

## Three Scarabs from Shiloh: Chronology, Typology, and Iconography

Gary D. Urie and Scott Stripling

### **Abstract**

Recent excavations conducted from 2017 to 2023 at Shiloh (Khirbet es-Seilūn) yielded thirteen Egyptian-style scarabs. Most of the scarabs are contemporary with the Middle Bronze Age IIB–Middle Bronze Age IIC (=MB III) in Canaan, three of which we examine here. They differ from the rest of the corpus: Only Scarab 1 dates to Egypt's New Kingdom; only Scarab 2 bears a hieroglyphic reference to Upper Egypt; and only Scarab 3 displays the "anra" ('nr') composition. The article analyzes these three scarabs, the context of their discovery, their hieroglyphic inscriptions (interpreted based on Gardiner's sign list), and their typology. These factors offer insights into the scarabs' periods of production and use. The discussion includes known parallels from clean archaeological contexts. The remaining ten scarabs will be the subject of future publications.

**Keywords:** scarab, Shiloh, Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Egypt, Canaan.

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## Introduction

Ancient Shiloh is located ca. 30 km north of Jerusalem in the West Bank of Israel, to the west of the modern Israeli community of Shiloh and north of the Palestinian town of Turmus Ayya. The tell is approximately 300 m wide and rises 715 m above sea level; its total area is about three hectares (Finkelstein 1993: 1). Most of the tell consists of soil and exposed rock, with several visible ruins. On the north side of the tell, there is a lower terrace (Buhl and Holm-Nielson 1969: 10). Beyond this area is a steep drop into Wadi Seilūn. The north, east, and west sides of the tell are relatively steep compared to the south side, which is more gradual in slope. Access to the tell is generally from the direction of the modern settlement of Shiloh on the south side.

The remains discovered in the four Shiloh expeditions conducted over the past century date from the Middle Bronze Age II through the Mamluk period. Between 1926 and 1932, Hans Kjaer excavated three seasons on behalf of the Danish National Museum. Marie-Louise Buhl and Svend Holm-Nielson completed the Danish excavations in 1963.<sup>1</sup> From 1981 to 1984, Israel Finkelstein excavated four seasons on behalf of Bar-Ilan University. Since 2017, the Associates for Biblical Research (ABR) has conducted excavations on the northern and eastern slopes of the site; these ongoing excavations are directed by Scott Stripling and take place under the auspices of the Staff Officer in the Archaeology Department of the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria (ADCA). ADCA also periodically operates salvage excavations and has recently explored the summit, northern platform, and southern slope under the direction of Reut Livyatan-Ben Arie.

The ABR team has discovered thirteen scarabs over the course of five seasons.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, the Danish team discovered three in four seasons (Buhl and Holm-Nielson 1969: 28–29, 37–39), the Bar-Ilan team found five scarabs in four seasons (Brandl 1993: 205–207, 211–212, 215), and ADCA excavations have yielded five

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1 Aege Schmidt executed several initial sondages in 1922.

2 The Appendix contains a comprehensive catalog of the scarabs discovered by ABR at Shiloh over six seasons.

scarabs over the past decade (Reut Livyatan-Ben-Arie, personal communication). Most of the scarabs found by ABR were the result of wet sifting, an integral element of the team's excavation protocols. The three scarabs in this analysis include two found in mixed contexts, including one from wet sifting. Workers discovered the third scarab in situ in a clean context. This study considers the hieroglyphic signs, the typology, and the context of these scarabs' discovery. An examination of these three aspects of the scarabs suggests the date of their manufacture.

W. A. Ward (1987: 508) posited that if scarabs are to be useful as a dating criterion, there must first be a typological sequence based on an archaeological context. A typological analysis addresses each scarab's unique features, including its base, head, back, and sides. Our typological analysis relies primarily on the work of Olga Tufnell, with updates by Ward and Dever, Daphna Ben-Tor, and Othmar Keel that rely on large groups of scarabs from clean archaeological contexts.<sup>3</sup>

## Descriptions and Context

### Base Design and Hieroglyphic Signs

The analysis lists each scarab's Egyptian hieroglyphs in square brackets [ ] as they appear in Gardiner's sign list (1927: 432–531). For each scarab, we present the reading order required for accurate translation. Ancient Egyptians wrote hieroglyphs right to left and sometimes left to right (Allen 2014: 4). Although they typically wrote right to left, they also composed symmetrical inscriptions (Allen 2014: 4).<sup>4</sup> Hieroglyphs were aligned vertically in a column, usually read from top to bottom and not bottom to top (Manley 2012: 14).

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3 We are grateful for the important feedback of scholars Daphna Ben-Tor and Pieter Gert van der Veen.

4 Symmetrical inscriptions begin with a middle hieroglyph between other hieroglyphs. Reading starts in the center and proceeds left to right or right to left.

Context

This analysis provides the archaeological context of each scarab, including its associated ceramic corpus and stratum. The study also considers the site’s occupational history; viewed in light of known historical facts, this aspect enables us to better understand the presence of Egyptian-style scarabs at the site.

Table 1: Stratigraphic sequence at Shiloh

|      |                |  |
|------|----------------|--|
| 0    | 636–1917 CE    | Islamic Period                                 |
| I    | 325–636 CE     | Byzantine Period                               |
| II   | 135–325 CE     | Late Roman Period                              |
| III  | 167 BCE–135 CE | Late Hellenistic/Hasmonean/Early Roman Periods |
| IV   | 980–332 BCE    | Iron Age II–III                                |
| V    | 1200–980 BCE   | Iron Age I                                     |
| VI   | 1550–1200 BCE  | Late Bronze Age                                |
| VII  | 1650–1550 BCE  | Middle Bronze Age IIC (= MB III)               |
| VIII | 1750–1650 BCE  | Middle Bronze Age IIB                          |



Figure 1: Aerial view of Area H1 with ABR’s grid, highlighting the locations where the scarabs were discovered (photo by Gary D. Urie; graphics by Steven Rudd)

## Scarabs

### Scarab 1

Shiloh Object 1000 (K46108), Area H1, Square AH29, Locus 7, Pail 60.



**Figure 2:** Scarab of Thutmose III, 18th Dynasty (photos courtesy of Michael C. Luddeni)

**Material:** Glazed steatite.

**Dimensions:** Length 1.68 cm, width 1.27 cm, height 0.80 cm, weight 2.16 gm.

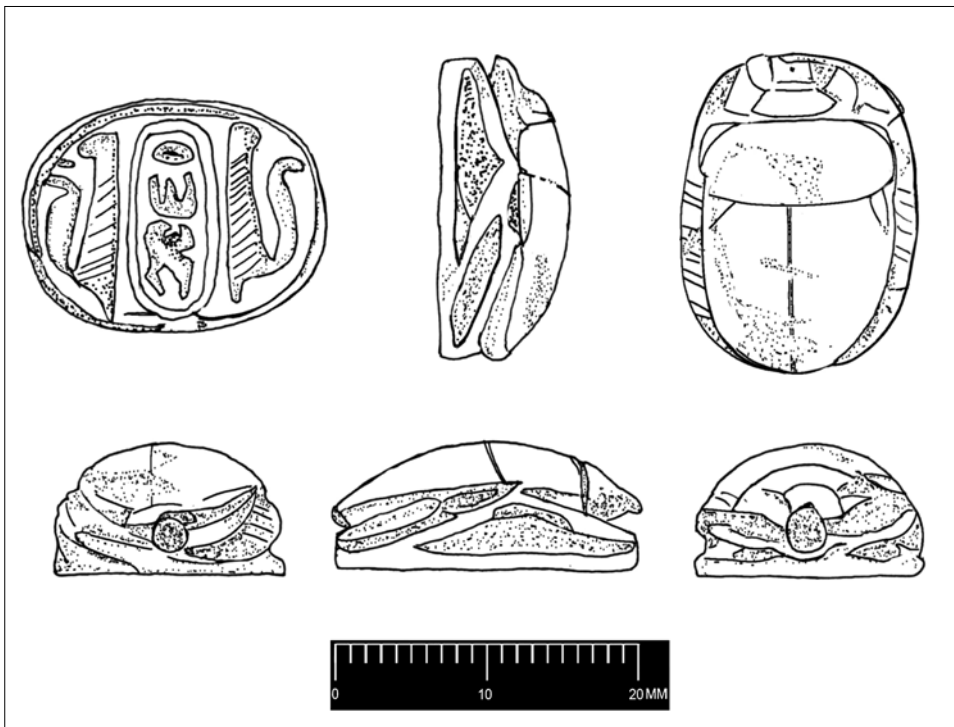
**Method of Manufacture:** Carving, abrading, drilling, incising, and glazing.

**Workmanship:** Hieroglyphs are crude but clear. Head, legs, and back are clearly distinguishable.

**Technical Details:** The scarab is perforated lengthwise on the front and rear and has linear engraving.

**Preservation:** The scarab is mostly complete, with some damage to the back and head.

**Base Design:** The scarab has seven hieroglyphic signs depicted horizontally along its length. There are three signs inside a cartouche in the center of the design. These are flanked on both sides by two closely intertwined signs, a Ma'at-feather and an uraeus serpent.



**Figure 3:** Scarab 1, Object 1000 (drawing by Gary D. Urie)

## Typology

The head of Scarab 1 is type B2 with a double "hourglass" outline and a horn. Type B2 scarab heads may have a single or double "hourglass" outline, with or without a horn (Tufnell 1984: 32, 34; Ward and Dever 1994: 162–163).

Its back is type VLV, demonstrating V-shaped humeral callosities, or type I, with one line dividing the elytra (wing case; Tufnell 1984: 34–35).<sup>5</sup> Ward and Dever (1994: 164–165) labeled this type LN (Lined Naturalistic) with a rounded pronotum (plate between elytra and head) and one or more lines dividing the elytra. The notches on the fore, middle, and hind legs indicate that the sides are type d6 (Tufnell 1984: 36–37; Ward and Dever 1994: 164–165).

The presence of a royal name places Shiloh Scarab 1 in the design class 11A (Tufnell 1984: 30). Ben-Tor (2007: 134, 167) based her revised classification for the design on Tufnell's work, labelling it Design 3D2, Actual Cartouches for Early and Late Palestinian Scarabs. Design 11A (Tufnell 1984: 140–141) or 3D2 (Ben-Tor 2007: 85, 134, 167) scarabs include the royal name of Thutmose III in a cartouche, which provides a relative chronology.

## Archaeological Context

The scarab derived from a mixed context at an elevation of ca. 701.50 m, a locus associated with an Early Roman structure in Stratum 3 (Square AH29, Locus 7). Locus 7 was the southwest area of the square; its dimensions were 4.15 m × 2.90 m, covering an area of approximately eight square meters. Excavations revealed that Locus 7 came after the Early Roman structure, as it was sealed against it without any evidence of a foundation trench. The material retrieved from this locus ranged from the Early Roman period to the Middle Bronze Age. This locus yielded several other important objects from various time periods, including a ceramic pomegranate, a bronze axe head, and a coin (Stripling 2018: 84–85). The pomegranate was the subject of a previous publication (Lopez, Stripling, and Ben-Shlomo 2019: 37–56).

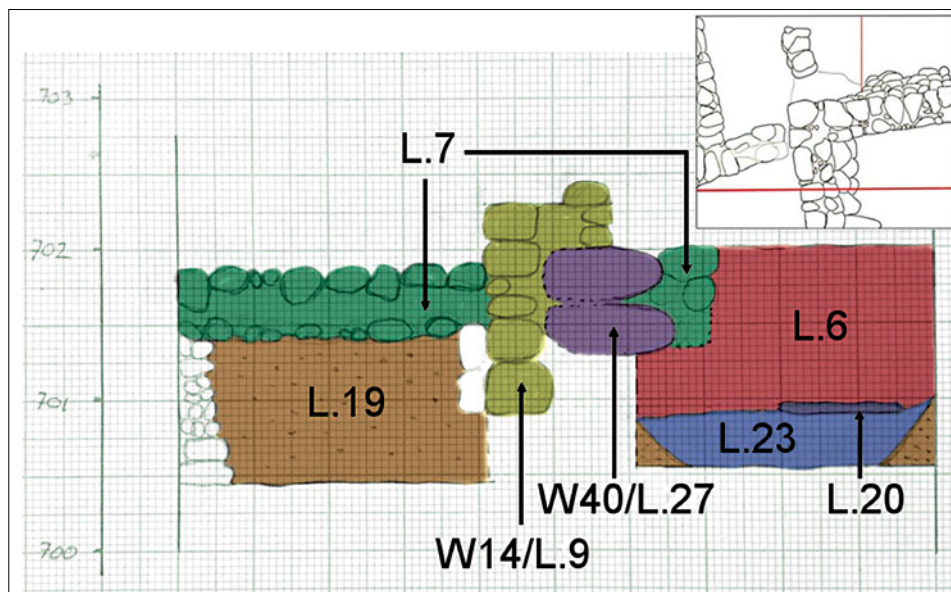
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5 According to Tufnell (1984: 36), humeral callosity is a term entomologists use to denote the shoulders of beetles.





**Figure 4:** Aerial view of Square AH29 before the excavation of Locus 7  
(photo by Greg Gulbrandsen)



**Figure 5:** Section drawing of Square AH29; the red line in the top plan marks the location of the section (drawing by Tim Lopez)



## Scarab 2

Shiloh Object 1282 (K46514), Area H1, Square AE27, Locus 4, Pail 5.



**Figure 6:** Scarab depicting Egyptian good-luck signs  
(photos courtesy of Michael C. Luddeni)

**Material:** Glazed Steatite.

**Dimensions:** Length 1.32 cm, Width 1.17 cm, Height 0.75 cm, Weight 0.84 gm.

**Method of Manufacture:** Carving, abrading, drilling, incising, and glazing.

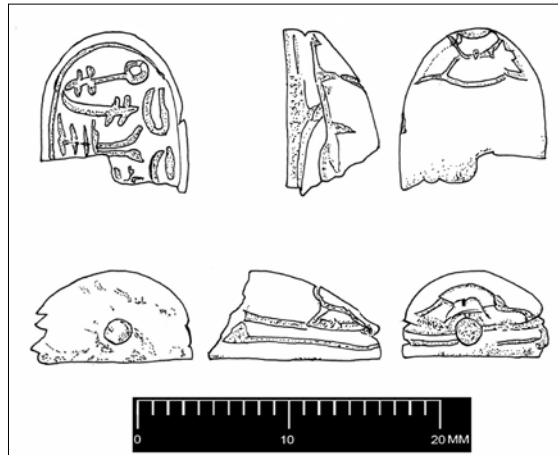
**Workmanship:** Hieroglyphs are very clear. Head, legs, and back are clearly distinguishable except for damaged areas.

**Method of Manufacture:** Carved.

**Technical Details:** The scarab is perforated lengthwise on the front and rear and has linear engraving.

**Preservation:** The scarab is broken, with approximately two-thirds remaining.

**Base Design:** The scarab is broken, but two complete and two partial signs are visible and oriented horizontally along its length. The third sign from the right appears to be the center sign, with similar signs to its right and left. The missing sign(s) may resemble the sign on the far right; this would make the inscription symmetrical, and thus potentially readable to the right and left from center (Allen 2014: 4–5).



**Figure 7:** Scarab 2, Object 1282 (drawing by Gary D. Urie)

## Typology

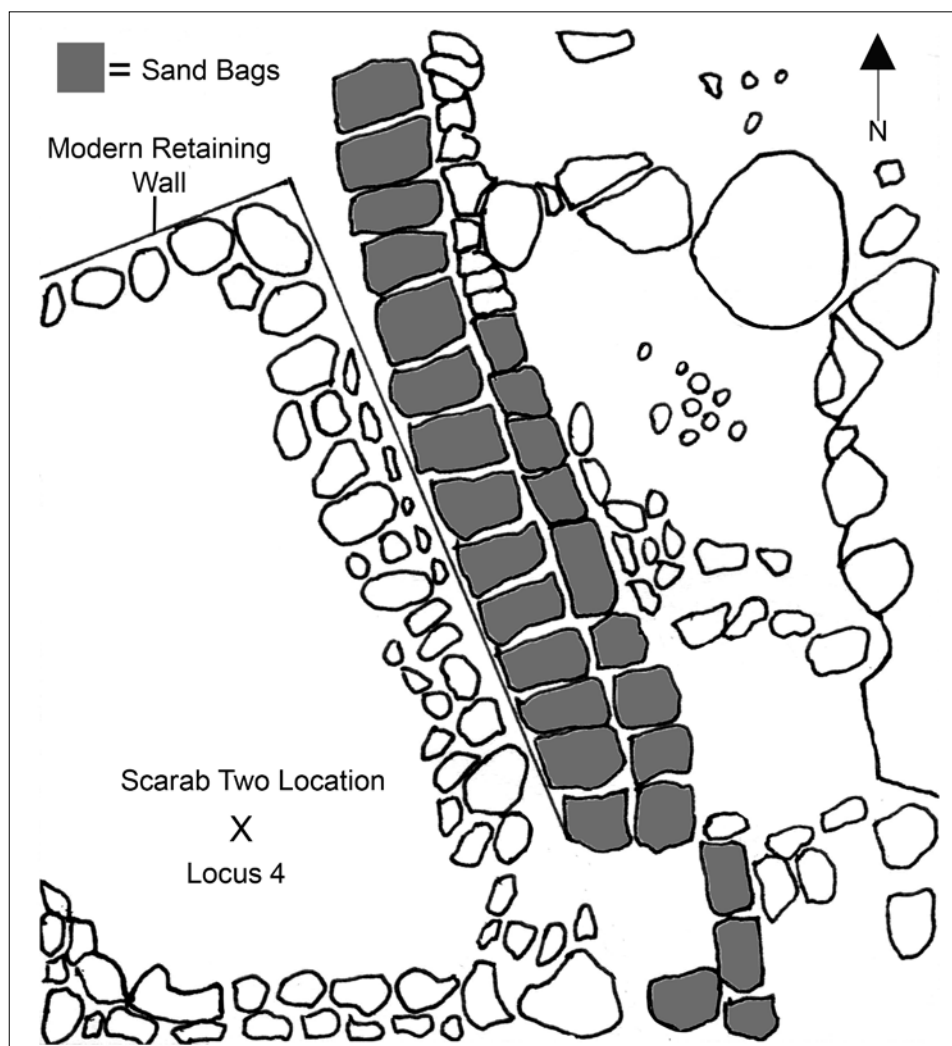
The head of Scarab 2 is type B2 with a double "hourglass" outline and a horn. Its back is classified as type O, as there are no lines dividing the elytra (Tufnell 1984: 34–35). Ward and Dever (1994: 164–165) classified plain backs without lines as PN (Plain Natural) or PS (Plain Stylistic), indicating the lack of lines between the elytra and the pronotum. The back of this scarab appears to be PN (Plain Naturalistic).

The sides may be type d5 and appear to have plain legs with a squared base (Tufnell 1984: 36; Ward and Dever 1994: 164–165).<sup>6</sup> The presence of sedge plants, sometimes paired, in a symmetrical pattern indicate that the design class is 3B5 (Tufnell 1984: 120, 286; Ben-Tor 2007: 131, 164).

6 The damage to this scarab prevents a more refined classification for the sides.

### Archaeological Context

Square AE27, Locus 4. The locus was in the south side of the square. It yielded 54 objects, most notably this approximately 60%-intact scarab from Pail 5. The mixed pottery assemblage read primarily as Early Roman and Iron Age II (Stripling 2019: 17). Other objects discovered in the same pail include three coins, a sling stone, a grinding stone, and an unknown metallic object (Stripling 2019: 20).



**Figure 8:** Square AE27 on the discovery day of Scarab 2 (drawing by Gary D. Urie)

### Scarab 3

Shiloh Object 1100 (K46110), Area H1, Square AE30, Locus 14, Pail 44.



**Figure 9:** Scarab 3, reflecting "anra" ('nr') composition (photo courtesy of Michael C. Luddeni)

**Material:** Glazed Steatite.

**Dimensions:** Length 1.2 mm, Width 0.9 mm, Height 0.6 mm, Weight 0.75 gm.

**Method of Manufacture:** Carving, abrading, drilling, incising, and glazing.

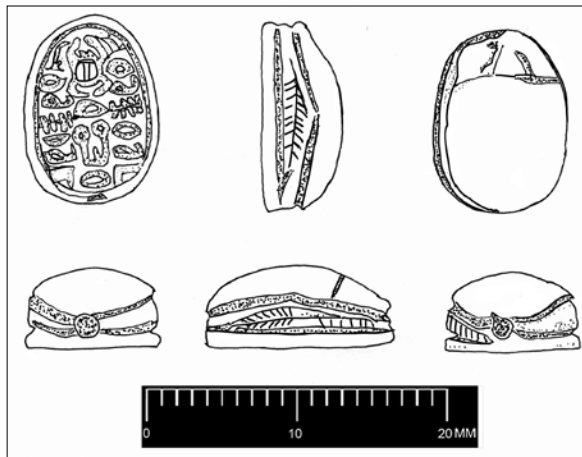
**Workmanship:** Most hieroglyphs are clear, but some are crude and difficult to read. The head, legs, and back are clearly distinguishable.

**Technical Details:** The scarab is perforated lengthwise on the front and rear and has linear engraving.

**Preservation:** The scarab is mostly intact, with minor damage to the left side of the head.

**Base Design:** There are eighteen hieroglyphs aligned vertically in three columns. The signs in the left and right columns are identical and in the same order. There are

four signs in the center column, two of which appear to be the same. Angled lines appear in the lower right and left corners of the design side adjacent to the design border and below the right and left columns. A proper reading of the signs is from top to bottom, beginning with the center column (Allen 2014: 4–5). Below, we provide a complete analysis of the signs.



**Figure 10:** Scarab 3, Object 1100 (drawing by Gary D. Urie)

## Typology

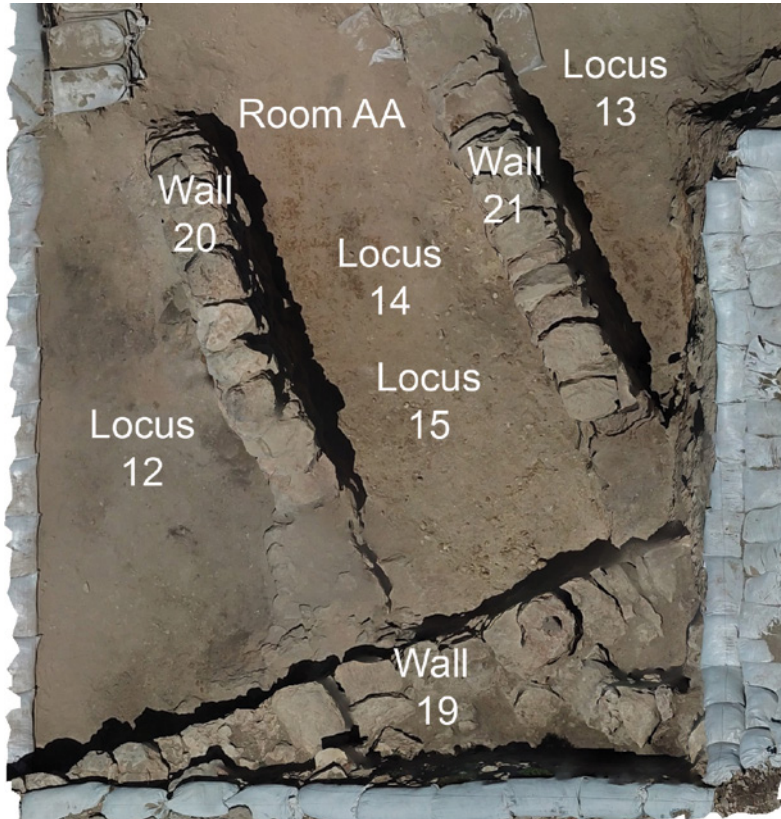
The head of Scarab 3 is type B2 with a double "hourglass" outline. Like Scarab 2, the back of Scarab 3 is type O or PS (Plain Stylistic). The sides, with the fore and middle legs fringed and the hind legs notched, are either type e6c (Tufnell 1984: 36–37), or type e6, as per Ward and Dever's (1994: 164–165) revision. The design is class 3C, also known as formulae or 'nr' style (Ben-Tor 2007: 165–166; Tufnell 1984: 121).<sup>7</sup>

## Archaeological Context

This scarab derived from a clean context in Square AE30 (Locus 14, Room AA, Stratum 7; Stripling 2018: 31). Other objects from this locus include three loom

<sup>7</sup> Design class 3C appears earlier in Palestine than in Egypt. Poorly rendered signs and pseudo-hieroglyphs are typical of this class (Ben-Tor 1997: 171–175; 2007: 83).

weights, two jar-stoppers, a grinder, a Middle Bronze Age juglet, and a shell bead. The pottery dates exclusively to the Middle Bronze Age IIB–Middle Bronze Age IIC (=MB III; Stripling 2018: 31).



**Figure 11:** Square AE30, Locus 14, Room AA (photo by Greg Gulbrandsen)

## Discussion

The scarab typology utilized in this analysis is likely to be accurate, as it relies on large groups of scarabs from clean archaeological contexts. Scarab parallels supplement the typological analysis, and where available, the head, back, and sides of the parallels are compared to the respective scarabs under examination.

Ben-Tor (2007: 43) provided an update to Tufnell's scarab typology by distinguishing between scarabs manufactured in Egypt and scarabs manufactured in Canaan. In Ben-Tor's refinement of the studies on scarabs, she argued for a Canaanite origin for most scarabs found in ancient Palestine (Canaan; Ben-Tor 2007: 117). Her approach built on the work of Schroer (1985; 1989) and Keel (1989; 1994: 207–225; 1995; 1997), who first presented solid evidence of the Canaanite origin of Middle Bronze Age scarabs (Ben-Tor 2007: 115). Ben-Tor (2007: 117, 155) labeled scarabs from Canaan as belonging to either the Early Palestinian Series or the Late Palestinian Series. Brandl (2014: 2) accepted Ben-Tor's designations but broadened the designations to Early and Late Middle Bronze Age Canaanite scarabs.

The Early and Late Palestinian Series scarabs come primarily from Canaanite tombs (Tufnell 1984: 4–23; Ben-tor 2007: 186). Ben-Tor's (2007: 186) Early Palestinian Series indicates close cultural interaction between Canaan and Egypt in the first half of the second millennium BC, corresponding with the occupation levels at Tell el-Dab`a earlier in the Middle Bronze Age IIB. The scarabs from this period reflect Late Middle Kingdom styles. Ben-Tor's (2007: 186) Late Palestinian Series demonstrates that many more scarabs were manufactured locally near the end of the Middle Bronze Age IIB to Middle Bronze Age IIC (=MB III) than previously thought. While these scarabs reflect Middle Kingdom styles, they bear a variety of designs from Egypt and the Levant. Ben-Tor ascribed scarabs of the later period in Palestine to the ascendancy of the 15th Dynasty (Second Intermediate Period) at Tell el-Dab`a during the late Middle Bronze Age IIB–Middle Bronze Age IIC (=MB III).

## **Scarab 1**

### **Preliminary Analysis**

Ben-Tor noted that this scarab featured the throne name of Thutmose III of the 18th Dynasty, positing that it may be an Egyptian scarab of the 19th Dynasty from the Ramesside period in the Late Bronze Age IIB (Ben-Tor, personal communication, 2023). Van der Veen described the style as late 18th-Dynasty, dating it to the Late Bronze IB–IIA during the Egyptian New Kingdom (van der Veen, personal communication, 2023).



## Analysis

Head type B2 is more prevalent in the Early Palestinian Series (Keel 2004: 92–93; Ben-Tor 2007: 151), indicating an earlier date during the New Kingdom. Its features resemble the Late Middle Kingdom style as described by Ben-Tor (2007: 151).

Tufnell (1984: 34, 36) stated that the back type VLV-Humeral Callosities may not date earlier than the New Kingdom. However, Ben-Tor (2007: 109, 111) cited earlier examples, noting that the V-shaped markings on the shoulders (humeral callosities) are characteristic of the 18th Dynasty (Ben-Tor 2007: 177, 183). She maintained that the feature may date as early as the 15th Dynasty and as late as the 19th Dynasty (Ben-Tor 2023).

Ward and Dever (1994) excluded the use of humeral callosities in their revised typology of scarabs. Their classification is LN (Lined Naturalistic). This back type is common among early Canaanite scarabs (Early Palestinian Series) but much less common than plain backs by a 2:1 ratio (Keel 2004: 92–93; Ben-Tor 2007: 151).

Type d6 sides are one of the dominant types in the Late Palestinian Series (Ben-Tor 2007: 183), indicating that Scarab 1 originates from a period earlier than the Late Bronze Age IIB. The type d6 sides appear on royal named scarabs of the Second Intermediate Period (Ben-Tor 2007: 112). They also appear in the Late Palestinian Series in late Middle Bronze Age IIB–Middle Bronze Age IIC (=MB III; Ben-Tor 2007: 183).

## Name Ring Signs

The cartouche contains three signs. Reading from top to bottom, the first sign is a sun, N5 [☉] (Gardiner 1927: 474). The second sign is a game board or draught board, Y5 [≡] (Gardiner 1927: 518). The third sign is a scarab beetle, L1 [𐐡] (Gardiner 1927: 467).

The signs inside the cartouche are phonograms. From top to bottom, they read Rā-men-kheper or Men-kheper-Re. This is the throne name of Thutmose III (Rowe 1936: 111; Allen 2014: 83).

## Other Signs

The signs inscribed to the immediate left and right of the cartouche are feathers (H6) [𐀓] (Gardiner 1927: 464). The signs immediately to the right and left of the feathers are outward-facing erect cobras (uraei), I12 [𐀓] (Gardiner 1927: 466).

The signs on the sides of the cartouche are ideograms. The feather (H6) represents the goddess Ma'at and means "truth" or "proper behavior" (Gardiner 1927: 464; Allen 2014: 119, 147, 482). The erect cobra or uraeus (I12) is a determinative for goddesses (Gardiner 1927: 466; Rowe 1936: 112; Allen 2014: 483).

A parallel (Figure 12) from Tel el-Far`ah-South, No. 646, Cemetery 900, Grave 935, dates to LB IIB–IA IA (Keel 2010: 646, 304–305). Keel cited additional parallels from Tell el-Ajjul, Tell el-Far`ah-South, Tell Jemmeh, Gezer, and Lachish but did not suggest dates. The Tel el-Far`ah-South scarab (No. 646) has a similar head, back, and sides as Scarab 1. The hieroglyphs are very similar to Scarab 1, also with a horizontal orientation.



**Figure 12:** Scarab from Tell el-Far`ah-South, No. 646 Cemetery 900, Grave 935 (Keel 2010: #646, 304–305)

Keel cited a parallel (Figure 13) for the Tel el-Far`ah-South scarab. The parallel comes from Lachish Tomb 4004 and dates to MB IIC (=MB III)–LB III; 1600–1370 BCE (Tufnell 1958: Pl. 38: 283). Tufnell indicated that the Thutmose III scarabs from the tomb were contemporary to his reign. She also mentioned reuse of the cave (tomb) in ca. 1220 BCE (Tufnell 1958: 97, 281). The head and back types resemble those of Scarab 1. There are no sides for this parallel depicted in the Lachish report.



**Figure 13:** Scarab from Lachish Tomb 4004 (Tufnell 1958: Pl. 38: 283)

## Scarab 2

### Preliminary Analysis

Ben-Tor described this scarab as a Middle Bronze Age Canaanite scarab with a design absent from Egyptian Middle Kingdom or Second Intermediate Period scarabs (Ben-Tor 2023). She contended that most scarabs found in Israel are of Canaanite manufacture and that this scarab is an imitation of a Middle Kingdom prototype (Ben-Tor 2007: 19). Van der Veen described it as a Late Middle Kingdom, Second Intermediate Period scarab and suggested that it may be translated as "Enduring is the goodness of the king of Upper Egypt" (van der Veen, 2023).

### Analysis

Like Scarab 1, head type B2 typically occurs in the Early Palestinian Series and rarely appears in the Late Palestinian Series.

The back type is O according to Tufnell's classification or PN (Plain Natural) according to Ward and Dever's classification. This type is more common than lined backs on the early Canaanite scarabs (Early Palestinian Series) with type B2 heads (Keel 2004: 92–93; Ben-Tor 2007: 151).

The sides are likely type d5. The legs are plain, and the base is square (Tufnell 1984: 35–36; Ward and Dever 1994: 164–165). As previously noted, the damage to this scarab prevents a more refined classification for the sides.

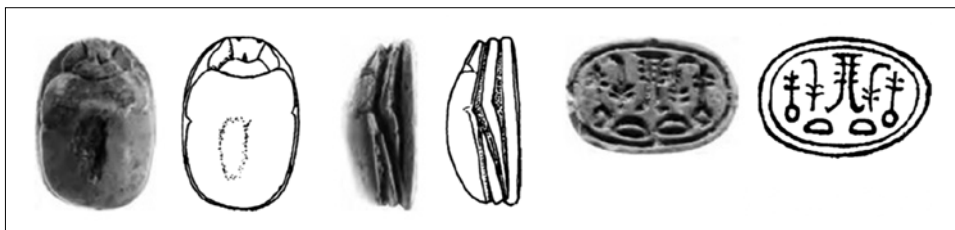
The design of Scarab 2 is Class 3B5 – paired sedge plants or symmetrical-pattern sedge plants (Tufnell 1984: 120, 286; Ben-Tor 2007: 131, 164). According to Tufnell (1984: 120), paired sedge plants were at their most popular in Dynasties 13–15. This design (class 3B5) is more common in the Late Palestinian Series

(MB IIB–MB IIC [=MB III]) (Ben-Tor 2007: 131). Evidence of this class from Tell el-Ajjul indicates its popularity in the Middle Bronze Age IIB and the Second Intermediate Period (Ben-Tor 2007: 164).

The sign in the center of the scarab is a reed column, R11 [𓀀] (Gardiner 1927: 489), probably meaning "stable" or "enduring" (Gardiner 1927: 489). The signs to the right and to the immediate left of center are all M24 [𓆎] (Gardiner 1927: 472), which integrates sign M23 [𓆏] (Gardiner 1927: 471) over a mouth, D21 [𓆑] (Gardiner 1927: 444). Gardiner (1927: 472) described M24 as a sportive pictorial for South, while Allen (2014: 485) interpreted it as an ideogram for *rsu* or South. The sign on the far right is a heart and windpipe (F35) [𓆑] *nfr* (*nefer*) (Gardiner 1927: 456).

The missing sign or signs are likely the same as the signs on the right. The *nefer* sign means "good" or "beautiful" (Gardiner 1927: 456). The *swt* plant or sedge plant is typical of Upper Egypt (Gardiner 1927: 471). Sign M24 [𓆎] *rsu* (South) and other sedge plant sign variations (Signs M23, M25, M26, and M28) refer to the South or Upper Egypt (Allen 2014: 485). This indicates a non-Hyksos design for the scarab, as the Hyksos were rulers of Lower Egypt in the north, whereas the design is indicative of Upper Egypt in the south under the rule of indigenous (Theban) Egyptians (Grimal 1988: 187–189; Silverman 1997: 31). This scarab's description comports with a parallel from Jericho (below).

Keel also noted a parallel from Jericho (Ben-Tor 2007: Pl. 80:10), stating that it is MB IIB, 1650–1550 BCE (Keel 2017: No. 308, 158–159). This parallel came from Grave D13, Reg. No. 24. It is unknown to which of Kenyon's groups the tomb belongs. The head and back resemble Scarab 2. The sides also appear to be like Scarab 2, but damage renders a more precise comparison impossible.



**Figure 14:** A similar scarab from Jericho (Keel 2017: #308, 158–159)

### Scarab 3

#### Preliminary Analysis

According to Ben-Tor, the design of this scarab indicates a Middle Bronze Age Canaanite production consistent with its context. Ben-Tor (2007: 164–165; 2023) assigned the scarab to the Late Palestinian Series. She described the design as the "anra" ('nr') design (class 3C), a typical Canaanite design that appears first in the Early Palestinian Series and more often in the Late Palestinian Series (2007: 133). Based on van der Veen's description, it is a scarab with pseudo-hieroglyphs in three columns; the central column reads Kheper-ka-Re (ḥpr, r, k3, r). The scarab has the "anra" ('nr') composition, which according to van der Veen (2023) suggests a later Canaanite production.

#### Analysis

This scarab derives its date from its context, hieroglyphs, and typology. It came from a clean context in Square AE30, as noted above (Locus 14, Room AA, Stratum 7, MB III; Stripling 2018: 31). As stated in the previous analysis, head type B2 is typically found in the Early Palestinian Series and rarely found in the Late Palestinian Series.






Like Scarab 2, the back type is O according to Tufnell's classification or PS (Plain Stylistic) according to Ward and Dever's classification. It is more common than lined backs on the early Canaanite scarabs (Early Palestinian Series) with type B2 heads.





The sides are type e6c (Tufnell 1984: 36–37) or type e6 according to Ward and Dever's classification (1994: 164–165). This type of side appears in Late Middle Kingdom Egyptian scarabs (Ben-Tor 2007: 41, 103) and in the Late Palestinian Series (Ben-Tor 2007: 165), which imitate Egyptian Middle Kingdom styles (Ben-Tor 2007: 186).



#### Signs (Center Column)

Reading from top to bottom, the first sign is a scarab beetle, L1 [𐎗] (Gardiner 1927: 467). The second sign appears to be a mouth, D21 [𐎎] (Gardiner 1927: 444). The third sign is two arms, D28 [𐎎] (Gardiner 1927: 445). The last sign, like the second sign, appears to be a mouth.

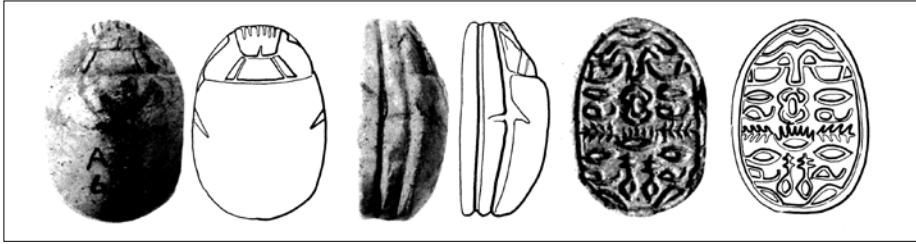
### Other Signs (Left and Right Columns)

The outside columns contain the same signs inscribed to the immediate left and right of the center column. The first sign is probably a sedge plant, M23 [, (Gardiner 1927: 471). However, it could also be a supinated hand with curved palm, D47 [, (Gardiner 1927: 447), above the second sign, a mouth, D21 [, (Gardiner 1927: 444). The third sign is an arm and hand, D36 [, (Gardiner 1927: 446). The fourth sign is a water ripple, N35 [, (Gardiner 1927: 479). The fifth and sixth signs repeat D21 and D36, and the last sign is above a corner line or angled base line. This description comports with known parallels discussed below.

The design class is 3C, also known as the formulae or "anra" ('nr') style. This class is most typical of the Late Palestinian Series (Tufnell 1984: 121; Ben-Tor 2007: 165–166). Richards (2001: 11) defined "anra" scarabs as those with a sequence of hieroglyphs on the base that always include 'n, r, and ' (signs D36 [, N35 [, D21 [, and D36 [). Although the exact appearance and chronology of the "anra" scarab is unknown, 70% of "anra" scarabs originate in Palestine (Richards 2001: 162). Richards (2001: 162) claimed that they coincide with the Second Intermediate Period or MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III).

Van der Veen (2023) indicated that Scarab 3 contains pseudo-hieroglyphs in three columns, with the central column (ḥpr, r, k3, r, Kheper-ka-Re) reflecting the royal name of Senwosret I (Senusret I). Senusret I reigned ca. 1919–1875 BCE (Silverman 1997: 28). While the iconography is suggestive of his prenomen (throne name), there is no cartouche around the hieroglyphic signs. Also, it lacks the requisite sign for the sun, Re N5 [, (Gardiner 1927: 474), but instead features two mouths, D21 [, (Gardiner 1927: 444).

There is one parallel from Tel el-Ajjul (Petrie 1933: Pl. 3: 8; Ben-Tor 2007: Pl. 79: 22), also noted by Keel (1997: No. 378, 230–231). The parallel dates to the late 13th Dynasty–15th Dynasty, 1675–1522 BCE. Petrie (1933: 4) showed that the parallel is derived from after the Hyksos and was likely manufactured in Canaan.



**Figure 15:** Scarab from Tel el-Ajjul (Petrie 1933: Pl. 3: 8; Keel 1997: No. 378, 230–231; Ben-Tor 2007: Pl. 79: 22)

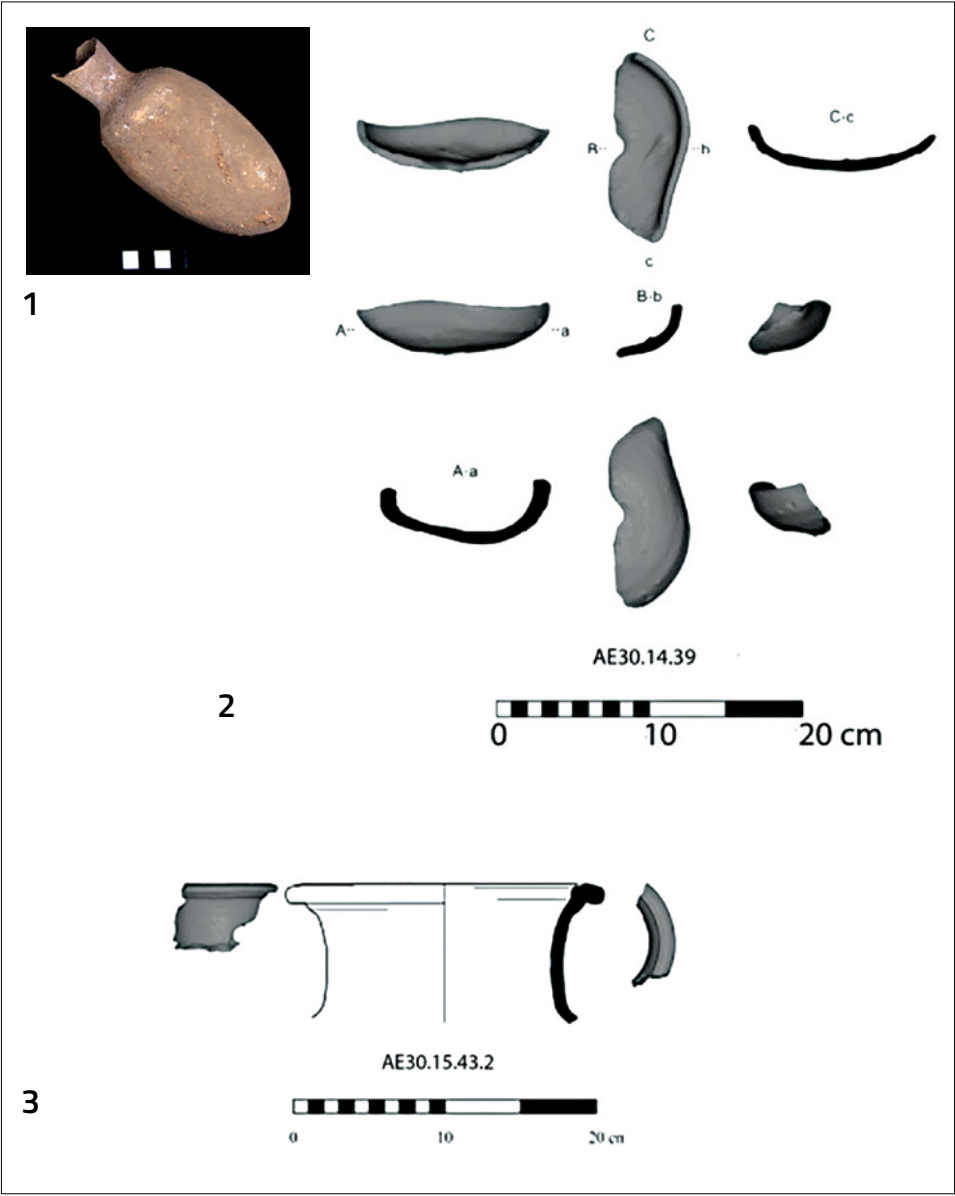
## Ceramics

The ceramic assemblage corresponding to this scarab is from the Middle Bronze Age (Stripling 2018: 31), as indicated by the following: 1) Middle Bronze Age Juglet, Object 1083 from Locus 14 (Stripling 2018, Figure 11, 31); 2) Middle Bronze Age Lamp, AE30.14.39 (Stripling 2018: Figure 6, 138–139); and 3) Middle Bronze Age Storage Jar, AE30.15.43.2 (Stripling 2018: Figure 5, 137).<sup>8</sup>

Bonafil (2019: 88; Pl. 1.3.30 1, 2, 4, and 6) described similar juglets from Megiddo as buff, elongated, oval-shaped, with high, outwardly inclined necks. According to Freud (2018: 126), lamps with a rounded base or small disk base date to the Middle Bronze Age IIB–Middle Bronze IIC (=MB III). She describes the pithoi with a splayed high neck and everted molded rim as more typical of the late Middle Bronze Age (Freud 2018: 126). Table 2 and Figure 16 lists parallels.

8 Locus 15 is contiguous with Locus 14.





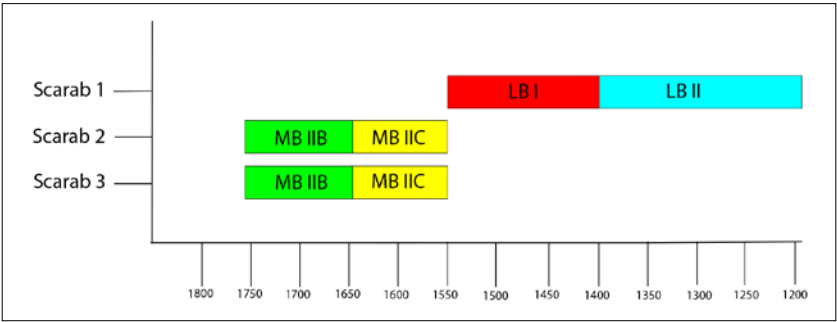
**Figure 16:** Ceramic assemblage associated with Scarab 3  
(photo courtesy of Michael C. Luddeni; drawings by Ortal Harush)

Table 2: Parallels for ceramic assemblage associated with Scarab 3

| Plate No. | Obj. No./ Reg. No. | Type   | Description  | Parallels  |
|-----------|--------------------|--------|--|--|
| 1         | 1083               | Juglet | Buff, elongated, oval-shaped   | Bonfil 2019: 88, Pl. 1.3.30, 12, 4, and 6  |
| 2         | AE30.14.39         | Lamp   | Light brown clay, handmade, few large dark grits, many very small grits, pinched | Bonfil 2019: 88, Pl. 1.3.31, 1–6; Yadin 2009: Fig. 7.18:15                           |
| 3         | AE30.151.43/2      | Pithos | Brown clay, grits  | Bonfil 2019: 85, Pl. 1.3.17–1.3.20; Bunimovitz and Finkelstein 1993: Figs. 6.15–6.19 |

The following table lists the strata range for each Shiloh scarab, showing the dating of all three scarabs from ca. 1750–1220 BCE.

Table 3: Date ranges for Shiloh scarabs (courtesy of Gary D. Urie)



Heirlooms and Post-deposition Activities

The dates for scarabs, especially Thutmose III scarabs, may vary greatly. The idea of a commemorative or posthumous scarab is often presented as an explanation for scarabs from earlier pharaohs found in later contexts. However, scarabs should be dated according to their typology and not assumed to date to another period, especially if found in a clean context. This assumption relies on the accuracy of current scarab typology.

Brandl (2019: 155) provided several possible explanations for scarabs from earlier periods that appear in later contexts, using the example of a 17th century-BCE Middle Bronze Age scarab from Nahal Aviv that appeared in an Early Roman context. He explained that the scarab’s appearance in a later context may be due to the "heirloom paradigm" or Post-deposition activities (2019: 155). In the first explanation, scarabs

may have been passed down from generation to generation and therefore appear in a later context. In the second explanation, small finds from earlier periods may have moved around at sites because of settlement activity, then reemerged in later contexts.<sup>9</sup> Other Post-deposition activities may include scarabs from burial tombs or burial caves that become the personal property of others, then are passed to later generations or even reburied with a subsequent owner (Brandl 2019: 155). Tombs are the most frequent source for scarabs, especially those from the Early and Late Palestinian Series, which, according to Ben-Tor (2007: 186), come primarily from Canaanite tombs.

## Conclusion

Although only Scarab 3 derives from a clean archaeological context, all three Shiloh scarabs may provide insight into their origins and the history of Shiloh, whether through chronology, typology, iconography, or a combination thereof.

The earliest date for Scarab 1 derives from its design, which contains the royal name of Thutmose III. His accession dates range from ca. 1451–1476 BCE (Schneider 2010: 377). The typological features range in date from the Early Palestinian Series to the Late Palestinian Series. A parallel cited by Keel (Pl. 38: 282, 283) and subsequently by Ben-Tor, who referenced Keel, was found at Lachish Tomb/Cave 4004 (Ben-Tor 2023). Tufnell dated the parallel to Middle Bronze Age IIC (=MB III)–Late Bronze Age III, 1600–1370 BCE. However, she mentioned reuse of the cave in ca. 1220 BCE (Tufnell 1958: 97, 281). The range of dates for this scarab is 1476–1200 BCE (LB I–LB II).

Scarab 2 provides a relative date despite its damage. The typological features range in date from the Early Palestinian Series to the Late Palestinian Series. The design class (3B5) is more prevalent in the Late Palestinian Series type [MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III)]. The parallel dates to MB IIB (1650–1550 BCE). This scarab is likely a

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9 Contamination could also explain the anachronism.

Canaanite imitation of a Middle Kingdom style dating to Middle Bronze Age IIB but no later than Middle Bronze Age IIC (=MB III).

Scarab 3 dates to the Middle Bronze Age IIB–Middle Bronze Age IIC (=MB III) based on the context of its discovery (stratigraphy). Its typology ranges from the Early to the Late Palestinian Series. Its iconography, as indicated by the "anra" composition, dates it to MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III). The parallel from Tel el-Ajjul dates to the same timeframe (1675–1522 BCE).

## Appendix 1

### Shiloh Steatite Scarabs (Seasons 1–5)

| No. | Object # | Date      | Area | Square      | Locus           | Pail            | Length (cm) | Width (cm) | Height (cm) | Weight (g) | Description                                   |
|-----|----------|-----------|------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|---|
| 1   | 1000     | 8-Jun-18  | H1   | AH29        | 7               | 60              | 1.68        | 1.27       | 0.8         | 2.16       | LB I–LB II (18th Dynasty or Later)            |
| 2   | 1100     | 14-Jun-18 | H1   | AE30        | 14              | 44              | 1.24        | 0.9        | 0.5         | 0.82       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |
| 3   | 1282     | 27-May-19 | H1   | AE27        | 4               | 5               | 1.32        | 1.17       | 0.75        | 0.84       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |
| 4   | 600      | 13-Jun-17 | H1   | AF29        | 20              | 39              | 1.35        | 0.95       | 0.5         | 0.87       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |
| 5   | 650      | 13-Jun-17 | H1   | AE30        | 11              | 27              | 1.45        | 0.95       | 0.65        | 0.85       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |
| 6   | 899      | 1-Jun-18  | H1   | AC28        | 5               | 12              | 2           | 1.2        | 0.8         | 3.34       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |
| 7   | 1090     | 14-Jun-18 | H1   | AF29        | 38              | 104             | 2.3         | 1.6        | 1.1         | 5.74       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |
| 8   | 1690     | 19-Aug-19 | H1   | AD27        | Terrace Removal | Terrace Removal | NA          | NA         | NA          | NA         | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |
| 9   | 1695     | 15-Dec-19 | H1   | F2          | NA              | NA              | 1.6         | 1          | 0.7         | 1.98       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |
| 10  | 2500     | 29-May-23 | D1   | AV/<br>AW35 | 2               | 2               | 1.9         | 1.9        | 0.7         | 1.61       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) |

| No. | Object # | Date      | Area | Square | Locus | Pail | Length (cm) | Width (cm) | Height (cm) | Weight (g) | Description  |
|-----|----------|-----------|------|--------|-------|------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|--|
| 11  | 2525     | 31-May-23 | H1   | AF30   | 39    | 59   | 1.6         | 1.1        | 0.6         | 1.57       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III)                  |
| 12  | 2850     | 16-Jun-23 | H1   | AF30   | 41    | 101  | 1.7         | 1.2        | 0.7         | 2.10       | Canaanite Scarab from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III)                  |
| 13  | 2600     | 5-Jun-23  | H1   | AF30   | 37    | 55   | 1.6         | 0.5        | 0.4         | 0.35       | Canaanite Scarab or Seal from MB IIB–MB IIC (=MB III) (Broken) |

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