

BYBLOS IN ANCIENT RECORDS

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Byblos is the earliest of all cities in Syria-Palestine mentioned in Egyptian records as well as in cuneiform documents of Mesopotamia. This famous port city on the Phoenician coast was one of the most important export cities of Lebanon lumber, especially of cedar, and had therefore close connections with Egypt and Assyria-Babylonia in many periods of antiquity. This is the reason that the name of this city occurs frequently in ancient records.

In 1866 F. J. Chabas recognized the name of *G'bal* (i.e. Byblos) in the place name *Kpn* (Table I, 22) found in Papyrus Anastasi I.¹ Of all Syro-Palestinian place names none has been better authenticated than that of Byblos, for it occurs not only in hieroglyphic and hieratic records of Egypt for almost 2000 years but also in hieroglyphic inscriptions discovered in the ruins of ancient Byblos.

The earliest occurrence of the city's name comes from the lintel of a false door of a 4th Dynasty mastaba at Giza opened in 1953.² Its spelling *Kbn* (Table I, 1) agrees with that dominating throughout the Old Kingdom period in records coming from Egypt as well as from Byblos itself. During the 6th Dynasty *Kbn* (Table I, 2, 3) is mentioned in the tomb inscription of Khui of Aswan as a place to which he together

¹ F. J. Chabas, *Voyage d'un Égyptien* (Chalon-sur-Saône, 1866), pp. 156-59.

² J. Leclant, "Fouilles et travaux en Égypte, 1952-1953," *Orientalia*, XXIII (1954), 73. See Table I for the actual spelling in hieroglyphs of this name in its various forms found in other inscriptions and texts as referred to in this article.

with another companion had traveled,³ and occurs also on a bas relief from Byblos.⁴

In a text from this same dynasty—the inscription of Pepinakht—occurs also for the first time the term “Byblos-ships,” sea-faring vessels used for the transport of lumber. In this text as well as in a Wadi Hammamat inscription of the 11th Dynasty the spelling for such ships is *Kbn.t.*⁵ From the 18th Dynasty on the spelling of these ships in harmony with that used for the city’s name is *Kpn.t.*⁶ P. Montet believes that the name “Byblos-ships” was applied to vessels which had either been constructed in Byblos or elsewhere of material imported from that city.⁷ The correctness of this view has been questioned by T. Säve-Söderbergh⁸ and cannot be demonstrated, yet there can be no doubt that the Byblos-ships got their name from the city of Byblos. This name may have merely been given to any large sea-going vessels, because the most important overseas place with which trading was carried on was Byblos.

During the 12th Dynasty a change took place in the spelling of the Egyptian name of Byblos. On two 12th Dynasty Coffin Texts the former spelling *Kbn* (Table I, 4, 5) still prevails,⁹ and it is at the same time also found as an element

³ Percy E. Newberry, “Three Old-Kingdom Travellers to Byblos and Pwenet”, *JEA*, XXIV (1938), 182-83.

⁴ Pierre Montet, *Byblos et L'Égypte* (Paris, 1928), pp. 35-37, Pls. XXIV, XXVIII.

⁵ Kurt Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* (2d ed.; Leipzig, 1932), p. 134, line 15; J. Couyat and P. Montet, *Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques et hiératiques du Ouâdi Hammâmât* (Cairo, 1912), p. 82, No. 114, line 9.

⁶ For the various spellings of the “Byblos-ships” see Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, V, 118, and the references given there.

⁷ Montet, “Pays et princes redoutés des Égyptiens sous la XIIIe Dynastie,” *Kémi*, I (1928), 19-28; Montet, “Byblos et les navires giblites,” *Kémi*, XIII (1954), 62-70.

⁸ Torgny Säve-Söderbergh, *The Navy of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty* (Upsala, 1946), pp. 12, 48-49.

⁹ A. de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, I (Chicago, 1935), pp. 262, 268.

in two occurrences of the personal name *Nb.t-Kbny* (Table II, 1, 2).¹⁰ However, during that same dynasty the *b* in *Kbn* was replaced by *p*, and from now on *Kpn* was quite regularly spelled with the *k3p*-sign. This new spelling with the *k3p*-sign is encountered first in the B manuscript of the Story of Sinuhe which dates from the late 12th Dynasty and then also in the R manuscript (Table I, 9, 10)¹¹ which may be slightly later. Also in a letter from Kahun this new spelling is found (Table I, 13),¹² and as part of the personal name *Nb.t-Kpny* (Table II, 4-6) which occurs in several Middle Kingdom inscriptions. They come most probably from the latter part of the 12th Dynasty, although it is not possible to date them accurately.¹³ In this connection it is of special interest to find a hybrid spelling of the name *Nb.t-Kpny* (Table II, 3) on a 12th-Dynasty stele in the British Museum. On this stele the *k3p*-sign is followed by the hieroglyph *b*.¹⁴ This evidence shows clearly that the transition from *Kbn* to *Kpn* took place during the 12th Dynasty.

This fact is of great importance for the dating of the two series of Execration Texts published by Sethe¹⁵ and Posener.¹⁶ Although all scholars agree that they were written during the Middle Kingdom, no agreement has been accomplished

¹⁰ H. O. Lange, and H. Schäfer, *Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reiches* (4 vols.; Berlin, 1902-1925), I, 244: Ahmed Bey Kamal, "Fouilles à Dara et à Qoçéir el-Amarna," *ASAE*, XIII (1912), 135. See Table II for the actual spelling in hieroglyphs of these names and others mentioned in this article.

¹¹ Sinuhe B manuscript line 29; R manuscript line 53.

¹² F. Ll. Griffith, *Hieratic Papyri from Kahun and Gurob* (London, 1898), pp. 69-70, Pl. XXVIII, line 5.

¹³ A. Erman, "Zur ägyptischen Religion," *ZÄS*, XLII (1905), 109; Lange and Schäfer, *op. cit.*, II, 305.

¹⁴ *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae, etc., in the British Museum*, III (London, 1912), 6, Pl. VIII.

¹⁵ Sethe, *Die Ächtung feindlicher Fürsten, Völker und Dinge auf alt-ägyptischen Tongefässcherben des Mittleren Reiches* ("Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse, No. 5," Berlin, 1926).

¹⁶ G. Posener, *Princes et pays d'Asie et de Nubie* (Brussels, 1940).

as to their exact dating, for which reason they have been dated by scholars variously from the 21st to the 18th century B.C.¹⁷ Leaving aside the various arguments advanced in favor of an early or late date for these texts, it may be pointed out in this connection, that Byblos occurs several times in both series of texts. The spelling *Kbn* occurs twice in Sethe's texts (Table I, 6) and is found once in Posener's texts (Table I, 7). However, the spelling *Kpn* is found four times in Sethe's texts (Table I, 11), and is the common form in the texts published by Posener (Table I, 12). Of special interest is a hybrid spelling found once in Posener's texts, in which the *n* of the name spelled *Kbn* is followed by the *kꜣp*-sign (Table I, 8).¹⁸

In surveying the Middle Kingdom evidence it is of importance to note that in the religious Coffin Texts of the 12th Dynasty the name of Byblos is still spelled with the old *b*, while in the magical Execration Texts the newer spelling with *p* prevails, although rare writings with *b* and a hybrid form show that these texts have their roots in older ages. This confirms the observation frequently made with regard to religious and magical texts that they show a tendency to continue archaic forms and an old orthography much longer than secular texts. This evidence seems to indicate that the Execration Texts belong in the late 12th Dynasty or in the early 13th Dynasty. For various reasons combined with the evidence here presented I am, therefore, inclined to place both series of texts toward the end of the 12th Dynasty with Posener's texts following those of Sethe.

From the Second Intermediate Period come four occurrences of the name of Byblos (*Kpn*) written on objects found in the excavations of that city, namely one on a sickle sword of Prince *Ypšmwib*, one on a relief of Prince *'Intn*, and two on

¹⁷ See W. F. Albright, "The Land of Damascus Between 1850 and 1750 B.C.," *BASOR*, No. 83 (Oct. 1941), 32-33.

¹⁸ Sethe, *Die Ächtung feindlicher Fürsten*, p. 55; Posener, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

scarabs of 'Intn (Table I, 14-16).¹⁹ The name occurs also in the Papyrus Ebers written during the Second Intermediate Period (Table I, 17).²⁰

In New Kingdom texts Byblos (*Kḫn*) occurs on the Gebel Barkal Stele of Thutmose III (Table I, 19),²¹ on a stele of *Wsr-Št.t*, an officer of Amenhotep II (Table I, 20)²² and in an Asiatic list of Amenhotep III (Table I, 21).²³ It is also found in the satirical letter of the Papyrus Anastasi I of the 19th Dynasty (Table I, 22),²⁴ in the Wen-Amon story of the 21st Dynasty (Table I, 23-24),²⁵ and in the Onomasticon of Amenope which comes either from the 21st or the 22d Dynasty (Table I, 25).²⁶ Furthermore, the element *Kḫn* occurs occasionally in personal names during the New Kingdom period (Table II, 7-9).²⁷

In cuneiform records Byblos is mentioned first in two Drēhem texts of the 3d Dynasty of Ur, of which one was recently published by E. Sollberger, while the other had already been published earlier by N. Schneider although the

¹⁹ Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, pp. 174-77, Pl. XCIX; M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos*, I (Paris, 1939), 197-98, Pl. XXX; Newberry, "A Middle Kingdom Mayor of Byblos," *JEA*, XIV (1928), 109.

²⁰ Walter Wreszinski, *Der Papyrus Ebers* (Leipzig, 1913), p. 115.

²¹ G. A. Reisner and M. B. Reisner, "Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal," *ZÄS*, LXIX (1933), 29, line 11. Literally, "the Lady (= goddess) of Byblos," whom the Egyptians equated with their Hat-Hor; her name stands here for the city. The name Byblos occurs probably also in the Leiden Papyrus I 344 which contains the admonitions of Ipu-wer, though only half of the name is preserved (Table I, 18), Alan H. Gardiner, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage* (Leipzig, 1909), pp. 32-33.

²² Wolfgang Helck, "Eine Stele des Vizekönigs *Wsr-Št.t*," *JNES*, XIV (1955), 23. It is of interest to note that in this 18th-Dynasty text the early *b* turns up in the name of Byblos just as in the personal name *Nb.t-Kbny*, which comes approximately from the same time (Table II, 7).

²³ J. Simons, *Handbook for the Study of Egyptian Topographical Lists Relating to Western Asia* (Leiden, 1937), No. IX/f2.

²⁴ Papyrus Anastasi I, col. 20, lines 7 and 21.

²⁵ Wen-Amon, col. 2, line 82; col. 3, line 12.

²⁶ Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* (London, 1947), I, 150*.

²⁷ See Table II.

name was not recognized by him.²⁸ In both texts the city is spelled *Ku-ub-la*. In all later cuneiform records—the Mari texts of the 18th century B.C., the Amarna Letters of the 14th century B.C.,²⁹ the Assyrian texts from Tiglath-pileser I down to Ashurbanipal, and a Babylonian text from the time of Nebuchadnezzar II—the spelling is *Gublu*, *Gubal* or *Gubla*. Following W. F. Albright's short chronology³⁰ the Ur III texts were written between c. 2070-1960 B.C. thus coinciding with the early Middle Kingdom Period (Dynasties XI-XII) in Egypt. In this period the name of Byblos was spelled *Kbn* in Egypt, which closely agrees with the spelling *Kubla* of the Drēhem texts. That two centuries later and henceforth the name was written in cuneiform sources with a *g*, and in Egypt, beginning with the late 19th century B.C., regularly with the *k3p*-sign seems to indicate that a change in pronunciation of that name had taken place in the early second millennium B.C. I will not suggest that the *k*-sound in the *k3p*-sign is closer to *g* than to *k*, for which otherwise no evidence exists, but the Egyptian scribes of the late Middle Kingdom must have felt that the old spelling *Kbn* did no longer correspond to the real pronunciation of the name for which reason they initiated the orthographic changes which have already been discussed.

In Phoenician inscriptions written in alphabetic script the name of Byblos occurs first on the Ahiram Sarcophagus of the 10th century B.C. and then in several other inscriptions found at Byblos.³¹ The name, written *Gbl*, was probably pronounced *gubl*, as is attested by the Assyrian transliterations

²⁸ Edmond Sollberger, "Byblos sous les rois d'Ur," *AfO*, XIX (1959-1960), 120-122.

²⁹ In Amarna Letter 67, line 14, the city's name occurs as *Kubla*, which may be a scribal error, for the name is found numerous times as *Gubla* in other Amarna Letters.

³⁰ Albright, "A Third Revision of the Early Chronology of Western Asia", *BASOR*, No. 88 (Dec. 1942), 32.

³¹ The references are conveniently collected in Zellig S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (New Haven, Conn., 1936), p. 93. For the texts see Albright, "The Phoenician Inscriptions of the Tenth Century B.C. from Byblos", *JAOS*, LXVII (1947), 153-160.

and by the Onomasticon of Eusebius in which the name is spelled Γοβελ.³² In the Hebrew Bible (Eze 27: 9) the spelling גבל corresponds to that regularly found in Phoenician alphabetic inscriptions. Cyrus H. Gordon has pointed out that the Massoretic pointing *G·bal* is not an error, but simply the Aramaic form of a Hebrew *Göbel*.³³

How the Greeks changing the initial *g* to *b* obtained the form *Byblos* has been discussed by Albright, and does not need to be repeated here.³⁴

Postscript

Since this article was written the hieroglyphic text of an obelisk found by Dunand in the Obelisk-Temple at Byblos has been published by Montet in *Kémi*, 16 (1962), 96. In Dunand's publication of plates (*Fouilles de Byblos*, II [Paris, 1950-1958], Plate XXXII: 2) the photograph was not clear enough to read the text, though one could suspect from Dunand's transliteration given on p. 818 of his text volume that the name of Byblos was written with the *k3p-sign*. Montet's article confirms this assumption. It shows that the spelling of *Kpn* on the obelisk is identical to that found on the sickle-sword of *Ypšmwib* of Byblos which is to be dated in the early 13th Dynasty (Table I, 14).

This spelling has an important bearing on the dating of the obelisk. Albright has suggested a date of about 2000 B.C. for this inscription. He does it on the basis of the orthography of the personal names found in the text, and because of the occurrence of the element *Harsaphes* in the name *Hršf-R*, the divine suzerain of the Heracleopolitan kings of the 9th

³² *Eusebii Onomasticon*, ed. E. Klostermann (Leipzig, 1904), p. 58, lines 5-6.

³³ Cyrus H. Gordon, "Marginal Notes on the Ancient Middle East," *Jahrbuch für kleinasiatische Forschung*, II (1952-1953), 53.

³⁴ Albright, "Some Oriental Glosses on the Homeric Problem," *AJA*, LIV (1950), 162-176; see also G. J. Thierry, "Gebál, Byblos, Bible-Paper," *VT*, I (1950-1951), 130-131.

and 10th Dynasties (*BASOR*, No. 155 [Oct. 1959], 33-34). I believe that this date is too high by at least two hundred years on the basis of the orthography of Byblos. This name was never spelled *Kpn* before the 12th Dynasty, in fact probably not before the end of that dynasty as Table I shows. If the inscription came from the First Intermediate Period or from the early Middle Kingdom we would expect Byblos to be spelled *Kbn* as it was regularly done up to the 12th Dynasty.

Table I

Byblos in Egyptian Records

1. Dyn.	IV. Mastaba of <i>Wnnt</i> at Giza	
2. Dyn.	VI. Khui's tomb at Aswan	
3. Dyn.	VI. Bas relief from Byblos	
4. Dyn.	XII. Coffin text of Amenemhet of el-Bersheh	
5. Dyn.	XII. Coffin text of <i>S3t-hd-htp</i> of el-Bersheh	
6. Dyn.	XII. Sethe's Execration texts (twice)	
7. Dyn.	XII. Posener's Execration texts (once)	
8. Dyn.	XII. Posener's Execration texts (once)	
9. Dyn.	XII. Sinuhe Story, B 29	
10. Dyn.	XII. Sinuhe Story, R 53	
11. Dyn.	XII. Sethe's Execration texts (4 times)	

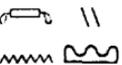
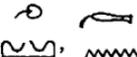
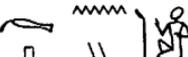
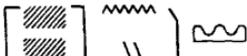
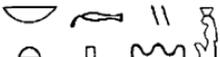
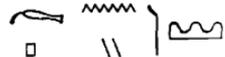
12. Dyn.	XII. Posener's Execration texts (usual)	
13. Dyn.	XII. Letter from Kahun	
14. Dyn.	XIII. Sickle sword of <i>Ypšmwib</i> from Byblos	
15. Dyn.	XIII. Bas relief of <i>'Intn</i> from Byblos	
16. Dyn.	XIII. Two scarabs of <i>'Intn</i> from Byblos	
17. Sec. Int. Per.	Papyrus Ebers	
18. Dyn. XVIII.	Admonitions of Ipuwer	
19. Dyn. XVIII.	Gebel Barkal Stele of Thutmose III	
20. Dyn. XVIII.	Stele of <i>Wšr-Št.t</i> from Fort Semneh	
21. Dyn. XVIII.	Asiatic List of Amenhotep III	
22. Dyn.	XIX. Pap. Anastasi I, 20, lines 7 and 21	
23. Dyn.	XXI. Wen-Amon 2, line 82	
24. Dyn.	XXI. Wen-Amon 3, line 12	
25. Dyn.	XXI. Onomasticon of Amenope 257 G	

Table II

The Names Nb.t-Kbny and Nb.t-Kpny

1. Dyn.	XII. Cairo Stele, No. 20,224	
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2. Dyn. XII. Dara Stele



3. Dyn. XII. Brit. Museum Stele



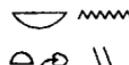
4. $\frac{5}{2}$ Dyn. XII. Louvre Inscr., C 43



5. Dyn. XII. Vienna Inscr., No. 14



6. Dyn. XII. Cairo Stele, No. 20,678



7. Dyn. XVIII. Nurse of *S3t-immn*



8. New Kingd. Turin Statue, No. 30



9. New Kingd. Turin Stele, No. 166

