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- 70 Carol Meyers, "Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Women's Bible Commentary, Expanded Edition, with the Apocrypha*, ed. C. A. Newsom and S. Ringe (London: SPCK, Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1998), p. 254.
- 71 We are told in 1 Sam 1:3, 21; 2:19, for example, that the reason the household of Elkanah goes annually to Shiloh is *l'izboah*, which means, literally, "to slaughter [an animal] as a *šélamim* offering." See Gary A. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5: 878b.
- 72 Phyllis Bird, "The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus," in *Ancient Israelite Religion, Records, from Ancient Egypt and Western Asia, Proceedings of the Conference on Women in the Ancient Near East, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, November 5-7, 1987*, Brown Judaic Studies 166, ed. B. S. Lesko (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), p. 293.
- 73 Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp. 113-14.

Ashdod and the Material Remains of Domestic Cults in the Philistine Coastal Plain

RÜDIGER SCHMITT

Family Religion and the Archaeology of Palestine

Scholarly interest in the topic of family religion in Israel and its ancient Near Eastern environment has increased notably during the past few decades.¹ However, scholarly work has focused mainly on the literary evidence; the archaeological material has only been explored in part,² though recent studies have demonstrated the crucial importance of archaeological finds for the reconstruction of family religion in Ancient Israel/Palestine.³ Therefore, the archaeological features of family religion are still a question for research.⁴ The aim of this case study is to determine archaeological features that point to religious activities in the household or in the neighborhood and to refine the typology of cult places and cultic activities at Iron Age living quarters.

General Problems of Philistine Material Culture

The arrival in the Coastal Plain of a new ethnic group from the Aegean, the Philistines, is marked for the majority of scholars by the arrival of a new pottery type, the locally produced Mycenaean ware represented in Ashdod Stratum XIIIa and Tel Miqne/Ekron Stratum VII in the first third of the twelfth century BCE.⁵ This kind of pottery was replaced by the bichrome ware at Ashdod Stratum XII and Tel Miqne Stratum VI in the middle of the twelfth century which flourished until the end of the eleventh century BCE. The ethnic significance of the pottery has been questioned by several scholars, because (a) the total amount of Philistine pottery in central Philistine cities such as Ashdod and Tel Miqne is only about c. 27 percent

of the total; and (b) the forms of Philistine pottery closely resemble older local Canaanite types. J. F. Brug states therefore:

Our distribution studies confirm that the heartland of the so-called Philistine Ware is indeed the coastal plain which the literary texts associate with the Philistines. Philistine Ware does occur at sites which are not Philistine, but the consistency and percentage of its occurrence diminishes sharply as one gets further away from the Philistine heartland . . . It is, therefore, virtually certain that this pottery was manufactured by inhabitants of Philistia and used by Philistines.

But "This does not mean that Philistine Ware must be an indicator of the time of arrival of the Philistines, nor that it is a sure indicator of their ethnic background."⁶ Also, the production of the typical Philistine terracotta figurines in Ashdod does not begin parallel to the monochrome ware but with the introduction of the bichrome ware. Only in Ekron can two objects, a Ψ-type figurine and an Ashdoda-type head, be dated to the initial phase of Philistine pottery production, marked by the monochrome Mycenaean IIIC 1-b-ware. All in all, "Philistine" terracotta figurines are indeed typical for Philistine material culture, but they cannot serve as an indicator of the arrival of a new ethnicity. The main problem concerning the terracotta figurines is whether they reflect Aegean or Mycenaean cult practices or neither. The relatively late appearance of the terracotta figurines, especially their flourishing until Iron Age II B/C and the typological differences between them and their Aegean "sisters" show that they were developed in Palestine during the Early Iron Age. Therefore, they are not relevant for determining the question of ethnicity, although the objects are distinctive for the material culture of the Philistines in the Iron Age I and II.⁷

The Typology of the Figurines

The corpus of Philistine terracotta figurines consists of seven main types with several subtypes (Figure 9.1):

- Type I: Ψ figurines
- Type II: mourning figurines
- Type III: chair figurines, so called "Ashdodas"
- Type IV: male "snow man" figurines
- Type V: "snow man" figurines of musicians
- Type VI: pillar figurine/Ψ-type mixed style
- Type VII: female "snow man" figurines⁸

The majority of Philistine figurines are represented by a unique type of figurine in the form of a chair with four legs and a highly stylized head in form of a *koluthos* on a long neck, nicknamed "Ashdoda." This type is present at Ashdod and Tel

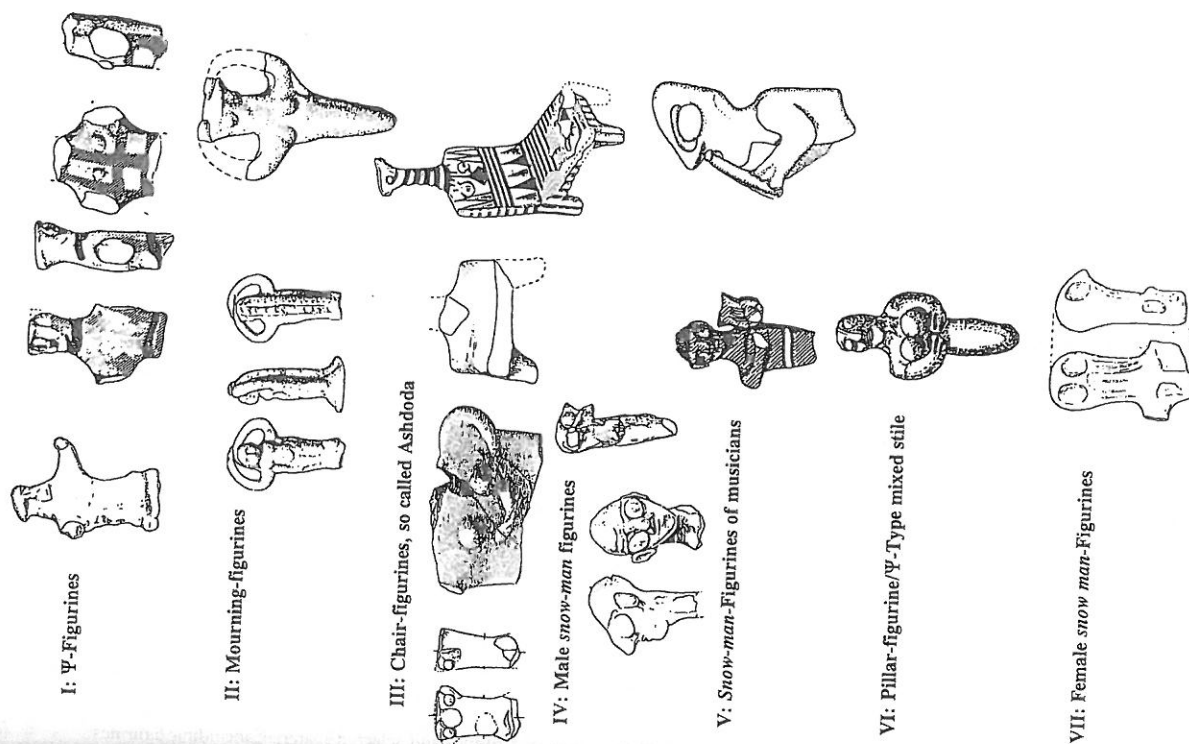


Figure 9.1 Typological chart of Philistine terracotta figurines

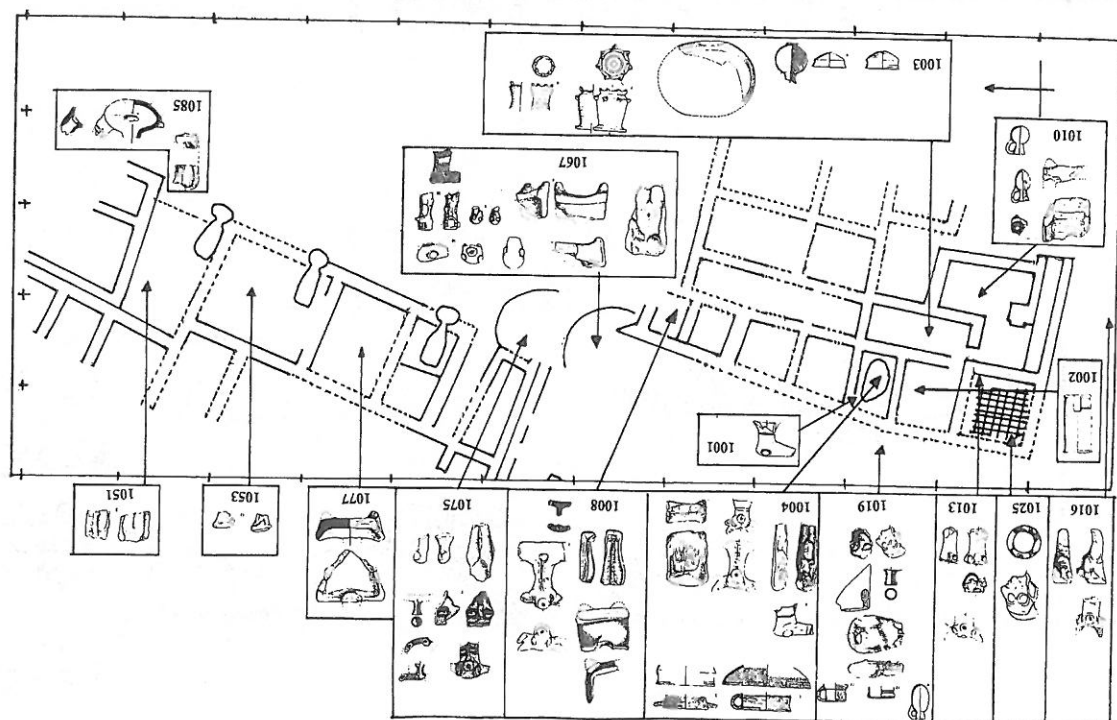
Qasile and, as several head fragments indicate, also at Tel Mique, Tell es-Safi, Aphek and Tell Judeidch. Only one figurine from Ashdod is fully preserved; the vast majority of the group consists of fragments of neck, head, or chair. Some of the chairs have applied breasts on the back-rest. From the iconographic point of view, it is quite obvious that these figurines represent the image of an enthroned female deity. Twenty-three chair fragments and twenty Ashdoda-like heads dating from Iron Age I B to Iron Age II C were found at Ashdod. The greatest number belong to Iron Age II B. Besides the Ashdoda fragments, eleven male heads and two male torsos were found at Ashdod, which probably belong to a standing nude male figurine. These figurines lack any iconographical indication that they represent a divine being (e.g., crown, weapons, or other divine attributes). Unfortunately, there is as yet insufficient evidence to identify the goddess represented by the Ashdoda figurines with the Asherah mentioned in an inscription on a storage jar from Tel Mique/Ekron,⁹ or with the deity *pt/g/yb* – possibly an original Philistine goddess – mentioned in a seventh century BCE dedicatory inscription from the same city,¹⁰ though the Ashdoda clearly represents a kind of mother goddess. The male heads and figurines without divine emblems are most probably representations of ancestors.¹¹

A Potter's Sanctuary at Ashdod

The archaeological contexts of these figurines is highly significant. Most of them were found in the so-called potters' quarter and adjacent living-areas in Area D. The potters' quarter of Ashdod Stratum VIII (= Stratum D 3) was most probably destroyed at the end of the eighth century during the conquest of Sargon II.¹² A great number of figurines came from pits in which they were buried together with other pottery remains.¹³ A building complex in the south of Area D has been interpreted as a small temple by the excavators¹⁴ (Figure 9.2). The installations in room 1010 consist of a small platform (Locus 1022) with three courses of brick of about 1.35m to 1.15m and a bench running along the southeast wall (W1013). The installations were covered with a white wash. In the northwest corner of room 1010 there is a room paved with pebbles of about 3–4m (1009); in the southeast corner a second room of about 3m by 3m, paved with mudbrick, was excavated (1025). Just one Ashdoda fragment has been found in room 1010 itself.¹⁵ The mudbrick room yielded one male head.¹⁶ In the debris of room 1010 one jug, two juglets and one bowl were found.¹⁷ The adjacent room 1003, together with 1006 and 1045, forms most probably a long corridor leading to room 1010. Room 1003 contains two knob-footed cups of unclear use (maybe incense-burners), two jugs, one store jar, a loom-weight, four bowls, one cooking pot, one jar, and a unique terracotta basin.¹⁸

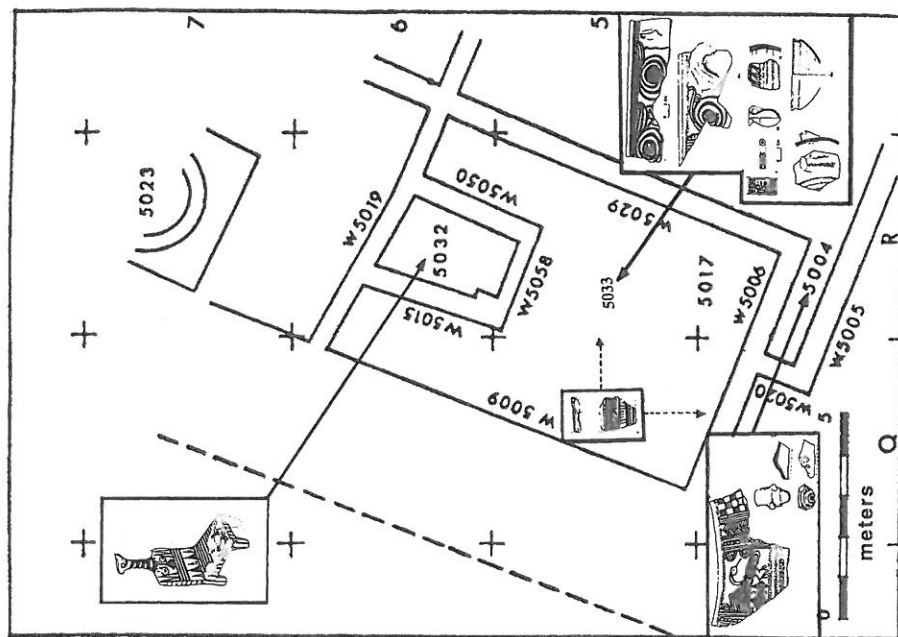
Three more Ashdoda fragments, two Astarte plaques and two male heads, were found in the adjacent rooms of the building and its vicinity. Another assemblage of

Figure 9.2 Ashdod, Area D, Str. VIII. Potter's quarter with find spots of figurines and selected material, including figurines found in Strata VII–VI workshop. Redrawn and compiled by the author after Dothan, *Ashdod*, II/III, Plan 8 and Figs. 38–47



probable cultic objects and vessels was found in Locus 1019, an open space either belonging to the older Iron II B Stratum IX (= Stratum D 4) or to Stratum VIII (= Stratum D 3): The assemblage consists of one Ashdoda fragment and one head of a male figurine, a zoomorphic libation vessel, six craters, a stand, a fragment of a keros ring bowl, five bowls, among them a miniaturized form, a juglet and a jug, and two jars.¹⁹ It is possible that the Stratum VIII (= Stratum D 3b) pit 1004, containing a similar assemblage, including various pottery,²⁰ another Ashdoda fragment,²¹ a plaque-figurine and four zoomorphic keros ring spouts,²² can be associated with Locus 1019.

Some scholars, especially Wolfgang Zwickel and myself, discussed the problem of the cultic character of Area D and came to the conclusion that the structures have no explicit cultic meaning, because most of the objects do not form any kind of cultic assemblage. We concluded this because (a) they were not closely associated with the proposed cultic installations; (b) most of the pottery is of non-cultic types (bowls, craters, cooking pots, jars); and (c) the whole character of Area D, the potters' quarter, points to an industrial and commercial use.²³ The finds from Tell Jawa, especially the domestic cult assemblages consisting of terracotta figurines, various types of small vessels, libation vessels, etc.,²⁴ have led me to reconsider my proposal from ten years ago. However, the few finds in the proposed cultic room 1010 remain problematic, especially since the architecture is not comparable to any other temple in Iron Age Palestine. But the mixed utilitarian and non-utilitarian character of the pottery assemblage in the building leads me to the conclusion that some kind of cultic use is possible. Perhaps the cultic use of room 1010 was occasional, while the utensils for the cult were stored in the other rooms, usually serving as store rooms. Also, the similar mix of utilitarian and non-utilitarian assemblages of Locus 1019 and Pit 1004 suggests an occasional cultic use for these loci as well. The figurines accompanied by libation vessels, jugs and craters point to a kind of libation and/or meal ritual for the goddess represented by the Ashdoda figurines. Moreover, it is likely that these cultic activities had something to do with the process of pottery production. The finds from the potters' workshop itself indicate that the production of pottery was accompanied by cultic activities. The Ashdoda and the other types of figurines found in the area of the workshop, which was still in use in Stratum VII, could have been used to insure the success of the production process through their display near the kilns.²⁵ A great number of broken figurines and keros fragments, most probably originating from the workshop, were found in pit 1067 (Figure 9.3).²⁶ Therefore, it seems quite possible that the assemblages, including Ashdoda figurines and male ancestor figurines, were used in cultic activities associated with the craftsmen's work, in particular to insure the success of the problematic process of firing the kilns and producing the pottery. If this was the case, the assemblages point to a kind of group or guild cult, which includes the persons involved in the production process. The occasional use of industrial buildings for cultic purposes is also present in seventh-century Ekron, where a great number of limestone altars point to cultic practices associated with the olive oil industry.²⁷



interest is the content of a Stratum XI (4b/Iron I B) building in area H. The building's remains and the artifacts excavated in the building itself indicate a prosperous domicile.²⁸ The famous, complete bichrome-painted Ashdoda figurine²⁹ was uncovered in room 5032, but – unfortunately – in a secondary context, as part of a large heap of rubble and broken pottery fill in the room.³⁰ However, the complete Ashdoda, another fragment of a similar figurine,³¹ a fragment of a bird figurine and a zoomorphic kernos ring spout (most probably the head of a dog)³² can be associated with the rich contemporary bichrome Philistine pottery of the building³³ (Figure 9.4).

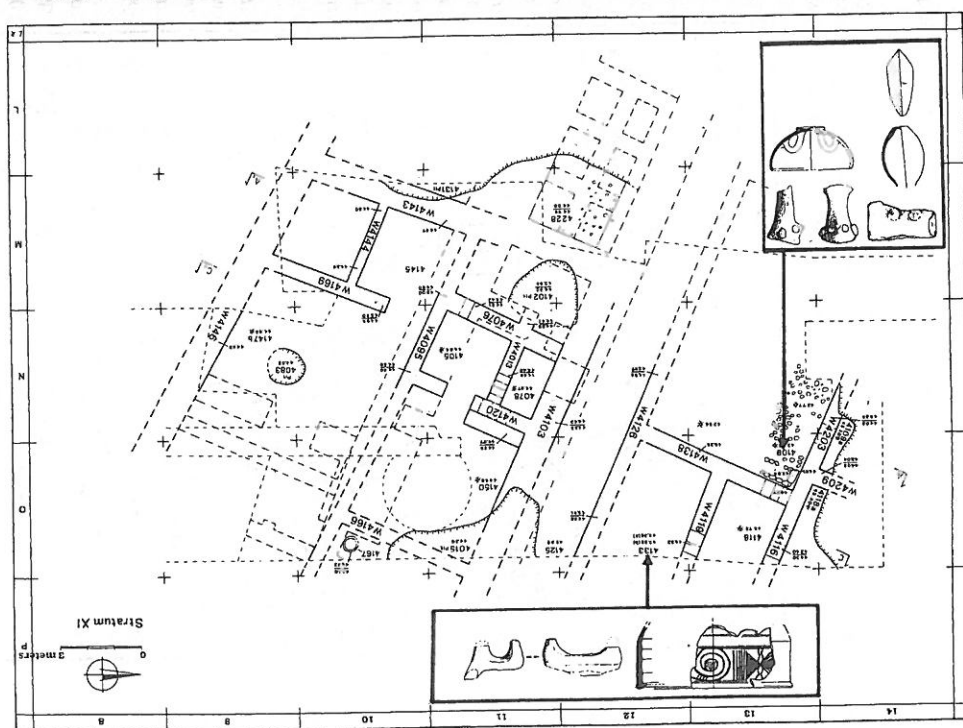
In the residential area G, Stratum XI (Iron Age II A), room 4133 yielded an Ashdoda chair fragment together with a crater³⁴, the adjacent yard (Locus 4109) yielded an Ashdoda back-rest fragment and the head of another Ashdoda together with a so called “spinning bowl”, a bone spatula, and a juglet³⁵ (plan 3). Here too, the findings point to cultic activities as well in the rooms and in the courtyard of the building.

Although the finds mostly form no coherent assemblage from a single find-spot, it is clear that luxury and non-utilitarian pottery objects and the Ashdoda figurines point to forms of domestic cult consisting of the worship of the goddess represented by the figurine and the male ancestors represented by the male figurine fragments with libations and meal-offerings. The findings in the Tell Qasile houses, especially an Ashdoda fragment from one of the dwellings,³⁶ confirm the observations from Ashdod, that cultic practices with figurines had their place in the domestic cult.

Conclusions

The assemblages of terracotta figurines, non-utilitarian objects of pottery such as kernos rings, and utilitarian pottery, mostly of luxury types, at Ashdod, were likely used in cultic activities of the family and the workmen of the potters' workshop. Such activities consisted of drink and meal offerings to the goddess represented by the Ashdoda figurines, and to the ancestors. The cult assemblages from Ashdod are quite similar to those of the superimposed phases (319, 200 and 131, Strata XII–X) of the temple at Tell Qasile, which is a village shrine. The assemblages of the shrine include terracotta figurines and a small terracotta naos, together with non-utilitarian pottery such as kernos rings, other forms of libation vessels and stands, as well as utilitarian luxury-types such as a lion-shaped rhyton and small bowls.³⁷ The difference between the remains of the domestic cult and the potters' cult on the one hand, and those of the shrines on the other, is that the shrines contain a slightly greater amount of specialized objects such as the small model shrine (naos), anthropomorphic vessels, and stands. Therefore, the cult assemblages in Ashdod (and Tell Qasile) enable us to differentiate between village shrines, guild cults which were practiced occasionally in or near industrial areas, and domestic cult, on the basis of the composition of the assemblages themselves and the character of related installations.

Figure 9.4 Ashdod Area G, Stratum XI with assemblages from Loci 4109 and 4133. Compilation of Rudiger Schmitt after Dothan/Porath, *Ashdod V*, Plan 12 and Figs 40, 42



In comparison, evidence from Beersheba³⁸ and many other sites suggests similar cultic features, e.g., cultic assemblages with figurines, votive objects, luxury and non-utilitarian vessels and incense altars, often associated with food processing and production installations.³⁹ Thus, the evidence from Ashdod and from domestic units in Israelite and Judean settlements shows that the cultic assemblages and the practices associated with them are quite similar in Philistia and in Judah/Israel. Furthermore, the Israelite and Judean household cult assemblages do not indicate a permanent "holy corner" or continuously used sacred space in the profane context of the dwellings. Like in the Ashdod dwellings, the ritual objects – mostly easily portable – could be used in different spaces of the household and could have been stored when not in use. Additional evidence from the excavations at Tell Jawa in Ammon, which yielded several cultic assemblages in the dwellings (mostly from the basement, but also in some cases from the upper story), with a similar content of figurines, luxury and non-utilitarian vessels, suggests the same picture. Thus, the archaeological evidence provides additional proof for the observations of Rainer Albertz and Karel van der Toorn concerning the international character of family religion in the Ancient Near East.⁴⁰

Notes

- 1 Rainer Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion: Religionsinterner Pluralismus in Israel und Babylon* (Stuttgart: Calver, 1978); *ibid.*, "Wieviel Pluralismus kann sich eine Religion leisten? Zum religionsinternen Pluralismus in alten Israel," in *Pluralismus und Identität*, Veröffentlichung der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie 8, ed. Joachim Mehlhausen (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995), pp. 193–213; *ibid.*, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit*, Grundrisse zum Alten Testament 8, 2nd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996–1997), pp. 45–68, 143–57, 291–304, 327–37; *ibid.*, "Religious Practices of the Individual and Family: Israel," in *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, ed. Sarah I. Johnston (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 429–30; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7 (Leiden, New York, Cologne: Brill, 1996); Erhard Gerstenberger, *Theologie im Alten Testament: Pluralität und Synkretismus alttestamentlicher Gottesgläubens* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), pp. 26–77; Bernhard Lang, *Jahwe, der biblische Gott: Ein Porträt* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), pp. 137–72; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel: The Family, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 48–103.
- 2 See Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 53 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), pp. 127–134; Wolfgang Zwickel, *Räucheraltäre und Räuchergeräte*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 97 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p. 38; Susan Ackerman, *Under Every Green Tree: Popular Religion in Sixth-Century Judah*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 46 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Carol Meyers, "From Household to House of Yahweh: Women's Religious Culture in Ancient Israel," in *Congress Volume, Basel 2001*, ed. André Lemaire (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002), pp. 277–303.
- 3 Paulette M. Michèle Daviau, "Family Religion: Evidence for the Paraphernalia of the Domestic Cult," in *The World of the Aramaeans II: Studies in History and Archaeology in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion*, ed. P. M. Michèle Daviau, John W. Wevers, and Michael Weigl, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 199–229.
- 4 See Wolfgang Zwickel, *Räucheraltäre und Räuchergeräte*, p. 38 n. 137.
- 5 See, for example, Trude Dothan, *The Philistines and their Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 94.
- 6 John F. Brug, *A Literary and Archaeological Study of the Philistines*, BAR International Series 265 (Oxford: Biblical Archaeology Review, 1985), p. 106.
- 7 Rüdiger Schmitt, "Philistäische Terrakottafiguren," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 31 (1999): 641–43.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 579–80.
- 9 Seymour Gitin, "Ekron of the Philistines Part II: Olive-Oil Suppliers to the World," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16 (1990): 232 n. 18.
- 10 Seymour Gitin, Trude Dothan, and Joseph Naveh, "A Royal Dedictory Inscription from Ekron," *Israel Exploration Journal* 47 (1997): 1–16; Ingo Kottsieper, "Eine Tempelbauinschrift aus Ekron," in *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments Ergänzungssammlung*, ed. Otto Kaiser (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001), pp. 189–90.
- 11 Schmitt, "Terrakottafiguren," p. 635.
- 12 Moshe Dothan, "Ashdod," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society), 1: 100.
- 13 Moshe Dothan, *Ashdod II/III: The Second and Third Season of Excavations*, 1963, 1965, *Soundings in 1967*, ATQOT 9/10 (Jerusalem: Central Press, 1971), pp. 88–105; Rachel Hachlili, "Figurines and Kernoï," in Moshe Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, pp. 125–6.
- 14 Moshe Dothan and David Noel Freedman, *Ashdod I: The First Season of Excavations*, ATQOT 7 (Jerusalem: Central Press, 1967), 133–4; Hachlili, "Figurines and Kernoï," pp. 125 and 135.
- 15 Dothan and Freedman, *Ashdod I*, Fig. 43.6 = Schmitt, "Terrakottafiguren," Cat. No. 24.
- 16 Schmitt, "Terrakottafiguren," Cat. No. 69.
- 17 Dothan and Freedman, *Ashdod I*, Fig. 37.15 (bowl), 22 (jug), 24.25 (juglets).
- 18 *Ibid.*, Fig. 38.7–8; Fig. 37.2–3, 11–12, 16, 19; Fig. 39.1, 3.
- 19 *Ibid.*, Fig. 42.18; Fig. 43.1; Fig. 42.19; Fig. 39.10; Fig. 42.3–7; Fig. 39.8, 10; Fig. 42.1, 2, 8, 15, 16; Fig. 42.9, 13; Fig. 42.11, 12.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 148; Fig. 36: four bowls, three craters, flask handle, lamp.
- 21 Schmitt, "Terrakottafiguren," Cat. No. 25.
- 22 Dothan and Freedman, *Ashdod I*, Fig. 43.4; Fig. 44.1–2, 45.4.
- 23 Zwickel, *Der Tempelkult in Kanaan und Israel*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 10 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 247; Schmitt, "Terrakottafiguren," pp. 582–3.
- 24 See Daviau, "Family Religion," pp. 199–229.
- 25 Schmitt, "Terrakottafiguren," Cat. No. 54 (near kiln 1164, under Hellenistic kiln 1053); Cat. No. 33 (between kilns 1088 and 1164); Cat. No. 31 (C/4, Locus 1085 near kiln 1169); Astarte-Plaque near kiln 1168 (Locus 1051; Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, Fig. 64.2).

- 26 Kernoi: Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, Fig. 66.2, 68.1. Figurines: Fig. 62.9; 62.10; Fig. 63.4 (= Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 30); 63.6 (= Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 34); 64.1 (Astarte plaque); 64.10 (female head). Male heads/figurines: Fig. 62.9 (= Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 77); 62.10 (= Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 93).
- 27 See Gitin, "Seventh Century BCE. Cultic Elements at Ekron" in *Biblical Archaeology Today 1990*, ed. Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), pp. 248–58.
- 28 Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, 162; Moshe Dothan and Trude Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 152–3.
- 29 Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 19 (= Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, Fig. 91.1).
- 30 Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, p. 161.
- 31 Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 21 (= Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, Fig. 91.1).
- 32 Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, Fig. 92.5, p. 8.
- 33 See Dothan, *Ashdod II/III*, Figs. 86, 87.
- 34 Moshe Dothan and Yosef Porath, *Ashdod V: The Fourth–Sixth Seasons of Excavations 1968–1970*, ATIQOT 13 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1993), Fig. 42.8 (= Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 27); 40.3.
- 35 Dothan and Porath, *Ashdod V*, 42.3 (= Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 23); 42.5 (= Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Cat. No. 58); Fig. 42.1 (spinning bowl); 41.9 (juglet).
- 36 Schmitt, "Terrakottafigurinen", Kat. Nr. 22 and p. 589 (= Amihai Mazar, "Excavations at Tel Qasile 1982–1984, Preliminary Report," *Israel Exploration Journal* 36 [1986]: Pl. 3a, Fig. 6.1).
- 37 Amihai Mazar, *Excavations at Tell Qasile I*. QEDEM 12 (Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1980), p. 120.
- 38 Yohanan Aharoni, *Beer-Sheva I: Excavations at Tel Beer-Sheva 1969–1971 Seasons* (Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, 1973), Loci 844, 859, 808: Pl. 22–5.
- 39 See Albertz and Schmitt, *Family Religion in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).
- 40 Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels*, p. 413; van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, p. 374.

Household Religion in Ancient Egypt

ROBERT K. RITNER

The famous assessment by Herodotus that the Egyptians were "religious beyond measure, more than any other people" (II.37) is supported both by an abundance of relevant artifacts and by a correspondingly prodigious history of scholarly publication. Yet despite a plethora of studies both general and specific on Egyptian religion, the term "household religion" is conspicuously absent from the field of Egyptology. It is ignored or avoided in titles of volumes and articles, and no such lemma may be found either individually or within the general treatment of "religion" in common references such as the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* or *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Egyptology*.¹ The reasons for this absence are not hard to discover and become apparent when one consults the necessarily brief entries on "house" in the same reference works.² A selection of remarks by Felix Arnold suffices to sketch the problem, as each historical paragraph begins on a disparaging note. Regarding prehistoric houses, "evidence for the origins of Egyptian architecture is still scanty."³ "The domestic architecture of the Old Kingdom has been little studied."⁴ "In the 1980s, the most progress was made in the study of the domestic architecture of the Middle Kingdom . . . all . . . reflect the architecture designed and employed by the state."⁵ "The house of the New Kingdom as known from Tell el-Amarna is the best documented of all Egyptian house types."⁶ "Domestic architecture of the Third Intermediate Period and the Late period has met little interest among Egyptologists."⁷

With ancient domestic architecture typically located beneath modern settlements while temples, tombs, and palaces remain accessible at the desert edge or beyond, Egyptian geography and scholarly interest have joined to favor state and funerary practices over "household" concerns. Exceptions to this rule are usually either state "towns" adjoining pyramids or forts, or aberrant settlements like the utopian Amarna of Akhenaton (with often "revolutionary" household cult) or the restricted