

SBL 2013 Baltimore, November 23-26

Program unit: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Bible

Special sessions on Iron Age terracotta figurines from the Levant

Program Unit Chairs: Izaak J. de Hulster (Göttingen), Joel M. LeMon (Atlanta)

Steering Committee: Regine Hunziker-Rodewald (Strasbourg), Rüdiger Schmitt (Münster), Thomas Staubli (Fribourg), Brent Strawn (Atlanta)

Description: We convene a special session (covering two time-slots) on the topic of terracotta figurines attested in the Southern Levant and dating back to the Iron Age (1200-333 BCE). Issues of iconography, typology, and meaning (identification and use) will be addressed. Thus, the session deals with female, male, animal, and furniture figurines, and with production, appearance, find contexts, and purposes / practices of terracotta figurines. While giving priority to figurines originating from Phoenicia, Philistia, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine, the impact and influences from Egypt, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean (in particular Cyprus) on Levantine pictorial material will also be referred to. For comparative purposes, not only figurines from other regions, but also other relevant materials and objects will be included. This special session presents interdisciplinary research by speakers combining insights and methods from the fields of Archaeology, Art History, Ancient Near Eastern Culture and Religion, and Old Testament Studies. All speakers and respondents for this double session are invited.

Session I

- Chair: Regine Hunziker-Rodewald (Université de Strasbourg)
- 1st paper (20 min): Izaak de Hulster (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), 'Iron Age terracotta figurines from the Levant: a comparative and iconographic perspective'
- Abstract: This paper provides a brief, dictionary-entry like, introduction to figurines and thus introduces the special session and its goals. Based on this, it further provides a succinct outline of the comparative method, and it addresses the importance of iconography.
- 2nd paper (20 min): Rüdiger Schmitt (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster), 'The Function of terracotta miniature Furniture in Iron Age II Israel'
- Abstract: Model chairs and model beds are often found in domestic and burial contexts, but also in purported cultic assemblages such as Jerusalem Cave 1 and Samaria Locus E 207. Though less numerous than the JPFs, model furniture comprises a distinct component within the corpus of Judean figurines of the Iron Age II period. In several cases from Beersheba and Tel en-Nasbeh model

furniture was found together with JPFs in domestic contexts, but these did not generally comprise pairs. Model furniture from the Late Bronze and Iron Ages was also found in the Levant and in Mesopotamia. Mesopotamian bed models from the 3rd and 2nd millennia found in domestic units, temples, and palaces were used as votives in the contexts of general fertility and associated rituals while the throne models may plausibly be interpreted to represent deities. Although these items from Iron Age Judah are obviously non-utilitarian objects, their function and meaning remains uncertain. The paper tries to solve the problem by looking into the archaeological contexts, where model furniture was mostly found side-to-side with other types of votive objects, like human and animal figurines utilized in domestic votive practices. Thus, the paper presumes that the furniture epitomized the preoccupations of the family, as furniture represents a particular class of valuable goods, both desirable for a family to own, and prestigious to have.

response to papers 1 and 2 (10 min):

Annie Caubet (Louvre, Paris / Metropolitan Museum, New York)

discussion (10 min)

3rd paper (20 min): Astrid Nunn (Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg), 'Figurines from Iron Age II Phoenicia'

Abstract: This paper presents Iron Age II anthropomorphic terracotta figurines found in Phoenicia and briefly discusses their iconography and distribution. Second, this paper aims to distinguish the Iron Age II terracotta figurines from the older Iron Age I types and the younger Achaemenid ones.

4th paper (20 min): Michael D. Press (University of Arkansas, Fayetteville), 'Continuity and Change in Philistine Figurines'

Abstract: The Philistines are widely seen as an immigrant population that underwent processes of acculturation (or "hybridization") over the course of the Iron Age – adopting various cultural ideas from neighboring Levantine groups while maintaining a separate identity. These processes are clearly reflected in the figurine assemblage of Iron Age Philistia. In the Iron Age I, the Philistine corpus is markedly distinct from that of other Levantine regions, instead showing close relationships with Aegean and Cypriot figurines. Starting in the later Iron I, however, these types develop away from their Mycenaean models and display more traditional Levantine elements, a process that continues through the rest of the Iron Age. This paper will begin by surveying the major types of Iron Age Philistine figurines, and then focus on a few Iron II types in order to examine how the Philistines incorporated and adapted foreign coroplastic elements in their repertoire. Key to the paper is a comparative perspective, considering Philistine figurines in their wider Levantine and Eastern Mediterranean context, through investigation of elements such as iconography, production techniques, and find contexts.

response to papers 3 and 4 (10 min):

Elizabeth Bloch-Smith (St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia)

discussion (10 min)

Session II

Chair: Izaak de Hulster (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

1st paper (20 min): Erin D. Darby (University of Tennessee, Knoxville), 'Sex in the City?: Judean Pillar Figurines and the Archaeology of Jerusalem'

Abstract: Most treatments of Judean Pillar Figurines (JPFs) apply one interpretation to the entire corpus, without considering the variety of archaeological contexts and individual sites where the figurines are found. Moreover, such interpretations tend to associate figurine meaning/function with human sexuality or the products thereof, i.e. coitus, conception, birth, and child mortality. At the same time, the connection between the various archaeological contexts of figurines and these types of interpretations remain tenuous at best. Thus, the most oft-repeated positions are also those with the least amount of archaeological confirmation.

In an attempt to model a site-specific archaeological approach to JPFs this paper uses archaeological data from Jerusalem to test dominant hypotheses and to suggest a more nuanced approach to figurine ritual in the Judean capital. The data from Jerusalem is ripe for such analysis, given the large numbers of figurines from the city, the quality of recent archaeological publications, and the centrality of Jerusalem in the eighth through sixth centuries, B.C.E. To that end, the paper begins by briefly summarizing the most common interpretations applied to the JPFs. It then explores various aspects of Jerusalem archaeology, including architectural context, archaeological assemblage, and petrographic data, to test the validity of current interpretations. The paper proceeds to outline those aspects of figurine production and use that might be unique to the Jerusalem area and closes by emphasizing the importance of site-specific archaeological context in interpreting the function and status of JPFs.

2nd paper (20 min): Robert Deutsch (Tel Aviv University), 'The Iconography of the Judean Pillar Figurines '

Abstract: Judean pillar figurines were first recorded in the 19th century and since then they are frequently found at almost all Iron Age II sites in Judea. They were the subject of many papers and monographs. The most comprehensive essay has been submitted by Raz Kletter in 1995 as a PhD dissertation (in Hebrew) to the Tel Aviv University and a year later, the revised monograph has been published in English by the BAR International Series. Today, 150 years later, many questions regarding their representation and function are still enigmatic. The present paper will deal with style and iconography used by the artists and new suggestions will be offered.

response to papers 1 and 2 (10 min):

Beth A. Nakhai (University of Arizona, Tucson)

discussion (10 min)

3rd paper (20 min): Regine Hunziker-Rodewald (Université de Strasbourg), 'Female terracotta figurines in Jordan: Molds and mold-links'
Abstract: Within the corpus of Iron Age female terracotta figurines originating from Jordan, several clay molds for female heads / figurines have been found, as have several pairs of identical heads; these doublets demonstrate that the same mold was used more than once. The multiple use of molds has been attested so far exclusively in the Jordan Valley, yet these finds nevertheless raise larger issues of molding techniques, workshop fabrication, and the figurines' diffusion.

4th paper (20 min): Michèle Daviau (Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo) and Emily Zeran (University of Toronto), 'Astarte's horse and the zoomorphic figurines from Khirbat al-Mudayna'
Abstract: The past 20 years of excavation in northern Moab have opened a window on the religious practices of the Iron Age peoples of central Jordan. The discovery of two temple buildings, one at Khirbat al-Mudayna on the northern rim of the Dhiban plateau and the other at Atarus yielded two very distinct assemblages of cultic paraphernalia. A third repertoire in the form of dozens of female and male figurines and ceramic statues at WT-13, a shrine site 3 km west of Khirbat al-Mudayna, has links to sites in the Negev and Arabah, but tells us little about the deities worshiped by the devotees who visited the site. This paper will investigate the symbolism of a horse and rider depicted on an ivory scarab and the large number of horse figurines found at Khirbat al-Mudayna as evidence for the worship of Astarte in central Jordan.

response to papers 3 and 4 (10 min):

Christopher Tuttle (ACOR Amman)

discussion (10 min)

Transmitted to ACOST by Regine Hunziker-Rodewald, director of the
Franco-German Figurines Project FGFP (2012-2015)
Hunziker-Rodewald/Nunn/Graichen



IA II figurine head from Tall al-Mazar
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The IA female terracotta figurines from Jordan: catalogue, typology, interpretation