

# THE SCARAB FROM BURIAL CAVE 900 IN NAḤAL REFA'IM, JERUSALEM

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The offerings in Burial Cave 900 included one scarab (Fig. 1) that originated in the lower MB II burial level (L908, B9084), in the soil next to an oval stone pavement.

*Material:* Glazed steatite, showing remains of green glaze.

*Measurements:* L 1.6 cm, W 1.1 cm, H 0.6 cm.

*Features:*<sup>1</sup> Back—plain stylistic; head—B-2; side—e9.

*Base Design:*<sup>2</sup> 3A3—"Egyptian signs and symbols: Varia" (Tufnell 1984:118, Pls. VIII, VIIIb; Ben-Tor 2007:126, Pl. 51).

The base design is displayed horizontally, depicting a falcon facing right, a lozenge-shaped element behind it and geometric elements at either end of the base surface. These three elements are filled with cross-hatching and seem to serve as decorative space fillers. The unclear upside-down L-shaped element emerging from the falcon's back is reminiscent of the 90° angle associated with falcons on scarabs displaying Tufnell's Design Class 3A4 (Tufnell 1984:118, Pl. IX; Ben-Tor 2007:126–127, Pl. 52). Nevertheless, unlike all known examples displaying Design Class 3A4,

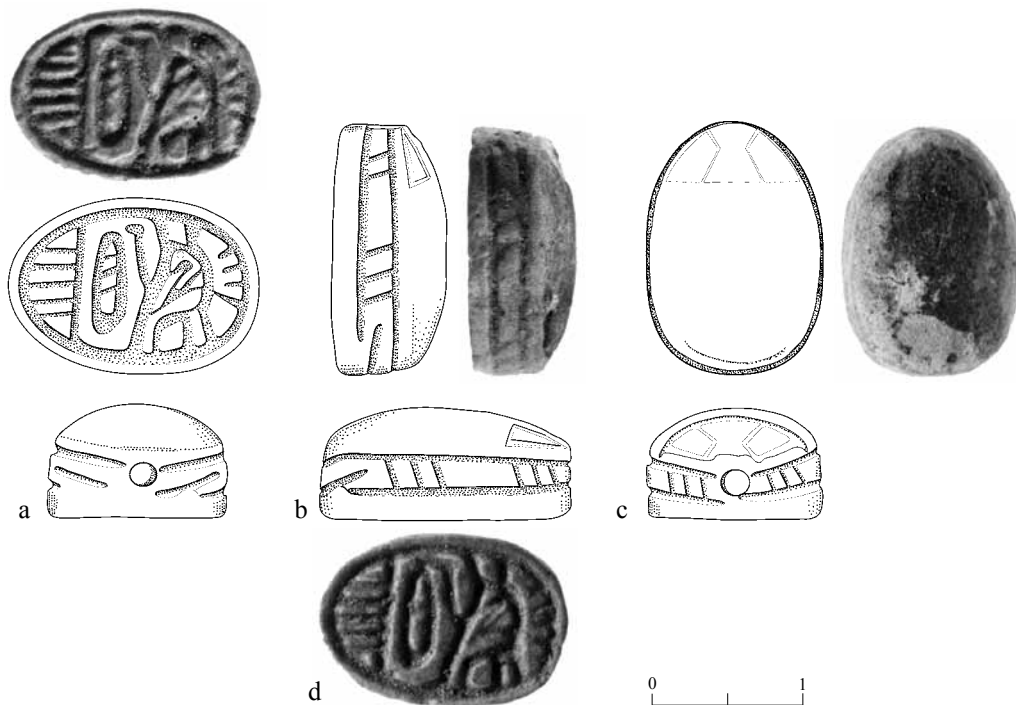


Fig.1. Scarab from Cave 900, L908: (a) base, (b) side, (c) back, (d) modern impression.

the L-shaped element is depicted facing the opposite direction of the falcon, which argues for categorizing the design on this scarab under Tufnell's Design Class 3A3—"Egyptian signs and symbols: Varia" (see above). Design class 3A3 is in fact a miscellaneous category referring to designs that do not fit under any of the classified variations of Tufnell's designs. However, as previously demonstrated, it can be used to differentiate between Egyptian and Canaanite scarabs of the first half of the second millennium BCE (Ben-Tor 2007:16–17, 126, Pls. 7, 51).

The particular design on the scarab from Cave 900 is not attested on any known example. However, it displays characteristics indicating Canaanite production of the scarab, as, for example, falcons comprising the central motif,

one of the most distinctive traits of Canaanite scarabs of the early series (Ben-Tor 2007:126–127, design classes 3A3–3A4, Pls. 51, 52),<sup>3</sup> which are absent on Egyptian late Middle Kingdom scarabs (Ben-Tor 2007:17, Pls. 7–11). The features of the Cave 900 scarab display the most distinctive characteristics of the B-2 head group, one of the earliest and most distinctive groups of the early Palestinian scarab series (Keel 2004:81–93; Ben-Tor 2007:151, Pls. 64–67). It was recently argued that the early Palestinian scarab series should be assigned to the early MB IIB and dated between c. 1700–1600 BCE (Ben-Tor 2007:117–121). This supports the local, early MB IIB production suggested by the design on the scarab from Cave 900, and it is therefore contemporary with the tomb in which it was found.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The stylistic typology of the features follows Ward and Dever 1994:163–165.

<sup>2</sup> The design typology follows Tufnell 1984:115–140.

<sup>3</sup> Most designs occurring on early Canaanite scarabs assigned to design class 3A3 have no exact parallels (Ben-Tor 2007: Pl. 51).

#### REFERENCES

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