

# ACANTHUS SCROLLS "PEOPLED" WITH FLOWERS A CLASSICAL ORNAMENT IN THE ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION OF ERETZ ISRAEL IN THE ROMAN AND EARLY BYZANTINE PERIODS<sup>1</sup>

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The "peopled" scrolls ornament was very popular in Roman architectural decoration during the second and third centuries. The conventional version of scrolls, "peopled" with flowers, was widespread especially in the Eastern parts of the Empire. Among the many decorated friezes in Syria and Eretz Israel, one specific scheme can be observed in several sites. It is composed of round scrolls, emerging from a single branch, spreading alternately to either side. The scrolls which grow out of a three-petaled flower cup, are "peopled" with leaves and flowers. The flower in each scroll-medallion is framed by an additional interior ring.

This composition appears in Damascus, Baalbek, Bostra, Philadelphia ('Amman), Gerasa and the Nabatean Temple of Qasr-Rabbah. It appears also in Eretz Israel, e.g. at the Roman Theater in Scythopolis (Beth Shean) and on various fragments recently uncovered at this site.

The geographical and chronological range, along with the varied execution of the ornament, point to the use of pattern-books as the most probable explanation for this phenomenon. The main iconographic features of the ornament can also be observed in the interior decoration of the synagogue at Capernaum (not far from Scythopolis). The motif retains its basic components, but the design and execution are extremely different, due to a process of fragmentation and disintegration. The ornament is carved on the friezes side-by-side with another type of acanthus medallion and displays technical and conceptual attitudes alien to the classical tradition. These characteristics already announce the "lace" pattern typical of the Early Byzantine period.

Interlacing and scrolling acanthus branches have been known in Greek art since the end of the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods<sup>2</sup>. Gradually, the formation of a scroll ornament composed of one or two intertwining acanthus branches takes place. Frequently the ornament consisted of a trailing branch from which tendrils, forming round or oval scrolls, emerged on either side. The scrolls were either open, or formed closed medallions, which framed flowers, leaves or other motifs. Although this ornament sometimes appears in an illusionary three-dimensional execution, it is very far from being naturalistic. In nature, the acanthus plant grows straight up from the ground and does not form any trailing branches or scrolls. It might be pos-

sible to trace trailing-branches and scrolls to vine trellis, but these are completely alien to the natural growth of the acanthus. Riegl (1893: 249-256) termed this phenomenon "acanthisation of the scroll"<sup>3</sup>. The selection of various plants, leaves and flowers, depicted inside and among the scrolls, also has nothing to do with nature — and the whole composition is a pure artistic invention.

Originally, this ornament might have had a symbolic meaning connected with the world beyond — the "garden of the blessed" — especially when used in a funerary context (Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1950: 2, Webster 1966: 25, Onians 1979: 129)<sup>4</sup>. In the Roman period the ornament apparently lost its symbolic meaning and merely served as a decoration, frequently used in architecture.

The acanthus scrolls ornament, known throughout the Roman world, was executed in various media. Toynbee and Ward-Perkins (1950) published the first specific research dealing with this ornament, devoting their attention mainly to the strange and interesting version where human or animal figures emerge from the interior of the "enscrolled" flower or leaf-cup. They coined the term "peopled" scrolls for this ornament<sup>5</sup>. Although they mention numerous examples decorated with scrolls "peopled" with human or animal figures, it should be noted that the most popular version, the earliest and most persistent, was that of the acanthus leaf scrolls "peopled" with flowers. This specific version, its development and survival in the architectural decoration of Eretz Israel, is the main interest of this paper<sup>6</sup>.

In Eretz Israel, the acanthus scrolls appear for the first time at the end of the Second Temple period (around 100 BCE - 70 CE), mainly on Jewish funerary monuments in the Jerusalem area<sup>7</sup>. Most likely this ornament was also used on other buildings, as can be concluded from some remains of the inner domes of the "Hulda Gates"

(figs. 1 and 4; Hachlili 1988: figs II/7<sub>a-c</sub>, I/9<sub>a-c</sub>)<sup>8</sup>.

The composition and style of the ornament reveal two different artistic traditions:

- The first based on the Hellenistic design, shows a slender delicately trailing branch in low relief, which forms open and widely spaced scrolls, among which flowers and leaves are depicted (e.g. on the domes of the "Hulda Gates" [figs. 1 and 4] and on sarcophagi - see n. 7).
- The second is characterized by flat, dense acanthus leaves, cut sharply into the surface, leaving a "raised border" (on the tomb façades and on ossuaries [Avi-Yonah 1981: 86, 133, 135; Pl. 17<sub>1,3,6</sub>]). This *horror vacui* composition and the execution point to local, popular (plebeian) traditions influenced by Oriental trends<sup>9</sup>.

In the second and third centuries CE the popularity of this ornament (in its various versions) increased considerably in the Eastern Roman Empire, especially in Asia Minor<sup>10</sup> and in the provinces of *Palaestina*, *Syria* and *Arabia*<sup>11</sup>.

Most of the architectural members, decorated with "peopled" scrolls have been broken and damaged, but many decorated fragments can still be seen *in situ*. These are usually unpublished, not being original sculptural creations, but rather a mass-produced conventional decoration.

A complete frieze, decorated with acanthus leaf scrolls "peopled" with flowers, is preserved on a *lintel from the scaenae frons of the Roman Theater at Beth Shean* (fig. 5). Although the frieze is partly damaged, the general scheme of ornamentations is quite clear. Framed by two large acanthus half-leaves, the decoration evolves symmetrically from the sides to the center. A large flat leaf, stylized and fleshy, spreads to the top of the frieze; between the large leaf and the half-leaf is a stylized blossom with three round petals; a double branch emerges from the blossom, splitting to the right and left, creating a scroll which in turn encircles the large leaf and forms additional scrolls. The conventional image of a trefoil blossom as a source of the scrolls is depicted alternately upright or inverted. The scrolls are rounded and appear in a symmetrical composition, alternately "peopled" with a five-petaled blossom or a horizontal denticulated leaf. The

blossoms have round fleshy petals arranged around a central disc. A narrow leafless ring encircles the motif within the scroll.

The ornament is essentially of an asymmetrical character, designed in a continuous composition<sup>12</sup>, but at the Beth Shean lintel its design is centripetal, comprised of seven scrolls (unfortunately the one in the middle is damaged). The execution is of a rich almost "baroque" character, typical of the Severan period<sup>13</sup>.

A similar composition of scrolls "peopled" with blossoms and leaves is preserved on *the monumental portal of the Jupiter Temple at Damascus* (fig. 2; Freyberger 1989: Pls. 22, 24<sub>a, b, d</sub>) as well as on the right-hand entrance frieze of *the Market Portal* (*ibid.*: Pl. 25<sub>a</sub>). There the pattern, consisting of four consecutive scrolls, depicted on either side of a large "acanthus-leaf cup", is repeated twice. As on the Beth Shean frieze, the tendrils emerge from a three petaled flower cup (alternately upright or inverted), turning right and left forming scrolls. These, curl likewise up and down, the leafless ends creating an additional interior ring framing the "inhabiting" motif. As on the lintel in Beth Shean, the frieze is terminated by large, vertical acanthus half-leaves, a decorative convention frequently used in Roman architectural decoration<sup>14</sup>. It should be noted that the floral motifs inside the scroll are different from those at Beth Shean<sup>15</sup>, but the affinity of design and composition could not be a mere coincidence.

This pattern also appears on two frieze blocks from *the Nabatean Temple at Qasr Rabbah*<sup>16</sup>. The frieze's ends were not preserved but the decorative scheme (fig. 6) described above is repeated:

- tendrils emerging from a three petaled flower (alternately upright or inverted),
- round scrolls curling upwards and downwards containing a leafless interior ring framing floral motifs.

The flowers inside the scrolls differ from those at Beth Shean and Damascus, so does the execution of the frieze, but the scheme and composition are the same.

This scheme and composition reappear on *the Baalbek temples*<sup>17</sup>, and more consistently on several friezes from *the Great Court of the Jupiter Temple*. As at Damascus, the composition of four scrolls framed with large, fleshy acanthus leaves

survived on two adjacent frieze fragments. The decoration is well preserved and reveals work of high quality and a greater variety of intertwining leaves and tendrils. Nevertheless the basic components of the pattern are evident once more. It appears again on the 'Kalybe' frieze at *Bostra* (Weigand 1914: Pl. IV<sub>2</sub>; Freyberger 1989: Pls. 11<sub>a</sub>, 34<sub>b</sub>, where it consists of seven scrolls, as on the lintel at Beth Shean; on a frieze fragment from *the scaenae frons from the Theater at 'Amman (Philadelphia)*, (Fakhrani 1975: 401 fig. 28), and *the Nymphaeum at Gerasa* (Lyttelton 1974: Pl. 141)<sup>18</sup>.

Among the frieze blocks preserved at the Beth Shean Theater are several scrolls "peopled" with various blossoms and leaf patterns (Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: cat. blocks 20-24). These are unfortunately in a very poor state of preservation, so that neither the general layout and system of ornamentation, nor the variety of "inhabiting" motifs can be studied. Some blocks (fig. 7; *ibid.*: cat. blocks 20-22, Ills. 121-124) show a large blossom (only one is complete) of similar conformation: a round receptacle surrounded by rounded petals (four or five in number), the entire blossom is set within a ring or leafless branch and framed by a scroll<sup>19</sup>. Despite these common characteristics, no resemblance is noted in detail or design; style varies from the naturalistic and three-dimensional rich in nuances (e.g. *ibid.*: block 24, Ill. 126) to the schematic and rigid (e.g. *ibid.*: block 21, Ill. 123).

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How could the reappearance of this specific pattern in several sites, distant from one another in time<sup>20</sup> and location (see map, fig. 3), be explained?

According to Ward Perkins (1980: *passim*) the dispersion of the various types of architectural decoration is a result of the development of the international "marble style" which followed the marble export from the Asia Minor quarries, and its distribution to clients all over the Roman Empire. In his opinion, the ornaments were transferred by trained marble workers or artisans, who accompanied the marble transports (*ibid.*: 62). In time their work influenced the local artisans, who adapted their marble

working techniques and models for carving local stone (*ibid.*: 49).

In our case, this hypothesis is unsatisfactory for several reasons:

- 1) Imported marble was mainly used at the Beth Shean Theater. Most of the sites mentioned above are situated far from the coastal cities and their ports<sup>21</sup>, and many of the decorated fragments are carved in local stone<sup>22</sup>.
- 2) The specific pattern with which we are dealing, was not found at the *Roman Theater at Caesarea Maritima* where imported marble was used (as at the contemporary theater in Beth Shean). Although many fragments, decorated with scrolls "peopled" with vegetal motifs, were recovered from the theater, their design and composition are different (fig. 8)<sup>23</sup>.
- 3) The pattern including its specific components (namely: a trailing branch with symmetrically composed scrolls emerging alternately upwards and downwards from three petaled flowers cups, enclosing a floral motif in a ring) was not common in Asia Minor during the Severan period. This should however have been the case, if the pattern had been exported from there<sup>24</sup>.
- 4) Most of the above mentioned monuments were constructed and decorated during the second century CE (meaning before or at the beginning of the Severan period), probably before the marble for the Beth Shean Theater was imported. Therefore, the process, as described by Ward Perkins, could not have taken place.

It is possible that the wide dispersion of this specific pattern of scrolls "peopled" with flowers, could be attributed to the activity of traveling craftsmen<sup>25</sup>, but the technical variations in style and carving, as well as the variety of motifs incorporated in the scrolls, contradict this assumption.

The consequent reappearance of the same basic elements at various sites which are at a considerable chronological range and geographical distance from each other — could be explained by the use of pattern books, a common practice in artists' workshops throughout the Roman and Early Byzantine periods. The use of pattern books, results in iconographic

resemblance but not in stylistic affinity.

We can only guess at the character of these pattern books — whether they contained individual motifs (Dauphin 1978: 408), or a sequence of motifs, or the composition of the whole pattern. Two limestone frieze-blocks found recently at Beth Shean may give us a clue to this problem (Foerster, Tsafirir and Mazor 1989: 38, fig. 33)<sup>26</sup>. Here the known pattern appears as a sequence of scrolls growing out of three-petaled flower cups. The ornament was designed on one block from right to left, and on the other from left to right, like a mirror image. A design like this could be the result of the use of a pattern book describing the whole pattern, and not its individual motifs.

The use of the single motif can, however, be seen on *the lintel of the northern doorway of the Roman Temple at Kedesh* (fig. 9; Kedesh 1984: Pl. 29<sub>1</sub>). On the right side is a festoon of flowers and leaves creating a single medallion of acanthus leaves "peopled" with a five-petaled rosette. The branch forming the medallion grows out of three-petaled flower-cup and curls around the five-petaled rosette. Flowers, leaves and tendrils emerge from the scroll, forming a rich and delicate composition. This single decorative element found at Kedesh, is the basic motif of the pattern described above<sup>27</sup>. Can we conclude from this that the pattern book contained individual motifs? On the other hand, the artist might have used only a part of the pattern as his model.

The "peopled" scrolls ornament with flowers, is also found on reliefs from the Roman period and onwards (Dauphin 1987). Friezes decorated with this ornament were also found in the ancient synagogues of Capernaum, Chorazin, Horvat Dikke, and Horvat Hokha, as well as at the Mausoleum at Beth She'arim (Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: 135, 137-139 and 140-141) etc.

A stylized version of the "peopled" scrolls ornament represents the main decorative component of *the friezes of the Capernaum Synagogue*<sup>28</sup>. On some friezes the convention of the scroll emerging from a three-petaled flower-cup was adopted together with the interior ring framing the flower. These are consequently used as components of the ornament. Another type of "peopled" scroll is likewise depicted on the

frieze. The two different types are carved one beside the other. The leaf-tips always point clockwise.

- *Type I* (figs. 10<sub>a</sub>-10<sub>b</sub>) reveals simplification and disintegration of the classical motif: the medallion is formed of four acanthus leaves, each growing out a three-petaled cup<sup>29</sup>. The deeply carved mid-rib forms the medallion, while the flat, outspread tips create an abstract pattern on both sides of the rib. An additional ring, framing the plant motif, appears inside the medallion (Kohl and Watzinger 1916: figs. 54-56, 58-59, 62-64)<sup>30</sup>.
- *Type II* (fig. 11) consists of windblown leaves which appear only inside the medallion, while a round leafless stalk surrounds it. Various leaves spring out of the connecting knot between the medallions and fill in the spaces (Kohl and Watzinger 1916: figs. 60, 61). Like type I, the design is stylized and schematic, but the execution is different: here the ornament is protruding from the block, depicted as laid on the surface (instead of carved and drilled into it as in type I).

Both types developed from the classical acanthus scroll. While sculpture of classical ornaments is of a plastic nature, and is characterized by a great variety and richness of forms and technique, it seems that each group of craftsmen at Capernaum was content with carving a single type of scroll-medallion. The two medallion-types were probably carved by projecting (type II) or by drilling (type I). The execution reveals the interpretation and the characteristics of the design. Thus the technique created the style. The drilling of the medallions caused flattening and spreading of the leaf, with the mid-rib cut into the stone, creating an optical light and shade composition. The flattened acanthus medallion (type I) can be seen as the last stage in the development of the scroll emerging from the three-petaled flower-cup. It completely lost its vegetative character and became an abstract pattern. The three-petaled flower-cup disintegrated into separate petals, depicted one beside the other. The inner ring, originally part of the scroll enclosing the flower, became an independent unit.

A further simplified and stylized version of the medallions appears at *the Chorazin Synagogue*.

Here the three-petaled flower-cup is entirely disconnected from the acanthus scroll and serves as a space-filler, depicted alternately upright and inverted between the medallions (figs. 12<sub>a</sub>-12<sub>b</sub>; Kohl and Watzinger 1916: figs. 99f, 100m; Turnheim 1987: Catalogue 3.4.6.6, Pls. 40<sub>1-2</sub>, 42<sub>3</sub>, 43<sub>1-2</sub>, 44<sub>1-2</sub>, 45<sub>1</sub>)<sup>31</sup>.

The reappearance of the main iconographic features of the motif in the Capernaum friezes, can be attributed to the work of a certain artisan, or to the decorative repertory of a certain workshop, perhaps based on a pattern book. The motif was reshaped during transfer, creating a new style. Since the features of architectural ornaments are simple — the design and execution mainly reflect the skill and ability of the artisan. The consequent use of a stereotypical design may indicate the work of one and the same hand. The parallel appearance of both carving techniques accentuated the process of simplification and fragmentation of the classical sculpture. This mode of execution created a new style, alien in character to classic concept and tradition, and announced the "lace" pattern typical of the Byzantine period.

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In all probability the artisans who decorated the Galilean synagogues were acquainted with the neighboring Pagan monuments and their decoration. It is possible that they were inspired

by the motifs, composition, and character of the decorated blocks from Beth Shean and Kedesh, but the difference in design and execution of the friezes in Capernaum and Chorazin reveals two different aesthetic and conceptual trends:

- One innovative — revealing an unclassical concept, based on the tendency to preserve the flattened surface with drilled and cut-in decoration. This trend is distinguished by the contours carved deep into the stone, with the interiors placed above (Capernaum type I).
- The second conservative — leaning towards the conventional classical tradition. However, the limited skill and misinterpretation, characteristic of artisans who were not trained in the classical tradition<sup>32</sup>, caused schematisation, simplification and reduction of the decoration. This is characterized by the gouged-out interior with a raised borderline (Capernaum type II, Chorazin etc.).

Technical and stylistic elements which were already known in the popular art of the Second Temple period (see above p. 118 and n. 7), reappear in the work of these artisans, most likely local men. This development demonstrates the vitality of the local traditions as well as the influence of the classical tradition, its continuation and preservation in Eretz Israel in Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine period.

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<sup>1</sup> This research was concluded with the assistance of a grant by the Department of Art History, Tel Aviv University.

As this paper deals mainly with visual material I preferred photographs over drawings and reconstructions, as the latter do not always agree with the findings still *in situ* and are sometimes misleading. This is the reason that I refrained from the use of the monumental work of K. Lanckoronski: *Städte Pamphyliens und Pisidiens* and other early works. Wherever possible I preferred recent photographs from Lyttelton (1974) and Ovadia and Turnheim (1994).

I would like to thank Prof. A. Ovadia for reading this paper and authorizing the use of photographs, drawings and other material from our common book [Ovadia and Turnheim 1994].

<sup>2</sup> The acanthus scrolls decorate painted pottery in South Italy, wall paintings in Macedonian tombs, framed mosaic floors (Gnosis' mosaic at Pella) and architectural members (Epidauros, Didyma etc.). However it should be noted that flowers and leaves on Apulian vases, wall-paintings and mosaics from the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods appear illusionary and three-dimensional, while in the reliefs from the Imperial period they are executed "flat", as if "laid" on the surface.

<sup>3</sup> *Die vollständige Akanthisierung der intermittierenden Wellenranke* (Riegl 1893: 256).

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that a certain symbolic meaning was attached to the Corinthian capital, likewise composed of acanthus leaves. The creation of the Corinthian capital is attributed by Vitruvius to the sculptor

Callimachus, who was inspired by a composition of acanthus leaves growing around a basket on a girl's tomb (Vitruvius IV 1.9). The Corinthian capitals with human or animal heads, could also be linked with the "peopled" acanthus scroll ornament.

<sup>5</sup> Gough (1952: 82-150) and Dauphin (1978: 411, n. 4) prefer to use the term "inhabited" scrolls. Dauphin (1976) analyzed the different types of the scrolls on floor mosaics in Asia Minor and the Eastern Provinces (i.e. including Eretz Israel).

<sup>6</sup> Scrolls "peopled" with human figures and animal *protomai* were also found in Beth Shean and in other locations in Eretz Israel, cf. Ovadia and Turnheim 1994.

<sup>7</sup> On the façades of the "Tomb of Jehoshaphat" (Hachlili 1988: fig. IV/10), and the "Tomb of the Sanhedrin" (EAEHL: 238). The "Tomb of the Kings" is decorated with a frieze of acanthus leaves, fruit and pine cones (Kon 1947: Pls. IX-XI). Stylized leaf scrolls "peopled" with fruit and leaves framed a sarcophagus lid, found in this tomb (*ibid.*: fig. 14). Another sarcophagus from the "Tomb of a Nazirite" on Mount Scopus is also decorated with acanthus scrolls, flowers, leaves and a grape cluster (Avigad 1975: 67), a similar pattern appears on a sarcophagus found in Herod's Family Tomb (Hachlili 1988: fig. IV/18).

<sup>8</sup> It is possible that the golden vine-scroll, which according to Josephus (*Ant.* XIV, 3, 1; XV, 11, 3), decorated the façade of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, had some features in common with the "peopled" scrolls ornament.

<sup>9</sup> "Peopled" scrolls with flowers likewise decorated Nabatean temples and tombs in Petra (Lyttelton 1974: Pl. 1), Horvat Tannur (Glueck 1965: Pl. 31) etc., also dated to the same period.

<sup>10</sup> According to common opinion the ornament was originally created in the Hellenistic East. Kraus (1953: 71), Wegner (1957: 12), Toynbee and Ward-Perkins (1950: 6, 30) etc. Boerker (1973: 283-317) holds a different opinion.

The "peopled" scrolls ornament occurs in the eastern part of the Empire (Pergamon - Kraus 1953: Pls. 19-20, 24; Limyra - Dinstel 1986-87: Pls. 4-5; Perge - *ibid.*: Pl. 7; Aspendus - Lyttelton 1974: Pls. 184-185; Gerasa - *ibid.*: Pls. 141, 148; Ephesus - Bammer 1978: figs 1-4; Palmyra - Lyttelton 1974: Pl. 153-154; Baalbek - see below n. 17; H. Tannur - Glueck 1965: Pl. 52; etc.). The same acanthus scroll also appears in the west (Nîmes, Arles - Kraus 1953: Pls. 10-11; Italica, Lepcis Magna - Lyttelton 1974: Pl. 214; Adamklissi - Florescu 1960: fig. 149) and at other sites. Incorporated within the scrolls are blossoms with round, fleshy petals, lobed acanthus-type petals, sometimes windblown, and various types of elongated, rounded, paired, bunched or individual leaves. An earlier, more delicate, version, although differing in execution and composition, is found in the floral zone of the *Ara Pacis* (Kraus 1953: Pls. 1-2).

<sup>11</sup> Partial lists can be found in Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1950: 32, Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: Appendix.

<sup>12</sup> Originally based on the Hellenistic "trailing branch" ornament (Riegl 1893: 249).

<sup>13</sup> The rich, floral ornamentation of the frieze is emphasized by the simplicity of the otherwise plain lintel.

<sup>14</sup> This convention was used to cover up the joint of the frieze blocks and preserve the continuity of the decoration. The systematic use of this convention indicates that the friezes were carved on the ground and then used according to need (see also Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: 107).

<sup>15</sup> It was not possible for me to compare the style and execution of both friezes, because of the quality of the photographs in the cited publications.

<sup>16</sup> Three different types are preserved among the "peopled" scrolls at Qasr Rabbah: round scrolls with blossoms, scrolls "peopled" with animal *protomai* and a distorted *putto* (Glueck 1965: 57, 247; Pls. 177a,b). According to Glueck these blocks could well be Roman.

<sup>17</sup> The "peopled" scrolls ornament with blossoms and leaves, decorates friezes on all three Baalbek temples (Temple of Jupiter—*Baalbek I*: Pls. 77-79; Temple of Bacchus—*Baalbek II*: figs. 26, 27, 34, Pls. 8, 24, 27; Temple of Venus—*Baalbek II*: fig. 163, Pls. 62-66). The lintel frieze which tops the monumental entrance of the Temple of Bacchus is carved with acanthus scrolls "peopled" with a *putto* and animal-*protomai*, which included a lion and a bull (*Baalbek II*: fig. 36, Pls. 49, 50b, 51, 52). Some of the friezes in the Temple of Bacchus still show acanthus leaves with heads or masks (*Baalbek II*: fig. 28, Pls. 38, 39).

<sup>18</sup> The Temples of Artemis and Zeus have also yielded blocks with scrolls that enclose animals and blossoms (Khouri 1985: 24; Lyttelton 1974: Pl. 148; Freyberger 1989: Pls. 21d, 34a); these have not as yet been fully published.

<sup>19</sup> Two blocks from the theater at Beth Shean (Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: cat. blocks 23 and 24, Ills. 124-125) preserve only the branches, twigs, tendrils and acanthus leaves which may in their turn have been framed within scrolls. On these blocks the ovolo topping the upper *fascia* of the architrave on most frieze blocks, has been replaced by a braided rope topped with an *anthemion* pattern of the same type (*ibid.*: Ills. 119, 120, 123, 125, 127). The iconographic characteristics may testify to the use of separate models from different pattern-books for the decoration of these *scaenae frons* friezes.

<sup>20</sup> The Temple at Qasr Rabbah is dated to the first quarter of the second century (Glueck 1965: 56), while the Roman Theater at Beth Shean is dated to the end of the second or beginning of the third century (Applebaum 1978: 88).

<sup>21</sup> Of all sites mentioned above, Beth Shean is the nearest to the sea. In the Roman period, marble and other building materials were usually transported by sea (Ward-Perkins 1980: *passim*).

<sup>22</sup> Proconnesian marble was used in Bostra but there is no reference to the building material of the "Kalybe", however the theater building was constructed of local yellow limestone (Freyberger 1989: 60 n. 107). Lyttelton (1974: 247) observes that marble was scarcely used at Gerasa.

<sup>23</sup> Depicted on some frieze blocks from the Caesarea Maritima Theater, are leafy, oval scrolls, composed of two intersecting branches, however the decoration on most of the frieze blocks is destroyed. In no case is there a sign either of the inner ring nor of the three petaled flower cup (see also note 27).

<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that the repertory of the canonical ornaments at Caesarea Maritima reveals some features common to the architectural decoration of Asia Minor. These affinities are not evident in the decoration of the Beth Shean Theater, except for a specific type of anthemion ornament which decorates the sima of some entablature blocks (Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: 121 and chap. VII, n. 17; Turnheim, forthcoming).

<sup>25</sup> Freyberger (1989a: 85), concludes from the analysis of the architectural decoration in the region, the activity of a regional (or super-regional) workshop in southern Syria during the Severan period.

<sup>26</sup> The fragments were discovered under the Byzantine steps to the south of the temple, and were dated by the excavators, based on stylistic analysis, to the second century.

<sup>27</sup> Another single scroll, of a different type, enclosing a large flower, carved beside the *protome* of *Serapis*, was

preserved on a frieze fragment from Caesarea Maritima (today in the court of the Israel Museum; Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: Ill. 269).

<sup>28</sup> Pulvinated friezes (combined with cornice and *sima*), decorated the interior walls of the synagogue (Kohl and Watzinger 1916: 29). The "peopled" scrolls ornament also appears on the southern façade of the synagogue building, decorating the horizontal cornice of the Syrian gable, and again as an integral decorative element of the Ark of the Law. The scrolls were "peopled" with various animals, mainly lions, emerging from the acanthus leaves; the beasts have been defaced. The position of the leaves and the animals suggests that the two "branches", which starts from both ends of the frieze, join in its center. The decoration is stylized and tends to geometric forms (Kohl and Watzinger 1916: figs. 26-31). The dating of the above mentioned architectural elements is in dispute, but most of them probably originate from the third century CE, or at the latest from the beginning of the fourth century CE.

<sup>29</sup> The same convention is also used in the decoration of the outer frieze below the gable (Kohl and Watzinger 1916: 29, and figs. 27, 28, 31).

<sup>30</sup> The inner ring is missing on some fragments (Kohl and Watzinger 1916: fig. 57).

<sup>31</sup> Similar medallions, probably carved by the same workshop, were preserved at the ancient synagogues at Horvat Dikke (Ilan 1987: 105; Turnheim 1987: Pl. 73) and Horvat Hocha (Ilan 1987: 94). The dating of these decorative elements is uncertain, but it seems that they belong to the third to mid-fourth century).

<sup>32</sup> Their work demonstrates *horror vacui* and misunderstanding of classical principles such as asymmetrical balance.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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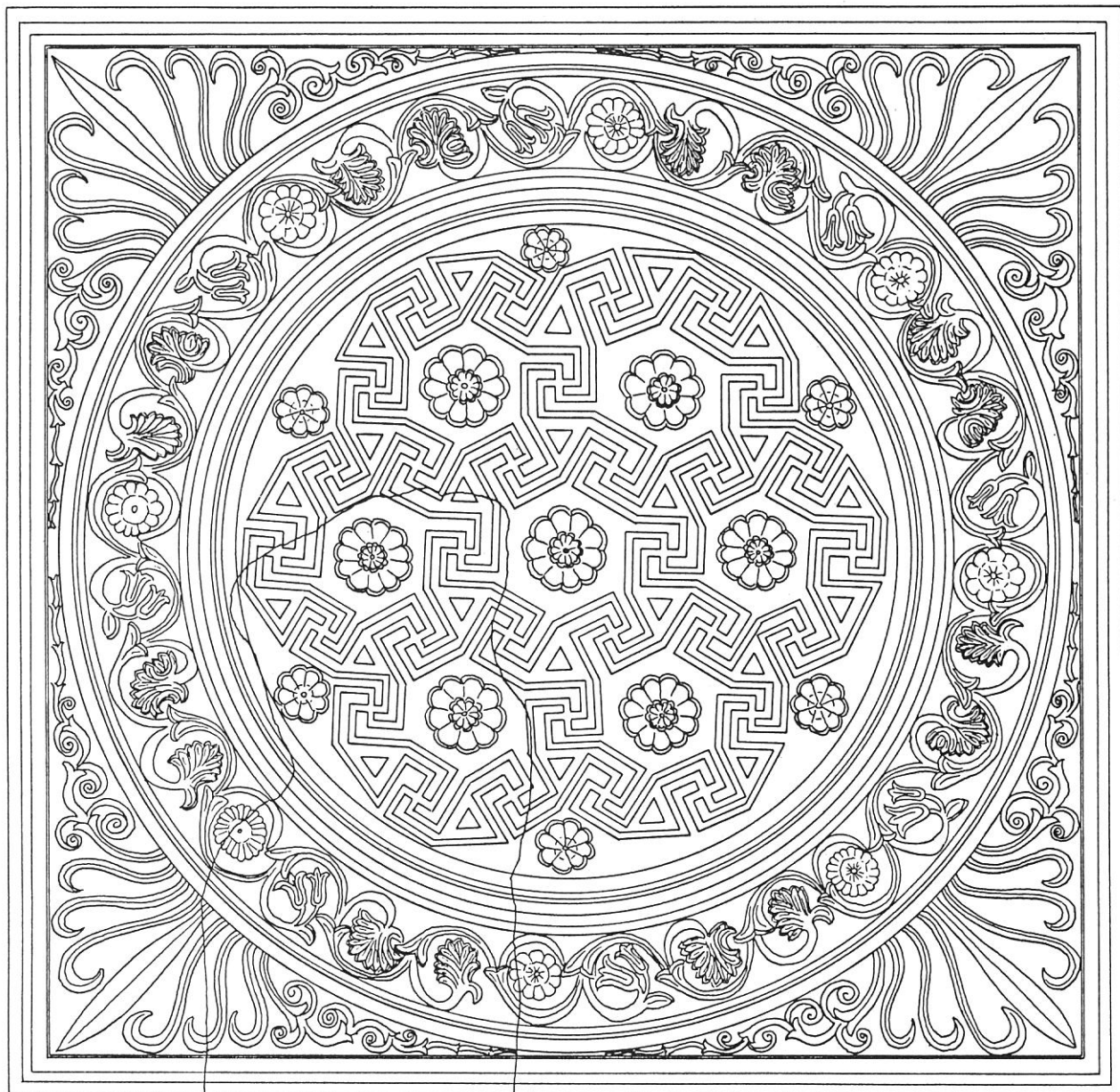


Fig. 1 - A Decorated Stone Dome of the Huld Gate, Reconstruction. (After Hachlili 1988: fig. II/7.).



Fig. 2 - A Decorated Frieze Fragment of a Monumental Entrance of the Temple of Jupiter at Damascus (After Dussaud 1924: 360, fig. 57).

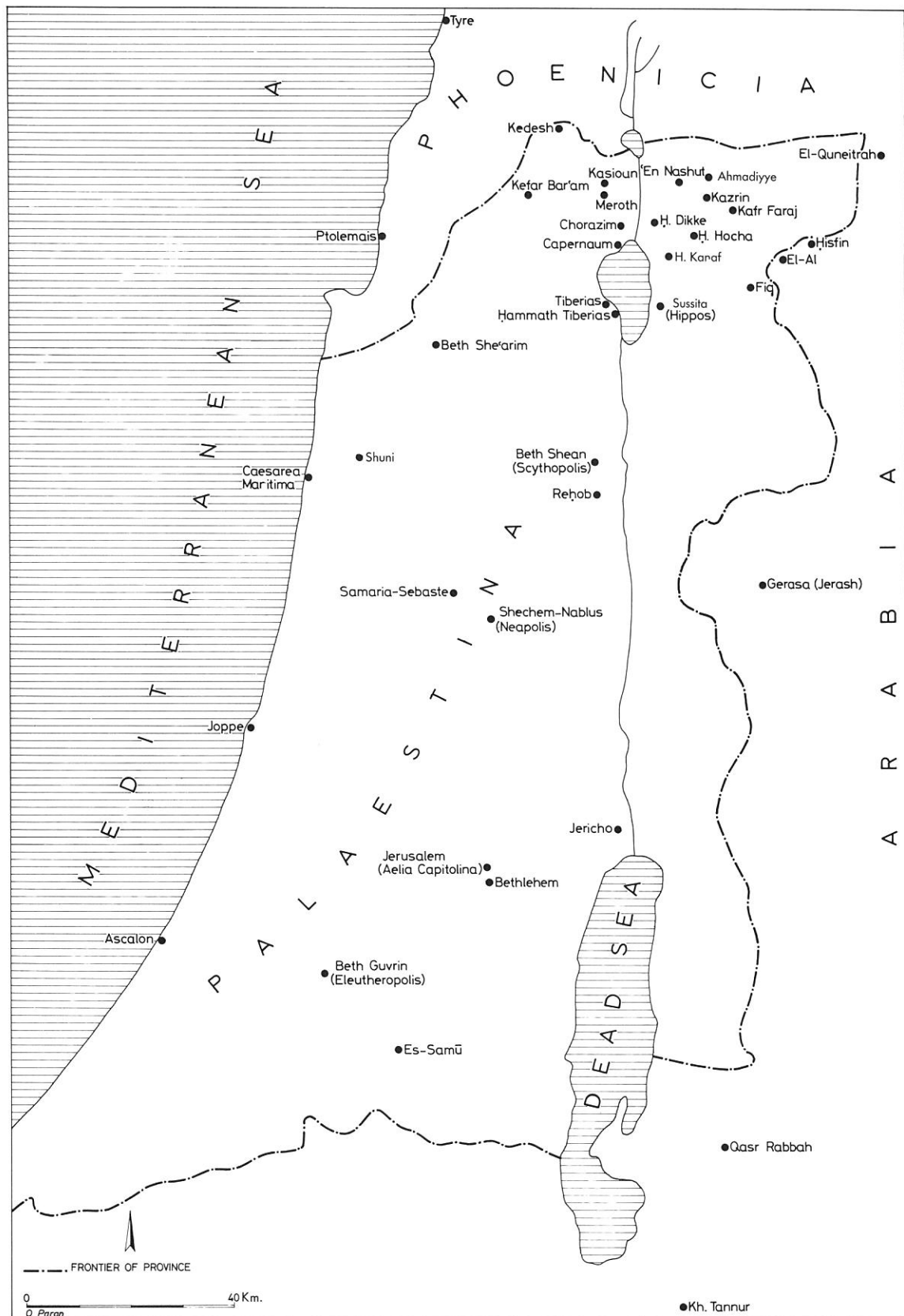


Fig. 3 - Map of the Sites Mentioned.



Fig. 4 - A Fragment of a Decorated Stone Dome of the Hulda Gates. (From the Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum, Haifa; after Hachlili 1988, fig. 1/9<sub>a</sub>).



Fig. 5 - A Lintel from the Roman Theatre at Beth Shean.



Fig. 6 - A Decorated Frieze Fragment from the Nabatean Temple at Qasr Rabbah. (After Glueck 1965: Pl. 177<sub>b</sub>).



Fig. 7 - A Decorated Frieze Fragment from the Roman Theatre at Beth Shean.





Fig. 8 - A Decorated Frieze Fragment from the Roman Theatre at Caesarea Maritima. (After Frova 1965: fig. on 17).



Fig. 9 - Floral Decoration of Lintel of Northern Doorway from the Roman Temple at Kedesh. (Courtesy of the excavators).

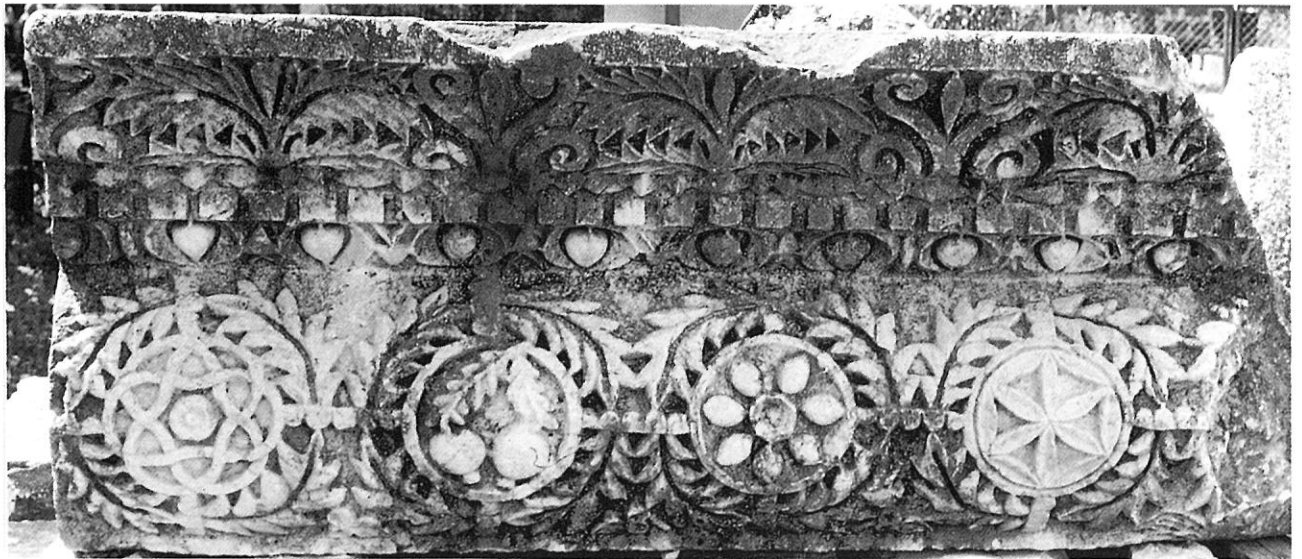


Fig. 10<sub>a</sub> - A Decorated Frieze Fragment from the Synagogue at Capernaum (Type I).



Fig. 10<sub>b</sub> - A Decorated Frieze Fragment from the Synagogue at Capernaum (Type I).



Fig. 11 - A Decorated Frieze Fragment from the Sinagogue at Capernaum (Type II).



Figs. 12<sub>a</sub>-12<sub>b</sub> - A Decorated Frieze Fragment from the Synagogue at Chorazin.