

## CULT SYMBOLS IN CHALCOLITHIC PALESTINE

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During recent decades the pattern of Chalcolithic culture in Palestine has become much clearer, with the discovery of sites up and down the country, each of which has contributed towards the creation of a more comprehensive picture of the period as a whole. In the thirties the settlement at Teleilat Ghassul was a "lone" discovery (Mallon *et al.*, 1934; Kocppel *et al.*, 1940); subsequently in the fifties, the Beersheba culture came to light (Perrot, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1964 and 1969; Dothan, 1959a), proving to be typical of the Negev region; while following on Sukenik's earlier excavations at Hedera (Sukenik, 1937), additional ossuary necropoli were excavated in the coastal plain, notably at Azor (Perrot, 1961); while the late fifties and early sixties saw the discovery of the sacred enclosure at En-Gedi (Mazar, 1963) and the hoard from the Cave of the Treasure (Bar-Adon, 1980), the latter consisting of cult objects which in all probability had originally belonged to the sanctuary (Ussishkin, 1971 & 1980, pp. 38-41); in the mid-sixties and throughout the seventies many new sites were identified and excavated, including in the Negev (Alon, 1977), Sinai (Rothenberg, 1972 & 1974; Bet-Arie, 1975 (Hebrew), Bar-Yosef *et al.*, 1977), the Jordan Valley (Stekelis, 1967; Zori, 1967; Amiran, 1977; Perrot *et al.*, 1967; Tell Kitan - Eisenberg, to be published), and in the Golan (Epstein, 1973-1981).

Despite distinctive regional features which may well reflect the arrival of several in-coming groups during the fourth millennium B.C., the culture of the period is distinguished by three marked characteristics: an economy based chiefly on a combination of farming and pastoralism (i.e. field crops and fruit growing on the one hand, and sheep and goat rearing on the other), with some practice of specialised crafts; an architectural tradition of rectangular building, as exemplified by house plans at Ghassul (Mallon *et al.*, 1934, fig. 12; Hennessy, 1979, fig. 4), Meşer (Dothan, 1959b, fig. 2), in the Golan (Epstein, *IEJ* Vol. XXVIII, 1978, fig. 1 & Vol. XXXI, fig. 1) and elsewhere, by the plan of the En-Gedi temple (Ussishkin, 1971, figs. 12 & 14; 1980, fig. 3 & pl. 7) and by the shape of so many ossuaries; and last but not least, a common cultic heritage involving the veneration of the same gods, with whom were associated a whole series of recognized symbols. While these three characteristics were inextricably bound up, it is the latter aspect which will be dealt with here (see also Epstein, 1978a).

At the outset it should be stressed that the Chalcolithic cult was essentially domestic in character, the only temple known to date being the sacred enclosure at En-Gedi, which was unconnected with a nearby settlement. The indications are that cult practices were integrated with everyday pursuits, carried out in the houses and courtyards where people lived and worked.

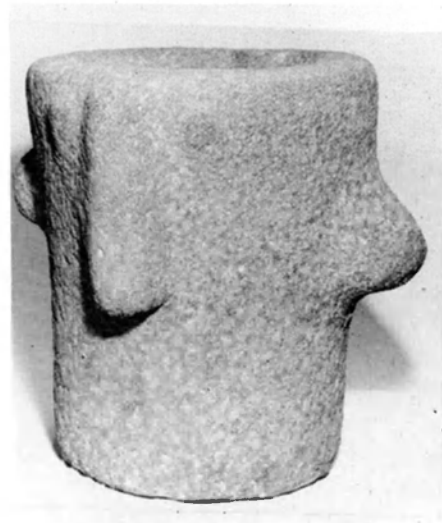


*Fig. 33-37*  
*Basalt house-god*  
*figures from the Golan.*



Thus at Ghassul, the walls of the houses were painted with frescoes depicting ritual themes and motives (Mallon *et al.*, 1934, pls. 67-70; North, 1961, pl. II; Hennessy, 1969, pl. IV and personal communication, 1978); at Beerheba a distinctly cultic assemblage was found in an underground dwelling (Perrot, 1964 and see below); in the Golan basalt house-gods are common, there being often two and as many as five such schematic figures in the same house (Epstein, *IEJ* Vol. XXIX, 1979). While no two are identical, they fall naturally into two groups, the one representing the god of fields and crops, the other - shown with horns and sometimes with the addition of a goatee beard - representing the god of flocks and herds (Epstein, 1975, p. 200). Both types are circular, being modelled in the form of a short pillar which terminates above in a shallow bowl in which suitable offerings were placed to ensure increase and plenty for fields and flocks alike. While facial features vary from statue to statue, on all but a very few the nose is indicated, frequently in a very pronounced manner. From the emphasis placed upon the nose it can be deduced that great importance was attached to it and it appears to have been regarded as the seat of the breath of life (see also Bar-Adon, 1980, p. 132) and hence was a symbol of life and fertility. For all their individual diversity, the statues share traits which cannot but be considered as intrinsic to the god and his cult: circularity of form, a prominent nose, horns to denote the god of flocks and herds and the practice of placing a receptacle for offerings on the head. By a process of extension, circularity of form, a prominent nose or horns were regarded as symbols of the godhead, imbued with a special potency. As such, they were applied singly or in combination to objects of ritual and daily use.

Thus circularity of form was given palpable expression on all kinds of objects, often by adding a disc-like symbol, applied in a prominent position.



Among a wide range of storage jars found in the Golan which were used for dry goods and grain, there are some which have on the shoulder non-functional, talismanic discs to safeguard the vessel's contents. On one fragment, circular discs occur on either side of a small horizontal lug handle; while at Beni Beraq, a knob-like protuberance of this kind was placed in a non-functional position immediately below the rim of a vessel from a kiln (?) outside the necropolis area (Ory, 1946, pp. 46-7 & pl. XVI: 3/3). This same disc-like symbol occurs widely on ossuary frontons, not only at the same site (Kaplan, 1963, fig. 7: 6,7), but also at Giv'atayim (Sussman & Ben-Arieh, 1966, fig. 4:6) and it is especially common at Azor (Perrot, 1961, figs. 21:1, 23: 1,2; 24:5,6). That these circular applications were not intended to indicate structural details, as has been suggested (*Ibid.*, fig. 18; Kaplan, 1963, fig. 8), can be understood from the angle of the so-called "beams" on one of the Azor ossuaries (Perrot, 1961, fig. 23:2) and from the position of clusters of circular discs above the roof on the fronton of another ossuary at the same site (Perrot & Ladiray, figs. 14, 15:2); while their association with other applied symbols - notably with a nose - points to an iconographic interpretation. This is made abundantly clear on an ossuary on which, in addition to a nose and a plastically-rendered agricultural tool, clearly indicating a connection with crops and fields, the opening is flanked on either side by long shafts topped by the circular symbol (Perrot, 1961, fig. 21:1). Their position recalls the gatepost symbols shown on either side of doorways on representations of Mesopotamian shrine façades - emblems which were widely recognized as symbols of the god or goddess (Van Buren, 1945, p. 44). It was in this sense that the circular symbol was added to ossuaries, including those in the form of a jar, where it occurs in a culminating position above the aperture (Perrot, 1961, figs. 35, 36:3-11; Kaplan, 1963, fig. 4: 10; Sussman and Ben-Arieh, 1966, fig. 4:3; Perrot & Ladiray, fig. 119).

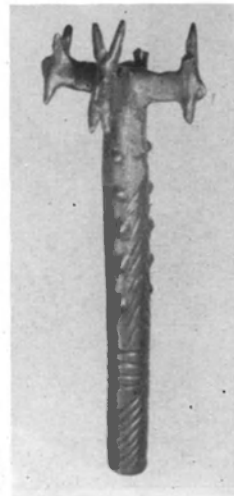
Such an interpretation is further illustrated by scores of standards found in the Cave of the Treasure (Bar-Adon, 1980, n. 17:133), the vast majority of which terminate above in a metal version of the circular symbol, while the shafts themselves are tubular. Particularly revealing is a standard which re-



Fig. 38  
Metal "crown" from the  
"Cave of the Treasure",  
near En-Gedi.



*Fig. 39-42  
Horned head and horns on  
standards from the "Cave  
of the Treasure", near  
En-Gedi.*

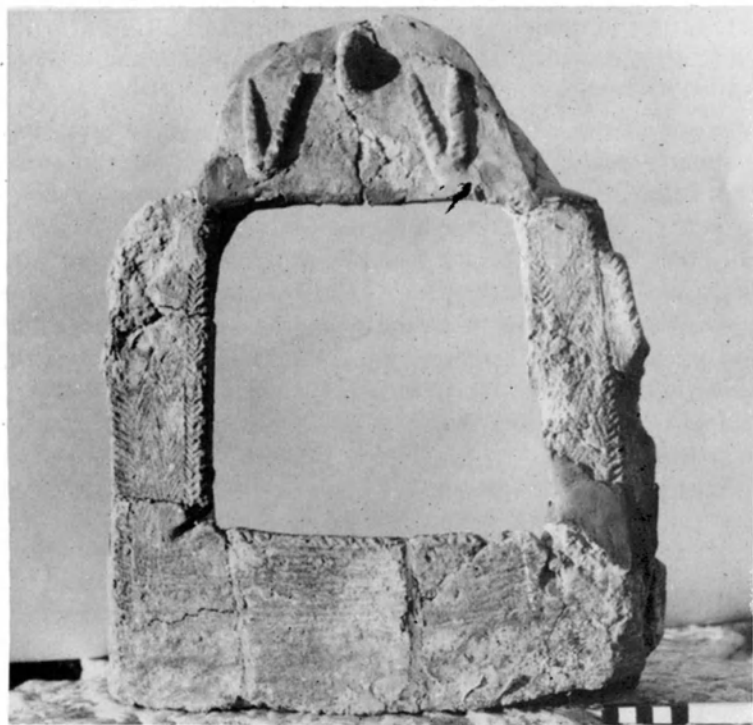


flects an approach identical to that which inspired the Golan pillar figures representing the god of fields and crops (*Ibid.*, n. 21): on the dilated part of the standard below the crowning disc-shaped symbol, facial features are shown and the ears indicated by elongated knobs, recalling the shorter ear knobs on the Golan statues. Even more revealing are two flower-like standards (*Ibid.*, n. 22 & 126) on which stalks are shown branching out from the central stem, their tips terminating in the circular symbol seen in profile; here, the explicit connection with vegetation and growing things emphasises the association with the god of fields and crops. The same circular symbol occurs on other types of artifacts found in the hoard, and there can be little doubt that no matter with what other emblems it was combined, in every case the disc-shaped form was understood to represent the godhead (*Ibid.*, n. 137-150, 152, 156).

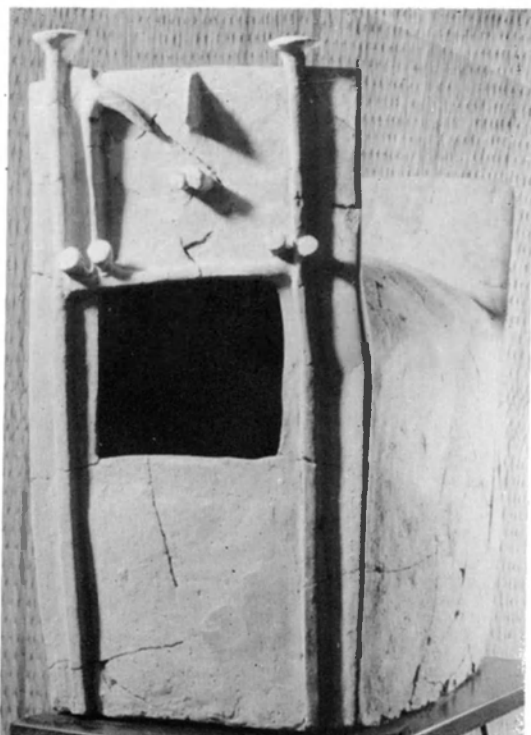
In addition to the standards and allied artifacts found in the Cave of the Treasure, there were a number of so-called "crowns", all of them circular and tending towards a bi-conical shape; they too, by virtue of their very circularity, clearly express the idea of the godhead. On all but three there is some form of incised or applied decoration, the precise meaning of which is not always evident (see in this connection *Ibid.*, p. 132). There can, however, be no mistaking the meaning implicit in the circular-headed shafts which originally rose from the rim a crown with facial features, including a prominent nose (*Ibid.*, n. 9). On the most elaborate of them (*Ibid.*, n. 7) the rim carries a series of cult emblems (see below for further discussion), while the body of the "crown" is itself pierced by an aperture which can surely only be understood as a shrine doorway, since at the two upper corners are circular discs, while shafts bearing double circular symbols rose above. The similarity of treatment with that of the ossuary doorway commented upon above is striking indeed, while both "crown" and ossuary recall the manner of indicating shrine doorways in protoliterate Mesopotamia.



Fig. 43  
Metal "crown" from the "Cave  
of the Treasure", near En-Gedi.



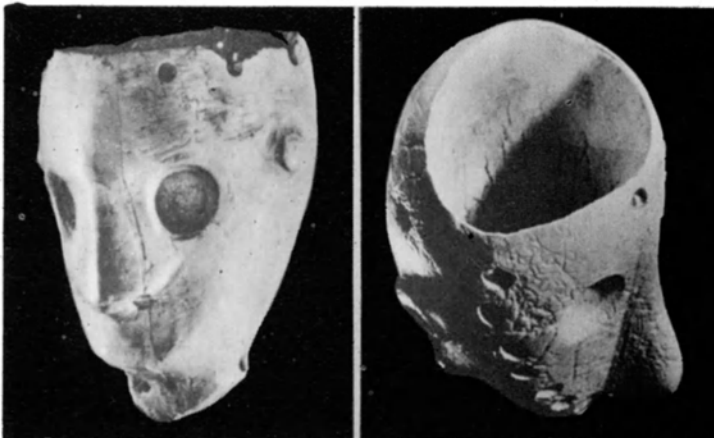
*Fig. 44*  
*Ossuary fronton from Benei*  
*Beraq.*



*Fig. 45*  
*Ossuary from Azor.*

The above artifacts found in completely different contexts in different parts of the country illustrate the wide diffusion of the use of the circular symbol and its frequent association with the god of fields and crops.

By extending the scope of our examination it will be seen that the nose too, which is so prominently rendered on the Golan pillar figures, was likewise used in Chalcolithic Palestine as a life-fertility symbol, being applied to different kinds of artifacts to ensure increase and prosperity. As such, it occurs modelled plastically below the spout of a vessel from the Golan, in which oil or "olive juice" may well have been stored, the nose being added to the pot in the same way as the circular symbol to the storage jars. But while the addition of a nose to pottery vessels appears to have been comparatively rare, it is extremely common on ossuaries found in the necropoli sites of the coastal plain (Hedera, Tel-Aviv, Benei Beraq, Azor Giv'atayim, Ben Shemen), being frequently shown, plastically-rendered, in the centre of the fronton. Such a widespread use only goes to strengthen the interpretation of the nose as a life-fertility symbol *per se* and not only in facial contexts, while the application of several nose symbols to a single ossuary fronton emphasises this (Perrot, 1961, pl. VII:8). In view of the evidence of the importance attached to the nose on pillar figures and likewise on ossuary pediments, it is indeed somewhat surprising that among the hundreds of objects found in the Cave of the Treasure, a nose is shown on only one "crown" and one standard (Bar-Adon, 1980, n. 9 & 21). On male ivory figures from Beersheba, however, the nose is large and prominent. When seen in profile, the juxtaposition of the nose and the sexual member is striking and was certainly intentional (Perrot, 1964, pl. LI:1). A recently published female ivory figure of this class exemplifies a similar approach; for when viewed in profile the juxtaposition of nose and breasts is so marked that it cannot but have been of special significance (Amiran & Tadmor, 1980, pl. 17:C). A similar rendering of a beak-like nose occurs on a female fertility figurine found at Gilat (Alon, 1977, p. 64); while most of the so-called "spook-masks" figuring in the Ghassul frescoes (possibly to be interpreted as cult masks worn in a ritual dance) are likewise



Figgs. 46-48  
Ivory figurines from  
Beersheba.



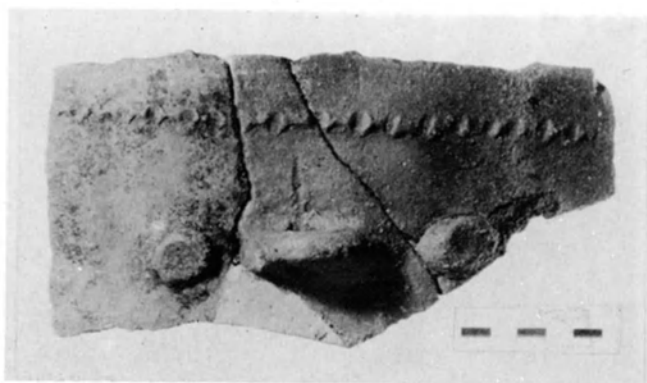


depicted with elongated, exaggerated noses (Mallon *et al.*, 1934, pls. 67-70; North, 1961, p. 35 & pl. 11).

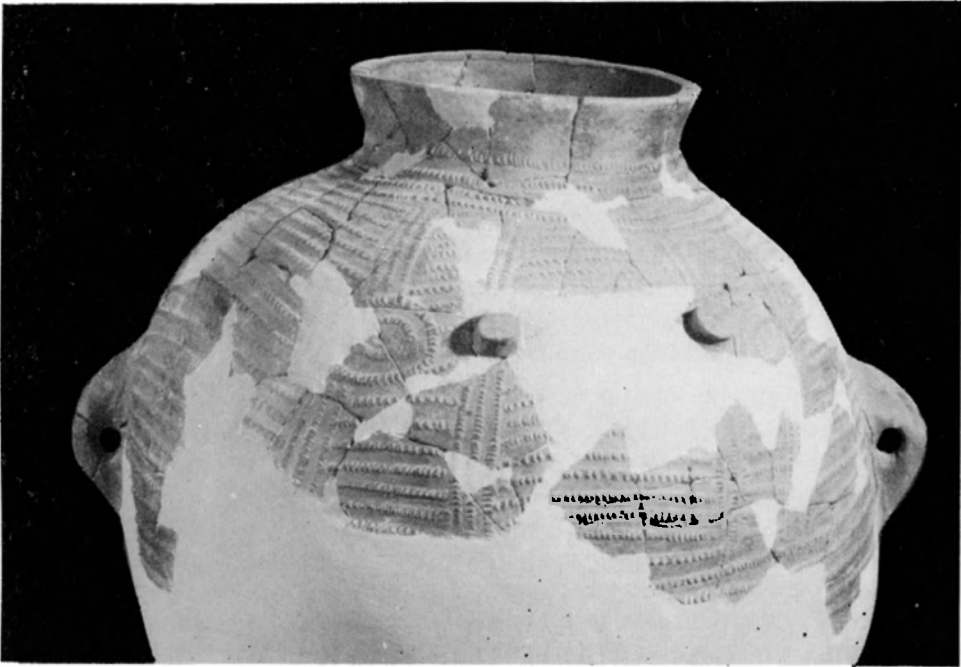
In all the above contexts it is apparent that the nose was considered as an attribute of the deity within whose power it was to ensure life, fertility and increase. It is by no means strange, then, to find that objects whose shape was reminiscent of a nose were suitably adapted and thereby transformed into a protective, apotropaic emblem. This is exemplified by upright handles (with curved rather than angular profile) which are common on storage jars: by piercing a second, smaller hole close to the upper juncture, the resemblance to a nose was strengthened by the addition of "eyes" and sometimes the forehead bulge was also indicated. "Eyes and nose" handles of this kind were first identified as such by the writer during the course of a surface survey at a southern Golan site and they have since been found on storage jars and other vessels. No longer unusual in the Golan, they occur at other sites, notably in the northern Jordan Valley, including Tell Turmus (Dayan, 1969, fig. 8:1), Delhamiya (Amiran, 1977, fig. 4:4) and Neve Ur (Unpublished - photo by kind permission of Mr. E. Eisenberg) and their diffusion may well prove to be considerably wider (note, similar handles at Ghassul - Mallon *et al.*, 1934, pl. 41:1 and Azor - Perrot, 1961, fig. 40:3).

In the case of the "eyes and nose" handles, their primary function was not impaired; but there are other forms where the handle has become completely merged with and an integral part of the associated symbol, so that its functional value has been lost altogether. A metamorphosis of this kind is seen in the "horn handles", the identification of which has added greatly to the understanding not only of various iconographic symbols, but also of the frequency and diversity with which they were used. It has been seen that the circular symbol was closely associated with the god of fields and crops; by the same token horns signified a close association with the god of flocks and herds, sometimes more specifically with the goat god. Once again the Golan is the starting point for the interpretation of material from further afield.

In 1978 the upper section of a fenestrated footed bowl came to light in a house context; below the rim there is a distended horizontal handle, from which on either side rise carefully modelled horns bearing incised decoration.



*Figgs. 49-50*  
*Non functional discs*  
*on pottery vessels.*



The "horn handle", which is treated as a single plastic application, is clearly non-functional and there is no corresponding handle on the opposite side of the bowl. This type of vessel was almost certainly used in the practice of the cult, as can be inferred from the fenestrations - or doorways - in the foot (Epstein, 1978a, p. 32). There are thus good grounds for assuming that the footed bowl with "horn handle" was specifically connected with the god of flocks and herds, being used in a domestic rite directed towards guaranteeing success and increase for this essential branch of the economy. In an adjacent house, further evidence came to light confirming an interpretation of this kind; for not only was a delicately modelled pottery goat's head found which had originally been attached to a vessel wall, but also fragments of a bowl with "horn handles" below the rim at both front and back. Another footed bowl is decorated below the rim with a pair of plastically-rendered horns between which a nose is modelled. The addition of a nose strengthens the interpretation of horns or a "horn handle" as a cultic symbol; while the combined use of more than one emblem illustrates the desire to increase potency (note another version of this kind of composite handle at Ghassul on a fragment bearing a plastically-rendered nose placed between and slightly above two horizontal handles - Koeppl *et al.*, 1940, pl. 91:11). The application of "horn handles" was not, however, confined to vessels of a purely cultic character and they occur on pots which were in everyday use. Particularly instructive is a storage jar on which a "horn handle" is placed on one side of the shoulder, though the horns themselves have disappeared and only the broken stumps remain on either side of a prominent horizontal handle; in addition, the vessel is equipped with a pair of upright handles. Here again is evidence of the purely symbolic value of the "horn handle",

since had it been intended to fulfill a functional purpose, there would have been a matching handle on the other side of the shoulder (it is possible that this vessel was used in the preparation of milk products). On another fragment, one of an original pair of plastically-rendered horns is extant, curving upwards from the vessel wall on either side of two impressed eyes. By analogy with the material already examined, it can hardly be doubted that a goat's head was indicated.

Having noted that in the Golan a goat's head, or alternatively emblematic horns were applied in one form or another to pottery vessels to ensure protection and promote fertility and increase, it will repay to review other contemporary artifacts for a similar use of these same symbols.

Turning first to the necropoli sites of the coastal region, an identical approach to that which underlies the "horn handles" is expressed on ossuary frontons found at Ben Shemen which bear one, two or three pairs of applied plastic horns (Perrot & Ladiray, figs. 82-85, 92-93, 101, 106, 109:1-3). Here the implication is abundantly clear and the association with flocks and herds manifest, even specifically with the goat god. In addition, jar-shaped ossuaries were found, nearly all of them terminating above in a flat circular symbol representing the godhead. On many there are plastically-rendered horns, not infrequently attached to a small fronton (*Ibid.*, fig. 119:4-10), and these clearly associate them with the pastoral side of the economy; while a miniature jar-ossuary, originally modelled above in the shape of a pair of up-standing horns, further illustrates this (Perrot, 1967, pl. XIII; Perrot & Ladiray, fig. 121). The use of several pairs of horns on an ossuary is likewise illustrated by a fragmentary painted pediment found at Azor on which there were originally three pairs of plastically-rendered horns above two incised eyes (Perrot, 1961, fig. 32:9), recalling the pottery fragment referred to with a single pair of horns and impressed eyes. Again, at Benei Beraq, there is a similar treatment of an ossuary fronton, where in the centre of a distinctively curved pediment are plastically-rendered V-shaped horns between which is a prominent nose (Perrot & Ladiray, fig. 141), providing a direct counterpart to the footed bowl, bearing horns combined with a plastic nose, referred to above.

In all these instances horns were added - sometimes in combination with other recognized symbols - to ensure that the object so marked would enjoy the protection of the god whose symbols it bore. It is not surprising, then, to find horns and goats' heads on different objects from the Cave of the Treasure, here too, frequently in combination with other well-known symbols. Among the scores of standards terminating in a circular disc is one at the top of which there are instead, four goats' heads placed in a circle around the shaft (Bar-Adon, 1980, n. 19). All are characterised by a prominent nose, V-shaped horns and a divided beard, the latter leaving no doubt as to their identification.

On other standards horned animal heads, without a goatee beard, occur together with other symbols: Bearing in mind the evidence presented, it can be inferred that as in stone and pottery, so in metal: an animal with a pair of V-shaped, up-curving horns decorated with incised markings, often

with eyes, pointed ears and mouth, was generally recognized as signifying the goat god and was not infrequently represented solely by a pair of horns. Thus on an elaborate standard terminating above in a well-defined circular symbol (*Ibid.*, n. 17) there are two tiers of animal heads which jut out from the shaft: all but one are shown in the accepted manner, while the central head has larger, sideways branching horns with no markings of any kind, probably representing a ram and thereby further emphasising the connection with flocks and herds understood by the goats' heads. This standard is another illustration of the combination in a single artifact of different cult emblems: on the one hand, circularity is expressed by its shape and by the flat circular symbol at its summit, with which the two upper goats' heads are moulded in one piece, while the animal heads associate it with the pastoral side of the economy. Another standard likewise exhibits a symbiosis of symbols (*Ibid.*, n. 18): circular in form, it terminates above in the usual disc head, below which there is a dilated thickening of the shaft to which well-known symbols are attached: on one side, a stylised goat's head with large, up-curving incised horns; on the other - as on so many of the standards (*Ibid.*, n. 21,23,25,32,35,42,47,108-111), smaller versions of the circular symbol. Another unique artifact from the Cave of the Treasure (*Ibid.*, n. 153) again exemplifies the integration of a number of accepted symbols: the most striking of these is a double-headed figure in the centre, on which (with the exception of the open mouth and indication of nostrils) the heads recall the lower goats' heads on the standard just discussed. Here the ears are less pointed and the eye holes deeper: but there can be no mistaking the up-curving, V-shaped, incised horns which symbolise the goat god. The twin-headed figure is shown with a single body and this in itself is unusual; for apart from two ossuaries in the form of sheep at Azor (Epstein, 1978a, p. 29), and excluding naturalistic figurines of laden animals which belong to a separate category, it is unusual for body or legs to be indicated. The two heads face different ways, while curving up close to them there is on one side a circular disc seen in profile placed at the end of a wide stem, conveying the idea of growth and vegetation, and on the other, a broad blade, surely intended for a sickle. Both these conceptions are intimately bound up with the tilling of fields and the gathering of harvests and were almost certainly regarded as symbols of the tutelary godhead associated with this important branch of the economy. There is, moreover, another feature which is worthy of comment: all the emblems, both agricultural and pastoral, are fused with and issue from a spheroidal object, which is but another version of the dilated part of the shaft which characterises so many of the standards. Stripped of these, its basic shape stamps it as belonging to the "mace head" class, of which some 250 were found in the Cave of the Treasure (Bar-Adon, 1980, p. 116), the majority made of metal and some of limestone and haematite - the latter also occurring in Chalcolithic contexts elsewhere (Mallon *et al.*, 1934, p. 71 and pl. 35:2,3; Dothan, 1959, p. 27 and pl. VII:4; Perrot, 1957, pl. III: 4; *idem*, 1961, fig. 43:4; Kaplan, 1963, fig. 9; 14 and pl. 34:B; Perrot *et al.*, 1967, fig. 14:1; Hennessy, 1969, pl. VI:a). The large number of "mace heads" in the hoard, coupled with the recurrent dilation of so many of the standard shafts makes it likely that the spheroidal shape likewise had a specific significance.



*Fig. 51*  
*Large jar with "eyes*  
*and nose" handles.*

*Fig. 52*  
*Large jar from Golan,*  
*with "horn handles".*

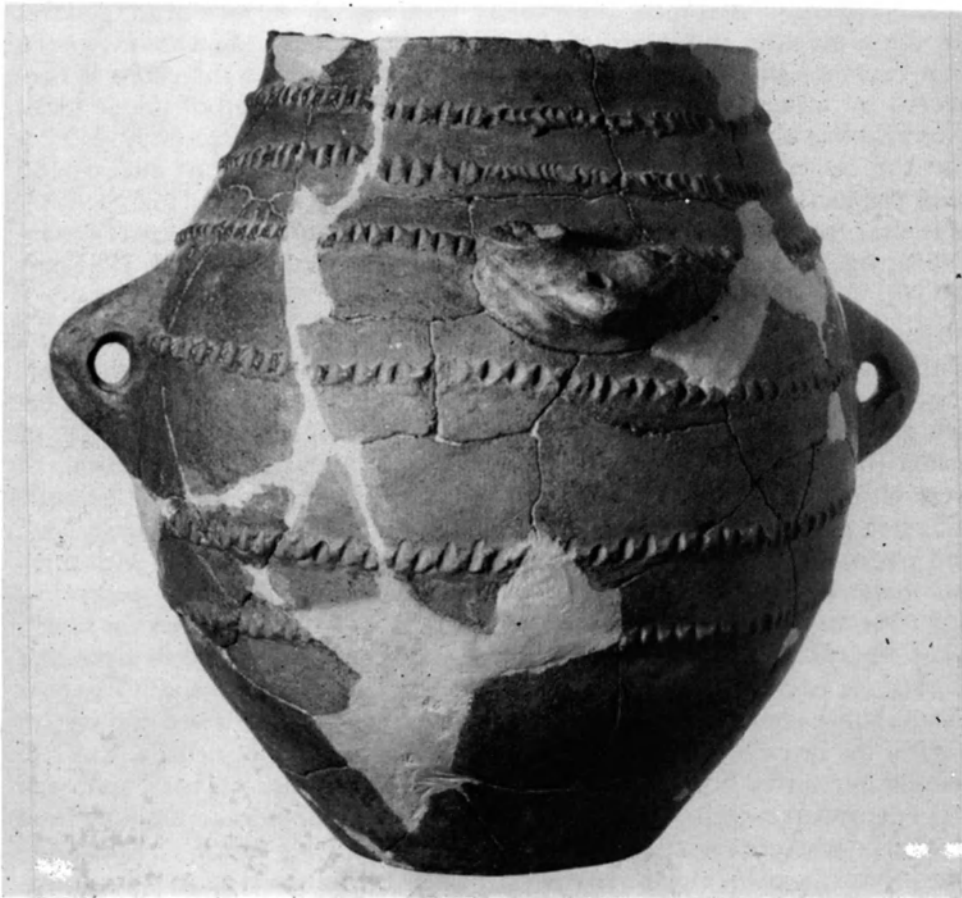
The widespread use of goats' heads and horns lends added weight to the interpretation of them as apotropaic symbols. This is further endorsed by a pair of up-curving horns occupying a central position on each of the two pediments which rise from the rim of the "crown" to which reference has already been made. Here again is a synthesis of symbols related to the two main branches of the economy: for the doorways - which should surely be interpreted as shrine entrances (Bar-Adon, 1980, p. 132; Epstein, 1978a, p. 26) - are studded on either side with circular discs placed one above the other, thereby expressing the connection with the god of fields and crops, while the horns represent the god of flocks and herds (there are likewise two bird figures on the rim which doubtless also had a recognized symbolic value). On another "crown" which is markedly bi-conical in shape (Bar-Adon, 1980, n. 10), there are two small triangular animal heads on one side of the rim and they, too, probably represent goats' heads.

From the above review of artifacts executed in various kinds of material to fulfill very different functions, it is abundantly clear that in Chalcolithic Palestine there was a wide range of symbols (not all as yet clearly understood) which were ultimately cultic in connotation; foremost among them are circularity of form, a prominent nose and horns. Their recognition has been greatly facilitated by the analysis of the outstanding characteristics of the pillar figures which in every case were sculpted with a shallow bowl on the head. While this is not strictly a cultic symbol, it nevertheless was a cultic convention, which on closer examination proves not to have been confined to the Golan statues.

Returning once again to a consideration of the male ivory figurines found at Beersheba, on which both nose and sexual member are accentuated (Perrot, 1959, pls. II-III; *idem*, 1964, pls. L-LII), it is seen that they are

distinguished by an intentional hollowing out of the head, which by analogy with the house-god figures no doubt served as a receptacle for small offerings, such as seeds, corn grains and olives. That the figurines were used in rites directed towards ensuring the fertility of fields and crops can be inferred from the ceremonial sickle in the curve of which one of them was found (Perrot, 1964, pl. 11:1) and by the presence in the same context of a tusk decorated with vegetal and fertility symbols. Although executed in very different media - the one schematically, the other naturalistically - both the pillar figures and the ivory figurines are seen to represent the same agricultural deity and both were used in a domestic cult designed to promote success for this vital branch of the economy.

Another fertility figurine found in the Negev provides a further illustration of the custom of placing offerings on the head (Alon, 1976, 1977). The figurine is of pottery and represents a goddess, shown as a barrel-shaped, seated figure holding a churn on her head. As on the male ivory figurines, here too, the nose is prominent and the sexual organs emphasised; in addition the figure has a distended navel, probably indicating pregnancy as on a headless ivory figurine from Beersheba (Perrot, 1969, pl. XIII). Such an interpretation is endorsed by the seated position of the goddess, shown in



the actual process of childbirth (compare an earlier figurine found in a grain bin at Catal Hüyük - Mellaart, 1967, pl. IX; Albright, 1940, p. 98). It is further borne out by the "stool" upon which she is seated: bi-conical in shape, it splays out markedly at top and bottom, recalling the shape of the "crowns" from the Cave of the Treasure and likewise of several of the pillar figures from the Golan. By virtue of its basic circularity it was clearly associated with the concept of fertility and it can be plausibly suggested that it was intended for a birth stool (red-slipped to increase its efficacy). Although considerably smaller in size, the biconical object held horizontally under the goddess' left arm is seen to belong to a related category and there can be little doubt that it was a talisman, such as were commonly clasped by women in childbirth: although without facial features, its general shape and the shallow bowl at one extremity recall smaller pillar figures from the Golan. Finally, there is the churn poised on the figure's head, its position and function being wholly in keeping with contemporary practice. For the churn, used in the preparation of milk products (Kaplan, 1954; Avizur, 1961), is unmistakably connected with the pastoral side of the economy: by placing it upon the head of a fertility figurine it fulfilled the function of a receptacle for offerings, in the same way as the bowl on the top of the heads of the pillar figures. In this context, however, it is likely that milk or curd libations were poured into it to evoke the beneficent powers of the goddess for the protection and increase of the milk-giving flocks. Such an interpretation becomes all the more likely in view of the fact that the churn is connected by means of an opening in the base with the head of the goddess, thus enabling the liquid to percolate through into the hollow body. Moreover, the churn was almost certainly regarded as the symbol of milking and milk products and as such had a cultic significance (Amiran, 1976, p. 120), as is clear from the occurrence of miniature votive churns elsewhere (Dothan, 1959a, fig. 10:3; De Contenson, 1956, p. 227, fig. 9:7-12; Perrot, 1961, fig. 39:3).

Although a unique piece, the Churn Goddess figurine is thus seen to be a synthesis of contemporary cultic conventions, falling into place alongside very different kinds of artifacts. All of these were expressions of shared beliefs given tangible form through an accepted range of symbols in a variety of media (metal, ivory, pottery or stone). No matter what their function, all were ultimately designed to the same end, namely, to guarantee the essential subsistence requirements of a community engaged primarily in agriculture and pastoralism. Success and abundance for everything connected with these two basic branches of the economy were regarded as ultimately depending upon the favor of tutelary deities. It is this belief which underlies the Golan pillar figures, set up in the houses and courtyards where people lived and worked; it is expressed through the decoration applied to ossuary frontons (death being regarded as the prelude to an after-life); it inspired the fashioning of the magnificent array of objects used in the temple ritual at En-Gedi (hidden for safety in the Cave of the Treasure); while this same basic approach was adapted to everyday requirements and used apotropaically on household vessels in which were stored the produce of the fields or the end-products from the milk-giving flocks. For in Chalcolithic Palestine religion was intima-





Fig. 53  
*Clay Goddess figurine*  
*from Gilat, Negev.*

tely bound up with those activities which were the *sine qua non* of man's physical existence, believed to depend on the benevolent intervention of gods directly responsible for them.

*Résumé:* La culture calcolithique en Palestine est caractérisée par des aspects distinctement régionaux, comme il en résulte évident des fouilles de Teleilat Ghassul (environ à 8 km. au nord-est de la Mer Morte), de Mallaha près de Beersheba dans le Negev, le long de la plaine côtière ainsi que dans le Golan. D'autre part, les croyances religieuses semblent faire partie d'un courant général, dérivé d'un héritage commun. Celles-ci sont tangiblement exprimées dans les rites domestiques (on ne connaît qu'un seul temple pour le culte public, à En-Gedi) et ont pour but surtout le succès et l'accroissement des deux activités principales de l'économie: l'agriculture et l'élevage du bétail.

Dans la culture du Golan, nous trouvons deux types de statues en basalte d'idoles domestiques en forme de colonne. Elles représentent le dieu des champs et des maisons, et le dieu du bétail, représenté avec des cornes et quelques fois avec une barbe caprine.

Les deux types ont une forme circulaire (représentant la tête du Dieu), un nez proéminent (symbolisant l'esprit de la vie et donc partie intégrante de la force créatrice) et une coupe pour les offrandes située sur la tête.

Ce symbolisme iconographique, qui était utilisé de diverses manières dans les différentes parties du pays, représente des croyances intimement liées aux activités essentielles de l'existence physique de l'homme, lequel croyait que le succès dépendait de l'intervention bienveillante des dieux tutélaires.

*Riassunto:* La cultura calcolitica in Palestina è caratterizzata da aspetti distintamente regionali, come risulta evidente dagli scavi a Teleilat Ghassul (circa 8 km. a nord-est del Mar Morto), vicino a Beersheba, nel Negev, lungo la pianura costiera e sul Golan. D'altra parte però, le credenze religiose sembrano far parte di una corrente contemporanea generale, derivata da un comune retaggio culturale. Esse vengono espresse tangibilmente nei riti del culto domestico (solamente un tempio per il culto pubblico è noto, En-Gedi) e sono diretti soprattutto al successo e all'accrescimento delle due attività principali dell'economia: l'agricoltura e l'allevamento del bestiame.

Nella cultura del Golan, recentemente venuta alla luce, vi sono due tipi unici di statue di deità domestiche in forma di colonne di basalto. Esse rappresentano il dio dei campi e del raccolto e il dio delle greggi e delle mandrie, quest'ultimo raffigurato con corna e a volte con una barba caprina. Ambedue i tipi hanno dei tratti in comune: una forma circolare (rappresentante la testa del dio), un naso prominente (simboleggiante lo spirito della vita e quindi parte integrante della forza creatrice) e una coppa per le offerte situata all'estremità del capo. Questo simbolismo iconografico, che veniva usato in diversi modi nelle varie parti del paese, è generalmente rappresentato come figura protettrice, essendo la religione intimamente legata alle attività essenziali, all'esistenza fisica dell'uomo dal cui successo era creduto dipendere l'intervento benevolo degli dei tutelari.

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