On the Anatolian Origins of Some Late Bronze Egyptian Vessel Forms

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Hélène BOUILLON*

ON THE ANATOLIAN ORIGINS OF SOME LATE BRONZE EGYPTIAN VESSEL FORMS¹

New Kingdom Egypt has long been thought to be an Empire, whose political power extended over Nubia and a great part of the Levant². While the expression 'Egyptian influence' is in fact quite vague, and fails to describe a well-defined phenomenon³, Egypt's cultural impact on the Near East remains a topic that is commonly used to explain many iconographies and artistic forms⁴. One of the most characteristic subjects of this supposed Egyptian prestige is luxury vessels⁵. Current research, however, has tended to reappraise Egypt's influence. Late Bronze Age artefacts are now being placed in a broader spectrum of investigation about contacts, exchange and international trade and diplomacy⁶.

The Egyptian tradition of vessel-making is very ancient. During the Badarian period (late 5th - early 4th millennium B.C.)⁷ the first appearance of luxury vases is linked to the beginning of a social hierarchy visible in cemeteries⁸. The most important tombs contain the first Egyptian stone vases, but also the first zoomorphic ivory vases⁹. The first use of metal in the manufacture of vessels took place during Nagada II (3500-3200 B.C.): gold and silver leaf adorns the lip or handles of the vases¹⁰. Tombs and cultic contexts of the following Dynasty I (3000-2890 B.C.) introduced small vessels in faience¹¹. The

major innovation of the Old Kingdom (2686-2160 B.C.) was the development of metalwork. It allowed the production of powerful tools for drilling and shaping stone vases, and soon, artisans also created vases entirely in metal. Thus appeared the first imitations of metal vases in other materials, including ceramics of high quality, commonly known as *Meidum ware*¹². This phenomenon of imitation, already observed in earlier times between ceramic forms and stone vessels, is one of the keys to the typological study of luxury tableware in Ancient Egypt. Metal and stone were the two materials of choice for luxury vessels. Unfortunately, the recyclability of the former usually prevented its preservation. Thus the typological study of luxury vases necessarily relies on stone vases forms.

The evolution of Egyptian vessel forms from Neolithic times onwards has been studied since the end of the XIXth century, essentially as a clue for dating¹³. During the New Kingdom (1550-1069 B.C.), corresponding to the Late Bronze Age, many new forms and techniques appeared in Egypt (Fig. 1), most of them during the reigns of Hatchepsut (1473-1458) and Tuthmosis III (1479-1425). We can recognize the same forms on wall-paintings and reliefs in tombs and temples, among the gifts presented to

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2) Aldred 1979; Redford 1993; Warburton 2001.

3) Shaw 2000: 224 (map).

4) Freed 1982; Jacobsson 1994; Phillips 2008.

5) Caubet 1991; Bevan 2007; Sparks 2007.

6) Lilyquist 1997; Feldman 2005; Aruz 2009; Lilyquist 2012; Aruz 2013.

7) See the Oxford chronology in Shaw 2000.

8) Midant-Reynes 2003.

9) British Museum AE 63057 (Harrell 2012: fig. 22).

10) Cf. Louvre Museum E 23206 and E 23238.

11) Vandier 1952: t.2, fig. 523.

12) Produced between 2650 and 2250 B.C., approximately (Kammerer-Grothaus 1998).

13) Bissing 1907; Reisner 1931: 130-177; Petrie 1937; El-Khouli 1978; Aston 1994.

Form description	Stone Vase examples	1 st appearance in stone	Last appearance in Egypt	Primary material and first attestation	Other materials	Other materials
Piriform vase		- BM (Alalakh VII) - in Egypt: reign of Ahmose	Reign of Ramesses II	- Stone? (Alalakh VII) - Ceramic?	Faience, wood, glass, (metal only for decoration)
Globular vase		- in Egypt: reign of Tuthmosis I	Reign of Ramesses II (type without stand)	the globular vase is a current form in Mesopotamia since the 3 rd millennium B.C.	Metal, glazed steatite, cuprivorit, faience, wood
Amphora with horizontal handles		- in Egypt: reign of Tuthmosis I	XX th dynasty	Ceramic (3 rd millennium in Crete – EM)	Glass, wood
Canaanite amphora		- in Egypt: reign of Hatshepsut	Reign of Merneptah	Ceramic (MBI in Levant – first exportation in Egypt during the Hyksos period)	Glass
Amphora with vertical handles		- in Egypt: reign of Hatshepsut	Reign of Merneptah (type without stand)	Metal?	Glass

Form description	Stone Vase examples	1 st appearance in stone	Last appearance in Egypt	Primary material and first attestation	Other materials	Other materials
'Bibil'		- in Egypt: Amenhotep I or Hatchepsut	Reign of Tutankhamun	Ceramic (LB I in Cyprus)	Glass
Flask		- in Egypt: Tuthmosis III	Reign of Sety II	Ceramic (Western Anatolia, EB III)	Faience, glass, ivory, tin
'Tazza'		- in Egypt: Tuthmosis III	Reign of Ramesses II	Metal? (Byblos, Baalat Gebal temple)	Ceramic, faience, glass, wood
Chalice		- in Egypt: Tuthmosis III	XXI st dynasty	Metal, ceramic?	Faience, glass, wood, metal, ivory

Fig. 1 : Table of new forms of Egyptian luxury vases in the New Kingdom.

Fig. 2 : Canaanite merchants represented in the tomb of Kenamun TT162 (Grimal and Menu 1998: 162).

the king or the gods, or brought by merchants (Fig. 2)¹⁴. Some of them are of well-known origin. For example, the *bilbil* form derives from the *Base Ring* juglets of the LB I and II in Cyprus¹⁵, used, according to R. S. Merrillies, for opium trade and imported to Egypt from the Second Intermediate Period to the reign of Amenhotep IV-Akhenaton¹⁶. Other forms are more difficult to trace. Such is the case for the horizontal loop-handled amphora and the flask.

The ceramic amphora with horizontal loop handles first appears in Egypt in the tomb of Maiherperi (KV 36)¹⁷, but an earlier, Second Intermediate period example from Nubia is reported by R. Holthoer¹⁸. The first example in stone was found in Saqqara and bears the cartouche of Tuthmosis III¹⁹. The last ones come from Memphis and date to the XXth dynasty²⁰. The stone amphorae are usually big, but a miniaturized form was adapted for glass. This type is often

called an *amphoriskon*²¹. We also find rare examples in faience²². The horizontal loop-handled amphora could be sealed with a lid, like the fake vessels found in the tomb of Amenhotep III's father in law, Yuya²³. The type evolved during the Late Bronze, becoming less globular and with a broader neck and smaller handles²⁴. The stone amphora is also well known in the Levant, south and north²⁵. The glass type has rarely been found in the Near East, but two examples are known from the Aegean: in Rhodes and Kalyvia (Attica)²⁶. There also is a Levantine stone type, called *lugged-flask* or *lugged-pyxis*, on which the handles are very small²⁷.

The lentoid flask is a second common form of luxury vessel in the Late Bronze Age. The first attestations in stone in Egypt date from the reign of Tuthmosis III in Abydos and Gurob²⁸. One of them is a variant called a *Ring flask*, comprising a tubular

14) PM I-II, IV-VI; Montet 1937; Vercoutter 1956; Wachsmann 1987.

15) Yon 1981: 35, 38.

16) Merrillies 1989.

17) Daressy 1902: pl. IV, n° 24009, pl. V, n°s 24021 and 24023.

18) Holthoer 1977: 102.

19) Bissing 1907: pl. IV, n° 18734; Daressy 1897: n°1 51.1.

20) Aston 1994: 152.

21) Nolte 1968.

23) Petrie 1891: pl. XX, 2.

23) CG 51102 in Cairo Museum (PM I.2: 562-564).

24) Aston 1994: 152 (shape 176 b)

25) From Ain Shems (Sparks 2007: cat. 580); Ashod (Sparks 2007: cat. 571); Beth-Shan (Sparks 2007: cat. 572); Tell el-'Ajjul (Sparks 2007: cat. 570); Gezer (Macalister 1912: pl. CCXII); Kamid el-Loz (Sparks 2007: cat. 574); Lachish (Sparks 2007: cat. 575); Megiddo (Sparks 2007: cat. 576); Minet el-Beida (Caubet, 1991: 224, pl. III:13 and pl. III:14); Ras Shamra (Caubet 1991: 241, pl. IV.7).

26) Nolte 1968: pl. 8.16; Phillips 2008: n° 78.

27) Pella (James and McGovern 1993: fig. 111); Pella (Bourke and Sparks 1995: fig. 7); Tell Deir Alla (Franken 1992: 64).

28) Garstang 1901: pl. 18; Petrie 1891: pl. 27.4.

body²⁹. Faience³⁰, glass³¹, or even ivory³² examples have also been discovered in Egypt. Furthermore, the flask is well known in the Levant and the Aegean in the entire range of materials³³. During LB IIB, corresponding to the early Ramesside period in Egypt (ca. 1300-1100 B.C.), the body of the stone version became elongated, and no longer circular³⁴. Although the production of stone flasks seems to cease after the Late Bronze Age, the ceramic and faience industries maintained this form until the end of antiquity³⁵. Metallic examples are rare, undoubtedly due to the recyclable nature of metal. One tin example with a lid was discovered in a tomb of the XVIIIth dynasty in Abydos³⁶. It is worth noting that the only other metallic flask attested so far was found in the Uluburun wreck³⁷.

Whether the original material for these two vessel types was ceramic or metal is difficult to determine. However, because examples in clay are more numerous, the ceramic corpus can help to indicate the geographical origins of the form. A first direction in which to is towards the nearest neighbors in ancient Palestine and south Syria: the Canaanites, who seem to have introduced to Egypt many new practices and fashions during the Hyksos period³⁸ and in the following centuries. A familiar instance of such borrowings is the *Canaanite jar*³⁹.

The first attestations of horizontal loop (or *basket*⁴⁰) handles on amphorae (also called *kraters*) in the Levant date from MB II⁴¹; but most of them be-

long to the Late Bronze Age, in other words, the same period as their equivalents in other materials. As for the flask, small handles placed on either side of the neck are already visible on *amphoriska* produced in Canaan during EB I (ca. 3200-2900 B.C.)⁴², and the tradition continued throughout the Early Bronze Age⁴³. The body of these vessels is round or oval and the bottom is flat. Their production was abandoned during the Middle Bronze Age, when Palestine potters began to create more jugs and jars, such as the *Canaanite jar* already evoked. When the pilgrim flask appeared, at the end of MB or the beginning of LB I, it was already the type called *pilgrim flask*⁴⁴, with a lentoid body not previously known in Canaan. Thus, Tomb 57 at Ugarit (MB III – LB I), contained a flask with a ring-shaped body⁴⁵; whereas a flask in the later Tomb 75 (LB I) was lentoid with three handles: two placed symmetrically on the shoulder, and the third on the more concave side of the vase, between the neck and the body⁴⁶. Consequently, flasks with two symmetrical handles from neck to shoulder became widely distributed from Ugarit to Tell el-Ajjul⁴⁷.

These new ceramic types seem to have entered the northern Levant first⁴⁸. It is thus logical to look farther north for the possible origin of these forms. According to R. Amiran, the origin of the flask is mysterious but that of the *krater* could be the Aegean⁴⁹. P. Betancourt links them to the relations between the Levant and the Minoan world during the

29) Randall-MacIver and Mace 1899-1901: pl. 44.

30) Gurob (Petrie 1891: pl. 17.9 and 18.22); Sedment (Petrie and Brunton 1924: I, pl. 66.8); Saqqara (Bissing 1902 : CG 3673).

31) Gurob (Petrie 1891: pl. 17.35, 18.13, 18.15, 18.17, 20.11).

32) Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge E 13.1901 (Randall-MacIver and Mace 1902: pl. 44).

33) In stone: Tell Atchana (Woolley 1955: pl. 82.22); Beth Shan (Sparks 2007: cat. 366); Tell Qasile (Mazar 1985: fig. 4.1); Tell Deir Alla (Sparks 2007: cat. 1089); Enkomi (Jacobsson 1994: n° 58, 59); Lachish (Sparks 2007: cat. 362, cat. 367); Minet el-Beida (Caubet 1991: pl. 3.1); Ras Shamra (Caubet 1991: pl. 10.2). In faience: Enkomi (Jacobsson 1994: n° 166, 169, 170) and Kition (Jacobsson 1994: n° 166, 168). In glass: Enkomi (Nolte 1968: n° 30; Jacobsson 1994: n° 85); Hala Sultan Tekke (Jacobsson 1994: n° 86); Kalyvia (Phillips 2008: n° 78).

34) Aston 1994: 157 (shape 195 b).

35) The Iron Age version is often called 'New Year's flask' because of the apotropaic formula inscribed in hieroglyphs on most of them (Blanquet 1992).

36) Ayrton 1904: pl. 17.20.

37) Yalçın 2006: 609, n° 132.

38) To the Hyksos are attributed the introduction of horse chariotry, gods riding horses (Leclant 1960; Grandet 2008: 59-62), and the 'twenty squares' board game (Dunn-Vaturi and Bardiès-Fronty 2012: 52).

39) Leonard 1996; Cohen-Weinberger and Goren 2004.

40) Amiran 1959: 153.

41) Amiran 1959: pl. 29.3.

42) Farah North (Amiran 1959: pl. 9.19, 9.20), Jericho (Amiran 1959: pl. 11.13, 11.14, 13.9, 13.10).

43) EB II: (Amiran 1959: pl. 15.14, 15.14); EB IV (Amiran 1959: pl. 22.12, 22.13, 22.14, 23.11, 24.10, 24.18, 24.19).

44) Amiran 1959: 166.

45) Schaeffer 1949: pl. LX = Schaeffer 1978: fig. 4.1.

46) Schaeffer 1978: fig. 5.15.

47) Ugarit: Schaeffer 1978: fig. 23.3; Tell el-Ajjul: Amiran 1959 : pl. 51.5.

48) Lilyquist 1996: pl. 5.3; Aruz 2009: 59.

49) Amiran 1959: 134.

Fig. 3 : Amphora with horizontal loop handles from Beycesultan
(Lloyd and Mellaart 1962: pl. XIII).

Middle Bronze Age⁵⁰. M. Guichard's study of the Mari tablet corpus dealing with the furnishing of tablewares for the palace shows that most of the luxury vessels derived from international trade and exchange⁵¹. Minoan vases were imported but also imitated, and the main source of supply was in the northwest: from Aleppo to the south of Anatolia. Aleppo and Karkemish were the big centers at this time⁵², when they oversaw the trade system between Anatolia, Mesopotamia and the Aegean. To their north, Anatolia is a region or rather a congregation of regions where ceramic traditions were varied and rich, and where horizontal loop handles are known from the end of the Late Neolithic – through the Early Bronze Age⁵³, together with the flask (Fig. 3)⁵⁴. In the Aegean world, the horizontal loop handles were adopted with other new shapes and features of

Anatolian origin during EM I (3200-2600 B.C.)⁵⁵. The horizontal loop handles became a common feature during the Middle Bronze Age in Anatolia as well as in the Aegean⁵⁶, where the ceramic form was imitated in stone⁵⁷. It was also among the forms applied to *Kamare Ware* amphorae, which were imported to the Levant and Egypt⁵⁸. The use of these imports indicates, as R. S. Merrillees states, middle class rather than royal connections⁵⁹. However, some of these forms were copied in more luxurious materials, such as the silver vases found in the tombs I and II (*ca.* 1830-1770 B.C.) of the royal necropolis of Byblos⁶⁰, and the faience vessel found in 'Knossos treasury', compared by A. Evans to the Gyblite vases even if from a more recent context (Fig. 4)⁶¹. The silver vessels from Byblos were contemporary with the archives from the royal palace of Mari, and can be

50) Communication from P. Betancourt to Lilyquist (Lilyquist 1995: 9).

51) Guichard 2005.

52) Guichard 2005: 1967-169.

53) Alacahöyük: Chalcolithic (Koşay and Akok 1966: pl. 148) and EB I (Koşay 1938: pl. LXIX, LXXVII); Beycesultan EB II (Lloyd and Mellaart 1962: pl. IX, XIII, XVI).

54) The EB I flasks discovered in Beycesultan are globular (Lloyd and Mellaart 1962: pl. XVIII), but they become lentoid in the MB *Karum* period (Schoop 2011: 253).

55) Betancourt 2008 : 70-71, fig. 5.32.

56) MacGillivray 1998: 80, 106.

57) Cf. two jars in chloritite from Knossos and Mycenae (Bevan 2007: 117, fig. 6.13).

58) Merrillees 2003.

59) Merrillees 2003: 139.

60) Montet 1969: pl. CXI, CXII.

61) Evans 1928: 825, fig. 541.

Fig. 4 : Faience vase from the Knossos 'treasury' (Evans 1928: fig. 541b).

considered an illustration of 'Minoan type' metal vases used in a royal context.

As for the lentoid flask, the form is undoubtedly of Anatolian origin: it is found in Western Anatolian sites like Troy starting with EB II (2600-2250 B.C.),

and shortly thereafter in Central Anatolia at Acemhöyük and Kültepe⁶². The lentoid flask was eventually adopted and developed in the *Karum* Period, and maintained during the Hittite Period (Fig. 5)⁶³. Whereas the little symmetrical handles of the so-called *pilgrim flask* were popular throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, the vertical handle and the ring-body seem to be northern features found mostly in Anatolia and the North Levant. The ring-flasks, even more ancient⁶⁴, were rarely adapted to materials other than pottery.

It appears that this generation of new luxury vessel forms was related to international trade. This intensified in the Near East during the Middle Bronze Age, at the instigation of Assyrian merchants during the *Karum* period (ca. 1950-1770 B.C.), and later – in the hands of north Syrian kingdoms such as Ugarit and Aleppo. The new forms that flourished during this period were the ones adopted by the Egyptian kings of the New Kingdom and their courtiers, including the three Asiatic wives of Tuthmosis III⁶⁵ and the general Djehuty, 'overseer of the northern countries' for the same king⁶⁶.

Fig. 5 : Lentoid flask from Hattusha (Schoop 2011: fig. 5).

62) Mellink 1989.

63) Schoop 2011: 252-253.

64) Kulakoğlu 1998.

65) Lilyquist 2003.

66) Lilyquist 1998.

Why is it so important to trace back the first appearances of these features and forms? They don't say much about the techniques in use, or the artisans and workshops. The issue instead applies to 'style'⁶⁷, or even 'fashion'. The fact that very ancient Anatolian shapes were imitated and transformed in North Syria, the Levant, the Aegean and Egypt, to become one of the most characteristic forms of Egyptian lux-

ury vases, provides significant evidence of a different sort: it reflects the scope of artistic influences, and to some extent, counterbalances the archaeological data for Near Eastern luxury items, whose paucity blurs our perception of artistic exchange and influences.

H.B.

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