



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Quaternary International

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/quaint

The characteristics and significance of prestige goods during the Early Bronze Age period of the southern Levant: The particular case of the four-handled basalt vessels phenomenon



Danny Rosenberg*, Rivka Chasan

Laboratory for Ground Stone Tools Research, Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa, 3498838, Israel

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 6 February 2017

Received in revised form

6 April 2017

Accepted 24 April 2017

Available online 15 May 2017

Keywords:

Four-handled basalt vessels

Early Bronze Age

Southern Levant

Prestige objects

Ground stone tools

ABSTRACT

The production of prestige objects is one of the hallmarks of the Early Bronze Age period in the southern Levant. The manufacture of notable numbers of highly invested basalt vessels during this time span forms an important aspect of the prestige good industries. The present paper deals with one of the facets of this prestige industry, the appearance of highly stylized basalt vessels bearing multiple handles. In this paper we identify patterns related to these invested vessels and discuss aspects of their chronology, distribution, typology, morphology, production, use and discard patterns. It is suggested that their significance was primarily bound with their value as special prestige objects and with the role they fulfilled in the public sphere during the Early Bronze Age period in the southern Levant.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd and INQUA. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The Early Bronze Age I period (henceforth EB I, ca. 3700–2950 cal BC) in the southern Levant involved increasing complexity of social and economic mechanisms, observed in significant shifts in settlement patterns, mortuary practices and the transition from village-based societies to rising urban centres (e.g. see discussions in Kempinsky, 1978; Esse, 1991; Joffe, 1991, 1993; Herzog, 1997; Philip, 2001, 2003; Chesson, 2003; Genz, 2003; Harrison and Savage, 2003). These changes are characterized by growing evidence for the accumulation of wealth, social hierarchies and far-ranging trade relations, entangled with shifts in different forms of production and transportation of goods and the exchange of ideas and ideologies (e.g. Milevski, 2011 and see references therein).

One aspect of the Chalcolithic–EB I transition pertains to shifts in trends associated with ‘regulations,’ conventions and the social and economic roles specific prestige goods fulfilled for the EB I communities and the ways in which these were circulated and controlled through various exchange networks (e.g. Rosen, 1983; Esse, 1991; Braun, 2002; Fischer, 2002; Philip, 2003; Milevski, 2008, 2011; Rowan and Levy, 2011; Rosenberg and Golani, 2012).

Ground stone tools, specifically basalt vessels, were among the most prominently traded products during the EB I, found in habitation sites and burial contexts (e.g. Braun, 1990; Rowan, 1998; Schaub, 2008). The production of basalt vessels, perceived by many scholars as prestige goods (e.g. Philip and Williams-Thorpe, 1993; Rowan, 1998, 2003; Schaub, 2008; Rosenberg and Golani, 2012), indicates some continuity in the material culture between these two periods despite changes in the scope of the production, typology, morphology and possibly distribution patterns and standardization.

Many of the EB I basalt vessels show high degrees of standardization and seem to follow specific guidelines. While such standardization is commonly conceptualized as a measure of increased production efficiency (e.g. Rowan and Levy, 2011), it can also be envisaged as a hint of craft specialization (Costin, 1991), although the type and level of such craft specialization is hard to establish due to the lack of the actual basalt vessel workshop/s (Costin, 2001). This could also reflect stylistic conventions that are anchored by social preferences (see also Rosenberg and Golani, 2012). Standardization and specific branches that emerge from the main stylistic conventional strands can also mirror specific usages or use contexts. Such functional formulations of material culture items can be public or private and mundane or cultic; however, it seems that more often we see ‘anomalies’ or specific objects that diverge from the formal conventional ‘rules’ as bearing

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: drosenberg@research.haifa.ac.il (D. Rosenberg), rivka.chasan@gmail.com (R. Chasan).

Table 1
EB sites with four-handled basalt vessels.

Site	Number of vessels	Sub-type	Period	Deposition context	References
Kabri	2	IIIA	EB I	Unclear	Current study
Me'ona	1	IIIA	EB I	Unclear	Braun, 1996, Fig. 14
Abu edh-Dhahab	1	III	EB Ib	Unclear	Getzov, 2004, Fig. 10.2
Ard el-Samra	1	IIIA	EB I	Burial cave	Getzov pers. com., 2011
Qiryat Ata	3	III(n=2); IIIA (n=1)	EB II (n=2); Unclear (n=1)	Unclear	Rowan, 2003, Fig. 6.6:5-6,12
Beth Ha'emeq	1	IIIA	EB II	Unclear	Givon, 1993, Fig. 17:3; 2002, Fig. 12:3
Tel Megadim	1	IIIA	EB I	Unclear	Rowan, 1998, Fig. 49a, appendix c.6
En Shadud	2	IIIA	EB I	Unclear	Braun, 1985, Fig. 39.1–2
'En Zippori	1	IIIA	EB Ib	Building floor	Milevski and Getzov, 2014, Fig. 22
Bet Yerah	7	III (n=1); IIIA (n=3); IIIB (n=3)	Unclear (n=5); EB I (n=1); EB III (n=1)	Unclear	Getzov, 2006, Fig. 2.18:10; Rosenberg and Greenberg, 2014, Fig. 15.16
Khirbet et-Tuwal	1	IIIA	EB Ib	Unclear	Eisenberg, 1998, Fig. 4:12
Beth Shean	5	IIIA (n=2); IIIB (n=3)	EB Ib (n=2); EB III (n=1); Unclear (n=2)	Unclear	Braun, 1990, Fig. 3.1; 2004, Figs. 4.4, 4.6.; Mazar and Rotem, 2012, Fig. 9.10:3-4
'En HaNaziv	1	IIIA	EB I	Burial cave	Amiran, 1989, pl. 1
Tirat Tzvi ^a	2	III (n=1); IIIA (n=1)	EB	Unclear	Anati, 1963, pp. 348; Braun, 1985, pp. 94, 1990, pp. 93
Tell Abu al-Kharaz	1	IIIA	EB Ib-II	Within defence system	Fischer, 2008, pp. 359, Fig. 323:1
Tel Megiddo	5	III (n=2); IIIA (n=3)	EB I	Unclear	Sass, 2000; Sass and Cinamon, 2006
Tel Megiddo (East)	9	III (n=3); IIIA (n=6)	EB Ib	Unclear	Greener, in press; Current study
Har Haruvim ^b	1	IIIA	EB II-III	Site's surface	Braun, 1990, Fig. 3.3
'En Esur	2	III (n=1); IIIA (n=1)	Surface	Above entrance to a Stratum IV building	Rowan, 2006; Fig. 6.1:15
Meser	1	IIIA	EB	Unclear	Current study; Dothan, 1957
Shoham	1	IIIA	EB	Unclear	Current study
Jericho	1	IIIA	EB I/II	Floor	Dorrell, 1983, Fig. 229:16
Palmahim Quarry	1	III	EB I	Unclear	Braun, 1996, pp. 20
Ashqelon-Barnea	1	IIIA	EB Ia-b	Open area in the settlement	Rosenberg, in press; Rosenberg and Golani, 2012
Tel Erani ^c	1	III	EB	Unclear	Braun, 1990
Tel Halif Terrace	2	III (n=1); IIIA (n=1)	EB Ib (n=1); EB (n=1)	Pit and topsoil	Alon and Yekutieli, 1995, Fig. 27.4; Rowan, 1998, appendix c.11
Arad	1	IIIA	EB I	Unclear	Amiran, 1978, pl. 78:1
Unknown	1	IIIA	EB	Unclear	Amiran, 1989
Unknown	1	IIIA	EB	Unclear	Braun, 1990, Fig. 3.2
Total	58				

^a Anati claimed one of these to be from "Kinnereth."

^b The Har Haruvim vessel is the only one we found to be made of non-basaltic raw material – in this case limestone.

^c There is at least one handled vessel in Tel Erani, although more are noted.

special public and more often cultic significance pertaining to specific ritualistic activity, sometimes at the community level (e.g. Chalcolithic pottery and basalt fenestrated pedestal vessels, cornets, figurines and copper items, see e.g. Alon and Levy, 1989; Amiran and Porat, 1984; Epstein, 1982; Rowan, 2013).

Attempts to understand relationships between material remains and public, cultic and religious practices have been part of numerous studies applying different approaches (e.g. Renfrew, 1994; Insoll, 2004; Kyriakidis, 2007). While linking specific items to public or cultic activities must rely on contextual data, in other examples we can use the sheer number of the objects (frequency and/or relative frequency) and their specific stylistic and morphometric traits as indications for their particular significance, even if the exact functions are unknown (Amiran, 1989). In this regard it is useful to document and discern the particular attributes of specific EB I prestige objects and see how stylistic conventions are formed and how these may have been regarded as an inseparable part of public and ritual activities, imperative for their success.

Four-handled basalt vessels are one of the best known yet understudied phenomenon of the EB I basalt vessel industry, reflecting selective production of highly designed vessels bearing multiple handles – a clear 'anomaly' within the 'conventional' EB I

basalt vessel industry that has no clear roots in the Chalcolithic basalt vessel industry. Although these vessels were previously discussed by different authors (e.g. Amiran, 1989; Braun, 1990; Rowan, 1998, pp. 202–203; Rosenberg and Greenberg, 2014), there has been no comprehensive attempt to systematically document and analyse their characteristics and place them in a more general context of EB I prestige goods production and use; thus we are presently left with only a fragmentary picture regarding these vessels' characteristics and significance. In this paper we present the results of a detailed study of the EB I four-handled basalt vessels and discuss patterns related to their chronology, distribution, typology and morphology, as well as their production, use and discard patterns. Following, we suggest that their significance was primarily attached to their value as special prestige objects and the role they played in the public sphere during the Early Bronze Age period in the southern Levant.

2. The EB four-handled basalt vessels of the southern Levant

In his study on basalt vessels of the EB I period, Braun (1990, pp. 87) defined the four-handled basalt vessels as having "a roughly square and almost flat base, a cylindrical wall, a concave outer

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات