

A2 Assignment

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An Object Analysis of Ain ghazal figure in the Neolithic Era

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HPAH7014 Spaces, Places, and Objects in Ancient Mediterranean Religions

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Abstract

This paper ^{will} ~~aims to~~ analyse Ain Ghazal's ^{three} two-headed statues, discussing ^{their} characteristics, use, viewing, and handling. They were discovered by contractors in 1974 building the road connecting Amman and Al-Zarga, Jordan. Two caches had been intentionally and carefully buried under the floors of abandoned houses , and the two-headed statues were in the second cache. Citation Needed

The three two-headed statues have two heads that emerge from the same torso, shoulders spread out horizontally, and no arms or legs. They have wide, open, almond-shaped eyes, and diamond-shaped pupils with irises outlined with bitumen. The noses are pointed the mouths tight-lipped, and the statues have traces of decoration with pigments like white clay and tawny and red *include an image here. Also give the dimensions and explain how the statuettes were built up from reeds and plaster* ochre. Citation Needed

Some **Archaeologists** suggest the statues played a vital role in the lives of the people of Ain Ghazal; some believe they represented the village's inhabitants' ancestors, whilst **others** suggest they might have represented a twin-headed god or goddess. They may also have represented twins, or human couples. These hypotheses are still speculative, and the statues' definitive function remains uncertain. Citation Needed

An Object Analysis of Ain ghazal Figures in the Neolithic Era

The three two-headed statue discoveries date back to the **Neolithic period** ³ when humans made one of the most significant improvements to their lives: the domestication of animals and plants. 15 statues and 15 busts were discovered from 1983 to 1985 in two separate caches, buried *some repetition from your introduction* Citation Needed

approximately 200 years apart. The Ain Ghazal statues are considered to be the first representation of humans, and are the most remarkable prehistoric art found in the pre-pottery Neolithic period¹.



First discovered by contractors in 1974, beneath a red-plastered floor, Mohammed Maraqtan, a Jordan archaeologist, reported the discovery to the Jordanian Department of Antiquities², and excavations started in 1982, led by Gary Rollefson, and continued into the late 1990s. Excavations discovered human figures in two separate caches, separated by almost 200 years³. The two-headed statue was discovered in the second cache. The two caches were intentionally and carefully buried under the floor of abandoned houses and how the two caches were deposited were the same.

The world monuments funds adopted the Ain Ggazal site, because they considered it endangered cultural heritage, stating urban settlement and development as a huge threat to its preservation⁴.



The archaeologists found many figures during the excavation, which dated back to 6500BCE, before pottery was discovered. Most were small figures of animals, largely aurochs, wild cattle killed for food and fur. Other figurines represented pregnant women, and were unique because they were constructed from lime plaster piled over bundles of twigs, reeds, and other grass⁵. These human figures were short, but had big heads and large eyes with black pigment outline surrounding their eyes⁶.

¹ Kuijt, I. 2011

² Tubb, 2012

³ Grissam, 2000

⁴ Tubb, 2012

⁵ SIMMONS et al., 1988 – don't need capitals

⁶ SIMMONS et al., 1988

contextualising the objects is important, but you need to structure this more clearly

In 7250BCE, few people populated Ain Ghazal, inhabiting individual houses constructed from fieldstones covered with mud, lime plaster, and red pigment paintings. By roughly 7550BCE, the population started increasing, and housing was expanded to accommodate. Ain Ghazal continued growing as the population kept on rising. However, between 7000-6900BCE, Ain Ghazal lost about 90% of its population and returned to being a small farming area.⁷

how much of this information is relevant for your analysis? Where do the objects belong with me?

One of the best ways to evaluate these statues is through object biography. Objects, statues, like human beings, acquire specific histories. Figures are more than their material content; they possess power through symbolism. Figures represent what the humans in the past belief, memorialize and celebrate. The objects bibliography allows modern humans to place the role of particular objects in the evolution of the human species.

Jordan's harsh climate had a severe impact on the first cache's statues – resulting in exposed fragile, inner skeletons and broken plaster. Consequently, when the second cache was discovered, the whole pit was block lifted to the Smithsonian Institute for further investigation, excavation, and treatment of the objects in proper laboratory conditions⁸. The statues survived being buried for almost 9000 years and, because they had central voids, the soil's weight above them led to their displacement. This was worsened by bulldozers' weight and vibrations⁹. To prevent breakages, the statues were placed in wooden boxes filled with polyurethane foam and covered with aluminium. Upon arrival at the Smithsonian institute, they underwent carbon dating; the second cache statues dated to within 80 years of 6710BCE. X-ray diffraction equipment, microscopes, and high-tech chemicals were used to analyse the objects. The objects were incomplete, and many fillings were

⁷ Bauer, 2019

⁸ Rollefson, 1998

⁹ Tubb, 2012

required so as the hardening of the plaster. Torsos were locked and deformed, and heads were displaced, leaving only the solid plaster standing alone¹⁰.

Displaced sections were repositioned so that recreation of armature and reassembling worked in tandem. The rods were then covered with cotton wool to prevent them clattering with the plaster inner surface and carefully boxed. Much guesswork was used in the reconstruction. The statues are today part of the Jordan Museum collection¹¹.

The statues discovered in the second cache were more stylish and larger than the statues in the first cache. The two-headed statues have two heads that emerge from the same torso, shoulders spread out horizontally, and no arms or legs.

. More effort was placed in the heads' modelling, covering almost a fifth of the figure's overall size. More detail was also placed on their faces, with wide, open, almond-shaped eyes, and diamond-shaped pupils with irises outlined with bitumen. The noses are pointed the mouths tight-lipped, and the statues have traces of decoration with pigments like white clay and tawny and red ochres.¹² The statues were made from the plaster used to cover the houses' floors and walls¹³. The plaster was also used to treat the skulls of death. The eyes are large, almost twice the nose's size. They had traces of decoration with pigments like white clay and tawny and red ochres, and the heads and torsos were formed using different reeds. The statue is 47 cm tall, and are intended to be only seen from the front¹⁴ *you jump around quite a bit - you have already provided some description of the objects.*

¹⁰ Sackler, 1996

¹¹ Tubb, 2012

¹² Simmons and Rollefson, 1984

¹³ Rollefson, 1990

¹⁴ Grissom, 1996

An Object Analysis of Ain ghazal figure in the Neolithic era

Dinaa Orkoubi_2008519_A2



captions for the images

It is evident that this statue was not meant for permanent, because they were not made of stone or metal but rather plaster, which can easily break if not handled carefully. Archaeologists suggest the statues played a vital role in the lives of the people of Ain Ghazal; some believe they represented the village's inhabitants' ancestors, whilst others suggest they might have represented a twin-headed god or goddess. They may also have represented twins, or human couples. These hypotheses are still speculative, and the statues' definitive function remains uncertain.. The objects' function disappeared with the people who designed them, but archaeologists use these objects to obtain valuable clues about the community that created them.

Ain Ghazal contains structures that might have been used to serve special, most likely ceremonial functions, and it is speculated that the statues are connected to these rites; some statues were also found buried in those buildings used for ritual functions¹⁵..

The statues might have also been used to honour the ancestors, because the people of Ain Ghazal buried the deceased in their houses' floors and others just outside their buildings. Their heads were later exhumed and decorated for those buried inside the houses and buried separately in a shallow pit inside the houses¹⁶. This was done to grant their power to the people in that house or as a form of respect for the deceased.

. The statues' well-defined nostrils and tight-lipped mouths give the impression of breathing and living individuals who cannot speak or are not willing to speak. Clothes and other characteristics were painted on and, although they did not have arms and genitals, their torsos were modelled using plaster. There are also some differences when it comes to burials: the statues were

you should keep your description together - very difficult otherwise to follow the logic of your analysis.

¹⁵ Renfrew, 1990

¹⁶ Rollefson, 1986

buried in groups, but people are not. The eyes of the statue are wide open, as if they are aware and alive, which makes it difficult to understand what the statues meant to Ain Ghazal's people¹⁷.

Various studies agree on the site and context in which the objects were found, and its associated finds, characteristics, and degree of completeness. However, for anthropologists and archaeologists, statues provide significant clues to early human culture and life. Although archaeologists continually to discover more information regarding when and how the statues were created, they might not provide exact information about how they were made and used. The statues might have served different purposes to the people who made them. depending on their beliefs, experiences, age, and specific desires and needs. Additionally, might only be a fraction of what was created over a long time, meaning we are perhaps missing vital clues/evidence.

Various scholars have offered their interpretations of the statues: Kenyon (1957) first suggested they represented ancestors¹⁸, based on the plastered statue skulls, discussing how objects are either used to honour ancestors or represent slain enemies. Other archaeologists have followed in her footsteps, suggesting the statues represented revere community members and the deceased¹⁹. Schuster suggests the statues represented ghosts, and were used as substitutes in ghost rituals; the statues were smeared with ointments to keep ghosts under control, and prevent them from frightening people in their dreams²⁰.

The two-headed objects were created approximately 9000 years ago by unknown craftspeople, and have survived to this day as examples of human spirituality, technology, and ingenuity. Three two-headed statues were discovered in Ain Ghazal, Jordan. The statues were

¹⁷ Grissom, 1996

¹⁸ Schmandt-Besserat, 1998

¹⁹ Schmandt-Besserat, 1998

²⁰ Scurlock, 2016

considered a representation of humans and the most remarkable example of prehistoric art in the pre-pottery Neolithic period. These two-headed statues possess a bibliography, a history of people's lives in Ain Ghazal and are more than their material content because they possess the power of symbolism. Statues represent what the humans in the past believed, memorialize and celebrate. The objects bibliography allows modern humans to place the role of that particular object in the evolution of the human species.

The two-headed statues were discovered in the second cache. Since they are fragile much precaution was put in place during excavation and was even block lifted as a whole pit to the Smithsonian Institute for further investigation and excavation. Two-headed statues have two heads that emerge from the same torso with shoulders spread out horizontally with no arms. They have wide-opened and almond-shaped eyes and diamond-shaped pupils with irises outlined with bitumen and pointed nose with the mouth tit-lipped. *avoid repetition of information*

The statue had traces of decoration with pigments like white clay and tawny and red ochres. Archaeologists believe that the two-headed statues represent the ancestors of Ain Ghazal's people because they buried their loved ones on the floors of the houses. Others suggest that the two-headed statue might have been used to represent a goddess or twin-headed god. *Citation Needed* thought to have represented twins or human couples.

The biography of the two-headed statues is not yet complete. They might still accumulate important historical and biographical data until their final obliteration. Some of the questions that archaeologists have been able to answer include; where the statues came from, who designed them, their uses, age, and cultural significance. Biographical evaluation of objects is important in understanding the statue's creation and purposes; otherwise, the Ain Ghazal objects would have remained more isolated.

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A2 Assignment

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

58/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

This is clearly written and you have done some good research. There are however some problems with this as an object analysis - which requires you to focus on the objects and present your own analysis and interpretation.

1. focus - there is a lot of extraneous material that you do not need to include. You should be focusing on what you yourself can observe on the objects.

2. logical structure: your text jumps around quite a bit. Introduce the object and perhaps here give a brief contextualisation; describe the object in your own words (don't forget materials and dimensions); briefly explain how these have been interpreted by other scholars; provide your own theoretically informed interpretation - think in particular about how these were used and how they might have been embedded within ritualised practices and belief systems.

You identify object biography as an appropriate theoretical approach for analysing these objects. This i definitely agree with - but you could do a lot more with it - see comments on text. Also you need to demonstrate reading of the object biography literature.

Beware of value judgements!

Also be careful of using phrases like "archaeologists believe/think" etc without citing these scholars..

Text Comment. will

Text Comment. three

Text Comment. their

Strikethrough.

QM

Citation Needed

Cite Source:

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Text Comment. include an image here. Also give the dimensions and explain how the statuettes were built up from reeds and plaster

QM

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Additional Comment

you need to indicate who makes this suggestion and give teh supporting references

Text Comment. Some

QM

Citation Needed

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Additional Comment

who?

Strikethrough.



Comment 3

PPNB (give dates)

Text Comment. some repetition from your introduction

QM

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PAGE 3



Comment 4

value judgement. Is this your opinion your the opinion of the scholars you have read?
In general I would advise avoiding making statements like this that can be challenged.



Comment 5

relevance? Keep your focus on the objects

PAGE 4

Text Comment. contextualising the objects is important, but you need to structure this more clearly

Text Comment. how much of this information is relevant for your analysis? Where do the objects belong within this timeframe?

QM

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Comment 6

not necessarily a core concept for object biography - you have to make this relevant for your chosen object.



Comment 7

?

You hae misunderstood object biography. This approach explores the life history of an object, how it is embedded within human relations, and how this might change over time. It examines shifting lives/meanings of the objects.

QM

Relevance

Relevance?

PAGE 5



Comment 8

another value judgement

Text Comment. you jump around quite a bit - you have already provided some description of the objects.

PAGE 6

Text Comment. captions for the images

PAGE 7



Comment 9

Good observation, but you can tease this out some more. Perhaps not intended for regular use and handling. Perhaps something to be observed rather than handled?

What is the relationship between their creation, their use and their being cached? Thinking about these ideas is somewhere where object biography would work very well.



Comment 10

who? citation needed



Citation Needed

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Additional Comment

perhpas give us a bit more detail on these structures.



Comment 11

Evidence? This is an iterpretation

Text Comment. nice observation

Text Comment. you should keep your description together - very difficult otherwise to follow the logic of your analysis.

PAGE 8



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PAGE 9



Comment 12

avoid value judgements

Text Comment. avoid repetition of information

QM

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PAGE 11
