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THE DATE OF THE EGYPTIAN SHRINE AT BYBLOS

By

RASHID S. EL-NADOURY

Univ. of Alex., Faculty of Arts.

An amount of uncertainty has been realised concerning whether the Egyptian shrine at Byblos belonged to the Old Kingdom or not. I would like in this paper, to reconsider the available evidence on this point and try to arrive at some conclusion about it.

It has been observed ever since the beginning of Neolithic times in the ancient Near East that economic activities in general, agricultural life in particular, and religious beliefs were closely related throughout the cultural development of the rural and urban communities.

This close relationship can be traced in the available archaeological and textual evidence, especially in those connected with fertility cults, belief in immortality and divine kingship as well as the economic functions of the temples. They all reflect directly or indirectly the continuous attempts towards the integration of society and nature.

Such relationship between economy and religion became more emphasized when trade and exploration started to expand during the pre-and protodynastic times in order to fulfill the vast needs of those periods. Even the invention of writing as an essential means of communication has developed mainly as a result of economic and religious factors. Thus, state economic activities were in such a way subordinated to the people's basic beliefs; that would help them ensure prosperity, progress and security.

It was due to this practice that Egyptian traders found it necessary to establish a shrine of their own at Byblos, a city which had very close trade connections with Egypt. Before attempting to interpret the archaeological remains at Byblos, in order to find out how far they help to indicate the probable period in which the shrine was originally built, we have to classify our evidence into the following groups :

A) *Egyptian archaeological material found at Byblos* :—

1 — *Fragmentary and complete inscribed and decorated stone vessels belonging to the second, fourth, fifth and sixth dynasties e.g. :*

A stone vase fragment (1) inscribed with the name of king khasekhemul of the second dynasty.

An alabaster vase fragment (2) inscribed with the name of King Khufu. A vase fragment(3) inscribed with the last part of the name of queen Merytyetes, the wife of King Khufu.

An alabster vase fragment (4) bearing some traces of the name of King Neferirkare of the fifth dynasty.

An alabaster vase fragment (5) illustrating King Unis of the fifth dyn. with the atef-crown and a part of his titulary.

An alabaster vase fragment (6) bearing the first two hieroglyphs of the name of King Unis.

A vase (7) inscribed with king Unis's name.

A cylindrical alabaster vase(8) bearing the name of King Pepi I, of the sixth dynasty with his titulary.

An alabaster vase fragment(9) inscribed with the name of King Pepi II of the sixth dynasty.

An alabaster vase stand, decorated with a scene composed of two registers rendering the presentation of offerings(10).

(1) Dunand, M., *Fouilles de Byblos, 1926 - 1932, Tome Ier., Texte, Paris, 1939, No. 1115, P. 26, Atlas, Tome Ier., Paris, 1937, pl. XXXIX.*

(2) *Ibid.* No. 4506, pl. XXXIX.

(3) Montet, P., *Byblos et L'Égypte, Quatre Campagnes de Fouilles à Gebel, 1921 - 1924, Texte, Paris, 1928, No. 64.*

(4) Dunand, *Op. cit.*, 4909, pl. XXXVI

(5) Dunand, *Ibid.*, 3867, pl. XXXVIII.

(6) *Ibid.*, 3980, pl. XXXVI.

(7) Montet, *Op. cit.*, No. 46.

(8) Dunand, *Op. cit.*, 4366, pl. XXXVIII.

(9) *Ibid.*, 1921, pl. XXXVI.

(10) Dunand, *II*, No. 7551, fig. 107, pl. cc 111.

2 — *Egyptian Alabaster palettes, animal, bird figurines, animal statuettes, beads and offering plates e.g.*

An important inscribed stone offering-plate fragment(1) dated to the early fourth dynasty(2) and belongs to Nefer-seshem-Ra.

(B) *Egyptian texts belonging to the O.K. found at Byblos e.g.*

A cylinder seal(3) bearing the name of king Chephren as follows :
 Ht-hr mr (wy) t (y) H. f. R. ntrw mr (wy) t (y) H. f. R'. Chephren
 beloved of Hathor, beloved of the Gods.

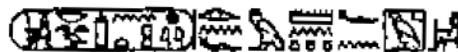


The Old Kingdom offering-table of Nefer-seshem-Ra bears the following inscription (4).



Rdi Nfr Ssm R'Axw Ssw mdh.w nswt Axw Mhy.t hrp Ssw hrj-k',
 Mhy.t Ss',t hnt.t pr mdwt j'iry.w 'iht mswt j

A fragment of an alabaster offering-plate(5) inscribed with the name of king Pepi I



Ht-hr s'nb.t Iwnt Ppy iri. n. f. m maw. f. n Ht-hr

Pepi, son of Hathor, lady of Denderah. He made as his monument for Hathor.

- (1) I *ibid.*, 5366, pl. XXXIX.
- (2) Ward, W., 'The Inscribed Offering-table of Nefer-seshem-Ra from Byblos', *Bulletin du Musée de Deirut*, t. XVII, Beyrouth, 1964, pp. 37 - 46.
- (3) Dunand, *Op. cit.*, I, 200 No. 3074 pl. CXXV.
- (4) I *ibid.*, 5366, p. 306.
 Ward, *Op. cit.*, pl. 11.
- (5) Dunand, I, 417. 418, No. 6496. pl. XXXVIII.

A stone cylinder seal(1) inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphic belonging to a ruler of Byblos in the third millenium.

An Egyptian inscription (2) on a monkey-shaped ointment jar found at Byblos dated to the reign of Pepi either the first or the second.



Pepi, R' h', swt.

A double symmetrical Egyptian bas-relief (3) bearing the inscription "beloved of Hathor, mistress of Byblos",



Ht — hr mr (w) y (fy) nb kbn

(C) *Architectural and sculptural remains at Byblos :*

Excavations at the site of Byblos have revealed some of the architectural remains of the foundations of a building called by Montet „Le Temple Egyptien", and by Dunand „Batiment I". The remains of two walls limit it towards the north, east and west. As is illustrated in pls. I and IV, there is hall A which is preceded by two bases of columns a,b resting in place; One lies opposite a large seated statue and the other opposite a large standing one.

(1) Montet, *Op. cit.*, P. 62 fl. fig. 20, pl. XXXIX.

Goedicke, H., "A Cylinder Seal of a Ruler of Byblos of the Third Millennium" *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts.*

Abteilung Kairo, Band, 19, Wiesbaden, 1963, P. 1 — 6.

(2) Montet, *Op. cit.*

Goedicke, *Op. cit.*, 3.

(3) Montet, *Ibid.*

The floor of the hall in front of the statues is covered with stone tiles, but its leveling is higher than that of hall A. The eastern wall had almost disappeared with the exception of some of its blocks K,L,M,N.

There are other halls in that building attached to hall A. Unfortunately the remains are not totally chronologically consistent. Some of the floor blocks are reused, also the eastern wall in hall C is constructed above an older one. In addition to these remains, a small standing obelisk was found west of the statues, pl. II. Although its point had disappeared there are some remnants of a mutilated relief upon its northern side, illustrating a seated personality facing a standing one who is attacked by an animal.

Concerning the sculpture, five statues were found in that temple, three limestone seated ones were arranged according to size and facing west, a colossal standing one two metres far from them, pl. III and an intact standing another one found on its right side a few steps south east of the large standing one.

Egyptian sculpture in relief at Byblos occurs in a number of fragments e.g. : two of them illustrate the lower section of an Egyptian bas-relief, one is probably a square pillar like those typically belonging to the Old Kingdom private tombs. Another example is a double symmetrical limestone bas-relief which illustrates two scenes separated by a vertical line and surrounded by the hieroglyphic sign of the sky the



two sceptres and the sign of the earth. Such a style is frequent in the Old Kingdom. On the left scene, a king either Pepi I or II is kneeling in front of a seated Goddess and is offering two vases. There is an important inscription written on the side of the goddess and its transliteration is Ht hr nbt Kbn. The name of Byblos (kbn) is written according to the orthography of the Old Kingdom, which has a great significance in dating the bas-relief to the O.K. times.

A third example is an Egyptian bas-relief in which a pharaoh is embraced by the Lady of Byblos whose headdress is typically Egyptian, with the sun disk, horns and uraeus. This is in addition to other Egyptian bas-reliefs later than the Old Kingdom period.

D) Archaeological and textual evidence from Egypt :

The historian can trace back the commercial relations between Egypt and Byblos to predynastic times, since some pieces of coniferous wood were found in Egypt at that time.(1) The Egyptian demand for the well-known Lebanese and Syrian varieties of wood continued throughout the early dynasties specifically for ship building and for the flooring and roofing(2) of the chambers; one can add to this the resin (3) which is extracted from the coniferous trees.

The Egyptians frequently registered their maritime voyages(4) to Byblos which were undertaken for the fulfillment of such demands and the transportation of merchants and goods, during the Old Kingdom. Official missions to Byblos were also sent. There is a record of the visit of three Egyptian officials to Byblos in the tomb of Khui(5) of the sixth dynasty at Aswan. Fakhry(6) has noted that their bearing of the title "God's Treasurer" signifies their responsibility for official expeditions to Byblos.

The mere observation which can be noticed is that the available archaeological data that belong to that shrine is incomplete and that the stratification of the levels is not totally consistent, which makes the role of the historian quite difficult in arriving at a final conclusion about its chronology. Pillet has described the remains as „Jonchéé de ruines bouleversees". (7) Such a situation had led Dunand to attribute it "à L'Ancien Empire, aussi bien qu'au moyen, on a même chuchoté qu'il

(1) Brinton, G., and Caton-Thompson, G., *The Badarian Civilization*, London 1928 pp. 62 ff.

(2) Fakhry, A., *The Bent Pyramid at Dahshur, Cairo*, 1954, p. 599, pl. 3 B.

(3) Smith, W.S., in Reisner, G., *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, Cambridge Mass., 1955, 2, 75.

(4) Borchardt, L., *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sahure*, *Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*, 7, pls. 3, 11 — 13.

Hassan, S., "The causeway of Wnis at Sakkara", *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, Berlin, 80, 1955, 136 — 39.

(5) Newberry, J.E.A., 24, 1938, 182 — 84.

(6) Fakhry, A.S.A.E., 38, 1938, 39 ff.

(7) Pillet, M., *Le temple de Byblos, Syria VIII*, 1927, P. 122.

était de L'époque Perse"(1). This is in addition to the fact that the blocks were frequently reused. But in spite of all these obstacles there are some important elements which recommend the Old Kingdom date.

First of all, the composition of the architectural remains together with the two bases of columns, passage, statues and halls pl. IV, is quite similar to that of the Old Kingdom. Montet has backed this view — point, but Dunand dates it to the Persian period, considering the possibility of an imitation of the bases of columns with those of the Achaemenid period. This is in addition to his observation of the difference of levels and the placing of the statues upon a block above a mixture of hellenistic sherds. In fact, the difference in stratification can be referred to the various destructions which the site suffered throughout the historical period. He stated in his conclusions that Batiment I is a small temple probably related to the cult of Adonis.(2).

I find the date which Dunand has suggested to the temple of Baalet Gabal, that is the 30th. century B.C.(3) is quite relevant to our problem, since the textual material and the offerings found at the site were presented to the Egyptian shrine and that of Baalet Gebal. We can safely deduce from this fact that both temples were contemporary.

Secondly, it is true that the statues found at Byblos are in a state of mutilation, but still there are some Egyptian sculptural stylistic elements within them e.g. their cubic form in blocks is typically Egyptian. The left foot of the standing statue is advanced a little which is also a regular Old Kingdom style. The arms are extended in the same O.K. way. There is also another intact Egyptian statue found a few steps south east of the standing one, which helps to prove this point. Dunand suggests that there is a resemblance between these statues and a large one found near Mouchannef at Djebel Druze (4); but their Egyptian stylistic attitude backs their O.K. origin. It is not necessarily that the architects and the artists were Egyptians. They might have been Gibletes and tried to imitate the Egyptian models.

(1) Dunand, 67.

(2) Ibid., 78.

(3) Dunand, *Bybus, its history, ruins and legends*, Beirut, 1964 P. 54.

(4) Dunand, *Op. cit.*, 71.

Concerning the scenes on the bas-relief fragments, Ward(1) cites a parallel to Hathor protecting the King, which emphasizes their O.K. date; but Smith(2) and Helck (3) favoured the New Kingdom date and most likely the Saite period.

Thirdly, the evidence compiled in group (A) which includes fragmentary and complete inscribed stone vessels testifies the large amount of offerings which were presented by the pharaohs of the 2 — 6 dynasties to either the Egyptian shrine or that of the Lady of Byblos. They thus prove that there was a process of dedication to both temples during the Old Kingdom period. This is supported by the texts, names and titulary of the kings inscribed on the vases. This will help in leading to the idea of the necessity of establishing that Egyptian shrine at that specific time. After all they were Egyptians and have their own deities and whenever they presented gifts and offerings to the Mistress of Byblos, they naturally did the same to their own Gods.

Fourthly, the religious textual evidence refers to Hathor with the epithet "Lady of Byblos". She, as an Egyptian deity, became more of an international one in that area rather than a local Egyptian Goddess. She was usually connected with different local Egyptian sites as well as with other communities in the foreign countries e.g.

As a deity at the diorite quarries in the Western Nubian desert dating from the O.K (5).

(1) Ward, W., "Egypt and the East Mediterranean from Perandynastic times to the old Kingdom", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 6, 1963, 24.

Jéquier, G., *Le Monument funéraire de Papi II*, 2, pl. 8.

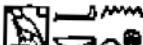
(2) Smith, W.S., *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East*, London, 1963, p. 12, n. 33.

(3) Helck, W., *Die Beziehungen "Agyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 3. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Wiesbaden, 1962, P. 21.

(4) Pap. Oxy. of the 2nd century A.D. 1380 from Bahnsa refers to the worship of Isis in fiftyfive foreign cities as far as India, Arabia and Rome, but this trend may go back to the 3th. Mill. B.C.

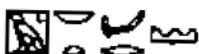
(5) Englebach, R., *A.S.A.E.*, 33, 1933, 72.

As a Lady of Ibsk in the small temple of Abu-Simbel .

As Lady of 'Kny (1). 

As Lady of  e •, IN COPTIC^v ⲁⲮ,ⲁⲩ Ht-sekhem, Ht, (2)

As Lady of  Imw, (:)mw(3)

As Lady of  Ht-hr nbt Dsrt .lady of the sacred land (4).

There was a sort of association and identification(5) between the Egyptian deities and the foreign ones. Gardiner emphasizes the attitude by saying that all Goddesses are apt to be equated with Hathor (6)

With regard to the lady of Byblos Baalat Goubla, she had even adopted the Egyptian emblems and costumes of the Egyptian Goddess Hathor (7). Such association between the two Goddesses was definitely established in that O.K. shrine at Byblos (8).

One of the significant observations is that the title "beloved of Hathor" was added, as a new epithet, to the titulary of king Chephren at Byblos,(9) pl. V. This signifies how important it was to add that

(1) Gardiner, A., *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, I, P. 60, No. 1.

(2) *Ibid.*, II, 33 f.

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) Cerny, J., *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, London, 1952, p. 124 f.

(6) Gardiner, A., *Op. cit.*, Text, II, Oxford, 1947, p. 62.

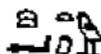
(7) Delaporte, L., *Les Peuples de l'Orient Méditerranéen*, I, Le Proche-Orient Asiatique, Paris, 1948, p. 97.

(8) Smith, *Op. cit.* 12.

(9) P. 3.

epithet at that specific period, which may be considered as an indirect indication of the O.K. dating of that shrine of Hathor. Goedicke states also that the epithet $\text{d}^{\text{t}} \text{dnh}^{\text{t}} \text{dt}$, which is mentioned within a cylinder seal text, "is not attested before the fifth dynasty" (1), which is another assertion to the O.K. dating. Again this text had written the name Byblos according to the O.K. orthography.

In fact, there was mutual religious interconnection between Egypt and Byblos during the O.K. times. Pepi I in a funerary text (2) compares himself in his wooden coffin with the Semitic tree-God Kha-taw of Negaw,



a geographical name of a section of Lebanon near Byblos. Kha-taw also mentioned three times in the pyramid texts; 242c, 423c. and 518d.

Another example is the occurrence of the Egyptian solar God R' of the foreign lands R' h', swt in an inscription belonging to the



reign of either Pepi I or II. Such religious relations may go back even to Chalcolithic times when the Giblites buried their dead in the large grain jars which can be related to Osiris(3), the God of the netherworld. The historian cannot overlook the legend of Osiris and Isis near the spring of Byblos, where the Egyptian shrine exists.

Such cultural as well as commercial correlations between Egypt and Byblos during the O.K. period demanded the services of an Egyptian official, responsible for the various activities and records of the Egyptians at Byblos. Ward had studied the titles held by Neferseshem-Ra in this inscribed offering table at Byblos and suggested that Nefer seshem R' was an official in charge of the records (4). Goedicke (5) draws attention in his new interpretation of the peculiar hieroglyphic text inscribed on a cylinder seal, to a semitic ruler of Byblos of the third millenium B.C.

(1) Goedicke, *Op. cit.*, I.

(2) Contenau, G. *Religions of the Ancient East*, London, 1939 P. 75.

(3) Dunand, *Byblos*, Beirut, 1964, 89.

(4) Ward, „The inscribed offering-table of Nefer-seshem -Ra from Byblos“, *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, t. XVII, 44.

(5) Goedicke, 4 ff.

A little later, the people of Byblos had invented a pseudo-hieroglyphic writing(1) of their own.

Finally the available evidence, mentioned above, helps in considering the definitely wide interrelationship between Egypt and Byblos during the Old Kingdom period which required the establishment of that Old Kingdom shrine.

(1) Dunand, *Op. cit.*, 26.