Figuring Out the Figurines of the Ancient Near East

Edited by Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper

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Preface

The series *Occasional Papers in Coroplastic Studies* came to fruition in order to promote the study of sculptural objects made in clay from the ancient Mediterranean and to facilitate their publication. An initiative of the Association for Coroplastic Studies (ACoST), formerly the Coroplastic Studies Interest Group (CSIG) of the Archaeological Institute of America, *Occasional Papers in Coroplastic Studies* is the first peer-reviewed publication venture of ACoST. This initial volume comprises 4 papers that were delivered at one of the three sessions of the Annual Meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) either in 2009, 2010, or 2011 that were entitled "Figuring Out the Figurines of the Ancient Near East." I would like to thank Stephanie Langin-Hooper, who had organized these sessions, for also accepting the role of editor for this volume, which involved considerable time and energy on her part. I also would like to express my gratitude to the two anonymous reviewers of the papers that were submitted for this volume. Their valuable insights and direction were very much appreciated by the authors. Finally, I would like to thank the authors themselves for being so steadfast in their devotion to this project.

Jaimee P. Uhlenbrock
President, Association for Coroplastic Studies
February, 2014

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Introduction

Figuring Out the Figurines of the Ancient Near East at ASOR 2009-2011

Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper

Of all the objects produced by the cultures of the ancient Near East, figurines (particularly, although not exclusively, terracotta figurines) are among the most pervasive. For instance, over eleven-thousand figurine fragments were excavated from the Babylonian site of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris[1]—and such ubiquity is by no means unique to that city. Although when evaluated by modern aesthetic standards, figurines rarely rise to the artistic level of "great" monuments or statuary, they nevertheless seem to have had their own particular appeal, as well as a wide audience, in the ancient world. The use of inexpensive material and relative ease of manufacture meant that terracotta figurines were available to most ancient Near Eastern people. Terracotta figurines thus have the potential to be particularly informative about everyday life in these societies.

Yet, the study of terracotta figurines is also beset with obstacles to interpretation. At the most basic level, there is an often-unexpressed disagreement about how best to regard terracotta figurines: are they artworks or archaeological artifacts? A case can be made in either direction. On the side of art is the fact that, although not always the case, some terracotta figurines (such as the famous Tanagra figurines of the Hellenistic Greek world) seem designed with aesthetics as a major, if not primary, consideration. Even terracotta figurines that are not especially visually appealing are still capable of evoking an art-like response in their viewers. Because of their representational properties as miniature versions of life-size things (usually human beings or animals), terracotta figurines would seem to have the non-utilitarian, visually-engaging properties of an artwork. This effect is especially heightened when a terracotta figurine is seen, and studied, in isolation. As a single object, a figurine's representative capacity to mimetically link to the outside world, yet also present that world through the shifted perspective of miniaturization,[2] comes to the fore. Selective representation, altered mimesis—these are (some of) the properties of art.

However, figurines are rarely excavated or studied as single objects. Terracotta figurines are usually seen by the hundreds (if not the thousands), and such overwhelming numbers suggest modes of scholarly analysis that are more similar to those used for potsherds than marble statuary. In addition to their prevalence, terracotta figurines are also generally viewed by scholars as being relatively mundane, due to the inexpensive nature of the ceramic material, their mass-produced or homemade manufacture by and for the non-elite, and the evaluation that many terracotta figurines were made with no special attention to artistic quality. The combination of these factors is often seen to situate terracotta figurines more within the domain of archaeologists than art historians. Archaeological approaches to terracotta figurines have often focused on extensive cataloguing and discussions of figurines (usually by "type") in general statements that apply to object groups. Such methodologies assist archaeologists in dealing with large numbers of terracotta figurines in a practical, manageable way. Assessing terracotta figurines as groups, rather than as individual objects, can also yield information, such as patterns of use and change across time, in ways more effective than individual artistic analysis would be. Yet, such methodological approaches also invite generalizations that gloss over variation—a particular problem at sites and in periods with marked figurine diversity—and often fail to consider the visual features of figurines as anything more than typological markers.

Terracotta figurines can thus be somewhat intractable and enigmatic. Positioned on the divide between the disciplines of art history and archaeology, they remain alluring, yet out of the full interpretive sweep of either discipline. As a result, many approaches to the voluminous numbers of figurines recovered from excavations in the ancient Near East regard them simply as objects to be categorized based on motif (such as "standing female") and then left with little more that is said about them. Analysis is often sweepingly broad, and assessments of function (such as "temple votive") rarely delve into the complexities of the human behaviors and social structures that would coincide with such figurine use.

There have always been exceptions to this trend. Within the field of ancient Near Eastern terracotta figurine

studies, notably innovative analyses have been conducted by Julia Asher-Greve (1998), Julia Assante (2002), and Zainab Bahrani (2000), in particular; and even some earlier scholars, such as Wilhelmenia Van Ingen (1939), went beyond the simple catalogue in their publications of terracotta figurines. Yet despite this notable precedent, it has been only very recently that ancient Near Eastern figurine studies has experienced a turn of the tide in terms of both the prevalence of research specifically engaged with terracotta figurines, as well as an expansion of the methodologies used to study these elusive objects. Many of these new studies attempt to overhaul, or even to reinvent, how figurines are analyzed. In my own observation, two trends in these new methodological approaches seem to be emerging: scientific and quantitative studies that analyze figurine manufacture, use-life, and deposition; and object agency and materiality-based studies that focus on the human engagement (usually visual and tactile) with figurines as objects. Although the adherents of either approach are not restricted by a single methodology, it is nevertheless useful to provide a general overview of each analytical development.

Scientific and quantitative studies of ancient Near Eastern terracotta figurines have particularly prospered in the last decades because of technological advancements that allow for such investigations as the geological sourcing of clay, detecting of micro-fractures that can indicate deliberate breakage, computer models of figurine distribution on both localized and regional levels, and reconstructions of object circulation within social networks. The search for scientific facts that can be quantified, graphed, and otherwise inputted as "real" data has been seen by many as preferable to what are often regarded today as the more impressionistic analyses of figurines that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries. Even when studying figurines as archaeological artifacts, early cataloguing efforts that attempted to categorize often-illusive figurine motifs into clear sets of defined differences were based on a certain amount of connoisseurship. Analyses of figurine use were similarly rife with intuitive assumptions, often resulting in speculation about the role of figurines in society (usually as deities or votives) superseding, and even displacing, archaeological evidence for the figurines' use context. New quantitative approaches usually begin with the archaeology, rather than the object itself, and reconstruct figurine use and meaning based on detailed studies of contextual data. Studies of figurines as objects focus on quantifiable attributes, such as the texture of the clay or the length of the figurine's arms, rather than on the more nebulous aspects of figurine appearance, such as motifs, iconography, and style. Such approaches are often described as an attempt to introduce methodological rigor, which is already well-established in other archaeological studies (particularly of ceramics), into a field that has been the more traditional domain of qualitative analysis.

The other approach to terracotta figurine analysis that has been gaining traction within recent years is based on anthropological investigations of object agency and materiality. As with the quantitative analyses, studies of human-object engagement with terracotta figurines generally exhibit a macro-level interest in the role of terracotta figurines within a society and community. But rather than utilize standard archaeological explanations for figurine use (as votives or toys) and appearance (representations of deities or offerings), the object agency approach to figurine use asks why figurines, as miniature representations of large-scale living beings, objects, or structures, are appealing and have meaning within ancient societies. Douglass Bailey (2005) has been the pioneer of this avenue of terracotta figurine research. His work has revealed that figurines as miniature versions of life-size objects, particularly those of humans or animals, have an intimate and powerful quality. As Griselda Pollock has put it: "why do we like looking at images of other human beings? ... An image of another or even ourselves might have no meaning or actually threaten us. There must be a reason for and a mechanism by which we delight in images, especially those that are 'like' us, human images."[3] This power to enchant and engage—a power that all human images share—is intensified in figurines because of their miniature size. Miniature human images can be not only viewed, but they can also be possessed, in a complete physical sense. Such intimate relationships enable reciprocal identity sharing and transfer between person and figurine.[4] As I have argued in my own research, this particular power of figurines to display, as well as reshape, human identity means that they are an especially useful tool for archaeologists interested in accessing social roles, traditions, and interactions in the ancient world.[5] Object agency and materiality approaches to the study of terracotta figurines are endeavoring to pursue such social analysis, while also maintaining a focus on the individual figurine as a locus for meaningful interaction.

Together, these two new schools of terracotta figurine studies seem poised to remake scholarship's traditional understanding of terracotta figurines in the ancient Near East, and their connection to the societies who made and used them. Theoretical advancements in other fields, such as Mesoamerican and Neolithic European figurine studies, as well as technological developments in broader archaeological practice, have fueled the development of both approaches. But their application to ancient Near Eastern corpora, and the further expansion of these theories to suit the distinctive features of the ancient Near Eastern past, have been recent developments. It therefore seemed timely introduce a session specifically tailored to figurine studies at the Annual Meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

This session, begun in 2009 and entitled "Figuring Out the Figurines of the Ancient Near East," aimed to bring together scholars researching terracotta figurines across all regions, sites and time periods in the ancient Near East, Egypt, and eastern Mediterranean. Prior to this session, papers on the topic of terracotta figurines were often presented at ASOR; however, they were always distributed across the conference, as they were slotted into sessions about regional specialties, such as the archaeology of Cyprus, or topics such as religion. This distribution of figurine papers across multiple sessions often did not allow for group discussion between figurine scholars. The "Figuring Out the Figurines" session aimed to provide a forum for idea presentation and discussion among a group of scholars who specialize in researching terracotta figurines. When the session was initially proposed, it was hoped that several benefits would result: encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue and cross-cultural comparisons of figurines; facilitating theoretical discussion about figurine interpretation; and fostering a sense of community among ancient Near East figurine scholars.

The response to the session was overwhelming. So many scholars submitted abstracts the first year that the session had to be given two time slots. The following two years also saw full slates of speakers, with deserving abstracts being turned away in the selection process. The audience response was equally enthusiastic. All three years saw audiences of 75-100 people, substantial crowds that far exceeded the average attendance at an ASOR session. Lively, informed discussion was frequent, both during the question-and-answer sessions and after the session concluded.

Based on these responses of both presenters and audiences, I judge the three-year run of "Figuring Out the Figurines of the Ancient Near East" to have been a success. Through this effort, the visibility of ancient Near Eastern figurine studies has been raised, and a community of scholars working in the field has become further interconnected. Although this incarnation of the "Figuring Out the Figurines" session has run its course at the ASOR Annual Meetings, it is my hope that figurine studies continue to be featured prominently at the conference, and that a revival of the session (at ASOR or another conference) might take place at some point in the future. As figurine studies continue to advance through new archaeological discoveries, new theoretical breakthroughs, and innovative approaches to figurine interpretation, the need for an ancient Near East figurine conference forum will continue. It is crucial that all scholars concerned with the study of these intriguing objects remain connected in productive collaboration and mutual idea-sharing, to further the efforts of our unique discipline.

ASOR Conference Programs of the "Figuring Out the Figurines Sessions," 2009-2011

Before proceeding to the introduction of the papers in this volume, I would first like to acknowledge the ASOR staff and organizing committee for their strong support of this project. Additionally, all of the scholars who participated in the three years of "Figuring Out the Figurines"—as speakers, facilitators, audience members, or supporters—have my sincere thanks. The session chairs, speakers, and paper titles are listed here:

ASOR 2009 (New Orleans), Session 1

Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper (University of California, Berkeley), Presiding

Adi Erlich (University of Haifa),"Double Faces, Multiple Meanings: the Hellenistic Pillar Figurines from Maresha, Israel"

Erin Walcek Averett (Creighton University), "The Ritual Contexts of Archaic Cypriote Figurines"

Jaimee P. Uhlenbrock (SUNY New Paltz), "A Near Easterner at Cyrene: Cross-Cultural Implications at a Greek City in Libya"

Erin D. Darby (Duke University) and David Ben-Shlomo (Hebrew University, Jerusalem), "Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice: Terracotta Pillar Figurines

and Jerusalemite Pottery Production in Iron II Judea"

Susan Downey (University of California, Los Angeles), "Images of Divinities in Terracotta and Stucco Plaques from the Hellenistic-Roman Period at Dura-Europos, Syria"

ASOR 2009 (New Orleans), Session 2

Andrea Creel (University of California, Berkeley), Presiding

Christopher Tuttle (American Center of Oriental Research, Jordan), "The Nabataean Coroplastic Arts: A Synthetic Methodology for Addressing a Diverse Corpus"

Elizabeth Waraksa (University of California, Los Angeles), "Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct, Karnak: Evidence of Ritual Use"

Elizabeth Bloch-Smith (St. Joseph's University), "Nudity is Divine: Southern Levantine Female Figurines"

ASOR 2010 (Atlanta)

Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper (University of California, Berkeley), Presiding

Rüdiger Schmitt (University of Muenster), "Animal Figurines as Ritual Media in Ancient Israel"

Christopher Tuttle (American Center of Oriental Research, Jordan), "Nabataean Camels & Horses in Daily Life: The Coroplastic Evidence"

Erin Darby (Duke University), "Seeing Double: Viewing and Re-viewing Judean Pillar Figurines through Modern Eyes"

Adi Erlich (University of Haifa), "The Emergence of Enthroned Females in Hellenistic Terracottas from Israel: Cyprus, Asia Minor, and Canaanite Connections"

P. M. Michèle Daviau (Wilfrid Laurier University), "The Coroplastic Traditions of Transjordan"

Rick Hauser (International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies), "Reading Figurines: Animal Representations in Terra Cotta from Urkesh, the first Hurrian Capital (2450 BCE)"

ASOR 2011 (San Francisco)

Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper (Bowling Green State University), Presiding

Rüdiger Schmitt (University of Muenster), "Apotropaic Animal Figurines"

Marco Ramazzotti (La Sapienza University of Rome), "The Mimesis of a World: The Early Bronze and Middle Bronze Clay Figurines from Ebla-Tell Mardikh (Syria)"

Doug Bailey (San Francisco State University), "Uncertainty and Precarious Partiality: New Thinking on Figurines"

Christopher Tuttle (American Center of Oriental Research, Jordan), "Miniature Nabataean Coroplastic Vessels"

Erin Darby (University of Tennessee) and Michael Press (University of Arkansas), "Composite Figurines in the Iron II Levant: A Comparative Approach"

Andrea Creel (University of California, Berkeley), "Manipulating the Divine and Late Bronze/Iron Age 'Astarte' Plaques in the Southern Levant"

Discussion of Papers Included in this Volume

All participants from the three-year run of the "Figuring Out the Figurines of the Ancient Near East" session at the 2009-2011 ASOR Annual Meetings were given the opportunity to submit articles for publication. The four peer-reviewed articles included in this issue are the result of that process. Fortuitously, they represent the breadth and diversity—both in temporal and geographical scope, as well as in theoretical approaches—that was exhibited over the three years of the ASOR session. Each can stand alone as a contribution to its respective field; however, together they represent the progress being made in figurine studies throughout ancient Near Eastern scholarship.

P. M. Michèle Daviau's contribution, "The Coroplastics of Transjordan: Forming Techniques and Iconographic Traditions in the Iron Age," is immediately notable in its treatment of the diversity of figurine forms found in Transjordan. Although difficult to classify, the unique or uncommon figurines in the corpus are nevertheless given equal treatment in this article with the more popular and easily categorized forms. Daviau powerfully demonstrates how classification of figurines can still be a useful tool without resorting to the over-generalizations and disregard for uncommon figurine forms that are so common to figurine typologies. In the analysis of her material, Daviau utilizes an object-experience methodology to address issues of use. Her assessment that many of the Transjordan figurines cannot stand alone, but must be held in the hand or propped up, is an excellent example of how object materiality can yield useful information about the function and experience of terracotta figurines. Daviau's detailed study of figu-

rine manufacture and iconography, along with quantitative analysis of figurine distribution across several ancient sites, is also representative of the recent trend in figurine scholarship towards more scientific studies. Daviau thus combines both of the new approaches to figurine analysis in order to shed important light on the expression of ethnic identity in the terracotta figurines of Transjordan.

Erin Darby's contribution, "Seeing Double: Viewing and Re-viewing Judean Pillar Figurines through Modern Eyes," is strongly positioned within the quantitative approach to ancient Near Eastern figurines. Yet, uncharacteristically for a quantitative study, Darby's article investigates iconography and motifs traditionally seen as the domain of art historians. Darby catalogues individual elements of the figurines in her corpus in order to determine how artisans drew upon a broad repertoire of available symbols and recombined them to create specific visual forms and functions in the figurines. An important critique of the tradition of impressionistic studies of figurines in scholarship is made; particularly enlightening is the critique that viewing and looking at objects is culturally-situated and conditioned, so any correlation between modern and ancient ways of seeing must be demonstrated, not assumed. Darby's article is uncommon in that its discussion of terracotta figurine iconography is presented with few accompanying images, none of which illustrate the specific figurines presented in her article. This is a compelling, and innovative, way to oblige the reader to think about figurines from ancient perspectives, rather than jumping immediately to visual assessment based on modern cultural norms. The article's comparison of the terracotta figurines with other artifacts from the Judean culture to discover iconographical similarities outside the figurine corpus is also a significant step forward for the field, as archaeologists often focus on figurines as a special class of objects, obscuring their functional, display, and visual similarities to other forms of material culture.

Adi Erlich's contribution, "Double Face, Multiple Meanings: The Hellenistic Pillar Figurines from Maresha," utilizes both of the new approaches to terracotta figurine analysis. The article begins with quantitative assessment of figurine types and distribution across the landscape and sites near Maresha. From this scientific analysis, Erlich progresses to a detailed consideration of the human interaction with, and meanings created through the materiality of, terracotta figurines with two faces. Her article takes a theoretically-informed perspective on the fluidity of "meaning" as a product of the encounter between the person and the object, with the conclusion that terracotta figurines were interpreted differently, and took on different identities, based on the cultural background and particular interests of their viewer. In Erlich's view, the interaction between human and figurine was dynamic, and only partially determined by the physical appearance of the object. The relationship of figurine forms to broader social issues of cross-cultural interaction and ethnic difference are discussed in the conclusion of the article, in which it is suggested that the "double face" figurines were accessible to most members of the Maresha community during otherwise tumultuous times. Erlich's line of argumentation seems to suggest that these figurines participated in broader social processes in which ethnic and culture differences were minimized —a powerful example of the role and agency of terracotta figurines within the communities who made and used them.

Marco Ramazzotti's contribution, "The Mimesis of a World: The Early and Middle Bronze Clay Figurines from Ebla-Tell Mardikh," is the most at home in the new branch of figurine theory that deals with anthropological approaches to materiality and investigates the intimate encounters between person and object that figurines encourage. Nevertheless, Ramazzotti also utilizes quantitative studies of figurine context and use at Ebla, as well as chemical and physical analysis of figurine breakage patterns, to support his argument. He thus demonstrates that both approaches to figurine analysis can be used together productively, especially to focus on the material presence and properties of a figurine, which have both a quantitative and a qualitative (human experience) component. The tactile element of human experience with figurines is especially highlighted in the article and used to explore how miniature clay versions of beings can substitute for (and allow experimentation with) the life-size, real social world. Ramazzotti's conclusion that the spatial distribution of figurines at Ebla, as well as the tactile experience of these diverse figurine forms, indicates that broader social issues beyond the sacred kingship were being addressed through terracotta figurines, is a striking example of the interpretive possibilities offered by both current approaches to figurine analysis. His discussion of creation versus mimesis, and the linkages of both concepts with Mesopotamian literary sources, is

a valuable addition to theoretical discussions of Mesopotamian figurines.

Conclusion

The four articles presented in this volume provide an excellent cross-section, as well as some of the most compelling examples, of the approaches to terracotta figurines presented in the three years of the "Figuring Out the Figurines of the Ancient Near East" sessions at the American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Meetings. All four articles fit within at least one of the two current trends in figurine scholarship, and many of them suggest that these two approaches can be productively combined. I would suggest that this combination of rigorous quantitative studies of figurines-as-artifacts focusing on contextual and physical data, with the more theoretical approaches to figurine agency, materiality, and human-object interaction, will be the future of our field. It is my hope that future coference sessions, at at ASOR and elsewhere, will provide the valuable forums necessary for those of us engaged in terracotta figurine studies to continue to share our research and to enrich our community with with further innovations and methodological developments.

Acknowledgements

My primary thanks go to Jaimee Uhlenbrock, who first approached me about creating this volume and did most of the editing work (even though she generously insisted on giving me editorial attribution). Without her, this valuable project would never have come to fruition. I would also like to thank all four of the authors, as well as the two anonymous peer reviewers; without their cooperation and incredible patience this publication would not have succeeded.

This volume is based on research that was originally presented at the American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Meetings. I would like to thank ASOR for sponsoring the original conference sessions, and believing in my vision that "Figurine Studies" had a place in the annual meeting. Many thanks go to all of the presenters who gave insightful and innovative papers during the three years of the session, as well as to the audience members who came to hear the speakers and participate in the lively and informed discussion.

Notes

[1] Menegazzi 2012: 157

[2] The most immediate way in which figurines present a shifted perspective on the world is by their miniaturization. However, other changes to the life-size human/animal body, clothing, etc. are often made to terracotta figurines; such changes have the potential to further alter the way in which the figurine's viewer encounters the object, and the way in which the object can alter the viewer's perception of the world. Bailey 2005 is the ideal reference for further reading on the ways in which terracotta figurines and other miniature objects present alternate perspectives on, and experiences of, reality.

[3] Pollock 2003: 182

[4] Bailey 2005: 38

[5] Langin-Hooper 2013

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Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper
Bowling Green State University
slangin@bgsu.edu

The Coroplastics of Transjordan
Forming Techniques and Iconographic Traditions in the Iron Age

P. M. Michèle Daviau[1]

Abstract

During the past twenty years, excavations in Transjordan have produced a large corpus of anthropomorphic figurines and statues, as well as figures attached to architectural models. For the most part, these figures originate in central Jordan and date to the Iron Age. Although they were found in tombs and at a limited number of sites, the figurines and statues in this study represent a variety of ethnic and cultural traditions, many previously unknown. While it is clear in certain instances that Egypto-Phoenician iconography had an influence on Ammonite and Moabite iconographic traditions, in other cases the imagery, especially of the ceramic statues, is distinctive and/or unique. This paper will present a discussion of the various forming techniques employed to produce these figures and begin to explore their place in the iconographic traditions of the region. Included in this study will be a review of figurines found previously and identified with confidence by early explorers and excavators as Ammonite, Moabite, or Edomite on the basis of the ceramic tradition represented in a given region. In view of the much larger corpus which is now available, considerable diversity in the assemblage is evident and a reassessment is warranted.

Area under Study

The central Jordanian plateau in the Iron Age included a number of small polities, some more centralized than others. Best known is Ammon, whose capital at Rabbath-Ammon (`Amman) retains vestiges of a royal citadel with impressive architecture and works of art. On Ammon's southwestern perimeter were the Land of Madaba and the plains of Moab, which supported organized tribal groups during Iron Age I–early Iron II.[2] On the plateau to the south, two distinct polities known as Moab and Edom developed during Iron Age II (900–600 BCE). Several major trade routes linking Arabia with Damascus passed through these regions, providing for the exchange of raw materials and cultural traditions.

Specific sites of interest on the plateau[3] that have yielded a significant number of Iron Age figurines include `Amman, Tall al-`Umayri, Tall Jawa, Khirbat al-Mudayna ath-Thamad, WT-13, Balu`a, and Busayra, with smaller numbers from Maqabalayn, Saḥab, Hesban, Jalul, Madaba, Mount Nebo, Dibon, and Tawilan.[4] One hundred ninety-four figurines and

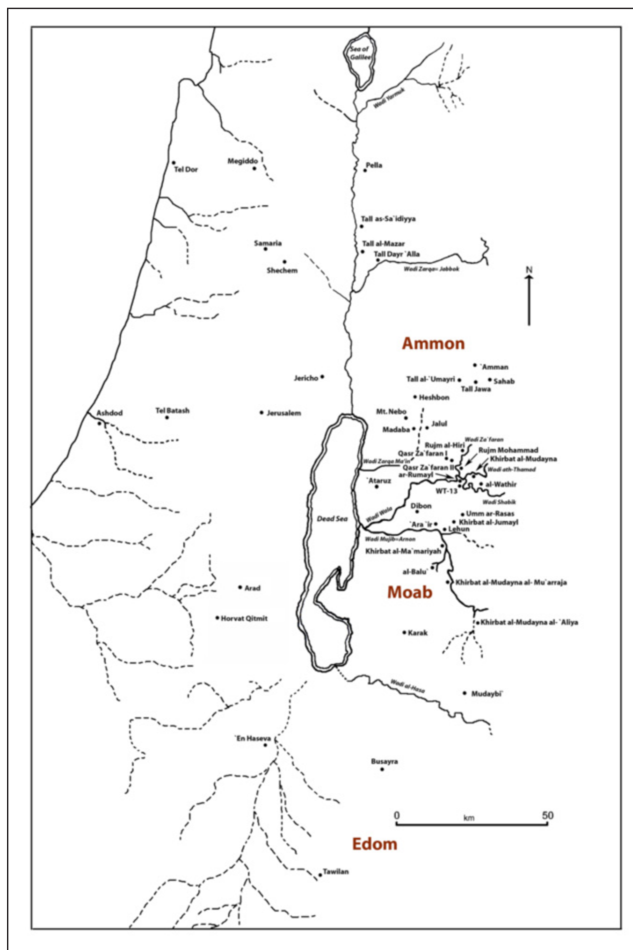

Fig. 1. Map of central Jordan and Palestine.

29 ceramic statues from published reports and from excavations in Moab under my direction are included in this study;[5] figurines with suspect provenience are not discussed in detail.

The anthropomorphic figures from central Jordan consist primarily of terracotta figurines and ceramic statues, with stone figures playing a minor role.[6] Terracotta figurines represent females and males as free-standing fully modeled figures, either mold-made or hand-made, and pillar figurines with mold-made heads. The smaller corpus of ceramic statues is, for the most part, pillar-shaped in style, with few details of the anatomy shown below the waist. Only

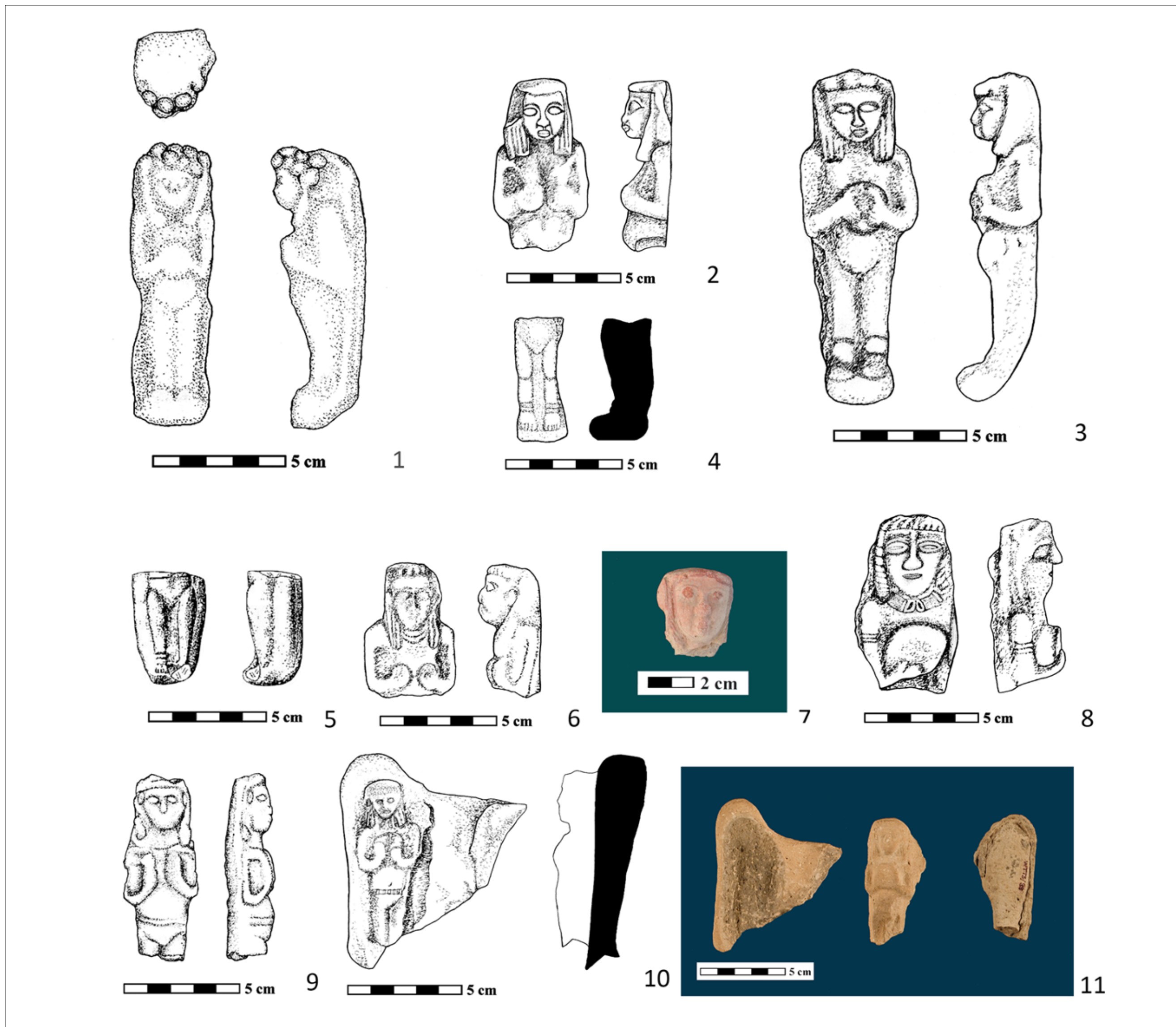

Fig. 2. Free-Standing and Attached Figurines; 1) finger formed (WT 21-1/521); 2) tool formed back (WT 35-2/535); 3) curved feet (WT 86-2/586); 4) flat base (WT 95-2/595); 5) excessive clay (TJ 1712; after Daviau 2002: fig. 2.30:3); 6-7) details of hair (WT 68-2/568; MT 565–4/21); 8-9) details of jewelry (WT 42-2/542; WT 286-4/514); 10–11) attached to a plaque or fronton (WT 88+89-2/588+589).

a handful of limestone statuettes have been recovered and these, along with the large stone statues from the `Amman area, are beyond the scope of this study.[7] So too are the large collections of zoomorphic figurines that deserve separate investigation.[8]

Basic Figurine Types

Free-standing, mold-made figures:

Solid mold-made ceramic figurines were formed either in the round (bivalve mold) or, more often, were molded on the front (univalve) and trimmed on the back, either with the potter's finger or a tool. The result of trimming with one's finger is evident in the gently rounded back of those figurines which retain additional clay behind the body (WT 21-2/521, Fig. 2.1), whereas tool-trimmed figurines have a flattened back which in some cases truncated the arms and legs (WT 35-2/535, Fig. 2.2; WT 286-4/514; WT 77-2/577). Although solid figurines have a vertical stance, they cannot stand up alone since the feet are often positioned at an angle in order to fully depict the feet (WT 86-2/586, Fig. 2.3). Although these figurines were designed to be carried or to lean against another object,[9] in some instances there is a small flat support for the feet (WT 95-2/595, Fig. 2.4). All of these figurines are distinct from so–called 'plaque

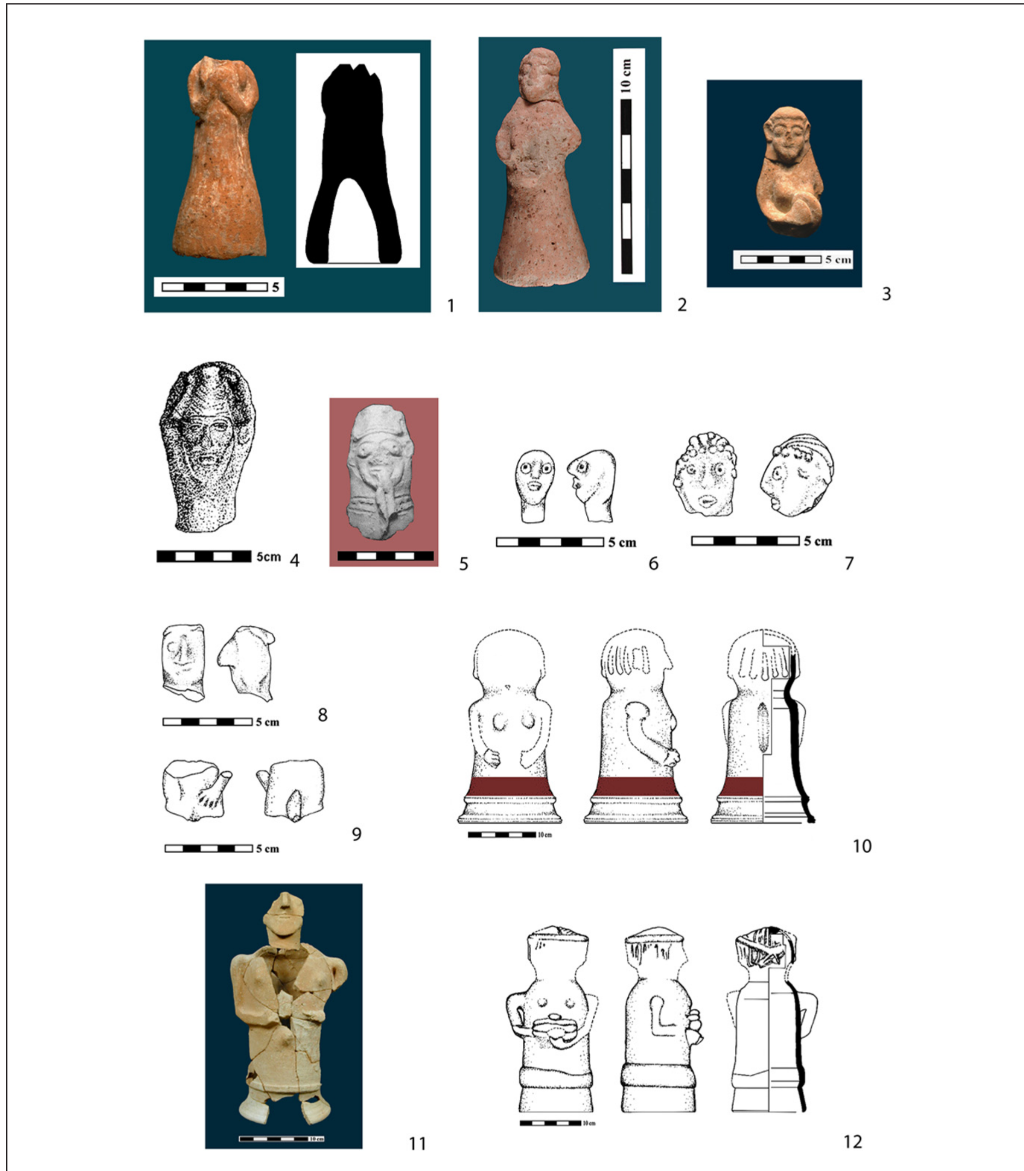

Fig. 3. Pillar figurines; 1) Wheel-made base (WT 72-2/572); 2) sloping shoulder (WT 479-6/526); 3) additional features (WT 53-2/553); 4) *atef* crown (TJ 100); 5) Jalul, used with permission); 6–9) male heads and bodies (WT 282-4/510, WT 466–6/505, WT 521-6/520, WT 323-5/508); 10-12) statues (WT 37-2/537, WT 11-1/511, WT 166-2/666).

figurines' which typically have a molded form impressed on a larger slab/plaque of clay that frames the figure on all sides. This Late Bronze–Iron I style is rare in central Jordan; for example, one figurine from late Iron Age II Tall Jawa in Ammon consists of the lower body of a female pressed against a thicker clay backing (TJ 1712, Fig. 2:5).[10] Even in this example, the backing is rounded, closer to the hand-finished style seen on figurines from WT-13 than to the flat slab or plaque of earlier figurines. Plaque figurines are found in Late Bronze Age II contexts at various sites, such as Tell Beit Mirsim,[11] Megiddo,[12] Tel eṣ-Ṣafi/Gath[13] and, in smaller numbers, at Tall al-`Umayri,[14] and Lahav.[15]

After the figurine was removed from the mold, additional attention to detail was completed, such as incised lines representing strands of hair (WT 68; WT 86-2/568, Fig. 2:6; WT 518) or the addition of pellets to represent curls (WT 21-2/521, Fig. 2.1; WT 466-6/505, Fig. 3:7), a feature that applies to both female and male figurines. Paint was used on occasion to highlight features such as hair and eyebrows (MT 565-4/21, Fig. 2.7); in other instances, it is apparent that paint covered

the entire figurine although in their current condition, the paint is only preserved in grooves and depressions in the surface. Necklaces, bracelets, armbands (WT 42-2/542; Fig. 2.8) and anklets (WT 95-2/595; Fig. 2.4) are also shown, although it is not clear in all cases whether these details were added by hand or were already present in the mold itself. Along with their jewelry, the line of the girdle on the abdomen and details of the anatomy (MT 566-4/22; WT 286-4/514, Fig. 2:9) are sometimes shown and/or enhanced on naked female figures. Facial features such as eyes, nose and mouth were partially designed in the mold and later enhanced by hand;[16] in a few instances, a small pellet was added to enlarge the eye and the pupil was either painted (MT 565-4/21, Fig. 2.7) or punctated (for example, Jalul, WT 282-4/510, 466-6/505, Fig. 3:5-7).

Free-standing figurines could also be attached to another object, such as an architectural model or ceramic stand. This can be done in a number of ways; the figure may be pressed onto another object[17] or attached with the addition of clay packed around all sides to seal it to the object (WT 88+89-2/588+589, Fig. 2:10, 11) or, thirdly, the figure could be attached only along one side (WT 86-2/586, Fig. 2:3). Figures that were attached on all sides were clearly made as free-standing figurines before a coil of clay was added as a seal. A small number of hand-made attached figurines represent a different technique; these were formed as integrated components of an architectural model (WT 80-2/580, WT 179-2/679) and protrude from one side or edge of the miniature structure.

Pillar Figurines:
Pillar figurines have a conical base, a mold-made head, and attached arms and breasts. The pillar was formed either by hand with a concave base[18] or made on the wheel, a practice evident from the rills on the interior of the lower body (WT 72-2/572, Fig. 3:1). The cone was then cut from the hump and inverted and a depression was made in the top of the pillar to receive the tenon extending from the neck. The mold-made head and neck ends in a peg-shaped tenon that was inserted into the top of the pillar. Extra clay was then added to secure the head to the pillar and form the shoulders. This extra clay was often poorly molded with the result that the shoulders sloped down onto the body (WT 190-4/501; WT 479-6/526, Fig. 3:2). In contrast to the standardization of the mold-made pillar figurine heads found in Judah[19] and represented at Tel `Aroer,[20] the facial features of pillar figurines from Transjordan are considerably more varied, with some figurines having pronounced eyebrows, large eyes, chins and ears,[21] while others have delicate features (WT 315-5/505) and an elaborate hair style, such as the drum player from Tomb 84 at Mount Nebo.[22] Hand-made additions to the pillar figurine may include small coils of clay to fashion the arms, pellets for breasts, mittens for hands and a clay disc to represent a frame drum (WT 53-2/553, Fig. 3:3). In one case, a Judean-style molded head found at Khirbat al-Mudayna ath-Thamad was enhanced by the addition of small coils of clay framing her face to form curls in the style of the Egyptian goddess Hathor. A second style, seen at Balu` and at WT-13, is the veiled female figure that appears either as a pillar figurine or as an attached figure.[23]

Due to poor preservation, many figurines are represented only by their head. While it is apparent that molds were used to form many of these heads, there is great variety in facial features. The lack of repetition makes it difficult to assign an exact identification or function for many of the female figures. The differences in hair style and the presence of veiled female figures in cultic and domestic contexts in both northern and central Moab add to this uncertainty.

Partially preserved figurines:
Identification and determination of function is also difficult for the male heads and crudely-made heads of figures with indeterminate gender. Complete male figures are rare but a wide variety of head styles make their appearance. Best known are mold-made heads wearing an *atef* crown or conical cap, a style that continues into the Persian period in the Levant. These are typically slipped or painted to show the beard and/or mustache, such as a complete figurine from a tomb at Maqabalayn[24] and a head from the `Amman citadel,[25] while the paint on a male head from Tall Jawa is faded (TJ 100, Fig. 3:4). A double flute player with *atef* crown from Jalul also appears mold-made (Fig. 3:5). This figurine has depressed pupils which may have been added by hand (Fig. 3.2), as was the case for two male heads from WT-13—these males are shown either bald (WT 282-4/510, Fig. 3:6) or with curls (WT 466-6/505, Fig. 3:7). The most elaborate head has long locks of hair held in place with a headband.[26] Male heads with a conical headdress are found at `Amman[27] and Tall al-‘Umayri.[28] In contrast to these carefully formed heads, hand-made male heads that are stylized

appear with only the nose and cap clearly formed (WT 521-6/520, Fig. 3:8). One body fragment from WT-13 suggests that some male figures were shown nude (WT 323-5/508, Fig. 3:9), as is a limestone statue from Khirbat al-Mudayna ath-Thamad (MT 2974) and a small, silt stone figure from Tall Jawa.[29]

Unique Figurine Types:
A small number of hand-made torso fragments are unique, such as the small figure seated on a throne or architectural model fragment (WT 472-6/506) and a second seated figure, somewhat larger in size and missing its head and limbs (WT 439-6/501).[30] Most distinctive among the hand-made figurines is a pair of legs, each made separately and then pressed together (WT 13a+b-1/513). The position of these feet is similar to certain mold-made figurines in that they are not flat on the bottom, although a single foot and lower leg (WT 110-2/610) and the feet and legs of a naked female (WT 95-2/595) are flat enough to stand on their own.

A naked female molded onto the side of a hand-made pillar[31] is distinct from other pillar figurines mentioned above. So too is a mold-made female figure, also from Tall Jawa, that appears to be seated on a winged chair; this figure has as its best parallels figurines from Aegean sites such as Tanagra, Locris, and Corinth.[32]

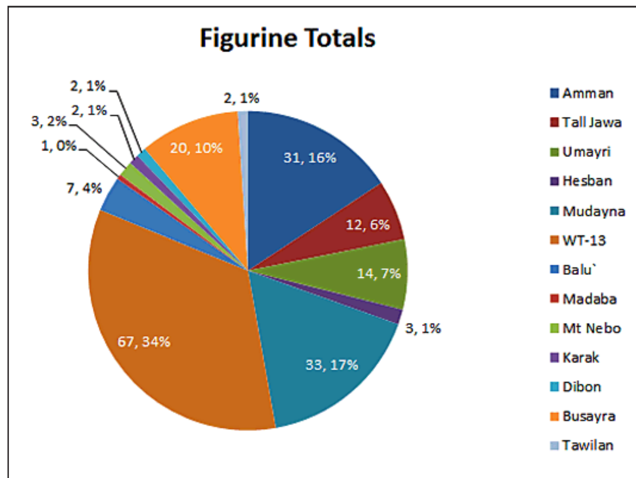

Chart 1. Distribution of Figurines in Central and Southern Jordan

Distribution and Quantification

When we quantify the figurines from sites in central Jordan (Chart 1, Figurine Totals), the largest concentrations known to this writer come from `Amman, Khirbat al-Mudayna ath-Thamad, WT-13 and Busayra[33] with nearly equal representation from Tall Jawa and Tall al-`Umayri.[34] Smaller numbers come from excavations at Hesban, Balu`a, Madaba, Mount Nebo, Karak, Dibon and Tawilan,[35] with isolated examples from Jalul and Maqabalayn.[36]

The second important class of ceramic figures consists of statues. Fragments and body sherds of statues are often not recognized as such or are classified as figurines, while hollow heads are identified as, or confused with, masks. I have classified small hollow figures as statues based on their similarity to the 20 statues of various sizes recovered at WT-13 and known from sites in Israel.[37] The statues were made on the wheel with the base fashioned in the same manner as the rim and neck of a jug or storejar (WT 37-2/537, Fig. 3:10). Clear evidence of rills and tool marks on the interior indicate this process, while the locks of hair, ears and other features were hand-made. The breasts were either formed separately and attached or were formed by pushing out the wall of the body. The heads were probably formed separately and then attached, since many statues are broken at the point of attachment (WT 11-1/511, Fig. 3:11). Two of the statues from Busayra have lamps on their head and one holds a disc parallel to the body[38] in the same position as many of the WT-13 figurines.

The arms of these statues were made from a clay coil, like a loop handle, and were pressed against the torso for support. The largest statue (WT 11-2/511) was painted with horizontal bands—only in a few places is there evidence for faded vertical stripes, while other statues retain a horizontal band of color on the lower body (Fig. 3:10). One figure holds several small loaves, each made separately and then pressed together (WT 166-2/666, Fig. 3:12). This same figure has attached locks of hair with a clear part in the middle and a hair band around his head which is knotted in the back. This hair style appears on several other statue heads, one of which supports a lamp attached above a headband which is decorated with pellets (WT 98-2/598). Other hand-made features include pellets for eyes, ears with holes for earrings, and noses, both simple and elegant in form. Quantification of statues (Chart 2, Statue Totals) yields only two concentrations, WT-13 and the Busayra area, with isolated examples from Tall Jawa, Tall Madaba,[39] Tall Damiya in the Jordan Valley[40] and Ṣabkhah in northern Jordan,[41] reflecting the small number of Iron Age sites excavated and published to date.

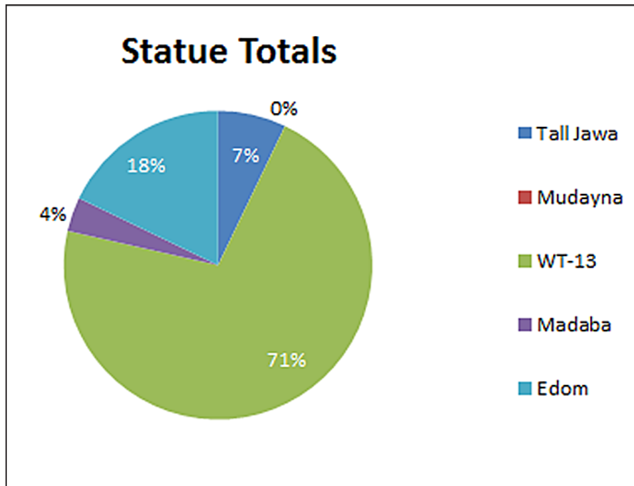

Chart 2. Distribution of Ceramic Statues in Central and Southern Jordan

Origin of the Ceramic Figures

The diversity of styles among the figures in this study and the recognition of various clay matrices with few links with figures from neighboring sites lead to the supposition that the figurines and statues at WT-13 were not all local products. In order to test this hypothesis, 10 samples from WT-13 and one from Mudayna ath-Thamad were submitted for NAA analysis to Jan Gunneweg and Marta Balla at Budapest for comparison with similar statues from Ḥorvat Qitmit and `En Ḥaṣeva.[42] By comparison of their results with databases that include Judah and Edom, it was clear that only one sample from WT-13 and one from Mudayna Thamad were similar to a lamp from `En Ḥaṣeva, while another sample had parallels at Busayra and `En Ḥaṣeva.[43] The remaining Moabite samples fell into two groups, neither of which has parallels known at this time. Figurines from Ammon have not yet been tested by NAA.

Motifs

Due to the fragmentary nature of many of the figures from Transjordan, the iconographic details are often lacking. As a result, the understanding of the iconographic traditions of Transjordan is in its infancy. Nevertheless, there are three motifs that appear dominant: figurines and small statues holding a disc at the waist,[44] female figurines playing a drum, and females holding their breasts. Other musical instruments are also attested: a male flute player from Jalul[45] and a lyre player from `Amman.[46] Only 4 figures obviously have their arms at their sides, while several statues have their hands on their abdomen or hold a bowl, a lamp, a stack of bread loaves, or an animal in their arms, positions that suggest that these ceramic figures were votive representations of worshipers.[47] The same is probably the case for those statues with a lamp on their head. Recognizable deity figures are few and are better known among stone statues from Rabbath-Ammon and among the small *atef*-crowned male heads. The precise function of naked female figures that hold their breasts or cover them with their hands, comparable in style to figurines from Megiddo[48] and Cyprus,[49] remains unclear, although they may represent Astarte or Anat.[50] These are, however, very different in style from the Judean pillar figurines with larger breasts[51] most probably related to the goddess Asherah and which may be symbolic of lactation.[52] Female heads with ornate earrings and necklaces from Tall Jawa[53] and in a mold from `Amman[54] have parallels to the ‘woman at the window’ depicted on Phoenician ivory inlays, whose precise meaning is in doubt.

Apart from the male figures with an *atef* crown or conical headdress, each male figurine is unique and its association with a specific iconographic tradition cannot be determined at present. The same is true of the small seated figures. However, the statues, both male and female, are part of a much larger tradition. They have their best parallels at Ḥorvat Qitmit and `En Ḥaṣeva[55] and in the extensive repertoire from Phoenician sites across the Mediterranean, especially at Bithia.[56]

Ethnic differences can best be seen in the variation in hair styles[57] and head coverings for both male and female figures. Among the statues, the dominant style shows individual locks held in place with a headband; this style is in contrast to male figurines that appear bald, with curls, or with a crown or hat. At present, the small numbers involved makes it difficult to interpret certain of these styles satisfactorily. Nevertheless, the recovery of an increasing number of ceramic figurines from current excavations and their ongoing publication is rapidly expanding the repertoire from central Jordan. As a result, future research should make it possible to better understand the forming techniques and unique styles of the coroplastic traditions of Transjordan.

Notes

[1] Director of the Wadi ath-Thamad Project, Jordan; and Professor Emerita, Archaeology and Classical Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, ON N2L 3C5 Canada)

[2] van der Steen 2004.

[3] Sites in the Jordan Valley that reflect Ammonite ceramic styles and a diversified material culture are not included in this study.

[4] Certain sites currently being excavated are not adequately published for a full appreciation of their figurine assemblages.

[5] A complete and more in-depth study and illustration of the ceramic figurines and statues from WT-13 is currently in preparation by the author with a comprehensive Jordanian corpus forthcoming by R. Hunziker-Rodewald. Preliminary studies by this author include Daviau 1997, 2001, 2006, 2008; Daviau and Dion 1994, 2002; Daviau and Steiner 2000.

[6] Daviau 2001.

[7] Abou Assaf 1980, Dornemann 1983.

[8] For an initial study of zoomorphic figurines from Ammonite sites, see `Amr (1980) and the preliminary reports of excavations at Tall al-`Umayri (for example, Dabrowski 1997)

[9] These same forming techniques are attributed by J. Karageorghis (1999) to figurines of the Cypro-Archaic period on Cyprus.

[10] The flute player from Jalul is shown here with permission from the excavator (after, Younker et al 1996, pl. 12).

[11] Albright 1939, pl. A.

[12] Loud 1948, pl. 242:13, 14.

[13] Shai et al 2011, fig. 11. Even in this small corpus, one figurine has a rounded back with the result that the head is bent forward (ibid., fig. 11.1).

[14] Dabrowski 1997.

[15] For the online catalogue of figurines, see DigMaster@www.cobb.msstate.edu. In his report on the Zaraqun survey, Kamlah illustrates two plaques from northern Jordan (1993, fig. 2) and compares them to various types from Cisjordan (1993, pp.122–125, fig. 8).

[16] Dabrowski 2009, p. 64 noted incisions around the eyes of a pillar figurine recovered at Hesban (74.3202).

[17] Herr and Clark 2003, figs. 23, 24.

[18] Worschech 1995, p. 187.

[19] Kletter 1996, fig. 6, identifies these mold-made heads as Types B.3.B, b.3.C, B.6.C and B.2.G.

[20] Thareani 2011, figs. 3.76–3.80.

[21] Glueck 1970, fig. 94.

[22] M2001, Saller 1966, fig. 28:2. Heads with pinched faces (Kletter 1996, fig. 4:1, Type A), such as those found at Judean sites (Thareani 2011, figs. 3.81, 3.82), are not represented in Transjordan.

[23] Worschech 1995, figs. 2, 4a, b.

[24] Harding 1950, pl. 15:12.

[25] F33; Koutsoukou and Najjar 1997, fig. 8.

[26] Glueck 1934, fig. 6.

[27] Koutsoukou and Najjar 1997, fig. 8.

[28] Herr and Platt 2002, fig. 16.36:1848.

[29] TJ 1877, Daviau 2002, fig. 2.34:1.

[30] Although its position suggests a rider, the fact that WT 439 appears to be naked and retains no evidence that it was attached to a horse mitigates this interpretation.

[31] TJ 1119, Daviau 2002, fig. 2.31:1.

[32] Daviau 2002, pp. 53–58, fig. 2.28:1.

[33] Sedman 2002.

[34] One ‘figurine’ (U1696) may in fact be a statue fragment although this cannot be confirmed from the illustration (Herr and Platt 2002, fig. 16.36:1696).

[35] Bienkowski 1995.

[36] For a complete bibliography prior to 1999, see Daviau 2001; examples of more recent studies include Mansour 2005 for `Amman, Dabrowski 2009 for Tall al-`Umayri, Sedman 2002 for Busayra and the synthetic study of Sugimoto 2008.

[37] Ḥorvat Qitmit; Cohen/Yisraeli 1995 and `En Ḥaṣeva; Beck 1995.

[38] Glueck 1970, fig. 90.

[39] I am grateful to Jonathan Ferguson of the Tell Madaba Project who first brought this statue to my attention.

[40] Petit et al 2006,187; fig. 4.

[41] Glueck 1951, fig. 13.

[42] Gunneweg and Balla 2002; Gunneweg and Mommsen 1990, 1995.

[43] Gunneweg and Balla, personal communication.

[44] Sugimoto 2008.

[45] Younker et al 1996, pl. 12.

[46] Koutsoukou and Najjar 1997, fig. 2.

[47] Frevel 2008.

[48] Guy 1939, pl. 24: M 4385.

[49] Karageorghis 1999, pls. I–XV.

[50] If not the goddess herself, these figures may be lesser goddesses associated with the cult of the higher deity. For a different opinion, see Sugimoto 2008, p. 85, who understands the disc-holding females, even those that appear naked, as "human women" who represented the goddess (Astarte).

[51] Kletter 1996.

[52] Stager 1982, p.119, n. 34; Ackerman 2003, pp. 463–465; Hestrin 1987; Kletter 1996.

[53] Daviau 2002, fig. 2.29:1.

[54] Dornemann 1983, 88:3.

[55] Beck 1993.

[56] Pesce 1965.

[57] Daviau 2001.

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P. M. Michele Daviau, Professor Emerita
Wilfrid Laurier University
micheledaviaudion@yahoo.ca

Seeing Double
Viewing and Re-viewing Judean Pillar Figurines through Modern Eyes

Erin D. Darby

Fig. 1. Pinched head and molded head Judean pillar figurines from the Israel Museum. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Abstract

Although figurines are usually treated as coherent symbols rather than compilations of separate elements, when it comes to Judean pillar figurines from southern Israel, this approach has failed to generate a scholarly consensus about the figurines' identity and function. Rather than focus on the identity of the figurine, it is time to explore a different methodology by investigating the various individual parts that constitute figurine iconography, including iconographic content, stylistic criteria, and technological characteristics. Because these figurines represent a new combination of elements taken from a variety of earlier artistic tropes and media, this approach takes seriously the process whereby artisan tradition selected separate elements and recombined them into a new whole. In order to demonstrate this methodology, the following paper investigates the pillar bases of the figurines from Jerusalem, evaluating each element according to two design principles—permanence and detail. As a result, these criteria reveal an internal hierarchy that governs the way elements work together to create figurine form and function. Only after this relative hierarchy is observed is it possible to understand whether a figurine was merely a hyper-redundant combination of individual symbols, or whether its elements coalesced to form a unique, holistic image.

Introduction

Although visual experience is often overlooked as a straight-forward process, the acts of seeing and interpreting are some of the most complicated functions performed by the human mind.[1] In actuality, images are constituted by a myriad of separate elements, and the means by which an audience perceives these individual elements as a whole is thus negotiable, dependent upon time, space, and culture.[2] Therefore, a modern audience and an ancient audience would not necessarily share the same view.

As one type of image, figurines are composed of many individual properties, both aesthetic and physical. In particular, Judean pillar figurines from the Iron IIB-C in southern Israel are composed of pillar bodies, arms and breasts, and two different styles of heads, as well as clay, whitewash, and paint (see Figs. 1–4). The relative hierarchy of these elements and their meaning for figurine function should not be taken for granted.

Nevertheless, modern interpreters of the Judean corpus often think of various figurine elements as a coherent whole rather than a combination of individual parts. This, in turn, leads interpreters to connect the figurines with goddess worship, as they attempt to

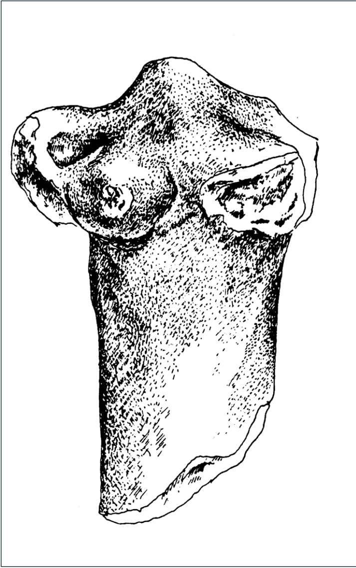

Fig. 2. Drawing of a pillar body with arms supporting the breasts, courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

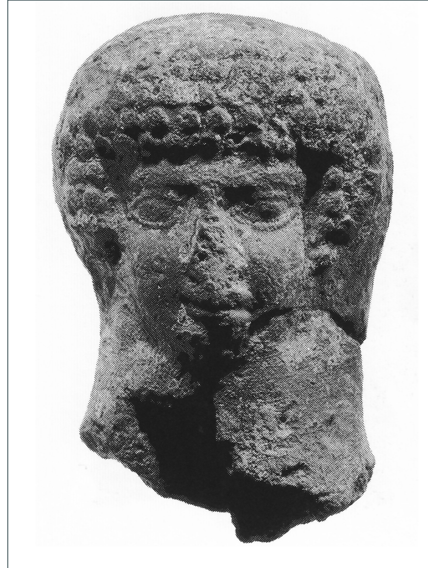

Fig. 3. A molded head, courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

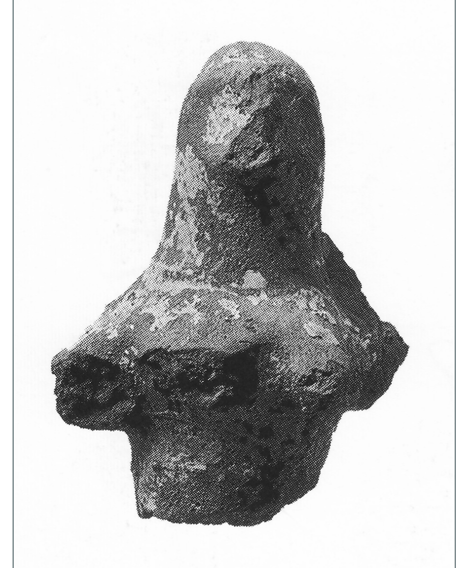

Fig. 4. A pinched head, courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

identify the one figure that the image is meant to represent. Yet, throughout this interpretive process, certain elements of figurine iconography become the focus of analysis, such as the pillar bases. Often seen as one of the clues that unlock the figurines' identity, pillar bases are used as load-bearing supports to prop up scholarly reconstructions, despite the fact that the relative importance of the bases within the overall figurine iconography is far from certain. Moreover, because Judean pillar figurines are the most common "religious" artifacts from southern Israel in this period, these interpretations strongly influence both scholarly and popular reconstructions of Israelite religion in the Iron Age.[3]

In order to evaluate the manner in which Judean pillar figurines are perceived and interpreted, this paper assesses several figurine elements based on two design principles—permanence and detail. Focusing on the way stylistic and technological features are combined to form the pillar base of the figurines from Jerusalem, the paper suggests that modern interpretations of such elements are often wanting. In contrast, when the figurine bases are considered in light of iconographic form, technological style, and related coroplastic objects, it becomes clear that the base of the figurine may be unrelated to the "identity" of the object, or it may indicate a protective function.

Methodology

A Judean pillar figurine is constituted by many separate parts that create its subject matter and style. Unfortunately, the process by which these separate parts are combined is largely overlooked. For example, in the field of biblical studies, the iconographic school has been responsible for the resurging interest in ancient Near Eastern art and the Bible; but these interpreters focus on the "meaning" behind visual symbols rather than the manner of their creation.[4]

While the investigation of iconographic content is certainly significant, elements may be included in a representation for a number of reasons; and the most stereotyped aspects of an image are often the most difficult to translate. Focusing on common iconographic elements of figurine design, to the exclusion of other figurine components, such as style, inadvertently creates the impression of a continuous function and meaning that glosses over the particularities of a trope's adaptation in various cultures and time periods.[5]

An alternative to this approach is to include elements of style in the discussion—the particular ways figurine elements were created and incorporated.[6] This would include the often overlooked category of "technological style," which considers the production of images and the effect of production steps on the final product.[7]

Although various aspects of technological style could be explained via a functionalist approach, i.e., economic necessity or resource availability, certain materials and production processes were chosen for ideological reasons as well.[8]

The ideological motivations for production strategies are further supported by the scale and nature of the figurines as miniatures.[9] A miniature is not the same as a replica. While a replica, or a model, attempts to reproduce even the smallest details of a larger image, a miniature is selective, often reproducing only those elements that communicate the most important aspects of the image. Miniatures imply choice on the part of the artisan community, including which visual representations to use, the degree of detail, or energy, invested in any given aspect of the image, and the resources dedicated to the durability of these various parts. Furthermore, miniatures depicting the human body are especially indicative of artistic choice, including which elements are depicted, how they are portrayed, and which elements remain ambiguous.[10]

The Technological Style of Judean Pillar Figurines

Judean pillar figurines are composed of fired clay, white wash, and paint. Rated on a continuum of permanence or durability, clay is certainly less durable than stone or metal, and this suggests the figurines were not created for extensive, long-term use. At the same time, artisans did dedicate the time and resources to fire the images, indicating that they were intended for some durability. Firing the figurines also implies they may have been manipulated by hand, displayed, and exposed to the air, since unfired clay would disintegrate quickly when handled.[11] Furthermore, those elements made of clay may also have been intended to endure for some time and must have been important to the function and meaning of the image.[12] This would include the heads, particularly the molded faces, the hand-modeled arms and breasts, and the hand-modeled pillar bodies.

The significance of clay as a production material is also indicated by a number of ancient Near Eastern textual witnesses. In addition to clay or earth in creation accounts,[13] clay was an important material in rituals of protection and transference. For example, a number of Mesopotamian ritual texts mention clay and its protective and healing functions. Tablet 9 of the Utukkū Lemnūtu incantations prays, "may Nunurra, the great potter of Anu, drive (the demon) away from the house in a pot fired in a pure kiln from a pure place."[14] From the same corpus, Tablet 12 describes "liquid extract of dark clay" used to cover the outside gate of the temple to protect against demonic attack.[15] Further, raw clay is used in one sky omen NAM.BUR.BI, a ritual used to ward off evil predicted by omens.[16] Additionally, a ritual to ensure healthy delivery requires the woman to recite prayers inside a potter's kiln.[17]

From the Ugaritic corpus, the *Kirtu Epic* describes the god El forming a divine female from clay and commanding her to heal King Kirtu.[18] There also seems to be a connection between potters and healing rituals in Egyptian magico-medical literature,[19] and it has been suggested that this connection should be applied to Egyptian clay female figurines as well.[20] So, too, the Hebrew Bible indicates that clay had unique properties that might be used in rituals transmitting purity and impurity.[21] Nor is this association between clay and ritual properties entirely unique to the ancient Near East.[22] In sum, these various witnesses undergird the conclusions made on stylistic grounds, especially the hypothesis that figurine elements formed in clay would have been important for the figurines' ritual function.

The clay properties can be compared with whitewash and painted decoration. While there is overwhelming evidence that the figurines contained whitewash and paint, these particular elements are poorly preserved on almost all extant exemplars. Whitewash may have served two purposes. It hides imperfections resulting from poorly levigated clay or firing mishaps. Indeed, even badly malformed fragments were covered and used. The whitewash also prepares the surface for painted decoration. Furthermore, other cultic items, such as zoomorphic figurines, cult stands, and shrine boxes, were regularly whitewashed and painted, suggesting some common techniques for the preparation of cultic objects.[23]

Perhaps the best explanation is that whitewash was an appropriate solution for the aesthetic irregularities that accompany clay formation and also provided an appropriate surface for painting.[24] Because clay was necessary for the figurines' function, whitewash was the easiest way to improve their appearance. That having been said, ethnographic analogy suggests that whitewash and paint quickly fade from

(Left) Fig. 5. Example of a Yavneh cult stand with pillar-based female. Courtesy of Raz Kletter. Photo: Leonid Padrul

(Right) Fig. 6. Example of a Yavneh cult stand with pillars. Courtesy of Raz Kletter. Photo: Leonid Padrul.

figurines, particularly when exposed to the elements.[25] Thus, while the whitewash and paint must have been important in the initial design and function, they were not the most durable components of the image, which may suggest design elements depicted in paint were only necessary in the initial phase of a figurine ritual. At the same time, those figurine elements that were formed from clay as well as painted, suggesting both durability and detail, would probably be the most important elements within the hierarchy of the image.

Pillar Bases in Scholarly Opinion and Stylistic Analysis

Turning to the pillar figurines, most examples from Jerusalem include hand-made, solid pillar bases, though some wheel-made[26] or hollow[27] fragments have also been found. The pillar bases have presented certain complications for the study of pillar figurines. Some interpreters have assumed that the pillar represents a tree trunk, which they connect with Asherah and sacred tree imagery.[28] This opinion remains fairly popular, despite the fact that the definition of the biblical terminology purportedly related to the goddess is still debated,[29] and the connection between the goddess Asherah and trees has been complicated.[30]

Other interpreters have argued that the plain bases should be contrasted with the figurines' Canaanite forerunners—the naked female plaque figurines. Such scholars claim that the pillar base is evidence for a distinction between Canaanite "fertility" figurines and Judean "nurturing" figurines, which emphasize a nursing mother rather than a "courtesan of the gods."[31] In this view, either the figurines are wearing a dress, or the schematic nature of the lower body was meant to censor elements from Canaanite religion, such as the pudenda.

The first and most practical objection to either of these approaches is that pillar bases are common on a number of figurines all over the world as a means to support a standing image,[32] suggesting that a more functional rationale cannot be dismissed. Further, pillar bases are component parts of a number of figurines both in the Middle Bronze Age in the ancient Near East, as well as in contemporaneous figurine traditions from Philistia,[33] Ammon,[34] Moab,[35] Northern Israel,[36] Cyprus,[37] and Phoenicia.[38] Thus, there is considerable precedent for adopting a simple and schematic pillar base from the iconographic traditions of the Levant and Cyprus, which does not suggest a unique connection between Judean pillar figurines and sacred tree iconography assumed to be central to Asherah worship as depicted in the Bible.

Going beyond these practical considerations, stylistic features present problems for these common interpretations. First, the pillar bases generally lack molded decoration or any modeling that indicates the pillar was intended to represent either a tree or a garment. Second, in many examples only whitewash remains; where paint is preserved it consists of broad stripes in red and yellow.[39] In short, the paint may simply depict geometric designs, as is the case on some Philistine hand-made figurines.[40] This lack of paint on the pillars should be contrasted with the faces and chests

of Judean pillar figurines, where the remains of red, black, and yellow paint have been found with some regularity.[41] Finally, were the pillar meant to represent a clothed female body, this artistic convention would differ considerably from that in neighboring Egypt, where clothing on females is most frequently depicted adhering closely to the body, so much so that the breasts, waist, thighs, buttocks, and even pubic triangle remain visible.[42] Given the fact that Egyptian convention largely governs the art of the Levant from this period, the schematic nature of the pillar base is even more striking.

Nor does the technological style of the pillars suggest that the pillar was one of the most essential aspects of the figurines. As part of the overall design, pillars are made of poorly-levigated clay, with consistent grey-coring that indicates they may not have been properly fired or were used as filler in kilns. Even when the pillar base is bent or disfigured the figurine is not discarded, but is whitewashed and used regardless.[43] Clearly the condition of the pillar was not so significant as to interfere with the object's function.

In sum, the fact that pillars were formed and fired as a part of the entire figurine suggests that they may have functioned either as a stand for the image or that the image could be held in the hand without breaking or disintegrating immediately. In other words, they do reflect a certain permanence or durability. However, when the technological characteristics are considered in combination with the lack of detail in molding, modeling, or painting, the pillars are certainly less important than other aspects of the image. As such, the pillar base is an unlikely place to look for the key that identifies the figurines' identity.

Comparanda

Comparing the pillar bases to related coroplastic objects also helps to clarify their relative importance and function. In addition to the pillar-based figurines outside of Judah, a number of pillar-style figurines, including those with hands on their breasts, were attached to the cult stands in the Yavneh corpus, found along the Mediterranean coast of Philistia.[45] These stands were dated to the end of the 9th through the beginning of the 8th centuries B.C.[46] and thus bridge the gap between the plaque figurines of the Late Bronze Age and the pillar figurines of the Iron IIB-C (Fig. 5).

As to the pillar-based females on the Yavneh cult stands, Irit Ziffer has explained the pillar base as a skirt, suggesting a partially dressed female.[47] This is problematic for several reasons. While it is true that females holding their breasts are more frequently depicted with fully-formed lower bodies on these cult stands,[48] these frontally molded or modeled females appear in the same areas of the cult stands (in rectangular or rounded openings) and with the same gestures as the females with pillar bases, suggesting a similar function.

Furthermore, females are not the only figures attached to the Yavneh cult stands by means of a pillar or peg. Zoomorphic fragments are also depicted by their heads or heads and pegs, attached vertically in the openings.[49] Moreover, in many of the same openings, the space is filled by pillar columns.[50] Thus, it makes the most sense to read the pillar bases on the females in the same way one reads the pillar bases on zoomorphic images and columns—namely, as architectural features (Fig. 6).

Nor is the Yavneh corpus alone in combining female figurines with architectural features. Other cult stands also use frontally molded females or sphinxes with molded heads as a substitute for columns; the heads may be associated with capitols and volutes.[51] In fact, frontally-molded, naked females commonly flank doorways and stand-in for architectural elements on cult shrines and stands from the Middle Bronze through the Iron Age, a fact already noted by Silvia Schroer.[52]

Although Schroer is aware of the potential connection between Judean pillar bases and columns, she interprets the base of the figurine as the trunk of a tree, assuming the figurines are associated with the goddess Asherah, who she connects with tree iconography. At the same time, however, she argues that frontally-molded, naked female bodies on cult stands and shrine boxes often represent architectural elements; and, in these cases, she argues that the females served as guardian figurines, similar to the protective *lamassu* and *šēdu*.[53] Given the fact that frontally-molded and pillar-based females seem to have been used interchangeably on the Yavneh cult stands, it makes more sense to argue that both the pillar-based females on the Yavneh stands and the Judean pillar figurines are alternative versions of the same protective female figures.

As to the function of the Yavneh cult items in particular, although Raz Kletter identifies these cult stands as

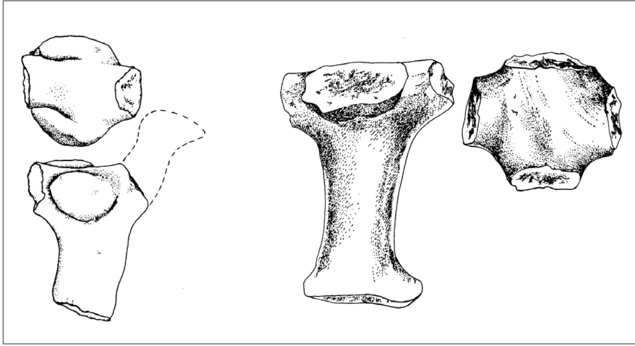

Fig. 7. Detail drawing of bird pillar figurines, courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

votive objects left in a temple (as yet undiscovered) and used for a number of purposes,[54] he also notes that they depict architectural elements used in the construction of sacred spaces.[55] Unfortunately, Kletter then claims the females on the cult stands may represent the consort of the god worshipped in the temple space, depicted because "the god prefers nice, erotic images of his consort, rather than of himself, on his gifts."[56] In contrast, many of the images on the cult stands, such as sphinxes, lions, bulls, caprids, and trees, are known in larger media from elsewhere in the ancient Near East, particularly temple and palace architecture, where they may function as images of protection and blessing.[57] Because the females, with or without pillar bases, were adopted on the cult stands along with other protective characters, the best explanation might be that they serve an apotropaic function, as divine guardian figures. This would be in keeping with Schroer's interpretation of other cultic items in which frontally molded females stand in for architectural features as protective guardians.

Finally, whether the pillar bases are meant to recall actual pillars or merely represent a schematization of a relatively unimportant lower body, ancient Near Eastern artistic style presents some precedent for excerpting symbols from their original settings, such as torsos with hands holding the breasts, and recombining them in new ways, like adding this trope to a pillar base. For example, Egyptian depictions of Hathor frequently borrowed only the head or the head and bust of the image in a type of synecdoche to indicate the meaning of the total image.[58] Similarly, ancestor statues at Deir el-Medina consisted of busts alone; clearly the bottom section of the image was simply unnecessary.[59] Furthermore, this abbreviated form of the female image combined with other elements, like wings or a sun disc, is also known from Syrian and Phoenician art of the Iron II.[60] In Egyptian iconography the extraction of particular symbols of gods and their recombination into fantastical forms may even have increased the effectiveness of an image.[61] Moreover, Andrzej Niwiński argues that the media of miniatures (here specifically scarabs and coffins of the 21st Dynasty) requires that images be abbreviated, what he calls the *pars pro toto* rule.[62]

This method also occurs in large-scale art. Female images combined with actual columns are known from Hathor columns in Egypt[63] and at Timnah,[64] as well as the basalt female standing on the back of a lion from the ninth century palace entrance at Tell Halaf.[65] Caryatids, believed to have been influenced by Ionic temples in Anatolia, may be a later continuation of these Syrian and Anatolian traditions.[66]

Thus, most of the comparanda agree with the conclusions based on stylistic criteria and suggest that the lower "body" of the figurine is actually a pillar and a schematization that has largely lost its significance for the function of this image. In comparison, a number of free-standing bird figurines appended to pillars have been discovered throughout Judah,[67] although few scholars would argue that the pillar is anything more than the base of the figurine (Fig. 7). These bird figurines come from the same region, time period, and sites as Judean pillar figurines. If the bases of Judean figurines maintain any significance, perhaps they recall the pillar columns from protective figures on cult stands guarding shrine spaces. Such an interpretation would be consistent with descriptions of clay in ancient Near Eastern texts that indicate its association with protection and healing.

Summary and Conclusions

This examination of the pillar bases on Judean-style pillar figurines has revealed that the technological characteristics, stylistic criteria, and related coroplastic objects all yield a similar interpretation—namely that the bases of the figurines were not only the least important iconographic elements in the figurine design but that their schematization and ambivalence actually indicate some connection with shrine box and cult stand iconography where female guardian figures typically take the place of architectural elements. In contrast, by attempting to read all figurine elements together as representing a single character, scholars consistently

misread the iconography. The resulting interpretations either insist the pillar bases, as part of a coherent symbol, represent tree trunks whose meaning is unlocked by an assumed relationship between the biblical terminology describing Asherah and a possible connection between the goddess and trees, or insist that the pillar base was incorporated into the holistic image as a garment meant to contrast the Judean figurines with their lascivious counterpart in Canaanite mythology.

The problem with Judean pillar figurines has always been the absence of a direct iconographic antecedent in any material or medium. The advent of these clay figurines appears to represent a new creation taken from individually known elements. Thus, whether this creation intends to suggest one holistic image, for example, that of a recognizable super-natural being, is not readily apparent. The alternative, tracking the individual design components, their stylistic characteristics, and their unique combination, still suggests a tentative but informed function for the image, as one intended to protect and preserve. It may also suggest that the extended search for the figurines' "identity" is misguided.

Notes

[1] Kuehni 2012, pp. 424–428; Yu 2012, pp. 292–299; Barat 2007, pp. 228–251; Donderi 2006, pp. 73–97; Greisdorf and O'Conner 2002, pp. 6–29; Albright and Stoner 2002, pp. 333–379.

[2] Mamassian 2008, pp. 2143–2153.

[3] Kletter 1996, pp. 10–27; Darby 2011, pp. 69–108.

[4] Weissenrieder 2009, p. 117; LeMon 2010, pp. 146–147; Winter 2010a, p. 139.

[5] Bal 1991; Keel 1992a, pp. 267–271; Keel 1992b, pp. 360–361; Keel 1998; Keel and Uehlinger 1998, pp. 12–13; De Hulster 2009, p. 146; Winter 2010a, pp. 140–141.

[6] Conkey 1989, pp, 118–129; Wobst 1999, pp. 118–132; Winter 2010b, p. 34; Winter 2010c, pp. 407, 421–422.

[7] Reedy and Reedy 1994, pp. 304–320; Stark 1998, pp. 1–11; Petty 2006, p. 21.

[8] Hardin 1996, p. 47; Stark 1998, pp. 1–11; Hegmon 1998, pp. 264–280; Gosselain 2000, pp. 187–217.

[9] Bailey 2005, pp. 32–33; Smith 2009, pp. 18–21; Winter 2010a, pp. 142–143, 147.

[10] Joyce 1993, pp. 255–274; Kuijt and Chesson 2005, pp. 152–183.

[11] Van Buren 1930, pp. 191–192, 211.

[12] Petty 2006, p. 25; Bailey 2005, p. 98.

[13] Barrelet 1968, pp. 7–11; Ritner 1993, pp. 137–138; Dorman 2002, pp. 113–132; Darby 2011, pp. 411–412.

[14] Geller 2007, p. 228, Tablet 9:47.

[15] Geller 2007, pp. 240–241, Tablet 12:92–94.

[16] Maul 1994, p. 457.

[17] Scurlock 2002, p. 219.

[18] Lewis 2005, p. 98; Darby 2011, pp. 508–509.

[19] Dorman 2002, pp. 30, 96.

[20] Waraksa 2009.

[21] Darby 2011, pp. 435–442.

[22] Hardin 1996, p. 40; Huyler 1994, p. 325.

[23] E.g., Kletter and Ziffer 2010, CAT 80, pl. 116; CAT 82, pl. 5:3; CAT 95, pls. 129–130; CAT112, pl. 143:1.

[24] Cf. Deut 27:1–6 and Tigay 1996, p. 248.

[25] Weinberg 1965, p. 191; Blurton 1997, p. 175; Ziffer 2010, p. 9.

[26] Kletter 1996, Appendix 5, 5.I.2.2–4, 8; Kletter 1996, Addenda to Appendix 2: 764.C.3.

[27] Kletter 1996, Appendix 5: 5.I.2.7; Kletter 1996, Appendix 2: 306.C.1.

[28] E.g., Kelso and Thorley 1943, p. 138; Hestrin 1991, p. 57; Bloch-Smith 1992, p. 99; Uehlinger 1997, pp. 100, 142; Keel 1998, pp. 20–46.

[29] E.g., Olyan 1988, pp. 70–74; Day 2000, pp. 42–48, 51; Hadley 2000, pp. 54–83; Zevit 2000, pp. 650–651; Smith 2002, pp. 119–133; Mastin 2004, pp. 326–351; Dever 2005, pp. 196–208, 211–218; Wiggins 2007, pp. 105–150.

[30] Wiggins 2007, pp. 252, 268–69.

[31] Engle 1979, p. 114; Dever 2005, p. 187.

[32] Kletter 1996, pp. 76–77.

[33] Press 2012, pp. 199, 205–206.

[34] ‘Amr 1980, pp. 22–35.

[35] Daviau 2001, p. 322.

[36] Kletter 1996, pp. 32–34.

[37] Karageorghis 1991, p. 13.

[38] Press 2012, p. 172.

[39] E.g., Gilbert-Peretz 1996, Reg. G/2281/1.

[40] Press 2012, p. 195.

[41] E.g., Gilbert-Peretz 1996, Reg. G/4931, E3/12886, E3/13016, E1/6143.

[42] Robins 1993, p. 183; Robins 2008, pp. 76, 150, 208.

[43] E.g., Gilbert-Peretz 1996, Reg. E1/20526, D2/20573, E2/3893.

[44] Darby 2011, pp. 484–486.

[45] Kletter and Ziffer 2010, CAT 37, pls. 11:1, 76–77, 78:1–2; CAT 44, pls. 13:1, 84–85; CAT 49, pls. 2:2, bottom, 14:2, 90:1, 3, 91:1; CAT 59 pls. 33:1, 103:2–3.

[46] Panitz-Cohen 2010, p. 131.

[47] Ziffer 2010, p. 77.

[48] Kletter and Ziffer 2010, CAT 84, pls. 21:1, 43:1, bottom, 119, 120:1; CAT 85, pls. 41:1, 120:2–3; CAT 86, pls. 21:2, 121; CAT 92, pls. 23:2, 125:2–3, 126:1–2; CAT 113, pls. 26:1, 143:2, 144; CAT 123, pl. 150:2; CAT 28, pls. 9:2, 69, 70:1; CAT 29, pls. 47:3, 70:2–3; CAT 57, pls. 7:1, 17:2, 99–100; CAT 90, pls. 1:2–3, 40:1–2, 41, 123:3–4.

[49] Kletter and Ziffer 2010, CAT 22, pl. 65; CAT 30, pl. 71; CAT 41, pl. 81; CAT 110, pl. 141:2.

[50] Kletter and Ziffer 2010, CAT 17, pl. 62:1; CAT 52, pls. 5:1, 16:1, 93:4, 94; CAT 53, pls. 2:2, center, 16:2, 95; CAT 54, pl. 96:1; CAT 106, pl. 138:2.

[51] Zevit 2001, pp. 325–326, fig. 4.10; Maeir and Dayagi-Mendels 2007, pp. 111–123, figs. 1, 2.

[52] Schroer 2007, pp. 438–439; Rowe 1940, pp. 54–55, pls. 17:1, 57A:1, 35:2, 17:2, 56A: 3; Wooley 1955, pp. 64, 248, pl. 58:a, b; Keel 1998, p. 41; Beck 2002, pp. 185, figs. 1, 2, 3a, 209, fig. 10, 414.

[53] Schroer 2007, pp. 430–438.

[54] Kletter 2010a, pp. 186–188.

[55] Kletter 2010b, pp. 42–43.

[56] Kletter 2010a, p. 188.

[57] Beck 2002, p. 402; Nevling Porter 2003, pp. 11–37.

[58] Robins 2008, p. 175, fig. 206; Staubli 2009, pp. 93–112; abb. 3.

[59] Friedman 1994, pp. 111–117; Robins 2008, pp. 189–190.

[60] Bisi 1988, figs. 1g, 1d; Gubel 1993, p. 123, figs. 61–63.

[61] Hornung 2000, pp. 1–20; Kákosy 2000, pp. 45–49.

[62] Niwiński 2000, p. 27.

[63] Schroer 2007, pp. 442–443.

[64] Rothenberg 1972, pp. 130, 151, fig. 78.

[65] Oppenheim 1931, p. 121.

[66] Mylonas Shear 1999, pp. 65–85.

[67] E.g., Kletter 1996, Appendix 5: 5.II.

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Erin Darby
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
edarby1@utk.edu

Double Face, Multiple Meanings
The Hellenistic Pillar Figurines from Maresha

Adi Erlich

Abstract
Maresha was a major city in Idumea during the Hellenistic period, with a mixed population of Idumeans, Sidonians, Greeks, and others. Many figurines were found in the earth fills of the numerous caves at the site, which appear to have been associated with houses above ground. This paper deals with a type found at Maresh referred to as a Hellenistic pillar figurine. The type comprises a hollow pillar with a rounded or pointed top, non-modeled backs, and plinth bases. They all portray a few types of mold-made faces, either singly or in identical pairs. These unique figurines represent a mixture of traditions: a face-type that is Eastern or Hellenistic, a body-type that recalls the Greek herm, and an overall conception rooted in the region. The Hellenistic pillar figurines make up a unique local group of terracottas, so far unknown outside Maresha and its vicinity. They present a reduction of the anthropomorphic depiction into one component, the face. A similar approach is also evident in other cultures in the region, such as the Nabatean, which generally preferred steles over figurative sculptures for the representations of their deities. The pillar figurines from Maresha illustrate the vagueness of religious iconography in the Hellenistic East.

The ancient city of Maresha (Marisa, Tel Sandahanna) in Israel, located in the Judean foothills, was a major town in the region of Idumea during the Persian and Hellenistic periods (Fig. 1). During the Hellenistic period Maresha was a bilingual town, using Greek and Aramaic simultaneously, and displaying a blend of cultures with a main Idumean identity.[1] Maresha flourished under Ptolemaic, and later Seleucid, rule. The city's life came to an end in the Hasmonean conquest of the late 2nd century B.C., when the local Idumeans were subdued by the Hasmoneans.

Excavations conducted during the course of the 20th century have yielded architectural and small finds dating to the Iron Age II, the Persian, and mainly the Hellenistic periods.[2] Since the mid-1980s the excavations have been conducted on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority by Amos Kloner (1985–2001) and Ian Stern and Bernie Alpert of the Archaeological Seminars (2001–present). The site consists of a tel surrounded by a lower city of approximately 80 acres. The recent excavations at the site concentrated mostly in the lower city surrounding Tel Maresha, uncovering houses,

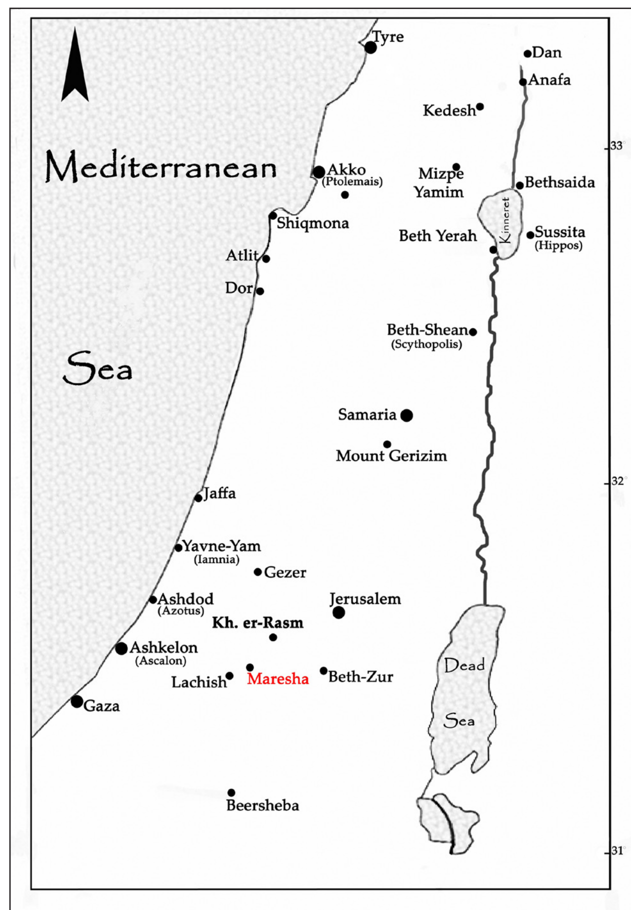

Fig. 1. Map of Hellenistic Palestine, drawn by Silvia Krapiwko.

streets, fortifications and other structures, as well as numerous rock-cut subterranean complexes, consisting of halls, cisterns, columbaria, oil presses, stables, quarries, and tombs.[3]

An outstanding feature of Maresha is its abundance of finds, mostly from the 2nd B.C., including hundreds of terracotta figurines that date from the 5th to the 2nd centuries B.C.[4] The figurines were primarily found in the earth fills of the numerous subterranean complexes at the site, while others were found in above-ground excavation areas, mostly in domestic contexts or shops. Those from the subterranean complexes also appear to have been associated with a residential neighborhood above. The overwhelming majority of the terracottas was manufactured in the city or its vicinity, as

Fig. 2. (Left) Attachment of the faces of a pillar figurine from cave 75 at Maresha. Courtesy of Amos Kloner (Israel Antiquities Authority) Photo: Paul Jacobs.

Fig. 3. (Center) Attachment of the faces to a pillar figurine from cave 169 at Maresha. Courtesy of Ian Stern and Bernie Alpert (Archaeological Seminars). Photo: Clara Amit.

Fig. 4. (Right) Complete pillar figurine from cave 169. As in Fig. 3.

is attested by the appearance of the clay, petrographic analyses, and the discovery on site of molds and sets of figurines made in the same molds.[5]

Generally speaking, the Persian-period types of terracottas are typical of southern Palestinian figurines of the period, and represent the local coroplastic craft of Idumea.[6] The types of the Hellenistic period are those belonging mostly to the Eastern–Hellenistic koine, with some regional and local characteristics.[7] Among the standard types, there is a unique type of figurine that appeared in the transition of the Persian to the Early Hellenistic period and is not known outside of Maresha or its vicinity. This endemic type, which I call Hellenistic pillar figurine, and its possible meaning is the focus of this paper.

The Hellenistic Pillar Figurine Type and its Date

Technique and Typology

The type of Hellenistic pillar figurine under discussion comprises a hollow pillar or peg with a rounded or pointed top, non-modeled back, and plinth base. All examples carry various types of mold-made faces, either singly, but more commonly in identical pairs, one below the other. The technique of manufacture involves several stages. First, each one of the two faces was cast in the same mold, and then the two were attached to a band of clay in a vertical alignment; the band was smoothed to blur the place of attachment, as shown in Figs. 2 and 3. The band was then attached to the upper half of the pillar, normally leaving the lower part bare. The unmodeled back was then attached to the front, usually resulting in a hollow base and solid top. The figurines stand steadily on a small plinth base and also can be easily grasped by hand. The height of the pillars is 10 to 15 cm, as shown by one complete specimen (Fig. 4). Several dozen pillar figurines of this type were unearthed at Maresha in different areas and caves, some of which were published in the report of the Hellenistic figurines from Maresha.[8]

Fig. 5. Pillar figurines from Maresha, caves 84 and 128, Face type 1. Courtesy of Amos Kloner (Israel Antiquities Authority). Photo: Paul Jacobs.

Fig. 6. Pillar figurine from cave 84 at Maresha, face type 2. Courtesy of Amos Kloner (Israel Antiquities Authority). Photo: Paul Jacobs.

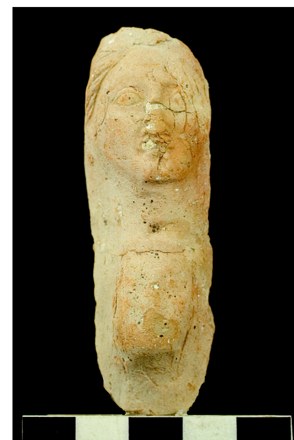

Fig. 7. Pillar figurine from cave 75 at Maresha, face type 3. Courtesy of Amos Kloner (Israel Antiquities Authority). Photo: Paul Jacobs.

Fig. 8. Pillar figurine from cave 75 at Maresha, face type 4, Dionysos face. Courtesy of Amos Kloner (Israel Antiquities Authority). Photo: Paul Jacobs.

Fig. 9. Pillar figurine with two breasts from Tel Halif. Courtesy of Paul Jacobs. Photo: Paul Jacobs.

Fig. 10. (Left). Pillar figurine from cave 84 at Maresha (left), and a Persian rider on a horse from cave 169 at Maresha (right). Courtesy of Amos Kloner (Israel Antiquities Authority) and Ian Stern and Bernie Alpert (Archaeological Seminars). Photo: Paul Jacobs and Adi Erlich

This group can be divided into subtypes, according to the facial types, of which some are feminine and others male. The first subtype has two identical faces marked by narrow eyes below heavy eyelids and a low forehead covered with a band (Fig. 5). The second type is also of a double face, but is different from the first by wide-open eyes and a thick, flat nose (Fig. 6). The third type of face is similar to the previous, but it has a Cnidian hairdo, indicating its female gender (Fig. 7).

The fourth type is an unusual pillar figurine with only one face—a fine, elongated Dionysos face crowned with a typical ivy wreath on a fillet (taenia) and abundant hair similar to Hellenistic terracottas depicting Dionysos from Susa.[9] Below the face is a hand-modeled pair of schematic breasts (Fig. 8). The mixture of male and female in one body is not surprising considering the effeminacy or bisexuality of Dionysos.[10] Nevertheless, the combination of a face bearing a male identity and feminine breasts is untypical of the iconography of the deity and therefore it may indicate that the coroplast did not intend to portray Dionysos himself. Rather, he used a randomly available mold for the face, which he actually intended to look feminine, and added the breasts. As Dionysos usually had a somewhat feminine appearance in Hellenistic art, such a mold served the artist's purpose. It is uncertain how acquainted were the inhabitants of a remote, small town in the periphery of the Hellenistic world with Greek ideas of transgender and bisexuality related to Dionysos, not to say applying them to a local type by modifying it with breasts. It is therefore reasonable to interpret the Dionysos pillar with breasts as a misunderstanding or misuse of the Dionysos mold and adapting it to a local type of a pillar figurine, rather than an intended sophisticated bisexual representation of Dionysos.

The Date of the Pillar Figurines

As mentioned above, the pillar figurines were discovered throughout the site, mostly in the fills of the subterranean complexes. These fills contain finds of mostly the Persian and Hellenistic periods dated to the 5th–2nd

Fig. 11. Judean pillar figurine from the National Maritime Museum at Haifa. Courtesy of Avshalom Zemer. After Zemer 2009: 68.

centuries B.C. Although in most cases the archaeological context does not provide us with a precise dating, there is enough evidence to date the origin of the type to the early days of the Hellenistic period, probably the end of the 4th century B.C.

The pillar portraying Dionysos was discovered in an occupation level in subterranean cave 75 dated to the Late Persian-Early Hellenistic periods, and the Praxitilean style of its face is typical of the Early Hellenistic period.[11] A similar example is a head from neighboring Tel Lachish.[12] This piece, cast in the same mold as the Maresha figurine, is hollow, and the surviving fragment is missing the breasts that are modeled on the Maresha piece. The figurine from Tel Lachish was discovered in an unstratified context, yet its provenience—the Solar Shrine—yielded finds from the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Another fragment of a pillar figurine with two breasts, but with its face missing, was discovered at Tel Halif south of Maresha, where the greater part of the corpus of figurines is dated to the 4th century B.C.[13] (Fig. 9). The two parallels from Tel Lachish and Tel Halif are the only parallels we know of outside of Maresha. Another fragment of a pillar base from Maresha was uncovered in a fill outside a residence at area 930 that contained Persian and Hellenistic pottery.[14] It should be noted that Persian pottery at Maresha is rare relative to the presence of Hellenistic ceramics, and therefore, the discovery of two pillar figurines in relation to Persian and Hellenistic pottery should not be seen as a mere coincidence.

Another reason to link the pillar type to the Persian period lies in a figurine of another type, the so-called Persian rider type.[15] Over 50% of the Persian period types at Maresha belong to the horse and rider of the southern Idumean type.[16] One of the riders of this type strongly resembles the face type no. 2 and was probably cast in the same mold (Fig. 10). It is plausible that Persian types continued to be produced into the early Hellenistic period, at least until the end of the 4th century B.C., if not later. The resemblance of the faces of one type of the Persian rider and one type of the pillar figurine points to the relationship between the two. This dates them to the transition between the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

Despite the Late-Persian affiliation, some of the pillar figurines are stylistically Hellenistic. The face and coiffure of the female type no. 3 are Hellenistic in style. The Dionysos head of type no. 4 is also very much Hellenized and Hellenistic in style, and has no resemblance whatsoever to any Persian types from the site. Therefore, it seems that these pillar figurines were produced as early as the Early Hellenistic period and include characteristics of both the Persian and the Hellenistic periods. They also might have been in use throughout the Hellenistic period.

The Source of the Pillar Type and its Meaning

The iconography of the pillar figurines is vague and elusive. They fit within a long tradition of Canaanite and Syrian gods, who had no clear iconography—identifiable forms, features, stances, or attributes—a stark contrast to other visual systems, such as those of the Egyptian and Greek pantheons.[17] The Semitic gods were obscure characters, usually identified with more than one consort and function.[18] It was suggested that, when dealing with the realm of the East, the discussion should not center on mythological narratives or concrete deities, but on essences and varied, recurring concepts.[19] However, some of the features in the iconography of the pillars point to a certain nature or perhaps even specific identity. The interpretation of the type and its meaning should rely on exploring similar phenomena in both cultures that are hybridized in the art of Hellenistic Maresha: the local and Greek.[20]

Fig. 12. Stone figurine of a herm from cave 147 at Maresha. Courtesy of Amos Kloner (Israel Antiquities Authority). Photo: Paul Jacobs.

Fig. 13. Wall relief of a herm in Cave 51 at Maresha. Photo: Adi Erlich.

The Iron Age Judean Pillar Figurines

The general idea of the pillar of type 4, with its modeled breasts, can be viewed as a reminiscence of Judean pillar figurines that were widespread in Iron Age Judah.[21] The Judean pillar figurines are solid clay images that represent females supporting their breasts with their hands. The body is hand-made, rounded, pillar-like, and schematic, and the head is either mold-made or hand-made (Fig. 11). The Judean pillar figurines date to the 8th–7th centuries B.C. and their distribution is limited to areas within the borders of Judah, which in part becomes Idumea in later times. These pillar figurines have been interpreted in various ways: as Canaanite goddesses, amulets for good luck, toys, or as representations of mortal women.[22]

The Hellenistic pillars from Maresha and the Iron Age pillars from Judea share a key element—the reduction of the anthropomorphic depiction into one or two components, the head and breasts. However, there is no direct relationship between the two groups. First, the pillars of the two groups look different, as the Iron Age pillars are cylindrical whereas the Hellenistic pillars are thin and rectangular. Second, most of the Hellenistic pillars from Maresha have no breasts, and the one that does have breasts does not hold them. Third, the Iron Age figurines have only one head, while many of the Hellenistic pillars have two faces, one above the other. Fourth and last, one should bear in mind that despite the partial geographical overlapping of the two types, the Iron Age and the Hellenistic pillars are divided by some three centuries and historical and cultural changes such as the Judean exile and the formation of Idumea. Therefore, it seems that although the Hellenistic pillar types may have been a late successor of the Iron Age pillars, they differ tremendously and should be treated as separate phenomena.

The Greek Herm

The general form of the pillar figurine invokes queries as to its association with Greek herms. The Dionysos head of type 4 is typical of Dionysos herms[23] and the pair of faces of the other types may be associated with the houble herm type.[24] Yet, despite the double heads, other traits rule out a direct relation to the double herm pillars: the heads are molded in relief about 1–2 cm below the top, rather than sculpted as a separate unit on top of the pillar; the faces are set one above the other, rather than on the same level on both the front and back of the pillar; there are no horizontal projections below the head resembling schematic arms, and no phalli. Moreover, double herms are rare in terracottas, due to the tendency to leave the back unmodeled. Consequently, although the outline of the Maresha pillar figurines resembles that of the Greek herm, it does not derive directly from it.

However, the herm as a sculptural form is not unfamiliar to Maresha. One terracotta from the site represents a mantle herm,[25] and herms appear in soft–limestone and on wall reliefs in some of the caves.[26] One small, schematic figurine from Maresha depicts a rectangular body on a wide rectangular base with incised facial features (Fig. 12). Among the reliefs on the walls of the underground chambers of Maresha are cruciform figures, one of which is carved as a large cross with short branches within a square depression, and its head has a schematic nose between two shallow depressions representing eyes and cheeks (Fig. 13) In an underground complex located roughly three kilometers north of Maresha was found an additional cross bearing a head and with a depression at the base of the vertical branch. These crosses can be interpreted as schematic herms, including both the pillar and the arms, but without a detailing of the face. Like the pillar figurines, some of these presentations are also uncanonical, and possibly had connections to the pillar figurines. But the many variations of this form at Maresha, in terracotta as well as in stone, attest to a rather local tradition that may have been assimilated with the Greek form.

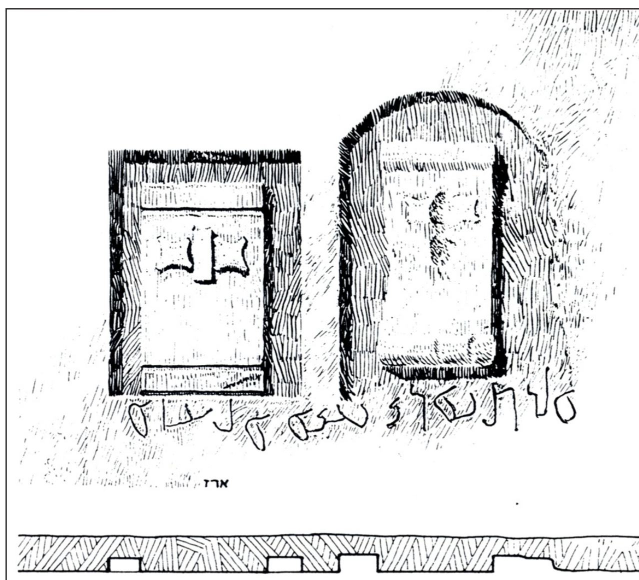

Fig. 14. Reliefs of Nabatean Eye Idols dedicated to al–Uzza and al-Kutba from Ain Shellaleh, er-Ramm. After Patrich 1990, ill.

It seems as though the Maresha herms are not related in content to the semi-anthropomorphic herm in its various Greek forms, but to the idea of the abstraction and the minimizing of the anthropomorphic element, a trend characteristic of the region. The pillar figurines convey the same idea. They resemble the Maresha herms in their abstraction of the body and in their being a standing pillar carrying a face. However, the double face of most of the figurines of this group separates the Hellenistic pillar figurines from both the Greek herm type and the Maresha local herms.

The Nabatean 'Eye Idols'

A similar phenomenon is widespread, as can be seen among the Nabatean betyls and stele gods. They also display a preference, if not an exclusive one, for the elimination or reduction of the anthropomorphic element of the god figure.[27] Given the proximity and known relations between Nabateans and Idumeans, such a similarity is not surprising. Certain types of Nabatean steles, referred to as eye idols, came in various sizes and sculptural forms (reliefs, steles, and figurines) and occasionally carried only a face or few facial features.[28] They sometimes represented female deities, as attested by their accompanying inscriptions,[29] and recall the Maresha pillar figurines that are also largely female. Like other betyls, some of the Nabatean eye idols appear in pairs and are dedicated to two different goddesses[30] (Fig. 14).

Although the Nabatean eye idols differ from the Hellenistic pillar figurines in their shape and modeling, they share the reduction of the human body to a face, and the pairing of deities in some cases. The Nabatean steles and figurines are probably slightly later than the Maresha figurines, as most probably date to the 1st century B.C.–1st century C.E.[31] The eye idols are identified with Nabataen goddesses (al-Uzza, al-Kutba) when accompanied by inscriptions,[32] but there is not one defined scheme of correlation between the image and its identification, or in Patrich's words, "The process of creating binding cultic formulas never reached a final stage in Nabatean society. In such an evolutionary situation, it is not surprising that we can not find any clear one-to-one relationship between the stele and the god."[33] It seems that despite the small gap in time and space, i.e. Hellenistic Idumea versus early Roman Nabatea, the same can be said about the enigmatic unidentified Hellenistic pillar figurines from Maresha.

Pair, Couple or Twins?

The meaning of a pair of identical faces modeled on a single pillar is unclear; the faces may have represented two different aspects or natures of the same image or two separate figures forming a syncretic entity. One of the enduring features throughout the Hellenistic period is the divine family, which could consist of a pair of consort gods; consort gods and their child; or a mother god and her child.[34] Such combinations are evident in inscriptions from Hellenistic Palestine.[35] The double-faced pillar figurines may represent the same thing as the inscriptions dedicated to two divine entities, such as Hadad and Atargatis in an inscription from Kfar Yassif near Akko,[36] or Serapis and Isis in an inscription from Samaria.[37] Nonetheless, if the pillars were meant to represent two different deities, we would have expected the two entities to stand side by side as in the Nabatean pairs of steles, or at least to have a different appearance, unlike the sole pillar carrying two identical faces. That leads us to believe that the faces portrayed on the pillars are not two separate figures, but rather a combined entity or two very close individuals.

The two heads may have also represented twins, a motif carrying profound symbolism in the ancient Near East.[38] Twins occasionally appear in terracotta figurines of the ancient Near East. Twin embryos in their mother's womb, or suckling from their mother, appear on Late Bronze plaque figurines.[39] Twin riders or a riding female accompanied by twins were depicted on

Achaemenid figurines from northern Syria.[40] But these sporadic examples come from distant sites and periods. In order to set the twins motif within its context one should look back into Hellenistic Maresha.

A figurine type frequent at Maresha depicts the Dioskouroi/Dioscuri, the Greek twin gods Castor and Pollux, the sons of Zeus and Leda and brothers of Helena.[41] The Dioskouroi from Maresha display a rather rare type (Fig. 15). They are depicted as a pair of standing young men wearing a loosely hanging chlamys and their typical headdress, the pilos. A series of figurines from Amathus, Cyprus,[42] echoing the frontal pose of the standing males, constitutes the closest parallels to the Maresha Dioskouroi.

The Dioskouroi were popular deities in the East, principally in Egypt and Syria,[43] owing to their astral character, protective role, versatile tasks, and diverse identifications with local deities. Their cult was practiced in Ptolemaic Egypt and in Cyprus.[44] In Hellenistic Palestine Dioskouroi appear in other media as well.[45] They can be found on coins of the 2nd century BCE from ‘Akko-Ptolemais on the north coast of Palestine.[46] A Hellenistic inscription from Scythopolis mentions the savior deities, perhaps referring to the Dioskouroi.[47] Two identical stone reliefs depicting only a pilos and star were unearthed at Samaria, within a wall of the Roman temple dedicated to Kore,[48] possibly indicating an earlier, probably Hellenistic, cult of the Dioskouroi.

The Hellenistic pillar figurines are different from the Dioskouroi terracottas in composition and sometimes also in gender. Still, it is worthwhile to point at a striking similarity between the faces of one of the Dioskouroi types at Maresha and the second face type of the pillar figurines. They both have the same wide-open eyes and flat nose. This resemblance implies that they might represent the same idea of identical, if not Siamese, twins, whether male or female. The divine twins are a long lasting motif in ancient cultures. At Egypt there were Shu and Tefenet and other divine or majestic twins, which are evident also in Graeco–Roman times.[49] The myth of twins as an astral power is evident also in the ancient Near East.[50] In the Greek world there were Castor and Pollux, mentioned above, who were the source for the sign of the Gemini in the Zodiac.[51] In Roman cultures there are of course Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome. Often the twins were considered to be heavenly and astral, and connected to the sun and the moon or to the stars.

Fig. 15. Dioskouroi figurine from cave 90 at Maresha. Courtesy of Amos Kloner (Israel Antiquities Authority) and Ian Stern and Bernie Alpert (Archaeological Seminars). Photo: Paul Jacobs.

There is one local pair of twins which should attract our attention, the biblical Jacob and Esau, from which the people of Israel and the Edomites are said to have emerged.[52] Although the origin of the Idumeans is obscure, Idumea in the Persian and Hellenistic periods seems to be the inheritor of biblical Edom,[53] especially when considering the popularity of Edomite names at Maresha and Idumea.[54] The claim of the Idumeans for south Judea is rooted in their being the successors of Esau, the deceived and deprived elder twin who did not succeed to inherit Jacob’s land.[55] The myth of the twins is interlaced in the heritage of both nations, Jews and Idumeans, after the first temple period.[56] It could be that such an ancient local concept of twins as divine astral power, or as founders of nations, is represented in the double-faced Hellenistic pillar figurines. Nevertheless, it should be noted that not all the pillars carry two faces,

and one certainly carries only one Dionysos face. Therefore, the twins interpretation may be valid only in some of the cases which form the majority of the Hellenistic pillar figurines.

Conclusions

The exact meaning and function of the double faced pillar figurines from Maresha are still vague. The pillars may represent specific deities, such as Dionysos or the Dioskouroi. They are frequently female, but in certain cases also males are represented in them. They have one or, more often, two faces. They are meant to stand on a solid base, but they are also easily held in the hand. They all share the reduction of the human body to a tall slender pillar with a face. As was maintained above, they find parallels in the concept of the Greek herm, but also in the Nabatean betyls and stele gods, which also display a preference for the elimination or reduction of the anthropomorphic element of the god figure. Another key element common to the Maresha pillars and the Nabatean steles is the flexibility of iconography; they seem to be a mere platform for altering entities and identities.

The Hellenistic pillar figurines are not found outside Maresha, except for one type found in two sites south of Maresha, Tel Lachish and Tel Halif, both in the heart of Idumea. The regionalism of the Idumean figurines is not a new feature of the Hellenistic period; Idumea has featured its own regional types as early as the Persian period.[57] The pillar figurines are part of this regionalism, although many of the Hellenistic figurines from Maresha are koine types. The inhabitants of Maresha created a local form of figurine, using conventionalized molds. This form might have been divine or mortal, female or male, representing local deities or Greek divinities, related to the Dioskouroi twins or to another pair; we can not tell for sure. The pillars from Maresha are evident for a local and independent Idumean tradition.

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Notes

[1] Peters and Thiersch 1905, p. 68; Oren and Rappaport 1984, pp. 142–148; Eshel 2007; Kloner et al 2010.

[2] Bliss and Macalister 1902, pp. 52-61; Kloner 2003, pp. 9–30.

[3] Kloner et al 2010, pp. 1–33, 205–216.

[4] Erlich 2006; Erlich and Kloner 2008.

[5] Erlich and Kloner 2008, pp. 113–114.

[6] Erlich 2006.

[7] Erlich 2009, pp. 51–58.

[8] Erlich and Kloner 2008, pp. 43–46, pl. 24.

[9] Martinez–Sève 2002, pp. 118–119.

[10] Jameson 1993, pp. 44–45; Stewart 1997, pp. 228.

[11] Erlich and Kloner 2008: 43–44, 95–96, 117.

[12] Aharoni 1975: Pl. 18:2.

[13] Jacobs, forthcoming.

[14] Erlich and Kloner 2008: 46, no. 137.

[15] Moorey 2000.

[16] Erlich 2006.
[17] Boardman 2000, pp. 324, 333.
[18] Cumont 1956, pp. 131–132; Moscati 1968, pp. 31–38.
[19] Keel and Uehlinger 1998, pp. 12–13, 393–394.
[20] For the syncretic nature of Hellenistic Levant see Erlich 2009, p.107; Kouremnos, Chandrasekaran and Rossi 2011.
[21] Kletter 1996; Kletter 2001. See also Darby 2013.
[22] Kletter 2001, pp. 195–201.
[23] Goldman 1942.
[24] Marcadé 1952.
[25] Erlich and Kloner 2008, pp. 60–61, pl. 36, no. 195.
[26] Erlich 2009, pp. 19–22.
[27] Patrich 1990, pp. 165–166.
[28] Ibid., pp. 82–86.
[29] Ibid., pp. 54–55, ill. 7, 62 ill. 9.
[30] Loc. cit., 62, ill. 9; Bartlett 2007, pp. 66–68.
[31] Patrich 1990, pp. 95–96.
[32] Ibid., pp. 101–106.
[33] Ibid., p. 104.
[34] Teixidor 1977, pp. 34–59.
[35] Erlich 2009, pp. 112–113.
[36] Avi-Yonah 1959.
[37] Crowfoot, Crowfoot and Kenyon 1957, p. 37, no. 13.
[38] Kuntzmann 1983.
[39] Ornan 2007.
[40] Nunn 2000, pp. 44–45, pls. 15–16; Nunn 2004, pp. 151–161, type d.
[41] Erlich and Kloner 2008, pp. 5–7, pl. 1.
[42] Queyrel 1988, pls. 25, 26.
[43] Barry 1906, pp. 168; Augé and Bellefonds 1986a, pp. 593.
[44] Fraser 1972, p. 207; Queyrel 1985; Barnard 2003.
[45] Erlich 2009, p. 22.
[46] Kadman 1961, p. 51, pl. 2; Lipinski 1995, p. 283.
[47] Ovadiah 1975.
[48] Crowfoot, Kenyon and Sukenik 1942, p. 66, pl. LX:2.
[49] Baines 1985, pp. 472–477.
[50] Kuntzmann 1983, pp. 137–163.
[51] Hermary 1986, p. 592; Fishof 2001, p. 107.
[52] *Gen*. 25, 22–34; Kuntzmann 1983, pp. 39–50.
[53] Kokkinos 1998, pp. 36–50.
[54] Stern 2007; Eshel 2007.
[55] *Gen*. 27, Kokkinos 1998, pp. 37–38.
[56] Assis 2006.

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ADI ERLICH
University of Haifa
aerlich@research.haifa.ac.il

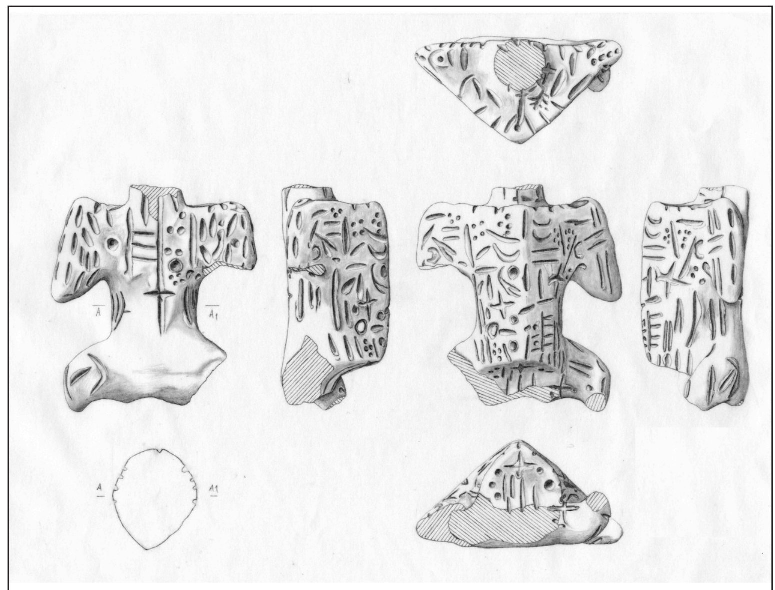
The Mimesis of a World
The Early and Middle Bronze Clay Figurines from Ebla-Tell Mardikh

Marco Ramazzotti

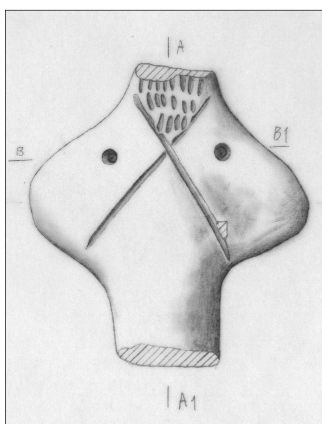
Abstract
The paper will focus on the cognitive and spatial analysis of clay figurines dated to the Early and Middle Bronze Age that were recently discovered in Ebla-Tell Mardikh (Syria). The results outline a symbolic *chaîne opératoire* of these clay artifacts and underline their ideographic and composite character, which also can be paralleled in the Early Dynastic and Early Syrian miniature statue tradition. It will then be suggested that these products of the so-called 'material culture' were also a conscious human imitation of sacred and royal images of power. It has been observed that during the Early Syrian Period (2400-2000 B.C.) the spatial concentration of clay figurines in the Royal Palace G of Ebla does not seem accidental, a likelihood that could demonstrate a sort of affinity of this miniature clay world with that of the sacred kingship. However, I would argue that even though the spatial distribution of the clay figurines from the Old Syrian Period (2000–1600 B.C.) is indeed extensive, the strong concentration of figurine fragments that was found close to the Ishtar public cult area (Monument P3 and Temple P2) seems to indicate a radical transformation of the roles played by this clay world. Rather than being a mimesis of the physical and metaphysical sacred kingship, it is instead a reproduction of the whole society.

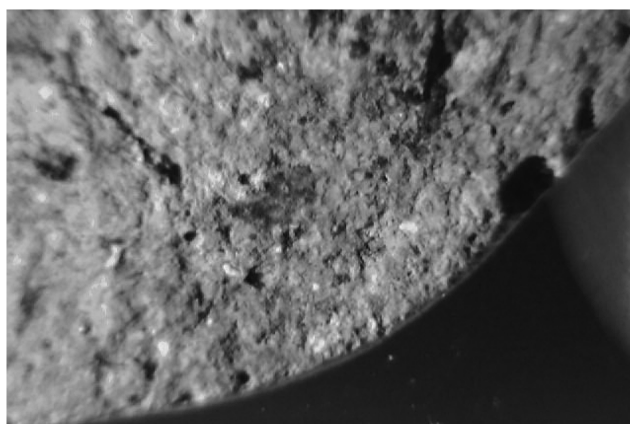
The Early Syrian and Old Syrian Clay Figurines at Ebla

Within the Early and Old Syrian coroplastic corpus from Ebla[1] there are a number of clay representations of the human and animal world that could be considered products of the first Mesopotamian state societies,[2] well adapted to the contextual, economic condition of the so-called northern secondary urbanism (Figs. 1a–b).[3] This specific, archetypical relationship between southern and northern Mesopotamia was strongly reinforced by the economic and political network of the Uruk Period. During the Late Uruk Period, at the end of the 4th millennium B.C., this network comprised an interchangeable continuum of materials, techniques, and images[4] that included the Sumerian technique of modeling in clay, or molding the earth, a technique that pre-dated the mechanical reproduction of figurines by means of a mold.[5] For this reason, many centuries later in the second half of the third millennium B.C., we still find at Ebla-Tell Mardikh in northern Syria a local translation of the Sumerian tradition of the miniature representation of the human and the appearance of a variety of shapes and styles contemporary with the Early Dynastic symbolic tradition. Typologically, we can distinguish these miniatures as Early Syrian from their distinctive iconographic character [6] and their similarity to many other contemporary images from north



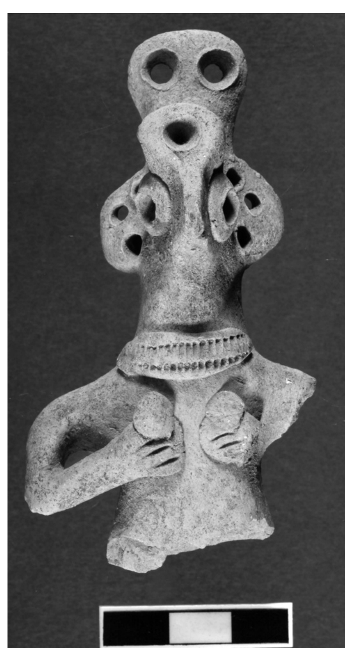
Figs. 1a–b: TM83G311 Early Syrian Clay Turtle.(© La Sapienza University of Rome – Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)





Figs. 2a–c. TM83G361 Early Syrian Clay Figurine. Photo: © La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

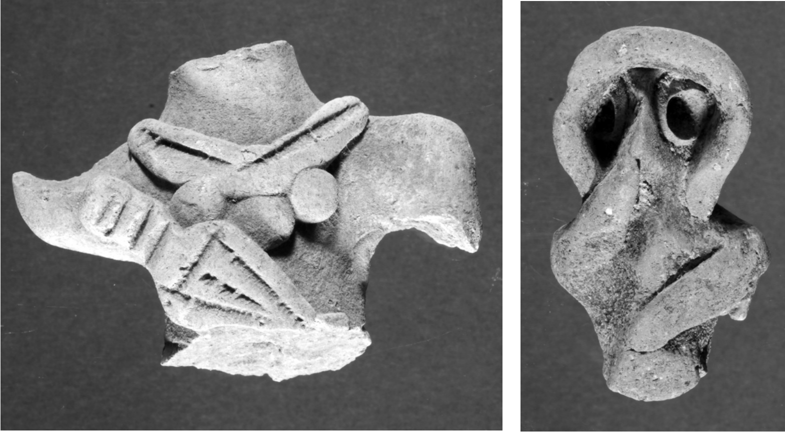
Figs. 3a–b: TM06HH0934 and TM07G174 Early Syrian Clay Figurines. Photo: © La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)



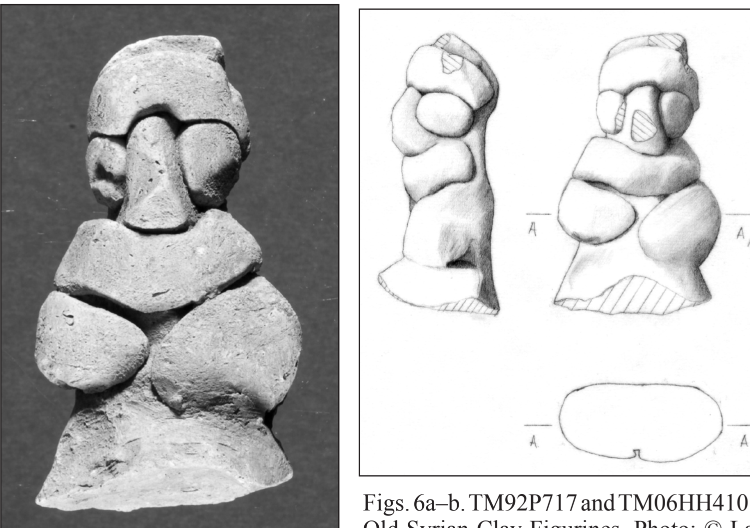
Figs. 4a–b: TM06HH0097+0738 and TM06HH0237: Old Syrian Clay Figurines. Photo: © La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

Syrian urban centers (Figs. 2a–b).[7] During the Early Dynastic and the Early Syrian periods in Mesopotamia and in Syria the quantity and variability of clay figurines increased, while the hybridism recognized during the Halaf and Ubaid period[8] almost disappeared in favor of the more naturalistic representations of the Uruk/Jemdet Nasr period.[10] The exponential growth in the manufacture of clay figurines, the reduction of hybrid images, and the appearance of naturalistic representations are variables of complex phenomena probably related to the political and economic characteristics of secondary urbanization, a different replica of the Mesopotamian urban revolution (Figs. 3a–b).[10] Subsequently, the technique of agglutinated, composite, molded elements that appears on a wide variety of Early Syrian artifacts was replaced by closer imitations of the real and/or metaphysical world during the Old Babylonian and Syrian periods.[11] At this time the highly diversified Early Syrian figurines were produced in uniform series (Figs. 4a–b)[12] that were not related to only the female, male, or animal classes, but also to some specific breakages, or fractures. However, in the same period the figurines were highly structured, with the hand–modeled examples related to the divided spheres of hybrids, humans, and animals that were based on a shared model with standard proportions and dimensions (Fig. 5a–b).[13] This transformation began suddenly, probably with the collapse of Early Syrian centralized political power at the beginning of the Akkadian period, when the aggressive expansion of the Sargonic royal household, at the expense of many local institutions, is attested.[14] In this period —after the "Fall"[15] — we have some rare and unusual painted clay figurines that cannot be automatically assigned to the previous tradition.[16] In any case, from the

beginning of the Old Syrian period onward, human, animal, and divine figures proliferated. But within the *habitus*, or social values, of this mass production the tendency to formalize more ancient schemes of representation coexisted with the tendency to maintain archaic, ideographic codes in order to make subject matter recognizable (Figs. 6a–b; Fig. 7).[17] These ideographic codes, the use of clay details on the image, and the place of the image as a socially recognizable aspect of the institutional, political, and religious roles of the represented subjects were probably inspired by popular imitation and translation of some contemporary Old Syrian works, such as the Face of Ishtar, which were impressive images of the most archaic Eblaite kingship and religious power.[18] Examples of this can be seen in clay imitations of the most archaic sacred images (Table II:A, TM83G400), such as the miniature statue in hematite, white marble, and red jasper discovered in the Royal Palace G (Table II:A, TM94P666), and reproduced—probably as a queen—in another important, but fragmentary, Early Syrian votive plaque representing a banquet scene. There are also clay reproductions of the most popular Old Syrian sacred images (Table II:B, TM88R035), such as the nude Ishtar representation in the fragmentary basalt basin from Temple P2 (TM08P2–916), or the clay imitations of archetypical symbols of kingship in the basalt monumental sculptures (TM64B35), such as the lions' heads well attested at Ebla during the Old Syrian period (TM95P260 / TM91P251). Additionally, there are the clay mimesis of ideological actions of kingship in the wooden and ivory inlays (Table II:C, TM93P340), such as the iconography of the king carrying an animal offering (Table II:C, TM92P596). Moreover, during the Late Old Syrian period we witness the multiplication of figurines that are not properly imitations and/or representations, but rather follow an autonomous composite path: theriomorphic vases, ceremonial chariots, and incense burners. These clay objects show that the clay as "matter of creation" for humans and animals and "matter of tactile mimesis" of humankind be-



Figs. 5a–b. TM76G476 and TM94P666: Old Syrian Clay Figurines. Photo: © La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)



Figs. 6a–b. TM92P717 and TM06HH410: Old Syrian Clay Figurines. Photo: © La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria.

Fig. 7. TM06HH410: Old Syrian Clay Figurine. Photo: © La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria.

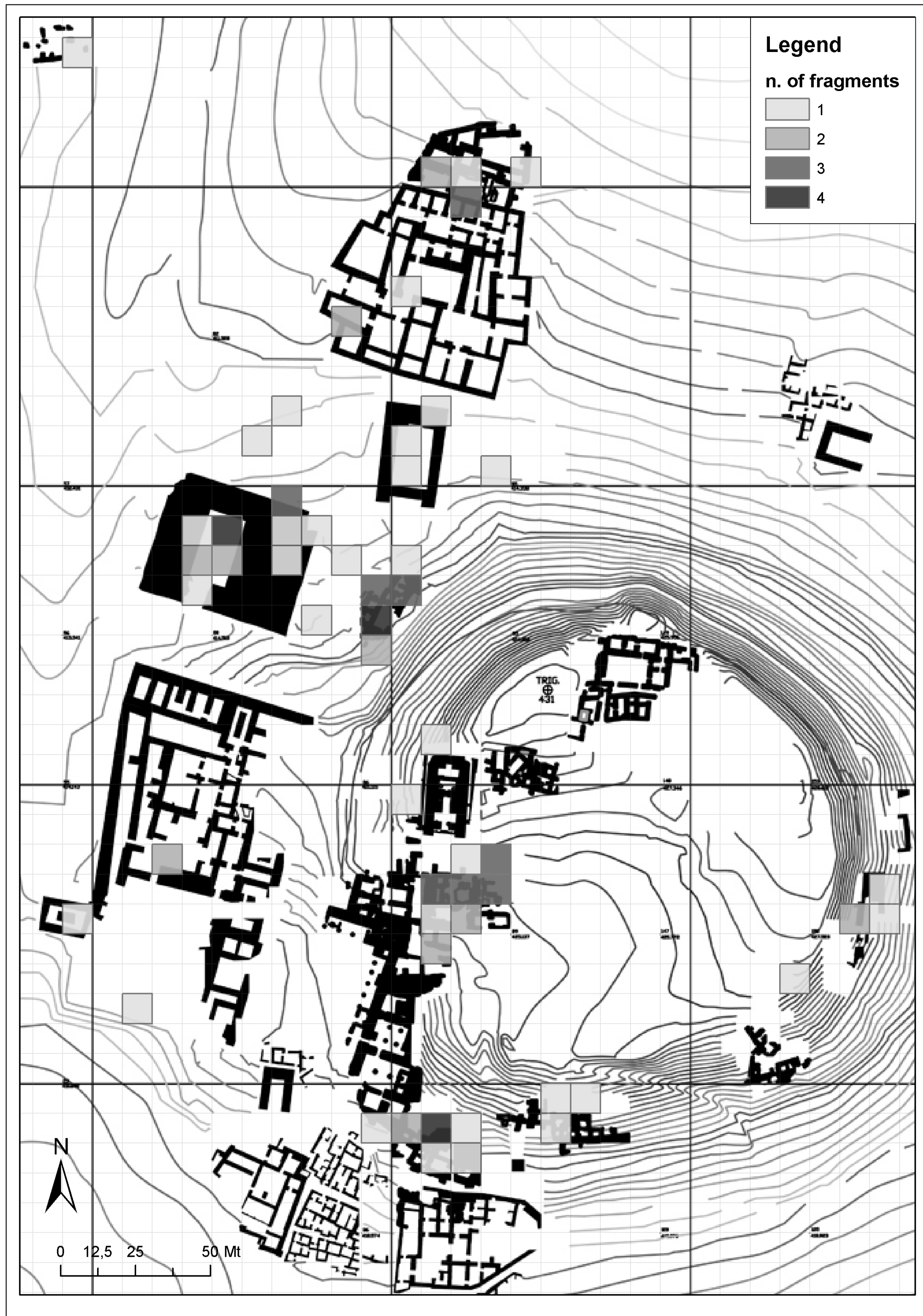


Table I:A. Spatial distribution of 100 clay figurines from Ebla dated to EB and MB period; B. Spatial distribution of 100 clay figurines main breakages (heads; chests; legs; pubes; complete); C. Spatial distribution of the 50 clay figurines Early Syrian breakages; D. Spatial distribution of the 50 clay figurines Old Syrian breakages. © La Sapienza University of Rome ARCHEOSEMA Digital Archive.

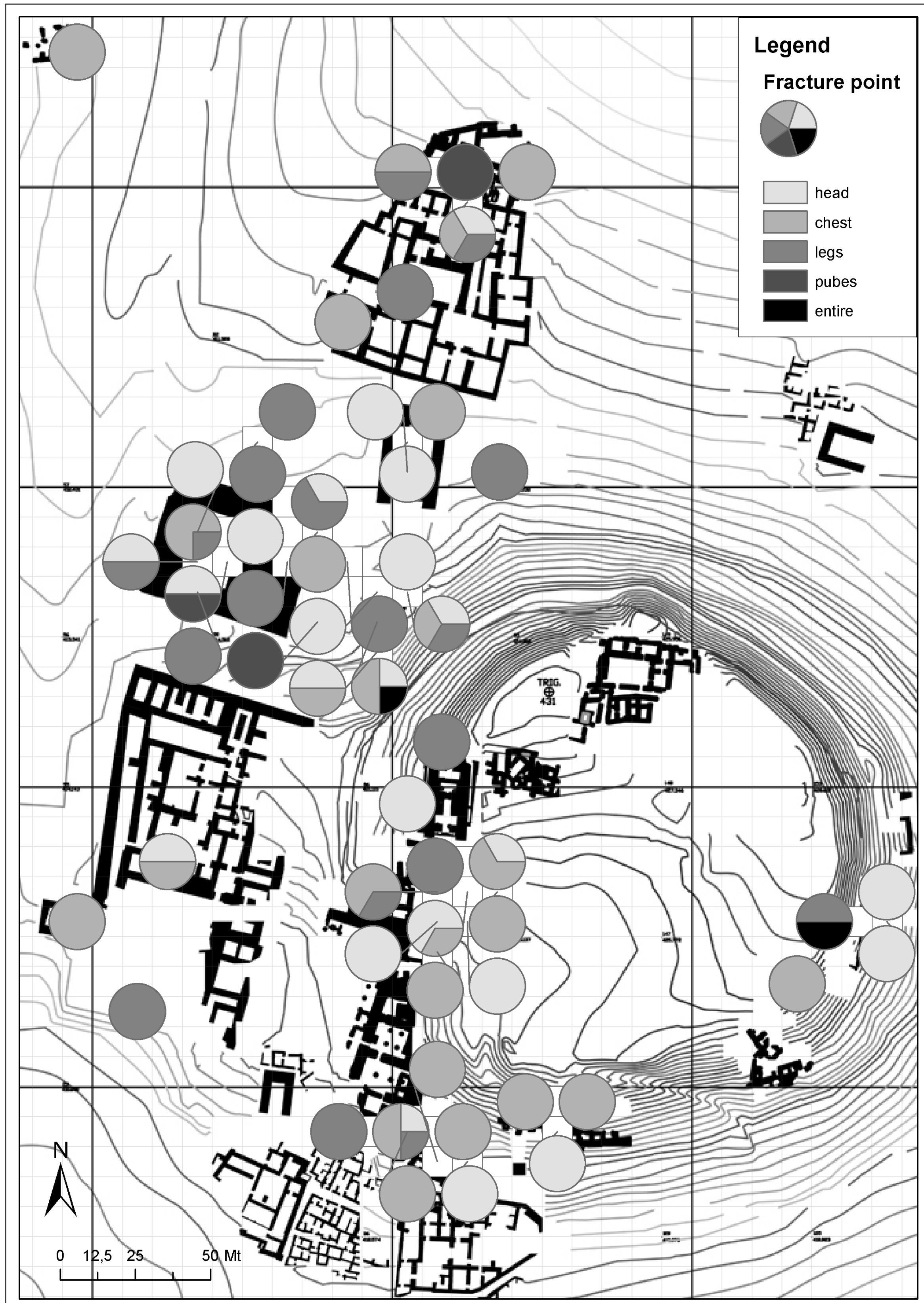


Table I:B. Spatial distribution of 100 clay figurines main breakages (heads; chests; legs; pubes; complete). © La Sapienza University of Rome ARCHEOSEMA Digital Archive.

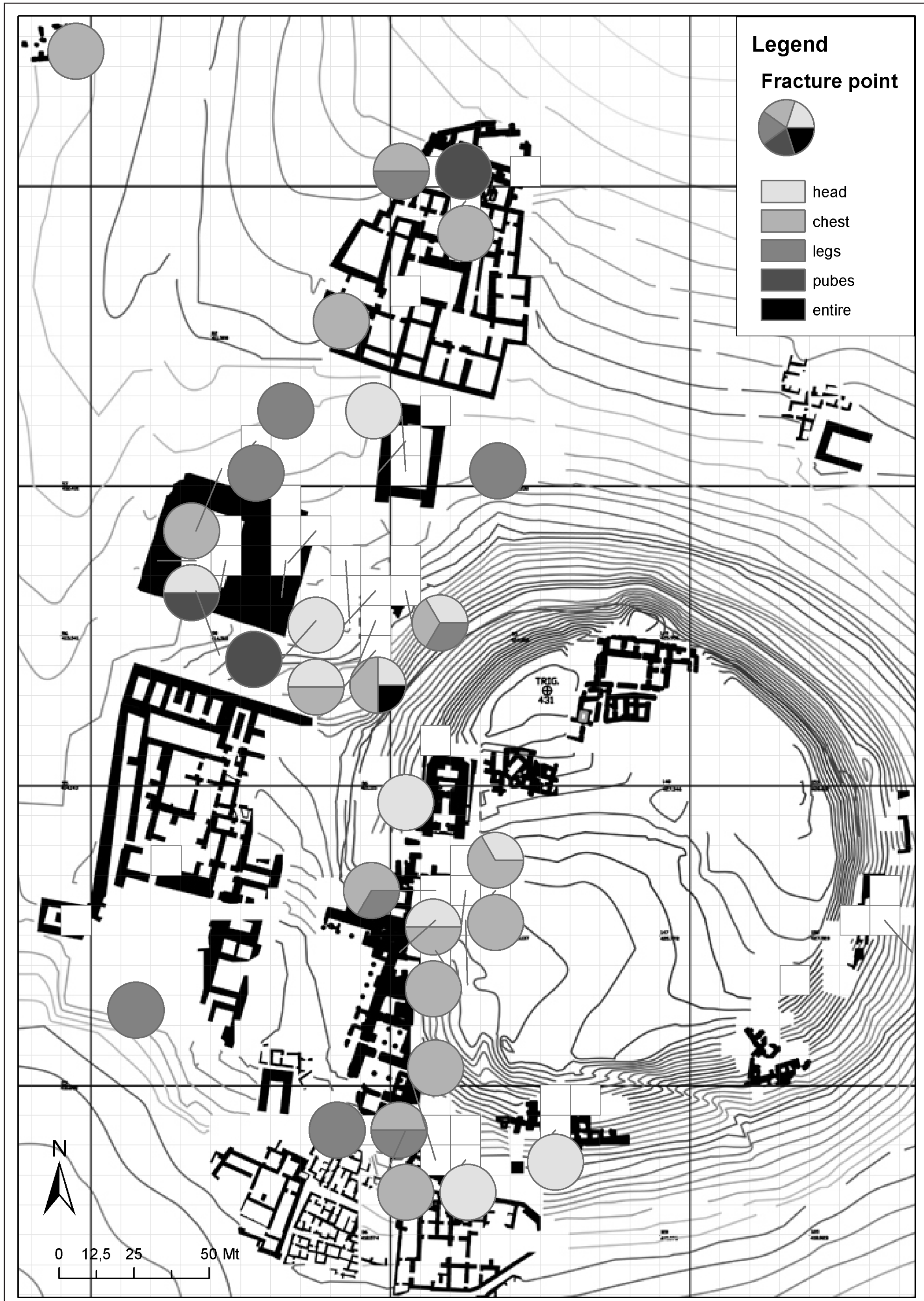


Table I:C. Spatial distribution of the 50 clay figurines Early Syrian breakages. © La Sapienza University of Rome ARCHEOSEMA Digital Archive.

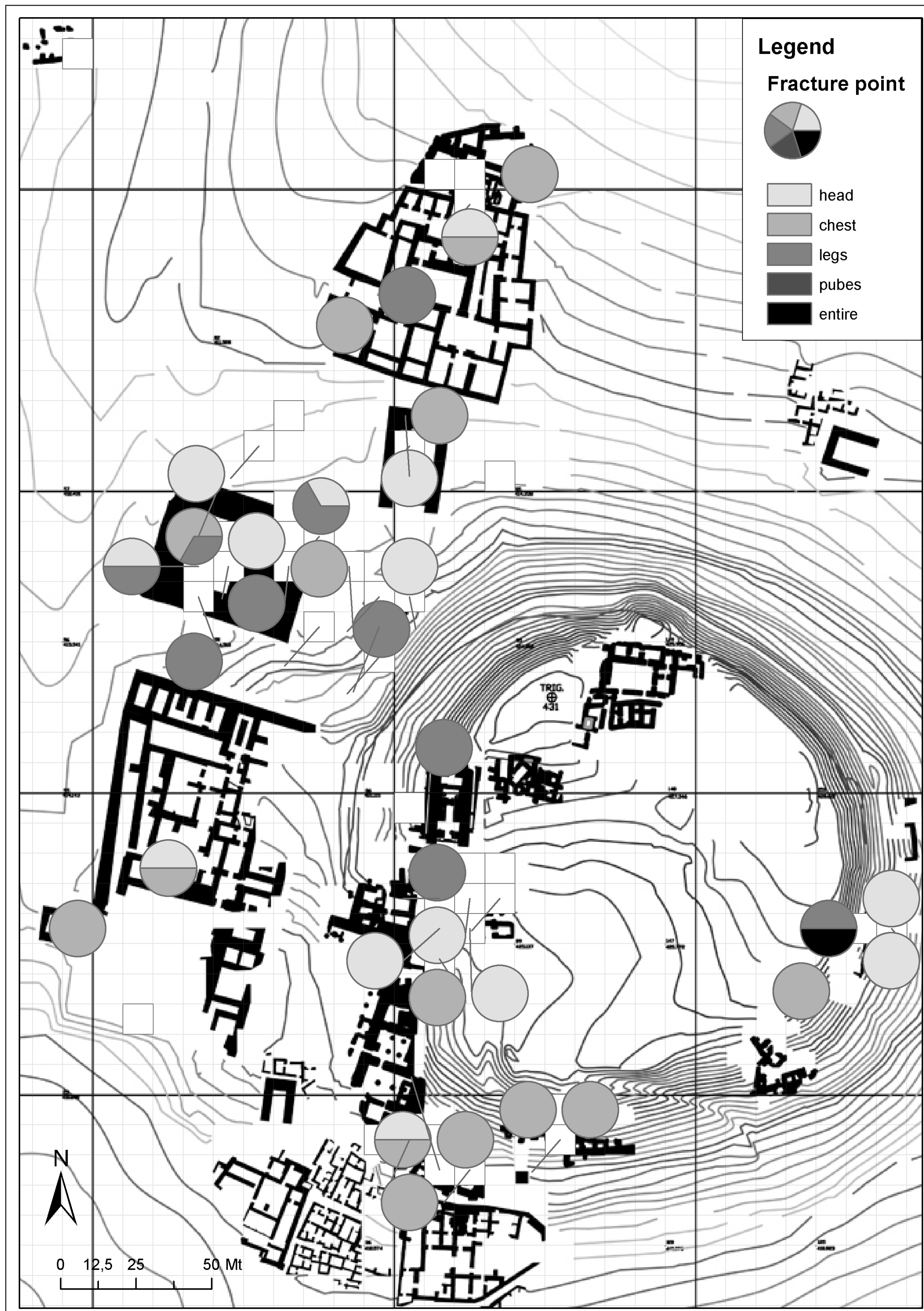


Table I:D. Spatial distribution of the 50 clay figurines, Old Syrian breakages. © La Sapienza University of Rome ARCHEOSEMA Digital Archive.

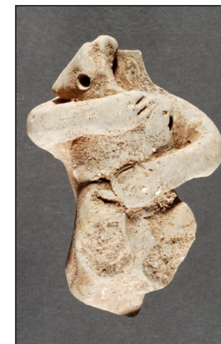
A. Clay Mimesis of archaic religious images (TM83G400 and TM94P666). (© La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

B) Clay Mimesis of the most popular sacred images (TM88R035 and TM08P2-916). (© La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

TM64B35

TM95P260

TM93P340



TM92P256

C) Clay Mimesis of the kingship symbols (TM64B35 and TM95P260) and actions (TM93P340 and TM92P256). (© La Sapienza University of Rome, Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

Table II

came a professional medium to display a "potential automation" of the real world.[19] Thus we could hypothesize that the role of these infinite reproductions was that of collective copies created for some function during important rites, or to remain as memory signs, games, and/or allusions in daily life.[20]

The Chemical and Physical Analysis of the Ebla Clay Figurines

Preliminary spectroscopic analysis realized in collaboration with CiSTEC at La Sapienza University of Rome by Professor Maria Laura Santarelli gave us the opportunity to analyze the technical aspects of the Early Syrian and Old clay figurine breakages and their topographic localizations, but the present analysis reveals a new side to the political assessment of the city, where the figurines became "clay images of people."[32] Our preliminary report on these Ebla figurines, which were richly embellished, has focused on the Sumerian concepts of clay as "creation matter" and as "molding technology."[33]

The *Chaîne Opératoire* of the Early Syrian and Old Syrian Coroplastic Production

In the Sumerian tradition of the poem *Enki and Ninmakh*, Nammu, the mother of every god, pulls out the clay from the Apsû (The Primeval Ocean)[34] in order to put it in the matrix of the first man. This matrix, which was created by Enki *Nu.dím.mud*,[35] the artificer, will be used to make man a replicable "Automa" assigned to serve the gods, to obtain food for them, and to placate their wrath.[36] In this myth, the animation of the Automa through the life–giving breath of Ninmakh seems to create a solution for Enki's laziness.[37] This laziness is apparently incompatible with his well-known official status as Enki 'the wise,'' but perhaps here it is evident that in myth-genesis every contradiction should be resolved. Wisdom and guile are universal values of the intellect, but they are also able to invent human slavery.[38] Later, in the *Curse of Akkad*,[39] one of the most potent invectives against those whose commit sacrilege to injure the Ekur of Nippur (the House Temple of Enlil founded at the beginning of creation) is: "May your clay return to its Apsû; may it be clay cursed by Enki!" Afterwards, in the *Atramhasis*,[40] the Akkadian poem dated to the Hammurabi period, the birth–giver *belet–ili* is given instructions by Ea to mix the flesh and blood of a god with clay to produce mankind; and so the clay itself will be kneaded with the flesh and the blood of a sacrificed god, as if to emphasize a sort of "sacrifice for life." Finally, the element of the Apsû–clay is eliminated altogether in the *Enuma Elish,*[41] when mankind will be created with only the blood of Kingu's corpse, the sacrificed rebel god. In this epic it seems that the clay matter of creation has been transfigured into an amalgam of the vital essence of humanity, adopting a function and a role that is easily understandable if analyzed from the point of view of original sin as the foundation of human life and as the separation between god and humans. In this Babylonian world clay always appears as the material and the ideal of every creation process. It is—in other words—a unique coexistence of values, ethics, and technologies that comprise allusive and metaphorical images, historical and meta-historical subjects. Clay is indeed a plastic material. However, both in the Sumerian and Akkadian texts, clay is not linguistically distinguished from mud. Modeling clay was used for the first Neolithic molded skull: the skull was removed from the face of the dead and was replaced by a plaster mask that reproduced the lines and attributes of the face, modifying and embellishing some details (Jericho, Palestine).[42] The sun–dried clay statues of Ain Ghazal in Jordan are exceptional coroplastic discoveries, which are already statuary, a coroplastic object that does not have miniature proportions, but nevertheless was discovered in contexts where there were miniature, handmade human and animal figurines.[43] The clay mask that transfigures the face of the dead and the clay reproductions of the family are archetypes, which, with plastic manipulation, gave the dead features from life, therefore the passage between the two—the *mask* and the *copy*[44]—were two of the most important nodes in the later consecration rites of divine statues.[45] In any case, the link between these theoretical, literary, and aesthetic notions can be identified in the Samarra figurines from Niniveh and Choga Mami, in the so-called Neolithic pillar figurines from Tell Bouqras, in the Yarim Tepe II anthropomorphic vessels, and later on in the snake-headed figurines of southern Mesopotamia dated to the end of the Ubaid period from Uruk, Oueili, Uqair, Ubaid, Ur, and Eridu. This is a homogeneous group of 20 hybrid figurines discovered out of their original contexts, apart from the Ur and Eridu copies, which were found in burials. The long heads, the almond-shaped eyes, the large shoulders, and the long legs are formal indices of the transformation of natural, human proportions: these elements make the body a model for a metamorphic change that, in this case, has been associated with a primeval aspect of Ninghizzida, the snake lord of the

earth and the netherworld.[46] The metamorphism of these subjects depends on controlled manipulation of some details that could have had ideographic values (the faces, the eyes, the shoulders, the legs and the arms). This kind of alteration will be preserved through millennia as a technique to make the metamorphic clay figurines a sort of prosthesis of ostensible reality.[47] The well-known, ideological link between Mesopotamia and northern Syria has recently been detailed on a cognitive level.[48] But this link also is well documented by some imported clay figurines of the Early Bronze age probably coming from the central Euphrates region and by the extraordinary iconographic analogy between the Ubaid Mesopotamian clay figurines with almond-shaped eyes and two Eblaite figurines respectively from the Royal Palace G (TM93P589) and from the Area P (TM92P290).[49]

Theoretical Approaches to the Visual and Tactile Meaning of the Ebla Clay Figurines

The miniature, or the idea of reproducing every subject of the imagination on a miniature scale, seems to be an ahistorical characteristic of perception,[50] which in the Near Eastern visual cultures becomes a tactile experience.[51] In this specific sense the Ebla clay figurines represent an extraordinary corpus,[52] since they can be studied as a contextual urban system of artefacts closely related both chronologically and culturally to the Mesopotamian psychical and technological milieu.[53] In the ancient myths of the Near East, clay is the matter, the matrix, and, at the same time, the body of the shape, as we say, the figure and substance of nature. Clay provides the possibility of replicating the one in the many, the copy and its twins, the unique and the diverse. Nevertheless, when we pass from this metaphor that lives in mythopoietic thought[54] and organizes the daily life of ancient people[55] to consider the physical properties of the clay, our attention is captured by its plastic essence, and we see the infinite forms that every lump of earth can take. It is as if the earth clod gave the hands also the capability of creation, modeling, and replication.[56] Starting from the Samarra, Halaf, and Ubaid periods, the additional elements that were molded, painted, impressed, and incised into the clay surfaces are the essence of the figure. These function as ideograms adapted to a model that seems standardized. These applications, impressions, and incisions are so typical of the Sumerian image perception and cognition that observing one single part both of the miniature composite statues and clay figurines of the Uruk period, it is possible to reconstruct the semantic unity of the subjects (*pars pro toto*): the wheel of a ceremonial wagon, the instrument of a musician, the representative standard, the sex of the man and the woman, the human or deity's headgear, and so on. The impact of the agricultural revolution on the times and modes of the mass production of the clay figurines should not be forgotten or neglected.[57] However, the "symbolic revolution" behind these images seems to be extended to such a large geographical area that it is inappropriate to suggest an historical and cultural epicenter for human clay reproduction as an aesthetic aptitude,[58] the aptitude to organize shapes by integrating and aggregating elements as intelligible signs. At the same time, the high variability of attributes and subjects represented renders questionable the hypothesis that most of the ancient clay figurines were related to the first administrative processes[59] or dedicated to the mother goddess, to the fecundity of nature, and inspired by the family nucleus, intended as a microcosm of the whole society.[60] If this were the case, why the high frequency of clay figurines in pre-urban, archeological contexts and in the semi-nomadic, nomadic, and other scattered modern ethnographic groups? Why also the clay imitation of games, furnishings, hybrids, omens, and, more generally, many subjects and objects that frequently fall outside the control of our classification categories? In these reproductions an inner geometry is continuously translated, but into different shapes; the clothes are diversified but not exclusive; the roles are alluded to but not the hierarchy; the sexual attributes are almost always emphasized, but not the sexuality.[61] Moreover, the use of agglutination and incision of signs on standard clay models was the most useful, technical, and cognitive way to record action and desire on more profound, consolidated images of authority and institutions and to transfer these consolidated images to a living communication system.[62] Starting from the clay *replica* of the human world, the silent or non-verbal miniature replica of physical and metaphysical beings, it also will be possible to distinguish a figurative world from a non-figurative world, to reduce the world to a manual scale, and to make the hands' action on the clay an extension of human effectiveness on the present, on the past, and on the future, avoiding any written "dramatic" distinction between peoples and authority. In fact, in the ancient Near East we can identify historically what we call *image*[63] in our western culture many centuries later, probably reaching back to the Old Akkadian period when the word *salmụ* translated

from the Sumerian term ALAM denotes indifferently the representations of gods, kings, and human beings, as well as demons.[64] Since we considered the concept of "clay as matter creation" a human cognitive code for the reproduction and imitation of the human world, our proposal has been to verify how and where reproduction as creation began the *mimesis* of the physical and metaphysical worlds, first in Mesopotamia and later in Syria. In fact, between *creation* and *mimesis* is located the space of a rapid aesthetic transformation of these cultures and their communication systems.

Notes

[1] The ARCHEOSEMA project (Geographic Information Systems and Artificial Adaptive Systems for the analysis of Complex Phenomena) of La Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Antiquities (Ramazzotti 2012c, pp. 6–10) gave me the financial support and the epistemological occasion to participate at the San Francisco workshop "Figuring Out: The Figurines of The Ancient Near East" organized by Stephanie Langin-Hooper (Ramazzotti 2012c, pp. 6–10; Ramazzotti, forthcoming c). This interdisciplinary workshop provided me with the opportunity to present a preliminary synthesis on Early Syrian (Early Bronze) and Old Syrian (Middle Bronze) clay figurines from Ebla-Tell Mardikh (Northern Syria), bringing together different ideas, concepts and materials that I began to collect after the interdisciplinary congress *Argilla. Storie di Terra Cruda* organized by me and by Giovanni Greco in Rome (25–26 May 2007: Ramazzotti – Greco 2011). For these reasons, I would like to thank Paolo Matthiae, Director of the Ebla Archaeological Mission for giving me the precious opportunity of studying these mostly unedited objects coming from the Ebla archaeological excavations; Armando Montanari, geographer of La Sapienza University of Rome, for his continuous support; Maria Laura Santarelli, engineer of La Sapienza University of Rome and coordinator of CISTEC (Laboratory of La Sapienza for materials and buildings techniques) for the chemical-physical analysis of the Ebla mud and clay world and Luca Deravignone and Irene Viaggiu, members of 'Archeosema Archaeological Group' for the geographical formalization and the spatial analysis on the Ebla Coroplastic Corpus (ECC) and, of course, Stephanie Langin-Hooper for inviting me to participate at this stimulating scientific and interdisciplinary workshop.

[2] In terms of absolute chronology, according to the so-called conventional Middle Chronology, the conquest of the first Ebla at the end of Early Bronze IV and the high Early Syrian period took place around 2300 B.C., while at the end of Early Bronze IVB and the late Early Syrian period, the destruction of the second Ebla should date from the years around 2000 B.C. The destruction of the third Ebla resulted in a catastrophic end of the urban life of the settlement in the final years of Middle Bronze II at the end of the classic Old Syrian period (Matthiae 1995, pp. 13–135). This probably took place immediately before the fall of Babylon in 1595 B.C., which meant the end of the Old Babylonian period in Southern Mesopotamia (Matthiae 2009, pp. 165–205, p. 165, footnote 3).

[3] See Ramazzotti 2003, pp. 15–71; Ramazzotti 2009a, pp. 193–202.

[4] See Ramazzotti 2011c, pp. 16–19. The problem of the identification of imported images could partially be solved with the chemical–physical analysis of the figurine's clay to determine its provenience; in any case the local imitation of foreign figurative models was also part of Ebla's aesthetic culture, deeply related to the lexical and conceptual translation of Sumerian and Early Dynastic written and visual documents. Ramazzotti 2010b, pp. 309–326; Ramazzotti 2013, pp. 161–216.

[5] Therefore, the plastic mold of "matter creation" began to copy the observed reality that the producer, free from the constraints and suggestions of customers, imagined in the clay. From our contemporary point of view, so deeply immersed in virtual communication, in the landscape of what is potential in nature, and in a world still oriented by the mass media, this miniature world, a tactile link between reality and imagination, appears far away and pervaded by abstractions and incongruities. However its ideographic character, its metamorphic physical structure and its 'genetic' hybridism reveals a tactile (and to us anachronistic) continuity between the similar and diverse, life and death, present and past. Ramazzotti 2011d, pp. 9–20; Ramazzotti 2012b, pp. 346–375; Ramazzotti 2013, pp. 48-69.

[6] We can suppose for this production not only faster, and almost industrial, firing methods that reduced the quality of the products, but also the influence of a specific role probably related to some pervasive religious cults, such as the Ishtar cult was at Ebla and Hadad at Aleppo. See Matthiae 2003b, pp. 381–402.

[7] The Early Syrian clay figurine typology has been proposed for Hama J: 1–6 (Fugmann 1958; Badre 1980, pp. 180), for the Orontes area (Badre 1980, pp. 52–54), for Tell Afis (Scandone Matthiae 1998, pp. 385–414; Scandone Matthiae 2002, pp. 16–18), for Umm el Marra (Petty 2007) for Tell Halawa and Tell Chuera (Meyer 2008, pp. 349–363), for Selenkahiye (Liebowitz 1988), for Tell Mumbaka-Ekalte (Czichon and Werner 1998), for Tell es-Sweyhat (Holland

1976, pp. 36–60), for Habuba Kebira (Heinrich et al 1970, pp. 27–85). The Ebla clay figurines were only preliminarily analyzed by Marchetti 2001, pp. 27–32; 62–64; 85–87 and Peyronel 2008, pp. 787–806.

[8] For the hybrid clay figurines dated to the Halaf and Ubaid period see Breniquet 2001, pp. 45–55.

[9] For the naturalistic clay representation in miniature scale of the Uruk period from Warka see Ziegler 1962; Wrede 1990, pp. 215–301; Wrede 1991; Wrede 2003.

[10] On the political and economic character of the 'Second Urban Revolution' in northern Mesopotamia see Ramazzotti 2002, pp. 651–752; Ramazzotti 2003, pp. 15–71; Ramazzotti 2009a, pp. 193–202.

[11] For the relative chronology of the Old Syrian Period based on historical, cultural and material cultural data see Nigro 2002b, pp. 297–328; Matthiae 2006c, pp. 39–51; Marchetti 2007, pp. 247–253; Matthiae 2007, pp. 6–33; Pinnock 2007, pp. 457–472.

[12] Marchetti 2000a, pp. 839–867; Marchetti 2000b, pp. 117–132; Marchetti 2001; Marchetti 2003, pp. 390–420; Marchetti 2007, pp. 247–283; Marchetti 2009, pp. 279–296; Di Michele 2010, pp. 145–154.

[13] Moreover during the Old Syrian period the human figurines are fashioned on standard schemes underlining their measures, proportions and sometimes social roles. Matthiae 1965, pp. 81–103; Baffi 1979, pp. 9–18; Marchetti 2000a, pp. 839–867; Marchetti 2000b, pp. 17–132; Marchetti 2001; Marchetti 2007, pp. 247–283.

[14] Ramazzotti 2009b, pp. 54–65; Ramazzotti 2011b, pp. 341–375.

[15] Dolce 1999, pp. 293–304; Dolce 2001, pp. 11–28; Archi aned Biga 2003, pp. 1–44.

[16] Some figurines dated to the Early Bronze IVB period were discovered in Area T (Matthiae 1993) and in the so–called Phase I of the Archaic Palace (Matthiae 2006a); recently some painted animals and human clay figurines were found in the Area HH where the 'Temple of the Rock' is located (Matthiae 2006b, pp. 447–493; Ramazzotti 2009, pp. 12–15). For some chronological aspects related to the EBIVB–MB transition at Ebla see Dolce 2008, pp. 171–194; Matthiae 2008, pp. 5–32.

[17] Like the so-called "undressed goddess", the "nude goddess with hands on her breasts" or the "doves of the goddess" closely related to the popular, rather than official, Old Babylonian and Old Syrian religious tradition. Pinnock 2000, pp. 127–134.

[18] Matthiae 2001, pp. 272–281.

[19] The case of the Early Dynastic, Early Syrian and then Old Babylonian, Old Syrian, and Middle Elamite wagons is typical; they are mobile, multi–sensory miniatures with tactile, visual, and sometimes olfactory functions. Each mechanism is activated by humans and is built as a harmonic integration of single parts (wheels, hubs, bodies, ropes). The parts are decorated with specific attributes (incised, applied. and integrated), which exhibit the complexity of a unitary project, or of a copy or simulation. A project that was probably planned in order to emulate, to memorize. or to reproduce ceremonial processions, on a different scale and in a different space–time dimension, like the ceremony attested in the L. 2769 Archive at Ebla, where the couple of divine, formally-dressed statues of Kura and Barama were certainly borne on a chariot drawn by oxen during the royal ritual. Matthiae 2007, pp. 270–311.

[20] Like the 2nd millennium Ishtar rite of Mari, where the hierarchical positions of the precious statues of deities were probably fixed in order to be seen. Following an Early Dynastic tradition from the Early Syrian period, many cult objects were transported inside chapels (DAGx) according to Biga (Biga 2006, pp.19–39), or sacred niches, such as the Ishkara image that we recently supposed was originally located in the painted niche of Building FF2 (Ramazzotti and Di Ludovico 2011, pp. 66–80; 2012, pp. 287–302); otherwise, in the contemporary Mesopotamian tradition these images of gods were set "upon" a seat in a temple so their surfaces could reflect (more than absorb) the light to render the physical emanation of the Sumerian (ME-LAM2) and Akkadian (*melammu*) as a sort of 'aura' according to Winter 1994, pp. 123–132.

[21] Ramazzotti 2011c, pp. 16–19.

[22] For a detailed analysis of this turtle discovered at Ebla see Marchetti 2009, pp. 275–296.

[23] The interpretation of the ancient Near East clay figurines is strictly related to the very different 'anthropomorphic' methods used for their classification see Van Buren 1931; Ucko 1962, pp. 38–54; Ellis 1967, pp. 51–61; Klengel and

Brandt 1967, pp. 19–28; Barrelet 1968; Hrouda, Braun, Holzinger 1981, pp. 61–67; Green 1983, pp. 87–96; Pinch 1983, pp. 405–414; Reiner 1988; Gimbutas 1989; Wiggerman 1986; 1992; Sycket 1992b, pp. 183–196; Pinch 1993; Brentijes 1994, pp. 15–18; Klengel and Brandt 1995, pp. 114–118; Ucko 1996, pp. 300–304; Tringham and Conkey 1998; Braun and Holzinger 1999, pp. 149–172; Pruß 2000, pp. 51–63; Pruß and Novák 2000, pp. 84–195; Malul 2001, pp. 353–367; Assante 2002, pp. 1–29; Nigro 2002a, pp. 1–11; King and Underhill 2002, pp. 707–714; Reade 2002, pp. 174–164; Martinez and Séve 2003, pp. 48–59; Marchetti 2003, pp. 247–283; Nakamura 2004, pp. 11–25; Moorey 2005; Kuijt and Chesson 2005, pp. 152–174; Meyer 2008, pp. 349–363; Abusch 2008, pp. 373–385; Waraksa 2008; Marchetti 2009, pp. 279–296; Pinch 2009; Waraksa 2009; Paradiso and Colantoni 2010, pp. 323–330; Ramazzotti, Deravignone,Viaggiu, forthcoming; Ramazzotti, forthcoming a; Ramazzotti, forthcoming d; Ramazzotti 2013, pp. 31-69.

[24] See Meyer 2008, pp. 349–363.

[25] See Marchetti and Nigro 1997, pp. 1–44; Marchetti and Nigro 2000, pp. 245–287.

[26] Marchetti 2009, pp. 279–296.

[27] Many inductions of cult images and “many rituals of constitution and installation” were attested in Mesopotamia from the end of the third Millennium, and a special verb meaning ‘to give birth’ (sum. *tud*; akk. *waladu*) is used for the creation of statues, rather than the verb ‘to make’ (DIM_2). see Walker and Dick 1999, pp. 55–122; Winter 2000a, pp. 129–162.

[28] Ramazzotti 2008a, pp. 191–205; 2009c, pp. 12–15; 2010, pp. 581–597.

[29] Peyronel 2008, pp. 787–806.

[30] Matthiae 2006b, pp. 447–493.

[31] We can consider the documented existence of some institutional rituals as official occasions also to realize clay reproductions. Examples are the monkey sacrifice at Mari and the equids sacrifice at Umm al-Marra. On the particular importance of equids in Syria during the Early Bronze Age Period see Biga 2007, pp. 125–151; for the supposed equids ritual dated to the Early Bronze Age period see Schwartz 2006, pp. 603–641; Schwartz 2007, pp. 39–68.

[32] Common everywhere as ‘*Volksgeister*’ media of an inner communication inspired and supplied by the people’s “common sense,” sometimes intimate without explicit ideological constraints of the authorities, other times the quite instinctive reproduction of the real world as mysterious requests or questions for the venerated deities. For the archaeological context and the interpretation of the unbaked clay figurines discovered in the Favissa P. 9301 of Temple HH2 related to the Middle Bronze Age see Lisella 2010, pp. 821–836.

[33] Two MSAE (Materiali e Studi di Archeologia Eblaita) volumes related to about 4,500 fragments of Old Syrian Period clay figurines discovered at Ebla from 1981 to 2001 (a corpus that follows Marchetti’s publication on the clay figurines discovered at Ebla between 1964 and 1980) is in preparation by the author (Ramazzotti, forthcoming b).

[34] The Apsû is usually intended as the ‘Primeval Ocean’ (Green 1978, pp. 127–167; Sjöberg 1994, pp. 202; Horowitz 1998, pp. 335) sustaining the Earthly and Kingship order (Ramazzotti 2009b, pp. 54–59), although the etymology of the word is still uncertain (Lambert 1997, pp. 75–77)

[35] The clay of the Apsû is plastic since the primeval ocean waters give the earth plasticity and therefore different images and shapes can be molded. In this specific character of the Apsû we should understand the epithet *Nu.dím.mud* (image fashioner, god of shaping) and this attribute gave Enki the protection of artisans and craftsmen. See Jacobsen 1971, pp. 111; Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998–2001, pp. 607.

[36] We cannot exclude a particular version of the myth centered on the spontaneous birth of man from the Earth; in a second moment Enlil “broke through the cast of the earth with his newly created pickaxe so that the first man developed below could ‘sprout forth.’” Kramer 1974, p. 5.

[37] See Kramer 1970, pp. 103–110; Kramer and Maier 1989, pp. 3–10; Cooper 1989, pp. 87–89; Black and Green 1992, pp. 75–76; Farber-Flügge 1995, pp. 287–292; Hallo 1996, pp. 231–234; Espak 2006.

[38] The first attempt by Enki to create mankind produces a visibly defective humanity of imperfect creatures; but the God will assign them a specific destiny (ME) and these ME will be existential archetypes of the human being. See

Castellino 1959, pp. 25–32; Oberhuber 1963, pp. 3–16; Farber-Flügge 1973; Matthiae 1984, pp. 7–37.

[39]Cooper 1983.

[40] Lambert and Millard 1999; Wilcke 1999, pp. 63–112.

[41] Maul 2000, pp. 23–34.

[42] Strouhal 1973; Ferembach 1977, pp. 179–181; Bienert 1991, pp. 9–23; Ramazzotti 2003, pp. 444–448; Ramazzotti 2012b, pp. 346–375.

[43] Rollefson 1986, pp. 45–52.

[44] Statues were also the object of recurrent renewal rites, such as the annual replacement of the silver mask that covered the statue of Kura at Ebla during the Early Syrian period. See, pp. Archi 2005, pp. 81–100; Archi 2010, pp. 3–17.

[45] Ramazzotti 2010b, pp. 309–326.

[46] Breniquet 2001, pp. 45–55.

[47] "The driving emotion in the making of these images was fear of bodily harm and an effort to find protection through the representation of the relevant superhuman figure." Porada 1995a, p. 10.

[48] On the figurative and cognitive relationship between the Mesopotamian Ubaid snake-headed human figurine and Old Syrian clay figurines from Ebla see Ramazzotti 2011, pp. 345–376.

[49] On the ideological relationship between the kingships of Ur and Ebla see Ramazzotti 2012b, pp. 346–375.

[50] For the logic of perception see Damerow 1996; Damerow 1998, pp. 247–269.

[51] Bailey 2005; Bailey, Cocjrane,Zambelli 2010; Ramazzotti and Greco 2011.

[52] The catalogues of the ancient Near East clay figurines from Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt: Heuzey 1882; Legrain 1930; van Buren 1930; Opificius 1961; Ziegler 1962; Ucko 1968; Klengel-Brandt 1978; Littauer and Crowel 1979; Badre 1980; Wrede 1990, pp. 215–301; Wrede 1991, pp. 151–177; Pruß 1996; Spycket 1992a; Auerbach 1994; D'Amore 1998, pp. 75–98; Marchetti 2001; Moorey 2005; Teeter 2010; Pinnock 2011.

[53] Matthiae 1965, pp. 81–103; Baffi 1979, pp. 9–18; Marchetti 2000a, pp. 839–867; Pinnock 2000, pp. 127–134; Matthiae 2001, pp. 272–281; Marchetti 2009, pp. 279–296; Lisella 2010, pp. 821–836; Paradiso and Colantoni 2010, pp. 323–330.

[54] On the literary, aesthetic, and cognitive concept of the "thought that creates myths" see Frankfort 1948; Frankfort 1950; Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951; Jacobsen 1971; Frankfort 1992a, pp. 3–21; Frankfort 1992b, pp. 47–69; Frankfort et al 1946; 1949; Matthiae 1984; Matthiae 2003a, pp. 3–14. On the religious, cosmological, and literary texts related to the "thought that creates myths" in ancient Mesopotamia see Kramer 1964, pp. 149–142; Kramer 1972; Jacobsen 1976; Lambert 1975, pp. 42–65; Bottéro and Kramer 1992; Foster 1993; Lambert 1995, pp. 1825–1835; Black et al 2004.

[55] The historical reconstruction of the so-called "thought of the people" from the ancient Near Eastern archaeological documents is, of course, both a political and technical problem. I am convinced that the clay figurines will constitute an important set of data on which to build a "common sense" interpretation of propaganda and reduce historical reconstruction exclusively linked to the rhetoric of the ancient kingships. Here the use of "people" as an ambitious and complex heuristic category is acknowledged by Samuel Noah Kramer's (Kramer 1964) and Peter Roger Stuart Moorey's (Moorey 2003) pioneer works that philologically and archaeologically explored the natural limits of the textual, material, and aesthetic data.

[56] In this ancient repetition of manual creation and in its organization, some art historians have seen "La Vie des formes." On the other hand, cultures have always been considered more material the more they are tied to the Earth, and the more they are able to touch and model the earth. Material, in any case, is an ambiguous word, difficult to understand outside its human historiography. Ramazzotti 2010a, pp. 50–87.

[57] Cauvin 1994, Cauvin 2000.

[58] For the specific character of this 'aesthetic aptitude' in the southeastern European Neolithic see Bailey 2005.

[59] In particular see Schmandt-Besserat 1992, 1996.

[60] In particular see Gimbutas 1982, 1989, 1991. For a different model and quite opposite views see Ucko 1968, where the cultic role of the mother-goddess has been strongly criticized.

[61] On a more specific "gender approach" to the Near East clay figurines see Assante 2006, pp. 183; Pruß 2002, pp. 537–545; McCaffrey 2002, pp. 379–391; Garcia-Ventura and López-Bertran 2010, pp. 739–749.

[62] On this specific cognitive character of the ancient Mesopotamian figurative system see Ramazzotti 2010b, pp. 309–326; Ramazzotti, forthcoming a.

[63] On the ancient visual communication systems in the Babylonian cultures see Jacobsen 1987, pp. 1–11; Cooper 1990, pp. 109–116; Michalowski 1990, pp. 53–69; Winter 1995, pp. 2569–2580; Postgate 1994, pp. 176–184; Frankfort 1992b, pp. 47–69; Porada 1995b, pp. 2695–2714; Amiet 1997, pp. 321–337; Walken-Dijk 1999, pp. 55–122; Winter 2002, pp. 3–28; Bahrani 2002, pp. 15–22; Winter 2003, pp. 403–421; Bahrani 2003; Ramazzotti 2005, pp. 511–565; Winter 2007, pp. 117–142; Matthiae 2007, pp. 270–311; Ramazzotti 2007, pp. 7–20; Bahrani 2008, pp. 155–170; Ramazzotti 2011a, pp. 19–37; Ramazzotti 2013, pp.161-216.

[64] This will be the only definition both for the statues and for the stelae (sum. NA-RÚ-A; akk. from Sumerian loan: narû). For the stelae concept in the Ebla documents see Archi 1998, pp. 5–24.

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Marco Ramazzotti
Sapienza Università di Roma
marco.ramazzotti@uniroma1.it

Association for Coroplastic Studies 2014

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The Association for Coroplastic Studies (ACoST) grew out of the Coroplastic Studies Interest Group (CSIG). Originally organized in 2007 as an Interest Group of the Archaeological Institute of America, the CSIG took its name from the word *koroplastes,* which in Greek antiquity was the term used for a modeler of images in clay. In view of the broad international membership that comprised the CSIG by 2012 and its over 200 members it was decided to separate from the Archaeological Institute of America and become an independant entity. Elections for officers and an Executive Board were held in 2012 and, after considerable deliberation, the name Association for Coroplastic Studies (ACoST) was adopted. ACoST members have organized conference sessions, conferences, symposia, colloquia, and a summer school on coroplastic studies, all focusing on coroplastic research. Currently, in 2014, 250 members from 21 countries around the world are conducting research on archaeological, historical, sociological, medical, religious, technical, and/or art historical issues pertaining to sculptural objects in made in clay.

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