

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE SEATED MALE TERRACOTTA FIGURINE

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A seated male terracotta figurine was discovered at Achziv during the 2004 excavation led by Eilat Mazar. The figurine was found in the Northern Cemetery in a large pit (L04-11, fig. 60) that disturbed earlier strata in which cremation burials were included. The date that this pit was dug is unknown and it is therefore necessary to rely on style and technique in order to determine the period in which the figurine can be attributed to.

DESCRIPTION

The figurine is about 15 cm long (however the bottom part of it is missing) and was made from beige (light orange-pink) clay. In terms of technique, the figurine is hollow and was made in a single mould. This means that only the front side of the figurine was made in a mould, while the back side was closed by smoothing down a strip of clay. The figurine depicts a man with a long pointed beard, sitting on a chair; however, the chair was broken off. He is wearing a tall knobbed hat of Egyptian style which is known as an Osiris type headdress or an *atef*-crown. The tall knobbed mitre is flanked on both sides by cylindrical protrusions which can be identified as the atef feathers that appear on both sides of the Osiris type headdress. He is wearing a long heavy cloak and his left hand is resting on his lap. His right arm, much of his back, and the lower part of his legs are missing, however there are finger like protrusions below his beard that were probably part of his right hand that broke off. It is likely that his right hand was originally grasping his beard. A small part of his nose and the area extending from his nose to the top part of his beard has been chipped off. His facial features are not clearly discernible which may indicate that the features were originally painted rather than formed in the clay and that the paint was not preserved. It is also possible that this was simply the style in which the figurine was manufactured or that the figurine corroded over time.

TYOLOGY

A seated man of patriarchal appearance who is stroking or clasping his beard is a very common type of figurine dating to the Persian period found at sites along the Phoenician-Palestinian coast (Stern, E. 2001 p. 492-493). We have identified our figurine as belonging to this group. In most cases, these figurines have a moustache (Yoon, K.Y. 2009 p. 58); however, the chipped off area by his mouth combined with the poorly defined features of his face makes it difficult to discern whether our figurine has a moustache or not.

The seated bearded male can be broken down into two subgroups which Gubel has dubbed the «Egyptianizing» type and the «Oriental» type (Gubel 1987 p. 90). Our figurine belongs to the «Egyptianizing» type which shows the seated bearded man wearing the *atef*-crown of Osiris (for examples see Gubel 1987: pl. XVI-38 and pl. XVII-42; Stern 2001, p.494; Avigad 1960, pl.10-A; Chehab 1953-54, pl. VII-4-6; Kaoukabani 1973, pl. X-4, Negbi 1966, pl. XI-

67; and Bliss 1899 p.328). The «Oriental» type portrays the seated bearded man wearing a round flat headdress (for examples see Negbi 1966, pl. XI-65; Avigad 1960, pl.10-B; and Stern 1982 p. 50, pl. I-1) (Stern 2001 p. 492).

The «Egyptianizing» type of bearded figurines portrays elongated faces and long beards. They wear long cloaks or robes which are generally homogenous with each other and, like on our figurine, their facial features are not clearly observable. As mentioned, they all wear the Osiris type headdress; however, slight variations are discernible in their shapes (Yoon, K.Y. 2009 p. 58). I would like to point out that calling these figurines the «Egyptianizing» type may be misleading. It is true that the headdress is Egyptian, however the long beard is Neo-Babylonian, and the heavy cloak is Persian (Kaoukabani 1973 p.48).

PARALLELS

Figurines of both of these types have been found at many sites along the Phoenician coast and it is likely that they are Phoenician creations (Stern, E. 2001 p.493). For the purpose of this discussion, I will focus on the «Egyptianizing» type. This type of figurine has been found at sites such as Makmish, es Safi, Achziv, Karayeb, and Tel Sippur.

Achziv

It is quite interesting that two other seated bearded male figurines similar to ours were discovered at Achziv. This came as a surprise to us since they were not discovered during excavations carried out at Achziv. They were acquired by the Louvre Museum in 1889 in a context that is unknown to us. The first one is a bearded male dressed in an ankle length garment. He is seated on a high-backed chair and grabs his beard with his right hand, while his left hand rests on his knee (Gubel 1987 p.86, pl.XVI-38, Louvre AO 1842). He is wearing the Osiris headdress and his features are not distinguishable. He appears remarkably similar to our figurine. The second figurine appears much the same way as the first one, the only differences being that the features of his face are much more distinguishable, the hand grasping his beard is more defined, and the feathers on his *atef*-crown are clearly indicated. It is also possible that there are traces of black paint (Gubel 1987 p. 101, pl.XVII-42, Louvre AO 1844).

Makmish

A hoard of figurines and statuettes were found among the remains of a sanctuary at Makmish. Avigad dated the hoard to the 5th-4th centuries BCE (Avigad 1960 p.92). Several examples of both types of bearded male figurines were found at the site. The figurine that appears most similar to ours wears an Osiris headdress, fondles his long beard with his right hand, his left hand resting on his knee (ibid, pl. 10-A). Avigad maintains that the site was occupied by a Phoenician colony during the Persian period and that the figurines found in the hoard were votive in nature. He believes that the sanctuary in which the figurines were found was dedicated as a fertility cult (ibid, p.93, 95, 96).

Kharayeb

Four figurines from Kharayeb parallel our figurine. They were discovered in and around the courtyard of a temple as well as within a pit in the temple precinct (Yoon, K.Y. 2009, p. 59). One of them was dated to the beginning of the Hellenistic period (Chehab 1953-54 pl. VII-4), two were dated to the Ptolemaic period/beginning of the Hellenistic period (Chehab 1953-54 pl. VII-5-6), and one was dated to the pre-Ptolemaic period (Kaoukabani 1973, pl. X-4) (Yoon, K.Y. 2009, p. 59). All of these figurines are hollow, but unlike our figurine, they were most likely made in double molds. Two of the figurines (Chehab 1953-54 pl. VII-4-5) show the bearded male grasping his beard with his left hand instead of his right hand, which is also dissimilar to our figurine. Chehab believes that the Osiris type figurine may represent the god Melquart but more probably represents a father-god that was associated to Osiris (ibid, 1951-52 p.129). Kaoukabani believes that these figurines are related to fertility worship associated with the Osiris-Isis cycle (Kaoukabani 1973 p.56).

Safi

Bliss and Macalister excavated Tel es-Safi in 1899. Their publications did not expand upon the context of the figurines found at the site although it seems that they were discovered in a pit (Avissar, Uziel, and Maeir 2007, p. 71). Two of the figurines resemble our figurine, although one of them seems to have been produced in a more schematic fashion and only the top part has been preserved. They wear the Osirian headdress, have long beards and are grasping the beards with their right hands. They were dated typologically from the 5-4th centuries BCE (Stern, E. 1993 1524). Avissar claims that the figurines represent the local Phoenician god, Ba'al (Avissar 2004 p.79-80).

Tel Sippur

At Tel Sippur, the upper part of a bearded male figurine was found (Negbi, O. 1966, pl. XI-67). He is wearing the Osiris headdress and is grasping his beard with his right hand. The figurine from Tel Sippur was found in a pit among many other figurines and statues. On the basis of style and technique, Negbi dated this figurine and most of the figurines found in the pit between 530 to 350 BCE (the Persian period) (Negbi, O. 1966 p. 8). She believes that most of the figurines were used as votive offerings at a nearby sanctuary (ibid, p.6).

CONCLUSIONS***The Date***

Most excavators date the figurines with the Osirian headdress to the 5th-4th centuries BCE (Persian period) (Stern 2010 p.7). Chehab is really the only one who dated them closer to the time of Alexander the Great (330 BCE) and the beginning of the Hellenistic period (Chehab 1953-54 pl. VII-4-6) (Yoon, K.Y. 2009, p. 59). Stern does not believe that there is clear cut evidence for this attribution (Stern 2010 p.7); however, I would like to point out that Chehab describes the figurines from Kharayeb as being made in a double mould rather than a single mould like the rest of the Osiris type figurines (Yoon, K.Y. 2009, p. 110). The double mould technique and the technique of using multiple moulds for one figurine began to develop in the Hellenistic period (Messika 1996 p.97, Higgins 1967, p.98). This would seem to indicate that Chehab's early Hellenistic date for the figurines from Kharayeb is indeed accurate. It is also interesting to note that two of these figurines from Kharayeb grasp their beards with their left hands rather than their right hands, which may have chronological significance. Using both the «Oriental» type of figurine and the «Egyptianizing» type of figurine for his analysis, Yoon compared the different style of the left hand grasping the beard versus the right hand grasping the beard. He came to the tentative conclusion that those grasping their beards with their left hand appear chronologically later (latter part of the Persian period/early Hellenistic) than those grasping their beards with their right hand (Yoon, K.Y. 2009 p. 63-64).

Based on the parallels from the other sites I have described, we have come to the conclusion that our figurine dates to the Persian period, probably between the 5th-4th centuries BCE. The only parallel finds that would suggest a later date for our figurine were found at Kharayeb. However, unlike the figurines from Kharayeb, our figurine was made in a single mould and is grasping his beard with his right hand, both of which support the date that we have suggested.

The Style and Origin

Phoenician seafarers often introduced and brought together various cultures through trade. This phenomenon is reflected quite well in their eclectic style of art, and our figurine is a good example of such a hybrid of influences. This fusion of style so characteristic of the Phoenicians can be seen in the Egyptian headdress, the Babylonian beard, and the Persian cloak (Kaoukabani 1973 p.48). Petrographic analysis has not been performed on this figurine; however, in terms of distribution, both this type of figurine and the «Oriental» type of figurine have been found in a relatively large quantity along the Phoenician coast. The fact that the figurines are confined to the Phoenician coast suggests that this was their place of origin (Stern, E. 2001, p.493).

Discussion

There has been much speculation about what the Osiris type figurine represents. Most researchers seem to be in agreement that the figurine was used in relation to some cultic purpose. This makes sense since many of the figurines were found near a sanctuary or temple. Although this type of figurine is wearing an Osiris headdress, it is unlikely that that the figurine represents Osiris himself due to the fact that Osiris didn't wear a beard (Stern, E. 2001, p.493) or he wore a false beard which did not resemble the Neo-Babylonian style beard on our type of figurine.

Culican points out that the Osiris headdress was commonly depicted on Canaanite deities and firmly believes that this type of figurine represents a Canaanite deity. As for the identity, he suggests Hauron-ba'al, consort of Koshart (Culican, W. 1969, p. 44-45). Stern also believes that this type of figurine is representative of a deity; however he suggests that the deity should be identified as Ba'al who was a common god in the Phoenician cult (Stern 2010, p.7). Avissar agrees with Stern that he should be identified as Ba'al (Avissar 2004 p.79-80), while Chehab suggests that the god might be Melquart or some type of father-god (Chehab 1951-52, p.129). Others, such as Lepinski and Kaoukabani have suggested that the figurine was used in relation to a fertility cult (Lepinski, E. 2003 p.303-304; Kaoukabani 1973 p.56). Such a suggestion fits with the fact that one of these figurines was found at Makmish near a sanctuary that Avigad maintains was dedicated as a fertility cult (Avigad 1960 p.93, 95, 96).

Although we are rather certain that our figurine was used in a cultic context, it remains unclear as to whether the figurine represents a particular god. On the other hand, the fact that the Osiris headdress has been depicted on so many Canaanite deities certainly lends credence to such a possibility. All of the suggestions regarding the identity of the god and the nature of the figurines cultic association are possible but remain open to interpretation.

Summary

The seated male terracotta figurine with a long beard and Osiris hat that was found at Achziv is a very common type of figurine that dates to the Persian period and has been found at many sites along the Phoenician coast. The figurine was most likely used as a votary in a cultic context, although the nature of the cult remains unclear. The figurine displays a collective style of influences characteristic of Phoenician art.

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