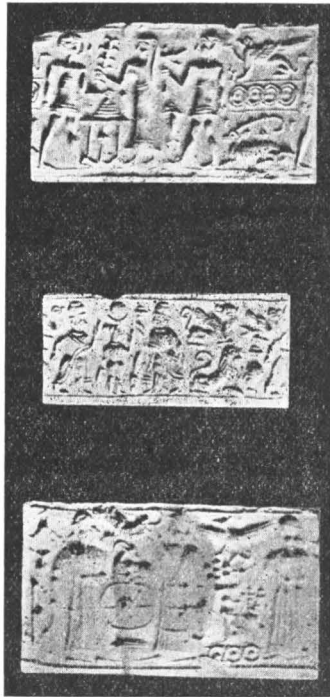


THREE SYRIAN OR HITTITE CYLINDERS.

By JOSEPH OFFORD.

THE accompanying heliogravures represent the impressions of three cylinders of Hittite or Syrian characteristics which are in Earl Percy's collection. They are selected for publication together because all three



Syrian or Hittite Seals.

are of similar type, differing in many respects from the numerous Assyrian, Babylonian, and Sassanian cylinders in the same and other collections.

They are published with the permission of Earl Percy, who was so kind as to permit me to have the impressions made.

The only monographs of importance upon these relics of Hittite or Syrian art, excepting illustrations of specimens in Dr. Messerschmidt's *Corpus* of Hittite Inscriptions, are an essay by Dr. Hayes Ward of New York upon "Hittite Gods in Hittite Art" (*American Journal of Archaeology*, III, 1-37), to which reference will be made, and M. Heuzey's chapter upon "La Glyptique Syrienne," in his *Les Origines Orientales de l'Art*.

In his work M. Heuzey notices the frequency, in this class of cylinders, with which, whilst the human, or divine, personages occupy almost the whole depth of the cylinder tableau, the smaller animal, or allegorical figures, are delineated in two zones, divided by, or surrounded with a rosace ornament. This feature of design is exemplified in the second cylinder to be now described. M. Heuzey adds, that in his opinion these Syrian-Hittite cylinders do not date back to the earliest times of Hittite power, but to the later era of Hittite dominion, about the epoch when, in Assyria, sculpture had attained its great perfection under the Sargonides.

The most characteristically Hittite cylinder of the three is the smaller one, which represents a personage, duplicated, probably for the sake of symmetry by the artist, appealing to, or worshipping, a female deity, whose symbols, placed above her head, are the crescent and the solar disk. They may be the crescent and full moon, but this is not probable.

The lion, bird, and sphinx (or gryphon) are all emblems that have elsewhere been found associated with Ishtar, for which see Figs. 34 and 35 in Dr. Hayes Ward's essay. Similar personages wearing the rounded headdress or *birette*, and counterparts of the small female goddess, are to be found upon other Hittite cylinders.

Perhaps the most convenient work, containing representations of such cylinders, to consult is the fine catalogue by M. Ménant of the late M. de Clerc's collection of these antiquities. Therein, upon Plate XXXV, is a cylinder with a human figure quite like the worshipper here. M. Ménant remarks upon the manner in which the tunic, or skirt, is turned back as a distinct feature of the costume of Hittite personages. It may be plainly seen in the figure of a god from Carchemish, given in the Rev. C. J. Ball's *Light from the East*, p. 97.

So also is the manner in which the robe is supported by straps, or bands, to the left shoulder. Upon the same plate, in M. de Clerc's catalogue, on Cylinder No. 392, will be found the lion, placed beneath the goat, which latter is found upon Earl Percy's two other cylinders here shown.

This hieratic type of lion, almost a facsimile of that on this cylinder, is to be found in No. 397 *bis.* upon Plate XXXIX of M. Ménant's work. There he is beneath an identical sphinx, or chimaera, but the animal faces to the left. Between them is the sort of rosace, or scroll, to be discussed presently.

The most striking parallels between these three cylinders and those given by M. Ménant, however, are in the analogies with the second of Earl Percy's trio; for in one or more of those depicted in the catalogue, Plates XXXV and XXXIX, we have the "shew-bread," or altar, table. This offering of cakes or bread is probably identical with the "meal offering" of the revised edition of the Old Testament. The same table appears in Ménant, Nos. 401 and 392. In the first it has but two legs or supports; in the second, three.

This de Clerc cylinder, No. 392, bears above the cakes the emblem of the crescent moon, with the solar disk resting upon it, like the first of Earl Percy's cylinders, but with the important addition that the disk is filled in, or emblazoned with a cross, making it certainly the solar "shamash" symbol, and so tending to confirm the view that the disk of No. 1 cylinder is the sun. The deity upon this second cylinder of Earl Percy's appears to be a goddess, more especially as the worshipper behind her is offering a dove. The bareheaded suppliant is almost certainly merely the duplicate of the similar personage facing the deity. The last holds a curious symbol in her hand, which is not identical with those grasped by any of the rock-relief figures at Boghaz Keui.

Beneath the hand holding a bird is an emblem consisting of a fish's body, and apparently, the head of a goat. If this is correct the concept illustrated heraldically must be connected with the goat-fish, Capricornis.

This fish appears upon M. de Clerc's cylinder, No. 384, but in this representation the head resembles that of a barbel, or similar species of fish.

This fish symbol may give some idea as to the identity of the goddess with one in neighbouring pantheons. The Mesopotamian fish-goddess was Nina. Assyrian cylinders depict a priest robed in the skin of a gigantic fish, before an altar bearing a fish. In Syria, from which undoubtedly these cylinders came, in later times Atargatis, or Derceto, was a fish-goddess. M. Salomon Reinach in his *Cultes, Mythes, et Religions* refers to Lucian's statement as to the connection of this goddess with the adoration of fish at the temple of Hierapolis, and mentions Xenophon's note, that the fish of the river Chalus, near the modern Aleppo, were held to be divine.

The fourfold rosace ornament, with dots in the centre of the circles, is to be found upon M. de Clerc's specimen, No. 401, with the same sphinx above it, and the shew-bread; whilst another of his cylinders, No. 392, which is the second of M. de Clerc's collection with the shew-bread upon its altar, also has the rosace and surmounting sphinx.

The Hittite, or Syrian guilloche or rosace pattern differs from the somewhat similar Egyptian recurrent helix.¹ It is probably derived from silver or gold wire ornamentation. Finally, with regard to the figures on

¹ M. Ménant termed the guilloche, "Une torsade enroulée et formant quatre rosaces."

this cylinder it should be mentioned that the oryx recurs upon the undoubtedly Hittite cylinder, No. 392, of M. de Clerc, in the same attitude however as in the next or third Hittite cylinder of Earl Percy.

The third specimen was never quite completed, and is perhaps of later date than the others. It has some affinities with Babylonian symbolism, because one of the deities holds the same curious sort of boomerang symbol as that the Mesopotamian, Martu, often carries. As the Cretan double axe is held by a Hittite deity at Boghaz Keui, so this curved weapon may be the original of the scimitar or sickle of Perseus.

Behind the god holding it is a zodiacal sign, the vase Aquarius. The rosette made up of seven dots is certainly stellar, representing the Sibitti, or Babylonian Pleiades (probably the same as the Assyrian Igigi). The worship of the Sibitti, or Sebi, passed to the Arameans and Syrians under the title of Sime or Si; Sihon the Amorite may be a compound of the name, as also Sibe, an Arabian Sheikh under Sargon. Dr. Grimme in *Das Israelitische Pfingstfest und der Plejadenkult* suggests that Beer-Sheba was the "Well of the Pleiades" and it is certainly curious that Abraham offered up seven lambs there. It may be there was a double meaning to the covenant there: Abraham appealing by his oath to *El Ôlâm*, the Everlasting God, whilst Abimelek connected the word with the Pleiades as the divinity of the site.

The wheel with eight spokes, an unusual number, is a solar symbol. The hand often appears on Phoenician stelae. Finally, we have an eagle, or vulture, a goat, and the lion above that. In some of M. de Clerc's cylinders (*e.g.*, No. 397) the head of the goat only is shown, but Hittite or Syrian lapidaries frequently permitted the heads of animals, and also the human head, to do duty as sufficient representation for the whole body.

It will be noticed that three, if not four, of the symbols upon these cylinders occur upon the "Zodiacal Tablet" from Gezer, namely, the fish; and the ibex, though the horns are different to those of Earl Percy's seals, being more like those of Mouflon, but both are almost certainly connected with Capricornus; the bird; and probably the lion, if the badly designed animal above one of the ibexes on the Gezer tablet represents Leo above the goat as on the cylinder.
