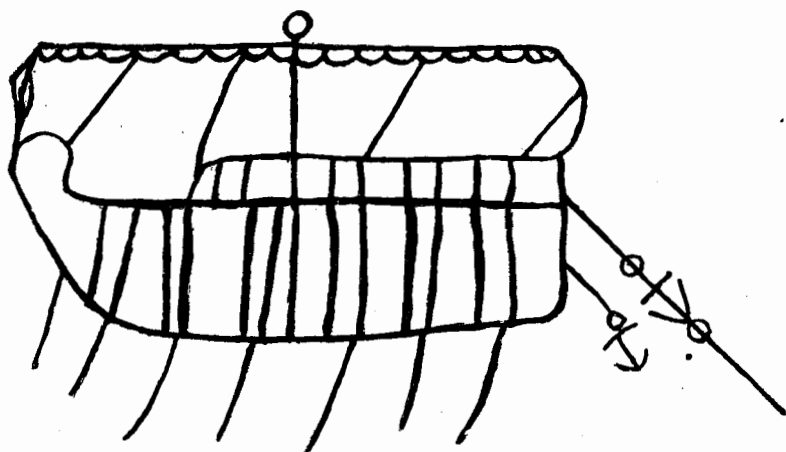


A GRAFFITO OF A SHIP AT BEIT JIBRĪN.

By H. H. BRINDLEY, M.A.

THE graffito, representing a sailing vessel at anchor, which is here illustrated by a reproduction of a rubbing, was found by Prof. R. A. S. Macalister, and to him I am indebted for calling my attention to it, and also for the following account of its provenance:—

“The block of limestone bearing a graffito representing a ship was found in the excavations of the Palestine Exploration Fund at Tell Sandahannah, near Beit Jibrīn, in 1900. It was put aside to



Graffito of a Ship.

be cast and drawn, but by some oversight it was thrown out, with a quantity of rubbish, when the camp was broken up, and was not missed till too late. Some years afterwards I revisited Beit Jibrin in order to examine the newly discovered tomb of Apollophanes, and, suddenly remembering the lost graffito, I took the opportunity of visiting the old camping ground on the chance of finding it. Though the site had doubtless been ransacked by fellahin on the chance of finding unconsidered trifles, and though the attentions of dealers' agents had trained their eyes for antiquities, the ship had escaped notice, and it was the very first thing I saw when I stepped on to the familiar spot. Needless to say I bore it off, and

is now in the Fund Museum. The date of the graffito must be that of the last city of Marissa, *i.e.*, between, say, 200 B.C. and 100 A.D."

The length of the hull over all is 88 mm., and from masthead to keel is 53 mm.

It will be seen from the illustration how rough the work is, and the artist seems to have had a fair conception of the ordinary one-masted craft of his time. Thus, the mast is carried right down to the keel, whereas a landsman would have stopped it at the gunwale, as remarked by Mr. Alan H. Moore on similar correct treatment of the mast of a vessel portrayed as a graffito on a brick at the quay steps at Utica, and described by him as "A Little Ship of Carthage" in *The Mariners' Mirror*, Journal of the Society for Nautical Research, Oct. 1911, p. 280. The Beit Jibrin ship is a one-masted craft with square sail, a type which certainly existed during many centuries in the Mediterranean without undergoing important change, and was typical of the centuries to which the graffito is ascribed by Prof. Macalister. The artist probably had in mind the ordinary coaster fitted with both sail and oars of his time. We may assume, from the form of the hull, that she is anchored by the stern. That this was practised in certain manoeuvres, or to help in riding out a gale, we know from Polyænos and Appian, quoted by Cecil Torr in *Ancient Ships* (Cambridge, 1894), p. 74, and also from St. Paul's shipwreck (*ἐκ πρύμνης ῥύσαντες ἀγκύρας τέσσαρας*, Acts xxvii, 29). Torr also refers to stern anchoring in one of the reliefs on Trajan's column. The continuation of the cable of the sternmost anchor is probably an error of execution, but the ring on the crown may have been a real fitting of the time for assisting tipping. The cheniscus ornamenting the stem is of the design so commonly seen in Greek, and especially in Roman vessels. The superstructure, suggesting a poop extending two-thirds of the ship's length, may indicate either the permanent deck-house, such as is seen in the relief of a merchant vessel of *c.* 200 A.D. from ports on the Tiber, and reproduced by Torr (*op. cit.*, fig. 29), or the wicker work or tent-like protection for the ship's officers, which we know was often fitted. The paired vertical lines on the hull may represent the ribs—it seems more or less accidental that in the main they correspond with the poles or stanchions of the superstructure—or they may be intended for portholes for the oars, for the latter are certainly represented by the slightly curved lines below the

keel, which originate suggestively between the two members of each pair of vertical strokes. There are other examples of oars shown only below the water line or the keel, their continuation upwards to the portholes being entirely omitted; for instance, in certain Greek vases of 600—550 B.C., and in ships in mosaic in S. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna, c. 600 A.D. (Torr, figs. 14, 15, 39). In a number of representations of Roman ships there is, running along the hull about half-way up the freeboard, a kind of panelling which appears to have nothing to do with the oar ports; sometimes it seems really constructional, but Jal, in his *Glossaire Nautique*, article "Galère," looks upon these panels as occasionally merely ornamental, e.g., in a carefully executed ship on a tomb at Pozzuoli. It is just possible that the Beit Jibrin artist had this panelling in mind when he put in these vertical strokes which, as they are, resemble frapping ropes more than anything else, though these they can hardly be. From their being in pairs the safest guess is that they mean portholes for the oars. The ring at the masthead is one of the simpler forms of ornament borne there; we see it, for instance, on an Alexandrian coin of 67 A.D. (Torr, *op. cit.*, fig. 27). The furled sail is probably the usual square sail of the time, though the yard being as long as the hull suggests a lateen. When this latter became common in the Eastern Mediterranean we do not know: a well-known early representation is seen in the mosaic of the pharos of Alexandria in St. Mark's, Venice, which may date from the ninth century. The braces are shown, and the duplication of the strokes here is evidently intended to indicate their tackles. These braces and the yard being hoisted parallel with the hull of course suggest the square-sail rather than the lateen. The three single strokes from hull to yard are clearly brailing ropes, the *καλοι* of the *Odyssey* and Herodotus (Torr, *op. cit.*, p. 81), of which there are numerous representations in Greek and Roman works.

There is nothing in the little Beit Jibrin ship—possibly a portrait of his own vessel done by a sailor to amuse a group of inland children—which was not already known to us as characteristic of Mediterranean craft of the centuries suggested by Prof. Macalister for its execution. The graffito is too slight and crude to tell us anything new, but it is of interest in confirming what more finished work shows, and in being, with little doubt, a representation of the ordinary coasting craft of the time.