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Inscribed jar-handles.

INSCRIBED JAR-HANDLES.

The jar-handles are re-numbered on the plate, where 4 and 5 = Mr. Duncan's 5 and 5a, 7-13 = his 8-14, 14 and 15 = his 21 and 22, 16-19 = his 24-27, 20-35 = his 29-44, and 36 = his 46.

MR. DUNCAN sends a fuller report of some forty-nine jar-handles, about half of the total number as yet discovered. They raise interesting questions of Hebrew palaeography, a subject which has recently received new and unexpected stimulus through the discovery by the French of a Phoenician inscription at Byblus which is very confidently ascribed to the 13th century B.C. Although nothing very definite can as yet be determined regarding the jar-handles, it will be useful to furnish a brief provisional statement in the hope that some light upon them may be forthcoming. Readers should refer to the earlier statement on Hebrew objects, including the inscribed ossuary, which was published in the October *Q.S.*, pp. 180-186.

Mr. Duncan very wisely does not wish to commit himself to any definite dating based on the pottery. In consultation with others he now considers that few date earlier than 600 B.C., and all are later than the לִמְלֶךְ ("To the King") type. This is interesting, because all those found at Elephantine, whether consisting of names (X, or X son of Y), or of the type "to the King," were on independent grounds, ascribed to the Persian period (5th century). It does not follow that the Palestinian *melek* type is necessarily of the same date, although some writers (like the present) are of that opinion, while others prefer an earlier date, partly on the ground of the monarchical reference. Whether the Yah(u) type (*Q.S.*, 1924, p. 181), necessarily points to offerings to the post-exilic Temple-treasury must likewise be reckoned a moot point, and Prof. Macalister very properly raises the question whether the Divine Name was freely written, and also so frequently crudely written on the coarse and common vessels to which the handles belonged.

The jar-handles vary greatly in material, and, with all caution, Mr. Duncan would distinguish between Jebusite (pre-Israelite), Canaanite (non-Israelite) and Israelite ware. He classifies them according to their lettering into four main classes.

(1) Those with one letter. The sign (No. 1) is reversed on No. 2, while on No. 3 it is reversed, and the top bar is not prolonged to the right. In each case it is incised. The pottery is red ware

with a yellow slip. It is only $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick, and it is evident that the vessels were not very large, and were probably of similar capacity. Mr. Duncan thus describes the provenance.

'These three were all found in the debris of the slope in front of the Solomonian Tower, when we were cutting a deep drain to carry off rain-water from the Tower. We divided this debris into two sections, inner and outer. The inner section "A" represents the space from 8 feet out from the Tower face to 28 feet out, or thereby. From 28 feet to 46 feet represents the outer section "B." These three jar-handles were found about 26 feet out from the face of the Tower and at the level 41 feet down from the highest point of the Tower. They may therefore indicate the stratification of their own period, or may belong to the inverted clearance "B." In the outer section "B" the stratification is more or less mixed, due probably to the throwing out of debris from the foundation trench of the Tower when it was being built, or to the Maccabean clearance which accounts for our finding some very early pottery in this outer section at the same depth as these handles were found.'

The character which Mr. Duncan regards as a *yod* might equally represent a *waw* or an *aleph*. In *Q.S.*, 1909, p. 295, it is pointed out that *aleph* has a very similar form, though with a prolongation upward of the vertical.

In Nos. 5 and 5a, of about the same period, an incomplete oval contains a small cross. The type resembles the eight examples from Elephantine in Upper Egypt (Sachau, *tafel* 73; Lidzbarski, *Plate* 6), where "to the king" is followed by a variously formed sign which looks like a roughly formed *teth*. Mr. Duncan writes:

Recently I found several small oval and circular stamped pottery weights of bright red ware. One of these, found in Field No. 9, section A, at a depth of 15 feet where we were finding Seleucid, Hebrew, and Canaanite pottery mixed, bears a circular stamp $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch in diameter. In the centre of this circular stamp a letter, like our letter "C," is left in high relief (*see* *January Q.S.*, *Plate* viii, *Fig.* 26). This seems to be the same letter as is stamped on the above jar-handle. On the weight the letter is very likely an indication of measure or weight, or a guarantee of authenticity. So it may be also on the jar-handle, either an indication of capacity or a recognised authoritative mark of genuineness.

Both Nos. 5 and 5a, one of reddish ware, $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick, with yellowish slip. They came from the wall-face, north of the north

bastion at 6 feet depth, but as the stratification is inverted here, there is no conclusive evidence as to date.

No. 6 is an unusual and unique stamp in our collection. It is a perfect oval $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch long and $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch at the widest point. Only one letter appears to have been stamped on it. The interior of the stamp, however, is so badly rubbed that it is hard to make out. A plasticene cast gives the letter as drawn. The ware would be classed as post-exilic; it comes from the north bastion face.

In another example (No. 7) from the same locality the sign is inside a circle and belongs to an older type of vessel.

(2) Stamps with two letters, *yōd* and *hē* (Nos. 8-20). Most are of the same type, though the letters are very differently formed. 'The ware seems Canaanite, the paste being generally very full of grit and the baking characteristically Canaanite. The ware is $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick. The handle is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches broad and only $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick at the thickest part. It is red ware covered with a fine yellow slip. The stamp was deeply impressed on the soft paste, as is seen from the edges of the outer circle having fallen in at points when the seal was removed. The letters are left standing clear, almost $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch in relief.'

No. 11 is, however, later, triple-fluted, with lighter slip. It was found like the others in Field 9. Mr. Duncan thinks it possible that one of the letters has been obliterated. No. 13 is similar. No. 14 bears a unique mark. No. 20 resembles it and bears a letter in relief, resembling the Greek *epsilon*. Nos. 15-19 resemble No. 8, but bear little, if any, traces of lettering.

(3) Stamps with three letters. (a) Nos. 21 and 22 bear letters which so far have not been read or recognised; one of them has been already described in the October *Q.S.*, p. 183, No. 10. The ware is reddish yellow, full of quartz grit, and distinctly reminiscent of the Third Bronze Age or Transition period. If so the writing would be very early. It will be noticed that the one stamp is the inversion of the other.

(b) Nos. 23-26 bear the letters *yōd*, *hē* and *wāw*. No two agree in shape, or size of stamp, or of letters. Only two show the imprint of the background of the seal; the others look as if the space containing the letters had been carved out, leaving the letters in relief. For No. 23, see *Q.S.*, October, p. 182, No. 2 (cf. Plate V *ib.*); the form of the *hē* is noteworthy. The pottery is yellowish red, with a good deal of ground quart grit; letters in high relief and not carefully

formed. No. 25 seems to be rather later. All, in fact, appear to be not earlier than the 5th century. Mr. Duncan records the suggestion of Mr. Abinoam Yellin that the letters represent a spelling of the name Jehu, which in the Old Testament is written with a final *aleph* (יהוה). Of course, it might be a local name. Still, the resemblance to the Jericho form *y-h-w*, and the spelling of the divine name on the Elephantine papyri (*y-h-w* and *y-h-h*) can hardly be ignored.

(4) Stamps with four letters. The type is now a familiar one (*Q.S.*, 1924, October, p. 182; 1925, January, p. 20), but unfortunately the interpretation of the letters continues to be elusive. The letters *yōl* and *hē* are clear, the remaining two uncertain. No. 27 is brown ware, which, on ordinary grounds, Mr. Duncan would call post-exilic, although the lettering looks earlier. A certain thickening of the ligature convinces him that *bēth* and *hē* have been united, and that a *dāleth* (or *rēsh*) in the place of the *bēth* is out of the question. Elsewhere he favours the reading *bēth*. A glance at the copies will show how difficult it is to decide between it and *rēsh* (or *dāleth*), and also in certain cases between the pure circle (*ayin*) and the circle with a diameter or other internal bar (*tēth*). For No. 28, cf. *Q.S.*, October, Plate V, No. 3. The ware of No. 29 "would at first sight be classified as Third Bronze Age"; there is no slip, and there are signs of incipient fluting on the handle. As in No. 30, the lettering seems badly done. Nos. 31 and 32 are of quite different ware and make, and would be classed as pre-exilic. No. 32 was found at the west face of the Hezekiah wall at 14 feet depth. The bar across the circle in the latter (contrast the former) points to a *tēth*. It should be remembered that the Elephantine jar-handles of the "to the king" type are followed by what is evidently a *tēth*, though palaeographically later than these (*Q.S.*, October, p. 186 n.). No. 33 is smaller than usual, and the ware suggests a pre-exilic date. No. 34 calls for no remark; and of No. 35 only traces of two letters remain, though the handle is heavier and of different shape. In almost all these the circular handles come away from the widest bulge of the jar well down the body of the vessel, and the jar to which they belonged may have had four such handles originally.

We now come to a different class of jar, with a handle "of the common Hebrew type." No. 36 is a handle of the type shown in *Gezer*, pl. xxi, 2, and was perhaps of a vessel of that shape with

pointed base, and of different capacity from the standard size indicated by those just described. For a better example, see *Gezer*, pl. cxlix, 2; and for illustrations of this type of handle, see Petrie, *Lachish*, pl. vi, 85; for other types of handles, see *ib.*, pl. vii, 124. Nos. 37 and 38 point to ware of the standard size (No. 8 above). In the latter the space between the *bēth* ? (or *dāleth* ?) and the *hē* may, perhaps, have some bearing on the order in which the letters are to be read. The rest call for no remark, though the handles of Nos. 41 and 44 resemble the shape and make of Rhodian jar-handles, and No. 44 has a very unusual stamp. What the outer circle and the "rays" symbolise it is very difficult to say with confidence. Nos. 45-48 appear to have the same stamp, and in each case the handles are identical in ware, weight and colour. In No. 46 the order of the letters is different.

Mr. Duncan concludes his notes (from which the preceding has been abstracted) with these words:—

"On the supposition that the letters may conceivably be read as יהב 'he gives,' and *tēth* and 'ayin (ט and ע) may be numerals indicating the number of measures of oil given, I have most carefully considered each handle with regard to the size of vessel which they singly indicate; but only in a few cases have I found any indication of varying sizes of jars (Nos. 35, 36, 40, 41, 42, 44-48). All the others point to jars of the same standard size and weight, though, of course, it is impossible to infer accurately the size of the vessel from the handle alone. In the references to 'Gezer' and 'Lachish' Plates under handles No. 36 (see above), the jars shown on these plates are not of any great size, measuring only 12 inches or thereby in height according to the scale given, and they are all very much of the same measurements. Until a larger fragment of one of these jars is found, or a complete one, nothing can be definitely inferred on this point."

It must suffice to present these notes and drawings, and to hope that further excavation may throw more light upon the stamps. On the lion-weight found at Abydos in Asia Minor, and of the Persian period, the inscription runs: "Correct (? אספן) according to the commissioners (? סתריא) of money"; it is a pity that the arrangement on the four-letter stamps does not justify the guess that the true reading should be היטב "well." S. A. C.

Mr. Duncan reports on 49 jar-handles (p. 91, 1st line); not all are dealt with in the printed account, and of these only a selection are given in the plate. It was an error to renumber the handles on the plate. S. A. C.