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BABYLONIAN CYLINDER SEALS FROM EGYPT

By SIDNEY SMITH, M. A.

The five cylinder seals shown on Pl. XXIII belong to the collection of Mr. G. D. HORN-BLOWER, to whom I am much indebted for permission to publish them. Four are known to come from Memphis, and it is of some interest to note that they are of early date. Many Babylonian cylinder seals must have been found in Egypt, and a complete publication of them would doubtless reveal many matters of interest, both as to the periods at which intercourse between the Nile and Euphrates valleys was most lively, and as to particular points in philology and cult practices.

No. 1. From Damanhûr. Haematite, length $\frac{3}{4}$ ", diameter $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Legend, *Ia-ak-ba-bi* (? or *hi*)-*e-da, arad (ilu) Adad*. Scene: A palm tree, the lower branches lopped, the upper branches looped together on the outside with twigs. On either side, a figure of an Egyptian monarch wearing the Atef crown and ram's horns, holding in his right hand and in his left hand .

The owner's name, *Iakba-bieda* or *Iakba-hieda* is puzzling. The fourth sign is cut in an ambiguous way, so that it is possible to read it as either *bi* or *hi*. I prefer the reading *bieda*, since this element may be paralleled in the second element of such names as *Ian-bi'di*, *Atar-bi'di*; I know no parallel for *hieda*. The first element, *iakba*, I am inclined to believe is a verb, so that the name consists of verb + noun, a common type; but I am unable to explain the meaning. That *Iakba* is to be connected with *Jacob* is highly improbable.

Although *Iakba-bieda* declares himself "a servant of Adad," the weather god is not represented on the seal. This absence of the god actually named as the patron is not unusual in cylinder seals. The scene actually depicted is sufficiently surprising, in that it provides an exact Egyptian counterpart for the scene most frequently depicted on Assyrian and Persian cylinder seals, namely the tree, with a royal figure on either side, obviously engaged in some cult practice. The best known examples of the same theme are of course the slabs from the frieze of Ashurnasirpal's palace at Calah.

There are three possible explanations of this scene. 1. That the Egyptian king actually performed a cult ceremony with a tree which closely corresponded to the cult ceremony performed by the Assyrian king. 2. That the theme has merely been adapted by the engraver, who has substituted a figure of the Pharaoh for that of the Assyrian king. 3. That the seal belongs to the period of the Assyrian occupation, when Psammetichus (who also bore the Assyrian name *Nabu-shezibanni*) may have adopted Assyrian cult practices to please his overlord, Ashurbanipal. Of these three explanations, the first seems to me correct.

The question of dating cylinder seals is always a difficulty; even the writing, which is stylised, affords little help. Sir E. A. WALLIS BUDGE has kindly pointed out to me that the crown with the ram's horns points to a late date, from the 26th Dynasty onwards. The form of the crown on this seal for instance closely resembles that painted on the 28th Dynasty coffin 6693 A (British Museum, Second Egyptian Room). I am inclined to date the seal 650—600 B. C.

Assuming that the ceremony here represented is actually Egyptian, and not merely an artistic or temporary adaptation, this cylinder is an important document for the study of comparative religion. Mr. HORNBLLOWER has kindly pointed out to me a few instances in which the tree occurs on scarabs of the Hyksos period. By far the most striking is B. M. no. 51902 (figured on the Plate), in which the theme strongly resembles Assyrian subjects. This tree is to be distinguished from the Hathor pillar, and it would be interesting to learn of other examples of it on Egyptian scarabs and cylinders. The seal here published was certainly made in Egypt; the style of the figures seems to prove that. The owner was probably a Syrian.

No. 2. From Memphis. Green schist, length $1\frac{5}{16}$ " , diameter $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Legend, (ilu) *Šu-kur-i-li mar A-ḥu-ṭabu*. Scene: A god, seated, holds in his hand a vase from which water springs; above is a crescent; into the presence of the seated god, a figure wearing the divine horned head-dress introduces a human suppliant. Before the suppliant are two devices of which I do not understand the significance.

Mr. HORNBLLOWER informs me that Professor SAYCE has suggested to him that (ilu) *Šukur* in the owner's name is the name of the Egyptian god Seker . This seems extremely probable; for it is no use citing as a parallel the Babylonian which is not only written differently, but seems to mean "goddess of (the city) Shuruppak," and is known to be an epithet of Ninlil¹. If the identification with Seker be correct, the father, *Aḥu-ṭabu* may have come to Egypt from Mesopotamia, and given his son a theophorous name of a common kind, in which the god's name was Egyptian,—“Seker is my god.”

The scene depicted is a very common one on cylinder seals, especially on those of the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur, B. C. 2250—2150, to which period I believe this seal belongs. The seated god is Ea, the lord of the deep, the god to whom the realm of the primeval Apsu was assigned. He is sufficiently distinguished in this case by the vase with flowing water². The god who introduces the suppliant is Marduk. This seems fairly clear from the fact that in some instances, *e. g.* WEBER, *Orientalische Siegelbilder*, vol. II, no. 452, DELAPORTE, *Catalogue des Cylindres Orientaux (Musée du Louvre)* I, Planche 5, no. 2; where the seated god is certainly Ea, the intercessor is two-headed³. The suppliant is the owner of the seal himself. The scene represented is that often mentioned in the class of literature called incantations. Marduk learns that some devil or sickness is abroad, reports the matter to his father Ea, and says, “What shall this man do? he does not know whereby he may be relieved.” Ea answers, “O my son,

¹ C. T. XXIV 5, line 8.

² On the significance of the vase with flowing water see ALBRIGHT, “The Mouth of the Rivers” in *American Journal of Semitic Languages*, vol. XXXV.

³ See *Journal*, April 1922, p. 42, note 2.

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1–5. Cylinders from Egypt. 6. Scarab in the British Museum

what dost thou not know, what more can I give thee? O Marduk, what dost thou not know, what can I add unto thy knowledge? What I know, thou knowest also. Go, my son Marduk . . .," proceeding with the specific means to be employed for the relief of the suppliant¹.

It is interesting to notice that the proprietor of the seal has chosen this scene, in which Ea, the deity of the infernal waters, figures, since his own name includes that of an Egyptian god who also was a deity of the world of the dead. Since the four Duats were all passed through in a boat², Seker, the lord of the second Duat, may have been associated with water, like Ea. Again, the interest of this seal is very considerable. Apparently, the son of a Syrian, born and settled in Egypt, owns a Babylonian cylinder seal of good workmanship, dating from 2250—2150 B. C., on which is depicted a well known Babylonian religious scene. To the present writer's mind, the seal can only have been of use to a man who perpetually needed it for sealing legal documents written on clay—in other words to a man employed in constant trade with Babylonia or Mesopotamia. Was Shukur-ili actually the agent of some Babylonian firm?

No. 3. From Memphis. Haematite, length $\frac{7}{8}$ ", width $\frac{7}{16}$ ". Legend, , (*ilu*) *Adad*, *mar Anim*, Adad, son of Anu. Scene: A divine figure, with four-horned head-dress, facing the god Amurru. Between the two figures are the full and crescent moon (or possible the sun and the moon), the forked lightning of the weather god Adad, and sitting monkey or ape. Amurru, the god of the Amorites, stands in a characteristic attitude holding a club in his right hand. Behind him are a pig and a fish; then another divine figure with the four-horned head-dress, with right hand raised.

This is a characteristic seal of the Amorite First Dynasty, 2050—1750 B. C. The peculiarity lies in the squatting ape, which may indicate the Egyptian god Thoth.

No. 4. From Memphis. Haematite, length $\frac{15}{16}$ ", width $\frac{7}{16}$ ". Legend, , (*ilu*) *Shamash* (*ilu*) *Ai*. Scene: Shamash, holding in his hand a sword, advancing; the goddess Ai facing him with both hands upraised. Between the two is an object which looks like a tripod with four cross pieces. The space left vacant was intended for the owner's name; this has not been filled in, owing possibly to the poverty of the purchaser. Period of the First Dynasty.

No. 5. From Memphis. Haematite, length $\frac{15}{16}$ ", width $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Legend, , *A-ka-na-ti(hi) ilu mar Ma-ti-ilu arad AN.AN.MAR.TU*. Above the first line is an erased line on which the scribe wrote the owner's name, but apparently made some error: traces of . . . can still be seen. Scene: Shamash, holding a sword, advancing; facing him is Amurru. Between them is the lightning fork of Adad.

I am unable to explain the owner's name. His father's name, *Mati-ilu*, is a good Babylonian name of the First Dynasty; to which period the seal belongs.

[The author of the above article having left England for the Near East has had no opportunity of correcting it for the press. In describing the cylinder No. 1 Mr. SMITH, an Assyriologist whose contributions to the *Journal* are highly valued, suggests that the

¹ See CAMPBELL THOMPSON, *Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, p. 93, et freq.

² BUDGE, *Egyptian Heaven and Hell*, III, p. 179.

scene depicted thereon represents a real Egyptian king performing an Egyptian ceremony of tree-worship. But I venture to think that Egyptologists would be unanimous in giving preference to either of the alternative explanations which he offers.

Mr. HORNBLLOWER would illustrate No. 1 by the remarkable jasper cylinder of "Khondy" of "Syro-Mesopotamian" work (Petrie *Scarabs and Cylinders with Names* Pl. XIX; and he remarks that Professor SAYCE had previously figured some Babylonian cylinders from Egypt in the collection of Mr. F. LEGGE in the *Proceedings* of the Society of Biblical Archaeology for Dec. 1911 (vol. XXXIII, pp. 259—260). Readers of Mr. SMITH's article will be glad to have these references. Ed.]