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ON A HITTITE SEAL PURCHASED AT SMYRNA BY
THE REV. GREVILLE I. CHESTER.¹

By PROFESSOR SAYCE.

The Rev. Greville I. Chester has been fortunate enough to secure another addition to our stock of Hittite inscriptions. As the object on which the inscription is found was purchased at Smyrna, it may be inferred that it was discovered somewhere in Asia Minor. Unfortunately it is impossible to fix more definitely the exact spot from which it may have come. Smyrna is the centre of the trade in the coins and other antiquities which are found in the interior of Anatolia; I have myself bought there cylinders which were imported from Kappadokia, and it is therefore quite possible that the "Hittite" relic obtained by Mr. Chester may have come from an equal distance.

The relic is a seal, though I was at first a good deal puzzled to ascertain its original use. It is a circular bead of brown limestone with flattened sides, on which inscriptions have been engraved. A hole has been drilled through the thickest part, passing between the sides on



which the characters are inscribed. This hole, however, was not the first which it had been attempted to make. There are remains of another hole which has been drilled for a short distance into the stone, and then left unfinished.

The hole shows that the object was intended for suspension. But it could hardly have been intended for purposes of ornamentation. The stone of which it consists is not a beautiful one, and seems to have been selected

¹ Read at the Monthly Meeting of the Institute, June 5th, 1890.

simply on account of the ease with which an inscription could be cut upon it. Moreover the inscriptions on both faces are executed with an equal amount of care and attention. Yet, if it had been intended that the "bead" should be used merely as the pendent of a necklace one of these faces would have been necessarily hidden. Finally, as we shall see, the inscription on one of the faces contains a royal name, that on the other the name of the king's father. It is difficult to suppose that such inscriptions could have formed part of a necklace.

A clue, however, to the original purpose of the object is afforded by the Babylonian cylinders, the use of which, as we know, extended itself as far as Kappadokia and the country of the Hittites. They, too, were pierced with holes through which strings were passed to attach them to the wrists of their owners. The cylinder, in fact, was the signet of the Babylonian gentleman, which had to be employed whenever he wrote his name or witnessed a deed.

The bead Mr. Chester has bought must have served a like purpose. It must have been a royal seal attached to the wrist by the string or chain which passed through it. This will explain the unfinished hole to which I have referred. The latter has been drilled through the edge of the bead at a point which corresponds with the end of the inscription on the first face. But the whole inscription did not really end here, a second inscription giving the name of the owner's father having been added on the other face. The workman, therefore, did not complete the hole, and made another at the point where the second inscription ends.

The inscriptions are composed of Hittite characters which we find extending with but slight variations, from Hamath and Carchemish in the east to the shores of the Ægean in the west. I believe that they were primarily invented in the district which adjoins the modern Mar'ash. It was here, at all events, in the eastern part of the ancient Komagênê that Hittite art begins, and it was here also that the Hittite tribes of the Taurus first came into contact with the civilisation of Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt. However this may be, the extraordinary similarity, not only between the products of Hittite

art, but also between the forms of the Hittite characters and the arrangement of the symbols, throughout the whole of the Hittite region, indicates that most, if not all, of the Hittite monuments known to us in Asia Minor belong substantially to the same people and the same conquering race.

The only light hitherto shed on the decipherment of the Hittite texts comes from the bilingual inscription of king Tarkondemos. This has given us the meaning of two ideographs—those for “king” and “country”—and the phonetic values of four signs. Besides this we know the meaning of the ideograph of “deity,” and also of one or two more.

The first face of the seal from Smyrna presents us with a number of characters arranged in the symmetrical fashion which we are accustomed to find on Hittite seals. At the foot of the inscription is the ideograph of “king,” twice repeated, and enclosing, as it were, the Royal name. On the inner edge of the ideograph is drawn a short line, which is attached to the last character in the inscription of Tarkondemos, as well as to the last character of an inscription on a seal belonging to M. Schlumberger. As it further occurs in other Hittite inscriptions in places where a paragraph seems to come to an end, it would follow that it denotes pretty much the same as a full stop, and served to indicate the conclusion of a text or a paragraph.

The two ideographs of “king” are preceded by two signs, each of which is found to precede the names of the kings mentioned in the longer Hittite texts. One of them is a simple line, the representative of the numeral “one.” The other combines this line with a crescent, which a comparison of passages has shown to be a determinative affix of patronymics. At Mar’ash the simple line takes the place of the compound sign which elsewhere is the one generally used. Besides preceding proper names it also precedes what are evidently titles and nouns of agency. I therefore pointed out some years ago that it must be a determinative prefix indicating that the word following was either a proper name or a noun of agency. Mr. Chester’s new acquisition verifies this conclusion, and further proves that the simple and compound signs were

employed interchangeably. They here determine the word for "king."

The royal name to which the ideograph of "king" is attached consists of three characters, one of which is new.

This is the one at the top, which looks like a cord tied into a bow with the ends spread out. The other two characters are a triangle which is found elsewhere, and a circle, which in an inscription from Carchemish (J. iii. 5) is preceded by the determinative of "deity," and must therefore denote the Sun-god. It is a pity that we do not know how the name of the Sun-god was pronounced in the Hittite language.

The vacant spaces in the inscription are filled up with two little angles which are frequently found fulfilling the same function on gems and seals of the "Hittite" class, as well as with a star. Two stars are also engraved on the other side of the seal, and similar stars are employed for the purpose of ornamentation on Hittite seals in the possession of M. Schlumberger. The inscription on both faces of the seal is surrounded with the representation of a twisted rope.

The inscription on the reverse contains the characters which a comparison of passages has long since shown denoted the patronymic, one of them being the phonetic representative of the patronymic suffix (*?kus*), the other, the determinative affix to which I have already alluded. They are twice repeated, like the ideograph of "king" on the first face, and the hole which runs through the seal starts from a point immediately below the place where they are inscribed for a second time.

The name of the father consists of three characters like that of the son, the first being again the triangle, and the second a character which has not been met with before. I have no idea as to what it represents; perhaps the foot of a horse, perhaps the head of some animal. The third character occurs on one of Mr. Schlumberger's seals, and is shown by a comparison of texts to be a "hieratic" and much deformed representation of a hand.

Such, then, is the signification of the inscriptions on the seal, so far as they can be made out at present. On one side is a royal name followed by the title of "king," on the other side the name of his father. Both names begin

with the same character, and the first name ends with that of the Sun-god. Until another bilingual text is discovered I doubt whether we shall succeed in getting much beyond these results.

By way of appendix I would mention a fine Phœnician seal of chalcedony, also obtained this winter by Mr. Greville Chester, and also presented by him to the Ashmolean Museum. A couchant lion, with its mouth open, is engraved on the lower part of it. Above the lion is an inscription in five Phœnician letters, the former of which belong to the 7th or 6th century B.C. Unfortunately fractures in the stone make the reading of the second and last letters a little doubtful, though the second letter can scarcely be anything else than P, and the last letter is either N or a mere symbol to denote the end of the inscription. The other letters are clear enough, and the whole legend would therefore run

לִפְרָ'ן L-P-R'-N

"belonging to Phera'n." The characters resemble those of the Siloam inscription.