

THE GREEN JASPER SEAL WORKSHOP REVISITED

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Fifteen years ago a volume of papers was published in honour of the grande dame of cylinder seal studies, Professor Edith Porada¹. It contained a paper I had written on a group of 25 cylinder seals² of the early second millennium BC which were made only rarely of the metallic-grey mineral haematite (which was commonly used for quality seals at that period all over the Near East), but frequently of other materials such as a dark green stone which was probably green jasper. These seals were also distinguished by their Egyptianizing designs, their use of elaborate guilloche patterns and by a "segmented"³ way of depicting animals and birds. I had proposed that these seals were the products of a single workshop and had suggested Byblos as the place where the workshop might have been situated.

Several scholars have since discussed the "Green Jasper Workshop" in print, and it seems timely to review the conclusions reached during the last fifteen years. I have also added a number of green jasper and related cylinder and scarab seals which others have suggested may be products of the same workshop.

It should be pointed out that in the following discussion and catalogue, the term "green jasper" has been used when, in fact, none of the seal stones has actually been analysed and there is

no proof that the material is, in fact, green jasper. It is, however, a hard, dark-green, fine-grained stone and, because it was used for elite seals, it must have been highly prized. Green jasper was available in Egypt, and during the Middle Kingdom Egypt was in close touch with the Levant and was importing lapis lazuli and exporting amethyst and green jasper.

In 1989 Keel reproduced thirteen of my green jasper cylinder seals (Collon, 1986, nos 1-13) some of which he related to a group of scarabs by material, iconography and date (7). These scarabs differ from most others of the period in being made of a material that is not steatite, even though, as with the cylinders, the material is not necessarily green jasper. The designs are more linear in style than those on the cylinder seals, but they depict similar worshippers who are probably wearing very short kilts but appear naked. Other green jasper scarabs depict birds and plants, again in a linear style (8:2-10), or linked spirals round hieroglyphs (9:1-2 and cf. 9:3). Keel suggests a location for the workshops of both the scarabs and the cylinder seals in Megiddo rather than Byblos, but it is interesting to note that the closest parallels for the falcon with spread wings, found on scarabs 8:3-5, though not on green jasper cylinder seals, are from Byblos (Keel 1989, pp. 232-9).

In 1995 Keel published a further green

1 Collon, 1986.

2 Cylinder seals were the characteristic form of seal used in the Near East between about 3400 and 300 BC. They are, as their name implies, cylinders, generally of stone and on average about 2-3 cm high and 1-1.5 cm in diameter, perforated longitudinally and carved with a design in "intaglio" so that when they were rolled out on clay labels, sealings for baskets, boxes, bags and goods, or on inscribed clay tablets and envelopes, the design appeared as a miniature relief. The seals collected here are particularly small and finely-cut.

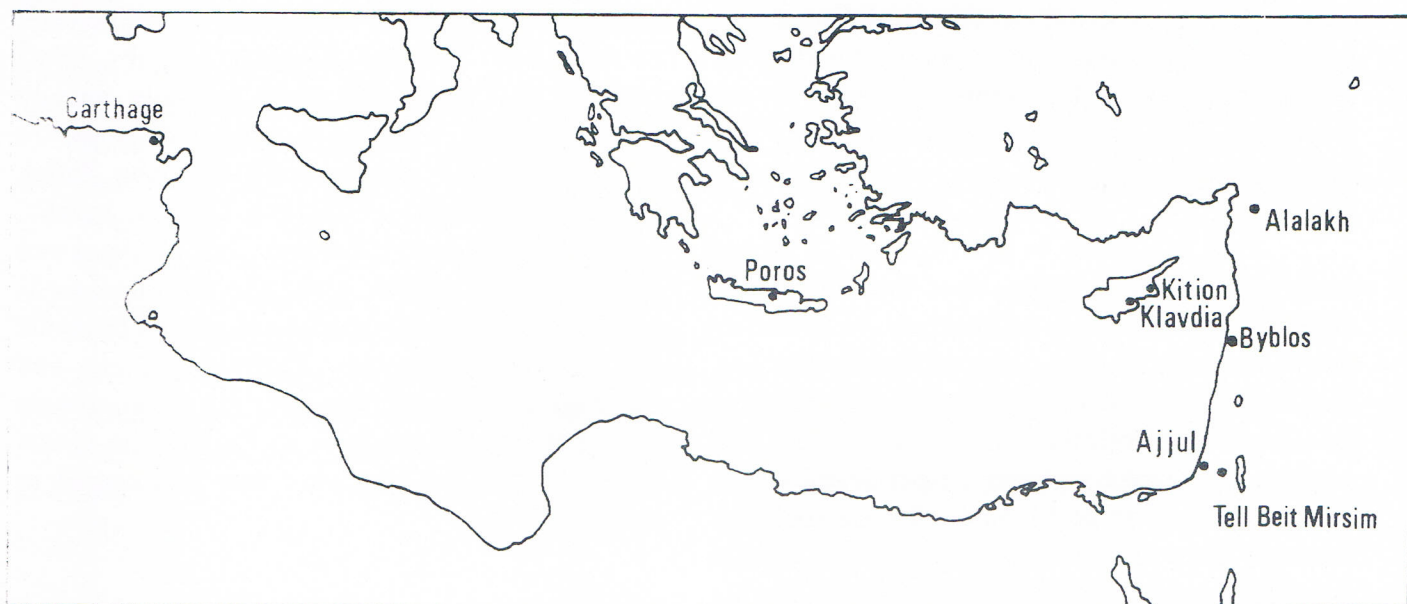
3 I defined the "segmented style" (1986, p. 61) as the way couchant animals are depicted with the neck and body forming one line extending into the tail and curving over the haunch, which is a separate drilled or gouged hole (e.g. 1:5, 6:6 and the sphinxes on 2:2-3). In the case of birds, the neck extends in a curve under the wing (1:3-5 and 6:6 and scarab 8:1); its use is particularly evident in the case of ducks or geese. It is found on all the cylinders illustrated here except 1:1-2, 5:1 and 6:5 (there are no relevant animals or birds on 3:1-3, 4:1 and 5:5) and therefore seems to have been introduced early in the 18th century BC. However, with the exception of 8:1, the "segmented style" is not a feature of scarabs.

jasper scarab (8:1), unfortunately unprovenanced, that has birds in the "segmented" style above a cartouche; some of the signs in the cartouche (as noted by Keel 1995, p. 101) also appear in the same form on 5:2.

Keel states that "a workshop can be assumed to have existed ... between 1720 and 1600 B.C.E. on the Lebanese coast, possibly at Byblos or even further south, at Megiddo, which produced scarabs made of greenstone facies ('green jasper') and other hard stones".

In the same year, Eder published a book

animals in rows and scant Egyptian influence, to "a more northerly Syro-Levantine tradition". The other seals she considers to be "a long-lasting group" and believes that "different workshops or places of manufacture are ... probable". She considers the use of hieroglyphs to be "one of the distinguishing and significant features of this group" (see 5), and particularly the conjunction with cuneiform (4) which she discusses further (Teissier 1995, p. 37). She stresses the royal iconography of the seals associated with the Egyptian cartouche (5; see Teissier 1995, pp. 29-32) and points out what she believes to be the chronological differences in the royal dress of the non-Egyptian fi-



about the Egyptian motifs on seals of the eastern Mediterranean. He assigned the green jasper seals to his Old Palestinian group (Eder 1995, pp. 37-40). In a review I wrote of his book, I commented "The term Old Palestinian is unfortunate since Palestinians used, or at least wore, the scarab, the area seems to have been on the fringes of the cylinder seal world and most cylinder seals found in Palestine are demonstrably imports from further north" (Collon 1998, p. 293).

Beatrice Teissier's major book about Egyptian iconography on Syro-Palestinian cylinder seals of the Middle Bronze Age was also published in 1995 and covers much the same material as Eder's book but in greater depth. She discusses the Green Jasper Workshop (her Group C; Teissier, 1995, pp. 15, 19-22) and adds seals 4:1, 5:1 and 6:4-5. She assigns the earlier group (here 1), with

figures - an earlier open mantle on 5:1-2 replaced on later seals by a garment wrapped around the body on 5:6-8, 6:1 and 6:3, but then states that this is "probably indicative of regional variation". She considers seals 2:1-2, 4:2 and 5:1-2 to be the earliest and dates them to the 18th century BC. Seals 6:4-6 she would date to the late 18th century. Seals 5:3-4, 5:6-8 and 6:3, with more stick-like figures and scarab parallels (see 7) would be "the latest, dating from the seventeenth to the sixteenth century BC"; she believes that "while Egyptianising, [they] reflect an intrinsically south Levantine or Palestinian iconography and 'ideology'". So basically, she would see a chronological southward trend in the location of the Green Jasper Workshops and favours more centres than the one I suggested in 1986 and the two proposed by Keel in 1989.

In Otto's book on Classic Syrian glyptic (Otto 2000, esp. pp. 143-4), the Egyptianizing green jasper seals are too late (according to her classification) to be included, but the earlier ones (1, 2:1-2, 3:2) are in her Group 5a (her nos 360-362, 364-368) with a suggested origin in Qatna, north-east of Homs, despite the fact that no cylinder seals or impressions of this period have been found there. She considers Byblos to have been a "second rank" city with a scarab-seal tradition, suggests that Qatna was more important at this period and that there must, therefore, have been a seal workshop located there. Although Qatna does appear as an important city in the first half of the 18th century BC in the archives of Mari on the Euphrates, it is clear that Byblos, with its rich Middle Bronze Age finds, was not a second rank city.

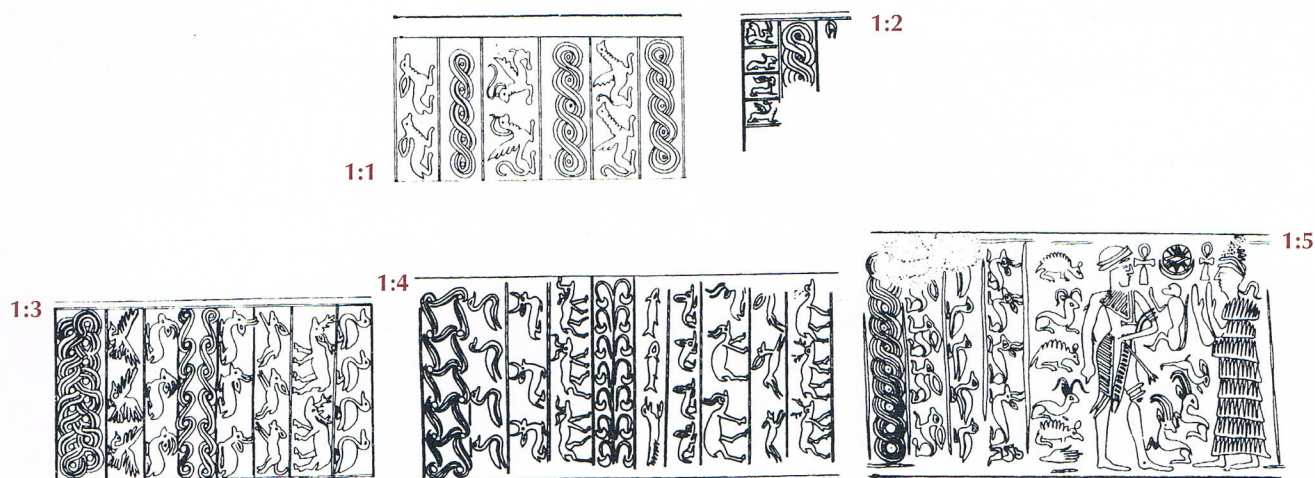
It is interesting to note that Otto's second reason for rejecting Byblos as a location for the Green Jasper Workshop is because she considers that it belonged to the area of scarab-seal use. However, Keel (1989, p. 240) prefers Megiddo as the location of both the scarab and cylinder seal workshops because no green jasper scarabs have been attested north of Megiddo. Teissier believes the seals and scarabs were made in several centres "in north-central Levant and Palestine, sharing cylinder and scarab traditions attributable to sus-

tained contacts, perhaps based on trade routes" (Teissier 1995, p. 22). While agreeing with Keel that the cylinder and scarab green jasper workshops were probably located in the same city, I would still maintain that Byblos is the more likely candidate since it stood at the interface of the cylinder and scarab seal traditions, it was the port through which not only the Egyptian motifs but also the green jasper used for making the seals were most likely to have been imported, and it was also the centre from which the seals would then most easily have been disseminated. They would have travelled north and east to the flourishing city-states of urbanized Syria (Alalakh west of Aleppo and Buzuran on the Euphrates). Cylinder seals have been found in southern Palestine (Tell el-'Ajjul and Tell Beit Mirsim). Scarabs, some possibly as blanks, but most probably already carved, would also have travelled south to Palestine (from north to south: Tell Abu Zureq, Megiddo, Tell Rehov, Shechem, Gibeon, Jericho, Gezer, Beth Shemesh, Lachish, Tell el-'Ajjul and Tell Jemme). Cylinder seals also travelled westwards, some probably much later as gifts (Klavidia and Kition on Cyprus, Poros on Crete and Carthage in Tunisia), thus attesting the continued popularity of the products of the Byblite Green Jasper Workshops long after they had ceased to operate.

The illustrations, which are not to scale, are based on the design on the impression of the seal. They are arranged in roughly chronological groups with 1, 2 and 3 dating to the earlier part of the 18th century BC, and 2:3 and groups 4-9 dating to the later 18th and 17th centuries BC; some have, however, been found in later contexts. Dimensions of the original cylinder are given as height x diameter; for the scarabs, the maximum dimension of the base is given. The drawings are by the author based on the publication of the object, which is given in abbreviated form; for further details the reader is referred to these publications.

1. EARLY PRODUCTS OF THE GREEN JASPER WORKSHOP (see also 2)

These seals combine tightly-curved guilloches with animals and birds, the latter often in the "segmented style" (see note 3).



- 1:1 Byblos? (Collon 1986, n°. 18); lapis lazuli in gold setting; height 2.6 cm.
- 1:2 Fragmentary cylinder seal impression excavated at Alalakh (Collon 1986, n°. 21); height 1.2+ cm.
- 1:3 Bibliothèque Nationale, n°. 418, Paris (Collon 1986, n°. 16); green jasper; 1.8 x 1.0 cm.
- 1:4 Marcopoli Collection n°. 568 (Collon 1986, n°. 17); green jasper; 2.0 x 1.3 cm.
- 1:5 Klavdia, Cyprus (Collon 1986, n°. 23); haematite; 2.5 x 1.35 cm.

2. CYLINDER SEALS WITH GUILLOCHES AND SPHINXES

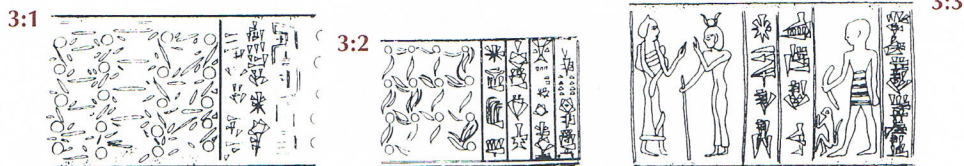
As with 1, but with the addition of a striding or reclining sphinx with a head-dress of ram's horns and double plumes, and other Egyptianizing figures and motifs.



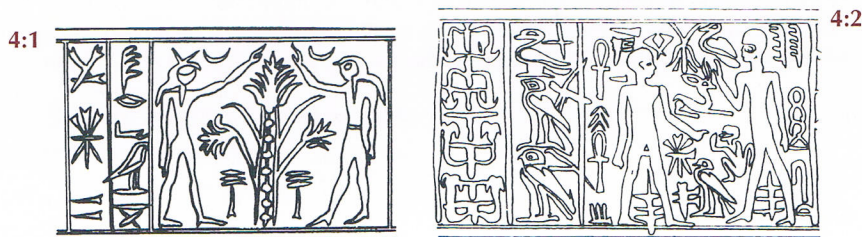
- 2:1 Rosen Collection, New York (Collon 1986, n°. 24); obsidian; height 2.4 cm. Cuneiform inscription (reversed on the impression), "Seal of Ia'ush-Addu, king of Buzuran." This king is mentioned as a ruler of a small city-state near Mari on the Euphrates around 1800 BC.
- 2:2 Carthage, found in a Punic tomb of the 7th-6th centuries BC (Collon 1986, no. 22); green jasper; 2.35 x 1.3 cm.
- 2:3 De Clercq Collection no. 389 (Collon 1986, no. 4); green jasper; 2.0 x 1.0 cm.

3. CYLINDER SEALS WITH CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTIONS (see also 2:1 and 5:6)

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- 3:1 Brett Collection n°. 80 = Institut Biblique, Fribourg, n°. 211 (Collon 1986, no. 14); green jasper; 2.3 x 1.2 cm. "..., servant of the weather god".
- 3:2 Cylinder seal impression excavated at Alalakh on the Turkish-Syrian border (Collon 1986, n°. 15); height 1.8 cm. "Zimra-ilum, wife of Iapah-addu, beloved of the goddess Nin-egal"; Iapah-Addu was a general who was active in Syria in the first half of the 18th century BC. For the pattern, see also 1:4 and 3:1, both green jasper.
- 3:3 Private collection (Collon 1986, n°. 12); green jasper; height 2.1 cm. "Seal of Hasiam-iapahat, beloved of the goddess Ashirtum".

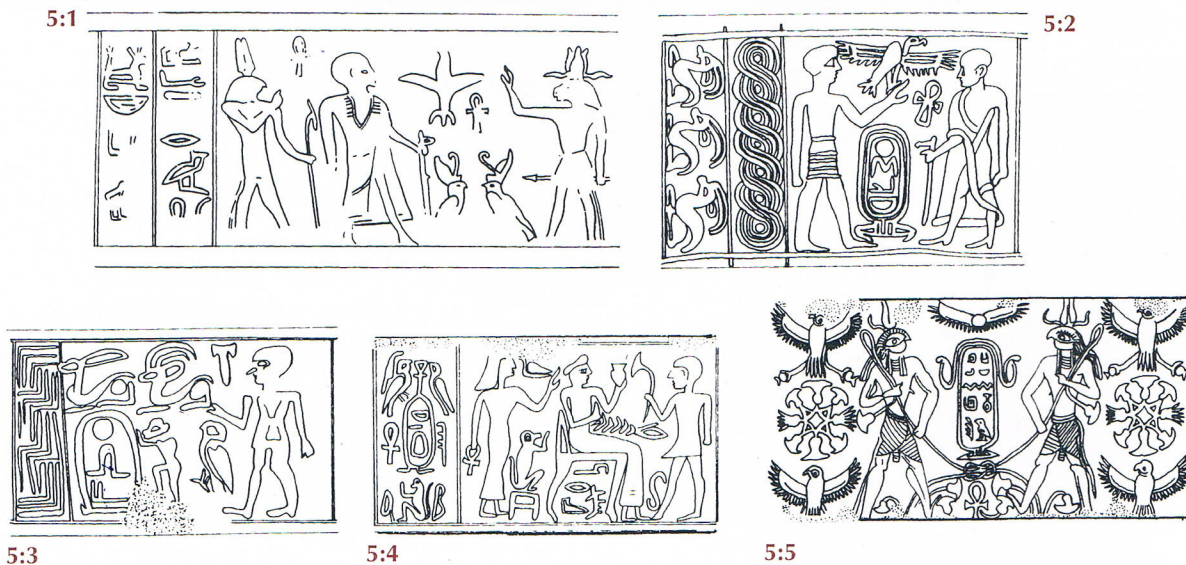


4. CYLINDER SEALS WITH CUNEIFORM AND HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS (see also 5:6)

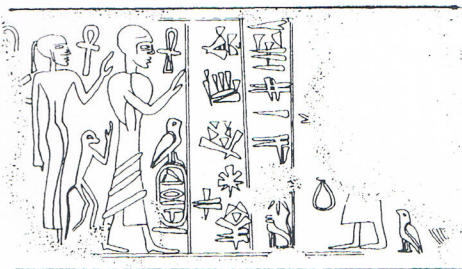
- 4:1 Moore Collection no. 180 (Teissier 1995, n°. 73), "basalt"; 2.1 x 1.1 cm. Bilingual inscription: hieroglyphs "ir.d.hr.?" with the last sign possibly an abbreviated form of mn, perhaps indicating that the Egyptian was a phonetic transcription of the Sumerian values for the cuneiform signs which read (with the first horizontal missing), "Servant of the god Min".
- 4:2 Tell Beit Mirsim, Palestine (Collon 1986, n°. 3); haematite; 1.95 x 1.0 cm. Possibly the name "Ibni-Adad" in cuneiform, and various hieroglyphs.

5. CYLINDER SEALS WITH ROYAL ICONOGRAPHY AND HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS

See Teissier 1995, pp. 29-32 for suggested readings.



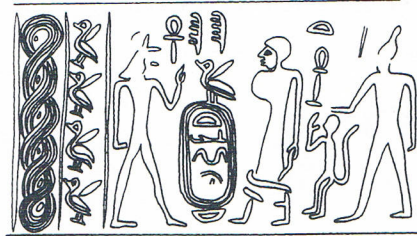
5:6



5:7



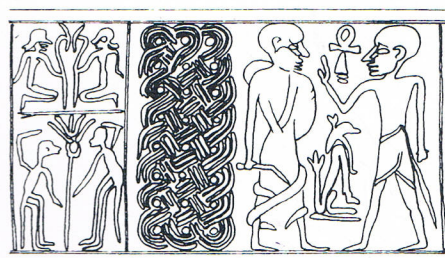
5:8



- 5:1 Alalakh seal impression on a tablet, now in the British Museum, dating to between 1500 and 1200 B.C. (Collon 1975, n°. 194). I had omitted it from my original list, but Beatrice Teissier demonstrated that it belonged to this group and had been reused at a later period (Teissier 1990). Since then, there have been numerous attempts at reading its very faint and incomplete inscription in Egyptian hieroglyphs. The translations proposed are given here with the restored parts in square brackets and a diagonal slash indicating the division between the lines:
- Collon 1975: "Count of [Byblos?], true one of the King/
'My Lord is Seth'" (personal name).
- Teissier 1990: "Local Prince (nomarch), one acclaimed by the King/
Seth is my lord or Seth, lord of X".
- Nagel and Eder 1992, p. 50: "Local Prince, one appointed by the King/
Sethi-nebi ... w ...".
- Malek 1996: "Real mayor, King's sealer (?), [one honoured by]/
Anubis, lord of the sacred [land, one who is in] the place of mummification".
This reading was adopted by Teissier (1995, p. 29) but rejected by Martin (1999).
- Martin 1999: "Prince ... em-su .../
Seth, lord (of) ... U[garit]".
- 5:2 Beirut private collection (Collon 1986, n°. 2); green jasper; 1.5 x 0.7 cm.
- 5:3 Tell el-'Ajjul, Palestine (Collon 1986, n°. 7); haematite; 1.8 x 0.8 cm.
- 5:4 Bibliothèque Nationale n°. 485, Paris (Collon 1986, n°. 13); green jasper; 1.5 x 0.9 cm.
- 5:5 Alalakh excavations (Turkish-Syrian border), present location unknown (Collon 1982, n°. 117); haematite; 2.0 x 1.0 cm.
- 5:6 Louvre A.906, Paris (Collon 1986, n° 11); haematite; 2.1 x 1.2 cm. Bilingual inscription: Egyptian cartouche with hieroglyphs; cuneiform, "???, servant of the weather god". See also 4:1-2.
- 5:7 University College, London (Collon 1986, n°. 1); dark green jasper; 2.95 x 1.5 cm.
- 5:8 Chiha Collection (Doumet 1992, n°. 291); green jasper (I am indebted to Claude Doumet for checking the material for me); 2.2 x 1.15 cm. See 6:3 for what is probably an unfinished version of a similar design.

6. CYLINDER SEALS WITH EGYPTIANIZING DESIGNS OR MOTIFS BUT WITHOUT CLEAR HIEROGLYPHS

6:1

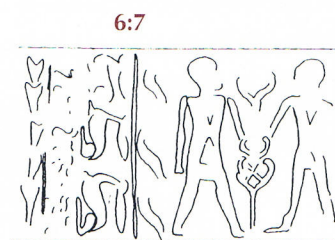
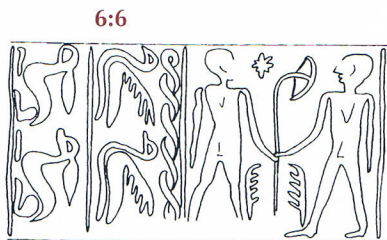
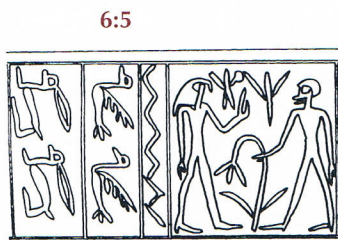
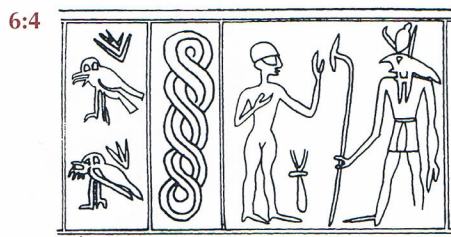


6:2



6:3





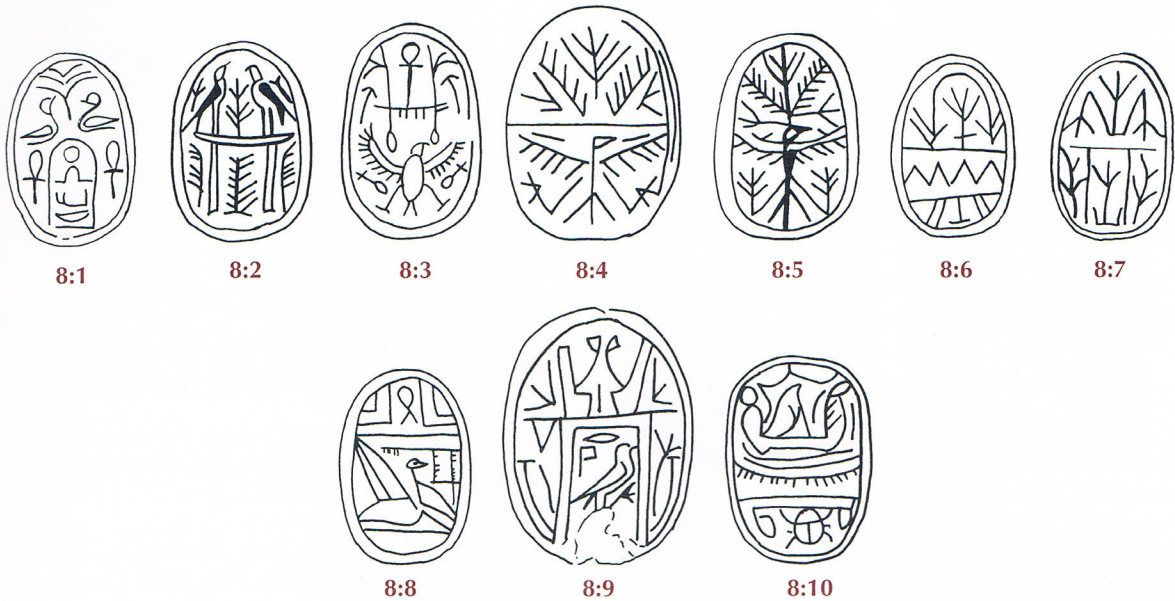
- 6:1 Kition, Cyprus (Collon 1986, n°. 6); hard black stone (jasper?); 2.47 x 1.38 cm.
- 6:2 Newell Collection n°. 318 = Yale n°. 1259 (Collon 1986, n°. 10); dark green jasper with the remains of a copper pin in the perforation; 2.3 x 1.3 cm.
- 6:3 Poros, Crete (Collon 1986, n°. 5); green jasper; 2.1 x 1.05 cm. See 5:8 for a more finished version of this design.
- 6:4 Yale Collection n°. 1258 (Teissier 1995, n°. 72); haematite; 2.1 x 1.1 cm.
- 6:5 Seyrig Collection n°. 97, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Teissier 1995, n°. 75); green jasper; 1.9 x 1.05 cm.
- 6:6 Tell el-'Ajjul, Palestine (Collon 1986, n°. 8); black steatite; 2.1 x 1.0 cm.
- 6:7 Rockefeller Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem (Collon 1986, n°. 9); grey stone; 2.2 x 1.0 cm.

7. SCARABS WITH WORSHIPPERS AND HIEROGLYPHS



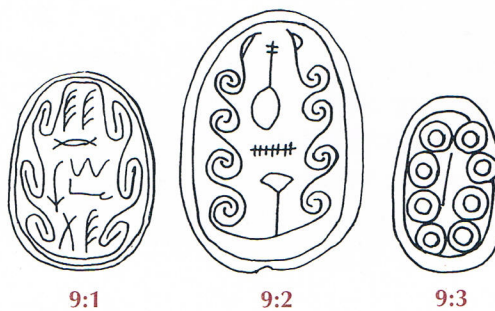
- 7:1 Jericho (Keel 1989, pp. 218-9, n°. 17); ?; 1.8 cm.
- 7:2 Tell Abu Zureq, found with 7:6 (Keel 1989, pp. 217-19, n°. 16); dark green jasper?; 1.52 cm.
- 7:3 Tell Jemme (Keel 1989, pp. 220-21, n°. 21); black jasper?; 1.3 cm.
- 7:4 Gezer, found in a late Byzantine grave (Keel 1989, pp. 219-21, n°. 19); ?; 2.0 cm.
- 7:5 Shechem (Keel 1989, pp. 217-19, n°. 15); dark grey stone; 1.8 cm.
- 7:6 Tell Abu Zureq, found with 7:2 (Keel 1989, pp. 217-19, n°. 14); dark green jasper?; 1.83 cm.
- 7:7 Lachish (Keel 1989, pp. 220-21, n°. 20); obsidian?; 2.0 cm.
- 7:8 Gibeon? (Keel 1989, pp. 219-21, n°. 18); green jasper; 1.64 cm.
- 7:9 Tell el-'Ajjul (Keel 1989, pp. 220 and 223, n°. 22); haematite; 0.87 cm.

8. GREEN JASPER SCARABS WITH BIRDS AND VEGETATION



- 8:1 Unprovenanced (Keel 1995, p. 101, Fig. 16); green jasper; ? cm.
- 8:2 Megiddo, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 222-3, n°. 23); green jasper; 1.9 cm.
- 8:3 Megiddo, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 222-5, n°. 26); green jasper; 2.1 cm.
- 8:4 Beth Shemesh, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 224-5, n°. 28); green jasper?; 2.2 cm.
- 8:5 Megiddo, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 224-5, n°. 27); green jasper; 2.0 cm.
- 8:6 Megiddo, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 226-7, n°. 30); green jasper; 1.76 cm.
- 8:7 Tell el-'Ajjul, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 226-7, n°. 31); black stone; 1.9 cm.
- 8:8 Megiddo, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 224 and 227, n°. 29); black stone; 1.9 cm.
- 8:9 Tell Rehov, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 222-3, n°. 24); pale green jasper?; 2.47 cm.
- 8:10 Beth Shemesh, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 222-3, n°. 25); black serpentine?; 2.0 cm.

9. GREEN JASPER SCARABS WITH DECORATIVE BORDERS, TWO WITH HIEROGLYPHS



- 9:1 Tell el-'Ajjul, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 226 and 229, n°. 32); green jasper; 1.96 cm.
- 9:2 Tell el-'Ajjul, Palestine (Keel 1989, pp. 226 and 228-9, n°. 33); green jasper; 2.4 cm.
- 9:3 Purchased in Jerusalem (Keel 1989, pp. 228-9, n°. 34); green jasper; 1.65 cm.

ABBREVIATIONS

Collon 1975: D. Collon, *The Seal Impressions from Tell Atchana/Alalakh* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 27), Neukirchen-Vluyn.

Collon 1982: D. Collon, *The Alalakh Cylinder Seals* (British Archaeological Reports International Series 132), Oxford, 1982.

Collon 1986: D. Collon, "The Green Jasper cylinder seal workshop". In M. Kelly-Buccellati *et al.* (eds), *Insight through Images - Studies in Honor of Edith Porada* (Bibliotheca Mesopotamica 21), Malibu, 1986, pp. 57-70.

Collon 1998: D. Collon, Review of Eder 1995 in *Orientalia* 67 (1998), pp. 292-4.

Doumet 1992: C. Doumet, *Sceaux et cylindres orientaux: la collection Chiha* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica 9), Fribourg Suisse and Göttingen, 1992.

Eder 1995: C. Eder, *Die ägyptischen Motive in der Glyptik des östlichen Mittelmeerraum zu Anfang des 2.Jts. v. Chr.* (Orientalia Lovaniensia 71), Leuven (1995).

Keel 1989: O. Keel, "Die Japis-Skarabäen-Gruppe", in O. Keel, H. Keel-Leu and S. Schroer, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel II*, Freiburg Schweiz and Göttingen (1989), pp. 209-80.

Keel 1995: O. Keel, "Stamp seals - The problem of Palestinian workshops in the second millennium and some remarks on the preceding and succeeding periods", in J. Goodnick Westenholz, *Seals and Sealing in the Ancient Near East - Proceeding of the Symposium held on September 2, 1993, Jerusalem, Israel* (Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem

Publications 1), Jerusalem (1995), pp. 93-142.

Malek 1996: J. Malek, "The Egyptian text on the seal impression from Alalakh (Tell Atchana), *Levant* 28 (1996), pp. 173-6.

Martin 1999: G. T. Martin, "Alalakh 194: An ancient seal-impression re-interpreted", *Egypt Exploration Society Occasional Publications* 13, London (1999), pp. 201-7.

Nagel and Eder 1992: W. Nagel and C. Eder: "Altsyrien und Ägypten", *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 6, (1992), pp. 1-108.

Teissier 1990: B. Teissier, "The seal impression Alalakh 194: A new aspect of Egypto-Levantine relations in the Middle Kingdom", *Levant* 22 (1990), pp. 65-73.

Teissier 1995: B. Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica 11), Fribourg Switzerland and Göttingen (1995).