

A possible New Link between Egypt and Jordan During the Reign of Amenhotep III

by

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The large commemorative scarab shown in Plate XXVII 1, 2, 3. would hardly attract notice were it not for its find-spot, for it is yet another example of the lion-hunt scarabs of Amenhotep III of which no less than 108 are already known.¹ The scarab is broken so that the head and half the back are missing and only two-thirds of the text remains. The size of the fragment is 60 x 50 x 17 mm, with a rather large string-hole 11 mm. in diameter. It is made of hard limestone which is described as "blackened or burned".²

This scarab was purchased by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in October, 1972, from a resident of the town of Wadi Musa, two miles east of Petra. It was discovered on a mound called Qla' et-Twal which overlooks Wadi Musa to the south-east. This is the second lion-hunt scarab to be found north of Egypt, the other having been excavated at Lachish some years ago.³ Indeed, so few of the hundred-odd specimens of this scarab can be given a provenance - only 11, and even some of these are doubtful - that for this reason alone the example from Wadi Musa deserves mention.

Since this object has no known archaeological context, it would be futile to attempt to assay what historical importance it might have beyond a very general statement which must of necessity deal only with possibilities. It is, first of all, one more hint that East Jordan was at least partially occupied by a sedentary population in the first half of the Late Bronze Period. Scholars have generally followed Glueck's lead in assuming that this area was nomadic from around the 19th to the 14th centuries B.C., with a new agricultural people strongly entrenched there from the 13th century onward.⁴ It is now evident from recent finds that this view will have to be modified in that some areas east of the Jordan river seem to have maintained a settled population throughout the Middle and Late Bronze Periods.⁵ Since Qla' et-Twal is a tell, it may well be that it was occupied during the reign of Amenhotep III.

Secondly, this scarab is a possible new link in Egypto-Jordanian relations, material for which is scant indeed for the Eighteenth Dynasty. While there is no evidence of Egyptian military activity east of the Jordan river prior to the

(1) Collected in C. Blankenberg-Van Delden, *The Large Commemorative Scarabs of Amenhotep III* (Leiden, 1969), Chap. II C.

(2) I am indebted to Dr. F. Zayadine of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan for permission to publish this object and for information concerning its description and find-spot.

(3) C. Blankenberg-Van Delden, *op. cit.*, No. C 87. For details of the archaeological context, see O. Tufnell, *Lachish II. The Fosse Temple* (Oxford, 1940), pp. 22, 69.

(4) Glueck's extensive work appears in *AASOR* XIV, XV, XVIII, XIX, and is summed up in

his general work *The Other Side of the Jordan* (New Haven, 1940). Glueck slightly modified his earlier views in his last statement on the subject in D. W. Thomas (ed.), *Archaeology and Old Testament Study* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 443f.

(5) For some of the evidence with references, see my summary in *JESHO* 15 (1972), 55. To this may be added the current excavation being carried out by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities at Sahab, seven km. east of 'Amman, where a MB II tomb has been discovered as well as structures going back to the 13th century B.C.

reign of Ramses II,⁶ there is scattered evidence of trade relations during the earlier part of the Empire. This consists primarily of Egyptian scarabs and stone vessels from 'Amman itself and a nearby Bronze Age temple. This, together with cylinder seals of diverse origins and some splendid Mycenaean pottery from the latter site, shows that 'Amman was an important trade center from at least the 15th century B.C. onward.⁷

It may be no accident that the first tangible information found in Egyptian texts about East Jordan comes from the reign of Amenhotep III. In his Nubian temple at Soleb, there are listed several localities situated in "the land of the Shasu," that is, East Jordan.⁸ The commemorative scarab from Wadi Musa may thus give added weight to some kind of Egypto-Jordanian connection during this king's reign, vague though this may be. In the light of our present knowledge, this connection was not a military one in spite of Amenhotep's list of "captured" enemies at Soleb, a theme which must often be interpreted in a figurative rather than a literal sense.

That a royal commemorative scarab should be found so far afield as Wadi Musa at first sight seems odd, given the

scanty evidence of relations between Egypt and Transjordan throughout the Empire. However, two points should be taken into consideration. First, Wadi Musa is located just off the ancient "king's highway" (Trajan's Road) which the modern highway follows from Aqaba, north through 'Amman, and on into Syria. It is of some interest that, with the exception of some Egyptian material in the Jordan Valley itself, Egyptian objects from Transjordan are usually found at sites along this route. But whether they arrived there by direct trade cannot be answered at present.

Second, commemorative scarabs of various content issued by Amenhotep III have been found at Gezer, Lachish, Ugarit and Serabit el-Khadim,⁹ all sites of major importance in Egyptian relations with western Asia. Since the reign of Amenhotep III was generally peaceful until his later years, it is evident that his commemorative scarabs may have been sent to important towns by way of a "public announcement" of unique events during his reign. In this case, it may be that the tell of Qla' at-Twal was one of some significance in the early 14th century B.C., a suggestion which only excavation can verify.

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(6) See W. A. Ward and M. F. Martin, *ADAJ* 8-9 (1964), 20f., and K.A. Kitchen, *JEA* 50 (1964), 66f.

(7) Among other studies, see J. B. Hennessy, *PEQ*, 1966, 155ff.; G.R.H. Wright, *ZAW* 78 (1966), 350ff.; V. Hankey, *AnnBSA* 62 (1967), 135ff.; *idem*, *Arch. Anzeiger*, 1967, 298ff.; W. A. Ward, *ADAJ* 8-9 (1964), 47ff.; *idem*, *ADAJ* II (1966), 5ff. An excellent general bibliography

on excavations at 'Amman is given by E. K. Vogel, *HUCA* 42 (1971), 7f.

(8) J. Leclant, in S. Schout, *Göttinger Vorträge*, *NAWG*, 1965, 205.; R. Givon, *Les bédouins Shosu des documents égyptiens* (Leiden, 1971), pp. 26ff.; W. A. Ward, *JESHO* 15 (1972), 50ff.

(9) C. Blankenberg-Van Delden, *op. cit.*, nos. A 40, A 42, B 2, and C 82.