distinguish between different ethnic categories and

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[10] They repeat this error throughout the article, thus stressing again and again that Philistine traits are missing from "Philistine" sites like Qubur el-Walayda, and hence those traits should no longer be viewed as Philistine (e.g., see Maeir et al. 2013: 8 regarding hearths). And the same is true with their treatment of the "Philistine" temples at Qasile (p. 12). Are they really Philistines? Even the excavator suggested that there were a number of groups at the site (Mazar 1985a: 123). Clearly one of the groups was probably affiliated with the Philistines (e.g., Bunimovitz and Faust 2001: 4-5; Faust 2006: 206-207, 213-215), but whether they were similar to those in Ashdod and Ekron, the nearest Philistine cities, or only a local group that was affiliated with them (politically or economically), is unclear. The nature of the temples themselves is clearly local (e.g., Bunimovitz 1990: 213-216; Negbi 1988; 1989; see also Mazar 1985b: 129-131, where he notes that most of the features in the temples are local).

[11] The existence of local groups was in fact recognized already by the late 1980s (cf. Greenberg 1987).

when they treat members of such categories differently. Each identification ("I am Swiss") obviously implies a categorical boundary (the non-Swiss)…". And Bakker (2007: 263) wrote: "(H)uman cultures and groups, when defining themselves, compare themselves with others". Maeir et al.'s suggestion that the Philistines created their identity in a vacuum and had a separate identity only because they kept contact with their homeland(s) or origins, is unheard of. [12] Indeed, they did not bring a single example for such a unique process, nor did they supply a single reference to show that identity can indeed develop in this way, especially when the archaeological evidence which stood at the core of the original article show that all the groups acknowledged the other group's traits (e.g., the increase in the consumption of pork and the production of Aegean inspired pottery in Philistine sites during the Iron Age I), and this is the next point we would like to comment on.

Even if the Philistines had arrived as a homogenous contingent it would have been difficult to claim that other groups did not influence their identity. However, since Maeir et al. (2013) agree that the Philistines did not arrive as a unified group, it therefore follows that their understanding of Philistine ethnicity is not logical. Since the Levantine Philistine identity was newly created, it must have been formed in relation to something concrete, i.e., to other groups. This can clearly be seen in the archaeological record, which shows that the Philistines defined themselves in contrast to the local groups.

Changes in Material Culture – Ignoring the Data

Maeir et al. (2013) seem to have missed the points that we addressed in the original article (Faust and Lev-Tov 2011). In our 2011 article, we presented a pattern according to which some traits (Philistine-manufactured but Aegean-inspired pottery in addition to regular pork consumption) show a gradual increase in the relative frequency with which they appear in the archaeological record of Iron Age I Philistine sites, and then a sharp decline in the early Iron Age II. This was the focus of our article, but this significant trend was all but ignored by Maeir et al. (2013).[13]

Philistine Pottery and Identity: Although even Maeir et al. (p. 4) admit that Philistine pottery was ethnically sensitive, they fail to explain why this pottery became more and more popular in the Iron I, before disappearing in the Iron II. In our 2011 article we detailed the data from Ashdod and Ekron, and as more data accumulates, it clearly fits with the pattern we presented. Thus, Master and Aja (2011: 130-131) recently published the data from Ashkelon, demonstrating that Philistine pottery increased from 20% in the 12th century to 35% in the 11th century (before, of course, disappearing in the 10th century BCE).

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[12] The internal processes within Philistine society are discussed in more detail elsewhere (Faust 2013; and especially Faust forthcoming), but these "internal" processes do not replace or exclude interaction with other groups – on the contrary: they explains why the "foreign past" became so important, as it served the Philistines in their self-identification **in contrast** to the others – the "natives" (see already Stone 1995: 23). Those are just two sides of the very same process. It must be noted that there are of course internal processes within society, which have nothing to do with ethnicity (although even they, as a by-product, can teach about boundaries, and hence ethnicity; David et al. 1988; see also Hodder 1982; Faust 2006), but identity is always negotiated with someone else.

[13] We explicitly noted that Gath is an exception, and we will expand on this matter below.

Although Maeir et al.'s entire article was devoted to discrediting our scenario, they did not offer an alternative explanation for the data.[14]

It appears that Maeir et al. (2013) unintentionally "masked" the pattern in a sea of information – partially relevant and partially irrelevant, partially correct and partially incorrect – and the large amount of "trees" made them oblivious to the forest.[15] They of course have the right to challenge our explanation and offer an alternative one, but the above-mentioned patterns were the central argument of our article and beg an explanation. They cannot be ignored.

Pork Consumption and Philistine Ethnicity: Why did the Philistine increase their consumption of pork, and then suddenly decrease it at most of their cities?

Maeir et al. (2013) brought to bear data that supposedly disqualified the ethnic association of this trait. But again, the "data" they bring simply "masks" the important information, leading them to mix various types of sites and finds. Some of the sites they bring forth to show that pig consumption was not ethnically sensitive are not Philistine (e.g., Qubur el Walayda, as discussed above, and the same applies to Nahal Patish, as well as to Tel Qasile; see, e.g., Bunimovitz and Faust 2001: 4-5; Faust 2006: 206-207, 213-215).[16] When the "noise" created by the irrelevant information is ignored, one can clearly see that within all the "real" Philistine sites (Ekron, Ashkelon, Ashdod,[17] Gath and Timnah) – pigs were present in high numbers during the Iron I. Ironically, even a brief

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[14] Out of the four "certain" Philistine sites (Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath), three clearly show the pattern. Unfortunately, the relevant data on the fourth (Gath) is currently insufficient to allow any quantitative studies (Zukerman 2012: 265, 303).

[15] Maeir et al. discuss a lot of data, some of it is indeed relevant, but part of it is (as they themselves admit) not always conclusive or even relevant, and parts of it are even (as can be seen throughout this article) incorrect. The superfluous data simply blur the discussion, making it difficult to see what is important and what is not, what needs to be addressed and what can be ignored. It appears that this is responsible for the fact that the authors, in so many instances, missed the obvious. The following are just a few examples: On p. 19, the authors discuss the important finds at Yavneh, but we don't really know the context of the favissa excavated there, who threw away/curated the cultic objects found there, and why. The settlement at the site of Yavneh was not excavated and the favissa was just a chance find with no associated architecture and settlement. We don't know if the settlers were Philistines or not. The information does not, therefore, contribute anything to the discussion, and only obscures patterns. On p. 20 they discuss dog burials, which they themselves admit are inconclusive (ibid). So why discuss them? And the same applies to their discussion of the Phallic-shaped objects found in Gath. They admit that their "origin" is not clear (p. 23), so even for them the objects cannot be relevant. So why discuss them? The discussion of architecture (pp. 9-10) is also irrelevant to what we wrote. Maeir et al. (p. 6, note 5) also report that there were significant numbers of pigs at Tel Kinrot, near the Sea of Galilee. What is the relevance of that observation? Pork is and was also eaten in northern Europe. However, we never suggested that other people in different regions were forbidden from eating pork. In similar fashion, Maeir et al. offer (p. 5) the information that the Philistines ate sheep and goats like the other groups. Does this fact suggest something about their identity and process of consolidation? Just like the discussion of plaster, this is irrelevant.
The forgoing are but a few examples (see also notes 27 and 33 below) where Maeir et al. ignored the obvious and did not identify the significant patterns because those were "drowned" in the sea of information (whether correct or not). They saw too many trees (real or not), and did not see the forest.

[16] Sapir-Hen et al. (2013) had recently also noticed that the inhabitants of the small sites in Philistia did not consume much pork. As suggested here, the simple explanation of this pattern (which corresponds with other differences between these sites and the Philistine centers) is that the small sites were not inhabited by Philistines (more below).

[17] On p. 6 Maeir et al., criticize our remarks about the Ashdod faunal data. We must stress, therefore, that this data fits our scenario. We mentioned the limitation of the data (one box totaling ca. 150 bones, recently found after excavations there ended some 40 years before) simply because this is scientific responsibility. In other words, we do not know why those bones, out of the thousands probably recovered but apparently not saved, were selected for preservation. But assuming that the preserved sample is representative, then the Ashdod material is in line with our conclusions, namely that the Philistines ate significant amounts of pork, especially in comparison with neighboring Canaanites and Israelites.

look at the map Maeir et al. (2013: 5, fig. 2) themselves presented show that during the Iron I there is a clear pattern as far as the consumption of pork is concerned. It is very frequent in Philistine sites (8% and more), whereas in other sites it is insignificant (0-2%). Pork was quite popular in some sites, but was avoided or at least rare in nearby sites (both Israelite and Canaanite), sharing the same ecological unit at the same time (e.g., Faust and Lev-Tov 2011; Faust and Katz 2011; Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011). This is a noteworthy and valid pattern.

In addition to the spatial dimension, we would like to stress that pigs were far less prevalent at the very same sites within Late Bronze Age strata (Killebrew and Lev-Tov 2008, and many references), while their consumption also decreased dramatically (with the exception of Gath, below) in the Iron Age II. The significance of the pattern is therefore clear both spatially and chronologically. There were no ecological-environmental-physiological changes in these periods.[18] What changed was society. Consumption of pork was usually limited in the Late Bronze Age, very popular in the Iron I, but only in a few sites, and then declined in most of those sites in the Iron II. The Philistines presumably consumed much pork because they were used to eating the meat as a dietary staple in their place(s) of origin(s). (Their precise, or general, place(s) of origin is beyond the scope of this paper.) That it was reduced in the end is an expected result of cultural contact and influence. What is surprising is that pork consumption became more and more popular during the Iron I in Philistine sites, before declining in most sites in the Iron II (Hesse and Wapnish 1997; Lev-Tov 2010; Hesse, Fulton and Wapnish 2011: 624-630). Gath is the only known exception (already Faust and Lev-Tov 2011; especially p. 26, note 11; Lev-Tov 2012).

This is the clear pattern. We offered an explanation for it, and we still stand behind it. Maeir et al. (2013) ignored the pattern, and did not offer an alternative explanation for the data. We shall return to this issue when we will discuss the transition to the Iron Age II, and as we will see, the information there only reinforce the ethnic significance of pork consumption.

3. The changes in Philistine society and material culture in the Iron Age II

The changes that took place – or not – in Philistia during the transition to the Iron Age IIA play a prominent role in Maeir et al.'s discussion (esp. pp. 15-25). While the consensus holds that Philistine society experienced profound changes at the time (below), they challenge this view, and bring forth a long list of traits that continue, in their view, from the Iron I to the Iron II. Here, too, the discussion is misinformed on both theoretical and factual grounds. The following is a short discussion of the major problems.

They ignore the obvious

The drastic changes experienced by the Philistine society, as expressed in its material culture, are well known to scholars. The changes were so pronounced, that Dothan's (1982) seminal work did not even discuss the Iron Age II, as she considered the Philistines to have assimilated in the early

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[18] Maeir et al. (2013) argued that there were some unspecified "possible physiological-environmental-constraints" (p. 5; see also p. 6), but did not elaborate on what they were. This unsupported assertion drives scholarship decades backward. Various "environmental" or "ecological" constraints were suggested in the past (e.g., Hesse and Wapnish 1997; on a more general level see also Harris 1985: 67-87), but do not explain the existing pattern, which in our view of the evidence was clearly cultural.

Iron II, writing (in the final paragraph of the book, p. 296) that "Philistine culture lost its uniqueness and vitality and slowly became assimilated into the surrounding Canaanite cultures" (see also ibid., p. 218). Due to the drastic changes and the disappearance of the distinctive material culture, this view was widespread (e.g., Dothan 1982: 296; Dothan and Dothan 1992: 86; see also Oded 1979: 237–8; B. Mazar 1986: 75–82; Bunimovitz 1990). Other scholars, however, argue that the Philistines did not assimilate, and maintained their unique identity throughout the Iron Age. Still, all (until now) have agreed that the Philistine material culture was drastically transformed at the time. The debate is only how to characterize this change: acculturation, fusion or creolization (and more; the issue is beyond the scope of this paper).[19] Thus Uziel (2007: 169) also refers to "the disappearance of traditional Philistine decoration on pottery, as well as of the typical pottery forms, at the end of the Iron Age I", adding "it therefore seems that the process of fusion was not completed until late in the Iron Age I or early in the Iron Age II. From this point on, the changes in the Philistine culture are minimal." (see also Uziel 2007: 168). Shai (2011: 414) also wrote that "during the transition from the Iron I to the Iron II much of the uniqueness of the Philistine culture disappeared, and it became quite similar to that of their neighbors" (see also p. 413). And Gitin (2010: 325) wrote: "(T)hus, by the 10th c. BCE, Philistine material culture markers had all but disappeared from the archaeological record…" (see also Aharoni 1981: 188; Barkay 1992: 334; Ehrlich 1997: 190, 198-201; Mazar 1990: 328; 1992: 301). Similarly, Maeir (2013: 241) himself recently summarized that "…the overall trend appears to be that during the Iron Age IIA, Philistine culture went through a rather intensive process of change. A large portion of the foreign, mostly 'Aegean' components that typified the Iron Age I assemblages are lost". Maeir (ibid) referred to those as "deep changes" (see also p. 240).

It is therefore surprising that Maeir et al. (2013) now claim otherwise. After all, the Philistine, Aegean-inspired pottery disappeared, the quantity of pork consumed decreased dramatically in most sites (again, Gath being an exception), the Philistines adopted the local script, etc. (as noted by all scholars) so how could Maeir et al. now claim otherwise? It seems that in this case, too, the plethora of irrelevant data they mentioned masked the pattern and while they, again, identified some trees, they didn't see the forest.

Let's examine some of the data:

Ceramic changes:[20] The Philistine, Aegean-inspired pottery which was so dominant in the Iron Age I, comprising 20-58% of the assemblages, completely disappear in the Iron II. Hence Dothan

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[19] Throughout the discussion, Maeir et al. (2013) refer to various processes of cultural change, like hybridity, transculturation, etc., but fail to realize that those processes, while explaining change, are not necessarily relevant for the study of ethnicity\identity. A culture, or material culture, can go through a process of change, be it hybridity, acculturation, transculturation, or any other process, but the identity of the people who use this material culture can remain different and distinct from all the sources of inspiration of the change (the issue will be discussed in more details elsewhere).

[20] As far as pottery is concerned, Maeir et al. (2013) claim (p. 4) that what is important are pottery forms, and not decoration. It must be stressed that (1) this would not change the statistics in any significant way; (2) in contrast to their claim, they are not the first to count forms (see already Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011: 42-44, and more below), and (3) that for ethnic negotiation and demarcation decoration was probably more important than any small subtleties in the shape of the neck of the vessel. It is quite clear that decoration was more noticeable to people (present and past) and conveyed clearer messages (see also Braunstein 1998: 179). While form is no doubt important for other purposes, and such fine subtleties are of utmost important for scholars, what people saw and what they more often regarded as impor-

(1982: 218) wrote about "the disappearance of the pottery's distinctively Philistine traits and its complete assimilation into the local pottery around in the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the tenth century BCE". Ben-Shlomo (2005: 185) also noted that in Ashdod, Philistine pottery is "almost non-existent in Stratum X" (dated to the 10th century BCE). And Mazar (1992: 301) summarized that, with the transition to the Iron Age II, "in Philistia, the use of decorated Philistine pottery ceases". Even Maeir (2013: 240) himself noted regarding the Iron IIA pottery at Gath, "the overall feeling is one of deep change and transition…new shapes and decorative patterns are strongly felt" (also p. 241; see also Uziel 2007: 167, 168; Aharoni 1981: 188; Kempinski 1983: 77; Ehrlich 1997: 198-199; Mazar 1990: 328; Barkay 1992: 334; Schreiber 2003: 2; see also Dothan 1989: 11-12).

While Maeir et al. completely ignored (above) the increase in the percentage of this pottery in the Iron I, they could not ignore the well-known disappearance of this pottery in the Iron II. Maeir et al. therefore suggested (pp. 15-16) that the Ashdod Ware of the Iron II (which they label Late Philistine Decorated Ware) is the continuation and development of the Iron I Philistine pottery. Not only is this relatively insignificant (as admitted by Maeir 2013: 240), but the mere suggestion of continuity runs against all we know about the two families of pottery (see extended discussion in Faust 2013; forthcoming):

1) Different decoration. There is no resemblance between the style of the Ashdod ware decoration and the traditional, Aegean-inspired Philistine decoration. The Ashdod Ware decoration is derived from the "local" Phoenician vocabulary – a fact that was known to all those who studied this pottery since the first time it was identified in Ashdod (Dothan and Freedman 1967: 130-131; see also Kempinski 1983: 77; Schreiber 2003: 2, 13; Ben-Shlomo 2006: 23, 69). Hence, Dothan and Freedman (1967: 130) argued that "[T]he style, the decoration, and the finish of these vessels…bear a resemblance to Cypro-Phoenician ware".[21] Later they wrote (Dothan and Freedman 1967: 132): "[A]mong the decorated pottery found, most vessels seem akin to Cyro-Phoenician and black-on-red ware, but all appear to have been made locally". Ben-Shlomo (2010: 174) wrote that the decoration is "lacking any Aegean-style motifs". The Ashdod Ware was not developed from the traditional Philistine, Aegean-inspired decoration, but was rather a new creation, influenced by the Phoenician world that grew into importance and started to take its place as an economic power at this time (e.g., Markoe 2000; Aubet 2001; more below).

The difference is even more striking when one realizes that the two styles transmit completely different, almost opposing messages. While the Aegean-inspired Philistine decoration exhibits and even stresses its "foreignness" (Faust and Lev-Tov 2011; also Stone 1995: 23), it is clear that the Levantine, Phoenician-inspired Ashdod Ware transmitted a message of integration.

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tant was probably the decoration (this can also be seen in the extensive literature on style; e.g. various papers in Conkey and Hastorf 1990). Notably, even during the heyday of the New, or Processual, archaeology, when the study of ethnicity was not regarded as a worthwhile enterprise, decoration was viewed as the main channel to study it (if someone was willing to do it) (cf. Jones 1997; De Boer 1990).

[21] They noted, however, that (ibid.: 130-132) "there are differences significant enough to warrant giving the category a special name "Ashdod ware".

2) The new decoration was applied to different types of vessels (e.g., Ben-Shlomo 2006: 46), mainly to small, closed vessels such as jugs, used for storage and food preparation (though not cooking) (see also Ben-Shlomo et al. 2004: figures 1-4; Shai et al. 2008: figures 1-2), whereas the Aegean-inspired decoration was applied mainly to open vessels such bowls and kraters or to other vessels used for food and drink consumption (Bunimovitz 1999: 153, 155; Killebrew and Lev-Tov 2008; cf., Yasur-Landau 2010: 264, table 7.4, 331, 344; Steel 2004). This also suggests that it carries a completely different message, probably for different audiences and used at different occasions. In the Iron Age I it was directed to guests – to the outside – probably to reaffirm connections and affiliations between individuals and (mainly) groups (below). In the Iron Age II it was directed mainly toward the domestic sphere, while at the same time showing affinity to the Phoenician world.

3) Ashdod Ware is much less frequent in the ceramic assemblages of Philistia than the pottery that is supposed to be its predecessor. While Philistine pottery formed some 20-58% of the assemblages within Iron I Philistine sites (above), the Ashdod ware appears "in much smaller quantities" (Ben-Shlomo et al. 2004: 20; Ben-Shlomo 2006: 208; see also p. 211) and it comprised (at best) less than 10% of the assemblages (and usually much less) in the relevant Iron II strata (Ben-Shlomo et al. 2004: 20). This clearly shows that it could not have fulfilled the same social functions as the earlier Aegean-inspired Philistine pottery.

It is clear, therefore, that the changes through time were more significant than any cross-temporal continuity. The hallmark of the Philistine pottery – its Aegean connection and its foreignness – was lost, and the style of decoration became more similar to that of other contemporary societies in the region.

Food consumption:[22]

Pork: We have discussed the significance of pork consumption above, and here we would just like to stress that decline in the consumption of pigs was identified at Ekron, discussed in our article in detail, as well as in Ashkelon, where it comprises less than 1% in the late Iron Age (Hesse, Fulton and Wapnish 2011: 624, 626, 627, 628, 630), and Tel Batash, where it comprised 0.9% (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 283).[23] Gath is the only known exception, but this is indeed a unique site (below).

Grass pea lentils: in order to show continuity from the Iron Age I to the Iron Age II in food habits, Maeir et al. bring in an additional trait, and claim (pp. 7, 17) that the consumption of grass pea lentil (*Lathyrus sativus*) is a Philistine trait, practiced in both periods. Cultivated *Lathyrus* specimens were unearthed in five sites on the coastal plain (Mahler-Slasky and Kislev 2010). Chronologically, the sites are spread from the Middle Bronze Age (Tel Nami),[24] through Late Bronze Age (Tel Batash and Tel Miqne [pre-Philistine phase]), late Iron I (Tel Qasile) to the late Iron II (Ash-

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[22] They also mention (p. 20) dog consumption, but admit that it is inconclusive, so we will not address it here.

[23] It is not clear to which part of the Iron Age the finds should be attributed, but it appears that the late Iron Age II is the most appropriate setting, as this is the time to which most of the finds are dated (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 183). As we will see below, it is possible that during the Iron Age IIA the site was under Israelite control (ibid., 277-279), but it is quite clear that during the Iron IIB-C the site was mainly Philistine (and it is clear that the population was not Israelite) (ibid., 279-282).

[24] For the MBIIA finds, see also Kislev et al. 1993.

kelon).[25] The above chronological distribution shows that most of this small number of sites pre-date the Philistine settlement in Canaan and only in one case was it found in an unequivocal Philistine settlement (late Iron Age Ashkelon). Moreover, even if Maeir et al. accept the historicity of the stories about the Philistines in the book of Genesis (currently rejected by the vast majority of scholars), hence attributing the early occurrences to them, the mere fact that grass pea lentil is currently absent from Iron Age I levels of all major excavated Philistine sites (Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron, which even Maeir et al., agree were major Philistine centers), should have been sufficient to reject the suggestion that it was a Philistine trait (and even the small quantities in which it is found – whenever and wherever – are also a warning against its being an ethnic marker or behavior). Furthermore, Tel Nami is located outside Philistia, and one should also note (not mentioned by Maeir et al.) that grass pea lentils are found in Bronze Age Syrian sites (e.g., Pena-Chocarro and Rottoli 2007: 117; Riehl 2008: S46). Hence, the consumption of this plant *cannot* be associated with the Philistines.

Linguistic changes (textual evidence)

Maeir et al.'s lengthy discussion (pp. 10-12) does not cover the fact that while in the Iron I the Philistines apparently used a foreign script and language, in the Iron II they adopted a local one, as they have to admit (regarding the language,[26] see p. 10; see also Singer 1994: 332-337: Uziel 2007: 167).[27] Even Maeir (2013: 241) writes about "the adoption of a Semitic language and writing system". In this case, too, most of the discussion is irrelevant, and the wealth of details again leads the authors to miss the larger trend by focusing on smaller issues.

Changes were identified also in religion (e.g., Press 2012: 221-222) and more, but the above is sufficient to prove our point.

Settlement Patterns

When trying to understand the fate of the Philistines in the transition from the Iron I to the Iron II, settlement patterns are probably the most relevant piece of information. Maeir et al. refer to it by "name" (p. 23), but essentially ignored this line of argument. Their only, very simplistic, reference to this type of data was that it is not reasonable that Judah ruled Gath (p. 26) and that they can't see how Philistia was weakened in the face of Judah. In fact, in our original article (Faust and Lev-Tov

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[25] *Lathyrus sativus* was found in four of those sites (ibid.), but this does not change the overall pattern.

[26] They ignore the data on changes in script during the Iron Age II, concentrating instead on a detailed but irrelevant study of the Philistine script in the Iron Age I (pp. 10-12). Thus on p. 11 there is a long discussion that simply masks the fact that the inscription is not alphabetic. This is an important piece of information which is required to assess whether there was a change during the transition from the Iron I to the Iron II or not, but that simple observation is "drowned" in a sea of irrelevant data. On p. 10 Maeir et al. refer to "This evidence for varied languages". Not only did they fail to cite any evidence for that, but even if they had, it would not have contributed to the discussion of change in Philistine society. It simply adds irrelevant data. On the same page (10) they state that "it is not clear at all that the foreign languages went out of use completely". Perhaps not, but they were certainly replaced by a local one. The entire discussion masks the simple "fact" that there was an important change in language, and that the Philistines adopted the Canaanite script in the Iron II. On. p. 11 Maeir et al. note that "…it is quite possible that the writing system and/or languages used by Philistine scribes had nothing to do with the languages spoken by the individual on whose behalf the inscription was executed". Whether this is likely or not is irrelevant. Perhaps not all of their original language was "lost", but the data clearly show that the Philistines adopted a local script. Maeir et al.'s discussion on p. 12 is likewise misleading: The pattern is clear – the Philistines had a foreign script at the beginning, and a local one in the end – that is the major point.

[27] I (Faust) will discuss the question of circumcision (Maeir et al., p. 20) elsewhere (also Faust 2006: 85-91).

2011) we never claimed that Judah ruled Gath at any time. We claimed that Gath was independent and even grew in significance during the Iron II (2011: 26, note 11), but that Philistia at large was significantly weakened (see also Stager 1998: 171; Mazar 2007: 135; Ehrlich 1996: 53-55; 1997: 199-201). As this issue was not the focus of our article, we based the argument on changes in material aspects. But we must stress that it is also based on clear and dramatic changes in settlement patterns within Philistia.

In the late Iron Age I Philistia (both the coastal strip and the inner coastal plain) prospered, and some 22 sites (not all inhabited by Philistines, but all probably politically controlled by them) are known from excavations in the southern coastal plain. The Shephelah to the east of Philistia, by contrast, was sparsely settled to the east of Gath. That area was a relatively empty zone, and only toward the easternmost edge of the Shephelah were a few sites, namely at Beth-Shemesh, Yarmouth, Tel 'Eton and Tell Beit Mirsim, settled. The Iron II, however, witnessed a dramatic reversal. Settlement in Philistia declined dramatically - most of the smaller settlements (towns and villages) there (regardless of their ethnic composition) were abandoned altogether, e.g., Qubur el Walayda, Nahal Patish, Tel Zippor, Tel Mor, Umm el Baqar, Tel Ma'aravim, the haserim in the Negev, and more (all in all, about 14 sites were abandoned at the time). Furthermore, even the existing sites experienced change. Thus, Ekron, and probably Ashkelon, declined in size and importance while Tel Batash and Tel Hesi (and maybe also other sites like Tel Sera) probably became Israelite/Judahite at the time. Gath, by contrast, grew in size, as perhaps did Ashdod as well. The Shephelah, on the other hand, was gradually filled with settlers, and became part of Judah/Israel (Faust 2013, and many references[29]).

From the above it is clear that Philistia was drastically weakened at the time, and that the relative center of gravity moved toward the coast, with only Gath being a large Philistine stronghold, facing Israel\Judah in this area.

Continuity to the Iron II?

As noted, Maeir et al.'s negation of the changes in Philistine material culture is surprising. Whatever the process that caused it, the dramatic changes are acknowledged by practically every scholar who has studied Philistine society (e.g., Dothan, Mazar, Gitin, Stone, Uziel, Ben-Shlomo, and even Maeir himself, above). Claiming that the Philistines used plaster, and that this shows cultural continuity doesn't hold water (even if the plaster does). The Philistines in the Iron II made pottery vessels and built their houses of mudbricks. This cannot serve as evidence for continuity.

It must be stressed that one could find points of more significant continuity than those brought by Maeir et al., but since the inhabitants of Iron II Philistia were the descendants of the Iron I settlers there (and even maintained their "Philistine" identity), this is inevitable. What is important is not some evidence for continuity, but the evidence for change. The case for change over time is surprisingly abundant and strong, and is evidenced in traits that were shown to be meaningful at the time. The drastic changes demonstrate a Philistine society that experienced a significant transformation.

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[29] New sites, settled or resettled in the Iron Age II after a settlement hiatus, and which according to the excavators were Judahite sites, include Lachish, Tel Zayit, Tel Burna, etc.

This leads us to another major shortcoming of Maeir et al.'s approach:

Gath, and "Site-Centered Archaeology"

In their attempt to prove "continuity", and in order to counter the arguments that Philistia was weakened, Maeir et al. bring forth mainly the data from Gath (pp. 2, 15-25),[30] and attempt to extrapolate from this to the situation in Philistia at large.

Thus, they argue that (p. 17) there is evidence that some cooking techniques at Gath continued into the Iron II. Continuity in Gath is also stressed on p. 19 regarding architecture.[31] And the same is true regarding the horned altar (p. 20, also p. 21, note 19).[32] Other suggestions for continuity at Gath are supplied on p. 22 (notched scapulae) and p. 23 (though they admit the "source" is not clear). On p. 23 they stress the size of Gath (concerning which they are probably correct). Not only are most of those things which they tout as examples meaningless and do not teach of real continuity, but since most of this evidence is from Gath, even the meaningful ones only point to the site's uniqueness (as suggested in Faust and Lev-Tov 2011: 26, note 11).

The site-centered approach of the article leads them to extrapolate from their site to Philistia at large, and hence to miss the significance of their own data (also pp. 26-7). Gath is the exception rather than the rule, and it should be understood as such, rather than as a basis for reconstructing the reality in Philistia.

The explanation for the unique position of Gath was already offered in our article.[33] After presenting the exceptional position in Gath as far as the sensitive trait of pork consumption is concerned, we noted (p. 26, note 11):

> Gath was the largest Philistine city on the eastern periphery of Philistia (especially in the tenth century BC). It is possible that due to the regular contact with the Israelites, ethnic boundaries were more visible here also during the beginning of the Iron Age II. Still, due to the partial nature of the data from Gath, any conclusion is premature, and we need to await more data before we can develop any detailed historical scenario to explain the finds there.

We expand on Gath's position elsewhere (Faust 2013).

Summary

Maeir et al.'s rejoinder is, unfortunately, misguided as far as theory is concerned and ill-informed as far as the data is concerned.[34] They attempt to challenge our views regarding (1) the Philistine

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[30] On p. 2, for example, they write that their data is derived "especially [from] our excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath in Philistia".

[31] The continuity is doubted, but it must be noted again that the example Maeir et al. provide is from Gath

[32] This case, too, is doubtful, as it is quite clear from the photograph that the altar is broken, and the explanation that it was not finished seems very weak – but our point is that even if it does show continuity, this is relevant only for the exceptional site of Gath.

[33] Contrary to Maeir et al.'s accusation (p. 6) that we left the data from Gath unexplained.

[34] A few examples for additional factual errors in Maeir et al.'s article: Beth-Shemesh (p. 24) is not a 25 hectare site, but about one tenth that size (some 3 hectares), and Jerusalem at the time was much larger than 6 hectares (even according to skeptical scholars such as Steiner 1998: 154; see also Reich 2000: 116). Maeir et al.'s claim that Tel Burna should be associated with Gath (p. 24) is contradicted by the excavators. They explicitly interpreted it as a Judahite border town

origin and initial settlement in the southern coastal plain, (2) the mechanism of creating and maintaining Philistine identity during the Iron I, and (3) the transformation of Philistine identity in the beginning of the Iron II.

As far as **Philistine Origins** are concerned**,** Maeir et al. debate with a straw man. They misquote us, and then debate with a view we did not endorse. We did not really address the issue, which was explicitly beyond the scope of our article and was mentioned only in passim, mainly to state that it is beyond the scope of our work. Furthermore, the thesis they promote, and pretend to be novel, was suggest by us in passim (and briefly) twice in the article (and was originally suggested by others, e.g., Yasur-Landau 2010).

Maeir et al. claim that the Philistines defined their own identity in isolation from their environment, and suggest that the Philistines developed in vacuum, and with no interaction with their neighbors. This is indeed a very new and novel suggestion that, if supported by any data, will revolutionize the study of ethnicity and identity formation. Mainstream views of ethnicity, however, and of any identity for that matter, claim that it is always created in contrast to other groups, through a constant interaction with them. Unfortunately, Maeir et al. fail to explain how this unique process operated, nor did they supply a single example or bibliographical reference for such a process.

As far as **Philistine Identity** is concerned, Maeir et al., confuse origins and identity, and discuss them interchangeably. This is methodologically unsound, and led them astray.

Another major problem in their discussion is that they treat all the settlement within the boundaries of Philistia (without explicitly explaining where those boundaries were) as Philistine in terms of population make-up, hence ignoring the existence of other groups, such as the Canaanites or other local groups that were neither Philistine nor Israelite. Most of the examples which they claim contradict traditional understandings of Philistine behavior are simply non-Philistine sites in terms of inhabitants' ethnicity.

The bottom line is clear: Whatever the Philistines' origin(s) was/were – we didn't discuss the issue (and are not doing so here) – they crystallized in the southern coastal plain as an ethnic group during the Iron Age I, defining or redefining themselves VERSUS the local population (Israelites, and also Canaanites). They used their foreignness as a tool to formulate their identity and for social consolidation, and increased their usage of the foreign traits as the Iron I progressed, in order to demarcate the differences between themselves and the local groups that existed in the area at the time.

Had Maeir et al. argued that the Philistines came as one homogenous group, it might have been possible to claim that their identity as a group within the southern Levant was not really dependent on and formed via interaction with their new neighbors. Rather, had this argument been made, Maeir et al. could have hypothesized that Philistine identity in the Levant was based on the cohesive group

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facing Gath (Shai et al., 2012). And the same is true regarding Tel Zayit: Maeir et al., quote Tappy on this matter, but according to him this association came into being (even then only partially) only during the late 9th century (Tappy 2011: 127*), and during most of the Iron IIA the site was part of Judah (Tappy 2009: 455-456, 459)! Kh. el-Alya is mentioned in association with Qeiyafa, instead of Tel Yarmouth (p. 16). Maeir et al. (p. 4) claim that until them all scholars examined only the Philistine decorated ware, and refer to Bunimovitz and Lederman 2011 as an example for this approach. But Bunimovitz and Lederman (2011: 42-44) DID count the non-decorated pottery.

identity they brought with them along with their unified ties to a single place of origin. But since Maeir et al. agree that the Philistines did not come as unified group, they instead must have created a new identity in their new setting, something that had to have been negotiated with their new neighbors. Thus the (surprising) increase in the Philistines' use of some foreign traits at that time simply demonstrates that these identity markers served them while interacting with the other local populations.

Concerning **the Philistines' fate during the Iron Age II**, the evidence unequivocally shows that they experienced significant changes. The changes have been variously characterized by different scholars, but whether one calls it creolization as some prefer, or some other term, the point is the same: In this period the Philistines' material culture shows profound blending with, but not whole-sale adoption of, markers from surrounding peoples. As far as settlement patterns are concerned, the Philistines were in decline. Many sites were abandoned (e.g., Tel Zippor [Biran 1993: 1526-27], Tel Mor [Dothan 1993: 1073-1074; Barako 2007: 246], Qubur el-Walayda [Lehmann et-al., 2010: 151-154], Nahal Patish [Nahshoni 2008; 2009], Umm el Baqar [Nahshoni and Tallis 2008], Tel Ma'aravim [Oren and Mazar 1974; 1993], the haserim in the Negev [Gophna 1966; Gazit 1994; 1996: 14; 2008]), and others shrank in size (e.g., Ekron [Dothan and Gitin 1993: 1056; Dothan and Gitin 2008: 1955]) or became Israelite settlements (or came under Israelite control e.g., Tel Batash; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 274, 277-278; for the process, see also Stager 1998: 171; Mazar 2007: 135; Ehrlich 1996: 53-55; 1997: 199-201; Faust 2013, and many additional references). Gath is the notable exception (and perhaps also Ashdod). The Philistines ceased manufacturing their Aegean-inspired pottery, and significantly reduced their consumption of pork (with the exception of Gath). These and other changes (adoption of local script, figurines, etc.) indicate that during the early Iron Age II the Philistines drastically changed the nature of their boundary maintenance, and in fact lowered the boundaries they had maintained for two hundred years.

Stressing their foreignness was a good strategy when the Philistines fought for hegemony in a region already having various "native" groups, but it was not beneficial after they lost the battle for hegemony and when they attempted to "merge" into the new political economy that evolved by the Iron Age II. The new strategy is revealed by an examination of all traits that were shown to be ethnically sensitive in the Iron I, and especially by the abandonment of the foreign, Aegean-inspired pottery, replaced by the adoption of the local, Phoenician inspired pottery (Ashdod Ware). It is likely that the political changes, reflected by the aforementioned settlement pattern shifts, are also responsible for the quick process in which the Philistines adopted many local traits. In a short period of time (in archaeological terms) the Philistines stopped using many of the "foreign" traits they had previously used to demarcate their population, and although still maintaining their separate identity, adopted a number of local, Levantine material culture traits in place of the older foreign-inspired ones.

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