

New Light on Iron Age Religious Iconography The Evidence from Moab

Introduction

A new discovery can add significantly to our knowledge of the past or radically alter our perception of a people's culture. Such is the case with the recent discovery of an isolated shrine site near the northern frontier of ancient Moab. With the discovery of Wādī ath-Thamad Site WT 13 in 1996 and its partial excavation in 1997, our knowledge of Iron Age religious practices and of the corpus of cultic artifacts from Transjordan is greatly expanded. This study is an attempt to classify the anthropomorphic figurines and statues from Moabite sites located on the Transjordanian plateau, from the region of Mādabā to Wādī al-Ḥasa, and to categorize their iconographic characteristics. Finds from sites in the Jordan Valley are not included here since their cultural affinities seem to be more diverse.

The State of the Question

The religious beliefs and practices of the inhabitants of Moab during the Iron Age are still little known in comparison to the religion of Moab's neighbours in Palestine and Syria. This point has been made most recently by Mattingly (1989:213) who reviewed the Mesha inscription and Hebrew texts to put together a preliminary overview of Moabite religion. At the same time, Mattingly recognized that there is limited archaeological evidence and what does exist lends itself to a variety of interpretations. In fact, the archaeological record has been silent in regard to temples and their furnishings, religious festivals and cultic practices. Only with the recent excavation of town sites is material becoming available that can be associated with domestic cults. During the past 50 years, excavation of Iron Age sites in the territory of ancient Moab has grad-

ually increased so that all areas of Moab are currently being studied. Prior to this decade, archaeological evidence for Iron Age religion has been limited to surface finds of figurines, to a small number of monumental sculptures, principally the Mesha inscription, and to finds in tombs. The best examples are Dhibān (Tushingham 1972: Figs. 14-24) where tombs yielded vessels sometimes associated with religious activities, such as tripod perforated cups, Cypro-Phoenician juglets and lamps in significant numbers and Tomb 84 at Mount Nebo where both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines were present (Saller 1966: Fig. 28). In 1978, Weinberg published an assemblage of cultic artifacts which included female figurines, a model shrine, perforated cups, animal figurines and lamps. Unfortunately, there is no known provenience for these artifacts except the suggestion that they originated in the area of Mādabā.

Recent excavations at al-Bālu' and the work of the Wādī ath-Thamad Project at Khirbat al-Mudayna and WT 13, have doubled the number of known figurines from Moab and has begun to situate these artifacts within their use context, both domestic and cultic. At al-Bālu', three figurines were found *in situ* on the floor of a house (Worschch 1995:185) providing clear evidence for an Iron Age domestic cult. During two seasons of excavations at Khirbat al-Mudayna, 4 fragments of anthropomorphic figurines have been recovered, adding to the number reported by Glueck (1934, 1939). More important is the corpus of finds from Site WT 13,¹ an isolated shrine site ca. 4.0 km west of Khirbat al-Mudayna where 24 intact and broken figurines were associated with 8 (or more) anthropomorphic clay statues and a group of ceramic fragments including faces, noses, ears, pieces of hairdo, arms,

¹ Site WT #13 was identified by Dearman, Field Supervisor of the Wādī ath-Thamad Survey in 1996. At the beginning of the 1997 field season, a salvage excavation was carried out for 8 days. Team members included the author, L. Cowell, A. Damm, J. A. Dearman, R. Levesque, H. Wilson, A. Olson (on occasion), and A. Abu Schmeis, representative of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

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and legs.

This corpus of ceramic and stone figurines and anthropomorphic statues, along with other figurines from excavations and surveys in Moab, contains sufficient examples that we can undertake a study of the range of types and their iconographic features. Careful analysis should also enable us to define those elements of Moabite religious iconography which can serve as distinguishing marks of cultural integrity and indicate the degree of syncretism present in Moabite cultic material. Finally, this classification should help to clarify the position of Moabite religion in the cultural sphere of eastern Palestine.

Figurines

By far, human and animal figurines constitute the largest single group of artifacts that served as correlates for religious activities.² Among the 68 identifiable human figurines known from Moab, only half that number have been found during excavation. Fortunately, the great similarity among female figurines, whether from excavated sites or from surface surveys, makes it possible to incorporate all of these figures in a single typological study. In view of their greater number, we will present the anthropomorphic figurines first and then the more fragmentary ceramic statues. For the purposes of iconographic typology, each type of female figure within the class of clay figurines is defined first on the basis of the style of its body, and secondly by its iconographic details in order to identify the characteristics which distinguish one sub-type from another.

Preliminary Types

The discovery of numerous Iron Age figurines from Moab that were each made in a single mould and finished simply on the back and were not part of a tablet or plaque enables us to refine the current terminology which classifies female figures as either pillar figurines or plaque figurines. Tadmor (1982: 140), Holland (1977) and now Kletter (1996) used these categories to classify all ceramic figurines and did not distinguish between figurines made in a mould or hand modelled in high relief from figures

moulded in low relief onto a plaque or tablet.³ Hachlili alone (1971: 126) describes clearly the formation processes for fashioning solid figurines that were made in a mould and finished by hand and goes on to distinguish these artifacts from figurine plaques.⁴

Using Hachlili's formulation, the anthropomorphic figures from Moab can be divided into three principal types; fully modelled figurines, pillar figurines, and anthropomorphic statues of which the greatest number represent females.⁵ Fully modelled figures can be further defined as free-standing figurines (Type A1), as attached figures (Type A2) or as protomes (Type A3). Plaques with a female figure in relief are not represented.

Free-Standing Modelled Figures (Type A1): Type A1 consists of free-standing figurines, less than 15 cm tall, that were formed by hand or in a mould.⁶ These figurines represent the complete human body with details of head, torso, limbs and, in some instances, clothing. For the most part, these features were formed in high relief with little or no detail on the back side (#11; FIG. 6) although figures in Type A1 could be completely designed in the round (for example, head #17, legs #37, and probably head #58; TABLE 1).⁷ Several Type A1 figurines retain a significant amount of clay around their feet and could not actually be set upright without support. The feet themselves are not completely perpendicular to the legs giving the impression that the figure is not standing upright. This is not an unusual position and is seen in figurines from Megiddo (May 1935: Pl. XXVII:M 65, M810) that were certainly intended to represent standing figures. In both cases, no supports for these figures have been recognised among the archaeological remains although, like round bottom juglets, the figurines may have been set up on a beaten earth surface or bench.

Among the female figurines within Type A1, we can distinguish three sub-types; A1/a) those that hold their breasts, A1/b) those that hold a disc at the waist in front of their breasts, and A1/c) those that hold a disc between their breasts and their neck.⁸ The differences in these po-

² Holladay (1987:291, n. 109) has shown definitely that such figures in Israel and Judah were associated with domestic and non-conformist religious practices and were not toys (see also Kletter 1996:73, 78).

³ As a result of our classification of modelled figurines as either free-standing or attached but not as plaques, we have assigned those figurines found in Moab and studied by Holland and Kletter to various types, including free standing modelled figures and pillar figurines (see below).

⁴ In his analysis of the figurines from 'Aiy Dara, Abu 'Assaf (1996) classified them as mould made or hand made. Within these two classes, he defined various types on the basis of the position of the hands and on the general appearance, including the details of clothing and adornments.

⁵ Apart from the female figurines of Type A, there are only two ce-

ramic figurines representing males that appear to be fully modelled, free-standing figures. These are classed separately in Type D.

⁶ All such figures examined by the author are solid although hollow-bodied figures appear in the zoomorphic corpus. Although some of these fragments may indeed be anthropomorphic figurines, they remain distinct from anthropomorphic vessels and clay statues.

⁷ All figurines and statues have been numbered so that those finds from various surveys can be referred to by number (see Table 1). The head of figurine WT/092=#17 is so worn that it is practically impossible to determine whether it was male, female, or animal. By contrast, the back is very clearly incised showing the hair and the folds of the upper part of a garment.

⁸ Fragments of female figures have been assigned to a separate category.

TABLE 1: Catalogue of Anthropomorphic Figurines from the region of Moab.

| Figure # | Registration # | Type | Reference |
|----------|----------------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | WT/015 | A1 | Daviau 1997:227 |
| 2 | WT/021 | A1 | Daviau 1997: Fig. 1 |
| 3 | WT/021 | B | WT 13 |
| 4 | MT/020 | A1(?) | Daviau 1997: Figs. 3-4 |
| 5 | MT/061 | B(?) | Daviau 1997: Fig. 2 |
| 6 | MT/263 | B | WT 13 |
| 7 | WT/035 | A1 | WT 13 |
| 8 | WT/042 | A2 | WT 13 |
| 9 | WT/053 | B | WT 13 |
| 10 | WT/064 | A2(?) | WT 13 |
| 11 | WT/068 | A1 | WT 13 |
| 12 | WT/072 | B | WT 13 |
| 13 | WT/086 | A2 | WT 13 |
| 14 | WT/088+89 | A2 | WT 13 |
| 15 | WT/094 | A2 | WT 13 |
| 16 | WT/099 | A2(?) | WT 13 |
| 17 | WT/092 | A1 | WT 13 |
| 18 | WT/104 | A3 | WT 13 |
| 19 | Al-Bālū' A | B | Worschech 1995: Fig. 2 |
| 20 | Al-Bālū' B | A2 | Worschech 1995: Fig. 4a |
| 21 | Al-Bālū' C | A2 | Worschech 1995: Fig. 4b |
| 22 | MT | B(?) | Glueck 1970: Fig. 94 (right) |
| 23 | Karak | A1(?) | Harding 1937: Pl. X, Fig. 8 |
| 24 | Al-Bālū' | B(?) | Glueck 1970: Fig. 94 (left) |
| 25 | Diban | B(?) | Morton 1989: Fig. 15 |
| 26 | al-Meshed | A1(?) | Glueck 1939: Fig. 18a |
| 27 | Diban | B(?) | Morton 1989: Fig. 16 |
| 28 | Mount Nebo | B | Saller 1966: Fig. 28:2 |
| 29 | Mount Nebo | B | Saller 1966: Fig. 28:1 |
| 30 | WT/125+156 | B | WT 13 |
| 31 | WT/095 | A1 | WT 13 |
| 32 | WT/097 | A1 | WT 13 |
| 33 | WT/076 | A1 | WT 13 |
| 34 | WT/077 | A1 | WT 13 |
| 35 | WT/155 | A2 | WT 13 |
| 36 | WT/110 | A1 | WT 13 |
| 37 | WT/013a+b | A1 | WT 13 |
| 38 | WT/011 | C | WT 13 |
| 40 | WT/123+145 | C | WT 13 |
| 41 | WT/048 | C | WT 13 |
| 42 | WT/047 | C | WT 13 |
| 43 | WT/119 | C | WT 13 |
| 44 | WT/093 | C(nose) | WT 13 |
| 45 | WT/058 | C(nose) | WT 13 |
| 46 | WT/165 | C | WT 13 |
| 47 | WT/166 | C(base) | WT 13 |
| 48 | WT/167 | C(base) | WT 13 |
| 49 | WT/168 | C(base) | WT 13 |
| 50 | WT/169 | C(base) | WT 13 |
| 51 | WT/170 | C(base) | WT 13 |
| 52 | WT/171 | B | WT 13 |
| 53 | WT/164 | C(nose) | WT 13 |
| 54 | MT | A3 | Sauer (1981:64) |
| 55 | WT/113 | C(nose) | WT 13 |
| 56 | Al-Bālū' | B(?) | Glueck 1934: Fig. 12(left) |
| 57 | MT | C(?) | Glueck 1934: Fig. 12(right) |
| 58 | MT | C | Glueck 1934: Fig. 6=1970: Fig. 96 |
| 59 | MT | C | WT 13 |
| 60 | Mādabā | A3 | Weinberg 1978:33(left) |
| 61 | Mādabā | A3 | Weinberg 1978:33(right) |
| 62 | Al-Bālū' | D | Worschech 1989: Pl. 8:2 |
| 63 | Mādabā Tb | A1 | Thompson 1986: Fig. 5:24 |
| 64 | Al-Bālū' | A1 | Worschech 1992: Fig. 5 |
| 65 | Karak | A2 | Zayadine 1986: Fig. 128 |
| 66 | Karak | A2 | Zayadine 1986: Fig. 128 |
| 67 | Al-Bālū' | A1 | Worschech 1992: Fig. 4 |
| 68 | Kh. 'Atarās | A1 | Niemann 1985: Fig. 1 |

sitions are important to note since each position may reflect a particular activity.⁹ Comparison with figurines from other Levantine sites will demonstrate the degree to which a figure with a particular pose is an example of a common type.¹⁰

Within each of these types, the female figures can be distinguished further by their appearance, especially their hair style. Two distinct styles are represented, one apparently local (TABLE 2) and the second in the style of an Egyptian wig. In both cases, the hair is shown in locks that reach to the shoulder. The distinguishing characteristic is seen in the shape and detail of the locks. The Egyptian wig style is shown with vertical lines that end in a horizontal cut (#7).¹¹ Variation is seen in the case of one figurine (#2) with a local hair style that also has pellets of clay on her head, probably representing curls.

Other features that are present consist of a clearly defined pubic area and well formed legs (#1; #2; #31). By contrast, the breasts are not shown on those figures that hold a disc at or above the waist and there is only minimal indication of clothing (see below). Two figurines, one from al-Meshed near Mount Nebo (#26) and a second from al-Karak (#23), both have grooves just below the

TABLE 2. Classification of Anthropomorphic Figurines.

| A. Fully-modelled Figures: | | B. Pillar Figurines | C. Statues |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| A1. Free-standing | A2. Attached | | |
| WT/015=#1 | WT/042=#8 | MT/001=#3 | WT/011=#38 |
| WT/021=#2 | WT/086=#13 | MT/263=#6 | WT/020+044=#39 |
| WT/035=#7 | WT/088+89=#14 | WT/053=#9 | WT/123+145=#40 |
| WT/068=#11 | WT/094=#15 | WT/072=#12 | WT/048=#41 |
| WT/092=#17 | WT/155=#35 | WT/156=#30 | WT/047=#42 |
| WT/076=#33 | Al-Bālū'=#20 | Al-Bālū'=#19 | WT/119=#43 |
| WT/077=#34 | Al-Bālū'=#21 | Nebo Tb=#28 | WT/165=#46 |
| WT/095=#31 | Karak=#65 | Nebo Tb=#29 | WT/166=#47 |
| WT/097=#32 | Karak=#66 | | |
| WT/110=#36 | | (Probable) | (Probable) |
| WT/013a+b=#37 | MT/061=#5 | MT(G)=#57 | |
| | (Probable) | MT(G)=#22 | |
| (Probable) | WT/64=#10 | Al-Bālū'(G)=#24 | |
| MT/020=#4 | WT/099=#16 | Diban(G)=#25 | |
| Kerak (G)#23 | | Al-Bālū'(G)=#56 | |
| Al-Meshed(G)=#26 | | | |
| Diban #27 | Protomes | Pillar bases | Statue bases |
| Mādabā Tb=#63 | | | |
| Al-Bālū'=#64 | WT/104=#18 | WT/171=#52 | WT/167=#48 |
| Al-Bālū'=#67 | MT (S)=#54 | | WT/168=#49 |
| | Mādabā=#60 | | WT/169=#50 |
| (Male heads, torsos) | Mādabā=#61 | | WT/170=#51 |
| MT(G)=#58 | | | |
| WT/078=#59 | | | |
| Al-Bālū'=#62 | | | (Sigla) |
| Al-'Atarus=#68 | | | G = Glueck |
| | | | S=Sauer |

⁹ The position of the hands was the second determining characteristic in the classification of the figurines from 'Ain Dara (Abu 'Assaf 1996).
¹⁰ Kletter (1997:29) points out the importance of the "common type" which may constitute the largest number of examples in any given assemblage and thus serve as a key to understanding the meaning

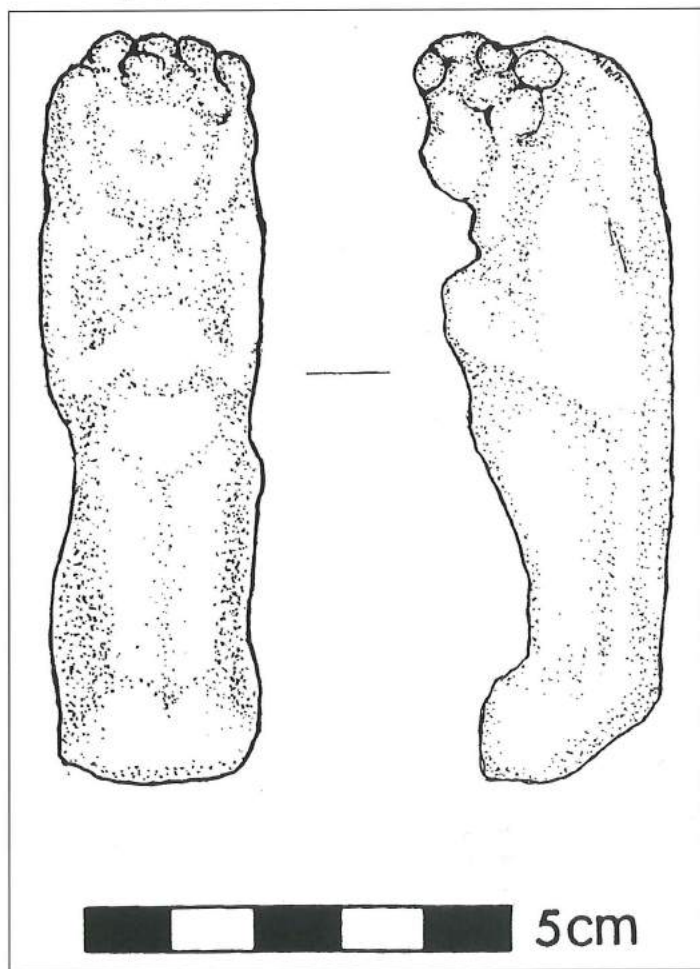
and function of these figures.
¹¹ There is a certain lack of consistency in the depiction of the local style. An example of hair locks with vertical grooves and rounded ends (WT/068=#11) is clearly an example of the local style since it lacks the horizontal end typical of the Egyptian style wig.

waist that indicate the top of the belly. Similar grooves appear on a free-standing figurine from WT 13 (#1) suggesting that all three figures were free-standing since such grooves never appear on pillar figurines.¹² Additional support for this view is the illustration of the al-Meshed figurine (#26) by Glueck (1934: Fig. 8) where the slightly rounded back of the head and shoulders is visible. Such a position is not seen on pillar figurines but does appear on other free-standing figurines (see #2).

Modelled Attached Figures (Type A2; FIG.1): Type A2 figurines are those with evidence of attachment to another artifact such as a model shrine or ceramic stand. The evidence for this attachment may be seen only along one side of the body (#13) or along the entire length of the back of the figure (#15). Into this type fall the figurines that retain extra clay all around their body which was used to seal them to a flat surface as well as those figures that are gray in colour on their back side. This colour

change, due to reduction, is evidence that the figure was attached even if the extra clay is now missing. These female figures share the same characteristics as the fully-modelled Type A1 figurines both in the details of their hair styles and in the position of their hands. In certain cases, there is evidence of a bow at the neckline that suggests clothing (#15) although the lower torso and legs appear bare.

Protomes (Type A3; FIG. 2): A third type of modelled figurine consists of protomes which represent the head and, on occasion, the upper body. The protome is attached to a larger object but was first formed independently and then pressed into place like an attached figurine or was tapered to fit on a support.¹³ The best examples of this type are twin female protomes (#60, 61) attached to the facade of a model shrine, reportedly from the Mādabā area (Weinberg 1978:33).¹⁴



1. Free Standing female figurine (#2); drawn by K. Watson.



2. Attached female figurine (#13); drawn by Victor Bush.

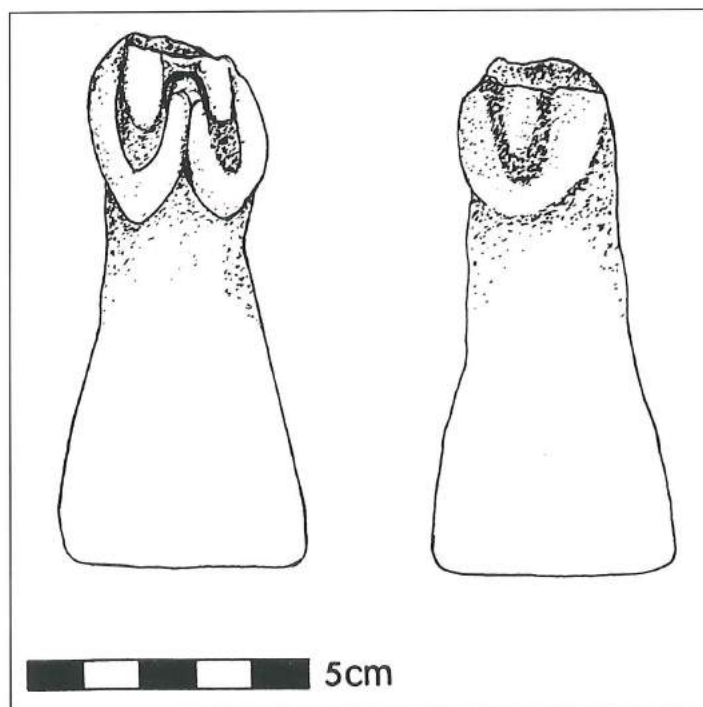
¹² Both figurines #23 and #26 were identified by Kletter (1996:268) and Holland (1977: Fig. 1) as "plaque" figurines.

¹³ One example (MT(S)=#54) reported by Sauer (1981:64) is difficult to classify but has been included here.

¹⁴ Although he cited Weinberg properly in his bibliography as "A Moabite Shrine Group", Kletter says in his text that this cultic assemblage originated in Edom (1996:239).

Pillar Figurines (Type B; FIG.3): Type B consists of pillar figurines which depict the head and upper torso of a human form above the waist while below the human shape is not shown (#19). Instead, a hand made cylindrical “pillar” or cone of clay supports the figure. In most cases, the pillar is hollow although examples of solid pillars do occur. The head and upper body may be mould made, hand made or a combination of these two techniques. Differences in appearance and secondary features, allow us to further separate such figures into sub-types. Type B1 represents a female figure with a local hair style, her locks with diagonal grooves resting on her shoulders (Mt Nebo=#26). Unfortunately, Type B1 is poorly represented in this corpus because the heads are often missing (MT 001=#3; MT 263=#6).

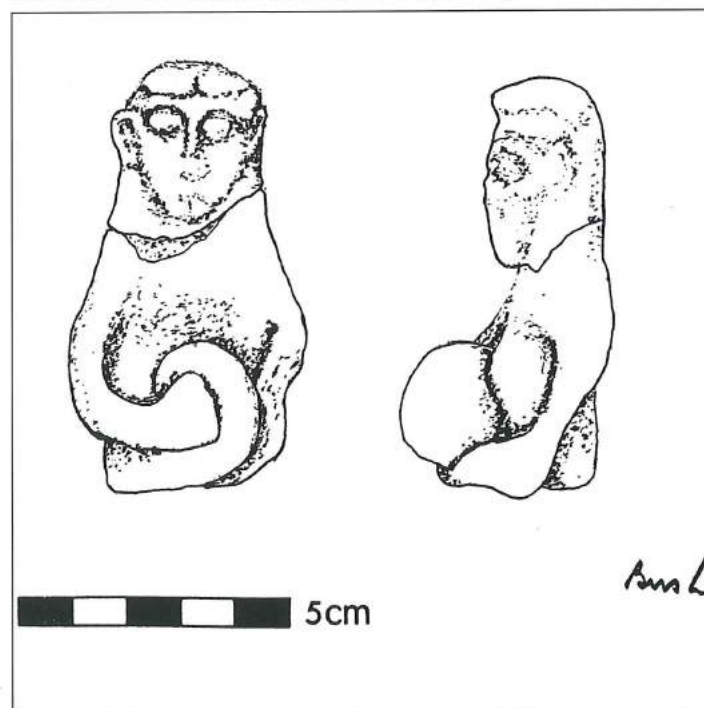
Type B2 includes heads that appear to be “veiled” so that the details of the hair are visible only above the forehead and what appears to be a shawl is shown falling onto the shoulders. In these examples, the shoulders are not usually defined but are a continuation of the shawl that forms a single unit with the neck. This shape may have been a means of strengthening the connection between a mould made head and the hand made body and pillar. In one case



3. Pillar figurine (#12); drawn by Victor Bush.

(#22), there is an actual peg preserved in the neck which indicates another method for assuring a firm attachment.¹⁵ In this group of pillar figurines, each female figure holds a disc in her hands in front of her breasts. In only three instances do the females hold a disc perpendicular to the body,¹⁶ suggesting a different object than that carried by the majority of figures (see analysis below).

Hollow Statues (Type C; FIG.4): Hollow figures were initially formed as an open bottomed vessel or stand to which human features and limbs were added. Such statues could be used as free standing figures or as supports for a bowl or lamp (Beck 1995:43-45; Fig. 3.17). To date, no complete statues have been found intact or have been reconstructed from Moab although WT 13 has yielded large fragments of 8 recognizable statues, 4 possible bases and 4 noses. The size range of these statues is much greater than that for figurines, measuring between 10.00-20.50 cm, shoulder to base. Five statues¹⁷ were sufficiently well preserved to see that they represented females, one holding her breasts (#40). The lower body was cylindrical or oval, in most cases without visible limbs or details of elaborate clothing (Beck 1995: Fig. 3.16).¹⁸ However, in



4. Pillar figurine holding a drum (#9); drawn by Victor Bush.

¹⁵ Glueck (1934:24) published two “male” heads of veiled figures, one head from al-Bālu’ and a second from al-Mudayna on the Wādi ath-Thamad. It was this second head that Glueck described as having a “prong by which it was attached to the body”. Unfortunately, the caption under the illustration of these heads (Fig. 7a, b) does not agree with the text. In his later work, Glueck (1970) identified these same heads as representing a female fertility goddess and again repeated his description of the head with the prong as the one found at Khirbat al-Mudayna. This time, the caption (Fig. 94) is in agreement with the text. (Worschech (1995) appears

to have copied the illustration from Glueck (1934: Fig. 7a, b) where the captions were not in agreement with the text).

¹⁶ In the three cases where the disc is perpendicular to the body, the breasts are visible (Mount Nebo tomb, #28, #29 and WT-13/53).

¹⁷ Several statues from WT 13 (#38, #39, #41, #39; # 47) had a least one breast preserved.

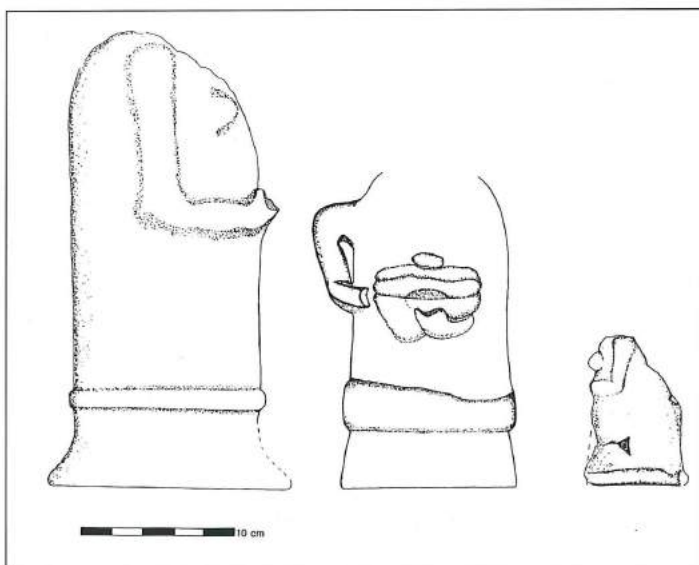
¹⁸ The lack of decoration on the body of most of the ceramic statues from WT 13 is in contrast to the row of cowrie shells attached to Figure No. 23 from Horvat Qitmit (Beck 1995).

two cases (#38, #50), there were painted lines and bands visible on the back that may represent clothing and one statue had attached legs (#42).

In all examples where the arms were preserved, they were flush against the body with the hands on the abdomen or holding the breasts. In one case (#47), the hands appear to be holding a stack of offering breads. Since no restorable heads have been identified that could be associated with these statues, few details of hair style and facial features can be subject to analysis. The closest parallels to the body shape of the Moabite statues are those from 'En Haseva (Cohen and Yisraeli 1995) and Horvat Qitmit (Beck 1995), tentatively identified with Edomite culture.¹⁹

Male Figures (Type D): A very small number (2) of ceramic male figures have been recovered from Moabite sites, each with its own distinguishing characteristics. The first male head discovered by Glueck (1934: Fig. 6) at Khirbat al-Mudayna (#58) represents a male wearing a headband to keep his hair in place, similar in appearance to the Ammonite stone statue of Yarah-'ezer (Abou Assaf 1980: Pl. VI). A male torso from al-Bālū' (#62; Worschch 1989: Pl. 8:2) is more difficult to identify iconographically due to the way it was broken. Nevertheless, these two finds are evidence of a tradition of depicting both men and women in art.

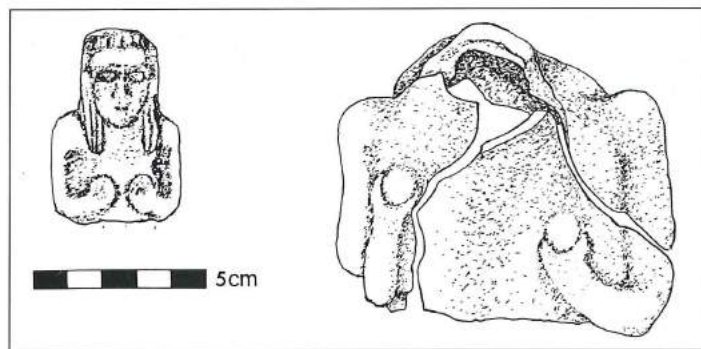
Stone Figures (Type E): At present, the class of stone figures includes only one human head (WT 78=#59; Daviau



5. Hollow statues (#38, #47, #41); drawn by Victor Bush.

¹⁹ Beck (1993:233) made note of certain features which suggest contact with Amman and sites in the Jordan Valley, especially the chin beard which she identifies as a feature typical of cultures located in eastern Palestine.

²⁰ Two additional figures, both broken, were recovered from WT Site #13 in 1998. This small group does not figure in the analysis pre-



6. Female figures, each holding her breasts (#11, #40); drawn by Victor Bush.

1997: 251) carved from limestone.²⁰ This is a distinct type with no parallels at present to constitute a recognized group.

Analysis

Among the 68 ceramic figures and figurine fragments that have been reported from sites and surveys in the region of Moab, 63 are suitable for analysis (TABLE 2). Among these anthropomorphic figures, all but three represent females.²¹ On the basis of their types, 17 (29.8%) are free standing, 9 (15.8%) can be classed as attached figures and 4 (0.7%) as protomes. There are at least 14 (24.6%) pillar figurines and fragments of 13 ceramic statues (22.8%), not counting the isolated arms and noses. Among these body types, modelled figurines, free-standing and attached, outnumber pillar figurines, 45.6% vs. 24.6%. On the other hand, there are almost an equal number of ceramic statues as there are pillar figurines. These numbers will change, of course, with additional finds, but at present, fully modelled figurines appear to be the "common" type.

Iconography

Three aspects of their appearance provides evidence for interpreting the function and meaning of the female figurines and statues; the position of the hands, the treatment of the hair, and the details of the pubic area. A minor aspect is the evidence for jewelry or clothing.

Position of the Hands (TABLE 3)

The most common position for the hands is that of holding a disc flat against the body, either in front of the breasts, or slightly higher between the breasts and the neck. This position is seen on 68.9% of the modelled and pillar figurines. In only three instances (al-Meshed #26) is the disc held against the left shoulder. For the most part,

sented below. Also omitted is a torso from 'Atarus (Niemann 1985: Fig. 1); my thanks to Dr F. Benedettuci for this and other references.

²¹ Several figurine legs probably belong to female figures since they share characteristics of better preserved female figures. These legs include #37 which have anklets, leg section #32, and leg and foot #36.

TABLE 3. Iconographic Analysis: Position of Hands

| Holding disc | Holding Breasts | On Abdomen | Holding Bread | Other* |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| WT/015=#1 | WT/035=#7 | WT/020=#39 | WT/166=#47 | WT/156=#30 |
| WT/021=#2 | WT/068=#11 | | | Al-Balu'=#21 |
| MT/001=#3 | WT/123=#40 | | | WT/ |
| | | | | 011=#38 |
| MT/263=#6 | | | | WT/ |
| | | | | 048=#41 |
| WT/042=#8 | | | | WT/ |
| | | | | 165=#46 |
| WT/053=#9(per) | | | | Al-Balu' |
| | | | | (G)=#56 |
| WT/072=#12 | | | | MT(G)=#57 |
| WT/086=#13 | | | | Madaba=#60 |
| WT/88=#14 | | | | Madaba=#61 |
| WT/094=#15 | | | | Al-Balu'=#62 |
| WT/099=#16 | | | | Madaba |
| | | | | Tb=#63 |
| Al-Bālū'=#19 | | | | |
| Al-Bālū'=#20 | | | | |
| Karak(G)=#23 | | | | Sigla |
| Diban=#25 | | | | (per)=perpen dicular |
| Al-Meshed=#26 | | | | |
| Nebo Tb=#28(per) | | | | |
| Nebo Tb=#29(per) | | | | |
| Karak=#65 | | | | |
| Karak=#66 | | | | |

* Other includes those figures that are damaged or incomplete but are clearly not holding their breasts.

the disc is small and undecorated, not much larger than the hand itself. Two positions are represented, either holding the edge of the disk with both hands or supporting the disc with one hand and covering it with the other. The form of the hands themselves occurs in three styles; fully formed with individual fingers indicated (Karak=#23), simply formed with two distinct sections suggesting the thumb and fingers (#8), or as a palm without any detail. This last style is seen most clearly on figurine #9 from WT 13 that held the disc perpendicular to the body. Figurines from Ashdod (Dothan 1977:38) and from Cyprus that represent musicians, especially women playing hand drums (Meyers 1991:18) also depict hands without details of individual fingers. In all of these examples, the disc or drum is held perpendicular to the body. Two additional figurines from Mount Nebo (Nebo Tb=#28, 29) also hold

a disc perpendicular to the body. Meyers (1991:19) makes a clear distinction between these musicians and figurines that depict a female holding a disc flat against her body. Although she does not identify the flat disc with certainty, suggesting a "loaf of bread, a sun disc," or "a plate?," Meyers (1991: 19) is certain that such discs did not represent musical instruments. This opinion is probably correct in the case of those figurines shown holding the disc by its edge since the position of the hands does not suggest the striking of a drum or tambourine.²² At the same time, a small number of figurines are shown with the left hand supporting a disc held flush against the body with the right hand covering it. The interpretation of this position leaves uncertain the identification of the disc and requires additional evidence before a judgment can be formed.

Only three figures (10.3%) are shown holding their breasts (TABLE 3). This position, so common among Judean pillar figurines, is rare in the iconography of Moab. Even less well represented is the position of the hands on the abdomen (10.3%) or holding a stack of bread loaves or other objects as an offering (10.3%). Ten additional figurines have evidence for the position of the hands at or near the waist but are so broken that the exact style cannot be determined.

Hair Styles: The dominant hair style, identified in this study as a local style, is represented by hair locks that frame the face and fall onto the shoulders with rounded ends. This style is present on 23 figurines (74.2%). Three versions of this style are apparent, simple locks (56.5%), locks with diagonal grooves (30.4%),²³ and locks with vertical grooves (13.0%). The style identified as an Egyptian wig was found on only 3 figures (9.7%). In most of these examples, the ears are hidden behind the front locks of hair.²⁴ The only exceptions are a figurine (#17) with a unique hair style (3.2%) and those figurines that appear to be wearing a shawl where the hair is shown above the forehead and the ears are visible (12.9%).

Adornment: There is very little evidence that suggests jewellery and clothing on the female figurines. On two figurines (#8, #15) there is the appearance of a bow at the neckline even though the lower body appears nude. In addition, three figurines are wearing a necklace, one wears bracelets, one wears armbands and five figures wear anklets. Remains of paint on two of the ceramic statues suggests clothing although others appear undecorated. This limited evidence indicates that clothing and jewellery were not important iconographic elements.

²² Comparison of the depiction of the disc common on Moabite figurines with figurines from the Jordan Valley and western Palestine reveal significant differences. Most apparent is the total lack of decoration on the disc itself. A simple design can be seen on discs held by figurines found at Dayr 'Alla (van der Kooij and Ibrahim 1989:V:128) and Tall as-Sa'idiyyah (Tubb, Dorrell and Cobbing 1996: Fig. 22) while an elaborate design appears at Beth Shan (Glueck 1970: Fig. 93, right) and at Gezer (Macalister 1912: Fig.

499). A female holding an elaborate disc was reported by Harding (1937: Pl. X:9); unfortunately this figurine is without provenience but may have come from Transjordan.

²³ Similar diagonal grooves are seen on a pillar figurine of a woman drum player from Cyprus (Meyers 1991:18) indicating that this style may have had a wider range than just the region of Moab.

²⁴ This is in contrast to the Egyptian style figurine head from Tall Mique where the ears are clearly defined (1995: fig. 4.17).

Interpretation

Determining the identification and function of the female figurines and statues is the most challenging aspect of any iconographic study. In view of the lack of clearly identifiable divine characteristics, we can start with the assumption that the ceramic figurines represented human figures rather than a god or goddess although their appearance may have been similar to human images (Connelly 1989:211). Among the figurines of females that hold a disc, certainly the easiest to understand are those whose disc is held perpendicular to their body. That such figurines, especially common in Cyprus, Phoenicia and Palestine (Meyers 1987:120-121), represent women musicians is generally accepted since women and their instruments are widely illustrated on Egyptian tomb paintings and stelae (Erman 1971:249). The social position of women who performed music during various ceremonies, both public and religious, has been studied by Meyers (1991). The question here is what function these figurines played in the religious life of the Moabites in view of the fact that two of the three pillar figurines with drums were found in tombs.

Studies of votive statues and figurines suggest that representations of devotees need not be exact portraits of the individual since the purpose of the image is to continue the prayer or religious actions of the believer in the presence of the god or goddess (Beck 1995:181; Connelly 1989:211). The evidence from Moab suggests that holding a drum was one of these actions. This same action may be represented by those figurines shown holding the bottom of the disc in their left hand with their right hand against the outer surface which is parallel to the body.²⁵

Those figurines that hold the disc on its edge remains unexplained since this position does not appear to represent musical activity. A clue as to the identification of the disc in this position may come from one of the ceramic statues (WT/166=#47) that appears to hold a stack of bread loaves, the uppermost being a small round loaf. Such an offering is known from textual references of neighbouring Iron Age cultures (1Kgs 7:48) and from depictions on north Syrian stelae (Dion 1997: Figs. 11, 16).

Figurines and statues that have their hands on their breasts depict a well known type, especially common among Judean pillar figurines. However, the Moabite figures are different in two respects; first, the breasts are small in size and second, the hands of the figurines cover the breasts, rather than support them (except for statue #40). At this stage in our study of Moabite religious iconography, it may be premature to attempt to identify these figurines with a particular goddess as Kletter has done for the Judean pillar figurines. The same is true for the ceramic statue with its hands on its abdomen (#39), a

position that is rare in our corpus.

The statues themselves have parallels principally at Horvat Qitmit and 'En Haseva, two sites in the Negev that have been associated with Edomites living in that region. These statues depict humans holding bowls or standing in a position of prayer (Beck 1995; Cohen and Yisraeli 1995). At present, the number of statues from WT 13 appears greater than that reported from both of the Negev sites. However, at Horvat Qitmit, there were 20 ceramic stands with evidence of attached figures (Beck 1995:180), a type of artifact that has not been identified at WT 13. Thus, it is premature to plot the distribution and identify the ethnic affinities of this style of figure since additional excavation in Jordan in the near future may quickly alter the evidence.

Conclusion

The figurines and statues recovered from the surface of Iron Age settlements, in houses and in tombs, and at WT 13, present a glimpse of Moabite religious practices. The majority of these figures appear to have been votive images, a type which has had a long history in the Levant (Connelly 1989:216). Playing musical instruments, making bread offerings and standing in the presence of the divine were clearly important ritual acts that were carried out in both temple worship and the domestic cult. Such evidence places Moab in the common cultural milieu of the Iron Age with its own characteristic articulation of its religious beliefs and practices.

TABLE 4. Iconographic Analysis: Hairdos

| Diagonal grooves | Vertical Grooves | Simple Locks | Shawl |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| MT/020=#4 | WT/064=#10(?) | WT/015=#1 | MT/061=#5 |
| WT/042=#8 | WT/068=#11 | WT/021=#2 | WT/053=#9 |
| WT/094=#15 | WT/88=#14 | MT/001=#3 | MT(G)=#22 |
| Karak(G)=#23 | | MT/263=#6 | Al-Balu'=#24 |
| Diban=#27 | | WT/072=#12 | |
| Nebo Tb=#28 | Egyptian Style | WT/104=#18 | Unique |
| Nebo Tb=#29 | | Al-Bālū'=#19 | |
| | WT/035=#7 | Al-Bālū'=#20 | |
| | WT/086=#13 | Al-Bālū'=#21(?) | WT/092=#17 |
| | WT/099=#16 | Diban=#25 | |
| | | Al-Meshed=#26 | |
| | | Karak=#65 | |
| | | Karak=#66 | |

TABLE 5. Types

| | N | % |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| --free-standing figurines (A1) | 21* | 33.3% |
| --attached figures (A2) | 11 | 17.4% |
| --protomes (A3) | 4 | 6.3% |
| --pillar figures (B) | 14 | 22.2% |
| -ceramic statues (C) | 13** | 20.6% |

* not including limestone male head; ** not including 4 noses

²⁵ These numbers are too few for meaningful analysis.

TABLE 6. Position of hands.

| | N | % |
|---------------------------------|----|-------|
| --females holding a disc | 20 | 68.9% |
| --females holding their breasts | 3 | 10.3% |
| --females holding some object | 3 | 10.3% |
| --females with hands on stomach | 3 | 10.3% |

TABLE 7. Hair styles.

| | N | % |
|-----------------------|----|-------|
| Ceramic female heads: | | |
| --local hair style | 23 | 74.2% |
| --shawl | 4 | 12.9% |
| --Egyptian style wig | 3 | 9.7% |
| --Unique | 1 | 3.2% |

TABLE 8. Adornment.

| | N | %* |
|-------------------|---|----|
| --bow at neckline | 2 | * |
| --necklace | 3 | * |
| --bracelets | 1 | * |
| --armbands | 1 | * |
| --anklets | 5 | * |

* Too few for meaningful quantification analysis.

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