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ABBREVIATIONS

- AASOR Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ADAJ Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan
AJA American Journal of Archaeology
AfO Archiv für Orientforschung
ANET Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament³, ed. J.B. Pritchard, Princeton, 1969
BA The Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BT Babylonian Talmud
CAD Chicago Assyrian Dictionary
CIS Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum
DJD Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD Dead Sea Discoveries
EI Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies
ESI Excavations and Surveys in Israel
IAA Reports Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
IEJ Israel Exploration Journal
JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEA Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies
KAI W. Donner and W. Röllig: *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* 1–3, Wiesbaden, 1962–1964; 1^s, 2002
NEAEHL The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (English Edition), Jerusalem, 1993
PEQ Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PT Palestinian Talmud
QDAP Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine
RA Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale
RB Revue Biblique
RE Pauly-Wissowa's Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
RQ Revue de Qumran
VT Vetus Testamentum
ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZDPV Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins

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A Rare Cypriot Krater of the White Slip II Style from Azekah

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ABSTRACT: This article identifies a Cypriot krater found at Azekah in 2012 as a White Slip II type 2 krater, a very rare import to the Levant. Its rarity may be explained not only by the fact that such kraters were not mass-produced vessels intended for export like the WSII bowls, but also by their shape, which would look unfamiliar and strange to the Canaanite and thus would serve as an intercultural barrier to its use in a Canaanite feast.

INTRODUCTION

THE trading networks of the Late Bronze Age left an impact on almost every context — domestic and cultic — in Canaan with finds of imported Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery, and there is extensive literature on these vessels (e.g., van Wijngaarden 2002; Bell 2006). The Cypriot import is largely dominated by very common types, such as the Cypriot White Slip II bowls ('milk bowls') and the BR II jugs and juglets ('bilbils') (Gittlen 1977; Bergoffen 1989), with thousands of occurrences, reflecting what may be perceived as a 'normal' maritime trade profile (see below), intended to respond to existing market demands. During the 2012 excavation season at Tel Azekah, a krater of the Cypriot White Slip II type was unearthed. The finding of such a rare type of pottery vessel merits a separate set of explanations for its occurrence.

Tel Azekah is located on the border between the southern coastal plain of Israel and the Judaeen foothills (the Shephelah), 27 km south-west of Jerusalem, 6 km south of Beth-Shemesh, 8 km east of Tell eṣ-Ṣafi/Gath and 17 km north of Lachish (grid ref. 19400 62315; fig. 1). The site overlooks and controls the strategic

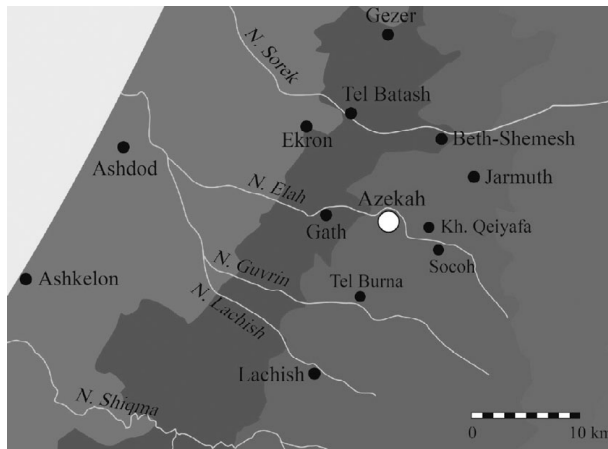


Fig. 1. Tel Azekah: location map

crossing of roads leading from Tell eš-Šafi through the ʿElah Valley to the Judean Hills in the east and the road connecting Beth-Shemesh in the north and Lachish in the south.

Although the name Azekah is not mentioned in second-millennium historical sources, the site is known from the Hebrew Bible, as well as from extra-biblical sources, as one of the Judahite border

cities during the Iron Age. Nine weeks of excavations were conducted at Tel Azekah by F.J. Bliss and R.A.S. Macalister between October and December 1898. Eight additional weeks of excavations were conducted between March 20–April 22 and in September 1899 (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 12–28). In their incomplete publication they report having found an Iron Age fort (later interpreted as dating from the Hellenistic period; see Dagan 2011) and Early and Late Bronze Age remains. Through a comprehensive survey conducted by the Azekah expedition prior to the excavations (Emmanuilov 2012), it became clear that the site was mainly settled during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, but also existed during the Early, Intermediate and Middle Bronze Ages, as well as the Persian, Hellenistic and early Roman periods.

After a gap of 113 years in the excavation of the site, the first excavation season of the renewed Lautenschläger Azekah Expedition was conducted between 15 July and 24 August 2012.¹ Three 10 m wide sections were excavated along the southern (Area S1), eastern (Area E1) and western (Area W1) slopes. Area S2 was opened on the southern terrace of the site, and Areas T1 and T2 were excavated at the top of the mound (fig. 2).

A sherd of a White Slip II Cypriot krater (obj. no. 50600/1, found at 336.72–336.55 m asl) was unearthed in locus AZK/12/W1/155, square O6, Area W1 (fig. 2).² The locus represents a soil accumulation or intentional fill, which is

1 The expedition is directed by Oded Lipschits, Yuval Gadot and Manfred Oeming, under the auspices of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University and the Theological Seminary (Wissenschaftlich-Theologisches Seminar) at Heidelberg University.

2 The Area W1 supervisor is Boaz Gross; assistant supervisors are Madhavi Nevader, Michal Weinberger and Nitzan Shalom. We wish to thank Celia Bergoffen of the Fashion Institute, New York, for her kind advice regarding WSII kraters.

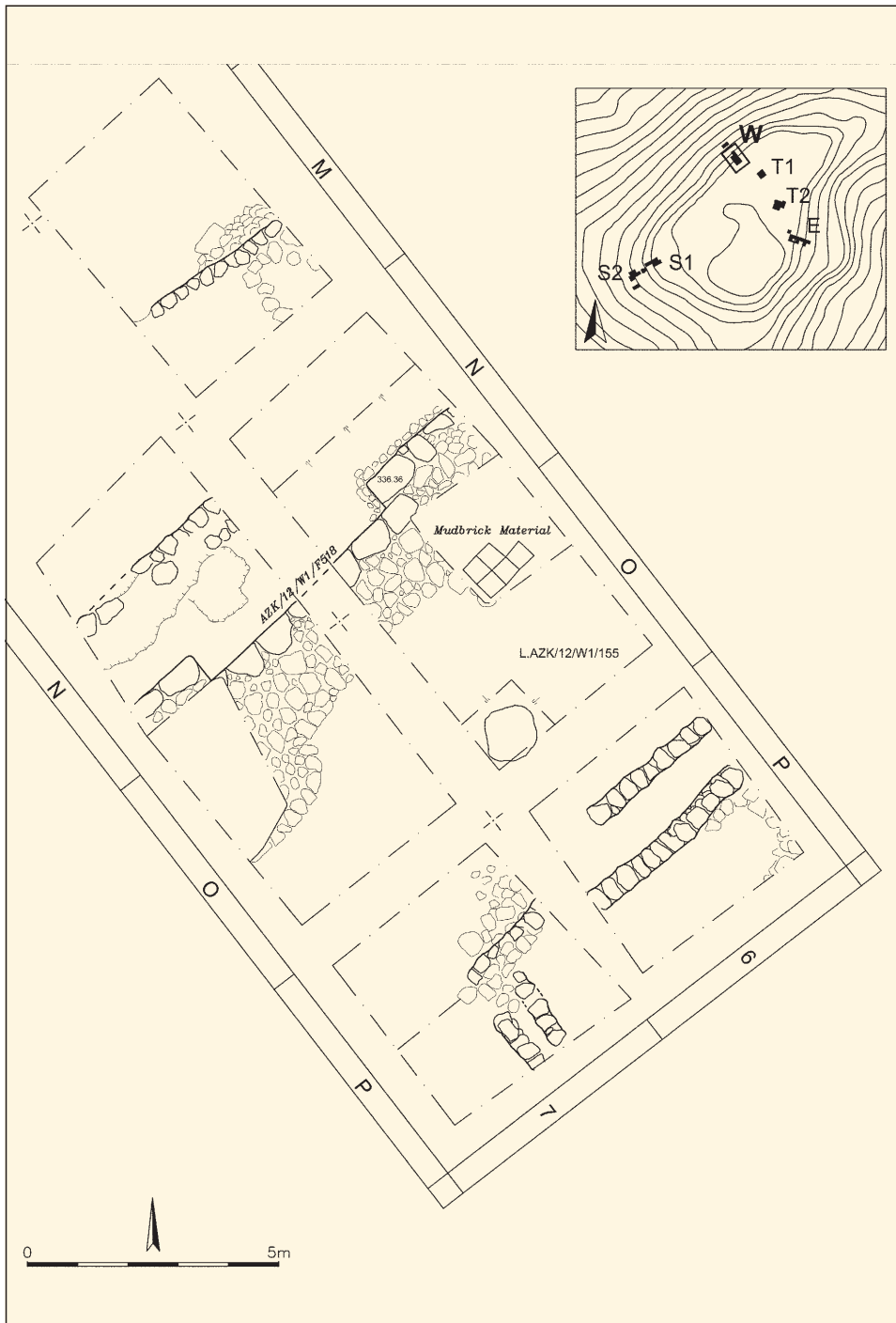


Fig. 2. Plan of Area W1, showing Locus AZK/12/W1/155

cut abruptly about 1.7 m from the south-eastern baulk and has no clear connection with architecture or installations. It is above the level and disconnected from a massive fortification wall (F518). The 52 cm deep layer yielded a large amount of pottery, mostly dating from the Late Bronze Age, with a few Early and Middle Bronze sherds.

The sherd under discussion (fig. 3) belongs to a large ledge rim (diameter: *c.* 20 cm) of a slightly warped vessel. The rim is a light brown ware with grey core. It is handmade and burnished with cream slip. The decoration, with dark brown paint, consists of two sets of four vertical narrow and wide bands on the outer rim, framing horizontal rows of strokes. Below the rim, the exterior decoration consists of vertical rows of strokes slanting from right to left, and the interior bears two groups of four vertical strokes framing shorter vertical strokes.

Bearing in mind the diameter of the vessel, which is too large to be a tankard or a jug, the vessel from Azekah can be identified as a White Slip II type 2 krater, not a common form in Cyprus (Popham 1972: fig. 55:6; 468). Parallels to the shape: Hala Sultan Teke Crowfoot's tomb 4 (Bailey 1976: pls. XXVIc–XXVIIa–b); Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios tomb 4, dated to the LCIIb–IIA (South and Russell 1989: fig. 48: KAD 140, 515; note very similar rim decoration to 515; fig. 4) and tomb 5, dated to the LCIIA–C (South and Russell 1989: fig. 57 KAD 365, 366). The Azekah vessel is likely to be of LCIIA date, but a LCIIb date should

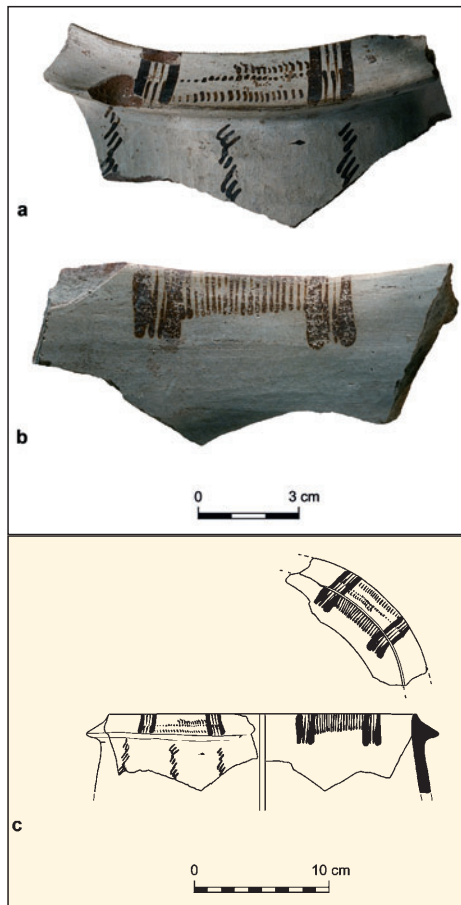


Fig. 3. The WSII krater: a) exterior; b) interior; c) drawing

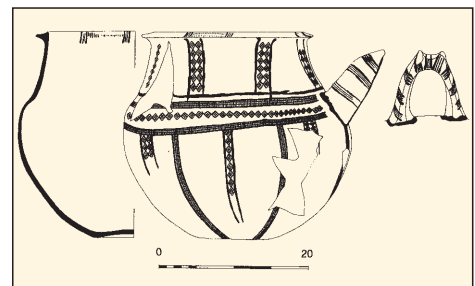


Fig. 4. White Slip II type 2 krater from Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios tomb 4 (after South and Russell 1989: fig. 48: KAD 515, reproduced with the kind permission of Alison South)

not be ruled out. In Levantine terms, the date should fall within the LBIIA. The use of these vessels as kraters in feasts is evident from the finds in tombs 4, 6 and 11 at Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios, where Base Ring cups were found inside the kraters (South and Russell 1989: fig. 48; South and Steel 2001: 70–71).

DISCUSSION

Cypriot WSII kraters are very rare imports to Canaan, as may be seen in Gittlen's catalogue of imported Cypriot pottery (1977: 477–478), which included many hundreds of WSII 'milk bowls' but only eleven kraters of all types. A similar picture emerges from Bergoffen's study (1989). Type 2 kraters seem to be even less common than other types. One possible example is a rim sherd from Tell Abu Hawam (Balensi 1980: pl. 28:20), which is decorated with a wavy pattern on the exterior and a vertical row of framed lozenges below it. On the interior of the rim, a vertical stroke may frame some dots. A fragment of the shoulder and neck of a vessel from Macalister's excavation at Gezer (1912: pl. CLX:13) was identified by Gittlen as a type 2 krater, presumably from the tel (1977: 477). Indeed, it has the stub of an elaborate horizontal handle, typical of a krater, but the vessel has a maximum shoulder diameter of *c.* 16 cm, which may be somewhat small for a krater of this type. A possible reason for their rarity in habitation sites may be the fact that when broken into very small pieces, kraters are easily recognisable by their large elaborate handles or ledge rims, whereas body sherds with a ladder pattern or cross-hatched lozenges may be misidentified as belonging to more common WSII 'milk bowls'. However, this alone cannot account for the fact that after over one hundred years of scientific publications of imported Cypriot pottery to Canaan, only a handful of type 2 kraters have been recorded.

One may seek the reason for their rarity — even more striking when compared to the abundance of WSII bowls — in their use patterns in Cyprus, as well as in the mechanisms of trade between Cyprus and the Levant.

Artzy (2001: 122) estimated, following her work in Tell Abu Hawam, Acco, and other sites, that 99.8% of the WSII forms imported to the southern Levantine coast were open forms. She suggested that this phenomenon was due to the desire of producers and shippers to minimise production and transport costs. The carefully made and decorated WSI bowls are considerably less common in the southern Levant. However, the production of WSII reflects a transition to mass-produced bowls with sometimes inferior quality of slip and decoration. Bowls could be easily stacked in ships, taking up little cargo space and adding only a little to the overall tonnage. Artzy's argument receives further corroboration from an examination of the large quantities of Cypriot pottery on the Uluburun shipwreck (Pulak 1998: 203; Hirschfeld 2011). The many dozens of pottery vessels, including White Shaved juglets, Base Ring II bowls, White Slip II bowls, lamps, wall brackets and more, were no doubt one of the least costly groups of cargo on

the ship, its value far less than copper, tin, the resin carried in amphorae, and glass ingots (Monroe 2010: 26). Among various forms of Cypriot fine and coarse wares, nine pithoi were packed, perhaps traded items themselves. In them were at least 35 WSII ‘milk bowls’ of three different sizes. Their open shape meant that they could be easily stacked one on top of the other and stored in a compact manner within a pithos.

Another possible explanation for the very common use of Cypriot WSII bowls in Canaan is the preference for drinking bowls as the vessel of choice for the consumption of drinks in the southern Levant (Yasur-Landau 2005; 2008). This cultural preference of Canaanite aristocrats drinking from a bowl is well represented in the archaeological record, which yielded dozens of bronze bowls in elite tombs in the Levant as well as in Cyprus. Cypriot milk bowls could easily serve as a cheap imported substitute to the more expensive metal bowls. On the other hand, stemmed drinking vessels, such as Aegean kylikes, were not accepted into the Canaanite repertoire, as they were connected with different modes of toasting and hand gestures during the feast. At the same time, Mycenaean amphoroid kraters, FS 53–55, were incorporated into Canaanite drinking sets, because of the general similarity to Canaanite krater types in the shape of the body and vertical handles. In fact, it is likely that this form was produced especially for eastern markets in Cyprus and the Levant (Yasur-Landau 2005; 2008). The rarity of Cypriot type 2 kraters in the southern Levant may be explained by two interconnected hypothetical reasons: the first is the fact that the Cypriots themselves were importing Mycenaean kraters and perhaps therefore did not think that their own WSII kraters would sell as successfully as Mycenaean kraters in the Levant. The second is the fact that unlike WSII bowls, WSII kraters could not be easily stacked one on top of the other and stored in a compact manner within the cargo of a ship; thus, they would not be a profitable export.

Further study of the find context of this krater and of other Cypriot imports uncovered in the 2012 season at Azekah is necessary. It is, however, clear that the mechanism of this krater’s arrival at the site differed from that of the mass-produced, mass-shipped WSII wares found in the southern Levant.

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