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## A SECOND LOOK AT THE SHELL BEADS FROM THE EXCAVATIONS AT TEL MICHAL SOUTH OF HERZLIYA, ISRAEL

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### INTRODUCTION

The archaeological site of Tel Michal consists in fact of a complex of separate sites spread over several kurkar<sup>1</sup> outcrops within the boundaries of the coastal town Herzliya, Israel. This complex was excavated by a team of the Institute of Archaeology at the Tel Aviv University and several institutes from abroad, under the direction of Prof. Ze'ev Herzog (TAU), during four seasons 1977-1980. The results of these excavations were published in a monograph edited by Herzog, Rapp Jr. & Negbi (1989).

Molluscs recovered during these excavations were only treated in part by Gifford & Rapp Jr. (1989), Hellwing & Feig (1989) and Kertesz (1989). The shells briefly mentioned by Hellwing & Feig (1989) were identified by the late Prof. E. Tchernov (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), one of his students: Simon Davis, and two unknown persons. This material will be dealt with in a forthcoming article (Mienis, in preparation).

The identification of the additional material mentioned in Gifford & Rapp Jr. (1989) and especially in Kertesz (1989) was not carried out by Tchernov & associates and suffers considerably from misidentifications.

In the past I have reported (Mienis, 2007) on the strange identification of bivalves as *Mya* species in sediments from Nahal Ayalon at Gerisa, which research had been carried out during the paleogeographical investigations for the Tel Michal excavations (Gifford & Rapp Jr., 1989).

In this short note I like to correct the identifications of the shells among the beads from Tel Michal which were published by Kertesz (1989).



From the Iron Age Stratum XIII Kertesz (1989: 370, plt. 79: 2, here copied in **Fig. 1**) mentioned six shell beads made of cowries found in a jug. The same beads (seven and not six) had been dealt with and figured by Herzog, Negbi & Moshkovitz (1978: 111, plt. 36:3) and identified as *Cypraea moneta* (which name reads today *Monetaria moneta*).

**FIG. 1: [LEFT] COPY OF KERTESZ (1989: PLT. 79: 2): THE HOARD OF BEADS FOUND IN AN IRON AGE JUG.**

In all specimens the dorsum had been removed. In that way the shells could be strung. The identity of the cowries had been changed by Kertesz (1989: 370) into *Cypraea carneola*, which in modern nomenclature should now be *Lyncina carneola*. The latter is characterized by very small and numerous teeth on the lip and columella of the aperture (**Plate 1 [1]**). The shells in the picture (Kertesz, 1989: plt. 79:2, and here **Fig. 2**) have a different depressed,

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oval form with less numerous teeth in the aperture. They belonged indeed to a single species of *Monetaria* but not to *moneta* but to the allied much smoother shelled *Monetaria annulus* (**Plate 1 [2]**). It is a rare species in the Red Sea but a very common one in the Indian Ocean.



From the Persian Period several cowry beads were found in burials and figured on the plates in Kertesz (1989): burial 1163: plate 79: 5: a single shell, burial 1184: plate 79: 7: two shells and burial 1875: plate 80: 1: four shells. All shells were identified again as belonging to *Cypraea carneola* but in reality they belonged also to *Monetaria annulus*.

The measurements given of all the Cowry shells mentioned in the text and shown on the plates are far too small for *Lyncina carneola*. The smallest shell of an adult specimen in the collection of the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History and shown in **Plate 1 [1]** has a length of 24.2 mm! The size of the shells and the number of teeth in the aperture and the wide gap between the teeth on the lip and the columella fit those in *Monetaria annulus*. In addition burial 666 (Kertesz, 1989: plt. 79: 6, here copied in **Fig. 2**) contained two shell beads identified as belonging to *Cerithium* [sic!] *erithraeonense* [sic!].

**FIG. 2: [ABOVE] COPY OF KERTESZ (1989: PLT. 79: 6): BEADS FOUND IN BURIAL 666 FROM THE PERSIAN PERIOD.**

According to Kertesz (1989: 372) the two shells had a length of only 14 and 16 mm. However in reality *Cerithium adansonii*, the correct name for *Cerithium erythraeonense*, is a much larger marine gastropod from the Red Sea (**Plate 1 [3]**), of which a normal adult specimen shown in Fig. 3, has a length of 65.9 mm. As a matter of fact the specimens figured on the plate showed that we are dealing here with shells of a freshwater species: *Melanopsis costata*, from the Jordan River and Sea of Galilee (**Plate 1 [4]**). In addition Kertesz (1989: 374, plt. 80:1) mentioned two amulets of Mother-of-Pearl in the form of a Horus eye, but these are unrecognizable from the plate.

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**PLATE 1: SHELL SPECIMENS –**

**(1) *LYNCINA CARNEOLA*, A TINY ADULT SHELL WITH A LENGTH OF 24.2 MM;**

**(2) *MONETARIA ANNULUS*, A LARGE SHELL WITH A LENGTH OF 23.58 MM;**

**(3) *CERITHIUM ADANSONII*, A NORMAL ADULT SHELL WITH A LENGTH OF 65.87 MM;**

**(4) *MELANOPSIS COSTATA*, A LARGE ADULT SHELL WITH A LENGTH OF 20.15 MM**