TEL MALḤATA
A CENTRAL CITY IN
THE BIBLICAL NEGEV

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Volume I

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VOLUME I
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CHAPTER 12

2. COSMETIC PALETTES AND BOWLS

Cosmetic palettes and bowls are a common find throughout the Land of Israel and in the Eastern Jordan Valley, and are considered as belonging to the world of Phoenician art during the Iron II (Barag 1985; Bienkowski 1995: 85–86). Four cosmetic palettes and seven cosmetic bowls were recovered at Tel Malhata, from Strata IIIB–IIIA and mixed Strata IV–III of the late Iron II (late 8th–7th centuries BCE). Cosmetic utensils of this type are usually assumed to have held cosmetic pastes of different colors, although this has never been proven. Another possibility is that they were used to grind medicines (Thompson 1971: 61). Most of them are made of limestone (calcite), as are the majority from Tel Malhata, although other materials include sandstone, marble and alabaster.

PALETTES

Palettes are rectangular in shape, flattened and smoothed on all sides, with a “head” at the narrow end. While in some cases palettes are adorned with facial characteristics such as eyes, mouth, nose, etc., those from Tel Malhata lack any clear facial features, and only incised lines on the top of the “head” or at the “neck” are discernable. In two cases (Nos. 1, 4), the bodies of the palettes are decorated with a dotted line encircling the outer perimeter. All the palettes from Tel Malhata are incomplete, and in most cases the lower part of the body is missing (from No. 4 only a body fragment is preserved).

NO. 1. REG. NO. 76/50, LOCUS 220, AREA A, STRATUM IIIA (Fig. 12.2.1: 1)

Material: Polished calcite
Dimensions: Preserved length: 5 cm, preserved width: 6.1 cm, thickness: 1.4–1.8 cm, weight: 111 gr.
Description: Only half is preserved. Incised double band across the head. Pierced through the head. Circle and dot motifs around the outer perimeter.
Parallels: Tawlan (Bienkowski 1995: 85, Figs. 9.15: 1; 9.60); Ghrarreh: with facial features on head (Hart 1988: Fig. 8: a–b); Umm al-Biyara: also with facial features (Bennet 1967: Pls. 22–23; Bienkowski 2011: Fig. 7.2: 16); Kerak in Moab (Barag 1985: 219); the Amman Citadel: a dotted outline is visible on the back of the palette (Philip 1991: 91, Photo 107); Tel Jezreel: Grave 1260, dated to the late Iron II (Ussishkin and Woodhead 1997: Fig. 27).

NO. 2. REG. NO. 2086, LOCUS 283, AREA A, STRATUM IIIA (Fig. 12.2.1: 2)

Material: Polished calcite
Dimensions: Preserved length: 4.3 cm, preserved width: 4 cm, thickness: 0.9 cm, weight: 35 gr.
Description: Three vertical incised lines on the head and an incised line across the neck. Pierced through the head (probably for a wire).

NO. 3. REG. NO. 1867/50, LOCUS 245, AREA A, STRATUM IIIA (Fig. 12.2.1: 3)

Material: Polished calcite
Dimensions: Preserved length: 4 cm, thickness: 2 cm, weight: 83 gr
Description: Only the head of the artifact is preserved, without decoration
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Fig. 12.2.1: Palettes Nos. 1–4.

No. 4. REG. No. 3523/50, LOCUS 1504, AREA H, STRATUM III (Fig. 12.2.1: 4)

Material: Polished calcite

Dimensions: Preserved length: 4.3 cm, preserved width: 4 cm, thickness: 1.2 cm, weight: 35 gr

Description: Incised circles and dots around the outer perimeter on both sides, resembling No. 1

BOWLS

Cosmetic bowls are usually more numerous than palettes (Barag 1985: 228), as is the case at Tel Malḥata. They range from 5 to 13 cm in diameter and are usually made of limestone. They have a wide, flat rim that is often decorated. As with the palettes, it is assumed that cosmetic paste was mixed in the bowls, and traces of black material can be seen in one of the bowls (No. 5).

No. 5. REG. No. 477/50, LOCUS 623, AREA C, STRATUM III (Fig. 12.2.2: 1)

Material: Polished limestone

Dimensions: Outer diameter: 7.3 cm, inner diameter: 3.4 cm, height: 2.3 cm, weight: 142 gr

Description: Incised rope-like band around the (broken) outer perimeter, band of squares filled with net pattern in the middle perimeter and another rope-like band around the inner perimeter. Traces of black paste (kohl?) inside the depression. Disc base with one ridge above it, another ridge around the upper body.

Parallels: Hazor (Yadin et al. 1961: Pl. 233: 4); Megiddo: several objects have similar motifs and shape as those from Malḥata (Lamon and Shipton 1939: Pl. 108, especially No. 7; Pl. 109, especially No. 13, although this one has two elongated handles on both sides; Pl. 111: 29 No. 14); Tell Abu al-Kharaz (Fischer
Fig. 12.2.2: Cosmetic bowls Nos. 5–10.
Fig. 12.2.3: Small cosmetic bowl No. 11.

1997: 131, Fig. 2); Gezer (Macalister 1912: Pl. 213: 6); Tell en-Nasbeh: similar rim decorations (McCown 1947: Pl. 106: 1–2, 4–5); Tawilan (Thompson 1971: Fig. 4); Samaria: similar bowl though inner band has triangular pattern (Kenyon 1957: Pl. 26: 3), Tel Jezreel (Ussishkin and Woodhead 1997: Fig. 56).

NO. 6. REG. NO. 1705, LOCUS 1130, AREA F, MIXED STRATA IV–III (Fig. 12.2.2: 2)
Material: Polished limestone
Dimensions: Height: 2.5 cm, weight: 142 gr
Description: Less than half is preserved. Incised rope-like band and net-filled squares in the outer perimeter, concentric lines in the inner perimeter. Disc base.
Parallels: Very similar to No. 5 above; Megiddo: see No. 5 above; Tell Deir ‘Alla (Ibrahim and van der Kooij 1986: Pl. 15:3; 1997: Fig. 4: 2); Tell Beit Mirsim (Albright 1943: Pl. 27: 5); Hazor (Yadin et al. 1960: Pl. 78: 7).

NO. 7. REG. NO. 2172/50K, LOCUS 12K, SECTION W, STRATUM IIIIB (Fig. 12.2.2: 3)
Material: Polished limestone
Dimensions: Outer diameter: 10 cm, inner diameter: 8 cm, height: 3 cm
Description: Band of incised integrated circles made with a compass on the rim, bordered by two lines above and below. Ridge above disc base and another under the rim on upper body. Band of incised dotted circles on lower body.
Parallel: Kadesh Barnea: a very similar design (Gera 2007: Fig. 13.4: 1, Stratum 3c)

NO. 8. REG. NO. 1679, LOCUS 1129, AREA F, MIXED STRATA IV–III (Fig. 12.2.2: 4)
Material: Polished limestone.
Dimensions: Outer diameter: 5.5 cm, inner diameter: 2.7 cm, height: 1.7 cm, weight: 76 gr
Description: Three quarters preserved. Faded incised lines on top. Disc base with one ridge above it and one ridge below the rim.
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NO. 9. REG. NO. 4406/50, LOCUS 1604, AREA H, STRATUM IIIB (Fig. 12.2.2: 5)
Material: Polished limestone
Dimensions: Outer diameter: 7.8 cm, inner diameter: 3.7 cm, height: 2.4 cm, weight: 219 gr
Description: No decorations on rim. One ridge around the upper part of the body. Disc base.
Parallels: Megiddo tombs (Guy 1938: Pl. 163: 6); Hazor: large bowl (Yadin et al. 1961: Pl. 256: 9); Tell Beit Mirsim: large plain bowl (Albright 1943: Pl. 30: 2); Tell en-Nasbeh (McCown 1947: Pl. 106: 8).

NO. 10. REG. NO. 4119, LOCUS 1569, AREA H, STRATUM IIIB (Fig. 12.2.2: 6)
Material: Polished reddish sandstone
Dimensions: Outer diameter: 11.5 cm, inner diameter: 6 cm, height: 2.3 cm, weight: 500 gr
Description: Two external incised bands around the body. No decorations on rim. Disc base with one ridge above it.
Parallels: Tell Beit Mirsim: similar bowl with no rim decoration and two external incised bands on body (Albright 1943: Pl. 27B: 4); Tawilan (Thompson 1971: Fig. 1).

NO. 11. REG. NO. 1000/50K, LOCUS 140K, AREA Z, SURFACE (Fig. 12.2.3)
Material: Polished limestone
Dimensions: Outer diameter: 4.5 cm, inner diameter: 2.7 cm, height: 2.5 cm
Description: Small cosmetic bowl. Faded incised lines on top, incised herringbone pattern around the outer body and on the base.