

TWO HITTITE RING SEALS FROM SOUTHERN CANAAN

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During the excavation season of 1927-28 at Tell el Far'ah (South) in southern Philistia two exquisite ring seals of silver were found together by Sir Flinders Petrie (Petrie 1930: pl. XXXVI; Macdonald et al. 1932: 30; pl. LXXIII: 58, 65; reproduced here as fig. 1). They were found in the Late Bronze Age levels at the southern end of the mound, above and west of the so-called Hyksos Gateway (see area plan in Macdonald et al. 1932: pl. LXXVIII). The architectural remains were too fragmentary to provide a clear picture, but the area (EF, Level 386) yielded a rich assemblage of Egyptian small finds, including two scarabs inscribed with the name of Ramesses II (ib.: 30; pl. LXXIII: 21, 31).

It is not known who first identified these seals as Hittite, but I.J. Gelb listed them in his corpus of Hittite hieroglyphic inscriptions, attributing the reference to R. M. Engberg (Gelb 1939: 20 f.). In her corpus of Anatolian seals, C. Mora attempted to decipher the names of the seal owners, but the quality of the photographs in the *editio princeps* prevented a more accurate reading (Mora 1987: 249, no. 1.6; 250, no. 2.3).

Within the framework of a project aimed at the (re)publishing of all the Hittite seals discovered in Israel (sponsored by the Israel Science Foundation), I examined the ring seals from Tell el Far'ah at the Institute of Archaeology of the University College in London in May 2000. I am grateful to Mr. Ian Carroll, Collection Manager, and to Dr. Rachael Sparks, Curator of the Petrie Palestinian Collection, for facilitating the cleaning and the restoration of the seals, and for providing me with new photographs and a permission to publish them.¹ Mrs. Rodica Penchas from the Institute of Archaeology of the Tel Aviv University prepared the new drawings, based on these photographs.

This type of finger ring seal was quite popular in Hittite Syria in the 13th century B.C.E., especially in the Middle Euphrates region (for refs. see Singer 1993: 189). A similar ring seal, made of bronze, was discovered at Tel Nami on the central coast of Israel (Singer 1993).

The first seal (figs. 2a-c) has a diameter of 23 mm. and a maximal width of 10 mm. Framed between two borderlines, the name of the seal owner is inscribed twice from top to bottom in mirror-like fashion. It reads: *Zi/Za(L 376)-zû(L 285)-wa(L 439)*.² The vocalic value of the first sign can be in this period either *i* or *a*, but a reading Zazuwa is perhaps preferable in view of cuneiform Zazuwa, the name of a field owner attested in a Hittite text (Laroche 1966: 209). The same name is inscribed on both sides of a biconvex seal from Korucutepe (Ertem 1988: 8 f., kat. 9; Mora 1987 primo suppl.: 80, no. 2.69). The name on the Tell el Far'ah seal is flanked by two crouching griffons, a frequent motif on the seals from Emar (Beyer 2001: 386 ff.). Several rosette-like fillers are dispersed in the field, which is closed on both sides by a three-pronged triangle (resembling L 175).³

The second seal (figs. 3a-c; published upside down in the original drawing) has a somewhat smaller diameter of 20 mm and a maximal width of 11 mm. The borderlines framing the central scene converge as the ring narrows into a wavy pattern with four ridges. The hieroglyphic inscription is flanked by two anti-thetic figures representing a somewhat ill-designed double-headed eagle, a frequent motif in Anatolian glyptics (Beyer 2001: 386 ff.). The name in the center is written from right to left: *À(L 450)-na(L 35)*. The sign FEMINA (L 79) flanking both sides of the name

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¹ A Hebrew version was published in Eretz-Israel 27 (2003), 133-135.

² For the reading of L 285, see Mora 1987 primo suppl.: 16; Gonnet 1991: 204, no. 42 (Zu-Ba'la).

³ Left of the left-hand griffin there is a sign which in the original drawing resembles the hieroglyph for L 326 (SCRIBA). However, after cleaning the seal it turned out to be merely a decorative filler.

identifies the seal owner as a woman. Two small fillers are tucked near the left-hand side eagle, and a larger, V-shaped one, appears underneath the sign *na*. *Ana* is often attested as a feminine name, in both cuneiform and hieroglyphic texts (Laroche 1966: 30, no. 58).

The two ring seal from Tell el Far'ah belong to a growing corpus of Hittite finds from Canaan, mostly from sites with a strong Egyptian connection. These include the bulla from Aphek (Singer 1977), the ring seal from Tel Nami (Singer 1993), a biconvex seal from Megiddo

(Singer 1995), and the famous Hittite ivory from the same site (Loud 1939: 10 ff., pl. 11; Singer 1988-89: 105 f.). These finds must be considered within the context of the expanding diplomatic and commercial relations between the Hittite and Egyptian administrations after the signing of the peace treaty of 1258 B.C.E. (Edel 1994; Singer 1977: 186 f.; 1988; 2006).

I dedicate these Hittite silver rings, possibly belonging to husband and wife, to Ali and Belkis, as a token of my appreciation and longstanding friendship.

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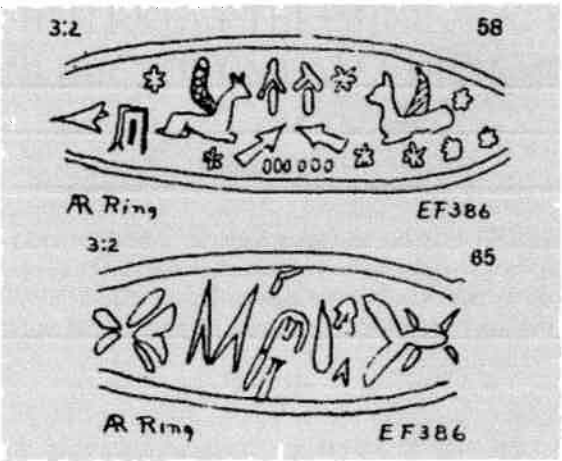


Fig. 1



Fig. 2a

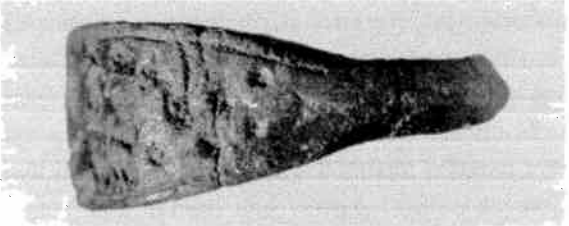


Fig. 2b



Fig. 2c



Fig. 3a

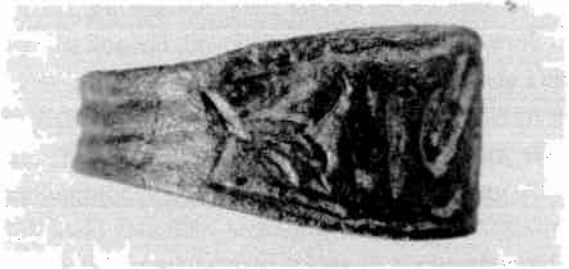


Fig. 3b



Fig. 3c