

A SCARAB FROM THE WESTERN WALL PLAZA EXCAVATIONS, JERUSALEM

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The Archaeological Context

In the course of the Western Wall Plaza Excavations,¹ a scarab was found in a quarry to the west of an Iron Age four-room house (see Ornan et al., this volume: Table 1:8, Plan 1, No. 8). The scarab (L6134, B61008, Wet Sieving No. B71528) was found 0.2–0.4 meters above the bed of the quarry, in a fill that contained many stone chips and some pottery sherds. The basket level was 724.26–724.06 m asl. The fill is located at the foot of a four-meter high vertical rock-scarp formed by quarrying, that runs in a zigzag line from north-west to southeast across the excavated area. The scarab was found about one meter west of the northwestern corner of the four-room house, which was built following the abandonment of the quarry (see Ornan et al., this volume: Table 1, Plan 1: Section 2–2). It is currently impossible to decide whether the fill that contained the scarab (L6134) accumulated after the abandonment of the quarry and prior to the construction of the four-room house, or if it is part of an intentional fill that was laid down by the builders of the house. The following finds were found in L6134 together with the scarab: a jar handle with incised concentric circles (B61166, from the same general basket, 61008, as the scarab); two cooking-pot handles (B70948, B70949), each with a sign incised after firing; pottery sherds from Iron Age II (eighth–sixth centuries BCE); and about ten fragments of terracotta figurines. The date of the fill thus falls within the eighth–sixth centuries BCE, narrowing the timespan provided by the typological dating.

Description of the Scarab (Fig. 1:a–d)²

The scarab is fragmentary; half the back and at least one third of the base are missing; part of the head, the clypeus, is also broken; the shape of the head is thus not entirely clear; it was probably trapezoidal, Tufnell's Class D3, with faint indications of the eyes (Tufnell 1984:32–34); it is also uncertain whether the *pronotum* and *elytra* were separated by single lines; the legs are reduced to two grooves. Similar features are found in the scarabs published by Keel 2010a: Bet-Schemesch Nos. 2 and 18 and Keel 2010b: Tell el-Far'a-Süd No. 353. The engraving of the base is hollowed out (Keel 1995: §328–334).

The material is baked steatite (Keel 1995: §386–390) with remains of red-brown glaze. The present measurements of the fragment are 13.0 × 10.5 × 7.5 mm, restored it would be c. 15.0 × 11.0 × 7.5 mm.

The Engraving on the Base (Fig. 1:e–g)

The traces remaining on the base allow a reconstruction of the name of the Egyptian god *Jmn-r'* "Amun-Re"; the *J* is entirely preserved; of the *mn* and the phonetic complement *n*—the line below the *mn*—enough is left to reconstruct them with certainty; the *r'* is accompanied by a determinative-stroke. To the right of the god's name is a vertical *nb* "lord". There are about 360 stamp seal-amulets from legal excavations in Israel/Palestine with the name of the god Amun-Re, one third of them, about 120, displaying the name together with *nb*, probably to be read *nb<j>* and translated "Amun-Re (is my) Lord" (Keel 1995: §642). Other examples

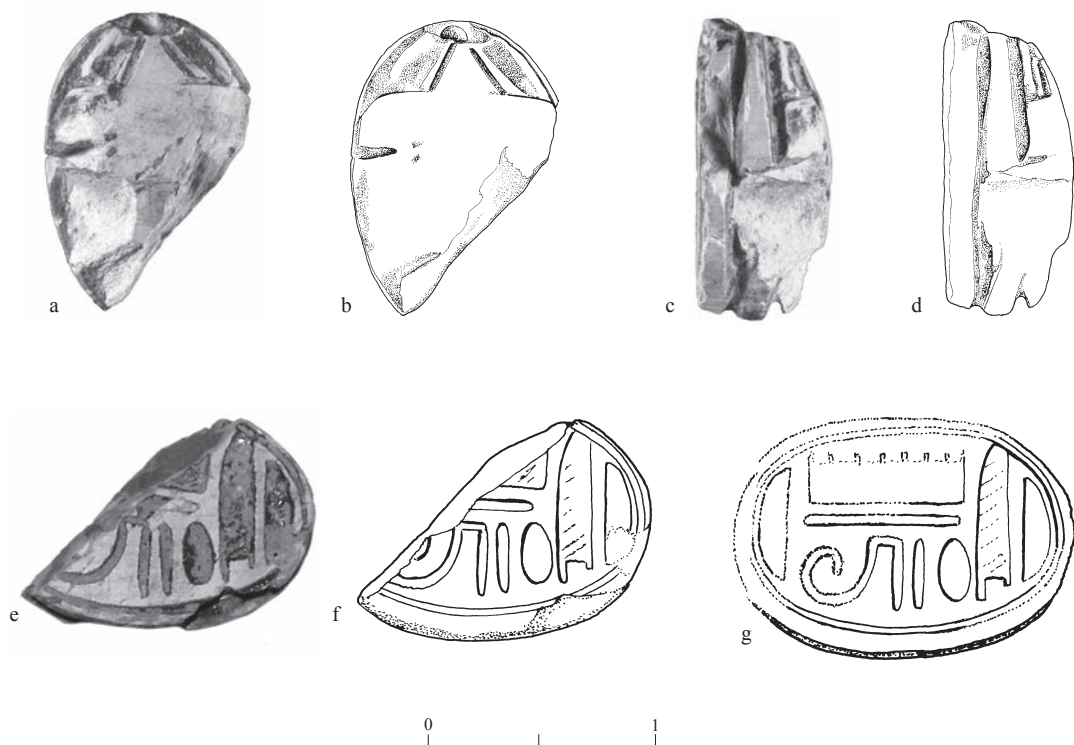


Fig. 1. Scarab No. 8 (a, b) top view; (c, d) side view; (e, f) base; (g) reconstruction of inscription.

with *nb* are Keel 2010b: Tell el-Far‘a-Süd Nos. 145, 455; Tel Lakhish: Tufnell 1958: Pls. 37–38:268; unprovenanced: Newberry 1907: Pl. VIII:36504, 36527, 36685, 37224. On the Jerusalem scarab-fragment traces of an additional sign are visible—a schematic rendering of Gardiner’s sign D17 “markings of the *wd3t*-eye” meaning *tît* “image, figure”. The sign is stylized in such a way that it can be read alternatively as Gardiner’s U21, *stp*, “chosen”. The entire inscription can be read “The image of Amun-Re, the Lord” or “The chosen by Amun-Re, the Lord”. In both cases, reference is

to the pharaoh. Parallels close to this legend are Keel 2010b: Tell el-Far‘a-Süd No. 209 = Petrie 1930: Pl. 29:255 and Tel Lakhish: Tufnell 1953: Pl. 43:11. These examples suggest that there was a second *nb* to the left, as shown on the reconstruction, Fig. 1:g. The object was imported from Egypt.

The Date of the Scarab

Based on the features of the scarab and the inscription, the object was most probably produced during Dynasty XXII (945–713 BCE).

NOTES

¹ IAA Permit Nos A-4604, A-4710, A-5002, A-5432, A-5568.

² The scarab is currently (August 2010) stored in the IAA facilities at Har Hozevim, Jerusalem.

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