MEGIDDO V
THE 2004-2008 SEASONS

VOLUME I
TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
SONIA AND MARCO NADLER INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

MONOGRAPH SERIES
NUMBER 31

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THE 2004-2008 SEASONS
VOLUME I
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WINONA LAKE, INDIANA
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2013
The paved courtyard of the cultic complex of Levels J-2 and J-3 was first excavated by the University of Chicago in the late 1930s (Fig. 2.4). The pavement was preserved in three segments: Locus 4118 in the central part of the complex, Locus 4064 in the southern part, and Locus 4008 in the northeast. Locus 4008 (Pavement 08/J/200 in the renewed excavations) — the most elaborate pavement segment — included 44 incised stone slabs depicting human and animal figures and signs and symbols. It was thus named the Picture Pavement. Following the renewed excavations in Area J, the pavement and the ‘curving wall’, supposedly enclosing the courtyard, were attributed to Level J-2 (Finkelstein and Ussishkin 2000a: 52).

Pavement 4008 had two phases (Loud 1948: 61), which were termed ‘upper pavement’, associated with the curving stone wall, and ‘lower pavement’, attributed to an earlier phase. The upper pavement was removed by Loud, revealing a stepped-like pavement similar to a staircase. The removal of this upper pavement was recorded in Loud’s report with only one photograph (Fig. 2.5). At the end of the University of Chicago excavation, a high baulk was left along the northern edge of the excavated trench (Fig. 2.6).

During the 70 years that passed since Loud’s excavation, the pavement’s condition deteriorated. About half of it was covered with earth and stone debris collapsed from the section created along the northern edge of Area BB. Other parts of the exposed pavement, especially those on its edges, were washed away.

The impetus for the renewed excavations in Lower Area J was my study of the Picture Pavement (Keinan 2007), in which the relation between the various scenes incised on the slabs, the temple complex and the people who visited the temple were reexamined. Based on stylistic and conceptual considerations I attributed the pavement’s incisions to the domain of Egyptian art. Questions regarding the function of the pavement within the earliest EB IB cultic complex and the significance of the engravings incised on many of its slabs arose from this study. Thus, the goals of the 2008 season in Lower Area J were:

1. To re-expose the Picture Pavement, record its remains to the maximal extent, check if some of the incised slabs are still in situ and look for new or unnoticed incisions;
2. To reassess the relationship between the pavement and the University of Chicago’s ‘curving wall’ (Loud 1948: 61, Fig. 390);
3. To check whether the lower pavement extends farther to the north.

PROGRESS OF WORK

The first part of the excavation was dedicated to the removal of the collapsed debris from the northern edge of Area BB upon the pavement.1 This was done in two adjoining squares, labelled Squares 1 and 2 (Loci 08/J/010 and 08/J/041 accordingly; Figs. 2.7–11).2 In both squares the collapse layer sloped steeply from west to east and from north to south.

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1 The dump zone was set at about 25 m east of the excavated area, at the eastern edge of the tell (see Fig. 2.1).
2 Lower Area J used a local grid, specifically laid for the excavation of the Picture Pavement, referred to here as Square 1, Square 2 and Incision A.
Fig. 2.4: Plan of the Stratum XIX Temple (Loud 1948: Fig. 390).
Fig. 2.5: The stepped-like pavement. Note the curving wall at the bottom right and the northern baulk at the bottom, looking south (Loud 1948: Fig. 146).

Fig. 2.6: Picture Pavement 4008; photograph taken during excavation, looking northwest (courtesy of the Oriental Institute, the University of Chicago).
Square 1 was located directly to the north of the exposed pavement segment. The original eastern edge of the pavement was traced in the western part of the square; the eastern part of the square had no finds at the elevation of the pavement. By comparing the slabs that were found with the University of Chicago’s original excavation photos, we determined that the original northern baulk of Area BB was located just a few cm to the north of Square 1’s northern section.

In Square 2 the pavement was revealed in almost the entire area. In its northwestern part some roughly rectangular slabs were found. This part of the pavement, which seemed to have been laid as a staircase, was the segment discovered under the upper pavement removed by Loud. He also removed some of these lower slabs – probably an indication that they were incised. This slab removal was not recorded by the University of Chicago team; therefore, if these slabs were incised, the depicted scenes remain unknown.

After excavating these two squares, the southern half of the baulk between them was removed, revealing additional pavement slabs. In both squares the incised slabs had been removed during the University of Chicago excavation, hence the ‘negatives’ of the removed slabs could be traced (Fig. 2.8). Most of those ‘negatives’ match known slabs that were removed and published (see Appendix to Part II), but in some cases, unexpected ‘negatives’ of unknown slabs were found. Some slabs were found broken, probably due to the destruction caused by the collapsing stones of the northern baulk. Twelve slabs included some incisions and decoration patterns not known thus far; one of them is of particular interest.

The second part of the excavation in Sub-Area Lower J comprised a $3 \times 2$ m Incision (A) into the line of the University of Chicago’s baulk at the northern edge of Area BB. It was cut at the western half of Square 2’s northern baulk.
While removing the collapsed debris in this incision, we found part of the University of Chicago’s ‘curving wall’ (Wall 08/J/21). This is the southeastern edge of the segment that had been uncovered by Loud (see Fig. 2.5, bottom right). The contour of the original northern baulk left by the Chicago Expedition was detected just to the north of the wall. Continuing the excavation in this incision revealed Pavement 08/J/200 – part of the lower pavement unearthed by Loud. The wall was built later than the pavement, as the pavement slabs continued under it, at least a few cm northwards (Fig. 2.9), and as an earth layer of a few cm separated the pavement from the wall. This was also the case with Pavement 4064 and the wall on top of it, which were re-examined in 1994 (Finkelstein and Ussishkin 2000a: 52, where the pavement was assigned to Level J-2 and the later wall to Level J-3).

After reaching the pavement’s level in the 2 × 2 m test incision, the latter was extended another metre to the north in order to excavate a larger portion of the original University of Chicago’s baulk and achieve a better picture of the stratigraphy (Fig. 2.10).

THE STRATIGRAPHY

LEVEL J-2

The earliest remains in the incision included a number of stones that appeared to be laid as a wall (08/J/30, Fig. 2.12). This possible earlier wall was five rows wide (1.24 m) and had one course of stones. A collapsed layer of medium-sized stones (08/J/176) to its east may have originated from this wall. A layer of dark
brown compact soil (08/J/161) was found above Wall 08/J/30 and its collapse layer. Level J-2 Pavement 08/J/200 did not extend northwards in this area. The revealed edge of Pavement 08/J/200 in this square is exactly the edge that was uncovered by the University of Chicago’s excavation.

Compact mudbrick material (08/J/215) unearthed under one of the pavement’s slabs (see Slab D below) is part of the make-up laid prior to the construction of the courtyard’s pavement.

**LEVEL J-3**

This level included Wall 08/J/21 – the University of Chicago’s enclosure wall of Stratum XIX – and some collapsed debris to its east. The exposed part of Wall 08/J/21 was actually its original eastern edge. It had one course on its northern part and two courses on the southern part. This part of the wall is wider than was previously thought. Loud did not uncover this wall to its entire width in this area, hence the University of Chicago’s Stratum XIX plan depicted it as getting narrower as it goes eastwards (see Fig. 2.4). It is now clear that the eastern edge of Wall 08/J/21 has exactly the same width as its western part that was unearthed by the University of Chicago team. Therefore, Wall 08/J/21 can be reconstructed as 1.5-m-wide throughout its length (Fig. 2.13). The relationship between this wall and the upper pavement remains unclear, since the latter had been fully removed by Loud. It is assumed that they were contemporaneous (Finkelstein and Ussishkin 2000a: 52).

The remains of Wall 08/J/21 could have served as a stone foundation for a mudbrick superstructure, or more likely, there could have been additional stone courses, as hinted by some large and medium-sized
stones found to its east, which may have collapsed from it. The latest collapse layer of this level is Locus 08/J/140, which included some plaster patches and a mud ‘surface’ to the east. The plaster may have originated from Wall 08/J/21. The lighter brown ‘surface’ may be interpreted as brick collapse.

**LEVEL J-4(?)**

The elements described below, all found above Wall 08/J/21, seem to belong to Level J-4, though no physical connection with the monumental construction of this level farther west could be established. This level consisted of a series of light brown/pink clayish surfaces (08/J/134) laid over mudbrick material (08/J/134). Laid in a shallow pit beneath the clay surfaces were the fully articulated remains of a fetus/infant of either a sheep or a goat (08/J/135). Above the clayish surface was a thin layer of phytolith and an occupational layer above it – a horizontal ashy accumulation (08/J/116) containing a large quantity of charcoal.
Fig. 2.12: Wall 08/J/21 and Wall 08/J/30 just below it on the left, looking north.

Fig. 2.13: Suggested reconstruction of Wall 08/J/21 (in black), after Loud 1948: Fig. 390 (in grey).
INCISED SLABS

Some incisions and decoration patterns that have not been observed (or at least not published) thus far were found on 12 of the exposed slabs of Pavement 08/J/200 (see Figs. 2.11, 2.14a–b; Table 2.3).

TABLE 2.3. INCISED SLABS FOUND DURING THE 2008 SEASON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slab</th>
<th>Square</th>
<th>Measurements (cm)</th>
<th>Elevation (m)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>150.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63 × 21</td>
<td>151.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Incision A</td>
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<td>152.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>151.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28 × 16</td>
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<td>K</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38 × 21</td>
<td>151.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46 × 33</td>
<td>151.84</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Slab A was not fully exposed since it continued into the square’s western baulk. It has two parallel lines incised at its bottom right, and a circular depression that may or may not be natural to its left.

Slab B has two parallel lines at its left part. A natural crack is located to its right.

Slab C has three sets of two parallel short lines: one on the left, one in the centre and one on the right part of the slab. The two lines on the right are only roughly parallel, the bottom line being much shorter than the top line. This slab was also part of the pavement below the upper pavement.

Slab D includes the most elaborate and significant incisions (Fig. 2.15). It was part of the stepped-like pavement found by Loud below the upper pavement. The main element, incised at its centre, is a human male figure holding a spear. The figure is facing right, holding the spear in his left hand. Three circles in relief represent the eyes and mouth. In addition, the figure has a pointed beard. His breast is emphasized by two circles in relief. He is wearing a short skirt and a belt with a dagger; the belt has two bulges at its centre, and the skirt has three bulges on its right side, all in relief. The right hand was destroyed by what seems to be an intentional strike made at a later stage. Additional blows include a semicircle of strikes on the left half of the slab, a diagonal line of strikes on the right half of the slab and a few strikes on the top edge of the slab. Another incision on the slab seems to depict a bird above a net pattern, on the right half of the slab. A few incisions around it and around the human figure remain unidentified. Four groups of parallel short lines are incised on the right edge of the slab.
Slab E  constituted part of the stepped-like pavement. The two hind legs of an animal (note the emphasized calcaneus), maybe depicting a bull, are incised at the bottom left. Parts of the animal’s belly and tail are also preserved. The top right area of the slab includes incisions that seem to be part of a larger, worn depiction: one is a soft wavy line that forms a pointed hat-like shape. There are additional incisions on its top and bottom, including four short parallel lines.

Slab F  was also part of the stepped-like pavement segment found under the upper pavement. It has nine incised lines at its southeastern corner. They are arranged in two groups, one of five parallel lines (top) and the other of four parallel lines (bottom). In the first group the lines are longer than those in the second group, except for the top-most line, which is very short and may have originally been longer.

Slab G  was also part of the lower pavement. The large crack at its centre is natural. It has many incised lines on its surface. Four lines are incised above the large crack: two of them are horizontal, and the other two lines, incised closer to the left horizontal line, are diagonal. Two parallel lines with four short parallel lines between them are also incised above the crack, on the right. Additional lines are incised below the large crack: six short parallel lines close to the slab’s bottom left edge, and another line to their top right; another line in the centre; two horizontal parallel lines on the right side of the slab, with a net pattern between them.

Slab H  was also part of the step-like pavement segment found under the upper pavement. It is located one slab away from Wall 08/J/21. This slab has many incised lines, arranged in three main groups. The first group at the top part of the slab has three long horizontal parallel lines, and another line, not as straight as the others and not exactly parallel to them. The second group is at the bottom of the slab; it has one long horizontal line, and at least three other short lines, parallel to it. Another short line is incised to the right of these lines. The third group of lines is located on the right part of the slab. It is a design of three horizontal parallel lines, and a vertical line that intersects them in the middle.

Slab I  was already exposed prior to the excavation in this square. It is located at the southern edge of the preserved pavement. It has a circle of at least 19 small depressions, probably made by blows of a stone. Those depressions look like small ‘cup-marks’. The four depressions in the eastern part of the slab are deeper and clearer than the other depressions. A few other lines are incised on the surface of this slab; some of them may be natural cracks: three parallel lines are incised at the centre; another line is incised on the western part of the slab; another line is incised on its eastern part.

Slab J  was part of the step-like pavement segment found under the upper pavement. It includes a few incisions to the right: two parallel lines, ending in one short vertical line, and another line branching twice to additional short lines to their bottom.

Slab K  has numerous incisions, especially of straight lines and geometrical shapes. In the upper left are four straight lines extending from a single point. A quadrangle and two parallel lines are incised below them. A human-like shape (stick figure) appears at the centre of the slab, with a few incised lines extending from its top, bottom and sides. A rectangle with two lines incised in it can be seen nearby. A triangle with a line dividing it and two parallel lines extending from it are in the top right. A worn portion of a larger incision is located at the bottom: a triangle-like shape is incised next to two curving lines. There are additional incisions inside the shape: a line parallel to its top side, and two short parallel lines on the left. Many other lines are incised on the slab’s surface.
Fig. 2.14: Incised slabs.
Fig. 2.15: Photograph and drawing (reconstructed) of Slab D.
Slab L was part of the step-like pavement segment found under the upper pavement. At its centre are two curving lines ending at a single point, with eight short parallel lines between them; one of the short lines continues to curve upwards. The incision as a whole reminds one of a depiction of a scorpion, with its narrowing body and two semicircular claws.

**DISCUSSION**

The excavation of Incision A showed that the Level J-2 Picture Pavement 08/J/200 did not extend farther to the north. Most of the incisions on the slabs of this pavement seem random and are very difficult to interpret. One motif (the pattern of two parallel lines) seems to repeat itself on at least nine of our 12 slabs. This motif was also incised on some of the slabs discovered by Loud (1948: Pl. 281: 31–33). The motif of the net pattern, appearing on two slabs (D and G), is also familiar from the previously found slabs (ibid.: Pls. 271: 1, 272: 4, 280: 26–29, 282: 34) and so is the motif of the short parallel lines between two long parallel lines (Slabs G and L; ibid.: Pl. 282: 36). The incised decoration on the edges of Slabs D, F and G (a group of four to six short parallel lines) is similar to a pattern on one of the slabs discovered by Loud – five parallel lines on the edge of a slab (Loud 1948: Pl. 277: 16). Slab H has an incision identical to an Egyptian potter’s mark (van den Brink 1992: 283, group XLI; example on p. 290, Fig. 11, Group XV No. 5–c 308)
Another affinity with contemporary Egyptian motifs may be found in the scorpion incised on Slab L (assuming that the identification is correct).\(^3\) The animal incision on Slab E, represented by its hind legs, is a very typical depiction on the Picture Pavement; characteristic is the emphasized calcaneus on the back of the left leg (e.g., Loud 1948: Pls. 275: 10–11, 277: 14–16).

Slab D deserves special attention. Similar to other human figures incised on slabs from Megiddo, the figure incised on this slab is one of the very few examples of human depictions in EB I in the southern Levant. Its general form and motifs are typical of the Megiddo incisions: the body’s position – upper part \(\textit{en face}\), head and legs in profile, the beard and the belt, are common to almost all human figures incised on the pavement’s slabs. The spear is similar to another spear incised on a different slab (see Fig. 2.16: 7, right): a triangle-shaped spearhead placed on a long vertical staff. The figure on Slab D shows clear resemblance to the harpist depicted on another slab (see Fig. 2.16, 5, left); both share the same attributes: the eyes and mouth, the prominent breast, the belt and the dagger. However, whereas the face and breast of the harpist are incised, those of the figure on Slab D are raised in relief. Another interesting incision is a possible bird depiction, facing right, on the right part of the slab. Schematically incised, the bird is depicted only by the outline contour of its body, which is not complete at the tail area. The bird depiction lacks legs; instead there is a net pattern incised just below it. If the bird identification is correct, it is possible that this bird represents the Egyptian Horus falcon, symbolizing the contemporary pre-dynastic Egyptian king and attesting to his connection to Megiddo. The net pattern, the blows around the slab and on its surface and the groups of short parallel lines incised on the right edge of the slab are all common motifs on the Picture Pavement’s slabs. Their meaning remains vague – they could either convey magical symbolism, or they could be mere decoration on the slab. It is interesting to note that as most of the other incised slabs found at Megiddo by the University of Chicago expedition (Keinan 2007: 34–36), the scene incised on this slab is also oriented to the east. It is most probable that the scenes were deliberately oriented towards the entrance to the cultic complex, and were meant to be seen by people ascending towards the temple.

Slab I was decorated with a circular pattern of depressions. This slab has at least three equivalents in Area J:

1. According to Ussishkin, this decoration is very similar to the spiral decoration on a slab uncovered in Locus 4064 (Finkelstein and Ussishkin 2000a: 52). We tried to locate this slab, which remained \textit{in situ} after excavation, but with no success.

2. A very similar slab was found in the 2008 excavations season inside the Level J-4 monumental temple (Fig. 2.17; see Adams in Part III of this chapter).

3. A slab with the same spiral or circular decoration was found in the University of Chicago excavations (Fig. 2.18). This slab depicted four decapitated figures with a net pattern incised on top. The circular decoration, made by blows of a stone, was created on top of these incisions. The net pattern and the circle of stones were interpreted as magical symbols of the capturing or killing of these figures (Kempinski 1989: 173; Schroer and Keel 2005: 240). A similar decoration of incised lines around the edges of a slab was observed on another slab discovered by Loud (1948: Pl. 274: 8). According to Guillaume, these slabs could be used as game boards (Chapter 25).

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\(^3\) The pre-dynastic King Scorpion is contemporary with the EB IB in the southern Levant. However, there is no clear synchronism between the early Egyptian kings and the EB IB strata at Megiddo.
The Level J-3 Wall 08/J/21 was built above Wall 08/J/30, and enclosed the courtyard at a later stage. It is clear that this wall was later than the Level J-2 08/J/200 Picture Pavement, as it was separated from it by a few cm of earth debris. The eastern edge of Wall 08/J/21 was very clear, and no continuation of this wall was found either by us or by the University of Chicago’s team. Therefore, it is possible that this was a north-south entrance to the cultic complex of Level J-3. It is also possible that the face of the wall was plastered, according to the plaster bits that were found to its east.

The layers above Wall 08/J/21 may have belonged to Level J-4; however there was no architecture with which to relate them, so their actual affiliation remains unclear. It is possible that the series of clay surfaces (08/J/134) represents multiple resurfacing of an exterior courtyard, maybe serving the same function as the earlier Picture Pavement. It is interesting to note that the earliest phase of the 08/J/134 clay surfaces was laid in a slope, whereas the latest phase of this locus was more or less horizontal – as if some sort of levelling was needed. This change could be related to the construction of massive Wall 4045.
unearthed by the University of Chicago team farther to the east. If this wall was used as a terrace wall, it would explain the levelling of the whole area of the cultic complex of this phase. This levelling phase can be observed in the latest clay surface of 08/J/134, as well as the layers above it – the phytolith layer with the occupational level on top (08/J/116) – both are horizontal. It is also possible that all these clay surfaces represent a single levelling event, carried out in a few stages. If this were the case, the clay surfaces would have been contemporary with the phytolith and ashy layers above them.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the new information, the stratigraphy of Lower Area J can be refined as follows:
1. The lower pavement (08/J/200) and its foundation (08/J/215) represent the earliest phase of the complex. Following the renewed excavations it was concluded that the Picture Pavement is contemporary with the Level J-2 temple that underlies Level J-3 Temple 4050.
2. The upper pavement and Wall 08/J/21 belong to the next phase, which seems to be contemporary with the Level J-3 Temple 4050.
3. Clay Surfaces 08/J/134, uncovered above Wall 08/J/21, may suggest a later courtyard, contemporary with the monumental temple of Level J-4.
4. The ashy, horizontal layer (08/J/116) above the phytolith layer, representing the occupational debris above the clay surfaces, may also be attributed to Level J-4.
APPENDIX: TABLE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO’S INCISED SLABS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Plate No. in Megiddo II</th>
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<th>Approx. slab meas. (cm)</th>
<th>Approx. incision meas. (cm)</th>
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