

Othmar KEEL *et al.*, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel. Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Katalog Band IV: Von Tel Gamma bis Chirbet Husche*. Fribourg, Academic Press – Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013. 1 vol. relié in-4°, XVI-720 pp., nombr. figg., 1 carte. (ORBIS BIBLICUS ET ORIENTALIS - SERIES ARCHAEOLOGICA, 33). Prix: €163.

The Swiss scholar Othmar Keel (Fribourg) no longer needs to be introduced to those working in the fields of ancient Near Eastern, in particular Levantine iconography, religions and biblical studies. Most of his publications, however, find their way to libraries specialised in Egyptology. Keel and the colleagues who over the years have gathered around him –thus forming the so-called ‘School of Fribourg’–, look at the minor arts (seals, terracotta figurines, ivories ...) in their studies on Levantine art and religion and the interconnections with Egyptian and Near Eastern cultures.

Over the past twenty-five years, Keel’s research focused mainly on glyptic, ranging from the publication of new finds from excavations in Israel, to typological and iconographical studies, as well as to voluminous catalogues of seals found in the southern Levant. These include a large number of Egyptian imports and their Levantine imitations and adaptations. Distinguishing both groups remains challenging, especially for the Late Bronze Age/New Kingdom, when the Egyptian empire encompassed most of the Levant and the majority of seals are considered to have been imported from Egypt. Othmar Keel has nonetheless demonstrated on several occasions that this is not an impossible task: his contributions to the study of Egyptian and egyptianising glyptic comprise pioneering work on the identification of Levantine scarab seal workshops. Moreover, his field of interest is not limited to a particular period but ranges from the early 2nd millennium to the early 1st millennium BCE (e.g. O. KEEL, ‘Die Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe. Eine vorderasiatische Skarabäen-Werkstatt des 17. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.’ in: O. KEEL, H. KEEL-LEU, S. SCHROER, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel II (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 88)*, Freiburg 1989, p. 213-242; O. KEEL and S. MÜNGER, ‘Die Lotos-Kopfschild-Gruppe. Neo-Hyksos Skarabäen der Eisenzeit IIB (ca. 900-700 v. U. Z.)’ in: C.G. DEN HERTOOG, U. HÜBNER, S. MÜNGER (eds.), *Saxa Loquentur. Studien zur Archäologie Palästinas/Israels. Festschrift für Volkmar Fritz zum 65. Geburtstag (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 302)*, Münster 2003, p. 127-158; O. KEEL, ‘Some of the Earliest Groups of Locally Produced Scarabs from Palestine’ in: M. BIETAK and E. CZERNY (eds.), *Scarabs of the Second Millennium BC from Egypt, Nubia, Crete and the Levant: Chronological and Historical Implications. Papers of a Symposium, Vienna, 10th-13th of January 2002*, Wien 2004, p. 73-102; D. BEN-TOR and O. KEEL, ‘The Beth-Shean Level IX-Group: A Local Scarab Workshop of the Late Bronze Age I’ in: M. GRUBER, S. AHITUV, G. LEHMANN, Z. TALSHIR (eds.), *All the Wisdom in the East. Studies in Near Eastern Archaeology and History in Honor of Eliezer D. Oren (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 255)*, Fribourg 2012, p. 87-104).

The most impressive and long-term undertaking is undoubtedly his *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel* that, since the publication of its introductory volume in 1995, has become one of the most important, if not the most important, instruments for the study of (Levantine) stamp seals. With its latest addition, it comprises no less than five volumes in the *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis-Series Archaeologica* series: an introduction (*Einleitung*, OBO.SA 10 – 1995) and four catalogue volumes (*Katalog Band 1: Von Tell Abu Farağ bis ‘Atlit*, OBO.SA 13 – 1997; *Katalog Band 2:*

Von Bahan bis Tel Eton, OBO.SA 29 – 2010; Katalog Band III: Von Tell el-Far'a Nord bis Tell el-Fir, OBO.SA 31 – 2010; and the volume reviewed here Katalog Band IV: Von Tel Gamma bis Chirbet Husche, OBO.SA 33 – 2013). The vast amount of data required a structured, methodological approach, maintained practically unaltered throughout the *Corpus*. The catalogue entries present all available technical (dimensions, material, typological features), archaeological (description, date, excavation number), bibliographical, museological and iconographical information, accompanied by (old or new) qualitative drawings and black/white photographs of all sides of the seals and seal impressions. The dates proposed for the individual stamp seals are based on the results of typological studies or on stratified parallels, and the descriptions also include internal references to similar seals from Israel/Palestine published in other volumes of the *Katalog* and to topics elaborated in the introductory volume. Although most cited parallels come from the Levant, there are also some references to finds from Egypt. In the *Katalog Band IV's* preface (p. vii-viii), Keel recognizes knowledge of the Egyptian material is necessary for understanding typological developments in the Levant, as demonstrated by the research undertaken for the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period by Daphna Ben-Tor (D. BEN-TOR, *Scarabs, Chronology and Interconnections. Egypt and Palestine in the Second Intermediate Period* [OBO.SA 27], Fribourg 2007; and see also the review thereof by the present author in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 65/5-6 [2008], p. 623-626). Ever since the *Katalog Band I* volume, the identification and dating of these items was therefore entrusted to Daphna Ben-Tor and the input of Bertrand Jaeger was indispensable for the reading and dating of New Kingdom name scarabs. Indeed, for this remarkably vast *Katalog* series, Keel appeals to the assistance of several scholars specialised in glyptic, mentioned as co-authors or gratefully acknowledged in the volumes.

The first *Katalog* volume presents 2139 items from sites in Israel beginning with the letter "A"; the second comprises 1224 stamp-seals from sites beginning the letters "B" through "E"; volume III adds another 1009 items from sites starting with the letter "F"; and this fourth volume publishes 1439 more seal-amulets from sites beginning with "G" and "H". One may also include in this series the *Corpus* for Jordan, edited by Othmar Keel and Jurg Egger (*OBO.SA 25 – 2006*) and cataloguing 719 seals, this time including stamp seals as well as cylinder seals. With a total of 5811 stamp seals from 71 sites in Israel/Palestine catalogued thus far and dispersed across public and private collections world-wide, Othmar Keel and his co-authors are, at an increasing pace, cataloguing provenanced finds from the southern Levant and making them available for archaeological, historical and art historical research, particularly with regard to cultural interconnections, religion and iconography. In this regard mention should also be made of the website of the Bible+Orient Museum in Fribourg, where an interface to the database BODO makes a large part of the glyptic collections accessible to scholars and to the larger public (<http://www.bible-orient-museum.ch/index.php/en/collections/online-database-bodo>).

Like its predecessors, the fourth volume of the *Corpus'* catalogue, dedicated to the recently deceased Manfred Görg, comprises Egyptian, Canaanite, North-Syrian, Phoenician, Hebrew ... stamp seals, dating from the Chalcolithic to the Persian Period. Hazor, Tel Gamma (Tell Jemmeh) and Geser constitute the larger part of *Band IV* with, respectively 118, 213 and 692 catalogued items. The 1439 stamp seals published in this volume include about 200 previously unpublished objects and many more that had been published with incomplete or inadequate descriptions. Keel aims at being as exhaustive as possible when compiling his catalogues. He adds items that have been lost in the meantime and even includes objects that came to light during excavations when the

manuscripts are ready to go to the publishing house, but at the same time acknowledges the impossibility of exhaustivity (*Corpus Einleitung* 1995, p. 9-10) because stamp seals have continued to surface during excavations at the sites treated in the three previous catalogue volumes. By expanding the already impressive bibliography of the *Corpus'* introductory volume, he amply makes up for this: the reference list (p. 672-714) includes further reading, thus aiming at providing a representative, updated overview of literature related to Levantine glyptic.

Compared to *Katalog Band I, II* or *III*, the fourth book is more voluminous –although *Band I* counted an even larger number of pages–, apparently due to the use of a different type of paper, making it somewhat less user-friendly. Considering the scope of the *Corpus* and the large amount of information it presents, it is admirable that there are very few typographical errors. Whereas the methodological approach ensures uniformity throughout the *Corpus*, the fact that several authors contributed to the catalogue manifests itself in some details. For example, different dates are proposed for the stamp seals of the so-called Post-Ramesside mass production of the early Iron Age / 21st- early 22nd Dynasties (e.g. p. 572 Tel Haror nr. 1 versus p. 461 Geser nr. 686) and while the great majority of catalogue entries are written in German, the contributions by Baruch Brandl (Tel Haror, p. 572-581) are in English, as was also the case for some of the Abu Hawam and Akhziv finds in *Katalog Band I*. These minor inconsistencies do not outweigh the fact that the structured composition and the pleasing layout of this catalogue –and with it the entire *Corpus*– makes it agreeable to browse, even for non-German speakers.

Most of the stamp seals are scarabs and Keel provides an elaborated type series for scarab heads (p. xv-xvi), taken from the *Corpus* volume for Jordan (EGGLER & KEEL 2006, p. xvi); although it does not contain new head types, it is updated with additional reference material. Regarding scarab typology and chronology, it is important to mention, however, that *Band IV* provides updated information on the (re)dating of particular types or groups and the identification of new workshops. By way of example and without going too much into detail, one can observe in the catalogue entries that, since Keel's article on the earliest Canaanite scarab types (KEEL 2004, cited above) and Ben-Tor's typological study of the Middle Bronze Age Canaanite scarabs (BEN-TOR 2007, cited above), in which she distinguished an early (ca. 1700-1650) and a late (ca. 1650-1500) series, the chronology of this production is further refined (e.g. the Ginnosar finds, p. 492-495). Recently published studies on the Egyptian or non-Egyptian origin of other types are also taken into consideration in the catalogue entries, for example items considered to be New Kingdom imports that can now securely be attributed to a workshop at Beth Shean, manufacturing faience scarabs in a period contemporary with the 18th Dynasty (cfr. BEN-TOR & KEEL 2012, cited above) (e.g. p. 264-265 Geser nr. 223; p. 568-569 Tel Harasim nr. 34).

Herein lies yet another of the many qualities of Keel's admirable enterprise, even if it is maybe the less obvious one, namely that the rapid progress in the field of glyptic studies can closely be followed through the *Corpus*, with its up-to-date reference material and bibliography, with its ever-growing number of contributing seal specialists, and with references to work in progress. Conceived as a catalogue but being so much more, the *Corpus* is well on its way to see it through until the letter "Z". The next volume is nearly finished and more will follow, all made possible by the perseverance and vision of a scholar who dedicated his life's work to artifacts not much bigger than a thumbnail.