

# Notes on the Sarcophagus of Ahiram

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The sarcophagus of Ahiram (pls. 1 & 2) is one of the most important works of art discovered in the region known to the Greeks as Phoenicia<sup>1</sup> (roughly, modern Lebanon and the adjoining territories of Syria). It was found on the site of ancient Byblos in tomb V of a necropolis (fig. 1) of nine subterranean royal tombs forming almost a semicircle<sup>2</sup> in a low hill, part of which has tumbled into the sea, revealing the chamber of tomb I. The two earliest tombs, I and II, belonged to two rulers of Byblos, Abi-shemu and his son Ip-shemu-abi, in whose tomb chambers were found objects inscribed with the names of Amenemhet III (1842-1797 B.C.) and Amenemhet IV (1798-1790 B.C.), respectively.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, the rulers of Byblos were contemporaries of the Egyptian pharaohs of the XII Dynasty, who had sent the inscribed objects.<sup>4</sup> These two tombs, then, are firmly dated, but they are the only ones. All the others (except tomb V) could be dated only approximately by comparison with the first two, with which they share the type, a squarish or rectangular shaft giving at the bottom onto a tomb chamber usually of roughly rectangular shape, often with rounded corners. Furthermore, the sarcophagi found in tombs I, IV, V, and VII share the same shape which corresponds to that of the common Egyptian stone sarcophagi, with the difference that the stone lids on those from Byblos retained the lugs on the lid by which the latter could be manipulated,<sup>5</sup> whereas they were sawed off from the Egyptian examples.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, some of the

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1 For an extensive discussion of the names 'Phoenicians' and 'Phoenicia', see James D. Muhly, "Homer and the Phoenicians," *Berytus* 19 (1970), 19-64.

2 For the description of the royal tombs of Byblos, cf. Pierre Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte, quatre campagnes de fouilles à Gebeil, 1921-1922-1923-1924*, [Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, 11] (Haut-Commissariat de la République Française en Syrie et au Liban. . ., 1928, 1929), 143-238; a review of the topography and of the chronology of the tombs was undertaken by Rolf Hachmann, "Das Königsgrab V von Jebeil (Byblos), Untersuchungen zur Zeitstellung des sogen. Ahiram-Grabes," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abt. Istanbul 17 (1967), 93-114. Hachmann suggested that the position of the royal tombs was influenced by the existence of an important building, concerning the function of which the excavation has admittedly not yielded any indications (*Das Königsgrab*, 94-95).

3 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 155-61, and pls. LXXXVIII—XCI.

4 Wolfgang Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, *Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* 5 (Wiesbaden, 1962), 64, suggested that the Egyptians considered the rulers of Byblos as officials of the Egyptian state and not as foreign subjects. Hence the precious vessels with the names of the pharaohs might have held the oil for the ceremonial investiture of these royal "officials."

5 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 207, pl. XI, fig. 93; 228, fig. 103.

objects, such as alabaster vessels, have forms related to those discovered in the first two tombs. All this suggests that the entire group did not span a long period. Nevertheless, there seems to have been two groups: an earlier northern one, tombs I-IV, very carefully built; and a later southern one, tombs V-VIII, of which only IX retains evidence of the careful construction reminiscent of the earlier tombs. Confirmation of an earlier date of this tomb was also provided by a fragmentary vase of blue faience with an inscription in Egyptian hieroglyphs naming *Abi-shemu*<sup>7</sup> perhaps the second of that name, who could have been a grandson of the first, according to the custom of naming a prince after his grandfather.<sup>8</sup>

The other tombs in the south were sunk into a terrain in which a thick layer of rock appeared at various depths below the surface and overlaid a mass of clay. The chambers of tombs V-VIII were simply hollowed out of the clay with the rock forming the ceiling but without sturdy walls to secure the sides of the chambers against the earth, which has seeped into the hollows. Moreover, tomb robbers merely had to burrow through the relatively soft clay, below the "ceiling" formed by the rock, in order to get to the tomb chambers and their riches.<sup>9</sup>

Tomb V (fig. 2), in which the sarcophagus of Ahiram was found, differed from the others by the roughly semicircular shape of the tomb chamber and by an intermediate floor which sealed off the shaft at a depth of about 4.35 m.<sup>10</sup> This floor was probably made of wooden beams of which the excavator, Pierre Montet, still saw the traces of discoloration in rows of four square holes on opposite sides of the shaft in which the ends of the beams must have rested. About 1½ m. above the rows of holes is a Phoenician inscription, which reads *ld't / bn ypd lk / t'ht zn.*<sup>11</sup>

Montet stated that the earth was solidly packed at the top of the shaft. In the northeast corner was a narrow conduit of a type also seen in tombs III and IV,<sup>12</sup> reaching down to a depth of about 2 m. These conduits appear to have been a distinctive feature of a mortuary cult at Byblos.<sup>13</sup>

In the fill of the shaft above the row of holes were marble fragments of obviously late date but also fragments of pottery which included only one fragment immediately recogniz-

6 William C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, Part 1 (New York, 1953), 319, fig. 208, clearly shows the mark of the sawed-off lug in the middle of the short side of the lid.

7 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, pl. CXXIII, no. 853, also p. 212; Montet published a second inscription from the same tomb (*ibid.*, no. 852) which reads: "the ruler of Byblos, *Abi*." Perhaps this is a defective writing of the name *Abi-shemu*.

8 Helck, *Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien*, 64.

9 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 205.

10 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 215f.

11 H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1966), no. 2; vol. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1968), 4-5: "Achtung! Siehe, *es findet sich darunter Unglück für dich!*" [words in italics indicate an uncertain translation].

12 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 152, fig. 67 and 215.

13 This observation was made by Hachmann, *Das Königsgrab*, 105, who also pointed out that the feature may have had chronological significance.

able as Hellenistic or Roman<sup>14</sup> and two fragments of Cypriote mild bowls of White Slip II type, datable in the fourteenth century B. C.<sup>15</sup> and a mass of pottery including a large fragment of a krater of "White Painted Ware," on which a pattern of thick and thin circles<sup>16</sup> may have been characteristic. Unfortunately the dates for the circle-decorated types are not yet well established, but the sophisticated alternation of large and small circles seen on the fragment from the shaft of tomb V already occurred in the latter part of the Early Iron Age (late tenth-ninth centuries B. C.),<sup>17</sup> through specific arrangement resembles more closely published examples from the Middle Iron Age (ca. 850-700 B. C.).<sup>18</sup>

Below the rows of holes for the beams of the intermediate floor, there was no more pottery. Only at the bottom of the shaft were there fragments of alabaster bottles and an ivory plaque, (fig. 3). The chamber was half filled with mud when it was discovered. It contained three sarcophagi, two plain ones, a large and a smaller one, and the carved and painted sarcophagus of Ahi ram, the only one made of a soft limestone which could be carved more easily than the stone of which the others were made, as stated by Maurice Chehab.<sup>19</sup> The sarcophagus of Ahi ram was certainly placed in the tomb later than the large plain one, which was closer

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14 It is unfortunate that there was no indication of the depth at which the various fragments were found. Certainly the marble fragments and the molded red-glazed fragment (Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 218, fig. 99, no. 854), perhaps a piece of a Megarian bowl, are likely to have been close to the surface.

15 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, pl. CXLIII, nos. 870, 871. Close parallels found, for example, at Enkomi are: Porphyrios Dikaios, *Enkomi*, vol. 3a (Mainz, 1969), pl. 63: White Slip II Ware from Level IIB, dated by Dikaios 1375-1300 B. C. (*Enkomi*, vol. 2 [1971], 487).

16 The term "White Painted" used for Cypriote pottery of this type also includes the yellow paint implied by Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 218, in his description of pl. CXLIII, no. 856, of which he says that there were numerous fragments. No. 857, mentioned on the same page but not illustrated (reference on p. 218 is erroneous), is called a vase of the same type but with "Black on Red" decoration. Under nos. 858-64, Montet mentions seven vessels with similar decoration, although this is not entirely certain to judge by the illustrated pieces. Nevertheless, this type of pottery seems to have been the most numerous in the shaft.

17 Cf. George M. A. Hanfmann in Hetty Goldman, *Excavations at Göztlü Kule Tarsus*, vol. 3, *The Iron Age* (Princeton, 1963), 46, stated that circle decoration was constantly used for craters (the example given, fig. 56:33, is from the Early Iron Age period). In a reference to the occurrences of circle-decorated pottery in Syria and Phoenicia (*ibid.*, 47, n. 32), Hanfmann cited especially the (as yet unpublished) Early Iron Age pottery from the Amuq. He also stated (p. 47) that, "At Tarsus, the more sophisticated scheme, involving rows of circles and differentiation of thick and thin circles, as on 351f., 520, and 555, came in somewhat later but still during the Early period."

18 Joan du Plat Taylor assigned the circle-decorated potsherds from the shaft of Ahi ram's tomb to level VIII at Al Mina which she dated 825-720 B. C. ("The Cypriot and Syrian Pottery from Al Mina, Syria," *Iraq* 21 [1959], 65 and 92.) (Corethia Qualls reminded me of this reference). The appearance of the circle-decorated pottery at Al Mina, however, may have been preceded by a lengthy development at other sites. It certainly was not limited to the eighth-seventh centuries B. C., as stated by René Dussaud in a review of Montet's *Byblos et l'Égypte in Syria* 11 (1930), 131, in which Dussaud referred to additional circle-decorated sherds (*Syria* 11 [1930], p. 179, fig. 9)—which Montet had brought to him at the end of his campaign—as having been found in the shaft of Ahi ram's tomb.

19 Maurice Chehab, "Observations au sujet du sarcophage d'Ahi ram," *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph*, 46 (1970-71), *Mélanges Maurice Dunand*, vol. 2:113.

to the wall. One would assume that the two plain ones belonged together and that if the smaller one was found closer to the entrance than that of Ahiram, this might be due to a change of position which had occurred in one of the numerous earthquakes that plague the eastern Mediterranean areas.

Fragments of alabaster vessels inscribed with the names of Rameses II (1290-1223 B. C.), of which one was found at the bottom of the shaft outside the chamber and the other within the chamber,<sup>20</sup> have been taken by the excavator to determine the date of Ahiram's sarcophagus. The ivory plaque from the shaft, mentioned above (fig. 3) was thought to support this date. The plaque shows a griffin and a lion attacking a bull. The closest parallel for the style of the plaque is provided by ivories from Enkomi in Cyprus, a gaming board and a mirror handle.<sup>21</sup> The expiring griffin on the mirror handle and the galloping animals of the gaming board all show, like the plaque, linear stylization engraved over the bodies of the figures. Helene Kantor has dated the Enkomi ivories in question in the Late Cypriote IIIA period (ca. 1200-1150 B. C.).<sup>22</sup>

The date of the closely related ivory plaque from tomb V in the Late Bronze Age is thus quite certain, but it does not really contribute to the dating of Ahiram's sarcophagus because at least one-quarter of the plaque is missing. By its fragmentary state, the ivory plaque thus joins the pieces of alabaster vessels. The excavator and other writers on the sarcophagus of Ahiram appear to have assumed that the robbers were responsible for the damage to these objects and for their position at the bottom of the shaft. It seems unlikely, however, that the tomb robbers entered the chamber through the shaft, in view of the existence of another entrance, marked on the plan but not discussed in the text. This entrance appears to have been created by the situation described above for tombs VI-IX, namely, that robbers could penetrate into the tombs by burrowing through the relatively soft clay into which the subterranean chambers had been dug.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, there is a contrast visible between the intact clay and alabaster vessels discovered in tombs VI-IX, all of which were pillaged, and the sad fragments retrieved from tomb V.<sup>24</sup> It seems likely that the persons responsible for the ruthless destruction of earlier materials and the "sweeping out" of the fragments into the shaft were those who reopened the latter to introduce the sarcophagus of Ahiram into the existing tomb.

In order to substantiate this suggestion, internal evidence must be produced to date the

20 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 225, no. 883 (pl. CXLII) and 227, fig. 102, no. 890.

21 A. S. Murray, A. H. Smith and H. B. Walters, *Excavations in Cyprus* (London, 1900), the gaming board, p. 12, fig. 19 and pl. I, top 996; the mirror handle, pl. II, no. 872 a-b. René Dussaud's remark that the plaque from Byblos must be older than the "degenerate" ivories from Enkomi (*Syria* 5 [1924], 142) could not have been based on a careful comparison.

22 Helene J. Kantor, "The Aegean and the Orient," *American Journal of Archaeology* 51 (1947), 93. Jörg Schäfer, "Elfenbeinspiegelgriffe des zweiten Jahrtausends," *Athenische Mitteilungen* 73 (1958), 83, took for granted a date in the twelfth century B. C. for the chamber-tombs of Enkomi in which the mirror handles had been found.

23 Cf. M. Dunand, *Byblia Grammata* (Beirut, 1945), 140.

24 For the intact clay and alabaster vessels, cf. Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, pls. CXXIV and CXXII.

sarcophagus later than the thirteenth to twelfth centuries B. C.<sup>25</sup> It is only since the Emir Maurice Chehab, director of the Archaeological Museum of Beirut, has had excellent electric lights installed for the sarcophagus that it can be properly studied. He has provided an article<sup>26</sup> in which he described the scenes represented on the sarcophagus, giving detailed indications of the colors, previously almost invisible and yet so important in the overall effect of the scenes. He has also proposed a new interpretation for the two figures on the lid (fig. 4), previously believed by the excavator and others to depict two aspects of the same figure. Instead, M. Chehab considers them to portray father and son, with the dead man holding a drooping flower in one hand and raising the other in a gesture of benediction toward the son, who holds a living, upright flower and what seems to this writer to be a small vessel with a pointed base.<sup>27</sup>

M. Chehab's interpretation is entirely convincing. As far as this writer can determine, Ahiram's sarcophagus shows the earliest representation of a royal father and son in Western Asia. Since the lid is not as well finished as the rest of the sarcophagus, it seems likely that it was carved in some haste on Ahiram's death, conceivably in accordance with a practice also followed in the earlier sarcophagi.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the scene was chosen by the son to manifest his legitimacy, if only for the brief period during which the sarcophagus remained above the earth and visible. The representation of father and son or sons for political reasons was later commissioned by Araras of Carchemish<sup>29</sup> and by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon for his stele

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25 Cf. Hachmann, *Das Königsgrab*, 108-11, for an account of the change of views concerning the date of the inscription on Ahiram's sarcophagus from the first reading by Dussaud in 1924, who placed the inscription in the thirteenth century B. C., to W. F. Albright's reiteration in 1966 of his views concerning the date, which he had assigned to the tenth century B. C. in "The Phoenician Inscriptions of the Tenth Century B. C. from Byblus," *JAOS* 67 (1947), 153-60. In the minds of most of these scholars the date of the inscription determined the date of the sarcophagus. To Hachmann's list should be added the view of the art historian Henri Frankfort, whose dating of the sarcophagus in the thirteenth century B. C. (as distinct from the inscription which he assumed to have been added later) proved very influential (*The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, The Pelican History of Art, 4th revised impression, [Harmondsworth, 1969], 159). Recently the thirteenth century date has been confirmed again by M. Chehab (see above, n. 19). R. Hachmann—under the impression of the relationship of the enthroned figure with the one on an ivory plaque from Megiddo (here fig. 4), as well as on the basis of (to me unconvincing) comparisons adduced for the lions and the garments shown on the sarcophagus—has arrived at a date before 1200 B. C. (*Das Königsgrab*, 108). Only Kurt Galling saw the difference between style and motif in the relation of the ivory plaque and the sarcophagus ("Die Achiram-Inschrift im Lichte der Karatepe-Texte," *Die Welt des Orients* [1950], 421) and dated the latter with Albright about 1000 B. C.

26 See above, n. 19.

27 Chehab calls it an indeterminate object (*Observations*, 115).

28 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 154, suggested that the lid for the sarcophagus of tomb I had been carved from a block of stone of insufficient size, since it lacked the fourth lug. This defect would appear to be a makeshift due to the pressure of time. Another sarcophagus, that of tomb IV, lacked a stone lid and may have had one of wood (*ibid.*). Thus it seems that only the receptacle of a sarcophagus was completed during the lifetime of the prospective owner and that a lid was made at his death. How can one reconstruct today what superstitions might have influenced such an improvident custom?

29 Cf. Winfried Orthmann, *Untersuchungen zur spätethitischen Kunst*, Saarbrücker Beiträge zur

of Zincirli.<sup>30</sup>

The two figures on the lid of Ahiram's sarcophagus each wear a long pleated robe with red stripes, over which hangs what M. Chehab describes as an apron suspended from a belt. Fringe of medium length in which red alternated with another color which can no longer be determined, though one would assume that it was blue, borders the "apron." No such costume with fringe of medium length is known from the Late Bronze Age, whereas it appears in the monuments of the Assyrian world, the increasing length of the fringe being a criterion of an increasingly later date.<sup>31</sup> M. Chehab mentioned a brown color almost certainly visible on parts of the garments which cover the breast and hips of the two men on the lid.

On the main body of the sarcophagus, the relief is higher and more thoroughly modeled, but the colors are less well preserved. The principal figure is the king (fig. 5) enthroned on a high-backed chair, the seat of which is supported by a standing winged sphinx. He again holds a drooping flower and raises what seems to be a shallow bowl. Before him is a table with a meal consisting of meat and bread represented by a calf's head<sup>32</sup> and a pile of bread with two rounded objects cradled in the layer at the top. On the other side of the table stands a man with an enigmatic tool, perhaps an abbreviated Egyptian *pesekh* for the opening of the mouth,<sup>33</sup> and what could be an Egyptian broad collar or a *Menyet* amulet, such as were occasionally worn by priests of Hathor in Egypt<sup>34</sup> but conceivably also by those of Hathor of Byblos.

Behind the person with the enigmatic objects follow two men with cups and four with both hands raised in a gesture of mourning or adoration. Mourning women with bared breasts<sup>35</sup> are represented on the two narrow sides, and on the second long side are depicted

Altertumskunde, vol. 8 (Bonn, 1971), pl. 31, Karkemis G/5. For a suggestion concerning the political and ritual meaning of the scene, cf. *ibid.*, 293 and n. 14.

30 Cf. Felix von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen in Sendschirli*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1893), Esarhaddon with his conquered enemies, pl. I; the crown princes of Assyria and Babylonia on the sides, *ibid.*, pl. III.

31 This can be observed in Assyrian reliefs. Cf. the short fringe shown in the altar of Tukulti Ninurta I (1244-1208 B. C.); a convenient reproduction available in Frankfort, *Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, pl. 73 (B); the medium-length fringe in the works of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 B. C.) (e.g., *ibid.*, pl. 82); and the long fringe in the reliefs of Sargon II (721-705 B. C.) (*ibid.*, pl. 83). The fringe closest to that in the garments of Ahiram's sarcophagus is that of Ashurnasirpal II.

32 The appearance of the calf's head at the sacrificial meal was an innovation on the sarcophagus of Ahiram. In earlier meal scenes in Western Asiatic representations only the foreleg of the sacrificial animal is shown, e.g., the meal scenes in the sealings of Anatolian style on Old Assyrian tablets in Nimet Özgüç, *The Anatolian Group of Cylinder Seal Impressions from Kültepe*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından V/22 (Ankara, 1965), *passim*. In Egypt, however, a calf's head appears often together with leg and ribs to symbolize meat, for example, in the great offering scene on the sarcophagus of Djehuti-Nekht on a stand in the lowest register; see Edward L. B. Terrace, *Egyptian Paintings of the Middle Kingdom: The Tomb of Djehuty-nekht* (New York, 1968), pls. I and IV.

33 I owe this suggestion to Nora Scott.

34 For the significance of the *menyet* or *menat*, see Hayes, *Scepter of Egypt*, part 2 (New York, 1959), 45-46.

35 Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, 230, partially cited Herodotus II, 85, for the custom that when a distinguished man dies in Egypt, all the women of the household plaster their faces with mud, then,

persons carrying baskets on their heads and one man leading an animal, all reminiscent of Egyptian representations of the deceased's estates.

The strong Egyptian influence in the scenes accords with the Egyptian shape of the sarcophagus, which "reproduces that of the characteristic lower Egyptian dwelling house of early times, with a hooped roof. . .," as William C. Hayes noted.<sup>36</sup> He added that the conception of the coffin or sarcophagus as an eternal dwelling persisted throughout most of the history of ancient Egypt. It is possible that this concept was also shared by the kings of Byblos, especially Ahiram, on whose sarcophagus the scenes appear enclosed as if by walls, a floor, and what appears to be the top of the wall adjoining the ceiling. Close to the top, the wall is ornamented by a garland pattern common in Egyptian tombs.<sup>37</sup>

The ruler on the sphinx throne differs, however, from the representations of the enthroned Pharaoh who, if seated in an official scene, usually appears on the ancient block-like throne, often protected by the Horus falcon.<sup>38</sup> A representation on an engraved ivory plaque from Megiddo dated in the thirteenth or twelfth century B. C. (fig. 6) on the other hand, shows a scene closely related to that of the enthroned Ahiram. Yet there are differences between the two representations which indicate that the relation is one of subject matter, not of style. The principal difference concerns the proportions of the human figures and of the spinxes. Those of the ivory have the slenderness and elegance of the Late Bronze Age, those of the sarcophagus are stocky and simplified as in Assyrian monuments of the ninth century B. C., specifically those of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 B. C.), though this tendency began earlier in various regions of Western Asia, perhaps as a result of Aramaean influence.<sup>39</sup>

Differences in details concern, for example, the shape of the wings. The outline of the wings of the sphinx on the Megiddo ivory is sharply bent, as is frequently the case in wings

leaving the body indoors, perambulate the town with the dead man's female relatives, their dresses fastened with a girdle, and bear their bared breasts.

<sup>36</sup> Hayes, *Scepter of Egypt*, 1:41.

<sup>37</sup> The pattern is frequently painted along the top of the walls in Egyptian tombs of the XVIII Dynasty and later and is also seen on lids of sarcophagi, cf. Pavla Fořtová-Šámolová and Milada Vilímková, *Das ägyptische Ornament* (Prague, 1963), no. 307f.

<sup>38</sup> For a survey of Egyptian thrones, see J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1964), 556f. Vandier draws attention to the representation of the throne of Amenophis III (1417-1379 B. C.) in the tombs of Anen and Amenemhet-Surer where the side panel shows the royal sphinx trampling enemies (ibid., figs. 305, 3 & 306-7). Not one of these thrones, however, incorporates the body of a winged sphinx like the throne of Ahiram.

<sup>39</sup> Mrs. Ursula Seidl-Calmeyer, "Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs," *Bagdader Mitteilungen* 4 (1968), 213-14, defined the style of stocky figures in Babylonia for the time of king Meli-Ši.ĪJU (1188-1174 B. C.). She pointed out, however, that these stocky figures of southern Mesopotamia appeared about a century before they were generally accepted, hence she wondered whether the style was a local manifestation which gained acceptance only gradually in northern Babylonia. In North Syria, the finds from Ain Dara, dated by Orthmann to Late Hittite I, ca. 1200-950 B. C., show a related stockiness of the figures owing to the proportion of the head to the rest of the body, from 1:4 to 1:3. For the reliefs of Ain Dara, see Orthmann, *Untersuchungen*, pls. 1-3.

<sup>40</sup> Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel* (Berlin, 1940), 62, referred to this feature as a criterion of Middle Assyrian seal designs. It is equally characteristic of Kassite and of contemporary Mycenaean

of the later second millennium B. C.<sup>40</sup> whereas wings on monuments of the early first millennium B. C. have a straight outline, as does that of the sphinx on Ahiram's throne. Moreover, the ivory shows the detailed fan-shape of wings as seen on ivories of the Late Bronze Age, like the one found in the shaft of Ahiram's tomb, whereas the wing of the sphinx on the king's throne is much more simplified, a fact which cannot be entirely due to the different media employed.

Equally distinctive of the first millennium B. C. is the furniture represented on Ahiram's sarcophagus. The table with lion's feet placed before the king resembles a table laden with food on a fragmentary ivory from Megiddo (fig. 7) in the ivory, however, the table is slender, has no central vertical strut and does not stand on cone-shaped supports. Such cone-shaped supports, which were common in Egypt from the Old Kingdom onwards, are not found for tables in Western Asia before the early first millennium B. C.<sup>41</sup> The closest parallel for the type of table depicted on Ahiram's sarcophagus is seen in Assyrian representations from the time of Shalmaneser III (858-824 B. C.).<sup>42</sup> To the same general period belongs the type of meal set on the table before Ahiram, for which Pierre Montet cited the appropriate parallel in a relief of the seated queen from Zincirli, datable in the latter part of the eighth century B. C.,<sup>43</sup> though the characteristic bread loaves with round objects already occur in ninth century reliefs.<sup>44</sup>

The most distinctive piece of furniture on Ahiram's sarcophagus is probably the footstool. It has the same adorsed brackets which can also be found on a type of footstool represented on some of the ivories of North Syrian style found at Fort Shalmaneser.<sup>45</sup> The date of these ivories ranges from the ninth to the late eighth century B. C. Panels for

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seal designs, e.g., John Boardman, *Greek Gems and Fingerrings* (London, 1970), 53, fig. 126, a gold ring made in Crete under Mycenaean influence fifteenth-fourteenth centuries B. C.; pl. 17, a lentoid from Mycenaean, Late Helladic II-III B.

41 Small tripods of cast bronze from Cyprus have dowels below the feline pads of the legs, of which H. W. Catling thought that they were mounted on a plinth of wood (H. W. Catling, *Cypriote Bronzework in the Mycenaean World* [Oxford, 1964], pl. 32 a, b; text, pp. 200f.). Since none of the related tripods have such a plinth, I think that the dowels were meant to fit into cone-shaped wooden supports, resembling those common in Egyptian furniture. M. Chehab has compared a related tripod from Ras Shamra (reproduced by Catling, *ibid.* pl. 32, f) to the table of Ahiram's sarcophagus (M. Chehab, in *Observations*, 114), and the resemblance is indeed undeniable. The table, however, appears to have been a much larger piece of furniture, more solidly designed in the manner of the Middle Iron Age. Moreover, the date of the tripod from Ras Shamra was placed by Catling as "no earlier than the first half of the twelfth century" (*Cypriote Bronzework*, 203), which would make it later than the reign of Rameses II, to which the tripod would have to belong in order to support the early date for the sarcophagus.

42 Cf. R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs* (London, n.d.), pl. 170, middle row; also Barthel Hrouda, *Die Kulturgeschichte des assyrischen Flachbildes*, Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, vol. 2 (1965), pl. 13, 3, 5 and following.

43 Ekrem Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittites* (New York, 1962), pl. 130.

44 Orthmann, *Untersuchungen*, pl. 14, d: Karaburclu I (dated in the time of Zincirli II, ca. ninth century B. C., *ibid.*, 76; pl. 45: Maras B, 10 (probably of considerable later date).

45 M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (New York, 1966), 501, fig. 399; 502, fig. 401; 503, fig. 402 (second from left).



such footstools were found at Megiddo<sup>46</sup> but the actual footstool represented on an ivory plaque from Mediggo (fig. 6) shows only the vertical paneling common in the later Bronze Age.

The last items pointing toward a date of about 1000 B. C. or thereafter for the sarcophagus are the heads of lions sculptured from the stone for the lugs of the lid and for what could have been intended for the handles at the base. Crouching lions with extended bodies and heads on the paws, are not often seen in Western Asiatic art; they appear only in functions of support for a deity or an object of great weight. At Carchemish two deities stand on the back of a crouching lion, and the goddess Kubaba, seated on a chair, is supported by such a beast.<sup>47</sup> The style of the lion's heads on the sarcophagus of Ahiram, with the block-like shape little mitigated by modeling, the flat nose, small lug-like ears, and bared teeth resemble, in general, lions of Neo-Hittite reliefs of the ninth-seventh centuries B. C. without having their sharp stylization. It is not impossible that the presence of these lions under the sarcophagus of Ahiram and supporting it was meant to indicate that the king had partaken of superhuman status by his death, an idea expressed in more conventional form by his sphinx throne. At any rate, the lions were surely meant to have a protective function.

In summary, a date of 1000 B. C. or slightly later for the sarcophagus of Ahiram is suggested with the following reconstruction of the sequence of the burials: tomb V was dug sometime in the second millennium B. C. It was used twice, probably in quick succession, since there are two sarcophagi of similar early type in the tomb. The objects datable in the thirteenth century of the Late Bronze Age were probably deposited with the larger of the two sarcophagi, which must have been the first burial in the tomb. About 1000 B. C., a time of transition from Early to Middle Iron Age, the tomb chamber was cleaned, not too carefully, of the objects deposited earlier (perhaps the tomb had been partially robbed earlier at that time), and some of the fragments remained on the floor inside the chamber, while others were dropped in the shaft—and then the sarcophagus of Ahiram was introduced into the chamber. The shaft was filled and some care may have been taken not to use earth mixed with potsherds. Then the intermediate floor was built which gave a person who had access to the shaft the opportunity to engrave the graffito on the south wall.<sup>48</sup> Finally, the shaft was tightly packed with earth available in the vicinity of the tomb,

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46 Cf. Gordon Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories*, University of Chicago, Oriental Institute Publications 52 (1939), pl. 46, nos. 213-15. For comment on these panels, cf. Helmut Kyrieleis, *Throne und Klinen*, *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Institute*, Supplementary no. 24 (Berlin, 1969), 52, fig. 10, "Konsolenartig geformte Elfenbeine die sich durch den Vergleich mit der Darstellung auf dem Ahiram Sarkophag. . . als Füße von Fußschemeln ausweisen."

47 D. G. Hogarth, C. L. Woolley, R. D. Barnett, et al, *Carchemish*, vol. 3 (London, 1952), pl. B. 33. A good reproduction also in Akurgal, *Art of the Hittites*, pl. 116. For the goddess seated on a lion, cf. *Carchemish*, vol. 2 (1921), pl. B.19a. A good reproduction also in Maurice Vieyra, *Hittite Art* (London, 1955), pl. 51 (the gods on the lion are reproduced *ibid.*, pl. 49).

48 Hachmann, *Das Königsgrab*, 101, also noted that the inscription on the south wall of the shaft could be easily carved and read by a person standing on the beams of the intermediate floor.

which included fragments of pottery. Some of the potsherds derived from earlier vessels, like the Late Cypriote milk bowls, but the mass may turn out to have been contemporary with the secondary use of the tomb, once circle-decorated pottery from sites where these pottery types took their inception becomes available in publication.

Many of the features of the sarcophagus classified in this essay as belonging to the early first millennium B. C., on the basis of dated Assyrian monuments, may have actually originated in Phoenicia. Such an assumption presupposes a flourishing art in that region about 1000 B. C., of which the sarcophagus of Ahiram would be the only survival that can be recognized on the basis of its inscription, dated about 1000 B. C. by most of the leading paleographers.<sup>49</sup> The style of the reliefs on the sarcophagus certainly fits a position between the art of the Late Bronze and Middle Iron Age periods. Ahiram's reliefs continue the iconographical traditions of Syria and Palestine as well as of the New Kingdom of Egypt, but they have assumed the simplified, heavy forms found in the reliefs of Carchemish and of Ashurnasirpal II of the ninth century B. C.

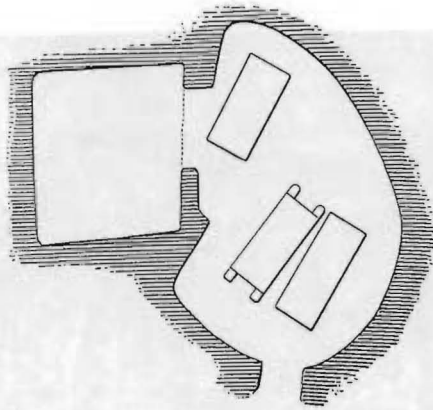
Sincere thanks are herewith expressed for the photographs for pls. I and II, which were taken by Henri Abdelnur with the kind permission of the Emir Maurice Chehab. The drawings of fig. 3 and 4 were made by Judy Mitchell. Fig. 5 was drawn by the writer, who used her sketches made in Beirut for the indication of color in this drawing and in fig. 4.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS

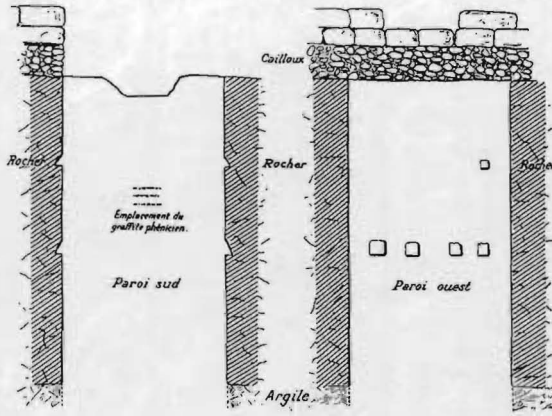
- Pl. 1 a, b      The sarcophagus of Ahiram: the long sides.  
 Pl. 2 a, b      The sarcophagus of Ahiram: the short sides.  
 Fig. 1          Plan of the Necropolis of Byblos. Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, pl. LXXII.  
 Fig. 2          Plan and section of tomb V, the Tomb of Ahiram. Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, pl. CXXV.  
 Fig. 3          Ivory plaque from bottom of shaft of tomb V, drawn after the photograph, Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, pl. CXLII, 818.  
 Fig. 4          The two figures on the lid of Ahiram's sarcophagus drawn after the photograph, Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, pl. CXXIX.  
 Fig. 5          The sarcophagus of Ahiram: detail of the enthroned king.  
 Fig. 6          Incised ivory plaque from Megiddo. Gordon Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories* (OIP 52, 1939), pl. 4, fig. 2b.  
 Fig. 7          Detail from an ivory bar, carved in relief from Megiddo. Gordon Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories* (OIP 52, 1939), pl. 32, fig. 160b.

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49 Donner and Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, 2:1.



Plan du tombeau v.



Puits du tombeau v. Paroi sud et paroi ouest.

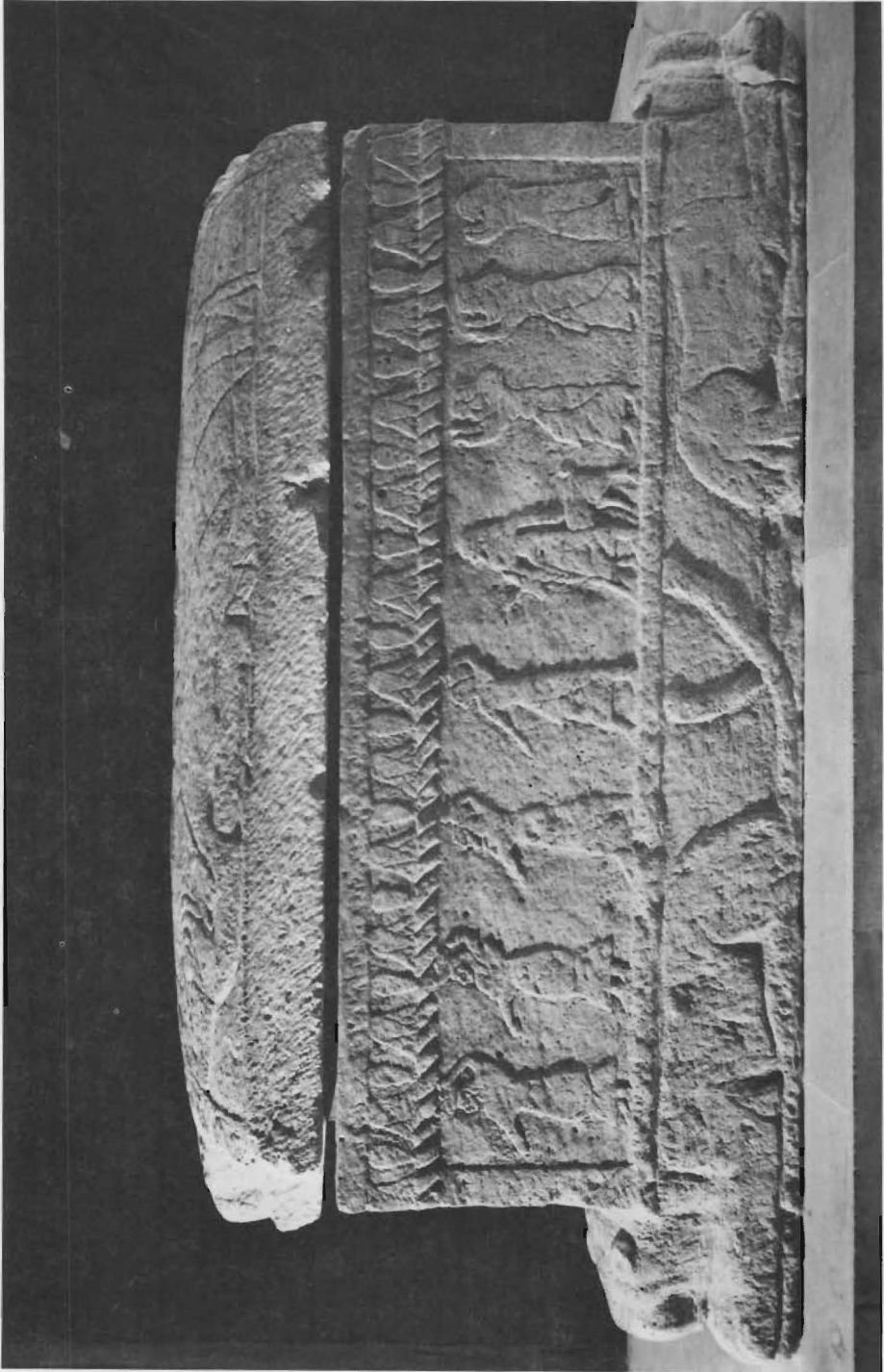
Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Pl. 1a



Pl. 1b



Pl. 2a



Pl. 2b

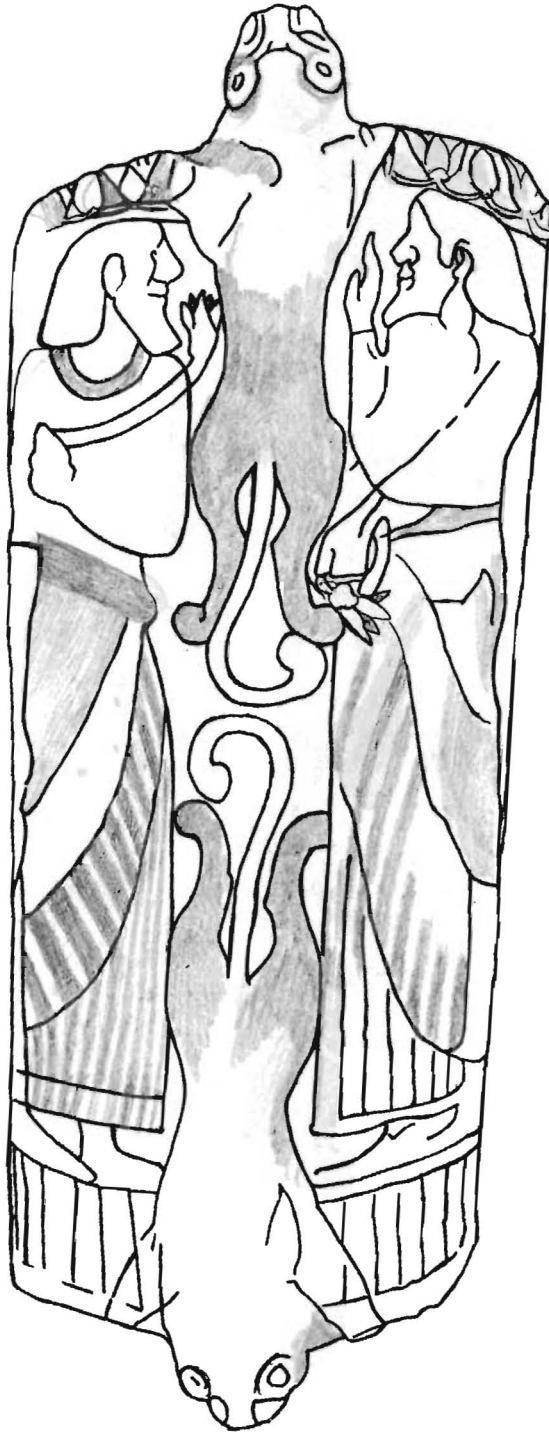


Fig. 4



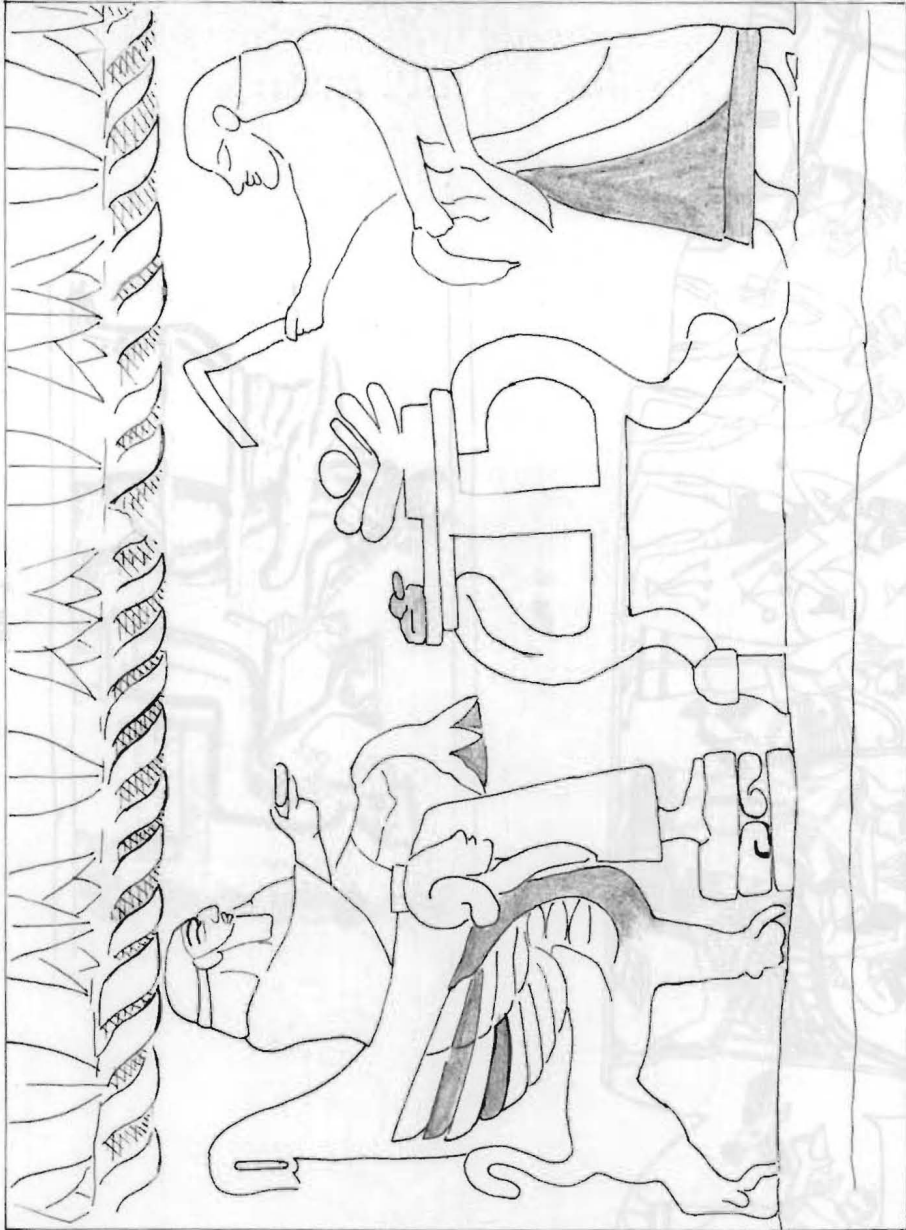


Fig. 5

