

A 'KIRGIPA' COMMEMORATIVE SCARAB OF AMENHOTEP III FROM BEIT-SHEAN

By Orly Goldwasser

INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXT OF THE FIND

By Amihai Mazar

Beth-Shean, located in the Jordan Valley, served as the main Egyptian stronghold in the northern part of Palestine during the New Kingdom. Between 1921–1933, widespread excavations were conducted at the site by a team from the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, directed consecutively by Clarence Fisher, Alan Rowe,¹ and Gerald FitzGerald.² The Hebrew University of Jerusalem resumed the excavations in 1983 under the direction of Shulamit Geva and Yigael Yadin³ and between 1989 – 1996 under the direction of A. Mazar.⁴

The new excavations show that the Egyptian garrison town was rather small (about 1.2 hectare). It probably was just a garrison town, while the main Canaanite city was located about 5 km to the south, in Tel Rehov. It appears that the garrison town was founded already in the 15th century (early phase of Level IX of the old excavations) and continued to exist until the end of the Egyptian domination, close to the end of the 20th Dynasty (Level VI). During this period, the town was destroyed severely at least three times: at the end of Level IX (14th century BCE), end of Level VII (end of the 13th century BCE) and end of Level VI (mid 12th century BCE).

The commemorative scarab of Amenophis III, registration no. 388222, was found on July 31 1996 at level 92.72 m in Locus 38855 in our Area S. This locus is attributed to our Stratum S3a which corresponds to Level VI of the previous excavations and is dated to the later part of the 20th Dynasty. The scarab thus must have been an heirloom. It is difficult to define the nature of the context. Locus 38855 is a small probe excavated east of our Area N, where a large building containing Egyptian pottery was excavated by us and attributed to Stratum S4 (early 20th dynasty). Above this building, the University Museum excavations revealed structures of Level VI, north of their Building 1700 (the latter proved to be an Iron Age II building in our excavations).⁵ Our Locus 38855 is not far from the eaSTERN edge of the mound. The monumental lintel of Ramesses-Weserkheph⁶ was found about 10 m to the south-east. This appears to be an important part of the Egyptian garrison town, yet most of the area around the location of the find of the scarab is still unexcavated.⁷

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The large commemorative scarab uncovered during the 1997 season,⁸ is of the rare type usually labeled the "Kirgipa"⁹ scarab, which tells of the arrival, in regnal year 10, of Kirgipa daughter of Shuttarna II, king of Mittani, escorted by 317 women of her

¹ A. ROWE, *The Topography and History of Beth-Shan, Beth-Shan I*, Philadelphia, 1930 and *The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan, Beth-Shan II*, Philadelphia, 1940, 1.

² G. M. FITZGERALD, *The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan, The Pottery, Beth Shan II*, Philadelphia, 1930, 2; *Beth-Shan Excavations 1921–23, The Arab and Byzantine Levels, Beth-Shan III*, 1931; The Earliest Pottery of Beth-Shan, *The Museum Journal* 24 (1935), 5–22. E.D. OREN, *The Northern Cemetery of Beth-Shean*, Leiden, 1973. F.W. JAMES, *The Iron Age at Beth Shean*, Philadelphia, 1966. F.W. JAMES and P.E. MCGOVERN, *The Late Bronze Egyptian Garrison at Beth Shan: A Study of Levels VII and VIII*, Vol. I–II, Philadelphia, 1993.

³ Y. YADIN and S. GEVA, *Investigations At Beth Shean, The Early Iron Age Strata, Qedem* 23 (1986).

⁴ A. MAZAR, *Beth Shean*, in E. STERN (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (revised edition), New York, 1993a, 214–223; *Beth Shean in the Iron Age: Preliminary Report and Conclu-*

sions of the 1990–1991 Excavations, IEJ 43 (1993b) 201–229. *Four Thousand Years of History at Tel Beth Shean: An Account of the Renewed Excavations, Biblical Archaeologist* 60 (1997) 62–76.

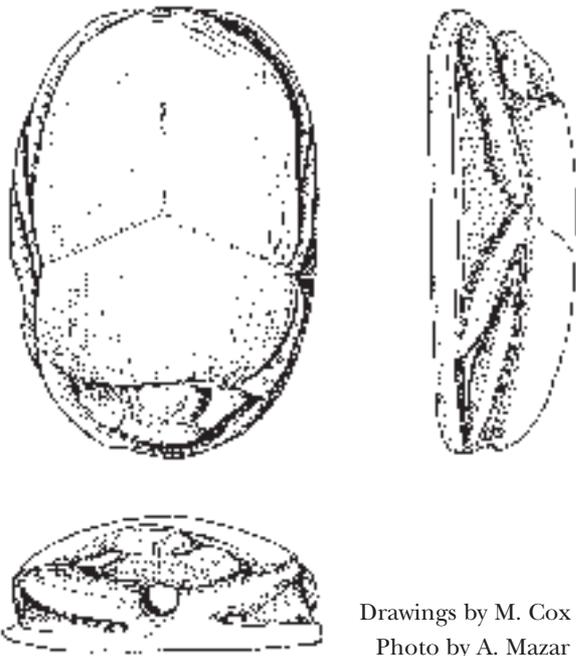
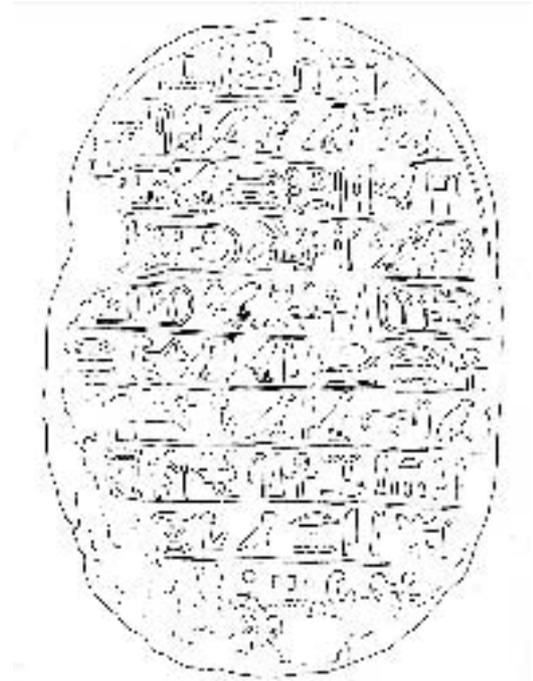
⁵ F. W. JAMES, *op. cit.*, Fig 76:1.

⁶ Ward in F. W. JAMES, *op. cit.*, 167–199, Fig. 93:1.

⁷ I recommend to add references to additional Egyptian objects from the new excavations: D. SWEENEY, *The man on the Folding Chair: An Egyptian Relief from Beth Shean, IEJ* 48 (1998) 38–53; A. COHEN-WEINBERGER, *Petrographic Analysis of the Egyptian Forms from Stratum VI at Tel Beth Shean*, in S. GITIN, A. MAZAR, E. STERN (eds.), *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE*, Jerusalem, 1988, 406–412.

⁸ I am very grateful to Prof. Amihai Mazar for allowing me to publish this unique find.

⁹ *Kebu-Heba*, see W.L. MORAN, *The Amarna Letters*, Baltimore and London 1992, 382.



Drawings by M. Cox
Photo by A. Mazar

entourage. This event is defined by the author of the text as “a marvel” (Pl.1).

Description: schist (?)
Dimensions: 8.6 x 6.0 x 2.7 cm.
Type: (pls 2,3)
Preservation: slightly chipped

Only five scarabs of this variety were known to date.¹⁰ Four were published by Blankenberg-van Delden¹¹ in his detailed catalogue book. He added the fifth in another publication,¹² a few years later. The latter is a “lost and found” scarab, known as “Mme Hoffmann’s scarab” of which information and hand copy already appear among the group classified as “lost scarabs” in Blankenberg-van Delden catalogue book.¹³ Of the five known scarabs one comes from an excavation in the necropolis of Hermopolis (Tunah el-Gebel), one was a gift by ex-king Farouk I to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo,

¹⁰ The first detailed study of the ‘Kirgipa’ scarab was presented by R. ENGELBACH, in his article “A ‘Kirgipa’ commemorative scarab of Amenophis III presented by his majesty King Farouk I to the Cairo Museum,” *ASAE* 40 (1940): 659–661; see also HELCK, *Urk IV*, 1738. For a recent collection of bibliography see A. P. KOZLOFF *et al.*, *Egypt Dazzling Sun. Amenhotep III and his World*, Cleveland, 1992, 67–69.

¹¹ C. BLANKENBERG-VAN DELDEN, *The Large Commemorative Scarabs of Amenhotep III*, Leiden, 1969, 129–133. He adds a detailed bibliography about each scarab.

¹² Id., *More Large Commemorative Scarabs of Amenophis III*, *JEA* 62 (1976), 74–80, pls. XII–XIII.

¹³ C. BLANKENBERG-VAN DELDEN, *Commemorative Scarabs*, 160–161.

and is said to come from Buto (Tell Fara'in), and the two others are in the possession of the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, and the British Museum respectively, both coming from unknown provenance. Mme Hoffmann's scarab is said to be brought from Egypt.

The Beth-Shean scarab is the first Kirgipa scarab to come from Canaan. Three other commemorative scarabs which were published by Blankenberg-van Delden originated in Canaan. They comprise two "marriage" scarabs and one "lion-hunt" scarab. One "marriage" scarab was found in a wall foundation in Beth Shemesh ('Ain Shems=Rumeila),¹⁴ while the other "marriage" scarab comes from the excavations in Gezer.¹⁵ The "lion-hunt" scarab was found on an altar platform in a shrine of the upper level temple founded by Amenhotep III in Lachish.¹⁶ A second "lion hunt" scarab was recently discovered in the renewed excavations in Jaffa and will be published soon.¹⁷ Another "marriage" scarab was uncovered in the palace of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) and is now in the National Museum of Damascus.¹⁸ All other scarabs from different museums in the Levant (including Jerusalem) come from unknown provenance or are known to be brought from Egypt.

Transliteration:

1. *rnpt sp 10 hr hm n*
2. *Hr k3 nht [h^c] m m3^ct Nbtj smn*
3. *hpw sgrh t3wy Hr nbw 3 h(pš)*
4. *hw Sttiw Nsw bit Nb-M3^ct R^c (s3 R^c)*
5. *Imn htp hk3 W3st di nh hmt nsw wrt Tiy*
6. *nh.ti rn n it.s Ywi3 rn n mwt.s Twi3 bi3wt (in)yt*
7. *n hm.f 3.w.s s3t wr n Nh-r-(n)*
8. *S-t-r-n K-l-g(-p)*
9. *tpwt n hnri.(s)*
10. *(st) 3(17)*

Translation:

1. The tenth year of his Majesty
2. Horus 'Strong Bull Appearing in Maat'; He of the Two Goddesses 'Establisher
3. of Laws, Pacifier of the Two Lands'; The Golden Horus 'Great of Valor,
4. Smiting the Asiatics'; King of Upper and Lower Egypt 'Neb-Maat-R'; (Son of Re)
5. 'Amenhotep the Ruler of Thebes', given life. The great royal consort, Tiy
6. may she live. Her father's name is Ywia, her mother's name is Twia. Marvels brought
7. to his Majesty (may he live be prosperous and healthy) –(the) Daughter of the great one of Naharina,
8. Shutarna – Kirgipa (with)
9. female entourage¹⁹ of her harem
10. 3 (17 women).

The six scarabs known to date (including our scarab) are not identical. There are slight differences in spelling and in the lines' arrangement.²⁰ Of all examples, our scarab is closest to scarab D2 in Blankenberg-van Delden's book, now in the British Museum.²¹ The most conspicuous peculiarity of our scarab is the omission of the word *h^c* in the Horus name *k3 nht h^c m m3^ct*. However, as the *h^c* appears in many commemorative scarabs above the back of the *m* bird, and as there is an empty space between the *m* and the *m3^ct* it is rather obvious that this is a mere error of forgetfulness of the scribe.

The exact function and purpose of the commemorative scarabs is not yet established. However, if they served as "official royal announcements" it is very plausible to assume, that Beit-Shean was on the "mailing list" of King Amenophis III.

¹⁴ C. BLANKENBERG-VAN DELDEN, *op. cit.*, 47–48 (A39). This is also a case of secondary use.

¹⁵ C. BLANKENBERG-VAN DELDEN, *op. cit.*, 49 (A40)

¹⁶ C. BLANKENBERG-VAN DELDEN, *op. cit.*, 116 (C87).

¹⁷ To be published in *Tel Aviv* by Deborah Sweeney. Dr. Sweeney has kindly informed me that the scarab comes from an unstratified layer.

¹⁸ C. BLANKENBERG-VAN DELDEN, *op. cit.*, 50–51 (A42).

¹⁹ *Wb* V, 294, 7 only one reference – *imy-r tpwt spst nt Hnmw*, without translation R. HANNIG, *Grosses Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch*, Mainz, 1995, 930, translates "weibliche Personengruppe".

²⁰ See HELCK, *op. cit.* and R. ENGELBACH, *op. cit.*

²¹ C. BLANKENBERG-VAN DELDEN, *op. cit.*, pl. XXIX, D2 and p.131.