

Fit for a (not-quite-so-great) King: A Faience Lion-Headed Cup from Hazor

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The complex system of reciprocal international relations in the Late Bronze Age (14th and 13th centuries BC) Eastern Mediterranean, comprised of several levels of diplomatic and commercial interactions between the various palatial polities participating in this system. These relations are reflected in the textual sources and iconographic records of the period. Value-laden luxury objects were the tangible means through which this system operated, and their contextual analysis forms the basis for reconstructing and interpreting its dynamics. A faience cup found at the royal precinct of Canaanite Hazor is discussed, in an attempt to assess the role of the Levantine kingdoms within the context of the Late Bronze Age 'koiné'.

Keywords: Hazor, Canaan, Late Bronze Age, faience, animal-headed cups

Introduction

The 14th and the 13th centuries BC were a period of intense political and commercial activity in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Great Powers of the time were tied to one another in a complex system of ceremonial relations, involving the exchange of greeting letters, brought by messengers bearing luxurious greeting gifts. Bulk goods and precious objects formed the cargo of royal ships roaming the Mediterranean, and an unprecedented dissemination of ideas, cultural concepts and élite habits is witnessed throughout the whole region. The prestige objects, regularly exchanged between the Great Kings and their peers and vassals, were the tangible means through which this Late Bronze koiné functioned, was maintained and thrived. The objects carried complex messages of reciprocity, equality and interdependence, and conferred a physical form to the behavioural conventions and dynamic relations within the system. These koiné objects share several common features, according to Feldman's recent discussion. They are made of expensive raw materials, their manufacture necessitates highly-skilled craftsmen and was probably palace-controlled, and they exhibit a narrow value-laden repertoire of subjects and an artistic hybridity of motifs (Feldman 2006, 10). Placed within their geographic

and chronological contexts, such objects provide us with a glimpse into the intricate system of political and commercial relations of the palatial polities of the Eastern Mediterranean. In the following, I will present an object from the royal precinct on the acropolis of Hazor, the largest Canaanite kingdom in the southern Levant, and discuss it in the context of the Late Bronze Age koiné.¹

The Lion-headed Cup from Hazor

The faience lion-headed cup (Figs 1–2) was found in the destruction layer of the Late Bronze Age 'Ceremonial Palace/Royal Sanctuary' of Hazor. The cup is small (diameter of 7 cm in the widest point of the neck opening, height is approximately 11 cm) and can be easily held in the palm of the hand. It was found broken into several pieces and is heavily restored, especially the area of the eyes and ears (Fig. 3).²

¹I thank Amnon Ben-Tor, Nava Panitz-Cohen, Joseph Maran and Miriam Tadmor, for their critical reading and valuable comments, and Cemal Pulak and Susanne Ebbinghaus for sharing with me their ideas about the animal-headed cups of the second and 1st millennia BC. Uza Zevulun pointed to the similarity between the Hazor cup and the Cypriot one published by Flourentzos, similarity that formed the basis of the former's reconstruction. Part of the research took place at Harvard University, where I spent a year of postdoctoral studies funded by the Rothschild Foundation and Fulbright Program. All interpretations presented below are, needless to say, my own responsibility.

²The cup (L. 7421 basket 44843) was found during the 1996 excavation season at Hazor, as part of the Selz Foundation Hazor Excavations in Memory of Yigael Yadin directed by Amnon Ben-Tor. It was masterfully restored by the Expedition's restorer, Orna Cohen. The drawings were done by Sarah Helbreich from the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and photographs by Menahem Grayevsky.



Figure 1 Lion-headed Cup from Hazor: frontal view

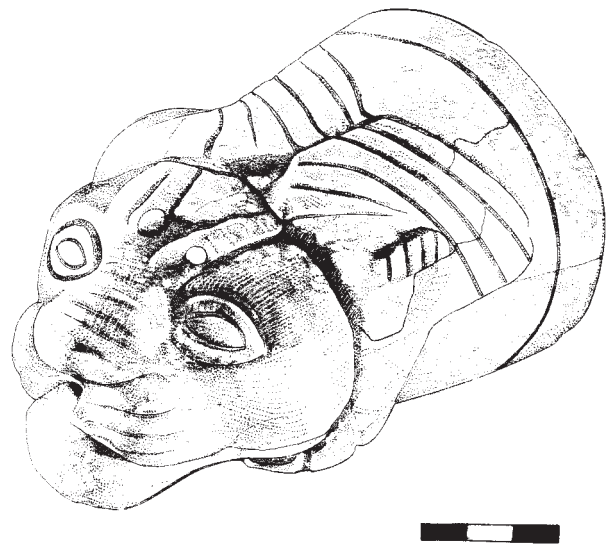


Figure 2 Lion-headed Cup from Hazor: frontal view

The vessel should be considered a cup rather than a rhyton, as there is only one large opening formed by the neck of the animal, and no second outlet in its muzzle (Koehl 1981; Yon 1997a). The liquid had to be drunk or poured over the rim rather than through a second outlet. Two holes for string attachment, located on both sides of the neck, form a part of the inner rim of the neck (Fig. 4). These can be explained either as the remains of a handle or a lid-fitting. The cup was made from white faience, with a yellowish

glaze on the rim and the mane. The forehead, the area around the eyes and the nose are grey-black and lustrous. The other parts of the vessel are not smoothed.

The details of the animal's head were executed by moulding and incising. A straight line is incised parallel to the rim of the cup, creating a border of around 1 cm. This line is crudely incised, and the width of the rim border is uneven throughout the vessel. The mane is depicted by two parallel groups of seven incised diagonal lines, converging into one



Figure 3 Lion-headed Cup from Hazor: as found



Figure 4 Lion-headed Cup from Hazor: back view

straight line perpendicular to the animal's face.³ A triangle is formed just above the animal's forehead. The borders of the mane are rounded. Two protrusions on both sides of the mane might be interpreted as the ears of the lion. The protrusion on the left, the only one preserved, is a rounded-out triangle, and its upper part is incised. The continuation of the mane around the head is depicted by a wide ring around the middle part of the vessel. The ring is decorated by a row of incised zig-zag lines, perhaps an imitation of a 'necklace' known in other cases of animal-shaped cups and rhytons (Muscarella 1974, nos 123–24).

The face of the lion is executed with careful attention to details. Based on the small lower section of the left eye that was preserved, the eyes were large and almond-shaped with accentuated eyebrows. On the forehead, above the nose, are two rounded asymmetrical protrusions. Two parallel diagonal lines align these protrusions to the mane, and they might symbolize actual features on lions' foreheads.

The nose and mouth of the animal were undoubtedly mould made. The nose is protruding, with a

slight hint of nostrils on its lower part. Four horizontal lines are executed on the upper part of the nose. A small round depression is attested under the nose. This depression forms the central part of the muzzle, and the diagonal lines extending from it on both sides probably represent the animal's whiskers. The mouth of the animal is wide and shallow. Although the vessel is rather crudely made, it gives a very vivid impression of the animal's facial features and expression.

The cup was found in the north-western room of the Ceremonial Palace/Royal Sanctuary (Fig. 5). This room and the adjacent room to the east contained a rich assemblage of objects, noteworthy among which are two model shrines, two gold-plated bronze statuettes, various jewellery items, a complete Cypriote WS II milk-bowl, and hundreds of pottery vessels (mainly open and carinated bowls, lamps and several large pithoi) (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999). It has been suggested that this structure served as a ceremonial public building, where religious banquets and feasts took place (Zuckerman 2006). While the definition of the structure as either a ceremonial palace or a sanctuary is debated (Ben-Tor 2006; Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg 2007), it is no doubt a royal edifice within the elite precinct of Late Bronze Age Hazor.

³This feature is the basis for the identification of the animal depicted as a lion rather than a lioness.



Figure 5 Ceremonial Precinct at Hazor. Find-spot of the lion-headed cup indicated

Animal-Headed Cups of the Bronze Age

Animal-headed cups (henceforth AHCs) of various shapes and materials appear in the written and iconographic record of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (Zevulun and Ziffer 2007). References to cups in the shape of bulls, calves, deers, rams, gazelles and lions, made of precious metals, appear both in the Mari and the Amarna archives (Dunham 1989; Moran 1992; Cochavi-Rainey 1999, EA 41, EA 25 *passim*). A bull-headed cup is enumerated among the wealth of precious objects listed in the temple inventories of the 15th century palace at Qatna (Bottéro 1949, 13, 33 n. 2). These texts are interpreted as lists of luxury objects donated by the kings of the city to Nin-Egal ('Lady of the City') and Samas ('God of the Royal Dynasty'), in fulfilment of the royal obligation to nourish and dress the deities (*ibid.* 38–39). Animal-headed rhytons made of precious metals and semiprecious stones are mentioned in the 13th-century BC context of Temple 2 at Hattusa (Otten 1989), and bull-headed cups of precious metal, inlaid with metal and semiprecious stone, were exchanged between Egyptian and Hittite kings in the 13th century BC (Cochavi-Rainey 1999, 201 KUB 3 70). Similar vessels are depicted in wall-paintings of the early 18th Dynasty officials' tombs, where gold and silver animal-headed 'rhytons' in various shapes are carried by *Keftiu* and Syrian messengers (Vercoutter 1956, 311–21, pls XXXVII–XLI; Wachsmann 1987, 58–59; Laboury 1990). All these references reflect the important place of these objects, both as cultic

equipment and as diplomatic gifts exchanged between the major rulers of the area, throughout most of the 2nd millennium BC (Peltenburg 1991, 168).

Actual finds of AHCs are not common. Clay bull and lion shaped rhyta (Hittite *BIBRU*), depicting the whole body of the animal or just its head, are known in Anatolia from the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC (Muscarella 1974, nos 123–24; Gorny 1996, 166–67; Özgüç 2001). Bull-headed rhyta made of stone and precious metals were found in palatial and royal funerary contexts in the Aegean region and were interpreted as ceremonial and ritual objects (Rehak 1995; Koehl 2006, 114–24). The earliest examples are the gold and silver drinking cups, in the shape of a lions' and a bulls' head, from Grave IV in Grave Circle A at Mycenae dated to the 15th century BC (Laboury 1990, 98; Koehl 1995). Metallic animal-headed cups are quite rare in Near Eastern contexts, probably due to the problem of recasting and recycling of precious metals. A ram-headed cup made of bronze was found at the royal palace of Qatna, in the 'Salle de la Pierre Noire', identified as the temple of the Goddess NIN.É.GAL. (du Mesnil du Buisson 1928, 19, no. 15, pl. XVI:1, XVII:1, XVIII; Zevulun 1987, 91–92). The cup was found together with a pile of unusually large bowls/plates and a group of Mycenaean vessels (du Mesnil du Buisson 1928, 13, pls II, VII, XIX:2 #14). Although the exact nature of the room is still unknown, its proximity to Hall C (previously designated the Sanctuaire and the Temple of Nin-Egal), where the temple inventories were found, is noteworthy (Novák and Pfälzner 2002, 80–83, figs 66, 73).

AHCs of faience were probably also considered prestige objects. Faience, the technology of which was known in Egypt since Pre-Dynastic times, was widely distributed in the Eastern Mediterranean by the 2nd millennium BC (McGovern *et al.* 1993; Nicholson 1998). In the New Kingdom, faience manufacture is allied with the newly introduced glass manufacturing techniques, and vitreous materials' industrial areas were found in palatial contexts at sites such as Amarna and Qantir. The mundane faience objects, like beads and amulets, were probably manufactured for the private market and were available to all levels of society (Shortland *et al.* 2001). This stands in contrast to the tightly court-controlled manufacture of glass objects and the more prestigious faience objects, which were no doubt made for the needs of the royal courts and the temples, and exchanged as high-value gifts (Peltenburg 1991, 170; Feldman 2006, 117–18). In the Late Bronze Age, local faience workshops probably existed also in the northern Levant, satisfying the needs of the western Asiatic élites and their neighbours for such prestige vessels (Caubet and Kaczmarczyk 1989; 1992; Courtois and Lagarce 1986, 155; Peltenburg 1972, 133–36; 1991). Several attempts were made to identify the products of such regional workshops on the basis of their technological and morphological characteristics (Peltenburg 1972; Caubet and Kaczmarczyk 1992).

The earliest faience AHCs published to date are the three or four examples of ram-headed cups, found together with a female-headed cup, as part of the cargo of the 14th century BC Uluburun shipwreck (Bass 1986, 290–91, figs 5–6; Bass *et al.* 1989, 7–8, fig. 12; Pulak 1988, 32, fig. 40; Pulak 1997, 244). The Uluburun cups are finely executed, and the details are depicted by both moulding and incision. The ram's and woman's headed vessels seem to share some common artistic details, such as the braid-like addition above the woman's face and the depiction of the ram's horns. These find close parallels in the faience cups of Enkomi (Courtois and Lagarce 1986, pl. XXVII:7–8, 10) and might indicate a common origin for the Cypriot and the Uluburun faience vessels. It is noteworthy that one of the ram-headed cups seems to have been broken and mended in antiquity, alluding to the special value of this object.

A fragment of a faience ram-headed cup was recently found in a 14th-century BC context at Tell Kazel in Syria, a site identified with ancient Sumur, the capital of Amurru (Badre and Gubel 1999–2000, 139 fig. 10:d). The cup was part of the Level 6 temple assemblage, consisting of several bowls and other

local and imported pottery vessels, bronze figurines and weapons, items of jewellery and a bone gaming box (Badre and Gubel 1999–2000, figs 9–11; Badre 2000, 39–42, figs 6–13).

Four female-headed and ram-headed faience cups were found at Tel Abu-Hawam on the Southern Levantine coast. According to the excavator, all the cups were found together in a Stratum V context, in the vicinity of Building 50, which is interpreted as a sanctuary (Hamilton 1935, 65, pls XXVII–XXX:425–29). Faience cups were also found in Cyprus, in rich tomb contexts at the coastal site of Enkomi. The Enkomi cups, which are dated to the 13th century BC, are shaped like ram, gazelle and horse heads, and were found in tombs together with female-headed cups (Courtois and Lagarce 1986, 152–56, pl. XXVII:7–11). Two faience cups in the shape of a horse and a lion(ess), from a private collection, are said to be from Cyprus and compared to those from Enkomi tombs (Flourentzos 1986, 169). The lioness cup is especially noteworthy, as it is almost identical to the Hazor cup in shape, technological details and colour scheme. Yon considers the Cypriot vessels as influenced by Levantine products or imported from the Levant (Yon 1997a, 54–56), but it is possible that at least some of the faience vessels were actually locally manufactured in Cyprus (Caubet and Kaczmarczyk 1989). The Hazor and the Cypriot unprovenanced cup are no doubt the product of one workshop, and indeed even of the same craftsman. Fragments of a least two faience AHCs were found at the Mycenaean citadel of Tiryns in the Argolid, in an area which was closely tied to the palace and is interpreted as the locus of production and storage of local and foreign prestige objects (Maran 2004, 13). This is the latest find-context of faience AHCs, the end of LH IIIB2 dated to the very end of the 13th century BC (Maran, pers. comm.).

Faience goblets shaped like female heads are closely related in terms of material, technology and context to the AHCs. The earliest example is the cup from Alalakh VII, dated to the MB II and considered by Mazzoni as the prototype of the later Late Bronze Age goblets (Mazzoni 1979–80, 238–39). At Ugarit, two female-headed cups, one of which is double-headed, were found in Tomb VI at Minet el-Beidah (Schaeffer 1933, 102–08, pls XI:1, XII:3–4; Caubet and Pierrat-Bonnefois 2005, figs 98–99). It appears that the combination of a ram and a female-headed cup had special cultic significance in the 13th century BC Eastern Mediterranean (Zevulun 1987, 93). Female-headed cups were interpreted by Mazzoni as representations of the nude Syrian goddess,

identified as Ishtar of the Canaanite pantheon (Mazzoni 1979–80). This religious identification has important implications for the interpretation of the faience AHCs which were found in the same contexts as well.

The historical references and the iconographic depictions of AHCs place them within the realm of royal prestige objects. The find-contexts of all Late Bronze Age AHCs can be defined as either royal (Qatna and probably also Uluburun and Tiryns), cultic (Abu-Hawam, Tel Kazel) or élite burial (Mycenae, Enkomi, Minet el-Beida), and thus corroborate the above observation. The AHCs can be interpreted as an important component of the corpus of value-laden prestige items exchanged between the palatial élites of the 2nd millennium BC (Liverani 1979; Sherratt and Sherratt 1991; Feldman 2006). A clear indication of the important part played by drinking-cups made of precious metals in this context is the references to the continuous exchange of AHCs, sent from one king to his peer and then on to still another royal persona, acquiring an enhanced value of distance and royal pedigree through this process (Peltenburg 1991, 168; Moran 1992, EA 41:39–43).

Lion-headed Cups of the Bronze Age

Lion-headed cups (LHCs) form a rather small but significant group within the Bronze Age AHCs, and seem to have a particular ritual and religious value within the Canaanite sphere. Such cups are specifically mentioned in the Mari archive (Deller 1985, 337–40; Dunham 1989, 218) and Hittite temple inventories (Otten 1989). LHCs made of precious metals are also depicted in Egyptian wall-paintings at the Theban tombs of Useramun, Menchepersonb and Rechmire, and are considered as the product of Asiatic workshops (Vercoutter 1956, 311–14, pls XXXVII–XXXVIII; Wachsmann 1987, 58–59, pls XXXIV, XXXVII, XL–XLI, LVI–LVIII). They are represented among the most valuable items in the lists of Syrian booty brought by Thutmose III (Wachsmann 1987, 58–59, pl. LIII:22; Sherratt and Sherratt 1991, fig. 2). The lion (and lioness) is a common motif in both the Near Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean art of the 2nd millennium BC, and is the most common predator depicted in the artistic repertoire of the Late Bronze Age koiné (Feldman 2006, 76–78). It is closely related to the power and authority of kingship and serves as the symbol of Canaanite Gods such as Ba'al, Resheph and Anat (Yadin 1985; Cornelius 1989).

Examples of LHCs are known in Anatolia from the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC and are usually interpreted as cultic vessels used in religious rituals (Özgüç 2001). Yadin cites a reference to a Hittite text published by Otten, where the elders of the Hittite city of Ura vow to offer a rhyton to the god of war, Ya-ri. In another text, the same god is offered a 'lion-shaped ivory object' by the king (Yadin 1985, n. 42, citing Weinfeld). In the Aegean region, LHC made of stone and 'Egyptian Alabaster' were found at Knossos and Akrotiri (Koehl 2006, 121–23, pls 25–26).

A miniature lion-headed cup was recently found at the royal palace of Qatna in Syria. The cup, which is about 5 cm tall, is impressively executed and its very minute details are depicted by incision (Al-Maqdissi *et al.* 2003, 211–13, abb. 12). The cup and its attached lid are made of Baltic amber, an extremely rare raw material in Levantine sites of the 2nd millennium BC. Amber is attested in the palace inventories of Qatna (Bottéro 1949, 19). Amber beads were found on board the Uluburun ship, and the material had no doubt a significant 'distance-value' in the Eastern Mediterranean of the 2nd millennium BC (Pulak 1988, 24–25; 2005, 304).

Three LHCs made of clay were found in Ugarit. Two are quite similar to one another in their general shape and details and seem to belong to one stylistic group. The first one was found in 1952 in the royal palace and is attributed to the 14th or 13th century BC (Weiss 1985, 291; Yon 1997b, 158, fig. 36a). The other one was found in a tomb and is dated to the 14th century BC (Schaeffer 1938, 194, pl. XIX:1; Yadin 1985, fig. 2). Both these cups are rather naturalistic in their depiction of the animals' features and similar in the execution of the crudely incised details, such as the rounded ears, the almond shaped eyes, the depiction of whiskers and the accentuated chin. The cups are made of unburnished clay, although both were found in élite ceremonial contexts.

The third example of an Ugaritic lion-headed cup was found in the 'House of Agaptarri', the neighbour of the 'House of the Priest-Magician', located between the temples of Dagan and Baal on the acropolis (Schaeffer 1978, *depliant* I, fig. 1). The house is dated on the basis of its ceramic assemblage to the 13th and beginning of 12th centuries BC (Ugarit Récent 3). The one-handled cup was found inside a semicircular installation designated as a cultic feature by the excavators in the corner of a small room (Schaeffer 1978, 154). The cup is roughly bi-conical in shape, and was found with part of the rim and neck broken, but otherwise intact (Schaeffer 1978,

figs 3–4). The details of the animal are crudely, even schematically, shaped, but its leonine features, such as the rounded ears and sharp fangs, are clearly visible. The pre-firing inscription on the neck of the cup reads ‘the lion’s face the nnn son of agptr has offered to Resheph GN’ (Schaeffer 1978, 153–54; Yadin 1985, 264, following Gordon). In his discussion of the Ugaritic cup and its inscription, Yadin argues for the connection between lion-faced vessels and the god Resheph, the Canaanite god worshipped at Ugarit and the Levantine coast during the Late Bronze Age (but see Cornelius 1994, 196). The absence of a known provenance for the lion-head faience cup from Cyprus, mentioned above, limits its contribution to this discussion.

In the 12th–11th centuries BC, after the collapse of the Late Bronze Age palatial system, similar LHCs were found in Philistine/Sea-People cultural contexts in the southern Levant (Mazar 1980, 101–3; Maeir 2006). These Iron I cups are sometimes interpreted as depicting lionesses rather than lions and have been seen as attributes of an Aegean-derived goddess, maybe the Philistine deity Dagon (Maeir 2006, 340–42). In the 1st millennium BC animal-headed cups are attested in texts dated to the Late Assyrian period, where silver lion-headed vessels are mentioned and lion-headed beakers and situlae are shown in palatial reliefs (Stronach 1996, 180–85; Curtis 2000). Ebbinghaus has shown convincingly that such vessels were used both as feasting utensils and as part of gift-exchange between the Assyrian royal court and its contemporaries (Ebbinghaus forthcoming). It is noteworthy that the actual Assyrian AHCs, made of pottery and metal, are all shaped as rams’ heads and only a handful of lion-headed cups are known throughout the Assyrian Empire sphere of influence (Young 1981, 121–23, pls III–IV and 62–63; Curtis 2000).

Animal-headed Cups as Cultic Paraphernalia and Luxury Objects

The interpretation of the function of the Late Bronze Age AHCs in general, and LHCs in particular, is based on their find-contexts, as well as the textual references and iconographic depictions of similar vessels.

One important function of AHCs was as drinking cups in feasts and banquets, on occasions of ceremonial consumption and display (Zevulun 1987; Yasur-Landau 2005; Ziffer 2005, 150–54). Noteworthy is the ivory ‘Feast Plaque’, found in the palace of Stratum VIIA at Megiddo (Loud 1939, pl. 4). The plaque bears the description of a banquet

scene and a returning army with prisoners. The objects depicted in the banquet scene include a throne and stool, drinking cups which are held in the participants’ hands, a large two-handled krater, and two animal-headed cups carried on a flat tray by the two attendants. One of the cups is lion-headed and the other is shaped as the head of a horned animal, probably a gazelle (Liebowitz 1980, 165; Barnett 1982, 26–27). Their close association with the large mixing krater and the attendants holding drinking bowls suggest that they were part of the drinking ceremony, and not merely used for ceremonial display (cf. Zevulun 1987, 100–01, Zuckerman 2007).

A vivid illustration of the diverse ways LHCs might have served within the context of feasts is found in the later descriptions of Assyrian banquets of the state, carved on the walls of the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad (Stronach 1996, 180–85). In these scenes, lion-headed beakers are held in the right hands of seated and standing officials. Lion-headed situlae are used by attendants to fill wine from the mixing bowl and bring it to the celebrating parties (Reade 1995, figs 9, 11–13). These banquets are interpreted as essentially secular events of communal drinking, with no clear religious connotations (Reade 1995, 41–48). The same lion-headed situlae appear in another series of reliefs, where they are interpreted as items of foreign booty (from Urartu or Phrygia?) carried in a procession towards the king (Stronach 1996, 182). It is thus clear that lion-headed vessels were known in Assyria in the 8th–7th centuries BC and they should be viewed within the context of wine consumption as an emblem of royal power and prosperity. The Late Bronze Age examples were probably used in very similar ways in palatial contexts (Feldman 2006, 195).

Another important function, gleaned from the textual evidence, is the role of AHCs in the context of religious rituals, both as votive offerings presented to the gods and as drinking vessels used in religious ceremonies. In Hittite texts, animal-shaped and animal-headed cups (BIBRU) are mentioned in religious contexts (Otten 1989) and were used by the king in ceremonies described as ‘drinking a god’. Güterbock reconstructs the function of the AHC either as the drinking utensils or as vessels used to fill the wine (from larger containers?) which is then poured into the drinking cups used by the king and the priests (Güterbock 1998, 127–28). This interpretation is strikingly similar to the Assyrian iconographic depictions discussed above. Although it is not stated, it is possible that the particular shape of the

vessel was chosen as a symbol of the deity it represents (Muscarella 1974, no. 123).

The Uluburun ram-headed and female-headed faience cups are interpreted by Pulak as belonging to a ritualistic assemblage, used in shipboard rituals that had taken place at the start, during and at the end of the voyage (pers. comm. e-mail message of 2 August 2006).

Within the context of Iron Age I Philistine culture, these cups are assumed to have served cultic and ceremonial purposes. LHCs were found in tombs or cultic precincts at the major Philistine sites (Tel Qasile, Ekron, Tel Gerisa and Tel es-Safi) and at Megiddo and Tel-Zeror (Mazar 1980, 101–03; 2000, 225; Dothan 1982, 229–34). The interpretation of their use as drinking cups and libation vessels reflects the assumption that wine production and its consumption were important activities in the Philistine culture (Stager 1998, 164–65). The common appearance of lion/lioness headed-cups at Philistine sites is interpreted by Maier as reflecting the attributes of the ‘Great Goddess’, whose origins seem to lie within the Aegean culture of the 2nd millennium BC (Maier 2006). The clay Philistine lion-headed cups were considered by Dothan and Mazar as an ‘inexpensive substitute for silver, gold and stone’ cups (Dothan 1982, 231), reflecting Aegean artistic tradition or Aegean influence on local Canaanite tradition (Mazar 1980, 101–03). As clearly emerges from the previous discussion, the origins of this shape should be sought within the Anatolian and Levantine spheres, and thus not necessarily considered as derived, or even influenced, from the Aegean sphere.

The Hazor Lion-headed Faience Cup in Context

The above discussion sought to place the LHC from Hazor within its chronological, cultural and historical context. Several unique features of the object merit special attention within the Late Bronze artistic *koiné*. The cup is made of white faience, an artificial material whose production was probably specialized and palace-controlled. The mixed colouring of the lion’s face might suggest an imitation of various precious metals. The yellow-glazed parts of the mane and the grey-black forehead might represent an attempt to imitate gold and silver, respectively. A similar colour scheme characterizes Aegean stone rhyta (Koehl 2006, 122–23). The mixing of different materials, or of different colours of the same material (especially precious metals), is a common phenomenon in the art of the *koiné*. Good examples are the Niello daggers from Mycenae and the inlaid bowls

from Enkomi (Feldman 2006, 121–22). Combination of lustrous and multi-coloured precious materials must have been accorded high value in the realm of royal gifts and is well-attested in the greeting letters of the Great Kings (Cochavi-Rainey 1999, 160–62).

In terms of its morphological details, while the lower part of the cup is executed with skill and is indeed leonine, the upper part and the mane are more reminiscent of the female-headed cups found at Tel Abu Hawam, Uluburun and Enkomi. The depiction of the mane is similar to the female coiffure of the Uluburun cup, with a braided line encircling the face and the straight incised lines representing the mane. This phenomenon might attest to the activity of one workshop manufacturing these vessels, an assumption which must await provenience analyses of the objects themselves.

The holes for string attachment might have served for insertion of a metal wire, and the vessel could have functioned as a *situla*, similar to the examples in the Assyrian wall-reliefs. Similar vessels are alluded to in the Amarna greeting-gifts inventory, in the list of ‘ram-horns rhytons’ sent from Tushratta king of Mitanni (Cochavi-Rainey 1999, 123, III.33), but are hitherto unattested archaeologically (but see now Zevulun and Ziffer 2007, 36–7 Fig. 20). The interpretation of a lid fitting is supported by the example of a lid attached to the tiny amber lion-headed cup from Qatna (Al Maqdissi *et al.* 2003, 211–13). The existence of a lid is not compatible with the function of a drinking cup, and in that case the vessel might be reconstructed as a cosmetic container or a jewellery box. If this interpretation is accepted, the role of the Hazor LHC within a context of feasts and conspicuous consumption of beverages is less relevant and it should rather be considered an item displaying prestige and ostentatious wealth. The recipient of the wealth of offerings (represented by the miniature vessels and remains of animal bones) and ostentatious gifts and luxury goods might have been a god, a king, or both. The size of the Hazor LHC and its resemblance to other cups lacking the lid-fitting seem, however, to support its interpretation as a drinking cup, used in contexts of the conspicuous consumption of beverages.

The Hazor LHC, and all faience AHCs discussed above, should thus be considered as true Late Bronze ‘*koiné* objects’, according to Feldman’s definition. They are made of an artificial material which was probably manufactured in imitation of semiprecious stones (lapis lazuli) and other prized materials (such as precious metals and ivory), their manufacture was probably palace-controlled and necessitated

highly-skilled craftsmen, and they exhibit a narrow value-laden repertoire of subjects and an artistic hybridity of motifs (Feldman 2006, 10). In chronological terms, they are attributed to the 14th–13th centuries BC, the floruit of the palatial system of the Late Bronze Age (Sherratt and Sherratt 1991; Zaccagnini 2000). Their function should be discussed within and in relation to the framework of this system.

In contrast to the metal AHCs, the faience examples are not specifically mentioned in the greeting-letters of the Great Kings of the Late Bronze Age koiné. Although there is an Egyptian term, *thnt*, for faience (Feldman 2006, 117–18), it is not mentioned in the texts or the Egyptian iconographic sources. The distribution of faience AHCs is rather limited and they have been found mainly in élite and religious contexts in the kingdoms of the Levantine littoral (Ugarit, Tell Kazel, Tell Abu Hawam and Hazor). The fragments found in Mycenaean Tiryns were interpreted as foreign goods arriving from the Near East as gifts (Maran 2004). Only the Uluburun ship cargo and the élite tombs of Cyprus can be considered part of the high-level diplomatic and artistic koiné of the Late Bronze Age (Feldman 2006, 130–44; Pulak 2005; Bachhuber 2006). It seems that the faience AHCs belonged to a contemporary but parallel system of royal greetings and courtly gifts, exchanged between the lesser-ranked rulers of the semi-independent Levantine kingdoms. The kings of Ugarit, Amurru and Qatna emulated the diplomatic activities of their higher ranking overlords, on a lower scale, as part of their negotiation for status (Feldman 2006, 108–10, 177–91). The existence of the two almost identical faience lion-headed cups at Hazor and Cyprus, the assumed products of one workshop, might serve as the material evidence of the actual dynamics of this hypothesized system.

If accepted, this interpretation places the ruler of Hazor in the 14th and early 13th century BC in the company of the semi-independent rulers of the Levantine littoral, such as the kings of Ugarit and Amurru. Hazor, the largest kingdom in the Southern Levant, should thus be considered as a member of what may be termed the '(not-quite-so) Great Powers' club. This 'lesser-koiné' functioned parallel to and in emulation of the 'Great Powers Club' (Liverani 2000), whose dynamics are reflected in the Egyptian and Hittite correspondence of the 14th and 13th centuries BC (Zaccagnini 2000; Bryce 2003; Feldman 2006). This interpretation might also explain the special status of the ruler of Hazor in

the Amarna archive, referred to by himself as well as by his peers as 'king', rather than the usual vassal identification as 'man of ...' or 'governor of ...' (Bienkowski 1987, 55). This special status is further reflected in the reference to a special envoy of the Egyptian court on his way to Hazor (Moran 1992, EA 227), and the recent find of an Egyptian inscription attributed to a high ranking vizier of Ramses II in the destruction level of a Late Bronze Age royal complex at the site (Allen 2001). These finds place the city of Hazor within the realm of the North Syrian kingdoms and the 'lesser koiné', characterizing the area 'in between' the Great Powers (Feldman 2006, 177–91). The role of gifts and exchange of luxury objects between the lesser-ranked Levantine kingdoms was basically similar to the role of 'koiné objects' exchanged between the Great Kings. An earlier version of such a system in the southern Levant is gleaned from the Taanach letters of the 15th century BC, where local rulers of Taanach and Megiddo are engaged in a relationship of gift exchange (including horses, amounts of silver, wood and myrrh, chariot wheels, bows and clothing) (Rainey 1999). The objects exchanged between the lesser kings, materializing their complex and dynamic social and political relations, were probably less costly and more related to the indigenous Levantine artistic tradition. The imitation of the precious metal animal-headed drinking vessels in a less expensive (albeit still skilfully crafted) material (i.e. bronze, faience and clay) should be understood as the material indices of such emulation process (Feldman 2002, 10–14).

The Hazor and Cypriote cups are unique within the group of Late Bronze Age ram-, horse- and female-headed faience cups. The lion shape finds parallels in other media of Canaanite art at Hazor, most notably in the basalt lion- and lioness-shaped orthostats found throughout the city of the Late Bronze Age (Beck 1989). The motif and the details of its execution fit well within the Canaanite sphere, and should thus be regarded as indigenous tradition of Levantine art. In this regard, there is nothing 'hybrid' or 'international' in this object, and in the group of AHCs as a whole. It is only in terms of their raw material and wider distribution in élite contexts in the Eastern Mediterranean, that these cups reflect their special function as greeting gifts and items of conspicuous consumption and ostentatious display. In the case of Tell Kazel, Tell Abu Hawam and possibly also the Hazor example, the faience AHCs had a ritual and cultic function within a religious context. In this period of intensive movement of

people and objects, and the wide-range dissemination of religious ideas and social practices across the entire region, this type of dynamic and constantly changing meaning of a luxury object is hardly surprising. In the palatial culture of the Eastern Mediterranean of the 14th and the 13th centuries BC, a separation between 'royal' and 'ritual' functions is impossible and anachronistic. Both functions were closely connected and constituted complementing aspects of the expression and materialization of social status and political role. An object such as the faience LHC could have been manufactured at Hazor or brought there as a royal gift. It could then have been used as part of a royal ritual or conspicuously displayed in the context of a communal feast held in the ceremonial precinct on the acropolis, and finally stored in the north-western room in expectation of future use or as termination of its role within this context. A reconstruction of the life-cycle of this object, and other objects within the same context, allows us a fleeting glimpse into the courtly life of the Canaanite élites in the Late Bronze Age.

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