

# AN INSCRIBED BABOON STATUETTE FROM TEL MIQNE-EKRON

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## INTRODUCTION

Tel Miqne-Ekron (hereafter Ekron) yielded a variety of Egyptian and Canaanite-Phoenician finds dated to the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age. The metal, ivory and faience items from this repertoire have been published and demonstrate the Egyptian and the Canaanite-Phoenician cultural affiliation of this site. Monkeys were introduced by the Phoenicians and, starting in the Bronze Age, found in Mediterranean tombs and sanctuaries. Our baboon statuette is of a high artistic craftsmanship and probably dates to the late 13<sup>th</sup>–early 12<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>1</sup>

Baboon and monkey imagery originated in Pre-Dynastic Egypt and spread throughout the Near East during the Middle Bronze Age. It was subsequently introduced into early Minoan Crete, Geometric period Greece and Italy during the Orientalizing period (Fig. 1). This imagery featured throughout in Egyptian religious symbolism and Canaanite-Phoenician mortuary traditions, although it carried a different meaning in the latter. Its symbolic function in Canaanite-Phoenician culture had been consolidated by the Bronze Age and was transmitted to Greece and later to Italy. The use and interpretation associated with baboon and monkey imagery in these spheres differ from location to another and from one era to the next, although in Egypt, the baboon continued to represent the sacred manifestation of the deity Thoth.

The circumstances of the entire sequence of baboon and monkey imagery in the wider Mediter-

anean context from the Bronze Age to the end of the Iron Age are examined in this study.

## THE BABOON STATUETTE FROM TEL MIQNE-EKRON (Fig. 2a–f)

The limestone baboon statuette was found, out of its original context and in two parts, in two different Iron Age I strata in Field IV Lower – one in Stratum VIIA and the other in Stratum IVA. The upper part of the statuette, a squatting baboon, was found in Building 350 *Room a* in a cache of objects of a late 11<sup>th</sup>–first quarter of 10<sup>th</sup> century BC Stratum IVA surface. The monumental entrance and pillared hall of this megaron-type building indicate that it was a public structure with administrative and royal functions. The artifactual and architectural evidence also supports the conclusion that this was a multi-functional building used for both cultic and domestic activities (Fig. 3).<sup>2</sup> While hundreds of restorable pottery vessels and ceramic, stone, metal, ivory and faience objects were found throughout *Building 350*, side rooms *a* and *b* yielded the largest and most significant artifact assemblages. *Building 350*, the large megaron-type structure, continued to have public, domestic and cultic functions, with only minor internal changes involving the addition of new surfaces and installations.

*Room a* contained a rich assemblage of pottery and objects with the pottery stacked on the floor of the room, probably fallen from shelves when the building was destroyed. The pottery assemblage

<sup>1</sup> Y. GARFINKEL, T. DOTHAN and S. GITIN, Tel Miqne-Ekron Excavations 1985–1988, 1990, 1992–1995, Field IV Lower – The Elite Zone: Part 1: The Iron Age I Early Philistine City. Tel Miqne-Ekron Final Field Report Series 9/1, Jerusalem, forthcoming. The excavations at Tel Miqne-Ekron were conducted from 1981–1996 as a joint project of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem under the auspices of Trude Dothan and Seymour Gitin. The authors thank S. Gitin and E. Sachar for their assistance in

editing this article. Thanks also go to D. Ben-Shlomo for bibliographic assistance and Alegre Savariego and Michael Sebbane of the Israel Antiquity Authority for sharing data and materials from the IAA archives and storerooms. Thanks go also to D. Ben-Tor for her valuable advice. Photos on Fig. 2 are by Z. Radovan, drawings on Fig. 1 by D. Regev and J. Rosenberg, drawings on Fig. 2 by M. Zeltser, drawing of Fig. 3 by J. Rosenberg.

<sup>2</sup> Obj. No. 585, Bucket No. IVNW.9.173B, Surface 9014P (IAA No. 86-18).

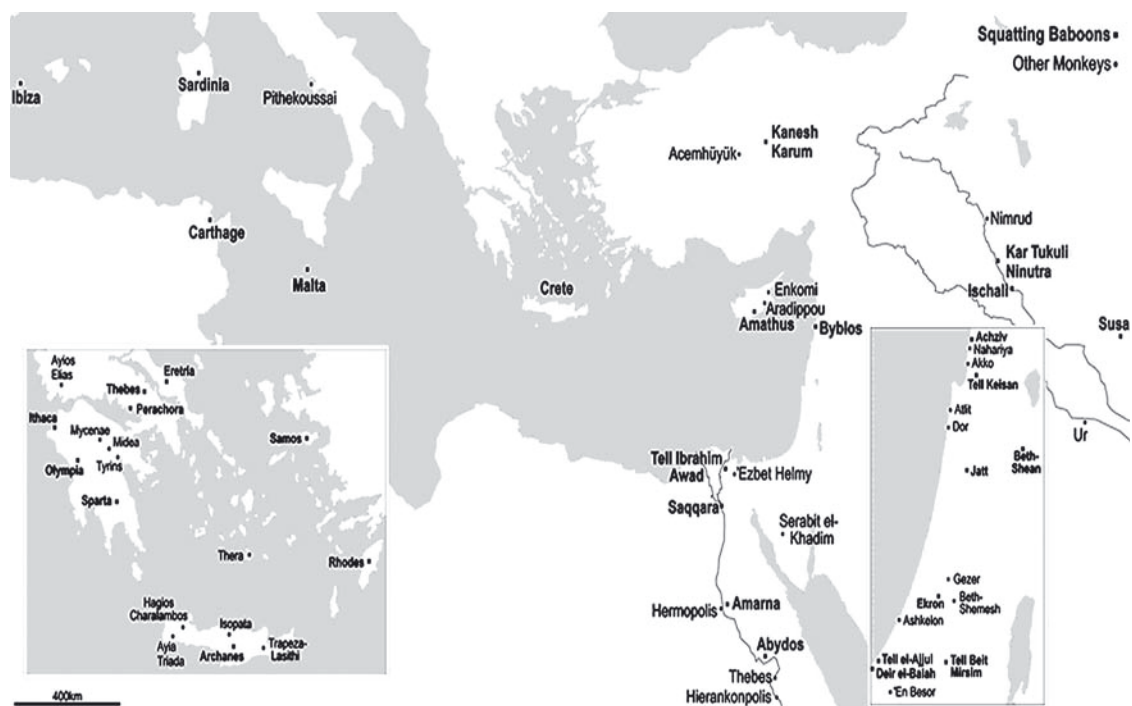


Fig. 1 Distribution map of baboons and monkeys

which was composed predominantly of red-slipped bowls also included votive vessels and cultic objects that are Phoenician and Egyptian in character, associated with the final phase of early Philistine material culture.<sup>3</sup> The baboon was restored with the lower part of the statuette, an inscribed square base found embedded in a mudbrick wall of Stratum VIIA of the second–third quarters of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> The statuette is dated to the LB II–early Iron I, late 13<sup>th</sup>–early 12<sup>th</sup> century BC, based on the inscription and parallels.<sup>5</sup>

The squatting baboon is 14.5 cm high and 3.8–6 cm wide. Thick fur hangs over the upper part of the body and covers the ears, chest, hands and back. The frontal depiction includes a promi-

nent penis, feet and toes (Fig. 2a). The ears are rounded under the fur and one of the eyes is damaged. The rear realistically depicts the buttocks and tail (Fig. 2b). The top of the head has a deep and wide circular cutting for the insertion of another object (Fig. 2e), probably a disc on a stem (Fig. 4). There are residues of red paint on the face, on various parts of the body and on the base (Fig. 2f). The use of lime or other simple stone, the measurements and the painted decoration is right in line with many other stone monkeys and baboons found in Dynasty 18 Amarna dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>6</sup> The base comprises a podium with what appears to be an altar on it and hieroglyphic signs on the podium: they read “Thoth,

<sup>3</sup> The cache included also a terracotta pomegranate, ivories and faience objects, see T. DOTHAN 1996, 147–150; T. DOTHAN 1998, 259–272. For the ivories, see D. BEN-SHLOMO and T. DOTHAN, 2006, 15–16, 20, 24–25.

<sup>4</sup> Obj. No. 3268, Bucket No. IVNW.24.320, Wall 24052, Building 352 (IAA No. 86-18). Since mudbrick Wall 24052 was built in Stratum VIIA, the base cannot be dated later than Stratum VIIB, that is, the earliest part of the second quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>5</sup> Since there is no Late Bronze Age occupation in Field IV Lower, it is likely that the two parts of the statuette came from an LB II context in Field I, the upper city. For another example and more detailed explanation of this phenomenon, see B.M. GITTLEN, 1992, 50\*–53\*.

<sup>6</sup> A. STEVENS, 2006, 106–109.

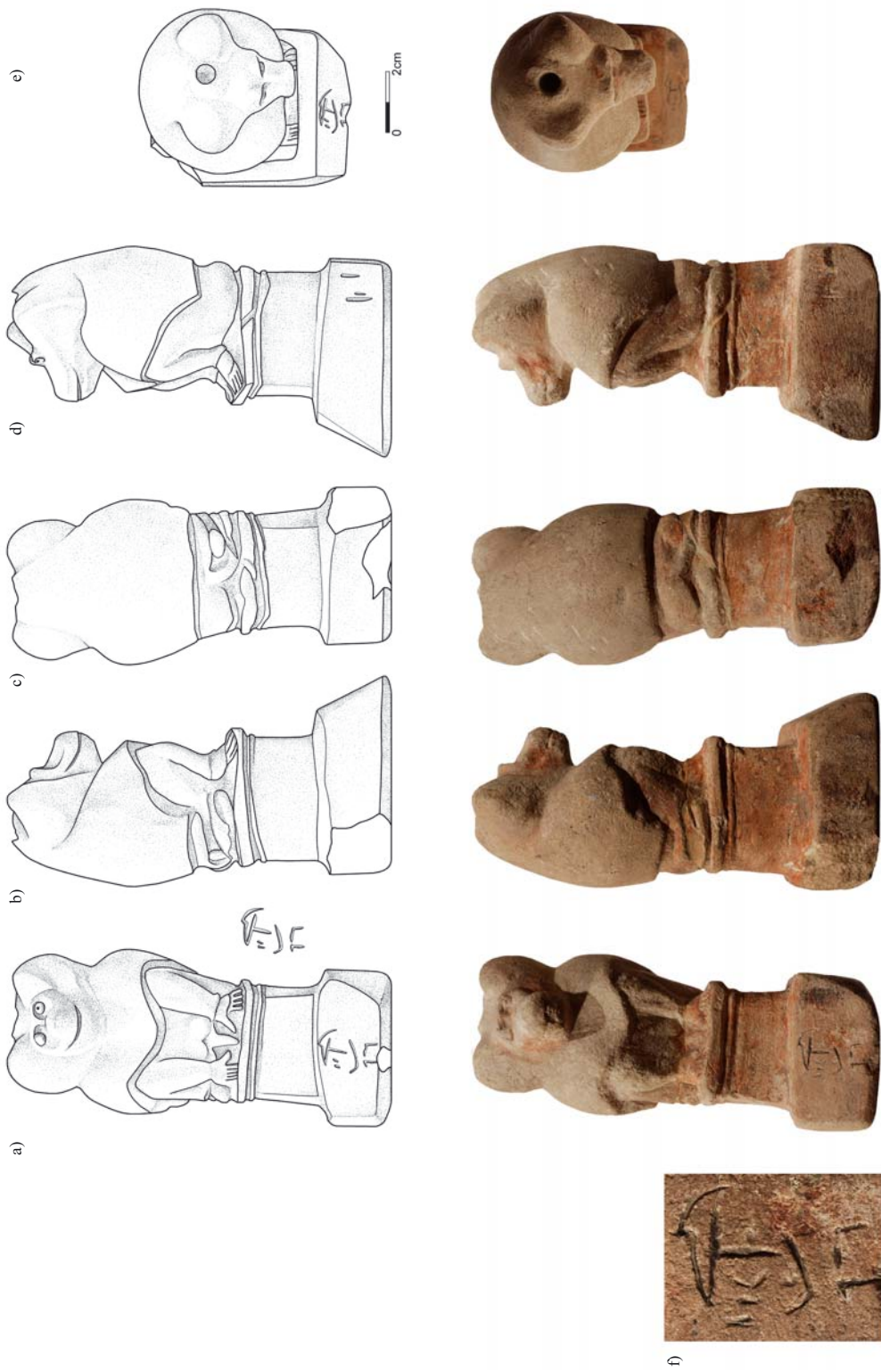


Fig. 2 The baboon statuette with hieroglyphic inscription

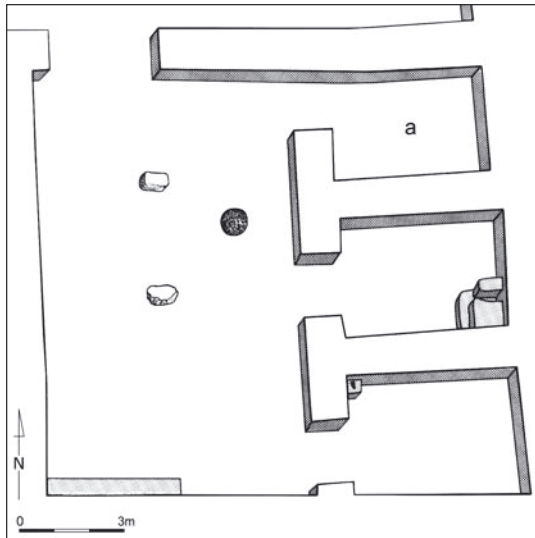


Fig. 3 Ekron IV A, Cult Building 350, Room a – finding spot of the upper part of the baboon; DOTHAN 1998 260, fig.1

Lord of Heaven” (Fig. 2f). The inscription, incised in the stone and filled in black, consists of three

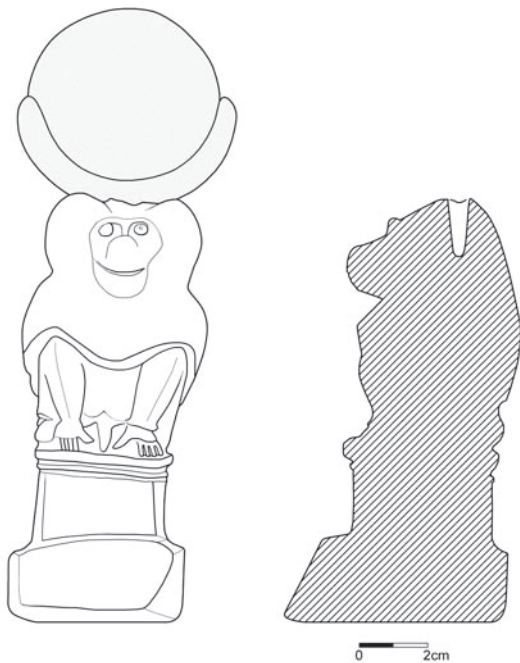


Fig. 4

words vertically written. The top one reads “Thoth”, the middle one reads “lord” and the sign at the bottom reads “sky”. The epithet “Thoth Lord of Heaven” is relatively rare and first appears during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, although our inscription fits better in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty period.<sup>7</sup>

**BABOON AND MONKEY IMAGERY IN EGYPT**

Baboon imagery in wall paintings, reliefs, statues and amulets are common in ancient Egypt. In Egyptian art the green monkey (*Cercopithecus aethiops*) was mainly depicted in luxurious and playful association and the hamadryas baboon (*Papio cynocephalus*) was associated with the moon deity, Thoth. This is the baboon represented in the Ekron statuette. Whilst the Thoth baboon was a cultic figure, other monkeys were not worshipped, but were rather symbols of luxury, fertility and eroticism.<sup>8</sup> Leashed monkeys are portrayed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century BC paintings at Rekhmire’ tomb in Thebes. The baboon and monkeys in these paintings are found among the depiction of Nubian tribute bearers, the baboon and one of the monkeys are leashed and the other monkey is on the shoulder of



Fig. 5 Saqqara, DAVIS 2006 pl.54 (courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society)

<sup>7</sup> See B. BRANDL in press.

<sup>8</sup> C. GREENLAW 2005, 71; A. STEVENS 2006, 60.

a person.<sup>9</sup> Monkeys were also commonly portrayed on cosmetic and other small luxury objects, commonly used by women.

In the third to first millennia BC in Egypt squatting baboons were cultic representations of Thoth. The image continues through the Ptolemaic period, as seen in a statue from Saqqara (Fig. 5). The chronological and geographical spread of this image demonstrates its power. For over 3,000 years, the representations preserved several constant features, with the baboon squatting on a square “seat”, hands on knees and the fingers, penis and fur depicted in detail. The baboon is also frequently portrayed with rounded ears and a moon disc on its head. The extent of detail depends on the size of the object.

As early as Old Kingdom Egypt, the baboon was closely associated with the moon deity Thoth,



Fig. 6 Illustration from the papyrus of Qenna, after BUDGE 1895, 256, fig. 2

the god of wisdom, knowledge, judgment, writing, science, measurement and excellence and who acted as a mediator and messenger of the gods.<sup>10</sup> Baboons were an important motif in Egyptian art and religion and their cultic importance grew significantly during the New Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> At Her-mopolis, Thoth’s cultic center contained large baboon sculptures made of stone dedicated by Amenhotep III; other cultic sites associated with Thoth included cemeteries of sacred baboons.<sup>12</sup> Thoth was worshipped in Egypt in his representation as a baboon at least until the Roman period.<sup>13</sup>

As the moon deity, Thoth baboons were often depicted crowned with the crescent moon and/or lunar disc, the moon aspect also represented in the use of blue faience, the color associated with the moon.<sup>14</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty papyrus of Qenna, a baboon squatting on a pedestal similar to the Ekron statuette base has a disc and crescent on his head (Fig. 6).<sup>15</sup> Another squatting baboon with lunar disc and crescent on his head is depicted in the *Book of the Dead of Nakht* of the 19<sup>th</sup>–23<sup>rd</sup> Dynasties (Fig. 7).<sup>16</sup> In both cases, the baboon represents



Fig. 7 Illustration from the Book of the Dead of Nakht, after DUNAND 1991, 348, fig. 4

<sup>9</sup> N. DE GARIS DAVIS 1943, pls. xix–xx; G.B. JOHNSON 2003, 33. Unleashed monkeys appear in Egyptian tomb paintings, for example, in Sennedjem’s tomb at Thebes, dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, with two squatting baboons depicted in a barque, B. BRUYÈRE 1959, pl. xxvii; H. FARID and S. FARID 2001, 49, bottom photo.

<sup>10</sup> D.M. DOXEY 2002, 353; C. GREENLAW 2005, 71; A. STEVENS 2006, 40.

<sup>11</sup> C. GREENLAW 2006, 65.

<sup>12</sup> D.M. DOXEY, Thoth, in D.B. Redford *The Ancient Gods Speak, A Guide to Egyptian Religion*, ed., 2002, 355.

<sup>13</sup> T.A. SHERKOVA 2003: 507. See also the twelve baboon figurines ranging from the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (beginning in the 24<sup>th</sup> century BCE) to the Ptolemaic period (ending in the 1st century BCE) in Petrie’s publication on Egyptian amulets, W.M.F. PETRIE 1914 (1972).

<sup>14</sup> C. GREENLAW 2006, 65.

<sup>15</sup> E.A.W. BUDGE 1895, 256, fig.2

<sup>16</sup> F. DUNAND 1991, 348, fig.4.



Fig. 8 Provenance unknown, after HAMANN 1944, Abb. 53

Thoth in his role as moon god, with the disc signifying the full moon rather than the sun.<sup>17</sup>

An unprovenanced squatting baboon statue in alabaster with the name of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty Pharaoh Narmer inscribed on its base, dated *ca.* 3000 BC,

may be the earliest parallel for the Ekron statuette (Fig. 8).<sup>18</sup> Other 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty stone baboon statues come from Hierakonpolis and Abydos,<sup>19</sup> some of which have thick fur, like that on the Ekron baboon. Baboons made of stone, one with an engraved inscription, were also found in the sanctuary associated with a Middle Kingdom moon cult at Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai (Fig. 10).<sup>20</sup>

The closest parallel for the statuette from Ekron is a stone baboon from Amarna dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>21</sup> Probably a votive from a private shrine, it is a squatting baboon of similar size and with similar features in terms of head shape, upper-body fur, prominent male organs and it has a similar base. In this depiction, the baboon reflects Thoth's role as the scribe of the gods, god of writing and patron of scribes. Similar inscribed statuettes dedicated to Thoth were found at Hermopolis.<sup>22</sup>

Another stone baboon statuette dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, comes from 'Ezbet Helmy/ Peru-nefer near Tell el-Dab<sup>c</sup>a. Found at a garrison's office, this baboon statuette is associated with Thoth' role as the patron of scribes. This statuette is especially important to our case as it was discovered at a site associated with Canaanite cult and population. The

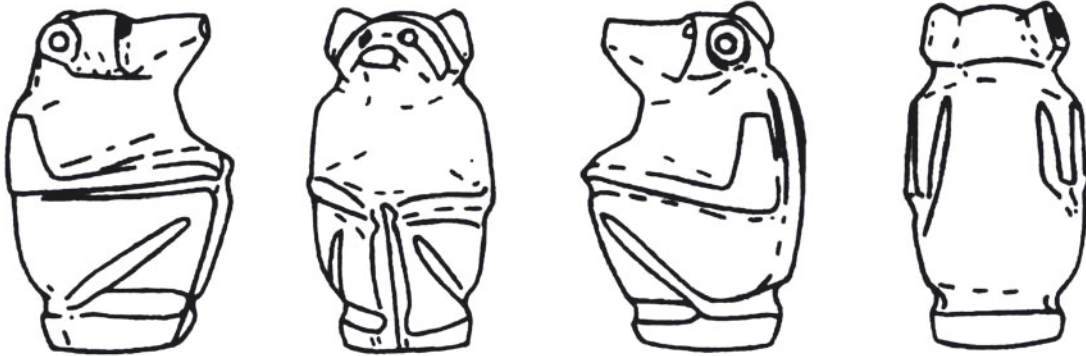


Fig. 9 Ishchali, after MEYER 1997, fig. 1

<sup>17</sup> For a full account of Thot's roll in the Book of the Dead see M.A. STADLER 2009.

<sup>18</sup> R. HAMANN 1944, 55–56, abb.53, now at the Berlin Museum, the statue is 52 cm in height.

<sup>19</sup> L. ECKENSTEIN 1914, 11; H. SCHLÖGL 1978, 24–25; T.A. SHERKOVA 2003, 505.

<sup>20</sup> L. ECKENSTEIN 1914, 9–13.

<sup>21</sup> E.L.B TERRACE and H.G. FISCHER 1970, 132.

<sup>22</sup> E.L.B TERRACE and H.G. FISCHER 1970, 129–132, mention that this type is not unusual and they know three other examples of the same statuette.



Fig. 10 Sarbet el-Khadem, after ECKENSTEIN 1914, fig. 7

Canaanite cultic connection at ʿEzbet Helmy is demonstrated by seals of the smiting Pharaoh found there, a symbol similar to the Canaanite smiting god Baʿal Zephon.<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned above, Thoth baboons were also linked to the sun cult and were often portrayed with their arms raised in worship to this celestial body. This link is demonstrated in the *Book of the Dead*, in which Thoth is mentioned as one of the baboons sitting in the Barque of Re singing and worshipping the sun. This image is portrayed in a faience model of a boat with seven seated baboons found in a temple deposition, together with 200 other baboon figurines at Tell Ibrahim Awad, dated to the late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period.<sup>24</sup>

The baboon was also linked to another funerary function of Thoth. In the *Book of the Dead*, four baboons are depicted squatting around the lake of fire that sustains the blessed dead and consumes the sinners in flames. These baboons played an important role in redeeming the dead of their sins and thereby allowing them passage into the realm of the blessed dead. In this respect, baboons represent Thoth as a mediator between the human and



Fig. 11 Jatt, after ARTZY 2006, fig. 2.123

divine spheres, aiding individuals in their passage to the afterlife.<sup>25</sup>

#### BABOON AND MONKEY REPRESENTATION IN MESOPOTAMIA AND ANATOLIA

The earliest Monkey imagery in Mesopotamia is made of red porphyry originating from Egypt, a stone figurine of a baboon squatting on a stool with his hands on knees.<sup>26</sup> The figurine, found at Susa, is dated to the Susa III period (3100–2900 BC), contemporaneous with the stone baboon statue with Narmer's name. Monkey imagery then, arrived at Mesopotamia at about the same date it was introduced in Predynastic Egypt. By the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium monkey imagery in Mesopotamia was found on terracotta plaques, seals and figurines. A figurine from Ur dated to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC depicts monkey musicians, an image that may have arrived in Mesopotamia from the Indus Valley.<sup>27</sup> In Mesopotamia, as in Egypt, monkeys were sometimes kept as pets, as borne out by tomb scenes showing monkeys on a leash, but also dancing and playing musical instruments and sometimes playing with dwarfs.<sup>28</sup>

However, in addition to their exotic status as symbols of luxury, monkeys also had a religious and ceremonial function unique to Mesopotamian society. Evidence to this function is shown on seals from Kanesh Karum, a Mesopotamian trade dias-

<sup>23</sup> M. BIETAK 2004, 43–54, fig. 5.

<sup>24</sup> T.A. SHERKOVA 2003, 504–506; C. GREENLAW 2005, 71–72. The baboons personify Thoth in this iconography of sailing with the solar god in the celestial barque. According to Egyptian beliefs, the model in the interment would change into a real boat in which the dead could reach the next world.

<sup>25</sup> R.O. FAULKNER 1972, 115, 118–119; T.A. SHERKOVA 2003, 504–505; C. GREENLAW 2005, 72.

<sup>26</sup> A. HAMOTO 1995, 80, abb. 10.

<sup>27</sup> C. MENDLESON 1983, 81–83.

<sup>28</sup> A. SPYCKET 1998, 1–10; S. SCHROER and J. EGGELER 2009.



Fig. 12 Achziv, Northern Cemetery, Tomb 1, after E. MAZAR 2004, fig. 19 (drawing: D. Weinblatt-Krauss)

pora in Anatolia dated to the 19<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century BC. The monkeys on these seals are depicted squatting or standing, with hands raised in worship or holding jars used in libation ceremonies.<sup>29</sup> Baboon depictions participating in offering scenes on ivory box and plaque from Acemhüyük in Anatolia (on the main trade route between Tarsus and Boğazköy and east and west Anatolia), clearly show that monkey imagery was adopted into the Hittite/Anatolian cult as well.<sup>30</sup>

An ivory amulet imported from Egypt, forwarded via Byblos and found at Ishchali in Mesopotamia, is dated *ca.* 2000–1750 BC.<sup>31</sup> It depicts a baboon squatting with hands on knees on a square base, like many other Thoth representations (Fig. 9). A statuette (19.1 cm high) made of diorite stone of a squatting baboon with hands on knees

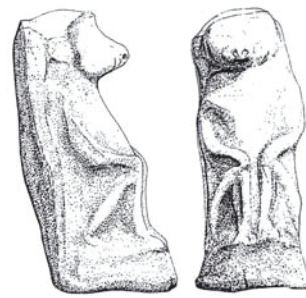


Fig. 13 Tell Keisan, after PIRAIRE 1980, pl. 104:39

was found at the one-level site of Kar Tukuli Ninura close to Assur, dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. It is generally accepted that the depictions of monkeys in Mesopotamia and Anatolia result from their contacts with Byblos and other major Syrian cities between the latter and Mesopotamia and not directly from Egypt.<sup>32</sup> Evidence showing that monkeys and monkey imagery was introduced into Mesopotamia by the Canaanite-Phoenicians is found in a 9<sup>th</sup> century BC relief from the palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud, in which a Phoenician bearer of tribute is depicted with monkeys.<sup>33</sup> Other monkey depictions from Nimrud dated to the Neo-Assyrian Empire appear on ivory plaques,<sup>34</sup> ivory being a material well-known from its working by Phoenician artisans.

#### BABOON AND MONKEY REPRESENTATION FROM SITES IN THE LEVANT

The Canaanite-Phoenician city of Byblos produced a large volume of baboon imagery dated to the Middle Bronze Age in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. Dozens of baboons depicted in figurines and on cult objects were found in the Obelisk Temple at Byblos. Baboons are depicted on ceremonial bronze axe and bronze and gold dagger, as well as 41 statuettes of squatting baboons and one stand-

<sup>29</sup> M.J. MELLINK 1987: 66–68, pl. XIX: 9–10.

<sup>30</sup> N. ÖZGÜÇ 1976, 547–559, pls. II, III. The authors wish to thank M. Tekocak from Selçuk Üniversitesi in Konya, Turkey, for sending in this article.

<sup>31</sup> C. MEYER 1997, 374. On monkeys depicted in various forms in Mesopotamian art, see also E.D. VAN BUREN 1939, 22–24.

<sup>32</sup> M.J. MELLINK 1987, 67; S. RATNAGAR 2004, 204. Ratnagar claims, however, that monkey imagery in Mesopotamia after the Middle Bronze Age comes from the Hindu Valley and the Harappan Culture. For a full account of Mesopotamian and Harappan monkey imagery of all types see S. RATNAGAR 2004, 203–207.

<sup>33</sup> BARNETT 1973: 3; A. HAMOTO 1995, 114, Abb. 132–133; G. MARKOE 2007, 104, fig. 1.

<sup>34</sup> A. HAMOTO 1995, 115, Abb. 136–137.



ing, some with their hands on knees and some with hands to mouth.<sup>35</sup> In addition, a cylinder seal made of jasper with squatting baboons,<sup>36</sup> comes from the Green Jasper Workshop of Byblos that operated in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC.<sup>37</sup> This compelling evidence indicates that baboon imagery was sacred in Byblos already in the MB Age.

The earliest well-stratified example of this imagery in Israel is a faience statuette of a standing baboon from 'En Besor, dated to the end of Early Bronze Age I.<sup>38</sup> Two other monkey representations from well-stratified contexts come from an MB IIA–B sanctuary at Nahariya, a coastal Canaanite sanctuary dedicated to Astarte/Ash-toret;<sup>39</sup> one being a seated monkey attached on a juglet neck, similar to those from Megiddo and Byblos,<sup>40</sup> and the other possibly being a clay figurine.<sup>41</sup> Monkeys as jar decoration are typical of the MB age.<sup>42</sup> A stone kohl container from a tomb at Gezer, in the shape of two squatting baboons holding a basket or a jar between them, date to 1400 BC, may be the earliest baboon stone vessel from Israel.<sup>43</sup>

Squatting baboon figurines dated to the Iron Age I (12<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) are represented by small bronze amulets (or weights), depicting the baboon with hands to mouth, were found at Jatt (Fig. 11),<sup>44</sup> Taannek and Megiddo.<sup>45</sup>

Clay monkey figurines come from secure Iron II contexts in the Phoenician sites Achziv and Tell Keisan.<sup>46</sup> Similar in size and paint decoration to the one from Ekron, the figurine from Achziv cemetery is dated to the 7<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. It was found in the same tomb as two amulets depicting the squatting baboon with a disc on his head, dated



Fig. 14 Dier el-Balah, KEEL 2010a, 458–459



Fig. 15 Ekron, after KEEL 2010a, 524–525

to the 9<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Fig. 12).<sup>47</sup> The figurine from Tell Keisan is also dated to the 7<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries; although smaller (9 cm high), it resembles the statuettes from Ekron and Achziv in the posture of hands on knees and the red paint (Fig. 13).<sup>48</sup> Another clay figurine of a baboon with prominent

<sup>35</sup> M. DUNAND 1950–1958, 390–391, 746–750, pls. LXXVIII: 10823, CXVIII, CXIX, XCVI; A. HAMOTO 1995, 89–90, Abb. 54–58.

<sup>36</sup> A. HAMOTO 1995, 111, abb. 120.

<sup>37</sup> R. FLAMMINI 2010, 160.

<sup>38</sup> R. GOPHNA 1993, 31.

<sup>39</sup> M. BIETAK 2003, 162–165.

<sup>40</sup> M. DOTHAN 1965, fig.6:1, with reference.

<sup>41</sup> I. BEN-DOR 1950, pl. XII: 7.

<sup>42</sup> S. SCHROER and J. EGGLEER 2009.

<sup>43</sup> M. DAYAGI-MENDELS 1989, 44, 48.

<sup>44</sup> M. ARTZY 2006, 46, 66, 72, 115–120, pl. 19: 3.

<sup>45</sup> F.S. FRICK 2000, 160–161, 268, with references.

<sup>46</sup> Another clay monkey/horse figurine from a secure Iron II context comes from Beth-Shemesh dated to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, see R. KLETTER 2002, 147–152, fig. 1.

<sup>47</sup> P.J. COWIE 2004, 230; E. MAZAR 2004, fig.19. Amulets of this type are usually dated between the LB IIB and Iron IB, see C. HERRMANN 1994, 562. A scaraboid depicting a seated monkey with raised arms, dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, was also found in tomb TA 72 in Achziv, see E. MAZAR 2001, 194, fig. 28. An 8<sup>th</sup> century BC scarab with squatting baboon produced outside of Egypt was recently excavated at Tyre, see I. GAMER-WALLERT 2004, 404–405. For other amulets depicting monkeys with a disc on their head from Ashkelon, Tell el Fara South, Megiddo and Beth-Shean see C. HERRMANN 1994, 568–576, Type 2.10.

<sup>48</sup> D.J. PARAIRE, 1980, 339–340, pl.104: 39–44.



Fig. 16 Bet-Shean, after KEEL 2010a, 122–123



Fig. 17 Tell Beit Mirsim, after KEEL 2010a, 84–85

penis, holding what may be a lamb on his shoulders, was found at Tel Safut in Jordan and dated to 1000–900 BC.<sup>49</sup>

Other monkey representations include faience and glass amulets, an alabaster vessel, seal impressions and a metal object. A dozen scarabs with squatting baboons have been published by now in Israel,<sup>50</sup> five of them originated from Deir el-Balah and dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, including scarabs with the inscriptions “Ramses II beloved by Thoth” and “Thutmose III beloved by Thoth” (Fig. 14).<sup>51</sup> Interesting in particular is a scarab of this type found at Ekron, stratum VIb, dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC and depicting a baboon with crescent and full moon above the head, blessing or worshipping the king bearing Egypt’s double-crown (Fig. 15).<sup>52</sup> Squatting baboons also appear as a seal from Bet-Shean (Fig. 16),<sup>53</sup> dated to the 13<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC and on a steatite seal from Tell Beit Mirsim with lunar disc and an inscription reading “Amenhotep III beloved



Fig. 18 Akko, after KEEL 1997, 602–603

of Thoth”, dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC (Fig. 17).<sup>54</sup> Other scarabs, found in Israel only at Akko (Fig. 18), are of a type depicting two monkeys (baboons?) flanking a palm tree or a papyrus stem

<sup>49</sup> A. HAMOTO 1995, 118, abb.148.

<sup>50</sup> By the amount of baboon and monkey imagery already published of sites until the letter F- many more such images are probably about to be published in the next volumes of Keel’s corpus of seals from Israel. For more seals of this type in Israel see, O. KEEL 1997, 204–205, 718–719, Tell el-<sup>c</sup>Aḏul 303 and Aschkelon 77; O. KEEL 2010a, 140–141, 268–269, Bet-Shean 95, Bet-Schemesch 117; O. KEEL 2010b, 86–87, 270–271, Tell el-Far<sup>c</sup>a-Süd 140 & 564.

<sup>51</sup> O. KEEL 2001a, 422–423, 430–433, 458–459.

<sup>52</sup> O. KEEL 2001a, 524–525.

<sup>53</sup> O. KEEL 2001a, 122–123.

<sup>54</sup> O. KEEL 2001a, 84–85.

<sup>55</sup> O. KEEL 1997, 578–579, 602–603, 636–637.

<sup>56</sup> S. SCHROER and J. EGGLEER 2009.

<sup>57</sup> F.W.M. PETRIE 1934, 10, pl. XXIII.

<sup>58</sup> T. DOTHAN and D. BEN-SHLOMO in press. Also at Tell el-Ajjul, an alabaster vessel with a handle in a shape of a monkey was found in an MB II tomb, see F. PETRIE 1934, 9, pl. XXII: 246.

<sup>59</sup> D. MACKENZIE 1912–1913, 60, pl. XXVIII: B31; see also C. HERRMANN 1994, 568–576.

<sup>60</sup> C.N. JOHNS 1933, pl. XXVIII: 739, found together with a Thoth, pl. XXX: 803.

<sup>61</sup> C. HERRMANN 2010, 241, pl. XVI: 61–62.

<sup>62</sup> Also depicted on this offering tray are figures pouring libation and, as a result, the object was interpreted as a possible dedication to a shrine in replacement of an actual libation.

<sup>63</sup> L. BELL 2011, 404–406.

<sup>64</sup> Information courtesy of the IAA.

in worshipping position, an image that means “good year”; one of which is dated to the Middle Bronze Age I and the other four to the 12<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.<sup>55</sup> This particular position is typical of Syrian seals of the MB Age.<sup>56</sup>

Further monkey depictions consist of a faience amulet of a squatting baboon found in an LB II context at Tell el-<sup>c</sup>Ajjul,<sup>57</sup> which, interestingly, also yielded a white limestone head, very similar to the ivory head found at Ekron Stratum IVA cache together with the baboon.<sup>58</sup> Another faience amulet, dated to the Iron II, was found in a tomb at Beth Shemesh,<sup>59</sup> and additional examples come from the Persian period Phoenician cemetery at ‘Atlit<sup>60</sup> and at Tel Dor.<sup>61</sup> Also dated to the Iron II, a bronze offering tray decorated with squatting baboons was found at Ashkelon together with bronze *situlae*, described as Phoenician imitations of Egyptian objects.<sup>62</sup> Such objects were found at Carchemish, Zincirli, Ugarit, Byblos, Amathus, Lefkandi and the sacred animal necropolis of North Saqqara, all dated to the Iron Age II.<sup>63</sup> Two other monkey objects known to have come from Akko are in museum collections: a clay figurine head is displayed at Akko Municipal Museum and a glass pendant at the Hecht Museum in Haifa.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, the presence of baboon and monkey imagery is continuous at sites in Israel, as in Egypt, from the Bronze Age through the Hellenistic period and occurs, albeit not in abundance, in a variety of materials and as statuettes/figurines, amulets and pendants, as well as in the form of decorative features on vessels and other objects.

#### BABOONS AND MONKEY REPRESENTATIONS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Monkey amulets, figurines and vases were exported from Egypt to the eastern Mediterranean starting in the Pre-Dynastic period. An Old Kingdom calcite vase in the form of a baboon was found in

Tomb 5 at Ayia Triada on Crete, together with a scarab of Queen Tiye, wife of Amenhotep III and another Old Kingdom alabaster vase in the form of a mother monkey with an infant comes from Mycenae. Lapis lazuli and faience amulets were found in a Late Minoan III royal tomb at Isopata near Knossos on Crete and in a Late Helladic II–IIIC tomb at Ayios Elias on mainland Greece.<sup>65</sup> Monkey and baboon figurines became commoner in Aegean and Cypriot cultures beginning in the Late Bronze Age when they were assimilated into the local religion.<sup>66</sup> Though baboon representations initially symbolized for the Greeks the god of all wisdom and creator of languages,<sup>67</sup> but – from the Archaic period onwards – this positive symbolism was superseded by the negative connotations that prevailed in textual references of Classical Athens and later in Rome.<sup>68</sup>

There is a noticeable difference between the stylistic representations, frequencies and origins of monkey imagery on Cyprus, Crete and mainland Greece during the Late Bronze Age. On Cyprus, along side faience figurines of Egyptianized style, there are crudely-made monkey figurines of local production.<sup>69</sup> The rare figurines found on mainland Greece were imported, possibly as a result of exchanges of gifts.<sup>70</sup> Crete, however, had the closest connection to Egyptian art, both in terms of quantities of imported Egyptian monkey figurines, amulets and vessels and the assimilation of this symbol into local art, as seen in the wall paintings in the palace at Knossos.<sup>71</sup>

The earliest known Minoan representations of monkeys on Crete are made of ivory: a seal from Trapeza-Lasithi is dated to the Early Minoan II–III<sup>72</sup> and two monkey figurines from Hagios Charalambos and Archanes dated, respectively, to the Early-Middle and Middle Minoan periods.<sup>73</sup> While baboons and other monkeys are common in Minoan glyptic art beginning in the Middle

<sup>65</sup> E.H. CLINE 1991, 37–39.

<sup>66</sup> V. KARAGEORGHIS 1994, 72.

<sup>67</sup> D.M. DOXEY 2002, 354.

<sup>68</sup> C. CONNORS, 2004, 179–207.

<sup>69</sup> The faience figurines, one of a seated monkey with his hand raised to his mouth, and the other of two seated monkeys facing each other and holding a large vase, are displayed at Cyprus Museum in Nicosia. Personal observation, April 2011.

<sup>70</sup> E.H. CLINE 1991, 40.

<sup>71</sup> A. EVANS 1928, 447–451, fig. 264, pl. 10.

<sup>72</sup> C. GREENLAW 2005, 72.

<sup>73</sup> See respectively, P.P. BETANCOURT 2005, pl. 102: j; Y. SAKELLARAKIS and E. SAKELLARAKIS 1997, 636, figs. 690, 694, dated 2100–2000 BC.

Minoan IIIA, most of the wall paintings on Crete and Thera are dated to the Late Minoan IA.<sup>74</sup> The monkeys in these paintings are connected to rites of passage, like some of the Thoth depictions in Egyptian art, in the role of mediators between the human and divine spheres.<sup>75</sup> In most of the monkey depictions on Crete, they are engaged in ritual or votive activities and by the Late Bronze Age, monkeys became fundamental images in Minoan religious iconography.<sup>76</sup> The monkey depictions in wall paintings in the Aegean are always blue in color, possibly as a result of the influence of the Egyptian blue faience lunar figurines, although in one example from Thera, the monkey is depicted raising his arms, like the Egyptian sun-greeters.<sup>77</sup> As monkey imagery was rare on mainland Greece, it may have entered the Aegean via Crete.<sup>78</sup>

Although the Mycenaeans did not adopt the monkey image and it is absent in Mycenaean wall paintings, two imported faience monkey figurines with cartouche of Amenhotep II of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century BC were found in Late Helladic IIIA context at Tyrins and Mycenae (Fig. 19). Parallels for these two small figurines, measuring 5–6 cm, come from late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Amarna.<sup>79</sup> A similar monkey depiction from Egypt, dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, is considered a luxury item: made of green stone, it was used as ornament on an ointment bowl (Fig. 20).<sup>80</sup> Another parallel from Egypt has cultic connotations: it is a bronze statuette (the size of an amulet) with gold inlays, also dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, depicting a monkey with his arms raised in what may be a prayer to the sun (Fig. 21).<sup>81</sup> The role of monkey representations in Mycenaean culture is uncertain, but the scarcity of this imagery suggests that it was brought to Mycenae in the form of luxury goods, rather than as objects bearing religious significance.

After the Minoan period, monkey images disappeared from the Aegean until the Geometric period, although they continued being represented in Egyptian art without interruption. The reappearance of monkey representations in the Mediter-



Fig. 19 Mycenae, CLINE 1991, pl. Ic



Fig. 20 Egypt, SCHLÖGL 1978, 165

ranean in the Orientalizing period of the 8<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC is specifically related to cult: all the finds from documented contexts come from sanctuaries and graves. Squatting monkey figurines

<sup>74</sup> S. MARINATOS 1969, 54; S. MARINATOS 1971, pls. 114–115; S. MARINATOS 1972, pl. D, 92–93.

<sup>75</sup> C. GREENLAW 2005, 72–73.

<sup>76</sup> E.H. CLINE 1991, 29, 39–40. On the profound influence that Near Eastern religion and mythology had on Greek culture from the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC onward, and especially concepts related to death and afterlife, see M.L. WEST 1995, 40–41.

<sup>77</sup> C. GREENLAW 2005, 72–73; C. GREENLAW 2006, 66.

<sup>78</sup> E.H. CLINE 1991, 39–40.

<sup>79</sup> E.H. CLINE 1991, 29–30.

<sup>80</sup> H. SCHLÖGL, 1978, 195.

<sup>81</sup> E.H. CLINE 1991, 32.



Fig. 21 Egypt, SCHLÖGL 1978, 195

and amulets in ivory, faience and clay were found in Aegean context at Sparta, Ithaca, Perachora and Thebes, among others. Good examples come from sanctuaries on Samos and Rhodes, islands known for their abundant Phoenician and Egyptian finds during the Archaic period and perhaps the locations from which monkey imagery entered Geometric period Greece. From Samos, these include a faience vase in the shape of a squatting monkey balancing a large (probably Egyptian) jar between his legs (Fig. 22), a faience amulet of a squatting baboon with his hand up to his mouth, a similar image in clay, and ivory scarabs with baboon hieroglyphs.<sup>82</sup> Kamiros and Lindos on Rhodes also yielded a large number of squatting monkey images in bronze, faience and clay, some imported from Egypt and Phoenicia and some Rhodian imitations.<sup>83</sup>

A group of 7<sup>th</sup> century BC faience vases in the form of a squatting monkey, interpreted as perfume flasks, have been found not only in Greece and the Aegean (for example, at Thebes and Rhodes), but also at other Mediterranean sites that are either Phoenician (for example, Carthage) or known as Phoenician trading-posts (for example, Etruria).<sup>84</sup> This vessel type has its origins in Egypt where it is found from the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty on. Although the Egyptian vases inspired the Mediterranean group,



Fig. 22 Samos, KYRIELEIS 1986, pl. IIB

they differ both in manufacturing technique and style. Based on the Egyptianizing style and their distribution, these Mediterranean monkey vessels are associated with Phoenician art and may have originated from a single workshop either in Carthage<sup>85</sup> or in Rhodes.<sup>86</sup>

Another group of seated monkey figurines made of bronze originate in Greece and the Aegean. Dated to the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, these figurines portray the monkey sitting or squatting on a stool, sometimes with elbows on knees and hands to the face, a pose popular in Carthage and sometimes with hands on the knees, like the common Egyptian depiction of squatting baboons. All figurines of this type that come from good contexts were found in sanctuaries (at Olympia, Tegea, Mavriki, Sparta and Kameiros), which links this group to other Geometric/Orientalizing period monkey imagery in the Mediterranean. This group of figurines was followed in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC by a related assemblage of

<sup>82</sup> H. KYRIELEIS 1986, 189, Pl. II: b.

<sup>83</sup> S. LANGDON 1990, 418; C. GREENLAW 2006, 66.

<sup>84</sup> A. RATHJE 1976, 96–106.

<sup>85</sup> A. RATHJE 1976, 97–99; The workshops at Carthage may also have produced fine stone scarabs like the example from

Tyre mentioned in n. 47 above and that dated to the 7<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century BC from the Dermech I cemetery at Carthage itself, see J. VERCOUTTER 1945, 221, item 581.

<sup>86</sup> S. LANGDON 1990, 418.



Fig. 21 Enkomi, KARAGEORGHIS 1994, fig. 1



Fig. 22 Amathus, KARAGEORGHIS 1996, pl. VIII.1

bronze pendants found mainly in tombs in northern Greece. The latter, however, resemble the human images more than the baboon and represent a local development specific to this area. Monkey imagery was brought to Greece, as elsewhere, by the Phoenicians and it was Phoenician rather than the Egyptian amulets that served as the immediate models for the Greek and Etruscan images. Based on the distribution of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC bronze figurine group in Greece, it has been suggested that Sparta was the location from which such figurines were first introduced onto the Greek mainland, a location at which evidence of Phoenician cult is attested as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>87</sup>

On Cyprus, monkey figurines occur from the Late Cypriot through Cypro-Achaic periods and are often band-painted in the style typical of other Cypriot figurines. Stratified examples come from Enkomi (Fig. 21),<sup>88</sup> Araddippou,<sup>89</sup> Komikebir,<sup>90</sup> and Cypro-Achaic IIA (600–475 BC) Tombs 470 and 294 at Amathus (Fig. 22).<sup>91</sup> On Cyprus, as in the Aegean, whilst monkey figurines and amulets have been found mainly in tombs, they also occur as votive offerings in sanctuaries. The introduction

of monkey imagery into Cypriot ceremonies and religion is particularly significant in the light of the island's involvement in Phoenician trade during the Bronze and Iron Age. Thus, like other Oriental elements, monkeys were introduced into Cypriot art from Egypt by the Phoenicians.<sup>92</sup>

#### BABOON AND MONKEY REPRESENTATIONS IN THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Egyptian-style monkey figurines and amulets made of ivory and amber were also popular during the Iron Age Orientalizing period in other parts of the Mediterranean. They were traded by Phoenicians and were especially popular in Italy and North Africa, but also in other Phoenician centers.<sup>93</sup> Steatite and faience amulets of squatting baboon were found as far as Malta, Sardinia and Ibiza, excavated from tombs dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. These tiny amulets (less than 2 cm high) are of the type depicted with hand raised to mouth, typical to Carthage and the Punic culture in the West.<sup>94</sup>

In Italy, tombs dating to the 8<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century BC in Etruria and Latium contained amber figurines and amulets made by artisans trained in ivory-

<sup>87</sup> S. LANGDON 1990, 411–422. Langdon also suggests that the Phoenician form of the cult of Bes was also introduced into Greece with the baboon figurines and amulets, as attested by numerous Bes amulets found in tombs and sanctuaries.

<sup>88</sup> V. KARAGEORGHIS 1993, 32–33, pl. XIX:5; V. KARAGEORGHIS 1994, 63–64, fig. 1.

<sup>89</sup> V. KARAGEORGHIS 1994, 64, fig. 9.

<sup>90</sup> V. KARAGEORGHIS 1994, 69, fig. 10.

<sup>91</sup> V. KARAGEORGHIS, 1996, 17–18, nos. 7, 9, pls. VIII:11, IX:2; The former was made of clay that suggested it was an import.

<sup>92</sup> V. KARAGEORGHIS 1994, 72.

<sup>93</sup> D.J. WAARSENBURG 1992/93, 59–65; C. CONNORS 2004, 181.

<sup>94</sup> G. HÖLBL 1989, 59–61, 178, pl. 7:2.

carving who had come to Italy from the East and were either Phoenicians themselves or trained by Phoenicians on Rhodes.<sup>95</sup> In addition to the artistic style of the amber artifacts, their iconographic representations are clearly Canaanite/Phoenician. The Italian amber figurines and amulets are mainly in the form of monkeys or nude females, both of which can be traced back to Canaanite and Phoenician tradition: the nude female is a well known representation of the Canaanite/Phoenician goddess Astarte,<sup>96</sup> and the monkey is apparently a Phoenician adaptation of the Egyptian Thoth baboon.

Another connection between monkey imagery, the Phoenicians and Etruria is reflected in the place-name of Pithekoussai from the Greek *πίθηκος*, hence “The Monkeys’ Island”.<sup>97</sup> A major trading-post that yielded numerous Phoenician finds, this gateway Etruscan port may have been the conduit through which monkey imagery was introduced into Etruria. The enthusiastic adoption of monkey imagery into the Etruscan cult may have been reflected in the Greek name of their main portal, Pithekoussai. The use of monkey imagery in Etruscan cult was widespread, as attested by the large number of monkey amulets found in Etruscan tombs and sanctuaries. Since monkeys were associated with Phoenician culture and commerce during the Orientalization period in Etruria and Greece, this could explain the shift in the connotation of monkeys in late Archaic Greek culture and thereafter; Greek literature exhibits the elitist contempt of trade as such,<sup>98</sup> and the Phoenicians were known first and foremost as traders. The ambivalent attitude of the Greeks to Phoenicians, at times hostile and at other times admiring, may be reflected in their use of monkey symbolism for cultic purposes in tombs and sanctuaries, but as an object of contempt in literary sources.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Baboon and monkey imagery originated in Egypt and spread to the Levant and the Mediterranean via Canaanite and subsequently Phoenician trade networks that, along with the shipping of Egyptian goods, also transmitted ideas. This is reflected in

the baboon statuette found at Ekron, and which represents the incorporation of Egyptian cultic symbols into Canaanite culture.

The spread of monkey imagery ties right in with the Phoenician trade routes in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>99</sup> and its prevalence during the Late Bronze Age appears to have followed similar trading patterns. The baboon and other monkey imagery are yet another aspect of the International Style of the Late Bronze Age and later Mediterranean *koine*, shared by Canaanite-Phoenicians and other Mediterranean peoples.

In its spread from Egypt to the Levant and into the Mediterranean, baboon imagery changed in many respects – in appearance, details, materials and, most importantly, in the meaning projected by the image. The significance of baboon and monkey symbolism in a Mediterranean context related mainly to burial customs and afterlife beliefs, the latter combining only one aspect of Thoth baboon’s many functions in Egyptian religion. The feature that continued unchanged in ivory, amber and metals, from the Late Bronze Age to the Archaic period, is the baboon’s squatting posture. This trait was an important part of the image and marked the item as a symbol used in transition ceremonies from the world of the living to the world of the dead.

Ekron during the 13<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century is revealed through the stone statuette discussed in this study as a node on the Egyptian-Canaanite/Phoenician trade network. This trade network bartered not only goods but also ideas and beliefs which influenced both cultures. The stone object from Ekron is linked to Egyptian religion in its Canaanite embodiment. The adoption of baboon imagery by the people of Ekron reflects their cult and ceremonial life during the earliest Philistine occupation levels in this city. By this era, at least some of the population had already been associated with local Near Eastern culture and not with a foreign one. Ekron during the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC portray the coexistence of the old and the new, the Canaanite and the Philistine cultures.

The baboon statuette found at Ekron in a 12<sup>th</sup> century BC context was probably imported from

<sup>95</sup> D.J. WAARSENBURG 1992/93, 48–52, 69–71.

<sup>96</sup> D.J. WAARSENBURG 1992/93, 41.

<sup>97</sup> C. CONNORS 2004, 186.

<sup>98</sup> N. MORLEY 2007, 82–85.

<sup>99</sup> S. LANGDON 1990, 419.

Egypt and symbolizes the god Thoth, as attested by its inscription. The baboon statuette point at a possible cult cultivated at Tel Miqne-Ekron around the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. This objects fit best into a culture of mixed Egyptian and Canaanite-Phoenician ele-

ments typical in the Levant during this era. The baboon symbol may have been assimilated into Philistine cult or culture in an acculturation process similar to that which occurred in other contemporaneous Mediterranean cultures.

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