

Milkom

I. Introduction. *Levantine god*, →DDD. According to the biblical authors M. was the chief deity of the Ammonites (e.g., 1 Kgs 11:5, 33; 2 Kgs 23:13). His confusion with Moloch as well as misreadings of M. in biblical manuscripts have been discussed elsewhere (e.g., PUECH 1999). Despite the predominance of El-names in the Ammonite onomasticon (roughly 90 percent are constituted with the theophoric element “El” [HÜBNER 1992], but only about 7 percent contain references to M., for example, Milkom`ur, Milkom-gad, Bod/Bar-Milkom [AVIGAD/SASS 1997: nos. 860, 940, 853]; for an ostrakon from Tall Mazar with the personal name Milkomyat see YASSINE/TEIXIDOR 1986: 48f, no. 7), evidence does exist that M. could well have been the chief deity of the Ammonite kings. It is generally believed that the divine name *[M]lkm* can be reconstructed in the 8th cent. Amman citadel inscription, in which M. is referred to as the divine client or patron of the palatial and/or temple structures on the citadel mount of Jebel al-Qal`ah (HÜBNER 1992: 254). On the other hand, it is striking that none of the royal Ammonite names attested contain the theophoric name M., neither in the Hebrew Bible nor in Ammonite inscriptions (for a recent list of kings see: REINHOLD 2003; VAN DER VEEN 2005:137–184; 2007). This, however, is not necessarily a contradiction. It has been suggested that either M. (literally “king’s [deity]” or “divine king”: HÜBNER 1992: 254) was a royal epithet for El (DAVIAU/DION 1994; AUFRECHT 1999) or →Baal (HÜBNER 1992: 256; 1993: 137), or that El was a *deus otiosus* referring to M. (ISRAEL 1991: 333f; LEMAIRE 1994: 143). At any rate, M. and El may well have been worshipped as essentially one deity (UEHLINGER 1997: 118). No final answers can be reached at this point since the archaeological evidence is no doubt “ambiguous at best and meagre at most” (AUFRECHT 1999: 156). Several suggestions have been made concerning M.’s representation in Ammonite glyptic art, which need to be taken seriously, especially if certainty is precluded by lack of sufficient evidence.

II. Typology

II.1. Phenotypes

A. ANTHROPOMORPHIC: POSSIBLE.

A number of erect statues and figurines of bearded individuals wearing a plumed Atef crown (→Crown [Egypt] § II.1.2.9), a headdress worn by the Egyptian mummified god →Osiris as well as by female and beardless male East Mediterranean and Le-

vantine deities (DAVIAU/DION 1994; DAVIAU 2002: 66; DABROVSKI 1995; UEHLINGER 1997: 104, 112f, 117f, 121; MEZA 2000: 205–207), have been unearthed in Jordan. They belong to a larger group of Ammonite statues and statuettes in the round dating to the 8th–6th cent., and have been subdivided into four or five groups according to Egyptian, Transjordanian, Syro-Phoenician, and Assyrian features (DORNEMANN 1983: 153–163; ABOU ASSAF 1980: 48–85; ZAYADINE 1991: 31–61). Granite and limestone statues (e.g., J 1657: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 3; BARNETT 1951: pl. 10) were discovered in Amman on the citadel mount of Jebel al-Qal`ah and elsewhere in (J 4767: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 11:19) and near Amman (J 16739: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 5:7). Another specimen was found at Khirbet al-Hajjar (J 12953: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 1; IBRAHIM 1971: pl. 2). Fragments of more statuettes were found at Abu `Alanda (J 12465: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 11:18), while others (e.g., J 8882: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 4:4; J 6806: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 4:5; J 2801: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 4:6; Beirut No. 60.30: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 11:20) are unprovenanced. The statuettes and statues vary in size between 30–85 cm. The same figure is also represented on a limestone relief (HUMBERT/ZAYADINE 1992: pl. 9:a) and by small clay figurines, also dating to the 8th–6th cent., which were found at Tall Jawa (DAVIAU/DION 1994: pl. 10; DAVIAU 2002: fig. 2.33:1) and on the citadel mount of Amman (ZAYADINE 1989: 362). Two specimens and a torso from Tall al-`Umayri may also be related (DABROWSKI 1995: figs. 5–7). A deity with what may be an Atef crown and a two-winged uraeus can be seen on an Ammonite jar handle impression from Tall al-`Umayri (EGGLER/KEEL 2006: Tall al-`Umeiri no. 50).

Although the represented figures share some common grounds with the Egyptian god Osiris, several elements are of local Ammonite nature, such as the heal-long gown, the scarf wrapped around the shoulder, and in many cases a trimmed natural beard (with and without moustache). Even though the Atef crown is also worn by other Levantine deities (UEHLINGER 1997: figs. 3, 19–20, 22) and though clay figurines normally represent deities only (STERN 2001: 251), some evidence suggests that these figures could also be Ammonite monarchs (ZAYADINE 1991: 31–61; HÜBNER 1992: 267; MEZA 2000: 205). One statue (J 1656: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 6; BARNETT 1951: pl. 11), albeit without Atef crown but with the same clothes worn by most Atef crown

figures, is identified in an inscription as “Yarh’azar, son of Zakir, son of the Shanipu/i” (BARNETT 1951; AUFRECHT 1989: no. 58; LIPÍŃSKI 2006: 317). It is confirmed in the Assyrian annals of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727) that this individual is of royal descent by identifying his grandfather Sanipu as king of the Ammonites (PRITCHARD 1969: 282; HÜBNER 1992: 189; REINHOLD 2003: 106f; VAN DER VEEN 2005: 159). The posture of these statues has been likened to that of the royal statuaries of Egypt and Assyria (ABOU ASSAF 1980: 19–76; IBRAHIM 1971: 92–97; 1989: 59–71). While most if not all Osirid statues have their left arms bent as if holding a scepter, a lotus flower is held by Yarh’azar as well as by another headless statue from the citadel mount in Amman (J 8124: ABOU ASSAF 1980: pl. 7). The lotus flower is a common Levantine symbol of regeneration and rebirth, frequently found in the hands of living and deceased monarchs as on the Byblite Ahiham sarcophagus (→**King [Levant] 22***) or the stelae of Kilamuwa and Barrakab of Sam’al (→**Rakib–El 1*–2**). Bringing both aspects together, it has therefore been surmised that the Atef-crowned statues may well represent deified deceased kings who were venerated at the citadel mount of Ammon–Rabbah (MEZA 2000: 205). Unmarked pupils on Atef crown statue J 1657 and an anthropoid sarcophagus from Sahab may also portray the deified monarch during his “sleep of death” (ZAYADINE 1991: 37). The cult of the deified kings of Ammon would not be dissimilar to that of the Pharaohs, who were united with Osiris in the afterlife (VAN DER VEEN forthcoming; also MEZA 2000: 205). The Osirid link may be further supported by an 8th–7th cent. bronze figurine from Assur (JAKOB–ROST 1990: fig. 203). While this figurine wears the same Atef crown and possesses the same facial “Ammonite” features (big ears, almond-shaped eyes, and neatly trimmed Levantine beard), it quite clearly holds the very insignia of the Egyptian deity Osiris, the crook and the flail (pers. comm. R.–B. WARTKE, March 2010). In a transferred sense therefore, the question must be raised whether the cult of the deceased Ammonite kings on the one hand and that of the Osirid statuaries/figurines on the other may be directly related to that of M. (UEHLINGER 1997: 118) in that, as in Egypt, the Ammonite king would have united with the Ammonite Atef-crowned Osirid deity M., i.e., the Ammonite divine “Melek.” Strikingly, all Atef-crowned statuary found to date occurred in a close radius of less than 10 km from Amman, which would support their

proximity to the Ammonite royal cult. This cultic tradition would then recall that of Bronze Age Ugarit, where ^d*malikū* deities (“divine kings”) were also closely associated with the *rp’um* spirits of the Ugaritic deceased kings (HEALEY 1978). Moreover, the Mesopotamian *kispum* ritual (COHEN 2005: 104–108) as well as the ancestral royal cult at Qatna come to mind (PFÄLZNER 2009). However, more research will be necessary to confirm this apparent connection (VAN DER VEEN forthcoming).

B. THERIOMORPHIC: POSSIBLE

1. Some scholars (HÜBNER 1992: 262; 1993: 137) consider M. as essentially the Ammonite form of the Canaanite weather god →Baal. Indeed, Baal belongs to the Ammonite pantheon and is especially attested by inscriptions from the 6th–5th cent. and most evidently by theophoric names such as Ba’alyasha’ (VAN DER VEEN 2007: 66–70; EGGLER/KEEL 2006: Tall al-‘Umayri no. 4), *b’ly’[.]* (EGGLER/KEEL 2006: Tall al-‘Umayri no. 30), and a fragmentary personal name (or separate divine name) in the Amman theatre inscription *-jb’l* (DAJANI 1967–1968: 65–67). Standing and striding bulls, an animal often associated with the weather god, are depicted partly in association with astral, solar, and lunar elements that emphasize their heavenly abode on several stamp seals from Jordan (EGGLER/KEEL 2006: ‘Amman nos. 9, 51; Karak no. 4; Pella no. 74; Rudschm al-Malfuf Süd no. 1; Tell al-Mazar no. 18; Tall al-‘Umayri nos. 3, 11; Tall as-Sa’idiya no. 10), and unprovenanced name seals which are classified as Ammonite by their inscription (EGGLER/KEEL 2006: as–Salt no. 1; AVIGAD/SASS 1997: nos. 937, 971, 979, 985). It can therefore be reasoned that they could be representations of M. in his role as weather god. Moreover, striding bulls are depicted on two seals, which bear personal names with the M. theophoric element (Milkom’az; Bod/Bar–milkom: AVIGAD/SASS 1997: nos. 792, 853). But since bulls appear on a large variety of personal seals with unrelated theophoric names, their significance for the study of M. is hardly conclusive (HÜBNER 1993: 136–138). This reasoning also applies for the alternative explanation that the bull may represent El (= M.?).

2. R. W. YOUNKER (1985: 175–177; 1989: 376f) has conjectured that M. may be represented by the four-winged scarab beetle found on a jar stopper from Tall al-‘Umayri (EGGLER/KEEL 2006: Tall al-‘Umayri no. 4), which names Milkom’ur, servant/courtier of Ba’alyasha’, i.e., Baalis (ca. 590), king of the sons of Ammon (see

Jer 40:14; VAN DER VEEN 2007). The four-winged scarab beetle pushes a ball of dung (representing the solar disk of the sun god →Re). YOUNKER suggests that the beetle may be the royal emblem of the kings of Ammon, as it apparently was in 8th cent. Israel and Judah. This symbol is depicted on two bureaucratic Ammonite seals (the above-mentioned seal of Milkom'ur and the unprovenanced seal of Shoḥer: AVIGAD/SASS 1997: no. 865), as well as on a private seal (EGGLER/KEEL 2006: Sahab no. 19) allegedly from Sahab. The beetle is flanked by two identical poles on both seals, each topped with an inverted crescent and a round object ("inverted lunar crescents and disks"). YOUNKER interprets the poles as lunar standards and the whole as a symbol of the astralized national Ammonite deity M. Furthermore, M. is compared with the Punic deity →Baal-Hammon, who also adopted solar and lunar attributes. The astral attributes of M. are indeed supported by the name Milkom'ur, i.e., "M. is a light/lamp." Other seals with the same central image of the four-winged beetle are the seal of "Menaḥem, the son of Yenaḥem" (EGGLER/KEEL 2006: 'Amman no. 7) from the Adoninur tomb, on an Ammonite seal from Byblos (AVIGAD/SASS 1997: no. 990), and on an unprovenanced seal of an unknown son of "...Elḥanan" (AVIGAD/SASS 1997 no. 987). Although it cannot be categorically ruled out that the scarab beetle was used as a royal emblem by the Ammonites and that it may have represented M., it is far from certain. Both the divergence and absence of symbols on Ammonite bureaucratic seals precludes this (HÜBNER 1993: 140; VAN DER VEEN 2005: 167–171). The alternative interpretation of the "lunar poles" as floral standards (VAN DER VEEN 2005: 171–176) also sheds doubt on suggested lunar attributes of M.

III. Sources

III.1. Chronological range. It is evident from the Amman citadel inscription (which appears to refer to him as the divine patron deity of the Ammonite rulers) and from a number of seals that M. was worshipped in Ammon during the 8th–6th cent. The biblical texts refer to him in the time of the Israelite united monarchy in the 10th cent. All the suggested figures, which may represent him as deity, date to a limited time frame stretching from the 8th–5th cent., i.e., from the Ammonite monarchy period to the subsequent periods of annexation by Babylon and Persia.

III.2. Geographical distribution. If M. is to be identified with the Atef-crowned statues and figurines (see § II.1.A), their

geographical distribution is mainly limited to the vicinity of the Ammonite capital of Ammon-Rabbah. A possible exception may be the Ammonite-styled bronze figurine found at Assur representing an Atef-crowned deity with the very insignia of the Egyptian god Osiris. As is evident from the unprovenanced Assyrian personal name seal of Mannugi-Inurta, i.e., "blessed to Milkom" (AVIGAD/SASS 1997: no. 805), Ammonites continued to worship M. even when far away from their homeland (see also AVIGAD/SASS 1997: nos. 792 and 853). If M. was predominantly worshipped as a weather god and was depicted as a bull with astral connotation, the relevant provenanced seals all stem from the Ammonite heartland (Amman, al-Karak, Pella, Rujm al-Malfuf, Tall al-Mazar, Tall al-'Umayri, Tall al-Sa'idiya). If M. was represented (also?) by the royal emblem of a four-winged scarab beetle (in association with lunar or floral standards?), he is attested on provenanced seals and seal impressions from Amman, Sahab (?), and Tall al-'Umayri.

III.3. Object types. Depending on the suggested identification of M., the national Ammonite deity would either be depicted on statues and figurines or on stamp seals.

IV. Conclusion. Although the study of Ammonite personal names has shown that the majority of theophoric name elements refers to El and not to M. as the main deity in ancient Ammon, there is good reason to believe that both deities were worshipped in ancient Ammon as essentially one god. At any rate, as can be deduced from a variety of considerations, the worship of M. was predominantly related to the royal cult at the capital city of Ammon-Rabbah. There is good reason to believe that both the royal deity M. and his cult had adopted aspects from the Osirid cult in Egypt. As in Egypt, the Ammonite rulers would be united with M. upon death and would be venerated as deified royal spirits at the residential site on Jebel al-Qal'ah of ancient Ammon-Rabbah (Amman), as may be evident from multiple basalt and limestone Atef-crowned statues and figurines which were excavated in and near Amman. The cult of deified deceased kings finds good parallels in the history of the ancient Near East, for example in Syria and Mesopotamia. However, it is also possible that M. was worshipped (also?) as a weather god in the form of a bull, often in association with astral, lunar and solar elements, as evidenced by Ammonite seals. These bulls could, however, instead be representations of El, who may have been identified with

M. as has been suggested by several scholars. Whether or not M. was (also) represented by a royal emblem of a four-winged scarab beetle (an image found on some bureaucratic seals) deserves further study.

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IV. Selected bibliography

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