

## THE AGE OF THE INSCRIBED JAR-HANDLES FROM PALESTINE.

By the Rev. Professor A. H. SAYCE, LL.D.

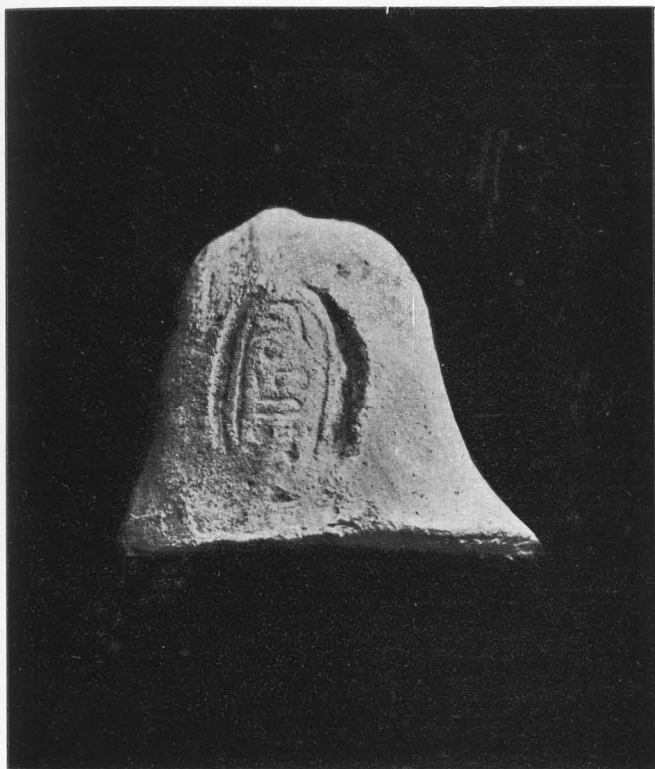
It is very unfortunate that thus far no inscribed jar-handle has been discovered by Dr. Bliss in an undisturbed stratum of *débris*. Owing to the rarity of early Hebrew inscriptions and the absence of chronological indications in them, it is impossible at present to date them with any approach to accuracy; the palæographical materials do not as yet exist. It is to archæology, therefore, that we must look for help; if once we can settle the date of a particular inscription, we shall at last have a basis on which to build up a Hebrew palæography. All attempts hitherto made to fix the age of a text from the form of the letters employed in it are necessarily worthless. They rest on a foundation of sand.

It is consequently to be hoped that the excavations of the present season may bring to light at Tell es-Sâfi an undisturbed layer of soil containing inscribed jar-handles, as well as pottery the age of which is known. Meanwhile, all that can be done is to examine the jar-handles found at Jerusalem and in the south of Judah from an archæological point of view, and see what indications of date may thus be gathered from them.

Dr. Bliss has found them associated with scarabs and other objects which take us back to the fourteenth century B.C., as well as with pottery of the pre-exilic period of Israel. But he has also found that wherever they occur the soil shows signs of disturbance, and that fragments of pottery of the Greek period have made their way into it. On the other hand, all indications of the Roman period are absent; the Maccabæan epoch is the latest to which the jar-handles can be referred. Indeed, if I understand him rightly, the latest epoch to which objects accompanying them can be assigned is that of the Exile.

The jar-handles are met with rather towards the top than towards the bottom of the strata, in which the pottery is predominantly that of the period from B.C. 1000 to B.C. 600. There is, therefore, a presumption that they also belong to this period; it is, however, a presumption only which a single contrary archæological fact could set aside. Let us now see what the archæological facts are.

(To face p. 66.)



(From a Photograph.)

JAR-HANDLE FROM TELL EL-AMARNA.

(1) The Jewish jar-handles do not stand alone. My friend Mr. D. C. Robertson, of Edinburgh, picked up on the site of Tell el-Amarna a similar handle, of which a photograph is here given. In shape and material it resembles the Jewish handles. Like them, it is ribbed, the ribs being two in number and formed in precisely the same way; the pottery itself, too, is red, and shows traces of having once been coloured white. The clay, however, is different, as the red colouring extends more or less throughout it; whereas in the case of the Jewish handles, while the surface has been burnt red, the clay underneath it is black. The Tell el-Amarna handle, consequently, cannot have been imported from the south of Palestine. On the other hand, the Egyptian and Jewish handles resemble each other in a very important particular. On both we have a cartouche, and the cartouche is stamped in the same place and in the same manner.<sup>1</sup> The cartouche of the Tell el-Amarna handle is that of the solar disc, and reads:—"The Solar Disc who issues forth from the glorious horizon." We thus know the date of the manufacture of the handle, that is to say, B.C. 1400. It need hardly be added that the cartouche was an Egyptian invention, and, like the winged solar disc, must have come from Egypt to Southern Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

(2) Several of the handles from Jerusalem have, in addition to the cartouche, another ornament, consisting of two concentric rings with a point in the middle. On one of them (No. 68 or 5)<sup>3</sup> two of these rings have been stamped over the cartouche. The ornament is found on scarabs of the time of Thothmes III in Egypt, and belongs to the age of the 18th, 19th, and 20th dynasties. It was revived in the late Roman period in, however, a somewhat different form, that of a point with a single circle surrounding it. It was not of Egyptian origin, but must have been imported into the Valley of the Nile from Canaan. It is a

<sup>1</sup> That the cartouche was stamped on the Jewish handles may be clearly seen from one of those from Jerusalem (No. 6) where there are traces of a double impression, the first impression not having been sufficiently deeply imprinted on the clay. Traces of the first impression have been left above the left wing of the solar disc.

<sup>2</sup> On one of the handles from Jerusalem (No. 5 or 8) the place of the cartouche is taken by an incised ornament which is a modified form of the Egyptian symbol of the Goddess Safekh.

<sup>3</sup> The Jerusalem jar-handles have two numbers attached to them, both of which I accordingly give.

distinguishing mark of the red Græco-Phœnician pottery of the eighth century B.C. which has been found in Cyprus, and was doubtless introduced into that island from the coast of Syria. After the sixth century B.C., or a little earlier, it disappears. The objects, therefore, found at Jerusalem on which it occurs will presumably belong to the pre-exilic period, and may be of any age from the seventeenth to the seventh century B.C.

(3) The winged solar disc on the Palestinian handles is of two forms, probably characteristic of different potteries. On those found at Jerusalem it has two wings; on many of those found by Dr. Bliss the wings are four in number. According to Dr. Birch, the four wings are not met with till the Persian period; the Palestinian symbol is, however, so unlike the Persian that they can have no connection with one another, and Dr. Birch's statement must be corrected in the light of recent discoveries. A negative statement is always dangerous in archæology.

A leading characteristic of the Palestinian symbol is that the ends of the wings are curved upwards (or downwards in the case of the two lower ones when there are four wings). This is contrary to the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Persian fashion. But it is also characteristic of the Hittite symbol as found at Boghaz Keui, and may be of Syrian origin. I believe it is due to a combination of the double-headed eagle (which is met with on the Hittite monuments of Boghaz Keui and Eyuk, and was originally derived from the *totem* of Lagas in Babylonia B.C. 2700) with the winged solar disc. This would explain the square head above the disc in the Palestinian examples, which would be a survival of the twofold eagle's head. As the Pterian cities were destroyed in the sixth century B.C., their monuments must belong to an earlier date, and we shall not be far wrong in supposing that the symbol had been carried as far north as the banks of the Halys before the eighth century B.C.

(4) The passage I have already pointed out in 1 Chron. iv, 21-23, seems to imply that the record relating to the royal potteries of Judah went back to pre-exilic times. This, however, is not certain, as a document of the beginning of the Persian period might have been described by the Chronicler as "ancient." But the corruption of the text and the reference to Moab favour an earlier date.

To sum up. I am inclined to refer the jar-handles to the eighth century B.C., though they may belong to the reign of Solomon. They can hardly be earlier, in spite of the extraordinary resemblance between them and the jar-handle from Tell el-Amarna. Future discovery can alone settle the question; palæography, it must be repeated, can tell us nothing.

While examining the jar-handles from Jerusalem in the Museum of the Palestine Exploration Fund I found an inscription on one of them that had never been noticed before. This is No. 42 (52). The word לְמֶלֶךְ above the winged disc is obliterated, and the disc itself is mostly gone. But below it can still be seen the two first letters of the name of the place from which the handle came. These are נב. There has been a third and last letter after them, which may have been ה, though there does not seem to be space for a wider letter than ה. In any case, the name must have been that either of the Judaite Nebo (Ezra ii, 29), or of the Benjamite Nob or Nobah (1 Samuel xxi, 1, &c.). In addition to the cartouche a concentric ornament has been stamped on the handle, and above the cartouche IV is incised.

September 21st, 1899.

## INSCRIPTIONS FROM KERAK.

By Major-General Sir CHARLES WILSON, K.C.B., F.R.S., &c.

THE inscriptions, Nos. 1 to 9, were copied from tombstones that were found in a rock-hewn tomb near Kerak by the Rev. A. Forder, a few years ago, and are now in the Konak at Kerak. The notes are from some remarks on the inscriptions which were kindly communicated to me by Professor W. M. Ramsay, M.A.

1. ἐνθάδε ΑΚΓΩ ΖΟΜΙΝΟC ΒΟΠΙΧ . . . . ζήσας ἑτη λ'.

The names are not intelligible; "having lived thirty years." In the first line we should perhaps read EN + ΘΑ. The reading ἐνθα κατάκιτε (taking ΓΟ for ΤΕ) Δόμνος (commonly Δόμνος) Βορίχου seems too far from the copy.