

THREE CANAANITE DESIGN SCARABS, ONE EGYPTIAN OBSIDIAN SCARAB AND ONE SYRIAN CYLINDER SEAL FROM A BURIAL CAVE NEAR RAS 'ALI, IN NAḤAL ZIPPORI

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INTRODUCTION

The four scarabs and the cylinder seal discussed below were unearthed in a burial cave near Ras 'Ali, in Naḥal Zippori, during a salvage excavation in November 1993 (see Horowitz and Lipkunsky, this volume).

In this article, an attempt has been made to list a large number of excavated parallels from Canaanite and Egyptian/Nubian sites as a basis for future studies. In cases where other scholars have previously discussed specific issues, I will refer to these works in order to avoid repetition. Parallels from collections are cited only when they are essential to the discussion. A deliberate attempt has been made to standardize the vocabulary and terminology of similar elements, features, etc., employed in the description. It should be noted that references citing multiple parallels, or multiple publications of the same item, have been moved to the endnotes so as to preserve the continuity of the text.

GENERAL NOTES

For the sake of brevity we describe here several features, mainly of a technical nature, common to most of the items below, so as to avoid repetition in the individual descriptions.

Material

Glazed Steatite. All the steatite seals were glazed.¹ The original colors of the glaze, which were most probably blue or green, have faded to

white or grayish hues (see also Keel 1995:153, §406).

Dimensions

The four main dimensions referred to in this publication are:

D = diameter, H = height, L = length, W = width.

Technical Details

Hatching. One of the most characteristic features of Canaanite scarabs is the extensive use of hatching and cross-hatching on the bodies of the various figures, some of which were originally invented as hieroglyphic signs (Keel 2004:83 [EMBCS]; Hayes 1968:35–36, Fig. 17 [LMBCS], respectively).

'Firing Marks'. Two of the scarabs have a strip of different color along the ridge on the back (for further examples, see Brandl 1993b: No. 9; 2004: Nos. 6, 29, 30; 2006: No. 4). This may be the result of the glazing process, when the scarabs were placed on their backs during firing to achieve optimal results on the decorated bases.

Scarab Shape

There are two main classification systems or typologies that relate to details of the shape of Middle Bronze Age scarabs.² The first, a segmented typology, was defined by Alan Rowe (Rowe 1936: Pls. 32–35 = Keel 1995: Ills. 44, 46, 67), the second, by Olga Tufnell (Tufnell 1984:31–38, Figs. 12–14 = Keel 1995: Ills. 45, 49, 69; for additional changes, see Ward and

Dever 1994:161–165). Neither is sufficiently accurate,³ and there is a noticeable discrepancy between their respective identifications.

Base Design

In this paper, all the Egyptian hieroglyphic signs are referred to [in square brackets] as they appear in Gardiner's (1973) sign list.

Typology

The designs of the Middle Bronze Age scarabs are described according to Tufnell's Design Classification (Tufnell 1984),⁴ with some later modifications made by Keel (1995:158–162) and Ben-Tor (2007:4).

Origin

An attempt has been made here to determine whether the scarabs were imported (from Egypt) or locally made. Ben-Tor has convincingly shown that most of the early Middle Bronze Age design scarabs found in Canaan were local products (her "early Palestinian scarab series"), as were the later Middle Bronze Age ones (her "late Palestinian [scarab] series"; Ben-Tor 1997; 1998).

I fully agree with Ben-Tor's observation regarding origins, but suggest employing alternative terms for these two groups, since imitations of Egyptian scarabs were locally produced in Canaan also during the Late Bronze Age and later. I thus propose to use the terms "Early Middle Bronze [Age] Canaanite Scarabs" (or EMBCS) for her early series, and "Late Middle Bronze [Age] Canaanite Scarabs" (or LMBCS) for her late series. In addition, the territory of Canaan is wider than that of 'Palestine', as it also includes Transjordan, Lebanon and, according to some scholars (for example Amiran and Eitan 1964:230), the Syrian coast up to Ugarit and Alalakh ('Greater Canaan').

Date

The factors used for dating are the shape of the scarab, the carving style, and parallels originating in controlled excavations.

My dating of EMBCS is lower by 30 years than Ben-Tor's "early Palestinian scarab series" (for a full discussion, see Brandl 2004:124–125). I suggest the following dates:

EMBCS: early MB IIB, 1680–1650 BCE according to Bietak's Low Chronology (= Tell el-Dab'a E/3).

LMBCS: late MB IIB–MB IIC, or 1650–1530 BCE, with a division between early LMBCS, dating to 1650–1590 BCE (= Tell el-Dab'a E/2 and E/1) and late LMBCS (MB IIC), dating to 1590–1530 BCE (= Tell el-Dab'a D/3 and D/2).

DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Scarab

Reg. No. 125, L103, IAA No. 1997-4454 (Fig. 1)

Material: Glazed steatite, white glaze, complete coverage.

Dimensions: L 13.5 mm, W 9.25 mm, H 5.75 mm.

Method of Manufacture: Carving, abrading, drilling, incising and glazing.

Workmanship: Good to excellent.

Technical Details: Perforated lengthwise, drilled from both sides. Linear engraving. Typical 'firing mark' on the back.

Preservation: Complete.

Scarab Shape: Rowe HC (Head and *Clypeus*) 58 (Hyksos–Dynasty XVIII), EP (*Elytra* and *Pronotum*) 5 (Dynasties XII–XXVI), Side 27 (Dynasties c. XIII–XXVI); Tufnell B6-O-d5; Ward and Dever B6-PS-d5.

Base Design: In a horizontal oval frame, perpendicular to the scarab, a single-line thread is surrounded by a scroll border comprising a pair of hooked, oblong scrolls.

Typology: Design scarab. Tufnell's Design Classes 6A "Coiled and 'Woven' Patterns, Single-line thread",⁵ and 7B1 (ii) a "Scroll Borders, Paired scrolls, top loop—one pair, oblong, hooked" (cf. Tufnell 1984: Pls. 24:2059, 2064 and 30:2285–2303, 2305 respectively).⁶

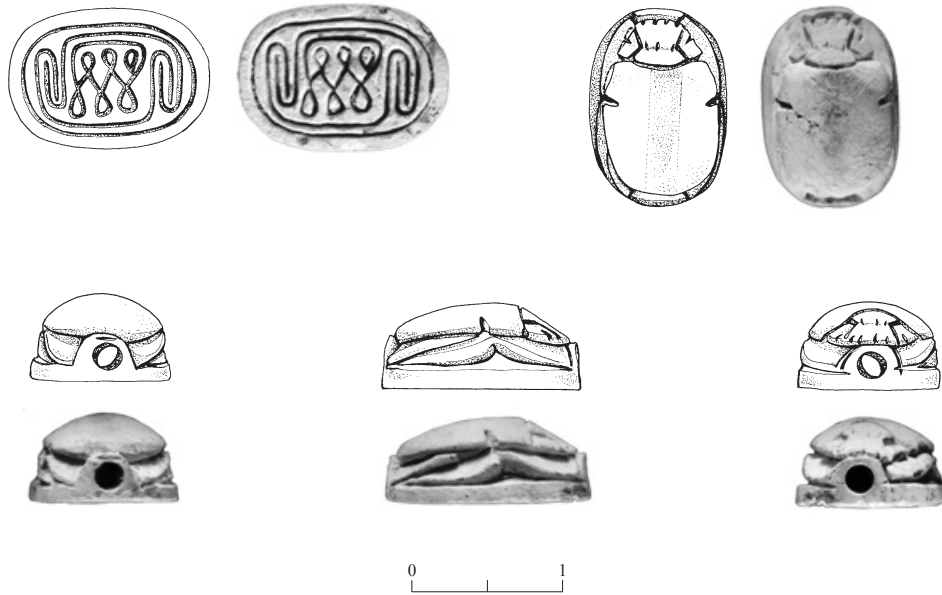


Fig. 1. Scarab 1.

Scarabs and scarab impressions with such borders are known from Canaan, Egypt and Nubia (see references in Brandl 2007: Scarab No. 8). The closest parallel is from Shekhem (Sellin 1927:272, Pl. 28A b).⁷

Origin: Canaanite, based on technical details and base design.

Technical Details. The ‘firing mark’ is a clear Canaanite phenomenon.

Base Design. The single-line thread is depicted in a non-Egyptian style by the addition of the upper right loop. In addition, the Egyptian prototype always consists of two,⁸ or even three,⁹ such interlocked threads, while in Canaan they are always single.

Date: This scarab seems to belong to our late LMBCS group (MB IIC, 1590–1530 BCE), in accordance with its shape and excavated parallel.

Scarab Shape. The only defined royal scarab with features of Tufnell’s B6-O-d5 is that of the Dynasty XV pharaoh Auserre Apophis I (Tufnell 1984: Pl. 62:3451).

Excavated Parallel. The above-mentioned scarab from Shekhem was identified correctly as a Hyksos (Dynasty XV) scarab by Sellin, Rowe, Horn and Müller (see n. 7).¹⁰

Archaeological Context: Locus 103 belongs to the second layer in the burial cave, dated to MB IIC. Thus, the scarab was found in a context close to its time of production.

2. Scarab

Reg. No. 109, L103–104, IAA No. 1997-4455 (Fig. 2)

Material: Glazed steatite, white glaze, complete coverage.

Dimensions: L 22 mm, W 15 mm, H 9 mm.

Method of Manufacture: Carving, abrading, drilling, incising and glazing.

Workmanship: Good.

Technical Details: Perforated lengthwise, drilled from both sides. Linear and hollowed-out engraving with hatching. Typical ‘firing mark’ on the back.

Preservation: Complete.

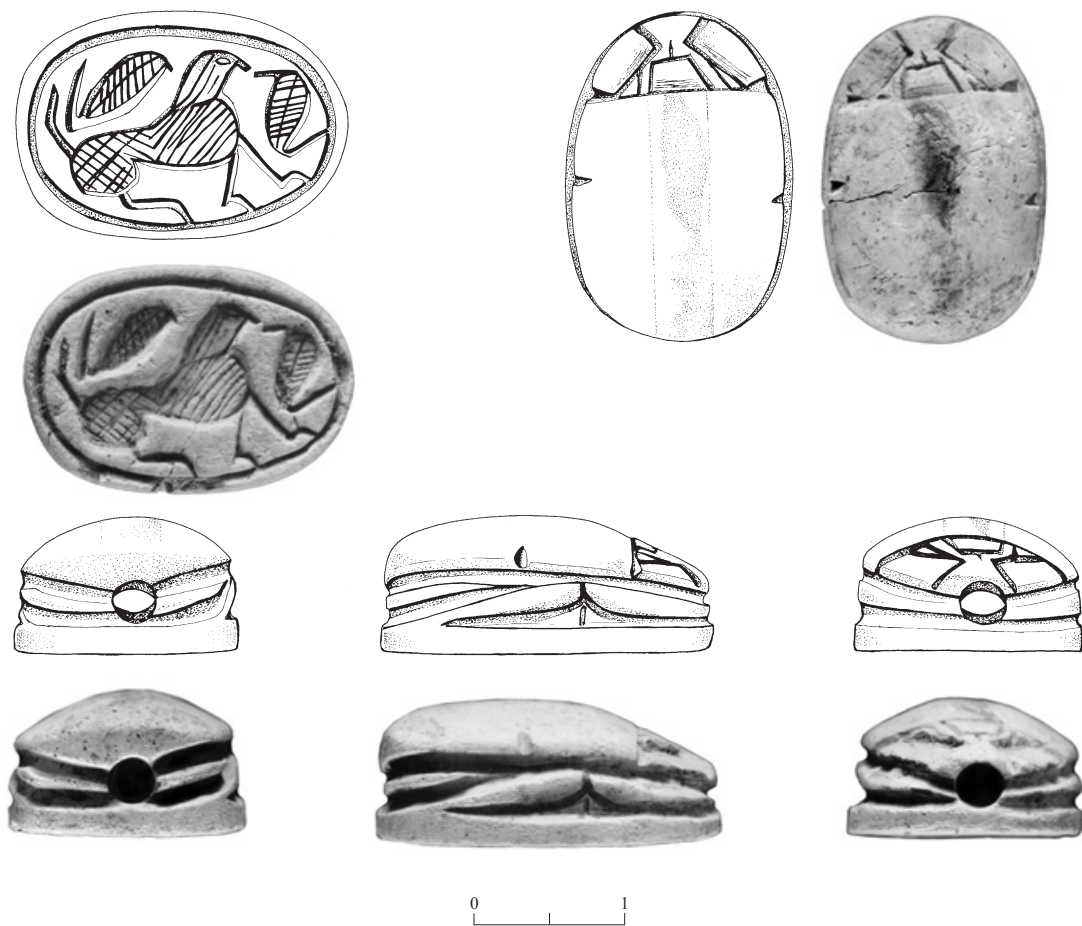


Fig. 2. Scarab 2.

Scarab Shape: Rowe HC 3 (Dynasties XIII–XVIII), EP 5 (Dynasties XII–XXVI), Side 27 (Dynasties c. XIII–XXVI); Tufnell D3-O-d5; Ward and Dever D3-PS-d5.

Base Design: In a horizontal oval frame, perpendicular to the scarab, a recumbent falcon-headed sphinx confronting an *ỉrt* “Uraeus” (or cobra) [I 12], with a second cobra above its back; all three decorated with hatching and cross-hatching.

Typology: Design scarab. Tufnell’s Design Classes 9C5 “Animals and Heraldic Beasts, Cobras confronted—with animals or heraldic beasts” and 9F “Animals and Heraldic Beasts, Heraldic Beasts” (cf. Tufnell 1984: Pls. 38:2569, 2574 and 41:2653–55, 2566, 2664 respectively).

According to Keel’s modifications, Design Class 9F should be transferred to his Design Class 9F2, “Falcon-headed sphinx” (“*Falkenköpfiger Sphinxen*”, Keel 1995:199–200, §§550–559).

Parallel scarabs are known from Jericho, Tell el-‘Ajjul (see above, Tufnell 1984), Megiddo (Guy 1938: Pl. 176:5; Loud 1948: Pl. 151:119)¹¹ and Pella (Richards 1992:94–95, Nos. 15–16, erroneously identified as lions).¹²

Origin: Canaanite, based on the exclusive distribution of scarabs with this design at Canaanite sites.

Date: This scarab seems to belong to our late LMBCS group (MB IIC, 1590–1530 BCE), in accordance with its shape and excavated parallels.

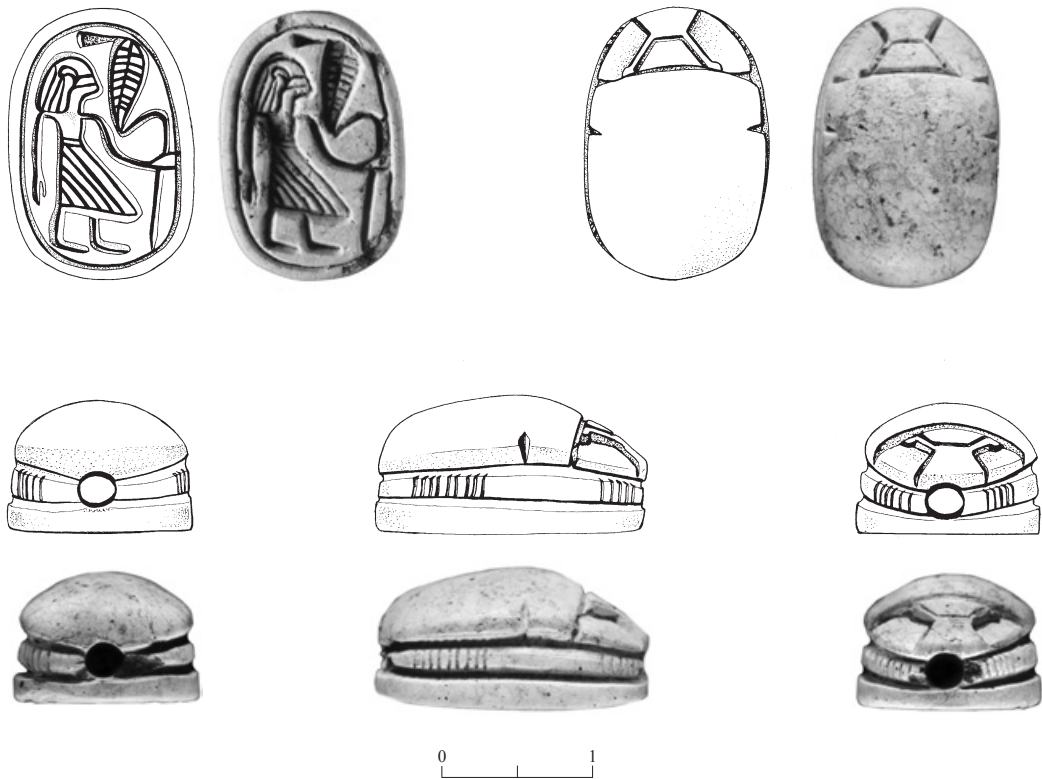


Fig. 3. Scarab 3.

Scarab Shape. The certain royal scarabs with features of Tufnell's D3-O-d5 are those of the pharaohs of Dynasties XV–XVI (Tufnell 1984: Pls. 57–61, 63).

Excavated Parallels. All the parallels are attributed to the late MB IIB, or Dynasty XV (Hyksos).

Archaeological Context. Loci 103–104 belongs to the second layer in the burial cave, dated to MB IIC. Thus, the scarab was found in a context close to its time of production.

3. Scarab

Reg. No. 108, L103–104, IAA No. 1997-4456 (Fig. 3)

Material: Glazed steatite, grayish glaze, complete coverage.

Dimensions: L 18 mm, W 12 mm, H 9 mm.

Method of Manufacture: Carving, abrading, drilling, incising and glazing.

Workmanship: Good to excellent.

Technical Details: Perforated lengthwise, drilled from both sides. Linear and hollowed-out engraving with hatching.

Preservation: Complete.

Scarab Shape: Rowe HC 1 (Dynasties XII–XXII), EP 5 (Dynasties XII–XXVI), Side 17 (Dynasties XVI–XVII); Tufnell D3-O-e10; Ward and Dever D3-PS-e10.

Base Design: In a vertical oval frame, a human figure dressed in a kilt, holding a staff whose top is shaped as an *i3rt* “Uraeus” or cobra [I 12].¹³

Typology: Design scarab. Tufnell's Design Class 10A1c “Human and Mythical Figures, Standing, human-headed holding cobra” (Tufnell 1984: Pl. 42:2711, 2714, 2717, 2721). According to Ben-Tor's modifications, Tufnell's Design Class 10A1c should be



Fig. 4. Scarab 4.

included in her Design Class 10A “Human and Mythical Figures, Standing Figures” (Ben-Tor 2007:178–179, Pls. 102:8, 44; 103:11, 22).

Parallel scarabs are known from Jericho and especially, Tell el-‘Ajjul (see above, Tufnell 1984). The closest scarab is from Tell el-Ajjul (Petrie 1934: Pl. 11:441).¹⁴

Origin: Canaanite (as noted already by Murray 1949: Pl. 11:8, 11). This design class is totally missing on the Egyptian scarabs.

Date: This scarab seems to belong to our late LMBCS group (MB IIC, 1590–1530 BCE), in accordance with its shape and excavated parallel.

Scarab Shape. The certain royal scarab with features of Tufnell’s D3-O-e10 is that of Ahetepre, a pharaoh of Dynasty XVI (Tufnell 1984: Pl. 61:3431).

Excavated Parallel. The Tell el-‘Ajjul scarab (see Typology, above) is dated by Keel to Dynasty XV.

Archaeological Context: Loci 103–104 belong to the second layer in the burial cave, dated to MB IIC.

4. Scarab

Reg. No. 120, L103, IAA No. 1997-4457 (Fig. 4)

Material: Obsidian,¹⁵ black opaque.

Dimensions: L 14.5 mm, W 10.5 mm, H 6 mm.

Method of Manufacture: Carving, abrading, drilling and incising.

Workmanship: Good.

Technical Details: Perforated lengthwise, drilled from both sides. Linear engraving only on the upper side of the scarab.

Preservation: Broken, part of the rear is missing, and three small scars are seen on the base; all seem to be modern damage from the excavation.

Scarab Shape: Rowe HC 20 (Hyksos), EP 5 (Dynasties XII–XXVI), Side 40 (Dynasties c. XIII–XXVI); Tufnell D8-O-e11; Ward and Dever D8-PS-e11.

Base Design: Plain.

Typology: Design scarab. Tufnell’s Design Class 12B “Uninscribed Scarabs” (cf. Tufnell 1984:39–41, Fig. 15:1–3, 25, 27). This class

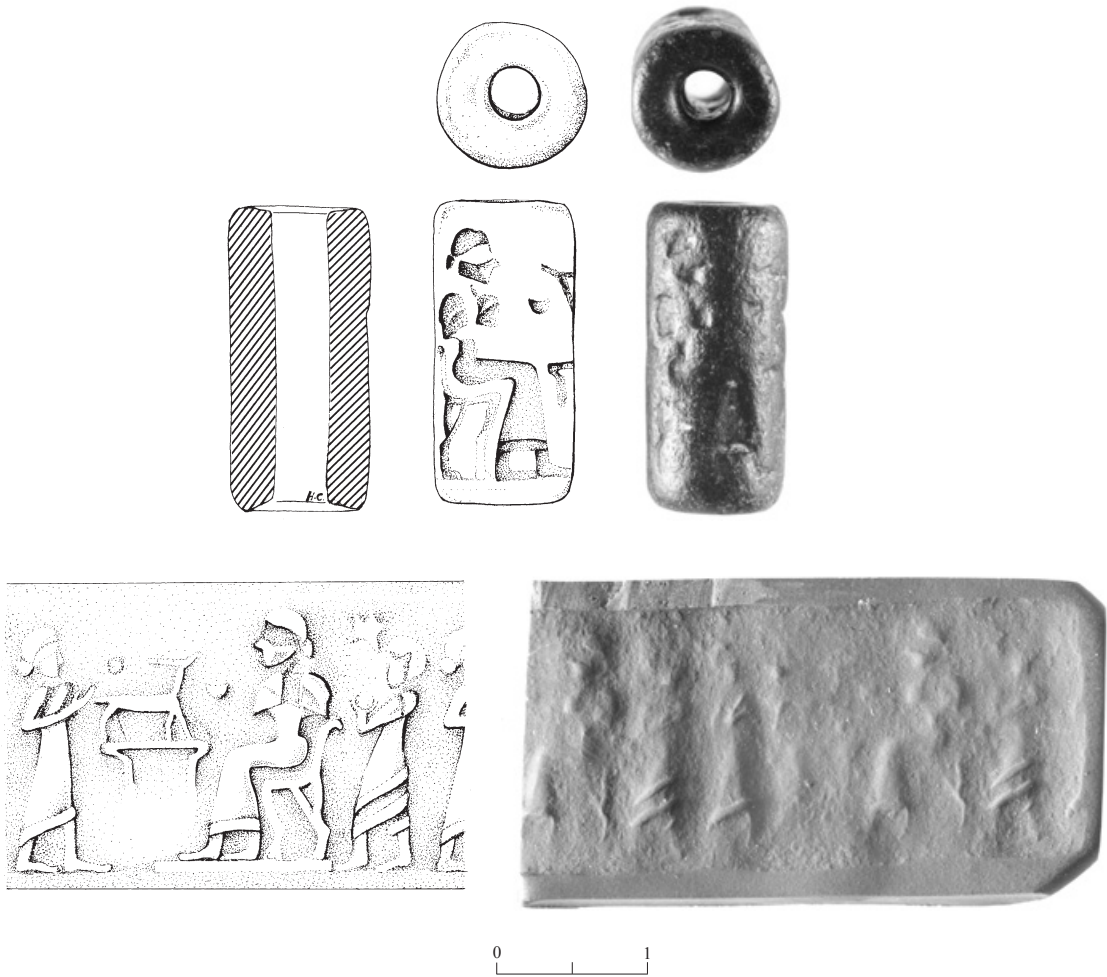


Fig. 5. Cylinder seal.

was totally ignored by Keel (1995:162) and Ben-Tor (2007).

Origin: Egypt, based on its shape. The source of the raw material was probably Crete, with which the Egyptians traded, although Ethiopia and southwest Arabia should not be ruled out.

Date: This scarab seems to be contemporaneous with our late LMBCS group (MB IIC, 1590–1530 BCE), in accordance with the material and scarab shape.

Excavated Obsidian Scarabs: Two uninscribed obsidian scarabs are included in Group 1300 at Mayana, attributed to Dynasty XVI (Petrie and Brunton 1924:18, Pls. 40:35, 40; 43:40, 42).

Scarab Shape: The closest royal scarab with features of Tufnell's D8-O-e11 belongs to Y'mu of Dynasty XVI (Tufnell 1984: Pl. 61:3416).

Archaeological Context: Locus 103 belongs to the second layer in the burial cave, dated to MB IIC.

5. Cylinder Seal

Reg. No. 119, L104, IAA No. 1997-4458 (Fig. 5)

Material: Serpentine, black.

Dimensions: H 21 mm, D 9.25–10.00 mm, circumference 28 mm.

Method of Manufacture: Carving, abrading, drilling and incising.

Workmanship: Good.

Technical Details: Perforated off center, drilled from both sides. The design was drilled by both a drill head and a disk.

Preservation: Complete, but worn.

Seal Shape: Cylinder seal.

Seal Design: One register occupies the entire surface, depicting a typical worshipping scene. A central figure, most probably a deity, is seated on a high-backed, lion-legged throne, facing an altar with a quadruped animal (offering) standing above it, and a worshiper whose hands are in a praying position. Another human figure is standing behind the throne, probably a priest.¹⁶ The mantle with the thickened coil resting on the shoulders of the deity is a typical garment of Syro-Levantine deities and rulers (cf. Merhav and Ornan 1979; Beck 1983).¹⁷ The location of the throne (cf. Teissier 1996: No. 138) upon a podium (cf. Teissier 1996: Nos. 138, 208), the position of the offering table (cf. Teissier 1996: No. 176) between the deity and the worshiper, and an additional figure behind the throne, are all known on classical Syrian cylinder seals (Otto 2000: Pl. 33:405–440). The direction of the wrappings of the priest's robe is opposed to that of the worshiper (cf. Schaeffer-Forrer 1983:54 [R.S. 28.025] and 42 [R.S. 11.025]),¹⁸ which is, *inter alia*, similar to that of the nobleman appearing on the famous Hazor bronze plaque (Beck 1983; 2002:307–311).

Typology: This item belongs to a group of post-classical Syrian cylinder seals that continued to use the traditional motifs of the classical Syrian cylinder seals of the eighteenth–seventeenth centuries BCE. Its later date is confirmed, *inter alia*, by the omission of a second register, typical of classical Syrian cylinder seals.

Origin: “Greater Canaan”, perhaps a workshop in Ugarit, based on the raw material and the form of the central figure.

Raw Material. Classical Syrian cylinder seals are generally made of hematite (Amiet 1992:5–

8) or green jasper (Collon 1986). However, during the Late Bronze Age (fourteenth–thirteenth centuries BCE), Ugarit is known as a production center of cylinder seals, bifacial rectangular plaques, and scaraboids made of local serpentine (Brandl 2012: Nos. 3–5).

Form of the Central Figure. The enthroned deity also appears at Ugarit during the fourteenth–thirteenth centuries BCE as in the “El bronze figurine” (Schaeffer 1966:7–8, Fig. 3, Pl. 2), the “El statuette” (Yon and Gachet 1989:349), and the gold plaques (Schaeffer 1939:139, Figs. 114, 120).

Date: It seems that the Ras ‘Ali cylinder seal comprises a missing link between the classical Syrian group of the eighteenth–seventeenth centuries BCE, and the Ugaritic sculpture, figurines and plaques (Brandl 1996:9) of the fifteenth–thirteenth centuries BCE.¹⁹ As such, it fits well within the sixteenth century BCE. This date is also supported by a MB II scarab from Lakhish, which shows a seated figure of a deity or ruler with a blessing gesture (Tufnell 1956: Fig. 1:5).²⁰

Archaeological Context: Locus 104 belongs to the second layer in the burial cave, dated to MB IIC. Thus, the cylinder seal was found in a context close to the time of its production.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The four scarabs and the cylinder seal are made of three different natural materials: three items of glazed steatite (Nos. 1–3), one of obsidian (No. 4) and one of serpentine (No. 5). The glaze on the steatite scarabs had survived on all the items, most probably due to the micro-climatic conditions in the burial cave.

Three of the scarabs (Nos. 1–3) are locally made Canaanite products, while the obsidian scarab (No. 4) seems to have been imported from Egypt. The workmanship of all the scarabs is good to excellent. The shapes of the Canaanite scarabs are seen in royal scarabs of Dynasties XV–XVI, and can be attributed

to the late LMBCS (1590–1530 BCE). The Egyptian scarab (No. 4) is dated to Dynasty XVI.

The cylinder seal (No. 5) is a Syrian product that was imported from the Syrian coast, most probably from Ugarit. It is dated to the sixteenth century BCE.

To sum up, all the glyptic finds from Ras ‘Ali are typical of the MB IIC in Canaan (sixteenth century BCE), and correspond well with the

dating of the other material-culture components with which they were found.

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NOTES

¹ For the different methods of glazing steatite objects used in ancient Egypt, see Tite and Bimson 1989.

² See diagrams showing the parts of the scarab beetle in Rowe 1936: Pl. 23; Ward 1978: Frontispiece; Uehlinger 1990:62, Fig. 37; Keel 1995:20, Fig. 1. The last is the most detailed, with the terms given in four languages: German, English, French and Italian.

³ This difficulty led me to avoid discussing these details in several of my earlier studies (Brandl 1984:60; 1986:247; 1993a:129; 1993b:203). However, in the present publication I decided to refer to these features, as comparative data are still meager, and they provide another, albeit secondary, means to refine dating, in addition to the motifs on the scarabs.

⁴ On the history and development of Tufnell’s Design Classification, see Brandl 1986:247, n. 4. Tufnell also used this classification for scarabs of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period.

⁵ According to Ben-Tor, this design class is divided into 6A1 for the Canaanite scarabs of the early series, and 6A for those of the late series (Ben-Tor 2007:138, Pl. 60:2–7, 169, Pl. 88:3 respectively).

⁶ According to Ben-Tor, this design class is named 7B1 (ii) (Ben-Tor 2007:28, 142, 172).

⁷ = Rowe 1936: No. 187 = Horn 1962:4 (No. 1), Fig. 1.1 = Müller 1987:94–95, Ill. 30:b = Ben-Tor 2007:138, Pl. 60:4.

⁸ Ben-Tor 2007:24–25, Pl. 13:1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10–13, 16–18, 20–23 (6A1 of the Egyptian Scarabs of Late Middle Kingdom).

⁹ Brandl 1986:251 (Scarab No. 841), with Ben-Tor’s observation (Ben-Tor 2007:138, n. 664, where its twelfth-century context was erroneously given as MB IIB).

¹⁰ The attribution of this scarab by Ben-Tor to her early series seems erroneous.

¹¹ = Tufnell 1973:72–73, 79, Fig. 2:101 = Ben-Tor 2007: Pls. 98:35; 101:22.

¹² = Eggler and Keel 2006:212–213, No. 28; 222–223, No. 51, respectively (rightly corrected to falcon-headed sphinxes).

¹³ An alternative identification may be just a cobra with a long tail, cf. Tufnell 1984: Pl. 38 (9C4).

¹⁴ = Tufnell 1984: Pl. 42:2714 = Keel 1997:442–443 (Tell el-‘Aḡul No. 994) = Ben-Tor 2007: Pl. 103:11.

¹⁵ This observation was possible due to the modern damage. For the use of obsidian in scarab manufacture, see Keel 1995:148.

¹⁶ This suggestion is based on the direction he is facing (cf. Amiet 1992: No. 230).

¹⁷ = Beck 2002:307–311; Merhav 1985; Schroer 1985; Ziffer 1990:51*–53*; Teissier 1996: No. 175; Beck 1998 = 2002:58–93 = Otto 2000:232 = Ziffer 2002:15–16.

¹⁸ = Amiet 1992: Nos. 39, 40 (of Aleppo Workshop). For that workshop, see Collon 1981.

¹⁹ It also fills the gap between the seal impressions of Alalakh VII and IV, see Collon 1975:198.

²⁰ = Tufnell 1958: Pl. 30:64 = Schroer 1985: No. 45 = Beck 1998: Fig. 30 = 2002:79, Fig. 31 = Keel 1995:207, Ill. 410.

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