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SEALS AND SCRIPT II

Since the appearance of the article, *Seals and Script*, in the first number of *Kadmos* has drawn attention to the relationship between writing and seal-use antiquity, an appreciation of three hitherto unpublished stones bearing script, one from the Spencer Churchill collection¹, and two from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York², may be of value to scholars, and add to our knowledge of both script and seals.

The scarab from the Spencer Churchill Collection (Fig. 1a—e), purchased forty years ago³, whose real significance has hitherto been unrecognised, calls for careful examination. Of medium size, 18 millimetres by 11.5 it appears to be made of cream-coloured steatite whose material shows through its blue-green glaze. The clypeus and the eyes are well cut, the elytra are outlined with gold inlay. Traces of gold also appear in the eye spaces, and the clypeus. The striations on the legs, have, as in some other examples of the Late Middle Kingdom scarabs, taken on a fern-like character. The base, bears, in common with many scarabs an inscription; but in this case not of Egyptian hieroglyphs, but of a script foreign to Egypt. Within a fine border of S-spirals in quadrilateral combination, the script is cut with such precision as to suggest that its nature, as that of the border, was not unknown to the engraver.

Originally there were seven characters. One now is almost wholly lost through a fracture near the string-hole, caused, so it seems, by the forcible removability of the original gold setting in which the scarab was held⁴. Of the six remaining characters, while some appear to be related to the Cretan Hieroglyphic system and the earlier Linear Script, others did not occur in any existing list and

¹ Permission to publish this scarab was kindly given by Captain E. G. Spencer Churchill.

² Permission to publish these two pieces has been given by the Director of the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

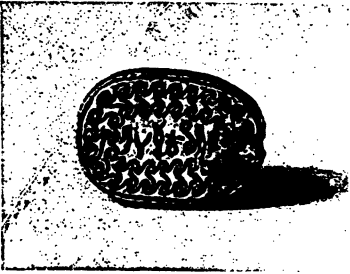
³ Believed to have been purchased in Egypt or Paris.

⁴ See H. R. Hall; *Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs in the British Museum* (1913), Pl. I. Nos. 1, 2 and 4

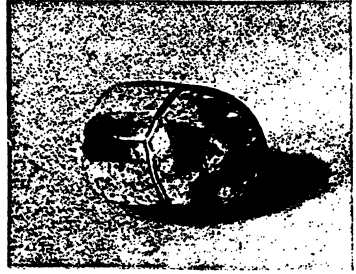
presented difficulties with which only a specialist in pre-Greek scripts could deal. A copy of the inscription was therefore sent to Professor E. Grumach, who after an examination of the scarab in the Spencer Churchill Collection answered in the following way: "In reply to your request I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my opinion about this interesting inscription. As you know, in the beginning I was sceptical about the character of the script. Among the seven signs of the inscription there was only one, the S-spiral (Nr. 5), which, at the first glance, could be recognized as a sign which occurs in the Cretan Hieroglyphic Class as well as in the Linear Scripts. Being, however, a comparatively simple character, which as such could appear in various scripts, an inference from this single sign seemed unjustified. It happened, however, that when I was examining the collection of Minoan seals of the British Museum, I came across the hitherto unpublished seal 1934, 11—20—4 (Fig. 1d). It is at once obvious that the figure in the centre of the seal is the same as Nr. 3 of the scarab. The only differences are, a) that the figure is enclosed by two crooked strokes, a phenomenon which can be observed in other Cretan inscriptions as e. g. Cretan Seals Nr. 71b, Nr. 97c etc., and b) that there is a small spatium between the point and the stroke at the bottom. These minor differences put aside, the signs are completely identical. There are two inferences which can be deduced from this fact. First, the figure on the BM-seal is a script sign and not an ornament, as one otherwise could believe. Second, there are two Cretan signs on the scarab, which in view of the shortness of the inscription can hardly be accidental. The only conclusion is that we have here a Cretan or at least a Cretanizing inscription which according to the general appearance of the signs may stand on the transition from the Hieroglyphic Class to Linear A. Since the provenience of the scarab is unknown, it is impossible to say, whether the piece was made in Egypt or originated in Crete."

In the Spencer Churchill scarab we have a striking example of an Egyptian amuletic shape which can be dated to the earlier part of the XVIII Dynasty: its character, remains of glaze and gold inlay suggest magnificent workmanship and the degree of regard in which it was held. If we add to this an inscription in writing associated with Crete, we have a rare and interesting combination of Egyptian and Cretan sentiment.

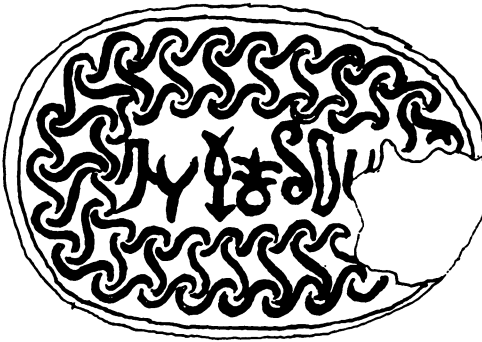
The earlier of the two carved stones from the Metropolitan Museum New York (MM) appears to be 26. 31. 98 (Fig. 2a—c) a



a



b



c



d

Fig. 1

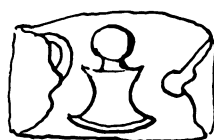




a



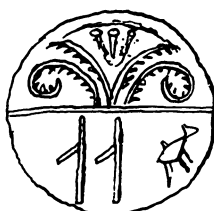
b



c



d



e



f

Fig. 2

rectangular bead shaped stone of cream coloured steatite, 14 mm × 8 × 5.5; stringhole 2. It has suffered fractures at each end of the string hole, by which the greater part of two hieroglyphs on the obverse has been lost. On this side only hieroglyph No. 18⁵ remains complete, which by the fullness and the assurance of its shape suggests the end of MM. II period or beginning of the next as a time reference. Remaining parts of the two damaged signs suggest that the one to the left was the "strainer" sign (No. 54), that to the right was the "arrow" sign (No. 13). The occurrence of these three signs together on one side is in any case of interest (they appear shared by two seals CS 150 and 151), but what gives the stone an added importance is that the forms engraved on the reverse in one case approximate to a linear schema, and in the other are so small in comparison with all other forms on the stone as to suggest a deliberate disparity in size. This may imply a secondary or pendant meaning if they are not mere filling ornaments⁶ or subsequent additions. Of the two larger forms, that to the right appears to be a linear schema of the "bucranium" (No. 63). Beneath is a small circular cup sinking, which in scale matches two other quantities engraved in the lower part of the field, of which that in the centre is a triangular shape reminiscent of a bucranium. The other larger form to the left is the "olive spray" with two branches (No. 101a—d) engraved in a naturalistic idiom which balances the schema of the bucranium, while another quantity to the left hand corner which in size matches the small cup sinkings in the right of the field and the triangular form in the centre, appears to be unique. In shape the upper part of this quantity approximates to bull's horns, the lower part to an altar base.

Whatever interpretation may be put on these five quantities, the two larger and the three of reduced size, consideration of condition, style and technique suggest the engraving of the two sides are contemporary; and that while the forms on the obverse, although in two cases fragmentary, conform to the normal hieroglyphs engraved on seal stones in the Middle Minoan Age, those on the reverse side show variations which may have a peculiar script significance.

⁵ These numbers are in accordance with the list of A. J. Evans in SM I Fig. 102/103 = PM I Fig. 214.

⁶ Filling ornaments are seen in HM 1537; CS 166, 169, 170. On MM. III a & b sealstones, they are small and generally repeated. As their name suggests they occupy spaces between the hieroglyphs.

Of exceptional interest is the other (Fig. 2d—f), a carved stone of black-green serpentine (MM 26. 31. 158). Its shape appears to be a combination of the earlier reel-shaped seal sometimes used at the beginning of the Middle Minoan Age and the later *bull*-shaped seals of jasper hitherto associated with Hittite use⁷. In diameter, it is 14.5 mm; in height or thickness 10 mm. It has a string-hole of 2.5 mm diameter accurately bored through its waist. Each of its two faces is engraved in two registers. If the impressions of the two faces are examined, it will be seen that in the upper register of the obverse, is part of an overall or ceiling pattern; in the lower, three script forms. On the reverse in the upper register, is engraved part of a flower which appears to be the papyrus flower⁸. In the lower, one sign repeated twice and the schema of a small animal engraved at an angle to suit the curvature of the field. When the impression is read in this manner with the flower and the schema of the animal in their normal position, the signs are seen to be upside down. If however, the impression of the reverse is turned so that signs are in their normal position, then both the flower and the schema are upside down. Sphragistically, from a Cretan point of view, there is no objection to this, but since this entails the schema of the little animal and the signs being at variance — although in the same register — there appears to be an inherent contradiction. This would be resolved if the form were not that of an animal but rather, as it sometimes appears in the impression, that of an animal's head in profile. Yet it must be said that if this is so, the style of engraving is quite different from the several examples of smaller animal's heads on the stones of the Middle Minoan Age⁹. Among other things also, it would appear to have three horns, and these projecting forward.

⁷ Cf. D. G. Hogarth, *Hittite Seals*. Oxford 1920, Pl. X pp. 89—91

⁸ On seals, the papyrus flower is usually engraved in a summary fashion. See CS 343, 357; MM 26. 31. 276, and also two fine sealings from LM. II. There are also some instances among the Hagia Triada sealings. In the case of the flower on this stone, closer parallels are to be found on vases. See PM II 477 Fig. 285, and S. Marinatos, *Kreta und das Mykenische Hellas*, 82, 91—93. Although these in general are later than this seal, they give the various styles used then in depicting the flower. The convention of curved petals is also extended to other species; cf. PM I 610 Fig. 448, II 475 Fig. 283, and Marinatos, *op. cit.* Pl. XXV.

⁹ Cf. CS 150, 167; MM 26. 31. 152. See also however, CS 51. If anything, the animal's head of CS 51 supports the explanation that this form, thought to be the rough schema of an animal, may be in fact an animal's head as it appears if the impression is turned. Here the position of the script may be the decisive factor.

A summary of other characteristics may throw some light upon the problems, which these deviations from both normal script and seal use raise:

1. The shape is archaizing. The normal period of its use as a seal being at the beginning of the Middle Minoan Age.
2. The material, a dark serpentine is more frequent at the end of that age than at the beginning, when it is rarely found.
3. The seal motifs, i. e. that of the ceiling pattern and the flower, are both halved.
4. The script signs, except for the schema of the animal — if it be this, are carefully and beautifully engraved.

It seems clear that the shape in its archaizing character is meant to give the stone a characteristic other than that of seal use: which the presence of the script signs in their unusual setting, since they are combined with *half motifs*, confirms. The half motifs in their engraving are also designed to give an impression (Abdruck) which has neither *left* or *right* in connotation or significance¹⁰. It would seem that here we have the rare case for Crete in this phase of a seal-talisman, an engraved stone whose character is both in contrast with the specialised talismanic stones of the Late Minoan Age, and with those of mixed character whose motifs contain a subject taken from nature engraved in a naturalistic idiom and with it a quantity usually associated with talismanic use. In this case MM 26. 31. 158 is literally half a seal and half a talisman. This would also account for the extremely rare, almost unique occurrence of half motifs on each side of the stone.

Perhaps of greater interest is the chronology of this piece. Since it has no known or verified provenience or stratigraphy, its chronology must be derived from internal evidence. Typologically, motifs thought to be derived from ceiling and architectural designs can, with a high degree of certainty, be associated with MM. III b—LM. Ia¹¹, on the evidence of the sealings from the Temple Repository¹²,

¹⁰ This is a mark of some contemporary Egyptian scarabs of the Middle Kingdom; see Kadmos I p. 12 note 44.

¹¹ Evan's identification of these motifs with architectural wall and ceiling designs, appears to be right, especially when the Faience Tablets, showing the facades of houses, are considered, see PM I 301 seq. Figs. 223—226. That Evans dated these tablets too early, and that in another connection subjects he considered on talismanic gems to be rustic or pillared shrines, may in fact be cult vessels, do not affect the value of his identification of these motifs of the end of the Middle Minoan Age, with architectural objects.

¹² PM I 565, Fig. 411 a & b

and others found in a magazine of the North East House at Knossos¹³. The flower with its style and technique of engraving not only provides the tulip flower sealing from the Temple Repository with a germane comparison¹⁴, but is further linked to the Second Transitional Phase by means of the relation of the architectural facade on the obverse with like motifs on sealings — albeit not at such a high stage of development — from the Temple Repository¹⁵. Since the North East House sealings are also endorsed with Linear script A¹⁶, an even closer chronological complex of both motifs and script is assured. Few carved seal stones possess such a wealth of internal evidence for their chronology, from the occurrence of the two half motifs, securely datable on typological grounds.

¹³ PM II 415 seq.

¹⁴ PM I 696 Fig. 518 L

¹⁵ PM I 565 Fig. 411 a & b

¹⁶ PM II 420 Fig. 242