'Atiqot 68, 2011

Scarabs from a Burial Cave near Ḥorbat Zelef

Othmar Keel and Stefan Münger

Introduction

Fourteen scarabs that were found in a burial cave excavated near Ḥorbat Zelef are discussed (see Covello-Paran, this volume). They came from Layer II, dating to Late Bronze Age I.[1] The reader should note the following conventions:

1) The description of head, back and side of the scarabs (for example: B2/0/e9) follows the classification system of Tufnell 1984:31–38 and Keel 1995:§74–114.

2) § + number (for example: §128) refer to the relevant paragraph in Keel 1995.

3) Place name + number (for example: Afeq No. 45) refer to the corresponding entry in Keel 1997.

4) Letter + number (for example: M16) refer to the "List of Hieroglyphic Signs" in Gardiner 1957:438–548.

Catalogue

Cat. No. 1. Reg. No. 1074; human face scarab (§165; cf. Tell el-'Ajjul Nos. 372 and 656); back type 0, side type e9; hollowed-out engraving with hatching.

Material: Enstatite.

Dimensions: L 22.2 mm, W 16 mm, H 9 mm.

Base Design: A falcon-headed deity with a theriomorphic head and an anthopomorphic body striding to the right. The chest is short and triangularly shaped, the waist extremely narrow. The kilt is unusually long, almost reaching the ankles (see also Jericho: Kirkbride 1965: Fig. 294:16). The arm behind is hanging down and seems to hold an object, possibly a scimitar. The arm in front is bent and touches a vertically arranged crocodile. The bulging eyes and the sharp teeth are well indicated. The bony plate is shown by cross-hatching. Its legs are in linear engraving. The tail is relatively short and stumpy. Below is a large vertically hatched *nb* (V30; §458) serving as an exergue; a border line encircles the scene.

The relation between the falcon-headed deity and the crocodile seems to be one of subduction (Keel, Keel-Leu and Schroer 1989:275). Many parallels, and the otherwise attested relation between the falcon-headed Horus and the crocodile-headed Sobek during Dynasties XIII and XV in general, suggest that the gesture of the falcon-headed deity on the present scarab is one of respect, if not veneration (§589 and §591; Keel 2002:203–207 and 216–220, Figs. 33–52). For parallels, see Tell el-'Ajjul Nos. 118.952.1046–1048; Jericho: Rowe 1936: No. 276; Tel Lakhish: Tufnell 1958: Pls. 32/33:129, 41:27; and Megiddo: Loud 1948: Pl. 151, 146.

Date: Dynasty XV (1630–1522 BCE).

Cat. No. 2. Reg. No. 1092; D1/0/e11; linear engraving.

Material: Enstatite.

Dimensions: L 14.7 mm, W 11 mm, H 6.9 mm.

Base Design: The rudimentary decoration consists of two *nb* signs (V30; §458), one atop and one below; they frame two *s3* signs (V17; §465); the whole is encircled by a linear oval.

It is possible to read the two double signs as 'any/every protection' (§445). Similar formulas are found on apotropaic wands, where the double protection is specified as 'protection by day and by night' (e.g., Legge 1905: Pl. 7, Fig. 11); similar formulas are found, e.g., on items from Jericho: Kirkbride 1965: Fig. 290:6

0 1

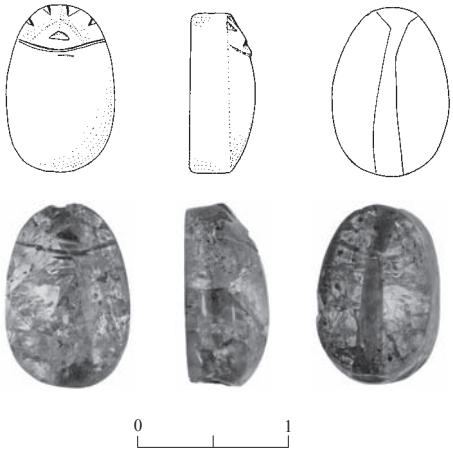
Cat. No. 1.

0 1

Cat. No. 2.

[with additional *nfr*], Fig. 283:8 [horizontally arranged; with additional *nfr*].
Date: Dyansty XV (1630–1522 BCE).

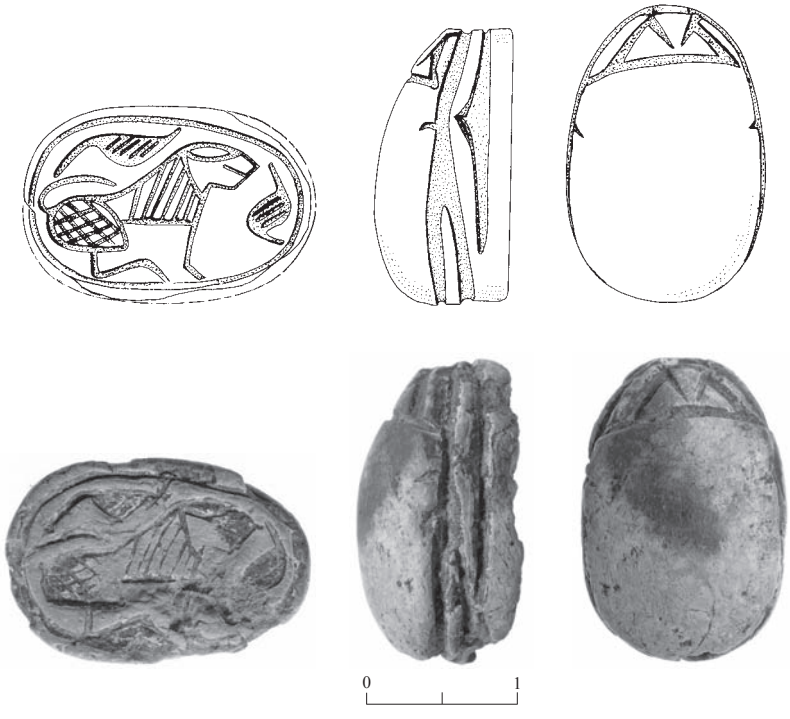
Cat. No. 3. Reg. No. 1121; D8/0/?.
Material: Rock crystal (a material rarely, but regularly, used for precious objects in Egypt §363; Pamminger 1995:151, nn. 17–20).



Cat. No. 3.

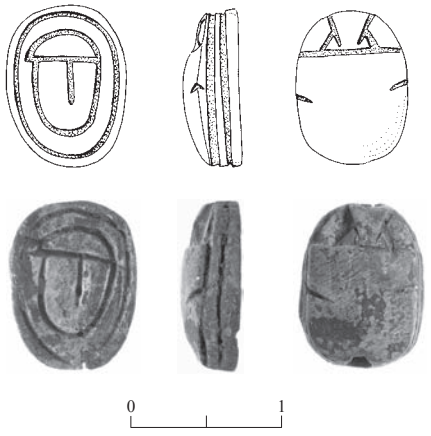
Dimensions: L 11 mm, W 7.5 mm, H 4.8 mm.
Base Design: Blank. Possibly imported.
Date: Most probably a late Middle Kingdom import, and heirloom in the context it was found (1850–1700 BCE).

Cat. No. 4. Reg. No. 1164; D8/0/d5; rim and part of the plinth are damaged; hollowed-out engraving with hatching.
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 19.3 mm, W 13.3 mm, H 8.8 mm.
Base Design: The design is horizontally arranged. It depicts a crouching lion with straight forelegs and an upraised tail (§537). The mane is especially highlighted by vertical hatching and the flank is cross-hatched. The lion is grouped with two uraei. One is in front and turns toward the lion's head, the other one is above the lion's back, facing outside. Parallels are amazingly common at Tell el-ʻAjjul, cf. Nos. 371.413.807.1136–1138, but see also, e.g., Tell el-Farʻah South: Petrie 1930: Pl. 10, 69 or Jericho: Kirkbride 1965:630, Fig. 295:23 and further parallels mentioned in §537.
Date: Dynasty XV (1630–1522 BCE).



Cat. No. 4.

Cat. No. 5. Reg. No. 1165; degenerated D8/0/e11; linear engraving.
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 10.7 mm, W 8.1 mm, H 3.5 mm.
Base Design: The design portrayed is a very schematic and clumsily engraved scarab beetle



Cat. No. 5.

ḫpr (Keel 1995: §40–41.516; 1997:779–781; Keel and Staubli 2003:58–60, 66–68) without legs within a linear oval frame. Only a line dividing the elytra and a line intersecting the pronotum/head from the body suggest such an identification. Normally, at least four legs are indicated (for examples from different periods, see e.g., Tufnell 1984: Pl. 1:1022–1033; Ward 1978: Pl. 6,158; Starkey and Harding 1932: Pl. 50, 62 and Pl. 55, 264; Kirkbride 1965: Fig. 287, 3). The total lack of legs is almost unique (but see, e.g. Byblos: Tufnell and Ward 1966: Pl. 13, 7; Tell el-ʻAjjul No. 1153). However, the partially interrupted oval frame can be said to replace the missing legs (cf. similarly, Ward 1978: Pl. 6, 153).
Date: Dynasty XV (1630–1522 BCE).

Cat. No. 6. Reg. No. 1174; the head-type is not included in Tufnell's typology (Tufnell 1984:32, Fig. 12); Rowe (1936: Pl. 32, Fig. 18)

Cat. No. 6.

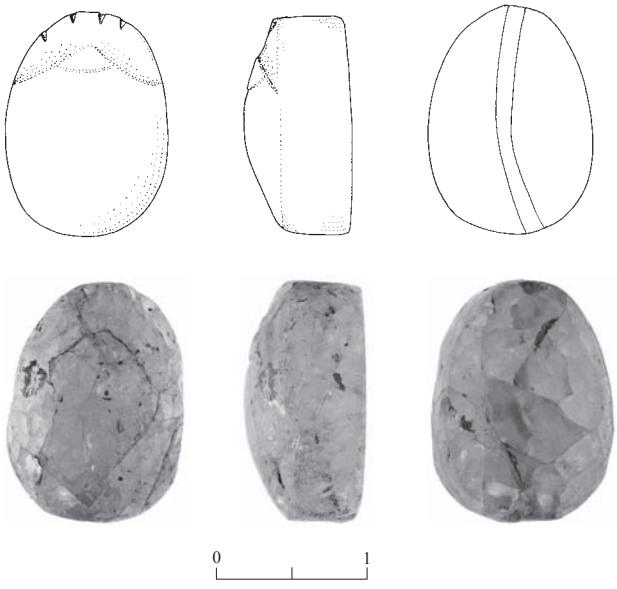
has an identical type, but without indication of the plates; the back type is 0, the side type is e9; linear engraving with some hatching.
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 20.5 mm, W 15 mm, H 10.8 mm.
Base Design: Two antithetic, inward-turned cobras (§524; Tufnell 1984: Pl. 10:1491–1514) in horizontal arrangement, flanking an unusual combination of hieroglyphic signs. In the center is an *ꜥnḫ* (S34; §449) sided to the left by a one-stemmed floral motif; the bud seems to be bent and bound to the stem (cf. §431, note that bent stems usually occur in pairs); to the right, the *ꜥnḫ* is flanked by a flowering reed (M17; §456); a *t3* (N16/17; §463) or a *nb* (V30; §458) supports the above mentioned signs; above are two inverted *s3* signs (cf. above, Cat. No. 2). For two antithetical cobras flanking hieroglyphic signs of all kind, cf., e.g., Tell el-ʻAjjul Nos. 44, 418, 627, 814, 921.
Date: Dynasty XV (1630–1522 BCE).

Cat. No. 7. Reg. No. 1175; B2/0/d5; linear engraving.
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 18.5 mm, W 13.5 mm, H 8.8 mm.
Base Design: The base features a border of two pairs of oblong hooked scrolls, connected above and below (§507; see also Nos. 9 and 14 below); they frame three hieroglyphic signs (from top to bottom): *nfr* 'beautiful, perfect' (F35; §459), *k3* 'soul/spirit/vitality' (D28; §456) and *t* (X1; §463) serving as an exergue. This pattern is quite common in the later Middle Bronze phases in Jericho: Tufnell 1984:30, 2308–2318, esp. 2315.
Date: Dynasty XV (1630–1522 BCE).

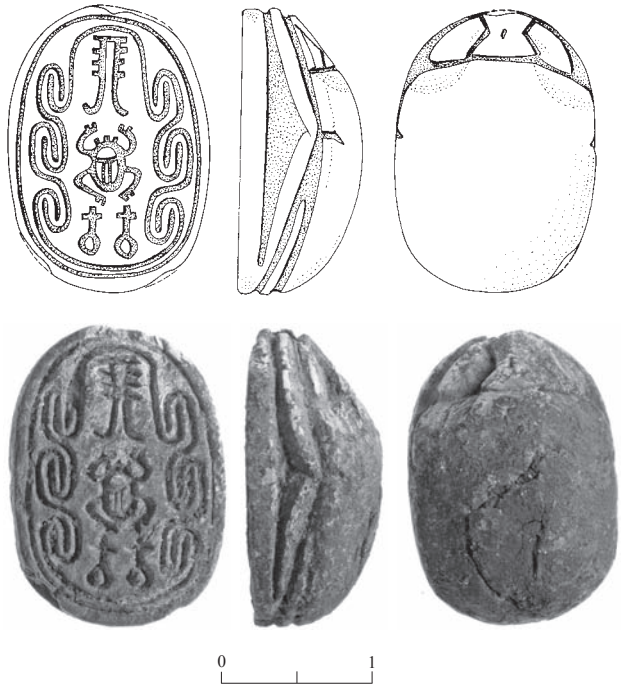
Cat. No. 7.

Cat. No. 8. Reg. No. 1176; unfinished?; D8/0/-; the perforation is strongly bent.
Material: Rock crystal? (§362–363) or amethyst? (§365–366).
Dimensions: L 15.6 mm, W 11.5 mm, H 7.8 mm.
Base Design: Blank. Possibly imported.
Date: Most probably a late Middle Kingdom import, and heirloom in the context in which it was found (1850–1700 BCE).

Cat. No. 9. Reg. No. 1182; B2/0/d5; crack in the back; linear engraving.



Cat. No. 8.



Cat. No. 9.

Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 18 mm, W 12.8 mm, H 8.1 mm.
Base Design: A border of three pairs of oblong hooked scrolls that are connected above and below (§508; cf. Nos. 7 and 14); they frame three hieroglyphic signs (from top to bottom): *Ḏd* 'Djed-pillar' (R11; §451), symbol of Osiris, *ḫpr* (L1; §454; see also above) and two *nfr* signs 'beautiful, perfect' (F35; §459); similar patterns are found on items unearthed, e.g., at Jericho: Kirkbride 1965: Figs. 287, 6 and 296, 4 or in Wadi Murabba'at: Benoit, Milik and de Vaux 1961: Fig. 5, 3 and Pl. 7, 2.
Date: Dynasties XIII–XV (1959–1522 BCE), most likely locally produced.

Cat. No. 10. Reg. No. 1243; A1? or A3?/0/d5; part of the head is broken off; hollowed-out engraving.
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: 23 × 16.5 × 9 mm.
Base Design: The base depicts a falcon-headed deity striding to the right, dressed in a short kilt and flanked by two confronting uraei with long, zigzagging tails; above the deity's head are two additional confronting uraei with bent tails; below a *nb* (V30; §458) serving as an exergue; linear oval frame.

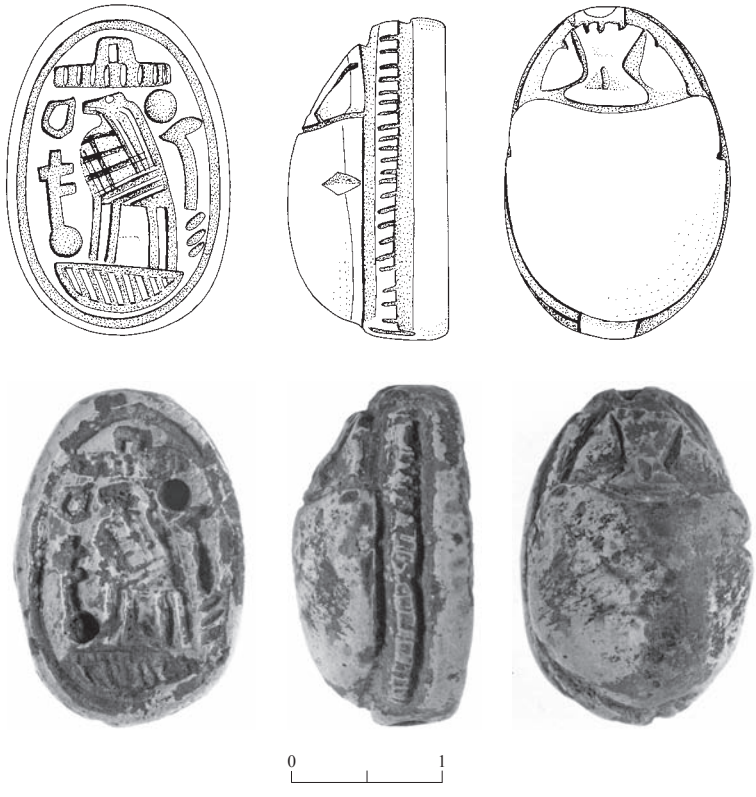
A scarab with a falcon-headed deity holding the tails of two confronting uraei above his head was found at Tell el-Far'ah South (cf. Petrie 1930: Pl. 7, 34). Additional parallels are a group of scarabs with a falcon-headed striding deity holding in his outstretched hand an uraeus turned inward, while there is a second uraeus starting from the tip of the kilt turned outward (Keel, Keel-Leu and Schroer 1989:269 Abb. 88–92; cf. also Abb. 84); closer to our item are, however, Tell el-'Ajjul No. 389, Tell el-Far'ah South: Petrie 1930: Pl. 7, 22 and Jericho: Kirkbride 1965:638, Fig. 298, 14, where a kneeling falcon-headed is flanked by two erect,

Cat. No. 10.

long-tailed uraei. This motif might be some sort of forerunner to the common Ramesside motif of a falcon-headed deity whose arms end in uraei, cf. Bet Shemesh: Grant 1932: No. 38 = No. 448, Grant 1934: Fig. 3, 20 and 3, 21; Tell el-Far‘ah South: Petrie 1930: Pl. 29, 244; Starkey and Harding 1932: Pls. 52, 163, 55, 307; or Gezer: Dever 1986: Fig. 2, 1.
Date: Dynasty XV (1630–1522 BCE).

Cat. No. 11. Reg. No. 1244; B2 or B3/0/e10; very coarse hollowed-out engraving with hatching, two drill holes, which is very unusual on scarab bases (§336), they do not seem to occur before Dynasty XVIII (cf. Keel, Shuval and Uehlinger 1990:183–185, 190–194).
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 22.4 mm, W 14.7 mm, H 10.8 mm.
Base Design: A standing falcon (§450.450.556) appears in the center; the feet and the tail are both indicated by two parallel lines. In front of the falcon are a sun disk (N5; §461) and a *nfr* ‘beautiful, perfect’ (F35; §459); behind the falcon are a *ꜥnḫ* ‘life’ (S34; §449) and three oblique strokes; above is a *ḥtp* ‘be pleased’ (R4; §455) and below, a *nb* (V30; §458) serving as an exergue. The combination of *ḥtp*, falcon and *nb* is found on Tell el-‘Ajjul No. 1086; falcon and *nb* is found on Tell el-‘Ajjul No. 1148.
Date: Dynasty XV (1630–1522 BCE), or in view of the drill holes even first half of Dynasty XVIII (c. 1530–1400 BCE).

Cat. No. 12. Reg. No. 1245, B6/0/d6; attached to a bronze ring (Type I or II; §263a–265.269); linear engraving (see Covello-Paran, this volume: Fig. 27:3).
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 10 mm, W 6.5 mm, H 4.2 mm.



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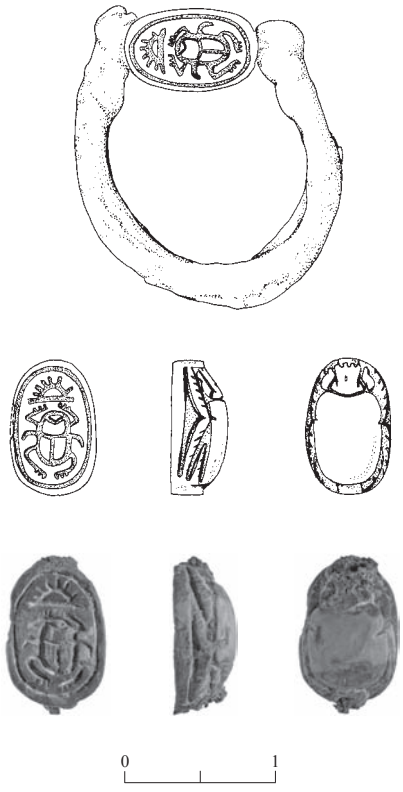
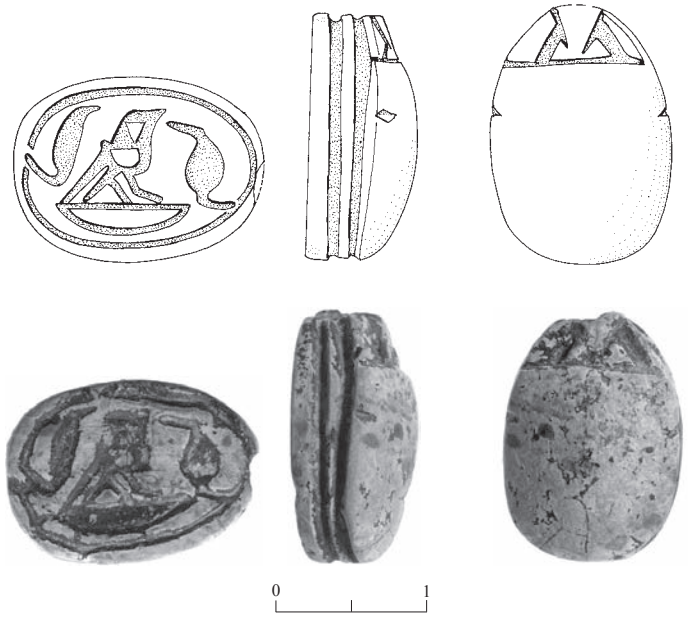


Cat. No. 12.

Base Design: *ḫ*ˁ 'hill of the sunrise' (N28; §453) above a *ḫpr* (L1; §454; see also No. 5 above) in a linear oval frame. The combination *ḫ*ˁ *ḫpr* is part of the throne-name of Sesostris II *ḫ*ˁ *ḫpr*ˁ (1844–1837 BCE; cf. §627 with Abb. 533–534). The combination *ḫ*ˁ *ḫpr* is attested, however, outside this combination, cf. Jericho: Kirkbride 1965: Fig. 302, 15 and Tel Kisan: Keel, Shuval and Uehlinger 1990:183–186, No. 7. The two signs are probably only luck signs without any relation to a ruler of Dynasty XII.
Date: Dynasty XV (1630–1522 BCE) if not the beginning of Dynasty XVIII (c. 1539/30–1450).

Cat. No. 13. Reg. No. 1313; degenerated D8 (cf. No. 5 above)/0/e11; hollowed-out engraving.
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 17.9 mm, W 12.3 mm, H 7.3 mm.
Base Design: The base depicts a horizontally arranged falcon deity standing to the right and flanked by two confronted uraei; below a *nb* (V30; §458) serving as an exergue, with a



Cat. No. 13.

Cat. No. 14.

linear, oval frame. A very close parallel is Tell el-ʿAjjul No. 1150, but there are numerous parallels without *nb*, cf. Tufnell 1984: Pl. 37, 2541–2544.2546.2549–2550.2552–2554. 2556.2560 and §526.
Date: Late Dynasty XV (c. 1600–1522 BCE), if not beginning of Dynasty XVIII (c. 1539/30–1450).

Cat. No. 14. Reg. No. 1354; B2/0/d5; mounted in gold (Type II; §264.266–275); linear engraving.
Material: Enstatite.
Dimensions: L 14.8, W 10.7 mm, H 6.8 mm.
Base Design: The base features a border of one pair of oblong hooked scrolls (see also Nos. 7 and 9), one above and one below. This pattern encloses a *nbw* 'gold/collar of beads' (S12; §458) above an *ʿnḫ* 'life' (S34; §449), flanked by two *nfr* 'beautiful, perfect' (F35; §459). This form of vertically displayed one-pair oblong scroll borders is typical of the late Middle Kingdom and is not attested on Canaanite scarabs, where this type of scroll border is always displayed longitudinally, cf. items from Uronarti (Reisner 1955: Fig. 10, 235 and Fig. 14, 355).
Date: Late Middle Kingdom, Dynasty XIII (c. 1800–1700 BCE); imported.

CONCLUSIONS

The small scarab assemblage from the burial cave near Ḥorbat Zelef is relatively homogeneous, regarding the date of the individual items and their assumed place of production. Exceptions are the two uninscribed scarabs (Nos. 3 and 8), which are heirlooms from the Middle Kingdom period. Like Scarab No. 14, they were imported from Egypt, most probably during MB IIB. All other items, however, reflect local manufacture. The rather unusual, clumsy designs and poor craftsmanship of Scarab Nos. 2, 5, 6, 10 and 11 are remarkable. The high percentage of hollowed out engraving (41% of the engraved scarabs: Nos. 1, 4, 10, 11 and 13) is also noteworthy and is rather typical of the later MB IIB–C. Finally, Scarab Nos. 11 and 13 may date as early as the beginning of Dynasty XVIII. Thus, only the latter two items might be contemporary with the date of the burial level in which they were found; all others should be considered heirlooms.

NOTES

[1] The authors thank Dr. Daphna Ben-Tor for her remarks and advice. This report was submitted in 2004. Editorial restraints did not allow for the updating of parallels or bibliography.

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