

Old Kingdom Cylinder Seals for the Lower Classes

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IT HAS LONG been apparent that, in addition to the usual type of Old Kingdom cylinder seal, the surface of which was completely covered with hieroglyphic inscriptions, a second type of cylinder seal came into use before the end of the Sixth Dynasty.¹ This type shows figures that may, in some cases, resemble hieroglyphs but are employed decoratively; they are often combined in pairs that more usually face inward than outward, and in such cases may be either partly fused (*trompe l'oeil*) or else reversed head to foot (*tête bêche*).

The clearest evidence for the dating of the Old Kingdom examples is the presence of a royal name accompanying the design. Since only two examples, both naming Pepy I, have heretofore been published, one of which presents some problems, it seems worthwhile to exhibit three more that have come to light—especially since they extend the chronological range.

1. The principal discussions are: P. Newberry, *Scarabs* (London, 1906) pp. 49–50; H. Frankfort, *Studies in Early Pottery of the Near East, I, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt and Their Earliest Interrelations* (London, 1924) pp. 132–135; H. Frankfort, "Egypt and Syria in the First Intermediate Period," *JEA* 12 (1926) p. 88; H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London, 1939) pp. 296–297; A. Scharff, "Über einige fremdartige Darstellungen auf Siegelbildern aus dem späten Alten Reich und der ersten Zwischenzeit," *ÄZ* 67 (1931) pp. 95–102; H. Junker, "Zwei Schein-Rollsiegel aus dem Alten Reich," *Mélanges Maspero*, I, fasc. 1, *Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut*

The total of five examples will be presented chronologically.

1. The earliest and most interesting of these royal seals (Figures 1, 2) is from the collection of Georges Michailides, who has kindly permitted me to include it.² Its material appears to be a reddish crystalline limestone; the height is 5 cm., the width 2.3 cm., and the hole measures 1.7–1.8 cm. in diameter. The surface of the seal is slightly concave. It is said to have been found at Abusir. Beside the Horus name of Djedkare (Isesy), and separated from it by a pair of vertical notched dividers, two dogs and two crocodiles are symmetrically arranged in *tête-bêche* pairs. The decoration bears a close resemblance to that of a limestone cylinder seal excavated below the floor level of the Old Kingdom temple at Abydos (Figure 3), which not only has a

stitut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, no. 66 (Cairo, 1935–1938) pp. 267–271; P. Kaplony, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1963) I, p. 45, II, pp. 677–678.

2. I am also indebted to him and to Edward Wente for the impression shown in Figure 2. After this article was submitted, I was informed by Peter Kaplony that he plans to include the Michailides cylinder in a forthcoming monograph on Old Kingdom seals, to be published by the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Elisabeth in Brussels.

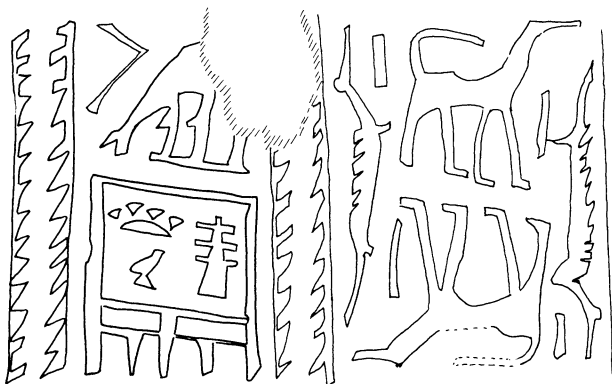


FIGURE 1
Cylinder seal (example 1). Michailides Collection, Cairo. This and subsequent reproductions of cylinder seals are approximately the same size as the originals



FIGURE 2
Impression of the seal shown in Figure 1

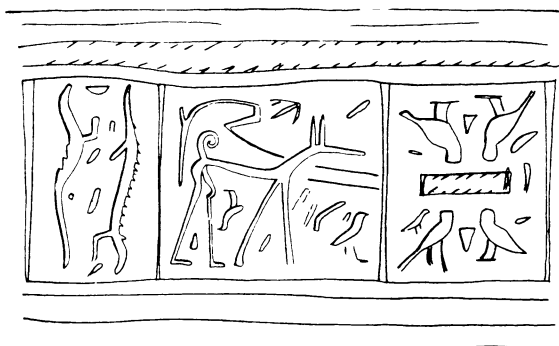


FIGURE 3
Cylinder seal from Abydos. After Petrie

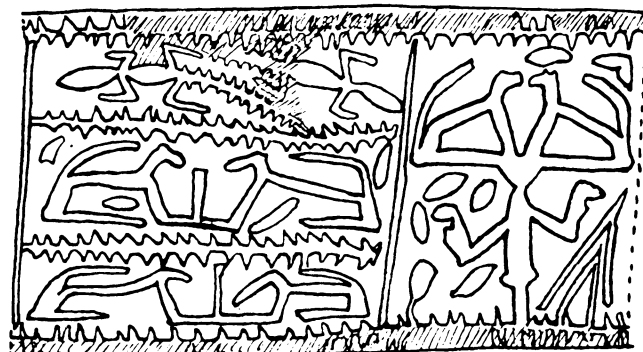


FIGURE 4
Seal from Abusir. Staatliche Museen, Berlin, 15600. After Scharff

similar dog and a tête-bêche pair of crocodiles, but also shows notched borders at the top and bottom.³ A wooden seal from Abusir, excavated at the pyramid temple of Neferir-kare, the third king of the Fifth Dynasty (Figure 4), also shows some similarities; it has

tête-bêche crocodiles and recumbent animals, with notched horizontal dividers and borders.⁴

2. Alexander Scharff has published a limestone cylinder seal (Figure 5) on which the Horus name of

3. W. M. F. Petrie, *Abydos*, II (London, 1903) p. 29, pls. 12 (276), 16 (12). Kaplony, *Inschriften*, II, p. 678, implies that this is protodynastic since it was found at a First Dynasty level, and he compares a steatite seal in Z. Saad, *Royal Excavations at Saqqara and Helwan (1941-1945)* (Cairo, 1947) p. 166; the latter is different in material, however, and does not show a tête-bêche arrangement or any other detail that specifically relates it to the series under

discussion. On the other hand the Abydos seal has some details in common (material, figures of owls and crocodiles) with W. M. F. Petrie, *Scarabs and Cylinders* (London, 1917) pl. 7 (163), which Kaplony (*Inschriften*, I, p. 44, III, fig. 634) assigns to the Old Kingdom prior to the end of the Fifth Dynasty.

4. Berlin 15600; Scharff, "Über einige fremdartige Darstellungen," *AZ* 67 (1931) pp. 96-97, fig. b.

Pepy I is preceded (or followed) by figures representing cattle, cuts of meat, fish, and a bee.⁵ The bee might be thought to signify “honey,” in an enumeration of offerings, but other seals (e.g., Figure 7) display the same sign in contexts that cannot be explained in this manner.⁶ Furthermore, as Scharff notes, the bee appears as an isolated motif on a number of button seals.

3. A second seal of Pepy I, formerly in the Spencer Churchill Collection, has twice been illustrated by Henri Frankfort on the basis of a drawing by Percy Newberry (Figure 6).⁷ It is now in the British Museum (66808), and thanks to the kindness of T. G. H. James, the following data may be supplied: Its material is steatite and it measures 7.5 cm. in height, 1.9 cm. in diameter. The Horus name *Mry-twy*, followed by *Mry-R*, is flanked by two columns of inscription, which give the titles and epithets of an official: “Liegeman of the Great House, who does what his lord orders,” and “Noble of the King, Companion of the House, who does what his lord orders.” Beside this is a much longer column of signs representing pairs of opposed apes and men with staves, along with groups of curved and straight lines that apparently serve only to fill space. Frankfort concluded that the apes, and so on, were added subsequently to the rest. James has written me that he does not believe that this part of the decoration was cut at the same time, but would not suggest priority. If Frankfort is right, it is curious that the inscription referring to the king is so much shorter than the full height of the cylinder; from this circumstance one might argue that the column with the apes was earlier, and that the other columns were reduced in scale so as to adapt the inscriptions to the remaining space. As will be pointed out later, however, the choice of material favors the priority of the inscription, as does the selection of titles. While the amount of margin at the top and bottom is unparalleled, other cases may be cited in which the inscription does not fill the entire circumference of the seal.⁸

5. Berlin 16431; Scharff, “Über einige fremdartige Darstellungen,” *ÄZ* 67 (1931) p. 99, fig. e; Scharff notes that the cuts of meat might possibly represent a bird net. The height is 5 cm.

6. For cylinder seals see also Scharff’s fig. c (“Über einige fremdartige Darstellungen,” *ÄZ* 67 [1931] p. 97) and Cairo Cat. 14518 (J. E. Quibell, *Archaic Objects, Catalogue général des antiquités*

4. The upper part of a brown limestone seal from the Nash Collection, bearing the Horus name of the same king, is published here with the further assistance

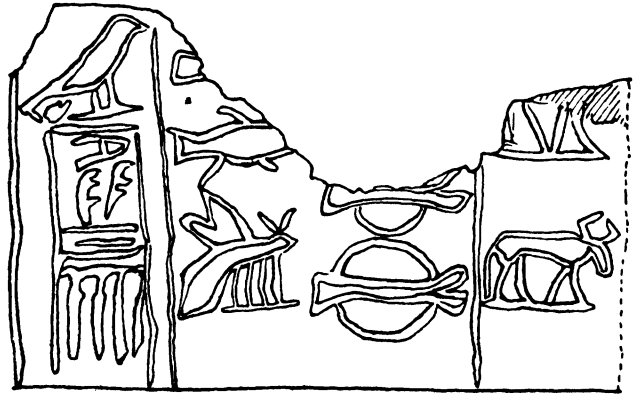


FIGURE 5
Cylinder seal (example 2). Staatliche Museen, Berlin, 16431. After Scharff

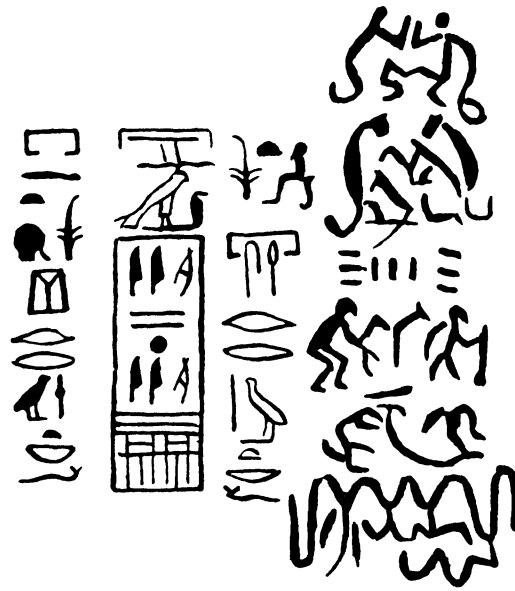


FIGURE 6
Cylinder seal (example 3). British Museum, 66808. After Newberry

égyptiennes du Musée du Caire [Cairo, 1905] pl. 59).

7. Frankfort, “Egypt and Syria,” *JEA* 12 (1926) p. 88; Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, pp. 296–297.

8. E. g., H. R. Hall, *Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, etc., in the British Museum* (London, 1913) no. 2602 (British Museum 25422). Cf. also the next example (no. 4).

of T. G. H. James, who has supplied a vinagel impression and the essential data (Figures 7, 8).⁹ The surviving portion is 2.8 cm. high and 2.6 cm. in diameter, and the diameter of the hole is 1.4 cm. The titles “King of Upper and Lower Egypt” and “Two Ladies” are followed by a column containing the title and epithet of an official who is a funerary priest and “one who does [what is praised]” or “who does [what his lord commands].”¹⁰ Between this and the Horus name *Mry-tswy*, which brings up the rear, there is a column of emblematic or decorative figures: a bee, an ape, and a space filler that resembles a branch. In view of the position of the ape, this figure may have been complemented by a tête-bêche companion, but the traces do not confirm this possibility with any certainty. The sequence of columns is suggested by the fact that a half column’s width of space has been left between the apparent beginning and end. The amount of the seal that is lost is at least half the original height, to judge from the fact that most variants of the epithets beginning with $\overline{\text{se}}$ require scarcely more than two quadrants of space (Figure 9).¹¹ If so, the “Two Ladies” title may

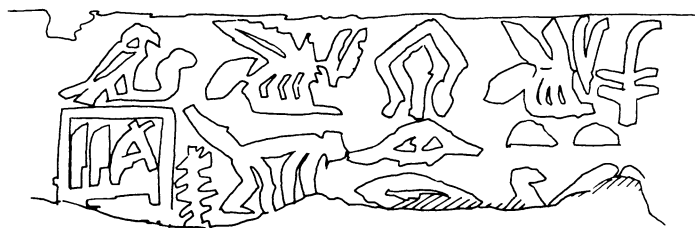


FIGURE 7
Cylinder seal (example 4). British Museum, 65855

FIGURE 8
Impression of the seal shown in Figure 7



9. British Museum 65855. Mentioned by Kaplony, *Inskriften*, II, bottom of p. 677. The material has previously been catalogued as “brown quartzite,” but James agrees that it is a softer material, and that limestone is probably the correct designation.

10. For the title, cf. the accompanying bone seal, Cairo Journal d’Entrée 72625 (height 4.7 cm., diameter 2.4 cm.). This is apparently the one indistinctly reproduced by J. E. Quibell and A. G. K. Hayter, *Teti Pyramid, North Side* (Cairo, 1927) p. 19, which was found in the tomb of *K3.i-m-hst*. The title *hm-k3* also occurs on a bronze seal of Shepsekare, Cairo J. d’E. 45041 (height 5 cm.), G. Daressy, “Cylindre en bronze,” *ASAE* 15 (1915) p. 94.

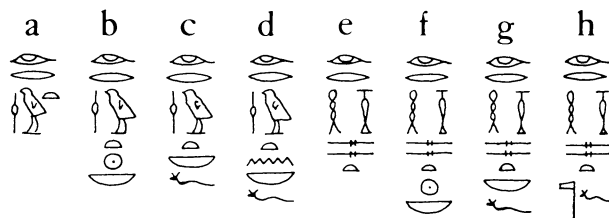


FIGURE 9
Epithets on cylinder seals (see note 11)

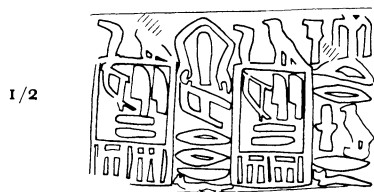
19, feminine Δ lacking); Brooklyn 44.123.32; probably Metropolitan 17.5 (with $\overline{\text{se}}$ restored); also horizontally: British Museum 51083 (Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 301, no. 2865, with $\overline{\text{se}}$ restored). Earlier (Sahure): Junker, *Giza*, VII (Leipzig and Vienna, 1944) fig. 96b, p. 235. Later (Pepy II): Brooklyn 49.50.

d. Pepy I: British Museum 29061 (Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 264, no. 2604; cf. $\overline{\text{se}}$ Δ $\overline{\text{se}}$ (a son of Neferirkare, Junker, *Giza*, VII, fig. 97, p. 237).

e. Pepy I: British Museum 29061 (Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 264, no. 2604); British Museum 5495 (Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 264, no. 2605); Metropolitan 07.228.95; Metropolitan 26.7.10 (P. Newberry, *The Timins Collection* [London, 1907] pl. 21 [15]). Later (Pepy II): Brooklyn 49.50.

f. Pepy I: only attested in a horizontal line: Metropolitan 07.228.95.

g. Pepy I: British Museum 51083 (Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 301,



11. The sources of the epithets in Figure 9 are as follows:

- Pepy I: British Museum 5495 (Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 264, no. 2605); Metropolitan 35.9.6 (different grouping of signs).
- Pepy I: Metropolitan 07.228.95; cf. H. Schäfer, *Ägyptische Goldschmiedearbeiten* (Berlin, 1910) p. 15 (7) (different grouping, name of Mycerinus).
- Pepy I: Figure 6; *PSBA* 21 (1899) p. 170; Newberry, *Scarabs*, p. 55, fig. 31; Petrie, *Scarabs*, pl. 10 (4); Brussels E 7311 (*Chronique d’Égypte* 31 [1956] p. 89); Cairo J. d’E. 72625 (Quibell and Hayter, *Teti Pyramid, North Side*, p.

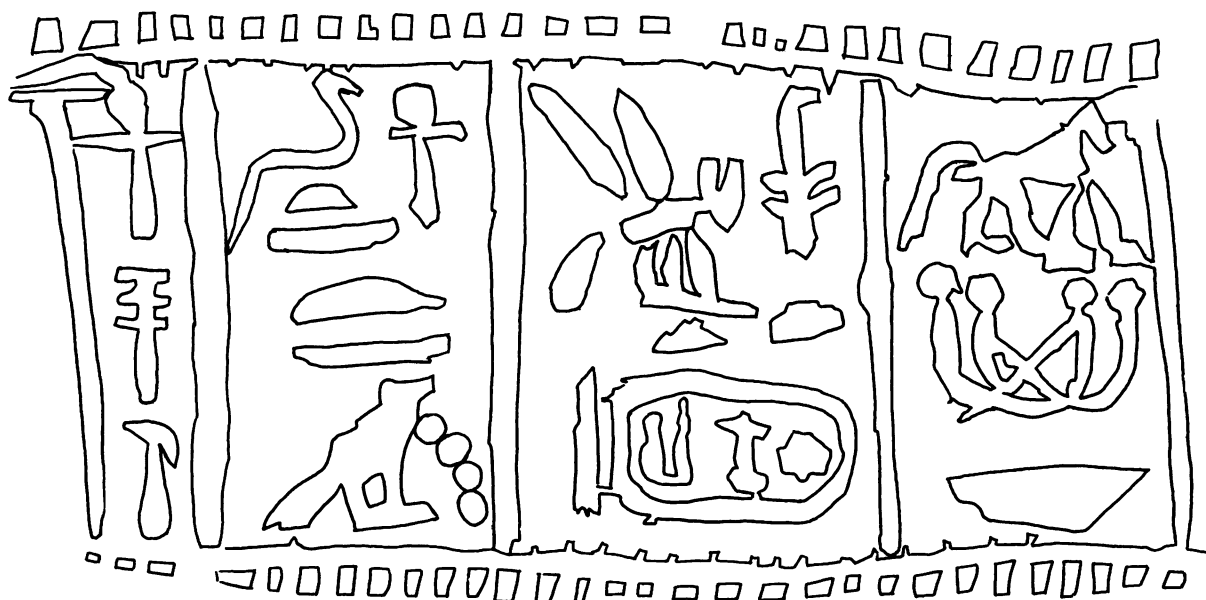


FIGURE 10 Cylinder seal (example 5). University Museum, Philadelphia, E 621

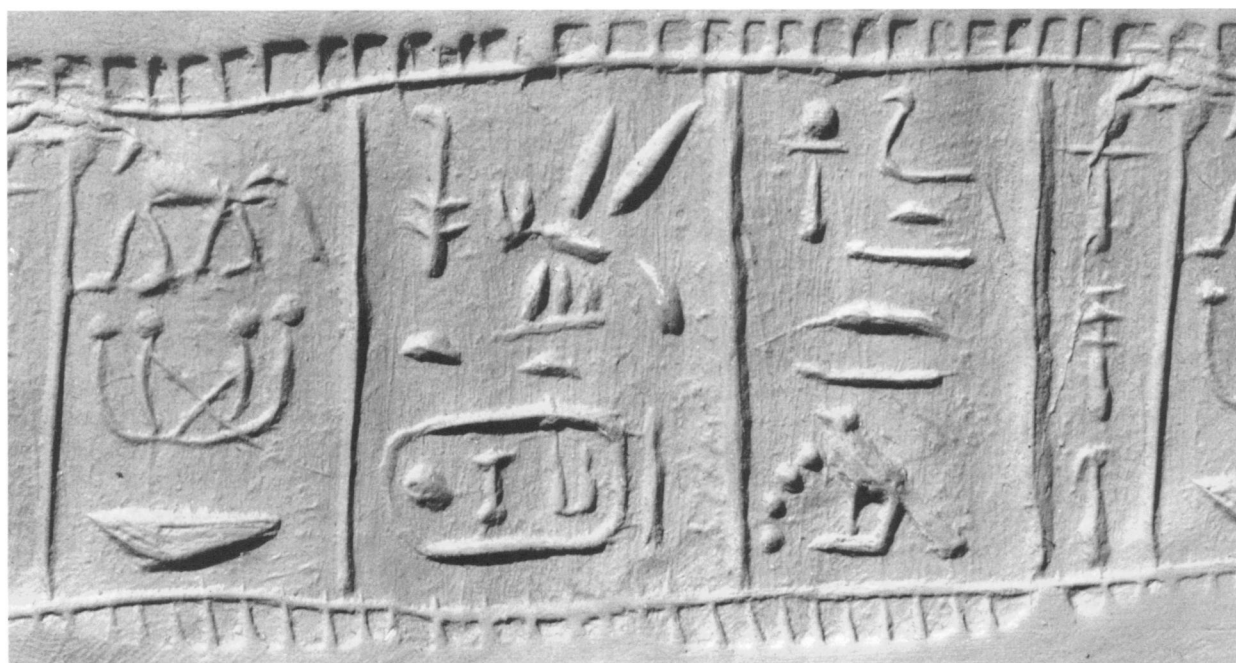
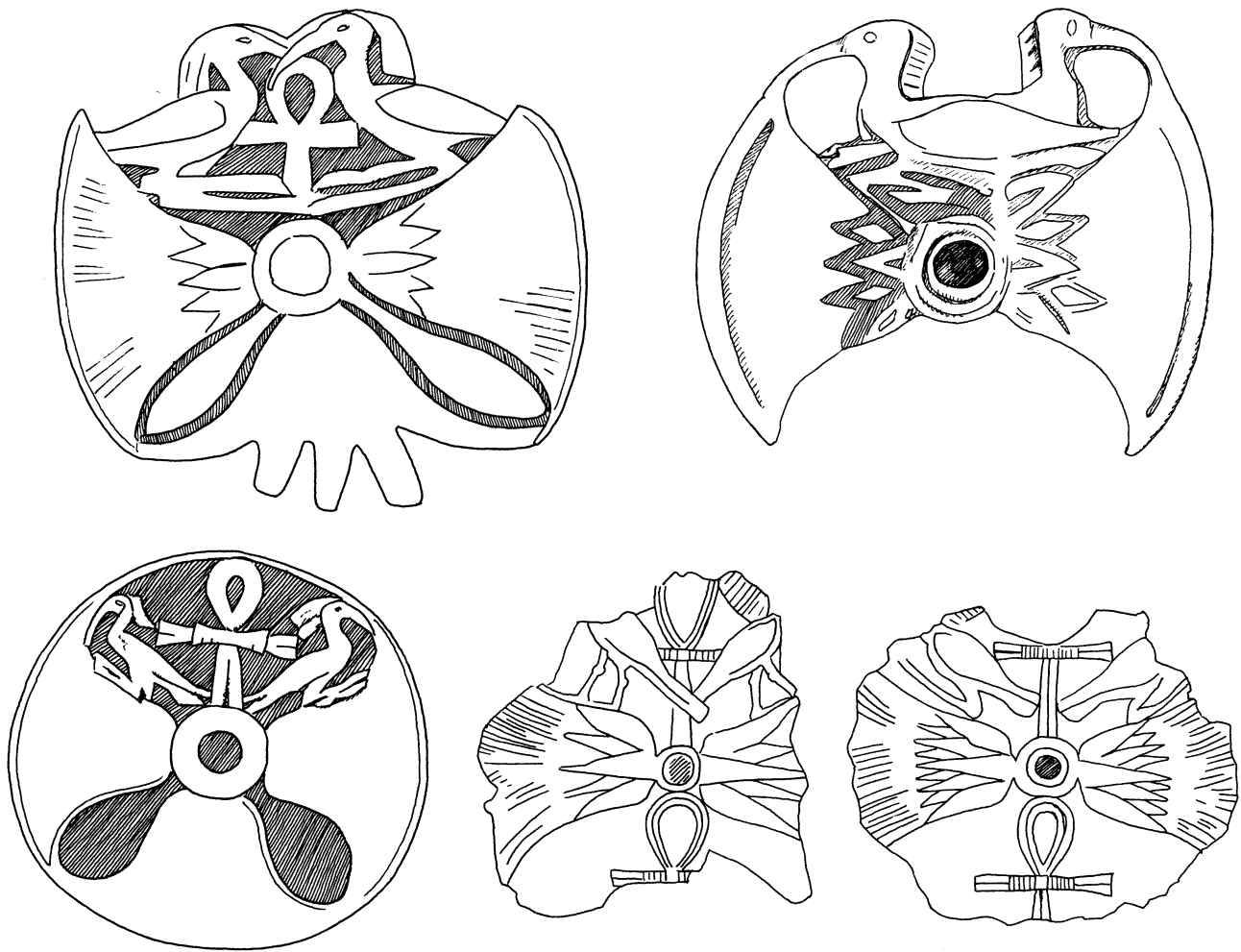


FIGURE 11 Impression of the seal shown in Figure 10

no. 2865); Petrie, *Scarabs*, pl. 10 [5]; Brooklyn 44.123.32. Earlier (Weserkare): Cairo J. d'E. 45041/45495 (*ASAE* 15 [1915] p. 94, lacks feminine \ominus). Later (Merenre and Pepy II): *Rec. trav.* 32 (1910) p. 41, fig. 2 (the sign \searrow is to be restored).

h. Pepy I: British Museum 25422 (Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 263, no. 2602; also arranged horizontally: Petrie, *Scarabs*, pl. 10 [5]; Louvre 13441 (*ÄZ* 86 [1961] 23).

For similar epithets from other sources see J. Janssen, *De Traditioneele Egyptische Autobiografie*, I (Leiden, 1946) pp. 46–47, nos. 120, 123, 141, 142, 144–146.



FIGURES 12-15 Old Kingdom diadems

be completed by the name *Mry-ht*. The omission of a cartouche after $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ is unusual, although the same situation occurs on a cylinder seal of Mycerinus, where *Nswt-bity Nbtj* is again followed by the *Nbtj*-name alone.¹² The Horus name *Mry-tswy* might well have been followed by the missing prae-nomen *Mry-R'* or the nomen *Ppy*, both of which are attested as the second element within the *srh*-enclosure.¹³ This would provide

one of the two names that customarily appear in a cartouche, but hardly compensates for the aforementioned omission.

5. The latest of the series (Figures 10, 11) is a cylinder seal of Pepy II that was bought in 1891 by Mrs. John Harrison on the advice of Emil Brugsch and was subsequently donated to the University Museum, Phila-

12. Cairo J. d'E. 36262, G. Legrain, "Achats à Louqsor," *ASAE* 4 (1903) p. 134. Cf. also J. Černý et al., *The Inscriptions of Sinai*, part II (London, 1955) inscription 16, where these two titles are followed by the *Nbtj*-name *Mry-ht* and the cartouche *Mry-R'*, in that order.

13. Addition of *Mry-R'*: Figure 6 above; also Metropolitan 26.7.10 (Timins Coll.); Metropolitan 17.5; Brooklyn 44.123.32;

Newberry, *Scarabs*, figs. 21, 31; Petrie, *Scarabs*, pl. 10 (4); Hall, *Scarabs*, no. 2602 (British Museum 25422). Addition of *Ppy*: Hall, *Scarabs*, no. 2603 (British Museum 47460), 2865 (British Museum 51083, followed by $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$); Louvre 13441, H. G. Fischer, "Three Old Kingdom Palimpsests," *AZ* 86 (1961) p. 23; W. L. Nash, "Cylinder of Pepi 1st," *PSBA* 21 (1899) p. 170. At least nine examples can be cited where these additions do not occur.

delphia.¹⁴ It is made of limestone and measures 7.8 cm. in height and 5.3 cm. in diameter, with a hole that varies from 0.7 to 0.8 cm. in maximum width. A toothed border somewhat like that of example 1 appears at the top and bottom, and plain vertical lines divide the field into three wide compartments. A narrower compartment, containing the signs $\text{𓆎} \text{𓆑}$, “life, stability, and prosperity,” may represent leftover space, as in the case of example 4. The name of “the King of Upper and Lower Egypt,” *Nfr-k3-R*, appears at the center and continues with “living forever and ever.” The remaining compartment contains a baboon and, above the sign 𓆎 , a figure that is difficult to identify. Possibly this represents an extremely stylized pair of monkeys facing one another, i.e., $\text{𓆎} \text{𓆑}$. An almost equally schematic tête-bêche group appears on a cylinder in University College, London: $\text{𓆎} \text{𓆑}$.¹⁵

Thus the curious type of seal decoration is not only

14. E 621. I am indebted to David O'Connor for assistance in making the impression illustrated here, as well as for his permission to publish it.

15. Petrie, *Scarabs*, pl. vi (147). The drawing is taken from A. Evans, *Scripta Minoa*, I (Oxford, 1909) fig. 55, p. 122.

FIGURE 16

Seal impression. After Jéquier

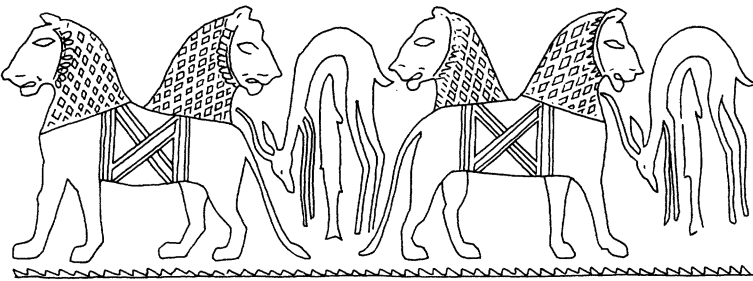
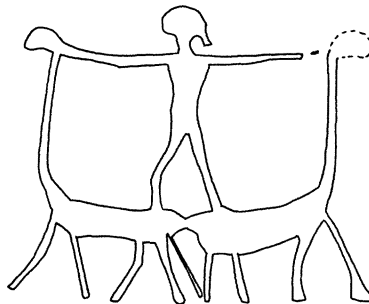


FIGURE 17
Emblem of
Cusae. After
Blackman



attested throughout the Sixth Dynasty, but as early as the penultimate reign of the preceding dynasty, at which time it already shows the tête-bêche arrangement of confronted pairs. Even the simpler type of confronted pair does not otherwise seem to have been popular in the Old Kingdom, although it must be admitted that there is very little evidence on which to base a comparison. Three out of four examples of Old Kingdom diadems with the crested ibis motif show the outward orientation as opposed to one that has the birds facing inward (Figures 12–15).¹⁶ In one of the three cases the pair is overlapped; a seal impression shows lions arranged in the same manner (Figure 16).¹⁷ And while pairs of serpo-felines on protodynastic palettes address each other, those that appear in the Old Kingdom emblem of Cusae are again turned outward (Figure 17).¹⁸ The same outward orientation is displayed by a pair of seated lions on the painted pectoral of an Old Kingdom statue.¹⁹ The greater popularity of

16. D. Dunham, “An Egyptian Diadem of the Old Kingdom,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* (Boston) 44 (1946) pp. 24–25, figs. 1–4, and A. Abu-Bakr, *Excavations at Giza 1949–1950* (Cairo, 1953) fig. 69, p. 84 (Figure 15 above). The exception, Boston 37.606A (Figure 12), is the principal subject of Dunham’s article. Figure 13 is drawn from Dunham’s fig. 7 (Leipzig), Figure 14 from photographs corresponding to his fig. 8 (Cairo).

17. G. Jéquier, *Le monument funéraire de Pepi II, III* (Cairo, 1940) fig. 68, p. 67; for the halters, cf. G. Jéquier, *Les pyramides des reines Neit et Apouit* (Cairo, 1933) pl. 5. As these examples show, crossed animals are not so rare in ancient Egyptian art as Frankfort indicates in his *Studies*, p. 121; he cites the cranes of *M3-nfr* (H. Fecheimer, *Die Plastik der Ägypter* [Berlin, 1923] p. 129) as an exception, but they occur in other cases: e.g., H. Junker, *Giza*, VI (Vienna and Leipzig, 1943) figs. 14, 16; Metropolitan 08.201.1; R. F. E. Paget and A. A. Pirie, *The Tomb of Ptah-hotep* (London, 1898) pl. 31. Cf. also the caged birds, Paget and Pirie, *Ptah-hotep*, pl. 32; J. Capart, *Une rue de tombeaux à Saqqarah*, II (Brussels, 1907) pl. 84, among other examples; and the hieroglyph for $\text{𓆎} \text{𓆑}$ in Jéquier, *Monument funéraire Pepi II, III*, pl. 4.

18. See W. S. Smith, *History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* (London, 1946) fig. 33, p. 118, and for the emblem of Cusae in the Old Kingdom, cf. Jéquier, *Monument funéraire Pepi II, III*, pl. 21, A. M. Blackman, *Rock Tombs of Meir*, IV (London, 1924) pls. 4, 4A, 6, 11. The reorientation of the motif is a further indication of its Mesopotamian origin, which was independently recognized by L. Heuzey, “Égypte ou Chaldée?”, *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 27 (1899) p. 66, and A. E. P. Weigall citing P. Newberry in “Miscellaneous Notes,” *ASAE* 11 (1910) pp. 170–171, and further discussed by G. A. Wainwright, “El Hibah and Esh Shurafa,” *ASAE* 27 (1927) pp. 97–101, and by Frankfort, *Studies*, pp. 119–121, where there are some further comments on the “antithetical group.”

19. L. Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten*, I, *Catalogue général des antiquités du Musée du Caire* (Berlin, 1911) p. 103 (Cairo Cat. 139).

the confronted pair during the Middle Kingdom, as evidenced by Twelfth Dynasty pectorals,²⁰ may be the result of the same influence that favored this orientation on the cylinder seals. But cylinder seals and button seals are the only vehicle for the more extreme form of confrontation—the tête-bêche arrangement. This is not attested in the protodynastic period either,²¹ and Scharff and Frankfort are probably correct in attributing it to foreign influence from the East.

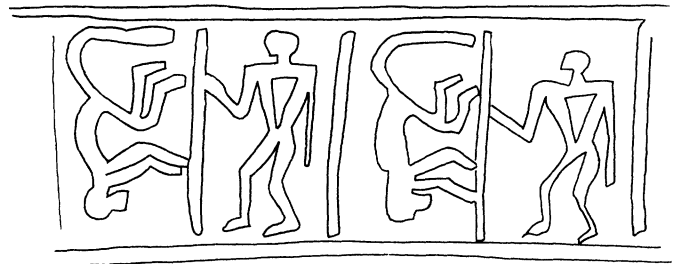
Another feature that merits further consideration is the choice of material. Like many inscribed Old Kingdom cylinder seals of the normal variety, a few of the type under consideration are made of wood (Figure 4) or steatite (Figure 6).²² Limestone is much more usual, however, and its use is almost entirely confined to this class of cylinders.²³ In addition to the four with royal names (examples 1, 2, 4, 5; Figures 1, 5, 7, 10) and the one from Abydos (Figure 3), there are several other limestone examples that clearly belong to the Old Kingdom: the two seals published by H. Junker in *Mélanges Maspero*, I (Figures 19, 20),²⁴ Berlin 16433

20. Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten*, II (Berlin, 1925) p. 2 (Cairo Cat. 381, 382); R. Engelbach, *Riqqeh and Memphis*, VI (London, 1915) pl. 1; J. De Morgan, *Fouilles à Dahchour Mars-Juin 1894* (Vienna, 1895) pls. 15–16 and cf. 19–20; H. E. Winlock, *Treasure of El Lahun* (New York, 1934) pls. 5–6; Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Ancient Egyptian Art* (London, 1922) pl. 50 (no. 10). Similarly the axe blade of *Hunís* (sic) in William C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, II (New York, 1959) fig. 126, p. 213 (Metropolitan 26.7.834), as opposed to another Middle Kingdom axe blade (H. Ranke, “The Egyptian Collections,” *University Museum Bulletin* [University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia] 15, nos. 2–3 [November 1950] p. 74), which shows apes turned inward, but with heads looking outward; cf. E. Kühnert-Eggebrecht, *Die Axt als Waffe und Werkzeug im alten Ägypten* (Berlin, 1969) pls. 20 (1 [outward], 2 [inward]), 22 (outward), 24 (1 [reverse of above-mentioned University Museum example, which is also shown here, 3], 2 [inward]).

21. William Ward sees a late predynastic antecedent in a ring that “has four falcons arranged in such a manner that opposite pairs are tête-bêche” (“The Origin of Egyptian Design-Amulets [‘Button Seals’],” *JEA* 56 [1970] p. 73, fig. 3 [c] on p. 72). But it is difficult to believe that the artist intended a diagonal comparison of this kind. In connection with the point made above, in note 18, it is also significant that the disk with confronted birds that Ward exhibits as another antecedent (his fig. 3 [d]) shows a thoroughly Mesopotamian style and technique of inlay; the border of white alabaster diamonds set in black paste (W. B. Emery, *The Tomb of Hemaka* [Cairo, 1938] p. 29 [no. 309]) reduplicates Sumerian inlays of shell and bitumen, and the inlays of two other disks (Emery’s pl. 12 [D, E]) display the same influence. For the similar use of channels for inlay see, for example, E. Heinrich, *Kleinfunde aus den archaischen Tempelschichten in Uruk* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1936)

FIGURE 18

Cylinder seal. Cairo Museum, Journal d’Entrée 72610



p. 27, pl. 26; P. Delougaz et al., *Pre-Sargonic Temples in the Diyala Region*, Oriental Institute Publications, no. 58 (Chicago, 1942) fig. 26.

Ward’s attempt to find an example of “linear fusion” in an Old Kingdom headrest (his fig. 6) is even less convincing. In this headrest a pair of arms replaces the usual central column, with the hands cupped to support the head. Ward’s drawing fails to indicate the division of the arms (cf. R. Engelbach and B. Gunn, *Harageh* [London, 1923] pl. 9 [7–8]), which appears in all the other examples mentioned in his note 1, p. 76, and my own note 20 in “Varia Aegyptiaca,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 2 (1963) p. 33, as well as *Illustrated London News*, June 4, 1938, p. 1001 (nos. 1, 3). None of the other five headrests (including Cairo J. d’E. 43059) shows the fluting that, in the Harageh example, is assimilated from the more customary upright in the form of a column. As illustrated in *Journal of the American Research Center* 2 (1963) p. 32, fig. 8, brachiomorphic implements are well known from the Archaic Period through the Old Kingdom and later, and in every case the hand is an ideographic addition, one that has a meaningful connection with the use of the object in question. It is difficult to see how this very concrete sort of hieroglyphic allusion is directly related to patterns in which quite disparate elements are fused so that, for example, the horns of the *bst*-emblem coincide with the forelegs of a pair of lions, as in the case of Figure 4 above.

22. G. A. Reisner, *Mycerinus* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1931) p. 234 (and pl. 64j); Cairo J. d’E. 72610 (Figure 18; height 3.4 cm., width, 2.3 cm.); G. Brunton, *Mostagedda* (London, 1937) pl. 60 (2, blue glazed); Brooklyn 44.123.33 (brown steatite); Petrie, *Scarabs*, pl. 7 (157) (“hard green stone” according to the Sotheby catalogue of the Macgregor Collection, June 26–July 6, 1922, p. 61 [488]). The “pierre grise” of G. Jéquier, *Tombeaux de particuliers* (Cairo, 1929) p. 52, might be limestone; cf. note 29 below.

23. The only exceptions known to me are a Fifth Dynasty seal, Brooklyn 44.123.30, which will be described presently, and Berlin 16432 (Scharff, “Über einige fremdartige Darstellungen,” *ÄZ* 67 [1931] fig. f, p. 99).

24. Junker, “Zwei Schein-Rollsiegel,” *Mélanges Maspero*, I, fasc. 1, pp. 267–271; cf. his *Giza*, VII, p. 90. Also reproduced by Kaplony, *Inschriften*, III, fig. 634. According to Junker, the seals name two “sealbearers” called *Wdsu* and *Mri-sw-nh* who were in the service of a certain *Tnti*. If so, the sequence of names is exceptional; one would expect “*Tnti* [estate], sealbearer *Wdsu*.” Cf. Junker, *Giza*, III (Vienna and Leipzig, 1938) p. 159, and the statues of various retainers of *Wr-ir-ni*, Cairo Cat. 110, 114, 118,

FIGURES 19, 20
Seals from Giza.
After Junker

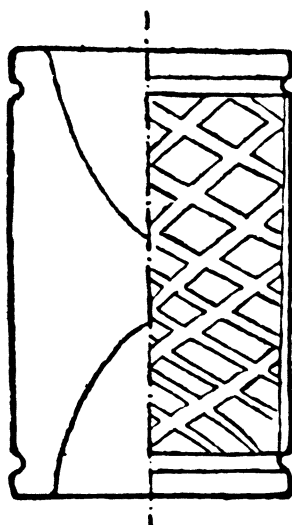
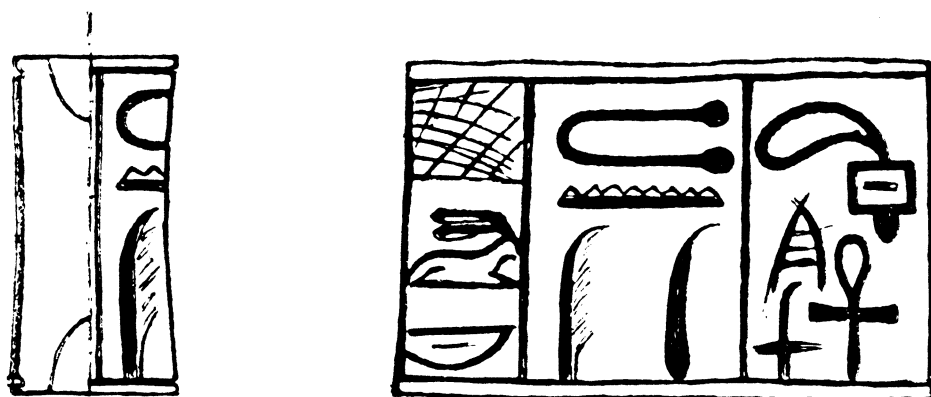
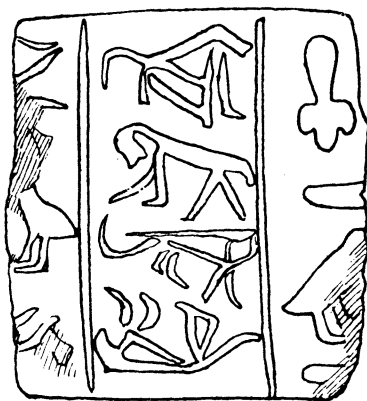


FIGURE 21
Cylinder seal.
Staatliche
Museen, Berlin,
16433. After
Scharff



(Figure 21),²⁵ Berlin 15399,²⁶ Berlin 18170,²⁷ University College 11090,²⁸ Brooklyn 44.123.29 (similar to the


119. It is also possible that one of the seals names the "Sealbearer of the stores [*dsw*—see next note] *Tnty*" and the "Sealbearer of *Mr-šw-nh Tnti*." For the name *Mr-šw-nh*, cf. S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza*, I (Oxford, 1932) pp. 104 ff. Kaplony, *Inschriften*, I, p. 453 (5) reads this *'nh-mrj-njšwt*.

25. Scharff, "Über einige fremdartige Darstellungen," *ÄZ* 67 (1931) fig. g, p. 98; my information concerning the material derives from the notes of Rudolf Anthes, who gives the height as 5.1 cm.

and the diameter as 2.7 cm. The restoration of the hieroglyphs at the left edge remains uncertain. The column at the right is to be read *h̄tm dsw* (Figure 22 a), for which cf. Figure 22 b (Cairo J. d'E. 36262; Legrain, "Achats à Louqsor," *ASAE* 4 [1903] p. 134) and Figure 22 c (note 28). The word *dsw* also occurs in the titles *iry dsw n pr-hd*, "keeper of stores of the treasury" (Figure 22 d: Louvre 251); *iry dsw pr*, "keeper of stores of the domain" (Figure

FIGURE 22 Titles from seals (see note 25)



Limestone is also the material of a crudely inscribed seal that apparently bears the Horus name , i.e.,

32. Cairo J. d'E. 72209. Height 3.5 cm. From Saqqara, near the tomb of *Pth-htp*. Just possibly the name begins with 𐎃, in

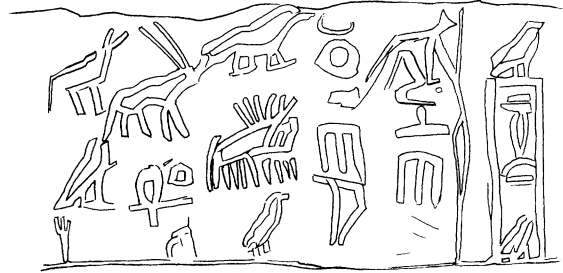


FIGURE 23
Cylinder seal, Cairo Museum, Journal d'Entrée
72209

35. Brooklyn 44.123.30. Height 7.5, diameter 3.5 cm.

omission of perforation may, however, be explained by the fact that the seal was not finished; there is space for three horizontal lines at the bottom, as in the case of a sealing of Neferirkare shown in Junker, *Giza*, VII, fig. 197, but the first line is incomplete and the space below it is blank. Another unfinished seal, displaying the Horus name of the Fifth Dynasty ruler Men-kau-Hor, and made of "black granite," has only the beginning of a perforation.³⁶ But it is difficult to explain why the hole is also lacking in the case of two other seals of Neuserre—one described as "terre émaillée,"³⁷ the other, "grey stone."³⁸ It may or may not be coincidental that this king is associated with all three of the seals of the normal variety that lack any perforation whatever.

While the presence of a hole cannot be confirmed in every case, this detail having been overlooked in most publications, it does in fact appear in most of the limestone cylinder seals under discussion,³⁹ and I know of only four other cases in which it does not occur. One, bearing illegible inscriptions, is a seal the ends of which are similarly inscribed.⁴⁰ In this respect it is comparable to a second example, which has decorative motifs and, in addition, a floral design on either end;⁴¹ Frankfort has cited Asiatic parallels for this usage.⁴² The third unperforated seal is the one in Petrie's *Scarabs* (pl. 6 [143]) that has a Middle Kingdom scroll design. The fourth is a seal with illegible inscription that derives

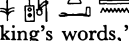


from Barsanti's excavations at Zawiyet el Aryan (Cairo J. d'E. 37094).

It is true that no mud or clay sealings have survived to confirm the functional use of seals of the type that were usually made of limestone,⁴³ but the surviving number of Old Kingdom sealings is in any case very limited. I know, from personal experience, that it is quite possible to make clear impressions of limestone seals without injuring the surface. Depending on the quality of the limestone, some of these would, of course, more readily show signs of wear than those made of steatite, and at least two limestone cylinder seals do in fact show evidence of use; one is described as "worn,"⁴⁴ the other, "badly worn."⁴⁵

To my mind the material and general character of the limestone seals suggest that they were made for persons of relatively lowly station. These individuals, if they had any title at all, were merely funerary attendants and "sealers."⁴⁶ Unable to afford costly workmanship⁴⁷ and probably, in many cases, incapable of reading an inscription, they were often satisfied with illegible assemblages of signs and motifs.

Conversely, it is difficult to imagine that a thoroughly literate Old Kingdom official would have had much regard for devices on the order of the tête-bêche composition or trompe-l'oeil fusions, such as a *bst*-emblem the horns of which simultaneously represent the forelegs of two lions (Figure 4). Devices of this sort evidently

36. British Museum 48989: Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 263, no. 2601.

37. Cairo J. d'E. 44200. Height 5.2 cm., diameter 2.5 cm. According to the Journal d'Entrée the seal was found by Borchardt at Abusir in 1913, by which time, however, he had concluded his excavations at that site and was excavating at Tell El Amarna. One of the more conspicuous titles is apparently to be read , "Scribe of royal documents of the king's words," but the group  is uncertain. Another is  which is the first explicit evidence for the cult of Hathor as well as Re in this particular sun temple. As these remarks indicate, the inscription is only partly legible and the signs are extremely rudimentary and peculiar. My interpretation of them is based on photographs kindly supplied by Henry Riad. According to Christine Lilyquist, the surface is not glazed, as the Journal d'Entrée states, but the material is uncertain.

38. British Museum 48988: Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 262, no. 2600.

39. Nos. 1 (Figure 1), 2 (Figure 5), 4 (Figure 7), 5 (Figure 10); Cairo Cat. 14518 (Quibell, *Archaic Objects*, pl. 59); Cairo J. d'E. 37096, Reisner, *Mycerinus*, p. 234, pl. 64 k; Brooklyn 44.123.29; Berlin 15399 (Scharff, *Altägypten*, II, p. 95, fig. 62); Berlin 16431, 16433 (Scharff, "Über einige fremdartige Darstellungen," *ÄZ* 67 [1931] p. 99, fig. c, and p. 98, fig. g, respectively); Berlin 18168–18170 (Scharff, *Altägypten*, II, pp. 96–97, fig. 64 a–c). Barbara

Adams informs me that a hole is also present in all but one of the eight cylinder seals in University College, London: Petrie, *Scarabs*, pls. VI (140, 142, 144), VII (156, 161, 162, 163).

40. British Museum 48987: Hall, *Scarabs*, p. 261, no. 2596.



41. Bibliothèque Nationale 515 (see above, note 31).

42. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 298.

43. The impression shown in Figure 16 consists of noninscriptional motifs (cf. note 17 above), but there is otherwise little resemblance to the limestone seals that are under discussion.

44. Petrie, *Abydos*, II, p. 29 (no. 276).

45. Reisner, *Mycerinus*, p. 234, pl. 64 k.

46. For "funerary priest" (*hm-k3*) see Figure 7 above; titles of "sealers" are represented by Figure 20 above, Petrie, *Scarabs*, pl. 7 (163), and Brooklyn 44.123.29 (cf. notes 28–29). Berlin 15399 (Newberry, *Scarabs*, p. 49, fig. 25) has the titles  and ; the first of these is oriented outward in both directions, as though it were a decorative motif; the second is upside-down in relation to the first; and both are interspersed among noninscriptional motifs, including trompe l'oeil emblems. It does not seem possible that either of these titles is to be taken at face value.

47. The relationship between cheapness of material, poor workmanship, and unintelligibility is further demonstrated by a cylinder seal described as "clay incised wet," Petrie, *Scarabs*, pl. 7 (162).

express a popular taste that is at variance with the scribal sobriety of Egyptian art, in which representations are generally well grounded on a base line, and all the elements are discrete and well defined. An analogous contrast is presented by the household gods eventually known as Taueris and Bes, hybrid fusions of man and beast, as opposed to the hieroglyphic assemblages of forms that constitute the so-called animal-headed gods.⁴⁸

It was only after this article was virtually completed that I read William A. Ward's "The Origin of Egyptian Design-Amulets ('Button Seals')" in *JEA* 56 (1970) pp. 65–80. While I cannot agree with Ward's denial that any foreign influence is to be seen in the Egyptian use of the tête-bêche and trompe-l'oeil devices (cf. note 21 above), my conclusions are otherwise very much in agreement with his views concerning the button seals that continue to display such devices. He emphasizes that what he calls "the design-amulet tradition" be-

longed primarily to the lower classes and that "the popular art of the masses was more readily susceptible to change and could deviate more easily from a classical norm than the more formal art of the conservative upper classes."

PERIODICALS ABBREVIATED

ASAE—*Annales du Service des Antiquités d'Égypte*.

ÄZ—*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*.

JEA—*The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*.

PSBA—*Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the more specific acknowledgments in the preceding pages, I want to thank Steffen Wenig and Joachim Karig for additional data concerning cylinder seals in East Berlin (15399) and Charlottenburg (Berlin 16431–16433, 18168–18170).

48. Cf. H. Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York, 1948) p. 12, who calls them "pictographs, not portraits," and "ideograms."