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Cultural Multiplicity in Northern Mo'āb: Figurines and Statues from Khirbat al-Mudaynah on the Wādī ath-Thamad

Introduction

In the past, our knowledge of Moabite culture was confined to information contained in a limited group of textual and cultural resources. Literary sources included the Mesha Inscription (Dearman 1989) and occasional references in Hebrew texts and Assyrian royal inscriptions, while the results from regional surveys and a small number of excavations at Iron Age sites contributed to a partial understanding of Moabite material culture. These sources yielded a rather homogeneous, if not sporadic, view of Moabite life on the Dhībān plateau. Howthe discovery, excavation, publication of a wayside shrine in northern (WT-13) revealed a complex assemblage of pottery and artefacts reflective of diverse cultures, many of which surpass known textual information. At the same time, excavation at the town site of Khirbat al-Mudaynah on the Wādī ath-Thamad (henceforth, Mudaynat ath-Thamad; also known

as Khirbat al-Mudayna and Mudayna Thamad) has yielded dozens of unique Iron Age figurines and statues whose cultural affinities have yet to be fully explained. This paper is an investigation of these objects in an attempt to understand the influences evident in the finds from the small town and their implications for the temple cult, the history of the site, and the interactions of peoples in the region and beyond.

State of the Question

In 1980, Abdel-Jalil 'Amr published the first synthetic study of Iron Age figurines from Jordan. This was followed by

¹ Excavations at WT-13 (2000) and at Mudaynat ath-Thamad (2005) were funded by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. An initiatory grant (1997) for the commencement of excavation at WT-13 was provided by the American Schools of Oriental Research. Short term grants were also provided by Wilfrid Laurier University.

reports on figurines from newly excavated Ammonite sites, such as Tall al-'Umayrī, Hisbān and Tall Jāwah (Daviau and Dion 1994; Dabrowski 1997, 2009; Daviau 2002, 2014, 2015). More recent finds in Moab (Worschech 1995; Daviau 2001, 2014a, 2017) have already revealed several iconographic traditions represented in both female and male ceramic figures, especially at site WT-13 that served as a shrine site during Iron Age II. What was special about the assemblage from WT-13 is the inclusion of hollow ceramic statues and stone figurines (Daviau 2017: figs. 4.7–4.12, 4.15:1–4). Even more unusual is the corpus of anthropomorphic figures from Mudaynat ath-Thamad, 3 km to the west, which contains figures in a wide variety of styles, ranging in size from 3-50 cm in height. Although there are several parallels to the figurines found at WT-13 and Tall Mādabā, the differences are striking. The Mudaynat ath-Thamad corpus under discussion here consists of 67 items: three collected by Glueck in his 1933 survey, one protome(?) published by Sauer, and the remainder recovered in controlled excavations.2 Due to the collapse of stone masonry at the site, many figurines and statues are fragmentary. Nevertheless, the better-preserved figures will greatly expand the number of types established in previous iconographic studies and contribute to a broader understanding and preservation of Moabite culture and the foreign influences that enriched it.3

Typology of Ceramic Figurines

Following the typology of previous studies (Daviau 2001, 2017), this analysis

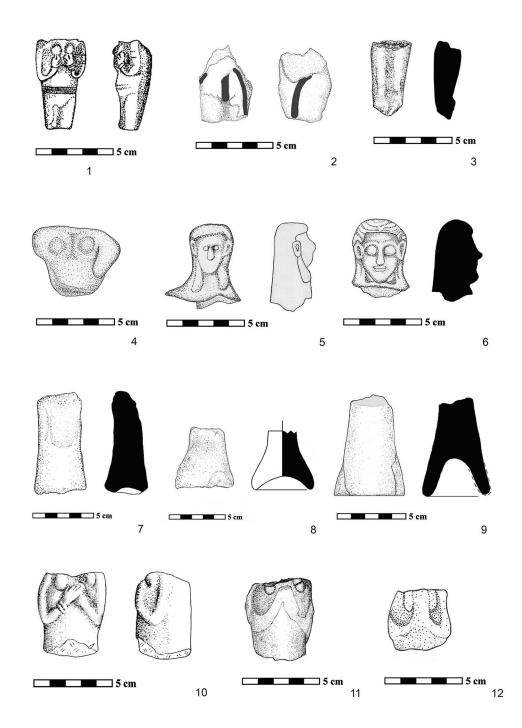
begins with free-standing ceramic figurines, primarily the naked female and secondarily the pillar figurines, the largest single group at Mudaynat ath-Thamad. These are followed by attached figures or protomes. Also free-standing, but less well represented, are male figurines, some in ceramic and others in stone. In another class altogether are miniature stone figures consisting of schematic figurines that represent a unique tradition. Finally, there are stone sculptures, including two unusual examples of large male figures, one in the form of a bust, the other a standing statue.

Free-Standing Modelled Figurines

Naked female figurines have a widespread distribution in the Levant, where they are represented holding their breasts or holding a small disc in their hands. Such figurines were mould-made in one piece with details of their face, arms and legs on the front. Typically, the legs are low on the body and detailed ornamentation consists of jewellery and a girdle. Manufactured by professional potters, these small figures were made of carefully prepared clay, slipped or hand painted, and fired in a kiln (Daviau 2014b).

At Mudaynat ath-Thamad, no intact figurines were recovered, although parallels with figurines from other sites in the area help us to identify the broken figurines in our corpus. The most complete example of a naked female (Fig. 1:1; MT 566) is preserved from her neck to her knees; her arms are bent and appear to be holding the breasts from below. Her only ornaments are twin bracelets on each wrist and a girdle just below the level of her navel. In one fragment representing the lower torso (MT 745) there are strips of red paint (Fig. 1:2). The gently rounded back indicates that the excess clay was removed manually before firing. Lower legs of mould-made figurines are parallel with a vertical depression between the legs (Fig. 1:3; MT 1120). Typically, there are

 ² Ceramic fragments too badly broken to identify with certainty raise the number of possible figurines to 74.
Of these, six were previously published (Daviau 1997: 226, figs. 2–4; 2014a: figs. 12:1, 13:5; 2015: fig. 3:1, 2).
³ The elaborate typology designed by Holland (1977) and employed by Gilbert-Peretz (1996) to analyze the figurines from Jerusalem includes a number of types not seen or, at most, rarely seen in Moab.



1. Naked female figurines: 1) MT 566, 2) MT 745, 3) MT 1120; handmade figurine: 4) MT 2812; attached heads: 5) MT 2638, 6) MT 2651; pillar bases: 7) MT 1956, 8) MT 827, 9) MT 759; pillar figurine torsos: 10) MT 1, 11) MT 3313, 12) MT 263.

anklets around the ankles, although the grooves above and below each bangle are difficult to discern on very small figurines.

Parallels

BUṢAYRAH: In Jordan the largest assemblage of naked female figurines holding their breasts (12) comes from Edom, primarily from Buṣayrah (Sedman 2002: 369–75).

WT-13: The position of the hands and the presence of a girdle are similar to the features of a free-standing naked female figurine (WT 286-4/514) and to a female attached to the fronton of an architectural model (WT 88), both from WT-13 (Daviau 2017: figs. 4.1:5, 4.3:4).

DHĪBĀN: At Dhībān, the head and upper body of a female with long locks of hair falling on her chest holds a disc in front of her breasts (Morton 1989: fig. 15).

TALL DAYR 'ALLĀ: Four fragments showing female figurine legs, each with two anklets, were found at Tall Dayr 'Allā ('Amr 1980: 89 figs. 91–94).

TALL AS-SA'ĪDIYYAH: Figurines with moulded anklets in pairs were compared by Green (2007: 298) to actual burial customs at Tall as-Sa'īdiyyah.

Ta'ANACH: The presence of bracelets around one or both wrists and a broad girdle around the hips are clear signs that the figurines in a group from Ta'anach were mould-made, even when the leg portion is broken off. These figurines are similar to figurines from the earlier Canaanite tradition (Lapp 1964: figs. 21, 22:3, 5).

PHOENICIA/SYRIA/CYPRUS: During the Iron Age, the Canaanite tradition was continued among the Phoenicians. This is seen most clearly on the bronze horse frontlet embossed with four naked females standing on lion heads and incised by Hazael of Damascus. This frontlet was sent as a votive gift to the Hereion on Samos (Eph'al and Naveh 1989: pl. 24; Dion 1997: 431 fig. 13). Each embossed female figure has

a Hathor-style hairdo and is adorned with a necklace, bracelets, and anklets. A limestone sarcophagus found at Amathus on Cyprus was decorated on one end with four naked females holding their breasts.

EGYPT: Although much less elegant, ceramic figurines of naked females found in the Mut Precinct date to the 21st–26th Dynasties (Waraksa 2009: 30–3, 37–8 fig. 7 pls. 5, 29–31). Type 3 figurines are shown holding their breasts, while those in Type 6 have only their legs preserved.

A second type of free-standing seemingly naked female consists of the upper torso and one arm (MT 2812). Of note is the formation and unnatural position of the breasts (Fig. 1:4). Nevertheless, this figurine has parallels among the handmade figurines from WT-13, especially WT 280, a female torso with arms at the sides, and WT 439-6/501, a seated figurine with a similar body shape (Daviau 2017: figs. 4.2:1, 4.4:6).

Pillar Figurines

The dominant type of female figure at Mudaynat ath-Thamad is the pillar figurine with a mould-made head and pillar-shaped torso and lower body. Of the 67 registered pieces in our corpus, 36 can, with some certainty, be identified as pillar figurines. The head and neck appear to be mould-made along with details of coiffure, headdress, or shawl. Glueck (1970) identified one male head with a prong in the neck as being from Khirbat al-Mudaynah (see below).⁴ In this case, the prong would be inserted into the top of the figurine body

⁴ Glueck (1933–34: 24) described two figurines, one with a prong from the dump at 'el-Medeiyineh on the Wadi Themed' and its twin without a prong from al-Bālū'. However, the caption for the illustration is reversed. This was corrected in a later publication (Glueck 1970: fig. 94). In view of this confusion, Worschech (1995: fig. 3e) published the head with a prong as coming from al-Bālū'.

or pillar and extra clay added to seal the join, with the result that the shoulder line was somewhat distorted (Fig. 1:5). A second head also retains evidence for a tenon (Fig. 1:6; MT 2651); without this evidence, it is often difficult to confirm the type of figurine in question. Below the neck, the pillar was cylindrical at the top but flared out on the bottom, evidence that it was formed on the wheel from a stump of clay with the rim constituting the lower edge. The base itself may be solid but is more often concave or hollow up to the waist (Fig. 1:7-9), similar to the technique evident on figurines from WT-13 and sites in Judah (Kletter 1996: 29; Daviau 2017: fig. 4.5:1, 2).

The most common style of pillar figure at Mudaynat ath-Thamad shows a female with her arms bent at the elbow and her hands clasped just below or between the breasts, possibly holding a small disc-shaped object (Fig. 2:1–3). Figurine MT 1, the first object recovered during the 1995 surface survey, depicts the arms, hands, and central body of a female with hair locks resting on the shoulders. The arms are bent with the right hand clasped over the left and positioned between the breasts. The hands appear to be holding a small disk although this is not as clear as on comparable figurines from al-Bālū' (see below) or from WT-13. Two bracelets on the right wrist and the fingers of the right hand are well preserved.

The point of transition from the cylindrical torso to the flaring lower body is marked by a slight 'waist' visible below the level of the elbows; however, as expected, there are no anatomical details and the figurine is broken at this point. On the upper back there is evidence of vertical tooling, although there are no details of clothing or body parts. The cylindrical shape of the torso suggests a pillar figurine wearing a long skirt, although the presence of bracelets on both wrists is usually the sign of a mould-made naked figure. Two other upper torso fragments (Fig. 2:2, 3; MT 263,

MT 3313) represent the same stance and features, while a fourth example (MT 2052) is badly worn.

Parallels

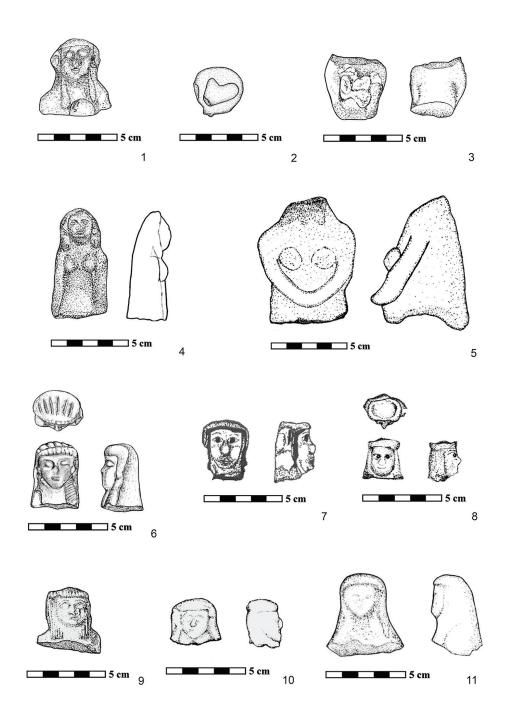
WT-13: The same stance and position of the arms can be seen among the figurines from the shrine at WT-13, such as WT 72 (Daviau 2001: fig. 3; 2017).

The best evidence for the female holding a disc or playing a drum is represented by one female head and upper body where the disc or drum is partially preserved (Fig. 2:1; MT 3246). Two detached drums, one with a mitten-shaped hand still attached (Fig. 2:2; MT 2320) and one fragment (MT 3450) that would have been placed in the hands of the figurine, are examples of this type of votive figurine. Extensive studies of drummers and drumming in ancient Israel (Paz 2007) suggests a link between the figurines from Jordan and those throughout the southern Levant where naked figures hold a disc against the chest and pillar figurines appear to hold the drum on an angle as if they are making music in the cult of the living and the dead.

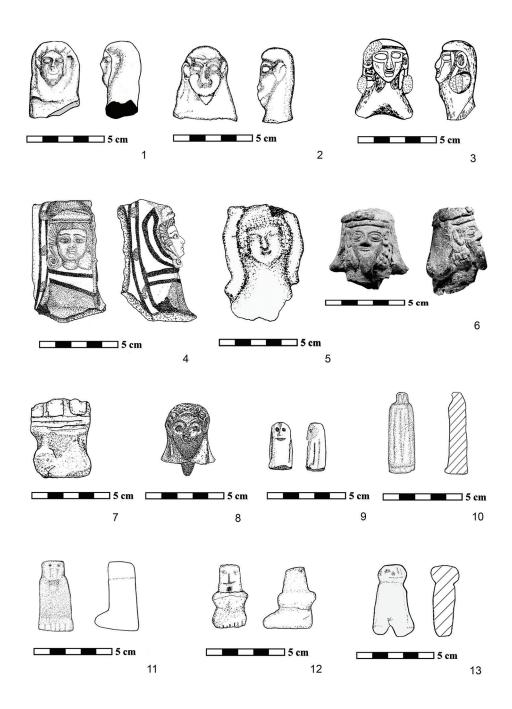
Parallels

WT-13: A pillar figurine with the drum angled away from the body (Daviau 2017: fig. 4.5:5) reflects a stance seen also on Phoenician pillar musician figurines. Separate drums, usually with one hand attached, are indicators of this style of musician figure (Daviau 2017: fig. 4.5:8, 9).

AL-BĀLŪʻ: The best known parallel is a complete figurine from al-Bālūʻ, measuring 11.8 cm (Worschech 1995: fig. 2), which is an example of the Moabite style of pillar figurine with tooling below the elbows suggesting a long garment. In this case, long plain locks of hair rest on the shoulders flanking the clasped hands. The same head style appears on two other figurines from al-Bālūʻ that Worschech (1995: 187, 189



2. Female with drum or child: 1) MT 3246, 2) MT 2320, 3) MT 541; other stance: 4) MT 1111, 5) MT 3595; various head styles: 6) MT 20, 7) MT 565, 8) MT 519, 9) MT 1591, 10) MT 487, 11) MT 1934.



3. Veiled heads: 1) MT 61, 2) MT 309; protomes: 3) adapted from 'Amr 1980: fig. 83; relief on jug neck, 4) MT 2402; combined styles: 5) MT 1884; male head: 6) adapted from Glueck 1933–34: fig. 6=1970: fig. 96; lower body, 7) MT 1541; head with prong, 8) adapted from Glueck 1933–34: fig. 7 right=1970: fig. 94; miniature figures: 9) MT 25, 10) MT 3137 11) MT 1950, 12) MT 24, 13) MT 1909.

fig. 3a, b) compares with those from sites in central Moab, especially Dhībān and al-Mashadd.

Two other figures are severely damaged but appear to represent females holding a child. Even in the best-preserved example (Fig. 2.3; MT 541), it is not clear whether these were pillar figurines or were naked. Several other styles of figurine may also have been pillar figurines, although they are different from the common style of a female holding a disc or holding her breasts. At Mudaynat ath-Thamad, one figurine has her hands at her sides (Fig. 2:4; MT 1111), another has her hands clasped on her abdomen (MT 3595). From the front, figurine MT 1111 has locks of hair that rest on each shoulder, even though the left shoulder is lower than the right. Two breasts are evenly spaced on the upper torso with a slight indentation below them, indicating a pinched waist. From the side, the head is covered with a shawl that extends on either side covering the arms and hands. Figurine MT 3595 (Fig. 2:5) is preserved from the neck to the hips. The lower part of the body is hollow and larger from the front to the back than from side to side, suggesting a pregnant female. However, she does not resemble the Phoenician seated pregnant female wearing a long cloak.

Hair Styles

Both free-standing and pillar female figurines may have simple locks of hair falling on their shoulders, or elaborate coiffures, while others may wear a headdress or shawl that covers the hair. Two heads with long locks falling from behind their ears represent a local style seen at WT-13 (Daviau 2017: Fig. 4.1:7). In some instances, the locks are incised with diagonal strokes (Fig. 2:6; MT 20) or covered with black paint (Fig. 2:7). One figurine appears to

wear a crown (Fig. 2:8) and another has an Egyptian-style blunt cut coiffure (Fig. 2:9), similar to figurine WT 86 at WT-13.

Heads without details of their coiffure appear to wear a veil or head covering. Two are worn and facial details are faint (Fig. 2:10, 11; MT 487, MT 1934), but two are better preserved. In the latter, the chin is covered with extra clay compressing it into the neck (Fig. 3:1, 2) and elongating the face, similar to that of male figurines.

Protomes

Protomes are attached figures, which were either mould-made or handmade. In the two examples from al-Mudaynah, both heads appear mould-made, although the one surface find is poorly preserved (Fig. 3:3; 'Amr 1980: fig. 83; Sauer and Khalayly 1981: 64). By contrast, a beautiful head attached to the neck of a jug (Fig. 3:4; MT 2402) has a Hathor-style coiffure with elaborate curls, a headdress, and shawl. The addition of these features may be a regional style. The face of this figure retains the detail of a new mould, but no other figurine heads of this type were found at the site.

Parallels

TALL AL-MAZĀR: The closest parallel to the female relief on a jug is a female head on a decanter neck from Tall al-Mazār. In this case, the hair style is more difficult to identify, due to damage on the left side (Yassine and van der Steen 2012: 134 cat. P004, cover).

One mould-made head is unique. MT 1884 is a Judean pillar figurine head as shown by Kletter (1996: figs. 25, 6:5, 6), who illustrates both a complete female pillar figure and a group of the most characteristic heads with tight curls on the top and sides. The head at Mudaynat ath-Thamad was modified by the addition of long curls (Fig. 3:5), possibly to represent the goddess Hathor.

⁵ Hübner 1989: pl. 7, illustrated a female head from Tall al-Milḥ (Malḥata) with the same hairdo showing locks with diagonal strokes.

Male Figurines

Although several small ceramic and stone male heads and torsos were recovered at WT-13 (Daviau 2017: 4.4:1-5), few such figurines were found at Mudaynat ath-Thamad. However, the first figurine head, discovered by Glueck during his 1934 survey, shares several features with the royal statue of Yerah-azer. This ceramic head (Fig. 3:6; Glueck 1933-34: fig. 6; 1970: fig. 96) depicts a smiling male with large eyes and ears, a beard, and long hair held in place by an ornamented headband. An extension from the neck is evidence that this head was attached to a larger figure. The lower part of a robed figure cannot be shown definitively to be part of the same figurine but is suggestive of what it might have looked like. In this instance, standing figurine MT 1541 (Fig. 3:7) preserves the base, feet, and lower part of a garment with three tassels extending to just above the hem. A second head, with an intact prong (Fig. 3:8), was initially identified as a male due to the elongated chin and appearance of a beard on the cheeks (Glueck 1933-34: 24 fig. 7), but was later included in the group of female figurines with a long chin (Glueck 1970: 188).

Miniature Schematic Figurines

A group of five miniature figures made of stone have stylised facial features and a truncated body (Fig. 3:9-13). In two examples, the base represents the toes of two feet (Fig. 3:11, 12), while another has short stumpy legs (Fig. 3:13). Two additional fragments cannot with certainty be assigned to this group (MT 81, MT 310). The first of these consists of the base without details of the head and the second was badly broken so that only the eyes and the back remain. Both are from Nabataean structures located at the base of the mound although the latter (MT 310) may have come from the northeastern dump immediately above Reservoir 700 (Daviau et. al. 2000).

Parallels

Although these schematic figurines share some features with Nabataean figurines, they have a much earlier occurrence in the southern Levant.

TALL AR-RUMAYTH: Two stylised miniature figurines were perforated and may have been pendants ('Amr 1980: figs. 101, 103).

TALL DAYR 'ALLA: Two handmade heads representing miniature figures, classified by 'Amr (1980: figs. 38, 39, 102) as miscellaneous, had incised and applied features. A third stylised figurine may have been used as a pendant.

Ta'anach: Figurine TT 1400 is a triangular-shaped figure with incised eyes and a mouth supported by a thick base (Lapp 1969: 45 fig. 30, right). This figurine was recovered in a mixed fill of Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Age pottery.

JERUSALEM: Although described as ceramic pillar figurines (Gilbert-Peretz 1996: fig. 10:12–14), these are true miniatures with a pinched face.

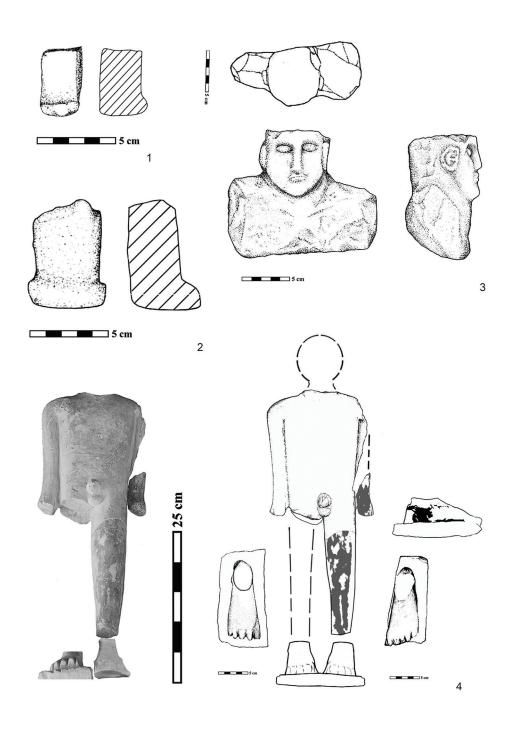
Stone Sculptures

Two stone sculptures (Fig. 4:1, 2; MT 481, 499) resembling the base and lower garment are so simply styled that it is not possible to ascertain the sex with certainty, although their style suggests that they should be classed as male figurines. More recognisable as male figures are a limestone male bust (Fig. 4:3; MT 1936) and a standing male statue (Fig. 4:4; MT 2968).6

Description

Bust MT 1936 consists of the head, flattened on the top, the shoulders and upper chest of a male figure. The eyes are somewhat misaligned, the nose is long and straight above a small mouth. The right ear is well preserved and has a circular shape. Altogether these features represent a serious

 $^{^{\}rm 6}$ Measurements in the database include H/height, L/length, W/width, T/thickness (forthcoming).



4. Stone sculptures: 1) MT 499, 2) MT 1855; 3) MT 1936, 4) MT 2968.

expression. From the front the chest is flattened, the right shoulder is bevelled and higher than the left, which is flattened. The bust is broken on an angle at mid-chest, rendering its function uncertain although the flattened head suggests a support in a balustrade.

A statue of a male (MT 2968) standing more than 46 cm in height was found in a number of pieces, the largest of which was the torso from shoulder to ankle of the left leg. The head is missing and there is no evidence for locks of hair on the shoulder suggesting a short hairstyle or bald head. Fragments include part of the left arm and hand and both feet, recovered separately. The hands were in the shape of fists with the knuckles to the front and the fingers turned to the back. There was no evidence for clothing, although red paint was preserved on one leg and on the left hand and foot. Even though the genitalia were clearly indicated, the penis is now chipped, eliminating the evidence of circumcision or the lack thereof. Although both feet were recovered it is not possible to determine whether one foot was ahead of the other in a striding position.

Parallels

This sculpture stands in stark contrast to the repertoire of stone statues from the Amman region, where 12 robed male statues wearing the *atef* crown were uncovered, and from the Egyptian-style figures on the al-Karak statue fragment and the al-Bālūʻ and Shīḥān stelae (Routledge and Routledge 2009; Hunziker-Rodewald and Deutsch 2014; Parker and Arico 2015). Apart from a number of small ceramic figurines, there are no known parallels to this statue from the southern Levant.⁷ The closest parallels

are from the northern Levant, Egypt, and Greece.

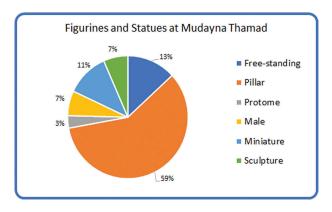
EGYPT: A nude striding male statue of Snofru-nefer, inscribed with his titulary, 'The venerable, with the great god, the Overseer of Singers at the royal court, dates to the 5th Dynasty and is currently in the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna (Satzinger 1994). Another example from the 6th Dynasty is a wooden sculpture of the master of ceremonies Merire-hashtef (Michalowski 1978: 111). Although the early date of these examples puts them in another category, the main features are similar, especially the lack of hair locks on the shoulders, the red paint on the body, and the lack of musculature that is in contrast to later kouros figures.

GREECE: The kouros statue from Sounion dating to *ca.* 600 BC is an early example of this well-known type (Johnston 1993: 52 fig. 39). Two aspects are at variance with MT 2968: its size (over 3.0 m tall) and certain features; namely, the long hairstyle and the position of the hands with the knuckles facing outward.

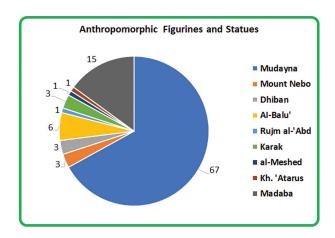
Reflections

The figurines and statues recovered at Mudaynat ath-Thamad (Fig. 5) were located across the entire site; in the gate and casemate rooms, the temple, the domestic and high-status areas, the street and the northeastern dump, while only one pillar base (MT 2581) was recovered from the complex of industrial buildings (B200; Field B). The stone bust and naked male statue were both from Complex 400 at the south end of the mound, along with Assyrian glazed bottles and a collection of alabaster and faience cosmetic vessels (Daviau and Klassen 2014: figs. 2, 3). The three broken figurines found in Temple 149 (Daviau and Steiner 2000: fig. 11:5-7) include the torso of a naked female, one painted female head, and one veiled head (Figs. 1:1, 2:7, 10). These fragments stand in stark contrast

⁷ Three naked male figurine torsos were reported from Tall Dayr 'Allā ('Amr 1980: figs. 9, 10, 48) and one each from Rujm al-Ḥinū, north of 'Amman (McGovern 1983: fig. 14:9), Tall Jāwā (Daviau 2002; TJ 1877) and WT-13 (Daviau 2017; WT 323).



5. Figurines and Statues at Mudaynat ath-Thamad.



6. Iron Age II Figurine Totals in central Jordan (published examples only).

to the well-preserved altars that were the focus of the cult. The remaining figurines and statues suggest an active domestic and industrial cult concentrated in the domestic structures (Daviau 2014a).

Of importance for this study is the wide variety of influences reflected among the figurines and statues from Mudaynat ath-Thamad. Beginning with naked female images, we find Canaanite and late Phoenician, Israelite, and Egyptian styles along with their incorporation in a combination of Phoenician and Cypriot traditions (Karageorghis 2000: fig. 215).

Pillar figurines embody various styles, including local and Phoenician charac-

teristics. Similar figurines are found at sites throughout Jordan, especially at WT-13, in the Jordan Valley, 'Ammūn and 'Īdūm (Edom). Drum playing musician figurines had a wide distribution under Phoenician influence, as seen on Cyprus (Karageorghis 2000: fig. 232). Judean influence is seen in one example of a mould-made head subsequently modified by long curls, while an Egyptian-style hairdo appears on the female relief on the neck of a jug.

Among male figurines, the ceramic male head found by Glueck and the robed leg fragment evoke Ammonite traditions. More difficult to situate are the miniature figures, although different styles are seen at

Jordan Valley sites and in Jerusalem. The stone bust has no true parallels, while the standing statue appears to follow Egyptian prototypes that later impacted Greek sculpture.

One other aspect derived from this study is the unusual number of figurines and statues at the small site of Mudaynat ath-Thamad when compared to neighbouring town sites (Fig. 6). The only other site with a comparable number is the one-room shrine, WT-13 (Daviau 2017). At present, Mudaynat ath-Thamad and WT-13 have yielded nearly 50% of all published figurines and statues in Jordan. Hopefully, the publication of currently unpublished anthropomorphic figures from Ammonite sites will put these numbers in better perspective.

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