

Stamp Seal from Beycesultan

Fred C. Woudhuizen
Heiloo, The Netherlands
fredwoudhuizen@yahoo.com

In this note the legend of a well-preserved stamp seal from Beycesultan, located along the upper course of the Maiandros river in present-day western Turkey, is recovered from oblivion. With a view to the fact that this stamp seal was discovered in a layer separating the Early Bronze Age ones from those of the Middle Bronze Age, it is argued that we may actually be dealing here with the earliest datable document conducted in an Indo-European tongue.

In the form of an addition to my most recent discussion of Middle Bronze Age Luwian hieroglyphic inscriptions in order to determine the region of origin of the script,¹ I drew attention to a stamp seal inscribed with a Luwian hieroglyphic legend from Beycesultan, which according to the excavators of this site, Seton Lloyd & James Mellaart (1965: 36), had come to light in a dividing line marking the transition from the Early Bronze Age (level VI) to the Middle Bronze Age (level V), so dating *c.* 2000 BC.²

¹Woudhuizen 2011: section I.2.1, but actually to be found in an additional note on p. 88 to section I.2.2. on full legend seals as well as in the postilla to section I.2.1 on pp. 464-467.

²Lloyd & Mellaart 1965: 36 "The integrity of these pavements on the south side of the trench is important to emphasize, because, at a point about 15 cm. beneath the earlier one, a stamp-seal of special interest was found (ASVIII, Pl. XXVIa). For the purpose of dating this seal, the lower of the two pavements must be considered as constituting the dividing-line between Levels V and VI, and accordingly between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages." For recent confirmation that Beycesultan Level VI indeed belongs to the Early Bronze Age III, and that hence Level V constitutes the earliest phase of the Middle Bronze Age, see Düring 2011: 288-289, in which work the turning point between the two phases in question is placed *c.* 2000 BC (my thanks are due to Dr. J.G. Dercksen of the Netherlands Institute for the Near East [Dutch abbreviation NINO] at Leiden for kindly drawing my attention to this publication).



(a) Schachermeyr 1957-8:199, Abb. 22.



(b) Lloyd & Mellaart 1958: Pl. XXVIa.



(c) Mora 1987: Tav. 109, XIIb 3.3.



(d) Bossert 1959: Abb. 6.



(e) Reconstruction by the author.

Figure 1. Stamp seal from Beycesultan.

The legend of this seal, of which a photograph has been published by Seton Lloyd & James Mellaart in their preliminary report of 1958 (pl. XXVIa [= our Fig. 1b]), should have been included in my section I.2.1 on the origin of Luwian hieroglyphic, but, in my defense, it must be admitted that it has been very thoroughly hidden away by Clelia Mora (1987) in her late group XIIb as no. 3.3.³ Nevertheless, she is outspoken about the dating of this stamp seal to “fine III millennio - inizio II” (Mora 1987: 350), i.e. *c.* 2000 BC. Yet another photograph is published

³Mora 1987: 332 with refs.; the photograph presented in her Tav. 109 is reproduced here as our Fig. 1c.

by Schachermeyr 1957-8: 199, Abb. 22 (= our Fig. 1a), whereas Bossert 1959: Abb. 6 presents a drawing of the legend on the stamp side (= our Fig. 1d). Note that only in the drawing is the top side of the seal reproduced at its proper place.

The reading of the legend of the aforesaid seal is, notwithstanding the fact that it is completely preserved, hampered by the fact that the script is highly cursive, almost linear (which suggests its regular use over a long period),⁴ so that the individual signs are difficult to identify. As a matter of fact, this latter observation forms the actual reason for the tendency among scholars, including, as we have noted, Clelia Mora, to a late dating of the inscription in question (it is true that Mora, as we have just noted, assigned an early date to the seal and its inscription, but, as we have also just observed, her hesitations about this early dating find expression in the fact that she catalogued it among a much later group, of which the representatives generally date to the 13th century BC, instead of to her first group, where it actually belongs).⁵ The same tendency is also observable in its treatment by Piero Meriggi of 1966(: 60), who, however, clearly expresses his reservations in regard to this topic. On the positive side, he convincingly identified in the middle line of the legend of our stamp seal from Beycesultan, which according to his analysis runs in right-to-left direction of writing, *376 *i*, or, in terms of the so-called “new reading”, *zi*, and *215 *ha*. These identifications had already been proposed by Bossert 1959: 80, who,

⁴The *ductus* of the signs of yet another Middle Bronze Age inscription, this time on a vessel from Kültepe-Kanesh, published in Hawkins 2011, to which my attention was kindly drawn by my colleague and friend Willemijn Waal, also makes a cursive or “modern” impression, at least in so far as the first sign, the donkey head *100 (numbering of the Luwian hieroglyphic signs according to Laroche 1960), is concerned. Cf. Woudhuizen 2011: 84; 464.

⁵As kindly pointed out to me by Willemijn Waal, again, an inscribed stamp seal in the form of a foot, which, in the light of the parallels, is datable to the first quarter of the second millennium (Erdem 1969: 114-115; tav. IVb), received a similar treatment by Mora, who, notwithstanding her suggestion of an early dating, be it this time with a question mark, catalogued it in her late group XIIIb, again, in this particular case *sub* no. 3.9, cf. Woudhuizen 2011: 464-465.

however, after these two signs reads *450 à, which, as I will argue below, is mistaken.

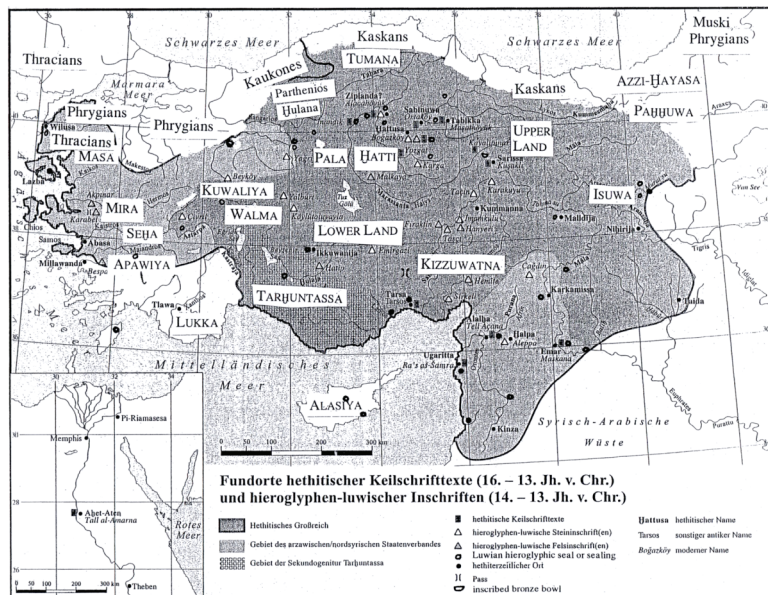


Figure 2. Map of Anatolia.

Now, in my opinion the legend of our stamp seal starts at the top side with the sign in the form of four vertical strokes, *391 *m, má, mi*. This in turn has a horizontal stroke below it, identifiable as *383, 2 *+r(a/i)*. In the light of the relevant parallels, in all probability these two signs form a combination, reading *mi+ra*, which cannot be dissociated from the country name *Mira* as known from later Luwian hieroglyphic inscriptions like the Tarkondemos seal, sealings from Boğazköy-Khattusha, the Karabel rock relief, the rock relief at Latmos, and the seal from Perati in Attica (see Woudhuizen 2004-5: 166-167, figs. 1-2). If this analysis is correct, it may reasonably be argued on account of the use of *225 *UMINA* or *urbs* in the following line (see below) that Mira is a town, after which the country of which it was the center is later named, and that this town name is to be identified as the ancient one of modern Beycesultan. The latter site is situated near the upper course of the Maiandros river, which is probably to be identified as the Hittite *Şeha*, just south of Çivril near

the confluence with a tributary coming from the southeast that is plausibly taken for the Hittite *Aštarpa* (see Figs. 2 and 3). Some confirmation of this scenario may be provided by the fact that one of the border towns of the later country Mira is *Wiyānawanda* (= classical Oinoanda) (Bryce 2010: 475, note 47), which lies at the upper course of the Xanthos river or Hittite *Šiyanta*, just south of Beycesultan (see Woudhuizen 2010-11). It furthermore deserves attention in this connection that it is directly associated with the province of *Kuwalīya*, situated, as deducible from the inscription on a stele from the region of Afyon (Woudhuizen 2011: 125-126; Woudhuizen *forthc.*, section 3), in that latter region just to the northeast of Beycesultan (see Figs. 2 and 3).⁶

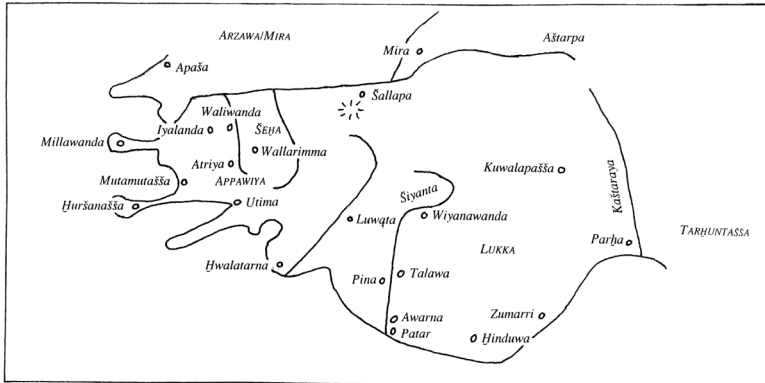


Figure 3. Map of southwest Anatolia.

However this may be, what primarily concerns us here is that the instance of *376 *i, zi* in the second line of the legend is preceded by the river sign *212 *ḪAPA* or *flumen*, with syllabic value *ná*, written vertically instead of horizontally in order to save space. In fourth position, after the third sign *215 *ḫa*, one can easily identify the triangular outline of *225 *UMINA* or *urbs* (not to be

⁶Note that as a result of the political reforms by Mursilis II (1322-1295 BC) the combination of Mira-Kuwalīya forms the successor of *Arzawa*, whose capital has been *Apaša* “Ephesos”: evidently, the center of gravity in the region has shifted from the Aegean coast, where Ephesos lies, to the eastern border with the Hittite lower land, where, according to the reconstruction advocated here, Beycesultan alias *Mira* is situated.

confused with the likewise triangular *17 *HANTAWAT* alias *rex* or *370 *ASU* alias *bonus*₂, with syllabic values [*as*], *su*, of which the latter, however, is less elongated). In sum, this leads us to the following sequence: *HAPA i -ha UMINA* “the river and this town”, in which the demonstrative *i-* “this” refers back to the place-name *Mira* of the first line or top side.⁷

Next, the last sign of the second line at its extreme left side can positively be identified as *400 for the number “1000”. Now, from this point, the inscriptions turns in the third line boustrophedon-wise from right-to-left direction of writing into a dextroverse one and consists of two angular signs open at the left side (>>). In my opinion, we are dealing here with two instances of a forerunner of *386^m or *vir*₂. In any case, it seems clear that in combination with the preceding *400 “1000” we are confronted here with the title of the owner of the seal, who specifies himself as “(overseer of) 1000 men” (the repetition of *386^m may be a means to express plurality). This particular title reminds us of the one attested for a text in Early Iron Age scribal tradition from Kirçoğlu, where in phrase 3 mention is made of *HANTA_ha-ta₄ 1000 PARNAsa* “a front (man over) the 1000 of the house” (Woudhuizen 2011: 264). But much more relevant to our present purposes, because it concerns a parallel from a Middle Bronze Age text, is the title attributed to the Aleppian dignitary *Nureyala* in a text from Byblos, conducted in the epichoric script, which in line 4 of the so-called bronze tablet d reads: *wa-ka-ya-lim le lim* “from among the overseers (overseer) of the 1000”, in which *lim* “1000” stands for the political institution of Aleppo’s assembly, comparable to the Hittite *panku-* (Woudhuizen 2007: 715-716 with note 7; 719).

In sum, then, the foregoing leads us to the following trans-literation and interpretation of the legend of the

⁷In Woudhuizen 2011: 408-409 I argue that the palatalization of PIE *[Ķ] > [z], though attested for cuneiform Luwian, is—apart from one cuneiform Luwian loan (*zārta₄/i-* “(to) desire” < PIE **k̑erd-* “heart”)—foreign to Luwian hieroglyphic, so that the secondary value *zi* of the polyphonic *376 as a reflex of PIE **k̑i-* “this” in this connection is unlikely. In any case, the distinction is immaterial here as it does not affect the interpretation *per se*.

stamp seal from Beycesultan: *mi+ra* \overline{HAPA} *i* *-ha* *UMINA* *1000^m* “Mira: (with respect to) the river and this town (overseer of) 1000 men” (cf. Fig. 1e).

With a view to the dating of the stamp seal from Beycesultan to the transitional period from Early to Middle Bronze Age, *c.* 2000 BC, it is interesting to note (though not particularly unexpected since it is well known that Luwian belongs to the Indo-European language family) that it shows evidence of the following Proto-Indo-European (= PIE) features:

- (1) *391 (sign in form of four vertical strokes) *m*, *má*, *mi* as acrophonically derived from the numeral *mauwa* “4” < PIE **mēi-* “less (than the full hand with five fingers)” (Carruba 1979: 195; Woudhuizen 2008: 179);
- (2) *hapa-* (sign in form of an undulating flow of water) “river” < PIE **h₂eb^(h)-* (Kitson 1996: 88, note 22; Woudhuizen 2010: 98);
- (3) *i-* (“demonstrative” sign in form of a pointing arrow) “this” < PIE **i-/ei-* (cf. Fortson 2004: 130; Mallory & Adams 2007: 417-418);
- (4) *-ha* “and”, later also occurring in full as *-hawa* < PIE **-k^we* (Mallory & Adams 2007: 62).

In my treatment of the earliest Cretan hieroglyphic seals and sealings, stemming from the beginning of the Middle Minoan period, *c.* 2000 BC, onwards (Woudhuizen 2006: 126-132), I also noted evidence for the Indo-European language, like:

- (1) the ox-head with four vertical strokes between its horns for the value *m+UWA* corresponding to Luwian hieroglyphic *107 *m+UWA*, *mu* < PIE **mēi-* “less (than the full hand with five fingers)” and **g^wow-* “ox”, with the for Luwian hieroglyphic regular loss of the initial voiced velar;
- (2) the deer or deer-antler sign E99 (numbering of the Cretan hieroglyphic signs according to Evans 1909) for the value *rú* corresponding to Luwian hieroglyphic *102-3 *KURUNT*, *KARUWANT*, *kar*; *RU(WA)NT*, *rú*; *INARA*, characterized in connection with the first two values of this

- polyphonic sign by the typically Luwian phonetic development *karu* > *kru* > *ru* as attested from the period of the Kültepe-Kanesh period onwards (Woudhuizen 2011: 401-402, note 10), and hence likewise bearing testimony of PIE **kerh₁*- “horn”;
- (3) the “bird of prey” sign E79-80 for the value *ARA, ra*, corresponding to Luwian hieroglyphic *130-3 *ARA, ar, ra* < PIE **h₂er-/h₂or-* “eagle”, with loss of the regular reflex [h] of laryngeal *[h₂] as incidentally attested for Luwian and perhaps attributable to the influence of a “Proto-Celtic” or “Old [Indo-]European” substrate in the regions in question (cf. Woudhuizen 2011: 417), traceable, in my opinion at least, from *c.* 3100 BC onwards (Woudhuizen 2010: 93-110).

In regard to the dating of the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age period from *c.* 2000 BC onwards in Anatolia as well as in Crete, however, it must be admitted that the Anatolian one is much more solid than its Cretan counterpart,⁸ so that I think that as far as the earliest datable document in the Indo-European tongue is concerned, priority should be assigned to the stamp seal from Beycesultan.

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⁸Note that knowing the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age in Anatolia is historically feasible owing to the records from level II of the Assyrian trading colony or *kārum* at Kültepe-Kanesh, which cover the period from late in the reign of the Assyrian king Erishum I to the end of that of one of his successors, Puzur-Ashur II, so, according to the Middle chronology, from about the last quarter of 20th century BC to the 30s of the 19th century BC, see Bryce 2010: 23-24, with refs. to Veenhof 1998. Apart from some onomastic evidence from the Kültepe-Kanesh period bearing testimony of Hittite type of names alongside Luwian ones, the earliest texts in Hittite, thus far taken for the earliest written evidence of an Indo-European tongue, belong to the subsequent Old Kingdom period (*c.* 1680-1500 BC), see Waal 2010: 14.

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