

THE ENTHRONED NUDE FEMALE: AN EXPLORATION OF NABATAEAN DOMESTIC  
RELIGION THROUGH A TERRACOTTA FIGURINE

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Religion in the ancient world was interwoven into the lives of its inhabitants. Temples and public shrines were prominent in the landscapes of the greatest cities to the smallest villages, emphasizing the divine force thought to control every aspect of life. Such monuments have received much attention, archaeologically and historically, for their importance in the culture of these past societies. These centers of religion, however, often addressed the broad concerns of the state and society; for example, the purpose of Egyptian temples was to maintain *ma'at* and the order of the universe. However, religious practice extended far beyond the precinct of the temple and was often integrated into the daily lives of all classes of society, from the elite to the common worker.

In domestic space, for example, more intimate concerns were considered, particularly those revolving around individuals' daily and home lives. Because of the frequent differences between the religion of the temple, which was often state-ordained and directed, and that practiced by individuals at the personal level, the investigation of religion beyond the temple temenos can provide great insight. The religious activities and objects of the home often illuminate a society's beliefs as to how certain forces affected their daily lives with regard to issues ranging from sickness to procreation, and how such forces could be manipulated. Additionally, the traditions of the home, while maintaining a degree of continuity with those of the temple through similar objects and practices, tend to be traditions that are slow to change, allowing a look into practices and beliefs that stretch far into the past.

This thesis focuses on an object type that gives a glimpse into such beliefs and traditions of one society, Nabataea. Terracotta figurines were a frequent part of domestic religious practice in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> Through an in-depth analysis of the Enthroned Nude Female, an anthropomorphic terracotta figurine common to Nabataean domestic contexts, this study will show that Nabataea was no exception to the use of such objects in domestic religion, and that this figurine type is quite informative concerning the character of Nabataean domestic religion. This introductory chapter begins with a brief background of the land and people of Nabataea. Additionally, a review is conducted of the previous research into Nabataean religion and Nabataean terracotta figurines. Lastly, the goals and structure of this research are outlined in Section 1.4, thereby establishing the framework for the thesis.

## **1.1 Nabataean Historical Overview**

Occupying the territory of Transjordan, southern Syria, the Negev, and the northwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, the land of the Nabataeans, thought to be an Arab tribe, straddled the great incense routes that linked the source nations of southern Arabia to their market lands, the greatest of which was Rome. This connectivity fostered the non-homogenous cultural makeup of the kingdom. It is from these diverse roots that Nabataean culture emerged from the Iron Age, combining the sedentary and agricultural ways of their predecessors, the Edomites, with the nomadic ways of the Arab tribes.<sup>2</sup> Evidence for this diversity includes varied linguistic expressions and naming conventions, as well as instances of certain deities being worshipped in some areas, but with no mention of them in others.<sup>3</sup> Much of Nabataean religious

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<sup>1</sup> Albertz 2008, 94-97; Shmitt 2008, 160-163; Waraksa 2007; Stevens 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Mettinger 1995, 67.

<sup>3</sup> Healey 2001, 11.

practice would follow that of the dominant Nabataean elite, namely the worship of aniconic betyls. By analyzing the Enthroned Nude Female, this study examines what may have been a religious tradition predating the kingdom, with roots in the Iron Age Levant and Mesopotamia.

## **1.2 Previous Study of Nabatean Religion**

Up to this point, the religion of Nabataea has been mostly investigated through examination of temples and public shrines.<sup>4</sup> This research has certainly provided a foundation from which to understand certain aspects of Nabataean religion. However, there is very little understanding of how these practices may have played out in the most intimate of spaces—the home. Fortunately, while much focus remains on the religious monuments of Nabataea, attention in recent years has shifted towards domestic spaces. Beginning in 1988, excavation of the homes of the ez-Zantur area of Petra gave insight into the lives of the residents of these middle class and elite houses.<sup>5</sup> More recent projects such as the Petra North Ridge Project also include the homes of less prominent citizens of Nabataea than those housed at ez-Zantur. This focus on more modest domestic structures permits a greater understanding of how Nabataeans incorporated their religious beliefs into their daily lives. This thesis intends to move towards understanding these beliefs and practices. For example, terracotta figurines with potential religious significance have been discovered in many Nabataean archaeological contexts, mainly homes and tombs, as well as public spaces such as the Great Theater of Petra and the neighborhood dump at el-

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<sup>4</sup> There are two main works on the topic of Nabataean religion. Healey (2001) does not discuss domestic spaces, except that there may have been triclinia attached to some, though likely without religious purpose (166). Alpass (2009) also does not investigate domestic religion, yet acknowledges that terracotta figurines, many of which were found in domestic contexts, may offer insight into personal piety (112). Both choose to focus on well-known temples and their architecture, including Qasr el-Bint, el-Tannur, and edh-Dharih, as well as the sacred high places found around Petra.

<sup>5</sup> Kolb and Schmid 2011; Kolb 2002, 260.

Katute.<sup>6</sup> Those found within the home can offer insight into the religious concerns of Nabataeans at the household level, and how they believed domestic issues, such as health and prosperity, could be managed.

While many types of terracotta figurines, both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, have been found in Nabataean domestic contexts, the Enthroned Nude Female was selected for this study because its features suggest potential religious use and it is commonly found in domestic spaces.<sup>7</sup> Nude female figurines are frequently used in the religious practice of neighboring cultures, most notably in Egypt and Mesopotamia,<sup>8</sup> therefore the Enthroned Nude Female type was ideal for study because of the availability of these comparative examples.

Nabatean sources, as will be discussed below, offer meager information making it necessary to draw inferences through comparison to both the nude female figurines of other societies and to other media with similar iconography, including statues and funerary monuments. Additionally, the iconography of the Enthroned Nude Female proved exceptionally informative, which made it possible to draw several broader conclusions regarding Nabataean domestic religion. This was achieved by analyzing each iconographic attribute and comparing it to similar attributes from other Near Eastern cultures for which there is more available information, both written and archaeological. The figurine's features were also compared to known Nabataean iconography from sources such as coins and religious statuary. Therefore, due to the highly informative nature of the figurine type, this study focuses solely on the Enthroned Nude Female.

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<sup>6</sup> For detail, please see the Contextual Information section, pages 25-28.

<sup>7</sup> The figurine type classified by Tuttle as the Nude Youth, Standing, also met these criteria. However, the Enthroned Nude Female offered the most comprehensive insight because of the availability of comparative examples.

<sup>8</sup> Assante 2002, 7-19; Waraksa 2008; Budin 2002.



### **1.3 Previous Work on Nabatean Terracotta Figurines**

Lamia el-Khouri was the first to explore Nabataean terracotta figurines in-depth. Her dissertation focused mainly on describing and analyzing manufacture techniques and stages of development. However, Christopher Tuttle greatly expanded upon this research and designed a framework for future investigations. His classification system for Nabataean coroplastic objects provides a logical typology based on observable details and characteristics. Tuttle's categories were used for this study because of their overall consistency, logic, and structure.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the parameters for Tuttle's groups, including the Enthroned Nude Female, were broad enough to allow for the inclusion of variations. This contributed to the recognition of the Enthroned Nude Female type's notable prevalence and uniformity compared to other Nabataean terracotta figurines. However, both Tuttle and el-Khouri's works only offer minimal input into how these figurines may have functioned in a religious context, instead mainly focusing on physical descriptions, developmental stages of the craft, etc.

### **1.4 Goals and Structure of Thesis**

There are several main goals of this study. The first is to determine if the Enthroned Nude Female figurine was indeed a religious object. Until now, research conducted into this matter has been limited,<sup>10</sup> and this thesis offers an opportunity to determine through an in-depth analysis of its iconography whether this figurine type was truly a religious object and not simply a decorative item, toy, etc. The second goal is to understand what kind of role this figurine may have played in Nabataean domestic religion. There is currently very limited research into what kinds of objects may have been used in Nabataean domestic religion, so this figurine may offer

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<sup>9</sup> Tuttle 2009, 130. Tuttle includes a separate section regarding potential function and meaning of the figurine type. However, his category system does not include any such bias of speculation regarding these aspects.

<sup>10</sup> El-Khouri 2002, 97-109; Tuttle 2009, 256-262.

insight into how Nabataeans utilized terracotta figurines in religious practice. Additionally, since the study of Nabataean religion inside of the home is virtually nonexistent, this study seeks to understand what the Enthroned Nude Female can tell us about the general nature of Nabataean domestic religion. The final goal of this project was to understand what, if any, implications the Enthroned Nude Female may have for our understanding Nabataean religion overall. There is a widely held view that the Nabataeans may have had some sort of prohibition against anthropomorphic imagery in their religion,<sup>11</sup> making research into the presence of a potentially religious anthropomorphic object in Nabataean homes important in this ongoing debate.

To accomplish these goals, Chapter 1 begins by providing background about Nabataea in order to understand its history and geographic position. Chapter 1 also highlights research previously conducted into both Nabataean religion and terracotta figurines. This review underscores the minimal amount of investigation that has been undertaken into both Nabataean domestic religion and the connection between Nabataean terracotta figurines and religious use. Chapter 2 begins by furnishing the reader with background on the study and definition of domestic religion as used in this study. Terracotta figurines and their previous research are discussed, both from Nabataea and the societies from which comparative examples are drawn, namely the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. This section also explores how other authors have connected terracotta figurines to domestic religious practice. Lastly, Chapter 2 describes the method employed in the analysis of the iconographic features of the Enthroned Nude Female, as well as the sites from which figurines included in the study originate.

Chapter 3 gives a complete description of the Enthroned Nude Female figurine type. It also describes each of the type's iconographic features and how they are both similar and

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<sup>11</sup> For details on this viewpoint, see Patrich 1990 and Mettinger 1995, 57-68.

different to neighboring societies from which the comparative examples in this study originate. Next, the contextual and dating evidence for the Enthroned Nude Female is examined to see what information it may provide concerning who may have used these figurines, where they used them, and during what period. Lastly, each iconographic attribute of the figurine type is analyzed and compared to both Nabataean and foreign objects to determine a possible meaning behind each one, allowing for interpretation of the Enthroned Nude Female's potential role in domestic religion in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 analyzes the iconographic information from Section 3.3 and relates these meanings to the framework of domestic religion as defined in Chapter 2. After detailing the potential uses of the Enthroned Nude Female in domestic religion in section 4.1, section 4.2 examines what the function and meaning of the figurine may tell us about the nature of Nabataean domestic religion overall. This study closes with Chapter 5's conclusions concerning the implications of the presence of a potentially religious anthropomorphic figurine for Nabataean religion as a whole. Finally, the conclusions of the study overall will be summarized.

## **CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND, DEFINITIONS, AND METHODS**

This chapter provides relevant information concerning several aspects of the study. First, domestic religion is defined, as well as details of the objects typically associated with its practice. The following section discusses in detail previous research into Nabataean terracotta figurines and proceeds to explain how other authors have connected terracotta figurines in other cultures to domestic religious practice. Next, the method of iconographic analysis is explained. Sites included in the study are discussed in the concluding section of this chapter to provide the reader with an understanding of both the nature of the domestic spaces from which the figurines in this study originated, as well as to highlight some of the limitations of the current data.

### **2.1 Domestic Religion**

In their definition of domestic religion, authors such as Dr. Anna Stevens exclude any religious conduct undertaken beyond the walls of the house, including the home's gardens or general compound area.<sup>12</sup> However, for two reasons this study defines domestic religion as the expression of religious beliefs in the home and its immediately adjacent areas. The first reason is that evidence exists for religious activity in spaces directly attached to Nabataean homes.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, the only written reference to religion in Nabataean homes states rituals were sometimes conducted on the roofs of homes.<sup>14</sup> For this study, the "home" is defined as a

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<sup>12</sup> Stevens 2003, 143.

<sup>13</sup> A small betyl, approximately 0.33 meters tall, was found on the esplanade connected to the large house at edh-Dharih (al-Muheisen and Piraud-Fournet 2013, 11). Several terracotta figurines with potential religious use, namely enthroned, draped females, as well as camels, were recovered from the courtyard area that had also served as an open-air kitchen at ez-Zantur I (Kolb and Keller 2000, 364).

<sup>14</sup> Healey 2001, 103.

dwelling in which an individual, family, or extended household resides, and is used primarily for shelter, sleeping, and the preparation and consumption of meals. The expression of religious beliefs in the home could take the form of passive placement of “apotropaic symbols, images, and inscriptions...used to guard the borders of houses” and protect its inhabitants,<sup>15</sup> or in an active form occurring as rituals performed by or with family members.

The term “household religion” was not used, as it is unknown how the Nabataeans may have recognized the specific composition of a household, be it the nuclear family, extended family across several domiciles, or whether servants or other unrelated individuals may have been included.<sup>16</sup> There is also not yet enough evidence to link the activities of household members to the greater “domestic sphere,” that is, “those places to which family members went (outside of the home) in the service of maintaining the safety, concord, and continuance of the family,” such as local shrines.<sup>17</sup> However, considering the concerns of the domestic sphere are central to the home and family, and that the home constitutes the central and most important site in the domestic sphere, the criteria applicable to the greater sphere will be applied to the data from the home itself. Therefore, this study is limited to areas that are strongly believed to have served primarily as residences and the religious expressions found within them.

While little is known about Nabataean domestic religion and its associated objects, geographically adjacent cultures are far more documented in this respect. As with the analysis of the iconographic features discussed above, the surrounding societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Israel, and the greater Levant serve to illustrate the types of objects common to domestic practice

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<sup>15</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 40.

<sup>16</sup> For more information concerning the definition of the household across cultures, see Ackerman 2008, 127-132; Ur 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 40.

of the time and region. This domestic practice of religion encompassed a host of rituals and actions, from intricate magical rites to rid homes of disease to the sharing of meals with ancestors, all efforts to maintain spiritual balance and wellbeing in the home.<sup>18</sup> Typical objects used during such religious practice included model shrines, incense burners, altars, lamps, libation vessels, cooking pots, decorated chalices, and other vessels; another commonly found artifact is the anthropomorphic terracotta figurine.<sup>19</sup> Many of these objects, such as shrines and altars, mimic their counterparts found in the temple in miniaturized form, signaling a measure of accord with temple practice.<sup>20</sup> However, domestic practice included additional layers not typically associated with formal temple religion, such as protective amulets, ancestor veneration, and distinct household deities. It also excluded some common temple practices such as animal sacrifice.<sup>21</sup>

It should be noted that terracotta figurines are certainly not the only objects from Nabataean domestic contexts that likely served religious purposes. The most conspicuous of other religious objects are the betyls that have been excavated from homes.<sup>22</sup> Betyls are plain, rectangular stones that were used in many aspects of Nabataean religion to represent deities. They were a common object in certain religions in Arabia and other parts of the ancient Near East.<sup>23</sup> Other objects sometimes found in Nabataean domestic contexts were altars, often in

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<sup>18</sup> Van der Toorn 2008, 25-26.

<sup>19</sup> Albertz 2008, 94-97; Olyan 2008, 116-117; Schmitt 2008, 164-167; Frankfurter 1998, 132-137.

<sup>20</sup> Olyan 2008, 117.

<sup>21</sup> Albertz 2008, 101; Olyan 2008, 116-119; Bodel and Olyan 2008, 279.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Muheisen and Piraud-Fournet 2011, 841-844; Stucky 1996, 338.

<sup>23</sup> Alpass 2011, 277. Occasionally, betyls depict eyes and a nose, in the form of geometric shapes or in a more naturalized manner. See Wenning 2001's section on "Eye Betyls with Inscriptions."

miniaturized form, as well as incense burners.<sup>24</sup> Hopefully future research will illuminate how, or if, terracotta figurines were used and associated with these other objects with religious significance.

## **2.2 Terracotta Figurines - Previous Research**

The first in-depth exploration of Nabataean terracotta figurines was undertaken by Dr. Lamia el-Khoury, now with Yarmouk University, Jordan, in her Ph.D. dissertation. This work investigated production methods, examined visual attributes, and took a preliminary look at how terracotta figurines may have been used in Nabataean religion. Almost a decade later, Dr. Christopher Tuttle expanded greatly on Dr. el-Khoury's work and corpus to define a typology for Nabataean coroplastics, as well as to create a template for potential functions of the various figurine types. His classification system uses formal analysis with "attention...paid specifically to the form and how it is rendered, rather than to either the content portrayed on the object or the context from which it derives."<sup>25</sup> This approach emphasized objectivity in the identification and description of details and avoided subjective interpretation and its possible influence on an object's description.<sup>26</sup> Barring the unexpected discovery of previously unknown figurine types, Tuttle's classification system will likely serve to guide all future research on Nabataean terracotta figurines.

Other researchers of ancient Near Eastern domestic religion have related terracotta figurines to its practice. Paulette Daviau sees terracotta figurines as a typical part of domestic cult assemblages from Israel and Mesopotamia and as an indicator of religious practice in

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<sup>24</sup> Retzleff 2003, 51; Parker 2007, 361.

<sup>25</sup> Tuttle 2009, 73.

<sup>26</sup> Tuttle 2009, 73.

homes.<sup>27</sup> Rüdiger Schmitt also sees this connection, and believes Ashdoda figurines found accompanied by libation vessels, jugs, and craters were evidence of some kind of libation or meal ritual for the goddess represented by such figurines in the home.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the most frequent assumption regarding nude female figurines found in domestic contexts is that they were brought into the home by women in an effort to secure fecundity.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, previous research has often connected female terracotta figurines from many Near Eastern societies, from Egypt to Mesopotamia, with serving a protective role in domestic religion. This was achieved either by their placement of female figurines as apotropaic devices throughout the home, or their use in active rites to repel evil.<sup>30</sup> This thesis investigates in what ways the Nabataean Enthroned Female may or may not have fit into such roles.

### **2.3 Method of Iconographic Analysis**

For this thesis, a comparative method was employed to analyze the iconography. The obvious and preferred choice was information concerning religious iconography gleaned from Nabataean sources such as statuary, coins, and inscriptions. However, when this was lacking, comparison with nude female figurines and iconography from neighboring cultures was the best option. Considering the widespread use of such figurines in religious practice in the ancient Near East, viable examples with similar iconography and known use in domestic religion were available from well-documented societies such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, Israel, and the greater Levant. Additionally, comparisons were made across media, mostly from statuary. Considering

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<sup>27</sup> Alberty 2008, 96.

<sup>28</sup> Schmitt 2008, 164.

<sup>29</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 66; Stevens 2009, 7; Thomas 2015, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Barrett 2015, 413; Tuttle 2009, 256; Stevens 2003, 160; Waraksa 2007, 81-83.



the widespread occurrence of certain iconographic features in media outside of terracotta, this information was included to provide the most thorough base from which to draw inferences.

The model used for interpretation of the figurine's role in Nabataean domestic religion was borrowed from David Frankfurter's recent work, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Words in Late Antiquity* (2018). This comparative framework comprises eight key features of domestic religion created through reference to other, more well documented examples of domestic practice from throughout history.<sup>31</sup> As with the analysis of the iconographic features of the Enthroned Nude Female, the best available option was to apply such a comparative model in the absence of more detailed, direct evidence of Nabataean domestic religion. This method of cross-cultural comparison has proven effective in the investigation of similar situations of limited knowledge, with "echoes (of) many of the same forms and orientations of domestic religion current in other cultures."<sup>32</sup>

## **2.4 Sites Included in the Study**

The figurines included in this study originate from sites or sections of sites believed with reasonable certainty to have been used primarily as residences.<sup>33</sup> Several sites are located in the heart of Petra, another in the hinterlands of the city, and one approximately fifty miles away. Two figurines, Figurines 1 and 2 from this study's catalog, were found at a site in the center of Petra, ez-Zantur, located on an elevated terrace to the south of the Colonnaded Street and southeast of the "Great Temple."<sup>34</sup> This site contained numerous domestic structures, mainly

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<sup>31</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 49.

<sup>32</sup> Frankfurter 1998, 138.

<sup>33</sup> This assumption is based on architectural remains and artifact assemblages consistent with known domestic structures in the ancient world. For additional information, see Allison 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Kolb and Schmid 2011.

housing middle-class and elite residents of the city. Nearby, Figurines 11 and 12 were found in the “Residential Quarter” adjacent to the “Great Temple” and carved into the slopes of the ez-Zantur terrace.<sup>35</sup> Less is known about this section of the site, as it has not yet been fully excavated. Additionally, much of the “Residential Quarter” is contaminated by fluvial deposits, making it difficult to determine if an artifact’s findspot equates to its primary context.

Another site in Petra is el-Katute, a hill south of the Colonnaded Street and near ez-Zantur. The objects included from this site, Figurines 3 and 4, were collected during Nabil Khairy’s 1980-81 excavations of the domestic complex that lined this hill.<sup>36</sup> They originate from Area D, a domestic structure in use from as early as the reign of Aretas IV, approximately 9 BCE to 40 CE.<sup>37</sup> The last object from the center of Petra, Figurine 13, was discovered in the earlier phases of the North Ridge Project, which investigated church structures there, as well as tombs of non-elite citizens. The occupation of the domestic structures included in that project dated from the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.<sup>38</sup>

Outside of the city center is the site of Zurrabeh, located between Petra and Wadi Musa. Zurrabeh served as a site of major pottery production from Nabataean through Late Roman and Byzantine times, approximately the 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE; Figurines 6-10 originate from Fawzi Zayadine’s excavations of the structures north of the kilns, which potentially served as both work and living spaces for the potters there.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, Figurine 5 hails from Oboda/Avdat,

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<sup>35</sup> Tuttle 2009, 36-38.

<sup>36</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Khairy 1990, 6-8.

<sup>38</sup> Canipe 2014, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Zayadine 1982, 382.

roughly 50 miles from Petra along the Petra-Gaza Road. This object was found beneath the floors of a Roman military camp that was constructed on top of earlier Nabataean remains, possibly a caravanserai or large residence.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, disturbance of the original Nabataean material during the process of construction of the military camp has left little possibility of securely dating such material, aside from dating it before construction of the camp.<sup>41</sup>

There are two main problems that consistently plague the data concerning Nabataean figurines. The first is that some artifacts were discovered in contexts that were possibly not their locations of primary deposition. This problem arises with instances such as the artifact being found in fluvial deposits, meaning the object may have not have been originally deposited in its findspot, instead having been moved there by the motion of water and the sediment it carried. Other issues regarding the certainty of associating an object's findspot with its original location of deposition, such as being found in the intentional fill of a tomb shaft. This instance makes it uncertain if the object was originally located within the tomb, or moved from another location to be used as fill. Both instances make it unclear as to whether the findspot was the object's primary place of deposition. When a figurine has a findspot not affected by such issues, often the publication regarding associated objects in the locus is either incomplete or nonexistent, making the link between the figurine and any assemblage impossible to determine.

Therefore, the figurines in this study were selected from the fifty published in el-Khouri and Tuttle's works that had the greatest likelihood of having been originally deposited in a domestic context. The objects with the highest likelihood of this came from stratigraphically secure contexts, with no apparent interference by man or nature. Though it is possible some of

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<sup>40</sup> Erickson-Gini 2002, 115.

<sup>41</sup> Tuttle 2009, 47-49.

the objects found in fluvial deposits may have been brought into a domestic context by the action of sediment and water, it is also possible such an object may originally have been located in that same context but mixed in with the deposited material. Some of these kinds of figurines were included, but only after considering the effects the surrounding terrain and structures could have on sedimentary deposits. In short, preferred sites were not downhill of other populated or well-used areas which were non-domestic in their nature.

There were other Enthroned Nude Females included in Tuttle and el-Khoury's publications that potentially had been used in domestic contexts, such as those from Negev's excavation of the dump at Oboda/Avdat, or from Glueck's work in the town at Khirbet el-Moreighah in the 1930s.<sup>42</sup> However, without further information, it was impossible to determine if such figurines came from homes or other structures in the community. Therefore, they were excluded.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of Chapter 2 was to provide the reader with the background information and framework necessary to understanding the scope of this study. This was first achieved by defining the spaces and objects associated with domestic religion. It was also important to note the previous research on terracotta figurines and how other authors have connected them to domestic religion to illuminate the kinds of roles figurines typically play in its practice. Explanation of the methods of iconographic analysis and interpretation will clarify the processes through which each iconographic attribute was analyzed in the subsequent chapters, as well as to how conclusions will be reached regarding their significance and implications for the figurine's role in domestic religion. Lastly, the site information detailed in this chapter can help to explain

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<sup>42</sup> Tuttle 2009, 47-48; Glueck 1934, 15-36.

the limitations of the data and the need for future research when better datasets become available.

Chapter 3, which analyzes the Enthroned Nude Female type, will build on the framework provided in Chapter 2 by providing details concerning contextual data from the sites listed in Chapter 2, and also utilizes the methodology described in Chapter 2 to analyze the iconography present on the figurine.

### **CHAPTER 3: THE ENTHRONED NUDE FEMALE TYPE**

This chapter explores the Enthroned Nude Female type in-depth. It begins with a summary of both the figurine's size and dimensions and progresses to a description of each recognizable iconographic feature. Next, the contextual data is examined for what information it can provide. Lastly, the iconographic attributes of the Enthroned Nude Female are analyzed using information available concerning similar features found in Nabataea, both in visual representations and written evidence, such as inscriptions. Since this information is not plentiful, a comparative approach is taken for many of the iconographic attributes using examples from neighboring societies in the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. One primary goal of this chapter is to introduce the Enthroned Nude Female figurine type and offer a complete description. Additionally, examination of the contextual evidence for this figurine type provides a framework for understanding where it was possibly used and during what timeframe. Lastly, analysis of the Enthroned Nude Female's iconography in this chapter allows for its interpretation in subsequent chapters as to how this figurine type may have functioned in domestic religion.

#### **3.1 Description**

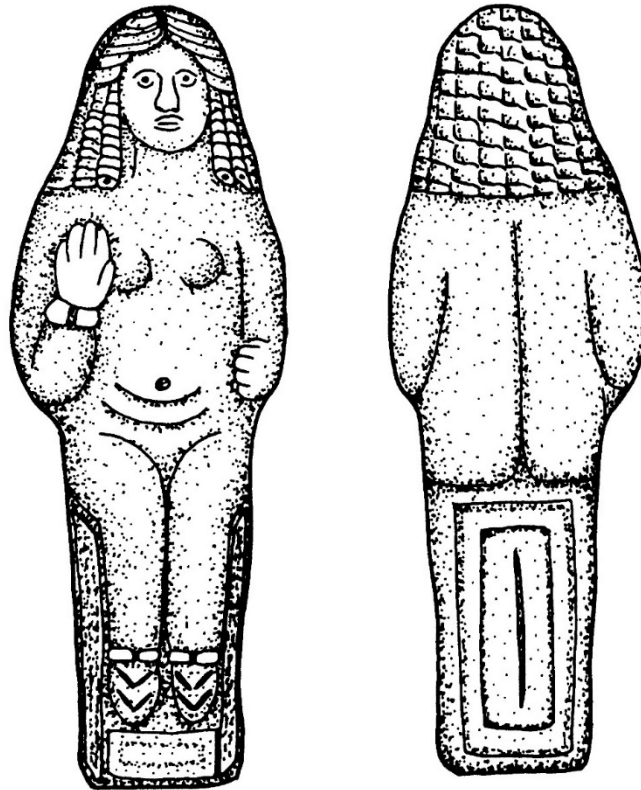
The requirements for inclusion in Tuttle's category of Enthroned Nude Female are the figure being female, nude, and seated, likely on a throne (Fig. 1).<sup>43</sup> While these specifications are broad, the examples of this type that are included in this study show a distinct uniformity in both size and iconography, despite their fragmentary state. The maximum width of the upper body

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<sup>43</sup> Tuttle 2009, 146.

portion is typically close to 3cm, while that of the lower section hovers around 2.5cm.

Reconstructed height would likely be around 8.5cm.<sup>44</sup> Only Figurine 8 from this study's catalog shows some variation, being of a slightly larger size, with an original height closer to 11 or 12 centimeters.<sup>45</sup>



**Figure 1.** *Illustrated example of complete Enthroned Nude Female* (el-Khoury 2002, 119).

The subject is always depicted frontally. The hairstyle, parted in the middle and arranged in plaits on each sides, could possibly indicate a wig showing Greco-Egyptian influence, and is

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<sup>44</sup> Measurements were calculated using the figures in Tuttle and El-Khoury's catalogs. The raw data can be found on pages 372-384 and 49-52 respectively.

<sup>45</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 19.

best seen on Figurine 3 from the catalog.<sup>46</sup> When the legs are extant they are, together with the feet, articulated by incised lines, suggesting sandals or slippers, best seen on Figurines 1, 2, 4, and 5.<sup>47</sup> The feet do not reach the ground; instead there is always some sort of platform or footstool underneath as on Figurines 1 and 2. Figurines 9 and 13 best show how there is no back to the throne; it resembles a solid block upon which the female sits. The details of the female's back are formed with shallow grooves.<sup>48</sup> The illustrated complete example (Fig. 1) demonstrates how the breasts are small and the pudenda is not emphasized. Instead, where extant, molded lines in the lower abdomen obscure the genital area, showing a degree of pendency in the belly, as exhibited on Figurines 3 and 12.<sup>49</sup> Lastly, in all examples with the right arm remaining, namely Figurines 3, 9, and 12, it is bent at the elbow with the hand raised to shoulder height, palm facing outward. Figurine 3, and to a lesser extent 12, demonstrates how the left hand rests against the abdomen, perhaps clasping an object. Unfortunately, only one complete example of this figurine type is available for comparison (Fig. 1).<sup>50</sup> However, as the objects in this category were formed with exceptionally uniform iconography and relatively close measurements, and because the extant fragments all mirror their respective sections of the complete object, it seems reasonable to infer that the examples in this study were similar.

The Enthroned Nude Female, like other Nabataean terracotta figurines, includes visual and iconographic features that have parallels in other cultures, from both the East and the Greco-

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<sup>46</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 9-10.

<sup>47</sup> Tuttle 2009, 382.

<sup>48</sup> Tuttle 2009, 377.

<sup>49</sup> Tuttle 2009, 351.

<sup>50</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 149.



Roman world. Features with potential Eastern origin include those seen in Parthian, Phoenician, Mesopotamian, and South Arabian cultures, among others. First among the iconographic features is nudity, a trait typically reserved in the ancient Near East for the depiction of deities, and often used in Greco-Roman contexts for this purpose as well.<sup>51</sup> Another feature common in Parthian and Palmyrene art is the use of a strict and rigid frontality (Fig. 2 and 3), instead of the more dynamic poses common in many contemporary Hellenistic figurines (Fig. 4).<sup>52</sup>



**Figure 2.** *Parthian Figurine*, ca. 4th–3rd century B.C., ceramic. 7.62 x 3.81 cm; Iran, possibly from Susa. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/324303](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/324303). Accessed March 9, 2018.



**Figure 3.** *Funerary relief*, ca. 172 CE, limestone. 52.4 x 39.7 cm. Syria, probably from Palmyra. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/322380](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/322380). Accessed March 8, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Tuttle 2009, 259; Bonfante 1989, 569-570.

<sup>52</sup> Hachlili 1998, 177-178.



**Figure 4.** *Terracotta statuette of Aphrodite and Eros.* 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, terracotta, H. 21.0cm. South Italy. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/248710](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/248710). Accessed March 3, 2018.



**Figure 5.** *Statuette of Isis and Horus.* 332-30 BCE, faience, H. 17 cm / W. 5.1 cm / D. 7.7 cm. Egypt. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/548310](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/548310). Accessed March 9, 2018.

Additionally, the throne is frequently used in depictions of deities and royal figures in both Eastern and Western art. In Egyptian examples this took the form of a flat sitting surface, typically lacking armrests, with a short or full length back (Fig. 5). Hellenistic depictions of thrones often had high backs and occasionally armrests as well (Fig 6.).

A final iconographic attribute common to other cultures is the gesture of the right hand raised, palm facing outward. This is found in statuary, figurines, and other works of art spanning the Eastern world, from as early as Bronze Age Ugarit (Fig. 7), to more contemporary societies such as those from South Arabia, Parthia, and Palmyra (Fig. 8). The gesture is used in representations of both deities and mortals, with the difference between human and divine typically shown by either inscription or through the interpretation of the iconography.



**Figure 6.** *Terracotta statuette of a seated goddess. 3rd century BCE, terracotta, H. 13.5cm. Cyprus. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*  
[www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/241147](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/241147). Accessed March 4, 2018.



**Figure 7.** *Standing Deity, Ugarit, Middle Bronze Age, early second millennium BCE. (Jamous 2008, 46).*

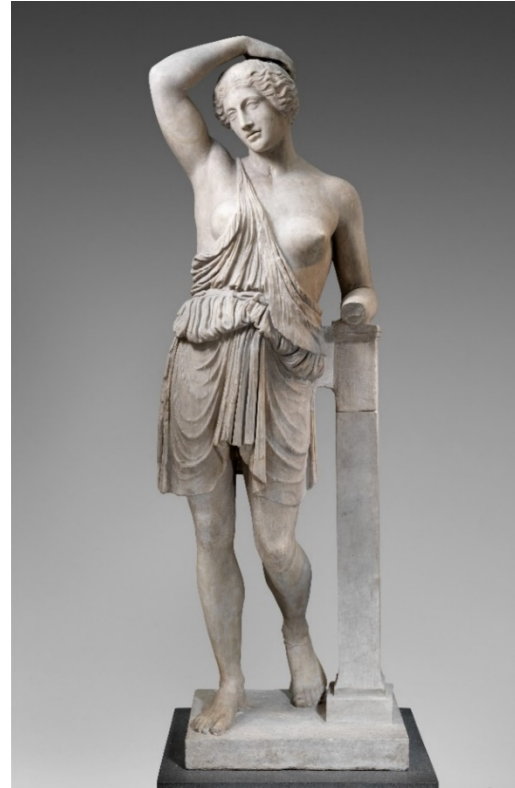


**Figure 8.** *Funerary stele, south Arabia with Qatabanic inscription, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. (DASI, CSAI I, 269).*

While the Enthroned Nude Female possesses iconographic attributes found in other cultures, there appears to have been a conscious choice in how these were presented. Examples of Phoenician, Palmyrene, Parthian, and South Arabian art certainly depict anthropomorphic figures with their right hands raised, palm outward. However, these works depict the subject almost exclusively clothed and typically standing (Fig. 9).<sup>53</sup>



**Figure 9.** *Standing Man.* Ca. 2nd century CE, basalt, H. 76.8cm, W. 40.1cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/324158](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/324158). Accessed March 1, 2018.



**Figure 10.** *Marble statue of a wounded Amazon.* 1st-2nd century CE, marble, H. 203.84cm. Roman. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/253373](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/253373). Accessed March 11, 2018.

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<sup>53</sup> In the case of south Arabian and Palmyrene examples, many come from funerary stele that only depict the bust of the individual, making it unclear if the figure was intended to be sitting or standing. However, in contrast to the Enthroned Nude Female, the individual is not shown in a definitively sitting position.





**Figure 11.** *Fish Goddess, Altar Platform 3. Ca. 1st century CE, limestone, Khirbet et-Tannur (McKenzie 2013, 61-71).*



**Figure 12.** *Male head from a bust on north pilaster of Altar Platform 3. Early 2nd century CE. Temple at Khirbet et-Tannur (McKenzie 2013, 71).*



**Figure 13.** *Cult statue of a god. Ca. 1st century CE, sandstone. Temple at Khirbet et-Tannur. Note the abstract non-naturalizing proportions between the head and body, as well as the lack of emphasis on a naturalizing portrait overall (McKenzie and Reyes 2013, 193-194).*

The Enthroned Nude Female also utilizes a block-like representation of a throne, instead of those found elsewhere with backs and armrests. There is also little attempt at the highly naturalized depictions of female figures found in much of contemporary Greco-Roman art (Fig. 10). Instead they have an almost abstract quality of the facial and bodily features, somewhat emulating larger Nabataean anthropomorphic statuary (Figs. 11, 12, and 13).

Lastly, where many nude female figurines of religious significance in other cultures emphasized the sexual attributes of female anatomy, such as the famous “Venus” figurines from the Paleolithic or the Judean pillar figurines,<sup>54</sup> this is absent in the Enthroned Nude Female. The complete reasoning behind these stylistic preferences may never be truly known. However, this study seeks to examine what this combination of iconographic attributes can tell us about Nabataean domestic religion and its practice, and to a lesser extent, Nabataean religious traditions overall.

### **3.2 Contextual Information**

The contextual information for representations of the Enthroned Nude Female in Nabataea is sparse at best. Overall, there are fifty examples of the Enthroned Nude Female found in el-Khouri and Tuttle’s works. Some come from relatively secure findspots, with published data that allow for a level of certainty as to their original depositional context. Others are far more obscure, originating from unknown locations within a larger site such as a town, which could contain a host of contexts, from temple to public to domestic. Unfortunately, some also exist in private collections, with all knowledge of their original findspot lost.

Even so, the thirteen objects (26%) selected for this study of the fifty Enthroned Nude Females included in el-Khouri and Tuttle’s works appeared to have the highest likelihood of originating from a domestic context. Another nine of those fifty (18%) potentially originated in homes; however, lack of thorough publication precludes their inclusion in this category, with their location frequently being only assigned to a larger site overall. Eight Enthroned Nude Females (16%) hail from tombs; however, most of these are from fluvial or intentional fill deposits, making it unclear if these were their original deposition areas. Another six (12%) were

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<sup>54</sup> Darby 2011, 101.

found in public areas; these range from the Great Theater at Petra, to an area near a communal olive press, to the dump at Katute.<sup>55</sup> Three Enthroned Nude Females (6%) appear to have originated from in or near temples, with one coming from the Temple of the Winged Lions, and the other two being found in the Upper Temenos of the Petra Great Temple.<sup>56</sup> Considering the ongoing debate as to whether the Great Temple was even a temple at all, this percentage may need to be adjusted downward with future research. Lastly, eleven examples (22%) are of unknown origin. This encompasses both objects that reside in private collections and those for whom the publication is unclear or nonexistent.

As previously discussed, lack of complete publication is a frequent problem. Even when a findspot is known, as in the case of the Petra Great Temple domestic objects, complications like fluvial interference often prevent a deposition location from being completely certain or the positive association of other items with the figurine. None have been found in any sort of recognizable niche or shrine common in the domestic religious practice of other cultures in the region. Therefore, based on available contextual information, only the broadest of interpretations is currently possible.

In the case of the Enthroned Nude Female, there are a few important observations deserving attention. First, it is notable that there is at least one example of this category from all seven sites included in this study. From the heart of Petra (Figurines 1-4 and 11-13), to her hinterlands (Figurines 6-10), to an outpost in the Negev (Figurine 5), the Enthroned Nude Female was apparently of enough cultural significance to find her way into the homes of every

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<sup>55</sup> Tuttle 2009, 651.

<sup>56</sup> Tuttle 2009, 374-383, 651.

site in this study.<sup>57</sup> It should also be known that of the few figurines for which there is a definite findspot, Figurine 1 was found in the most central and highly decorated area, likely a formal reception room, in the elite mansion of Ez-Zantur IV.<sup>58</sup> Other examples hail from domestic spaces of varying socio-economic classes, from the more likely middle-class abodes such as those abutting the Great Temple or nearby Katute Ridge (Figurines 3, 4, 11-13), to what were probably the homes of lower working-class families adjacent to the kilns at Zurrabah (Figurines 6-10).<sup>59</sup> While it has often been assumed that terracotta figurines were typically used by those of lower status due to the “cheap technological properties of the figurines” and their affordability,<sup>60</sup> this evidence may show otherwise. Even though such a high-status deposit location inside of Ez-Zantur IV could have been the result of random disposal and not from use in that specific area, it does suggest the possibility that these figurines were used in some respect in elite households. Their inclusion in both working and middle-class domestic spaces also speaks to a broad audience for this figurine type. Overall, it appears that the use of the Enthroned Nude Female in domestic religious practice was common across the socio-economic spectrum of Nabataea.

Lastly, dating of this type in domestic space is exceptionally limited as well. The date of Figurine 3 to the reign of Aretas IV (18 – 40 C.E.) appears estimated based only on associated coin finds, with insufficient publication to provide complete stratigraphical insight. Figurine 5 is given a slightly better *terminus ante quem* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. based on “deposition context

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<sup>57</sup> No recognizable examples of this type are known to the author from the other, middle-class residences of Ez-Zantur (I or III). However, it does not appear that the available literature includes a complete listing of figurine finds from Ez-Zantur. Full publication of the Ez-Zantur figurines by L. Gorgerat is forthcoming (Tuttle 2009, 33).

<sup>58</sup> El-Khouri 2002, 91; Kolb 2002, 260.

<sup>59</sup> Khairy 1990; Zayadine 1982.

<sup>60</sup> Darby 2011, 97.



and artifact associations.”<sup>61</sup> However, even with such scant information, it does seem likely the Enthroned Nude Female was in use during the height of the Nabataean Kingdom, namely the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E., and possibly shortly thereafter. When this information is combined with the figurine’s frequency and the fact that its iconography coincides with several known features of Nabataean culture, it seems quite likely that, despite its inclusion of features common in outside cultures, the Enthroned Nude Female was a distinct expression of Nabataean culture.

### **3.3 Iconographic Analysis**

The terracotta figurines in the Enthroned Nude Female type include multiple features which emphasize its potential religious function. The uniformity in size and features is worth noting in itself. While some examples may present slightly different details in the feet, design of the back of the throne, etc., the visual and iconographical features are systematic in their implementation. The purpose of this standardized iconography likely signals the craftsman’s desire to impart a particular identity and meaning to these objects.<sup>62</sup> Thus, when the examples from this catalog are considered along with the complete figurine, the most consistent attributes are nudity, the throne, frontality, the gesture of the right arm, and the presence of a footstool.

The first iconographic attribute that stands out as having potential religious connotation is nudity. The representation of goddesses and immortal figures in the nude was a frequent convention in Near Eastern art, as well as in the Hellenistic art that filtered through Nabataea.<sup>63</sup> While it can be misleading to compare religious iconography across cultures and time periods, considering the prevalence of such geographical and cross-cultural influence in Nabataea, similar

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<sup>61</sup> Tuttle 2009, 384.

<sup>62</sup> Tuttle 2009, 257.

<sup>63</sup> Aruz et al. 2008, 349. Bonfante 1989, 559; Schmid 2001; Tuttle 2009, 259.

functionality is possible.<sup>64</sup> In light of their own geographic location and origins, as well as the fact that the Nabataeans exhibited both influences in other forms of art, it is likely they shared in the tradition of the nude female as a divine figure.<sup>65</sup> The attribute of nudity alone potentially makes the Enthroned Nude Female some sort of cultic object for religious use. However, the nudity of these figurines should be explored in depth, as it may imply diverse concerns expressed by Nabataeans.

For many years, the nudity of female figurines was thought to primarily, if not exclusively, symbolize a desire for procreative fertility.<sup>66</sup> However, this may be too narrow a view of fertility and its connection to female nudity. For example, while the ability to conceive was certainly included in the Egyptian concept of fertility, the notion expanded beyond that of simple reproductive capacity. It encompassed a more “general concern with health that includes, but is not restricted to, the ability to have sexual relations and/or to procreate.”<sup>67</sup> This came from an association of the nude, healthy, female form, which in its fertile state of adulthood served to symbolize an ideal state of health and wellbeing.<sup>68</sup> While the capacity to conceive was important, the ability of the mother to survive childbirth, maintain her health, and raise the child to adulthood, was also significant. Perpetuation of the family was a common concern throughout the ancient world,<sup>69</sup> likely making the manifestation of optimal fitness as found in the Enthroned Nude Female a representation of the family’s desired state.

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<sup>64</sup> Meshorer 1975, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Patrich 1990, 114.

<sup>66</sup> Assante 2006, 178.

<sup>67</sup> Waraksa 2007, 144.

<sup>68</sup> Budin 2011, 131.

<sup>69</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 49.

In association with this, it appears that “ceramic nude female figurines were thought to protect healthy, and therefore fertile, men and women alike through their use as temporary manifestations of deities in magico-medical rituals.”<sup>70</sup> Throughout the Near East, the nudity of a female figure was thought able to “unleash magical powers” through its association with taboo, much like the image of the phallus, something typically hidden and which could impart such powers through its visibility.<sup>71</sup> A nude female figurine could therefore both represent a deity and unleash its powers through nudity during magico-medical rituals, and were often used as active agents during such rites in the home.<sup>72</sup> In Egypt, incantations were given over a “woman’s statue of clay” to heal stomach ailments and treat snake bites.<sup>73</sup> In Mesopotamia, nude female figurines were implemented in magico-medical rites to expel demons thought to cause illness in the home.<sup>74</sup>

Most notable is the evidence from what has been called the “Nabataean Incantation Text.” The earliest known example of Nabataean cursive writing, this ink-inscribed stone was found at Horvat Raqia in the Negev, near the northern border of what was the Nabataean Kingdom.<sup>75</sup> The incantation appears to have been designed to release its client from a spell. What is most striking is that it evokes divine assistants, all daughters of deities, in the form of “female statuettes.”<sup>76</sup> While the exact form of such statuettes is not described, considering the

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<sup>70</sup> Waraksa 2007, 166.

<sup>71</sup> Assante 2006, 179; Bonfante 1989, 544.

<sup>72</sup> Borghouts 1970, 25; Budin 2002, 319; Waraksa 2008, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Borghouts 1970, 25; Waraksa 2007, 144.

<sup>74</sup> Darby 2011, 139.

<sup>75</sup> Naveh 1979, 111.

<sup>76</sup> Naveh 1979, 113.

prevalence of female clay figurines in Nabataea and their frequent use during rites in neighboring cultures, there is a distinct possibility objects such as the Enthroned Nude Female were used similarly in rites by the Nabataeans.

Additionally, considering the powerful force invoked by female nudity, it should be considered that these kinds of figurines were used passively outside of magico-medical rites for their ability to avert the evil thought to bring about illness and misfortune in the home. Exposure of the female body has long been used as a repelling force to protect against malevolence.<sup>77</sup> In this vein, Akkadian depictions of a nude female has been said to represent the concept of *bastu*, or dignity, “personified as a protective spirit,” a similar concept which is seen across Mesopotamia.<sup>78</sup> Similar types were also used for apotropaic purposes to protect and “safeguard a living or working space.”<sup>79</sup> Therefore, nude female figurines could provide a tangible force to aid a person dealing with two kinds of intangible powers: those thought to cause sickness and suffering, and those believed able to repel them.

Lastly, the nudity of this type makes it possible that they were symbols of eroticism. However, this idea seems too narrow in light of the Nabataean Enthroned Nude Female’s characteristics. The breasts are small and lack exaggeration, nor is the pudendum emphasized; instead, a few incised lines in that area indicate only a level of pendency to the belly (best seen on Figurines 3 and 12). While the Nabataeans could have certainly viewed this representation of the female body as exemplifying sexuality, when the non-sexual, frontal position of the body is also considered, it is of minimal likelihood that these objects were viewed in an exclusively

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<sup>77</sup> Dexter and Mair 2013, 9.

<sup>78</sup> Assante 2002, 7, 19.

<sup>79</sup> Waraksa 2007, 82.

sexual manner. As Budin noted regarding the nude, almost erotic female figurines of the Syro-Mesopotamian region, the body of the nude female “functions to raise power, even for non-sexual purposes.”<sup>80</sup> Therefore, as previously discussed, rather than pure sexuality or eroticism, it appears that the nudity of female figurines is more a feature of power, whether it be for passive protection or assistance with magic in the home.

Something of possible importance to the subject of domestic religion is the absence of nudity in anthropomorphic statues of deities in the temples and community spaces of Nabataea. While a popular form of depiction for Nabataean deities is in the aniconic, betyl form, there are certainly humanized images of gods and goddesses, often known through inscriptions designating them as such. These are found in Nabataean settings as diverse as the Temple of the Winged Lions in Petra, Khirbet et-Tannur seventy kilometers to the north, and into Syria.<sup>81</sup> However, these deities, both male and female, appear to all be depicted at least partially clothed. Only *putti*-like subjects are typically seen in the nude, and those at Qasr el-Bint exhibit significant Hellenistic influence (Figs. 14 and 15).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Budin 2002, 319.

<sup>81</sup> For examples see the *Bust of the Egyptian god, Serapis* from the Temple of the Winged Lions, currently in the Petra Archaeological Museum; the *High relief statue of Nike supporting the Zodiac with Tyche*, Khirbet el-Tannur; the *Statue of Dushara*, National Museum of Damascus.

<sup>82</sup> Amadasi and Schneider 2002, 158-159.



**Figure 14.** *Fragment of a frieze with festoons and garlands supported by putti.* Late 1st century BCE to early 1st century CE limestone. Qasr el-Bint, Petra (Amadasi and Schneider 2002, 158).



**Figure 15.** *Putti.* Late 1st century BCE to early 1st century CE limestone. Qasr el-Bint, Petra (Amadasi and Schneider 2002, 158).

This could imply that the Enthroned Nude Female represents a deity outside the normal range of known Nabataean gods, perhaps a minor deity or divine figure, for now known only to the Nabataeans. Since there is currently no textual or contextual information to exclude the identity of the Enthroned Nude Female as a known member of the Nabataean pantheon, it also is possible that nudity was a method by which to unleash the power of the usually clothed divine female and allow use of her powers by the holder.<sup>83</sup> Either way, the nudity of these figurines certainly sets them apart from the larger anthropomorphic images found throughout the Nabataean Kingdom.

Another iconographic attribute that stands out is the throne on which the female sits. Figurines 9 and 11 depict the rear of the throne best, while Figurines 1, 2, and 5 give good detail about the front. Thrones have often been used to imply royalty and divinity in imagery across cultures. However, its presence deserves special note when applied to Nabataean religion. The

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<sup>83</sup> Bonfante 1989, 544.

throne, or *mwtb*, is a sacred object often mentioned directly in inscriptions as belonging to the god while also being a separate entity from the god.<sup>84</sup> The *mwtb* is usually depicted in conjunction with the aniconic betyls common in Nabataean religion. It serves as a special base on which the god-block rests, an object of divine nature yet separate from the betyl itself.<sup>85</sup> Though not supporting a betyl, perhaps Nabataean craftsmen integrated a traditional form of the *mwtb* with a less traditional anthropomorphic representation in an effort to communicate divinity. Considering the throne on which the figurine sits lacks the back or armrests of the chair-like thrones in Hellenistic and Egyptian images,<sup>86</sup> more resembling a block-like *mwtb*, it is possible this a visual translation of its traditional role. In light of its place in Nabataean religion as a sacred object, the throne adds support to the likelihood that the Enthroned Nude Female represents some sort of divine figure.

A further aspect indicating possible divinity is the pose of the seated woman. First, she is in a position of frontality. Frontal depiction of deities was common throughout the region surrounding Nabataea, a strong tradition in Palmyrene and Parthian art.<sup>87</sup> When the nature of the object is religious, frontality is said to establish a line of communication between the figurine and its viewer, allowing for religious discourse between the pair.<sup>88</sup> Throughout Mesopotamia, it has been argued that frontality is an iconographic feature of goddesses considered “accessible” to worshipers, perhaps as intermediaries with a greater deity.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Healey 2001, 92.

<sup>85</sup> Patrich 1990, 91.

<sup>86</sup> See examples, discussion of foreign iconic attributes, pages 19-22.

<sup>87</sup> Hachlili 1998, 177-178.

<sup>88</sup> Hachlili 1998, 178; Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2016, 80-81.

<sup>89</sup> Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013, 258.



**Figure 16.** *Allat on side of altar of Malkou.* Second half of the 1st century CE, Palmyra (McKenzie and Reyes 2013, 198).

Second, the positioning of the figurine's right arm is of particular note. The arm is bent at the elbow and the hand is raised to shoulder level with the palm facing outward in what has been called a "gesture of blessing."<sup>90</sup> This gesture of occurs frequently in imagery of cultures with which Nabataea shared geographic, trade, and cultural ties. It is seen frequently in Palmyrene, Phoenician, and South Arabian art where it is displayed both in funerary imagery and in images of deities or priestly figures.<sup>91</sup> In these contexts, the most likely connotations include invocation,

apotropaism, guardianship, and blessing.<sup>92</sup>

More important is the place this gesture held in Nabataean imagery. The raised right hand is seen in statuary representing goddesses of the Nabataean pantheon, such as the Allat relief from a marble altar at the Ba'alshamin Temple in Palmyra (Fig. 16).<sup>93</sup> Also, there are several instances of this gesture found on Nabataean coins, apparently a feature not found on coinage outside of the kingdom.<sup>94</sup> Beginning with the reign of Malichus I (59-30 BCE), an outward-

<sup>90</sup> Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2016, 75; Tuttle 2009, 351.

<sup>91</sup> Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2016, 76; The Walters Art Museum, *Stele with a Female Bust*.

<sup>92</sup> Dirven 2008, 237.

<sup>93</sup> Dirven and Kaizer 2013, 396. Drijvers 1976, 30.

<sup>94</sup> Kropp 2013, 65; Patrich 1990, 133-134.



facing hand appears on the reverse; from the reign of Obodas III (30-9 BCE) on, a female figure with her right hand raised to the observer is frequently depicted (Figs. 17 and 18).<sup>95</sup> This female is thought to represent the queen of Nabataea, likely in a position of religious connotation, portraying the gesture of blessing, or possibly even supplicating the gods.<sup>96</sup> Considering that kings and queens of many cultures have been thought of as either divine or as having special connections to the gods, including the ability to communicate with them, it is likely the gesture of the right hand symbolized the role as intercessor between mortal and divine.



**Figure 17.** Coin from the reign of Malichus I. 62-30 BCE, Nabataea. Courtesy of Nabataean Numismatics. [www.nabataeannumismatics.com/Catalog2.html](http://www.nabataeannumismatics.com/Catalog2.html). Accessed March 3, 2018.



**Figure 18.** Coin of Aretas IV and woman, possibly Huldu. 6BCE-5BCE, copper alloy. (Courtesy of The British Museum. Museum object # RPK,p167B.6.Pho).

Further evidence of this gesture having an intermediary nature comes from an inscription in the Hauran. Written in Nabataean but using Greek letters, it is dedicated to the god of el-Gi and his angel, Iduruma. The god of el-Gi, or Gaia, is usually taken to mean Dushares, chief god of the Nabataeans; the name Iduruma translates to “The Raised Hand (of the God).”<sup>97</sup> Considering this, as well as the fact that angels are often seen as communicators between mortals

<sup>95</sup> Meshorer 1975, 24-34. See Meshorer’s catalog for additional examples.

<sup>96</sup> Meshorer 1975, 34.

<sup>97</sup> Healey 2001, 90; Patrich 1990, 134; Teixidor 1979, 98.

and the gods, including in the Semitic religions,<sup>98</sup> the raised hand of the Enthroned Nude Female possibly demonstrated a similar function of intercession. Lastly, in a related Arabian context, Ibn-Kalbi writes of the goddesses Allat, Manat, and al-Uzza, known deities of the Nabataean pantheon, being invoked as intercessors.<sup>99</sup> If this is accurate, it could demonstrate the role of intermediaries in Nabataean religion. When the overall evidence for this gesture as a motion of intercession is combined with the likely presence of divine emissaries in Nabataean religion, it greatly increases the likelihood of the Enthroned Nude Female having served an intermediary religious purpose in the Nabataean home.

The final potential attribute indicating the religious function of the Enthroned Nude Female is the presence of a footstool. Both complete and fragmentary examples possess some form of pedestal underneath the feet (Figurines 1-5 are clearest). As Tuttle notes, this feature is only present on figurines thought to represent goddesses, with the potential of depicting “some aspect of divinity or regality.”<sup>100</sup> Throughout the Near East and the Mediterranean, the footstool is seen in imagery of both gods and royals.<sup>101</sup> Considered in light of the many other possible aspects of otherworldliness, the footstool certainly adds evidence that Nabataean Enthroned Nude Females were conceived of as no mere mortals.

## **Conclusion**

Chapter 3 is important for several reasons. Section 3.1’s description of the Enthroned Nude Female allows for recognition of its distinct uniformity in both size and iconography. This likely means its creators intended to impart a particular identity and meaning to these objects.

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<sup>98</sup> Burge 2011, 86-87; Moses 2015.

<sup>99</sup> Al-Kalbi 1950, 17.

<sup>100</sup> Tuttle 2009, 258.

<sup>101</sup> Feldman 2006, 123.

This description also allows for recognition of both the similarities and differences of the Enthroned Nude Female's iconography and how it is combined in the figurine, as compared to the religious objects of neighboring cultures from which comparisons have been drawn. Section 3.2 analyzes the available contextual information for the Enthroned Nude Female. The results show a widespread use of the figurine, including use outside of the capital of Petra. Additionally, it appears this figurine type may have been used by members of varying socioeconomic classes. Lastly, Section 3.3 analyzes the iconography of the Enthroned Nude Female. These features and their specific combination indicate that this figurine was indeed a religious object, and not simply a toy or decoration. The meanings of these features point to an object used to promote health and protection, as well as the possible presence of a minor deity with intermediary function in Nabataean domestic religion. In the subsequent chapter, the meanings of the iconographic features of the Enthroned Nude Female will be examined to determine what roles this figurine may have played in Nabataean homes and what those functions can tell us about the nature of Nabataean domestic religion overall.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE ENTHRONED NUDE FEMALE IN DOMESTIC RELIGION**

This chapter takes the findings outlined in Chapter 3 and applies them to the framework of domestic religion created by David Frankfurter and discussed in Chapter 2. Several potential roles of the Enthroned Nude Female are discussed as related to the primary functions of the practice of religion in the home. Section 4.2 builds a framework from these roles, achieving a broad view of what the nature and beliefs of Nabataean domestic religion may have been. Overall, this chapter seeks to accomplish the goals set forth in Chapter 1 of uncovering potential roles of the Enthroned Nude Female in Nabataean domestic religion, as well as how this figurine can inform us about the framework of Nabataean domestic religion overall.

### **4.1 Role in Nabataean Domestic Religion**

As previously discussed, textual and contextual evidence for the use of Nabataean terracotta figurines in the home is virtually absent. Additionally, as Tuttle noted, many of these objects were possibly subject to multivalent functions and polysemic meanings.<sup>102</sup> What function or meaning an object held for one member of a society could have been vastly different than how another would use or view such an object. Also, there are visual features of this figurine which are present in outside cultures, including the plaited hair, gesture of the right hand, and the footstool, as well as nudity, notable in light of its absence in monumental Nabataean art. It is possible that iconographic and stylistic features of neighboring cultures such as frontality or the

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<sup>102</sup> Tuttle 2009, 324.

gesture of the right hand were employed visually, yet used by the Nabataeans to communicate their own, perhaps vastly different, meanings.<sup>103</sup> However, considering the close religious connections exhibited through inscriptions and the sharing of deities between the Nabataeans, their Hellenistic Near Eastern neighbors, and the Arabian peninsula,<sup>104</sup> the best available model combines the known Nabataean data with inferences drawn by comparison.

Considering its nudity, throne, gesture, and footstool, the current evidence shows that the Enthroned Nude Female was of a divine nature. However, whether she represented a known goddess of the Nabataean pantheon is unclear. None of the Enthroned Nude Females in the study bear an inscription or singular iconographic attribute that connects it directly to either a Nabataean or foreign deity. Unlike the Isis figurines found in Nabataea, there are no easily recognizable features such as the crown or knot (Fig. 19).<sup>105</sup> Also, the contrast of nude, anthropomorphic representation with the typically clothed imagery found of Nabataean deities perhaps speaks to a separation between the main pantheon and the class of deity this figurine represented. However, when the iconographic features of the Enthroned Nude Female are considered, it is most certain she represented a deity or non-mortal figure of some divine nature. When the analysis of each feature is viewed in light of the primary features of domestic religion, it is possible to obtain at least a broad view of the religious concerns of the Nabataean household.

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<sup>103</sup> Tuttle 2009, 325; see discussion pages 19-22 for more background on the possible foreign origins of these and other iconographic features of the Enthroned Nude Female

<sup>104</sup> Healey 2001, 7, 112.

<sup>105</sup> Tuttle 2009, 160.



**Figure 19.** *Figurine of Mourning Isis.* Terracotta, date unknown. Petra. Note Isis crown, though in Nabataeanized style. (McKenzie and Reyes 2013, 201).

In her function as a deity or divine figure, the Enthroned Nude Female likely had several roles in the domestic sphere. When looking at the figurine's iconographic features, the throne and footstool seem to function primarily as symbols of divinity. While deeper meaning may have been assigned to them by the Nabataeans, from the available evidence the most that can be inferred from the throne and footstool is that they denoted this figurine as a divine being.

However, the nudity, frontality, and gesture of the Enthroned Nude Female would have addressed several of the primary concerns of domestic religion.

One of the primary features of domestic religion is the desire for the perpetuation of the family unit.<sup>106</sup> This aspiration had several facets. When looking at data on the death of women in childbirth and on infant mortality in the ancient Near East it appears that, while procreative fertility was certainly a concern, equally so was the ability of mother and offspring to survive.<sup>107</sup> There is little good in a woman conceiving if she dies in childbirth, unable to care for the child or produce another. In addition, fertility is a moot point if children fail to reach the age of reproductive capacity themselves. Beyond women and children, the well-being of adult males in the household was also important, not just for reproduction, but for the financial and social stability of the family. Nabataean women may have experienced more freedom than many of their temporal counterparts, such as the ability to own property and engage in contracts by themselves; however, the contributions of men, especially through physical labor and varying forms of income, was still important to the success of the family unit.<sup>108</sup>

To maintain the family, it is likely that members of Nabataean households would have sought a force capable of both bringing life into this world and keeping it healthy once here. The nudity of the Enthroned Nude Female could have served to perpetuate the family in several ways. First, her fertile nature would have been reflective of the desires of both males and females in the home for a condition of optimal reproductive ability. The overall healthy state of the adult female expressed in this figurine would have also mirrored the preferred condition of all

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<sup>106</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 49.

<sup>107</sup> Liverani and Tabatabai 2014, 24.

<sup>108</sup> Alzoubi et. al 2002, 154-159.

household members, regardless of age or gender. Lastly, the power emanating from the healthiness of the Enthroned Nude Female would have been important for both mother and child's continuation of health through childbearing, childbirth, the delicate times of infancy, and into adulthood. The presence of a figure in a healthy and divine form could have served the home as a talisman embodying and exuding healthiness in the home, a role that has been hinted at in the function of many Egyptian nude female figurines.<sup>109</sup>

Another primary feature of domestic religion is the “apotropaic protection of children, thresholds, domestic health, and livestock from particular spirits, the evil eye, and from general misfortune.”<sup>110</sup> In the ancient world, things like disease and poor fertility were often considered the result of evil spirits.<sup>111</sup> For this purpose, the repelling force of the Enthroned Nude Female's typically taboo nudity may have protected the home against malevolence and passively served to ward off any negative forces that could invade the home.<sup>112</sup> Since the Nabataeans believed in the protective ability of deities, from Shay al-Qawm, the protector of caravans, to Manat and Qaysha's spiritual defense of tombs, it is not inconceivable that this belief may have extended to whatever form of divinity Nabataeans believed the Enthroned Nude Female manifested.<sup>113</sup> In other Near Eastern societies, similar figurines were placed near ideal spots in the home, such as doorways and windows, to serve such a purpose and block the entrance of evil forces.<sup>114</sup>

Hopefully, future excavations will illuminate if this was customary in Nabataean homes as well.

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<sup>109</sup> Budin 2011, 131; Waraksa 2011, 137.

<sup>110</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 50.

<sup>111</sup> Garrison 1922, 28; Heeßel 2006, 126-127.

<sup>112</sup> Assante 2006, 178.

<sup>113</sup> Healey 2001, 133-154.

<sup>114</sup> Waraksa 2007, 82.



Also, there is a strong possibility that the Enthroned Nude Female was used actively in magico-medical rites in the home. If illness or misfortune found its way into the household, the Enthroned Nude Female would have been a powerful agent to assist in turning away the evil behind such afflictions. She may have functioned like her Egyptian and Mesopotamian counterparts to actively endow such rites with divine force, as hinted at in the “Nabataean Incantation Text.” Often in such rituals, the figurine was purposely broken at the end of the rite. It should be noted that ten of the thirteen Enthroned Nude Females included in this study are broken near the waistline. While this may be a natural consequence of disposal and millennia of burial, considering that only one intact example has ever been found in any Nabataean context, it is conceivable that ritual breakage may have been involved in the use of the figurine during certain rites. Again, future research has the potential to determine the likelihood of this.

If the role of the Enthroned Nude Female in the home was to grant fertility and health, as well as an apotropaic force, this may explain a function behind the gesture of the right arm, as well as the figurine’s frontality. Seen as a symbol of both received and answered prayers, the gesture of the raised right hand would have allowed multiple functions in the home. Household members could have supplicated the figurine, beseeching her goodwill, with the upraised hand a vessel for receiving or acknowledging prayers. In return, the gesture could channel divine power, granting health, protection, and good fortune. The protective function of the raised hand could have additionally served to ward off evil and guard the home.

Also, though current evidence is limited, there is the possibility that the Enthroned Nude Female functioned as an intermediary between its holder and a greater divine power. If this was a role of this figurine, the gesture of the right hand could have still served to receive prayers. However, the return blessings would have originated from the supplicated deity rather than the

figurine itself, although the gesture may have been seen to transmit them to the holder as well. The frontality of the Enthroned Nude Female would have created a connection with the viewer, allowing for intimate discourse between the two. The establishment of this direct line of communication would have then likely supported and increased the function of the gesture of the figurine by solidifying the connection between mortal and divine.

This intercessory-like function may also be related to a lesser, more remote possibility for the function for the Enthroned Nude Female. Another common feature of domestic religion is a “concern for ancestors, ancestral spirits, and their continual communication.”<sup>115</sup> The use of terracotta figurines to maintain connections with deceased relatives was practiced to a degree in cultures ranging from Mycenae to early Christian Egypt. After being included in funerary rites, figurines were sometimes removed to the home and used as receptors for offerings to these ancestors, afterwards entreated for their continued guidance and goodwill for the living.<sup>116</sup> A figurine such as the Enthroned Nude Female, with its ability to act as mediatrix between two worlds, could certainly function in such a manner.

Adding to this possibility is the early view of the Nabataeans that a person’s funeral monument, or *napsa*, “embodied the individual in his or her post-mortal state.”<sup>117</sup> Though without additional supporting evidence, this at least allows the possibility in Nabataean religion of a belief in the manifestation of the deceased in an inanimate object, perhaps even a terracotta figurine, and should be considered in future research. Unfortunately, while fragments of Enthroned Nude Females have been found in tomb contexts, the objects originating from Tuttle’s

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<sup>115</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 49.

<sup>116</sup> Frankfurter 2015, 206; Mureddu 2017, 34.

<sup>117</sup> Healey 2001, 171.

catalog appear to be a part of either intentional or fluvial fill, and those from El-Khourî's work have no published stratigraphical information to designate their contexts.<sup>118</sup> Yet, Tuttle rightly states that, because of the abundance of figurine fragments found in tomb contexts, there is still a likelihood they served a funerary purpose. If the Enthroned Nude Female was present in both tomb and domestic contexts, it is possible they were considered, like their Mycenaean counterparts, a channel through which continued communication with ancestors was possible.<sup>119</sup>

Moreover, it is widely accepted that the Nabataeans did not separate exclusively the spaces and activities of the living from those of the dead. Some of Petra's most exquisite architectural fronts are those of tomb facades lining the main thoroughfares of the capital. Whether or not living Nabataeans thought themselves capable of directly communicating with the dead is unknown; what is far more certain is that the Nabataeans continued activities in the spaces of the dead after internment. There is ample evidence of recurrent feasting in the attached triclinia of Nabataean tombs, alongside long-term depositional material from offerings.<sup>120</sup> These tombs frequently included betyls and other evidence of religious connection, namely inscriptions and apotropaic imagery such as snakes and eagles,<sup>121</sup> indicating that these spaces and the activities within them held religious significance. This connection between religion and the active consideration of the dead increases the possibility of religious objects such as the Enthroned Nude Female having been involved with reverence for and communication with the dead.

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<sup>118</sup> See El-Khourî's object #7, p. 91 and 151; Tuttle's objects 6-10, 12, 13, pp. 376-386.

<sup>119</sup> Mureddu 2017, 29-34.

<sup>120</sup> Healey 2001, 166; Wadeson 2011, 8-9.

<sup>121</sup> Wadeson 2011, 7-10.

Additionally, it should be noted that, while yet to be seen in a Nabataean funerary context, the gesture of the right hand raised with its palm outward is a common motif in funerary stele from both Palmyra and South Arabia, two societies with which Nabataea had significant cultural interaction.<sup>122</sup> The significance of the gesture in these contexts is often seen as expressing prayer, a purpose that could serve to link the worlds of the living and the dead.<sup>123</sup> When the communicative nature of the figurine's frontality is considered along with the transmissive nature of the raised right hand, there is potential that the Enthroned Nude Female was used to somehow interact with or give respect to the ancestors of a Nabataean household. This possibility will best be established through the future excavation of both undisturbed tombs and well documented domestic spaces, site categories which remain lacking so far.

However, there is one feature of domestic religion which the Enthroned Nude Female most certainly embodied. Frankfurter states that in domestic practice there is often an "expression of agency in the assertion of religious needs and traditions," which often results in a "selective mediation of the influences of religious institutions."<sup>124</sup> It is difficult with the limited available information to say how the practices of home and temple differed. Anthropomorphic imagery is certainly found in Nabataean depictions of divine figures in their temples, and the worship of female deities appears to have occurred in these spaces. However, none of these representations of deities are known to mirror the imagery and iconography of the Enthroned Nude Female. It is possible that, as Frankfurter notes, these figurines could have served to reinterpret the deities of the temple by altering their appearance, in an effort to make them more

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<sup>122</sup> Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions 2017; Rosenthal-Hegginbottom 2016, 77.

<sup>123</sup> Dirven 2008, 238.

<sup>124</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 52.

useful in the domestic sphere. Of course, it is also possible that these figurines represented deities not ordinarily found in temple practice, as noted in the “Nabataean Incantation Text.” This suggests that, while the temple likely included the worship of certain female deities, the Nabataeans mediated this influence to best suit their personal needs.

It should also be noted that, out of a total of fifty identified Enthroned Nude Female fragments in Tuttle and El-Khourī’s works, only two come from a temple context, one of which was found in a fluvial deposit. Considering the overwhelming difference between the numbers found with certainty in a domestic space (26% of all known examples) and other areas such as tombs or public spaces (28% combined), versus those from temple areas (6%), there appears a significant discrepancy in the use locations of this figurine. This likely speaks to an object that was found in the realm of individuals’ daily lives and was not common in temple practice.

Also, while anthropomorphic images often adorn the temple space, a more traditional aniconic betyl and its altar typically served as the actual focus of religious interaction, such as those at Qasr el-Bint and the Temple of the Winged Lions.<sup>125</sup> No Enthroned Nude Females have yet been found in conjunction with the known altars or betyls of domestic spaces, indicating a possible difference in practice from the temple spaces. This lack of association with a recognizable cultic space may also speak to the placement of the figurine at strategic locations throughout the home to safeguard the premises, instead of being focused in a designated niche or area in which other religious objects were also placed and used. It could also indicate their use in magico-medical rites which were often focused, not around a central shrine, but in the location of the immediate need, such as the bedside. While household concerns could possibly be addressed in a temple, it appears Nabataeans sought to act as many neighboring cultures did with figurines,

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<sup>125</sup> Wenning 2001, 84-90.

by warding off malevolent forces where they would affect their lives the most. Members of Nabataean households therefore were likely expressing their own religious needs and practices, distinct from public institutions such as temples.

Additionally, as already shown, the combined iconography of the Enthroned Nude Female fits well with the main objectives of household religion. While the exact religious desires of the Nabataeans as expressed in their temple practices are not known, the broad range of Nabataean inscriptions beseeching varying deities shows they sought the protection they could afford.<sup>126</sup> The Enthroned Nude Female focuses these desires into those central to the maintenance of the family and the home, an action that was purposeful on the part of those who used this figurine in their domestic spaces.

Unfortunately, there is a feature of Nabataean domestic religion that the Enthroned Nude Female cannot yet illuminate. Primarily, this would be the tendency within domestic religion to designate a sacred topography in the home.<sup>127</sup> It does not appear with the available information that these figurines were concentrated in any one area of the home. While a fair number of these figurines have originated from domestic spaces, without additional examples or other objects associated with religious practice, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the Nabataeans demarcated their homes in such a manner. Additionally, there are not yet enough secure findspots to accurately examine possible associated assemblages. For those with an exact locus, there is often not enough related published material to fully determine what objects may have been used in affiliation with these figurines. Future excavations have the potential to clarify if the Nabataeans held similar practices as many of their neighbors, with figurines typically

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<sup>126</sup> Alpass 2011, 40-42.

<sup>127</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 51.

found alongside objects such as lamps, miniature altars, and incense burners.<sup>128</sup> Since all of these objects have been found in Nabataean domestic spaces, it will be interesting to see if they may form assemblages associated with the Enthroned Nude Female or other Nabataean terracotta figurines.

An additional aspect of domestic religion which the Enthroned Nude Female cannot yet illustrate is “an investment in calendrical ritual observance.”<sup>129</sup> There is evidence throughout Nabataea of religious festivals based on a calendrical schedule. These ranged from the celebration of spring common to pre-Islamic Arabia, to ceremonies related to the dead, to evidence of frequent pilgrimage associated with such festivals.<sup>130</sup> Many societies utilized terracotta figurines as either mementos of such festivals, often as inexpensive replicas of the deities that were being celebrated for individuals to carry home. With a complete lack of parallel imagery found in Nabataean temples, while still possible, it remains unclear if the Enthroned Nude Female was utilized in a manner like the terracottas that were used in other cultures to mimic cult statues.

Overall, it appears that the Enthroned Nude Female was a divine figure important to the Nabataean household, with her ability to protect the home from evil, accept prayers, and grant blessings. While Nabataeans may have sought similar interactions at temples, shrines, or high places, they seem to have felt the need and ability to foster this kind of relationship in the home. The Enthroned Nude Female was likely appealing for both bringing a divine, protective force

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<sup>128</sup> Albertz 2008, 94-97; Olyan 2008, 116-117; Schmitt 2008, 164-167; Frankfurter 1998, 132-137.

<sup>129</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 50.

<sup>130</sup> Healey 2001, 160-161.

into the home and doing so in a manner that was visually recognizable and understandable to its holders.

#### **4.2 A Framework for Nabataean Domestic Religion**

According to Dr. Anna Stevens, “the creation of theoretical subsets of religious conduct can be an important stage in the analysis and comprehension of ancient religions.”<sup>131</sup> While many of the beliefs and practices involved in Nabataean domestic religion yet remain unclear, one of the most significant implications of the Enthroned Nude Female is that it permits the beginning of a rough framework through which to view them. One potential subset of religious conduct that may be inferred from this figurine is that members of the Nabataean household utilized divine and apotropaic imagery for protection of the home and its inhabitants. This fact is significant for several reasons. First, this signals a belief in both the extension of the protective ability of the divine into the home, as well as in the Nabataeans’ own capability for employing such a force. Instead of fiercely dictating the fate of mortals, or simply turning a blind eye to mankind while obsessed with their own divine activities, the Nabataeans appear to have thought their deities as playing an active and changeable part in their daily lives.

Furthermore, from the evidence found in Nabataean public spaces and tombs, religion appears to have been an integral part of Nabataean life. These facets of their religion appear rife with apotropaic aspects, from images of eagles and sphinxes guarding tombs, to inscriptions invoking the gods for protection.<sup>132</sup> Also, many of their temples and some of their monuments contain anthropomorphic divine imagery. However, from what is currently known, there are exceptionally few spaces within Nabataean homes that may possibly be termed cultic, and these

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<sup>131</sup> Stevens 2003, 143.

<sup>132</sup> Healey 2001, 135; Wadeson 2011, 7.



so far have centered around aniconic betyls.<sup>133</sup> Yet, in many cultures, figurines were not always placed in niches or other areas of frequent cultic activity. Instead, some societies placed such objects strategically near windows, doorways, or in corners, where they could prove most effective, as evidenced in finds from places like Assur, Nineveh, and Babylon.<sup>134</sup> While dedicated spaces involving anthropomorphic imagery may be uncovered in Nabataean homes in the future, these figurines are the first step to connecting the religiosity of the Nabataeans as expressed outside of the home to that which was found within.

Another potential form of religious conduct implied by the presence of the Enthroned Nude Female in Nabataean domestic religion is the supplication of a class of deities beyond the currently understood pantheon. It is entirely possible that these figurines represented a known goddess such as al-Uzza or Allat, with the nudity of the figurine a method of unleashing her power for use by the holder. Without an inscription or other evidence labeling them otherwise, the possibility of association with a known deity cannot be entirely excluded. However, the current evidence strongly suggests the Enthroned Nude Female was not a standard member of the pantheon. This is shown first by a complete lack of related imagery in known Nabataean public spaces and temples, with this figurine being a distinct departure from anthropomorphic statuary found throughout Nabataea. She does not share iconography with any Nabataean deities including Allat, al-Uzza, and Manat, goddesses typically depicted in Nabataea as rectangular betyls, occasionally shown with additional iconographic features such as star-shaped eyes or a crowning wreath. Known iconography of other Nabataean deities include the lion, a sword, and a

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<sup>133</sup> These include the stepped-block setup likely intended for the display of betyls at adh-Dharih (al-Muheisen and Piraud-Fuornet 2013, 11); the niche in the wall of the bronze workshop attached to the house at EZ I, with miniature betyl found below it (Grawehr 2010, 30-78; Stucky 1996, 337); and the altar setup adjacent to the mansion at EZ IV (Kolb and Keller 2002, 279-281).

<sup>134</sup> Nakamura 2004, 14-18.

rosette-style wheel of fate.<sup>135</sup> None of this appears present in the Enthroned Nude Female. It is more likely that this figurine type represented a divine figure, or a class of such figures, like those found in the “Nabataean Incantation Text,” who could be beseeched to assist with immediate needs but who did not receive recognition outside of the home. They may have also served as a class of intermediaries, with their gesture and frontality establishing a line of communication between mortal and divine. Considering domestic religion overall often includes deities separate from those found in temple practice,<sup>136</sup> it is certainly feasible that the presence of the Enthroned Nude Female suggests Nabataean domestic religion included additional deities and practice beyond what is currently known.

A final subset of domestic religious conduct that may be inferred by the presence of the Enthroned Nude Female is the use of magico-medical rites in the home. The presence of such rites is an interesting addition to the known practices of Nabataean religion overall, with the most prevalent forms of ritual action appearing to center around offerings, usually of incense or libations of wine, or around the consumption of meals.<sup>137</sup> While it is unknown if these other forms of ritual were seen as being methods of direction interaction with a deity or as simply honoring such is difficult to know. However, these rites definitively add a layer of practice, one in which a divine figure and a mortal interacted much more directly.

Additionally, we are presented with the question as to whom may have conducted such rites, whether a member of the household or an outside agent. It is of note that a particular type of priest mentioned in the Hegran texts as leaders of local religious establishments were referred

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<sup>135</sup> Raymond 2008, 39-44.

<sup>136</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 52-53.

<sup>137</sup> Healey 2001, 160-169. These meals ranged from large, communal gatherings at festivals, to the functions of the smaller *marzeḥa*.

to as '*pkl*', a term meaning an exorcist of some kind.<sup>138</sup> There is certainly no current evidence connecting these '*pkl*' and the individual who may have performed such rites in the home. However, when considered in light of the use of figurines in surrounding cultures to “exorcise” an individual of a spirit thought to be causing illness or misfortune, as well the Nabataean Incantation Text’s reference to disenchanting an individual, it does provide insight into how Nabataeans may have conceived the role of individuals involved in such rituals. Lastly, future research has the potential to uncover whether or not special kinds of clay were employed in the creation of these figurines as part of the process of imbuing the object with its magical powers, a practice that was common in cultures such as Egypt and Judea.<sup>139</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Overall, it appears the Enthroned Nude Female may have played several roles in Nabataean domestic religion. As an image of optimal health, this figurine may have served as a talisman to reflect such an ideal state upon the home’s inhabitants, helping to perpetuate and maintain the family unit. The Enthroned Nude Female may have served this role also as a part of magico-medical rites to rid the home of illness or misfortune. As an apotropaic device, this figurine would have also played an active part in the protection of the home from the unseen forces thought to cause such maladies. Additionally, the manner in which this figurine was designed and used speaks to an agency on the part of its holders to utilize an object that was not found in nor similar to religious objects from the temple, but instead tailored to suit the needs of domestic religion. Chapter 4 will go further and investigate what implications the presence of

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<sup>138</sup> Healey 2001, 164.

<sup>139</sup> Budin 2011, 130; Darby 2011, 147.

this anthropomorphic figurine can inform in the debate concerning aniconism in Nabataean religion overall.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 5 first seeks to resolve the final goal of this thesis, which is to explore what implications the presence of the Enthroned Nude Female in domestic contexts may have on our understanding Nabataean religion overall. Section 5.1 balances the information of this figurine's presence with what is known about the nature of domestic religion, and examines it in light of the ongoing debate concerning aniconism in Nabataean religion. Section 5.2 concludes this thesis by summarizing the findings of the study.

### 5.1 Broader Implications for Nabataean Religion

The presence of the Enthroned Nude Female in domestic spaces adds to the ongoing debate concerning aniconism in Nabataean religion. The use of abstract, geometric forms has long been considered the true and “traditional” form of depiction for Nabataean deities. Betyls are certainly abundant throughout Nabataea, with their niches commonplace along paths, associated with tombs, in temples, as well as being found on occasion in homes.<sup>140</sup> Some scholars have argued that iconic, anthropomorphic imagery should not be considered part of a true Nabataean religious tradition; instead, they frequently view it as the result of later Greco-Roman influence.<sup>141</sup> While the Enthroned Nude Female displays some Hellenistic characteristics, she also incorporates iconographic features originating perhaps as early as the Early Bronze Age, namely the gesture of the right hand and nudity in divine representation, predating the arrival of

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<sup>140</sup> Al-Muheisen and Piraud-Fournet 2013, 8-12; Stucky 1996, 337-338; Wenning 2001.

<sup>141</sup> Mettinger 1995, 68; Patrich 1990, 139-140.

Hellenism.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, while they may not be as easy to discern in the archaeological record, betyls appear to be far outnumbered in Nabataea by figurines and anthropomorphic statuary of potential religious significance.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, other considerations must be made.

What the Enthroned Nude Female adds to this debate concerns the very nature of domestic religion. The self-determination expressed by its participants focuses on “addressing and maintaining religious traditions and traditional perspectives.”<sup>144</sup> Considering the frequency of the Enthroned Nude Female among Nabataean domestic spaces, it is therefore difficult to designate this figurine, and the use of iconic imagery overall, as “non-traditional.” Instead, it likely speaks to a distinction held by modern scholars, one perhaps emanating from the strict prohibition against graven images found with the neighboring Israelites. However, this stark separation between the figurative and the non-figurative does not appear to have held as fierce a place in Nabataean religion. Aniconic imagery was certainly a part of the greater Nabataean religious tradition. However, there is no current evidence that aniconism in Nabataea predates iconic imagery. Instead, they are often found together, as in the schematized face of the idol of “The Temple of the Winged Lions.” This pluralism is again demonstrated in the anthropomorphic statue of Isis carved into the canyon wall alongside niches for betyls in the Wadi Siyyagh, as well as in the monument known as the Dushara-Medallion (Fig. 17), comprising a rectangular betyl surmounted by an anthropomorphic carving of the deity.

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<sup>142</sup> See discussion on foreign iconographic attributes, pages 19-22.

<sup>143</sup> Alpass 2011, 108.

<sup>144</sup> Frankfurter 2018, 51.

Similarly, the Enthroned Nude Female has been found in at least one home in which betyls were in use.<sup>145</sup>

Considering that domestic religion is itself a bastion of traditional ideals, the pervasive presence of this figurine provides further evidence for the absence of a strict prohibition in Nabataean culture against iconic imagery. There are several plausible explanations for this, the most likely of which originates from the non-homogenous nature of Nabataea. With varying



**Figure 20.** *Dushara Medallion.* Near High Place of Jabal al-Madbah, Petra. *Michael Gunther*, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Relief\\_of\\_Dushara\\_Petra\\_Jordan1423.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Relief_of_Dushara_Petra_Jordan1423.jpg).

naming conventions and languages across its regions, the kingdom has usually been understood as a multicultural population, perhaps united under a Nabataean elite.<sup>146</sup> If so, the Nabataeans may have practiced a form of religious pluralism, with both forms of representation existing side by side.

Mettinger provides additional insight into this possibility, noting the combination of language, temple layouts, and modes of deity representation strongly suggest “a symbiosis between immigrant Arabic groups (Qedarites) and autochthonous Edomites in the southern

<sup>145</sup> An eye-betyl was found in Room 30 of EZ IV, the mansion in which Figurine #1 was uncovered. Also, a pocket-size betyl was also found beneath a niche in the bronze workshop attached to EZ I; while no identifiable examples of the Enthroned Nude Female are yet known in this home, multiple heads of female figurines have been found here. Additionally, other figurines with potential religious purpose, namely the Standing Nude Youth, have been found in EZ I. Complete publication by Gorgerat of the Ez-Zantur figurines will likely produce more certain examples of the Enthroned Nude Female in this context.

<sup>146</sup> Healey 2001, 9-12.

Transjordan.”<sup>147</sup> While archaeological evidence is scarce, literary material points to the existence of iconic representations of deities in Qedarite religion, and the presence of iconic imagery in Edom is well known.<sup>148</sup> Also, aniconistic practice was common to the north-western Arabian Peninsula, as well as in certain cults in the surrounding Mediterranean, long before the rise of the Nabataean Kingdom.<sup>149</sup> While aniconic forms certainly held a place in the Nabataean tradition, the Enthroned Nude Female’s presence in the home, a location of assertion of traditional needs and practices, demonstrates the place of figurative representation in the same tradition. Though the two forms of deity depiction may have originated in separate places and times, as the people from whom they emerged coalesced into the unified entity known as the Nabataean Kingdom, so did their traditions, eventually inextricably intertwined.

## **5.2 Summary**

The original purpose of this thesis was to explore the role, if any, of the Enthroned Nude Female type in Nabataean domestic religion. To do so, it was first necessary to establish with certainty that this figurine was a religious object. As Chapter 1 shows, while significant effort has been made to create a typology of Nabataean terracotta figurines, only minimal work has been put towards the comprehension of their functions or meanings. After reviewing the available literature, it was also apparent that there was a lack research concerning Nabataean domestic religion overall. Chapter 1 is a review of the available information on Nabataean terracotta figurines and domestic religion and illuminates the lack of relevant research in these fields.

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<sup>147</sup> Mettinger 1995, 67.

<sup>148</sup> Oldenkamp 2014, 24-36; Shuaib 2014, 117.

<sup>149</sup> Alpass 2011, 277.



After defining the subject of domestic religion, Chapter 2 also shows how other authors have connected terracotta figurines to domestic religious practices, a first step in linking the Enthroned Nude Female to a religious function. The next step in making this determination was made by detailing the iconographic features of the figurine type in Chapter 3. By subsequently analyzing each iconographic attribute, it becomes clear that this figurine was of a religious nature. Nudity is a primary indicator of this, as it was a vehicle for indicating divinity in many ancient Mediterranean cultures. Similarly, the throne was used to denote divinity in other cultures. However, its place as the *mwtb* in the representation of deities and their related objects in established information on Nabataean religion, bolstered the idea that the Enthroned Nude Female had religious meaning to the Nabataeans. Lastly, while the gesture of the right hand raised is seen in other cultures, its presence on Nabataean coins, as well as the reference to the “Raised Hand of God” in a Nabataean inscription, solidifies its link to both Nabataea and a likely religious meaning. With these determinations, it was possible to determine that the Enthroned Nude Female was indeed a religious object.

Once the figurine’s religious nature was confirmed, it was possible to move towards exploring what roles the object may have played in Nabataean domestic religion. The combination of iconographic features of the object appear to meet many of the needs commonly found in domestic religion. The nudity of the figurine exudes the healthiness of a female in her prime, promoting the same health in household members through her presence. The figurine’s nudity may also have contributed to an apotropaic function, as may have the gesture of the right hand raised. Considering that protection of the home and family is a primary concern of domestic religion, it appears likely the Enthroned Nude Female served as an apotropaic device to affect

such protection. Lastly, the figurine's gesture of the right hand, as well as its frontality, makes it possible that it was used as an intermediary between the mortal and the divine.

Other conclusions made in this study concern the available contextual information for the Enthroned Nude Female. It is interesting to note that this figurine type was found in every site explored at the onset of this study. The recognition of this frequency was one reason for the selection of this type for examination. Also, the fact that the Enthroned Nude Female was found in domestic spaces previously inhabited by members of a wide range of socioeconomic classes suggests it was not used exclusively because it was likely an inexpensive object, but instead an important part of religious practice sought after by Nabataeans of all classes.

This study shows the need for future research into several areas. First, the thorough exploration and publication of multiple domestic sites will provide the data necessary to determine whether other objects were used in conjunction with the Enthroned Nude Female. This research may also show whether or not terracotta figurines were placed in niches or on special religious tables, a frequent practice in areas such as Israel and Egypt. Lastly, other Nabataean terracotta figurines may have had religious functions, namely the Nude Youths as categorized by Tuttle. These figurines also show the gesture of the right hand raised, as well as other potentially religious iconographic attributes. Exploration of this figurine type, which is sometimes found in published material on domestic spaces, may provide more insight into the overall nature of Nabataean domestic religion.

## CATALOG<sup>150</sup>

### Abbreviations and Terminology<sup>151</sup>

<b>Anc.:</b>	Any ancillary manufacturing technique used in creating the object.
<b>D/H:</b>	Depth/Height - Distance between surfaces: top to front and bottom to back.
<b>Exc. #:</b>	Excavation Catalog Number, if applicable.
<b>Fabric:</b>	Description of the material used with Munsell attribution.
<b>JP:</b>	Petra Archaeological Museum, Petra.
<b>L:</b>	Length - Measured from top to bottom (vertical objects) or from front to back (horizontal objects).
<b>Site:</b>	The object's provenience information.
<b>Tech.:</b>	Manufacturing technique used in creating the figurine.
<b>Th:</b>	Thickness - Average breadth of clay between the exterior and interior surfaces of molded sections.
<b>W:</b>	Width - Measured side-to-side.
<b>Wt:</b>	Weight of the figurine, if known.

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<sup>150</sup> All information regarding figurine provenience, fabric, date, etc., originates from Tuttle and el-Khoury's respective catalogs. Data and photographs for Tuttle's figurines (Tuttle 2009, 372-384). Data and photographs for el-Khoury's figurines (el-Khoury 2002, 49-154).

<sup>151</sup> Tuttle 2009, 366-367.

**Figurine #: 1**

**Exc. #: n/a**

**Museum #: JP 2345**

**Site:** ez-Zantur. Petra 1996, Ez. IV,  
Plq 90-91/ AO.

**Measurements:**

**L:** 4.9cm **W:** 2.4cm

**Fabric:** Reddish orange ware. Fine  
grits included. Unevenly fired.<sup>152</sup>

**Tech.:** Bivalve mold.

**Anc.:** Incision.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** “Lower part of the  
front half of an enthroned goddess.  
Sitting in a frontal pose, with legs  
tightly close together.  
Wearing anklets and shoes on her  
feet, which are resting on a  
footstool.”<sup>153</sup> Footstool appears as  
a ledge, legs are slightly inset into  
throne.

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khoury<sup>154</sup>



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<sup>152</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 49.

<sup>153</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 49.

<sup>154</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 150.

**Figure #:** 2

**Exc. #:** n/a

**Museum #:** JP 2345

**Site:** ez-Zantur. Petra 1996, Plq. 91/AV.

**Measurements:**

**L:** 4.3cm **W:** 2.4cm

**Fabric:** “Beige ware with dark places in the incised areas. Fine to touch. Unevenly fired.”<sup>155</sup>

**Tech:** Bivalve mold.

**Anc:** Incision.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** Similar to figurine 1, except anklets are more pronounced and possibly beaded. Feet marked with incised lines, either indicating toes or shoes/slippers. Footstool indicated by rectangular figure under feet.

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khoury<sup>156</sup>



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<sup>155</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 49.

<sup>156</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 151.

**Figurine #:** 3

**Exc. #:** n/a

**Museum #:** JP 747

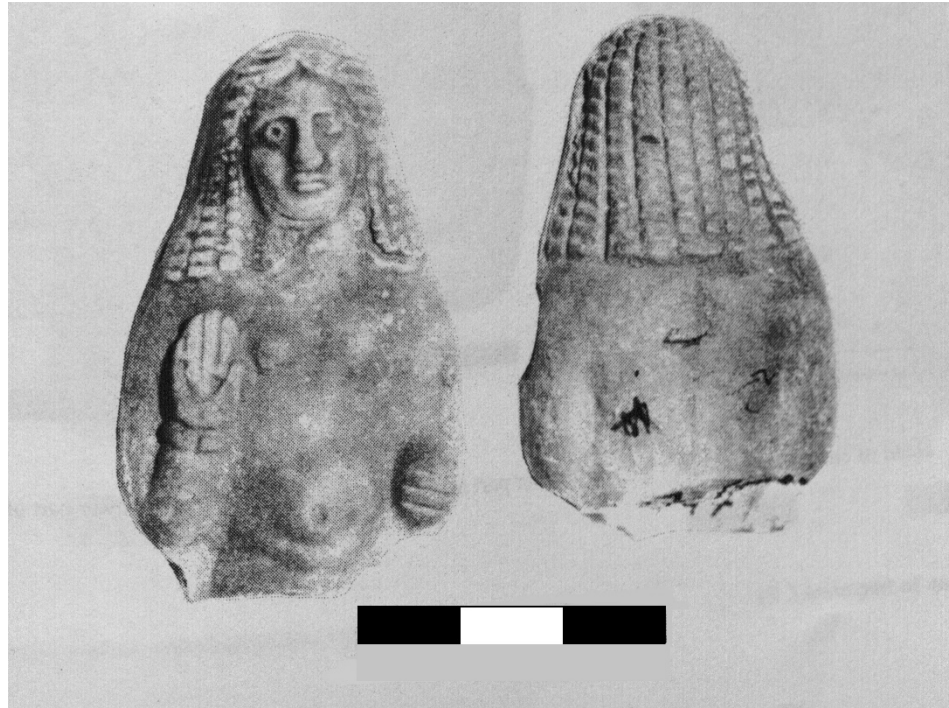
**Site:** el-Katute, Petra,  
1981. Locus D.2.9.

**Measurements:** L:  
5.0 cm W: 3.2 cm.

**Fabric:** Red ware,  
covered with red slip.  
Smooth surface.  
Evenly fired.<sup>157</sup>

**Technique:** Bivalve  
mold.

**Anc.:** Unknown



**Date:** Dated by associated coins to the second half of the reign of Aretas IV (18 – 40 A.D).

**Description:** Upper half of enthroned nude female, finely modeled. Raised right arm remains extant, bent at the elbow with the palm facing outward. Left arm is mostly extant with hand clasped beside the belly, perhaps holding an object. “The hair is parted from the middle and drawn to arrange plaits on each side of the head, covering the ears and falling to the shoulders. The body is naked, except for...a bracelet on her right hand. The breasts are small in size. Two folds under the belly knot.”<sup>158</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khoury<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 49.

<sup>158</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 49.

<sup>159</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 149.

**Figurine #:** 4

**Exc. #:** 110

**Museum #:** JP 750

**Site:** el-Katute,  
Petra, 1981. Locus  
D.2.9.

**Measurements:**

**L:** 2.4 cm

**W:** 2.0 cm.

**Fabric:** “Orange  
ware. Well  
levigated. Evenly  
fired.”<sup>160</sup>

**Tech.:** Bivalve  
mold.

**Anc.:** Incision.

**Date:** Dated by  
associated coins to  
the second half of  
the reign of Aretas  
IV (18 – 40 A.D).

**Description:**

“Fragment of the front half of a seated enthroned goddess, with feet slightly close together, wearing shoes and anklets. The front part of the pedestal is decorated with deep incised lines forming an oblong pattern.”<sup>161</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khoury<sup>162</sup>



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<sup>160</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 50.

<sup>161</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 50.

<sup>162</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 152.



**Figurine #: 5**

**Site:** Oboda/Avdat – Roman Army  
Camp Room 80, beneath floor, Basket 8.

**Exc. #: AVD 011**

**Museum #: n/a**

**Measurements:**

**L:** 4.0cm **W:** 2.0cm **D/H:** 1.2cm **Th:**  
0.6cm **Wt:** 11.3g

**Fabric:** Red 10R5/8; well-levigated;  
well-fired; red slip.

**Tech.:** Bivalve mold.

**Anc.:** Paring, Incising.

**Date:** 1st–2nd c. CE. “This fragment was found in association with a coin (68 CE) from the First Jewish Revolt as well as Nabataean fine ware from Schmid’s Phase 3c (Schmid 2000; Schmid 2003). The building in which they were found predates the Diocletianic army camp (Erickson-Gini 2002). Deposition context and artifact associations provide a *terminus ante quem* of the second century CE for the creation of the figurine.”<sup>163</sup>

**Description:** “Enthroned nude female fragment. The lower legs, feet, and footstool are extant. The legs and feet are shown pressed together. Raised horizontal relief bands across the ankles may be anklets. V-shaped relief patterns on the top of the feet probably indicate sandals. The soles of the feet are delineated from the footstool by grooves. The footstool is schematically rendered by an incised rectangle on its front surface. Pared join seams are evident on both sides and the base.”<sup>164</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Christopher Tuttle



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<sup>163</sup> Tuttle 2009, 38.

<sup>164</sup> Tuttle 2009, 384.



**Figurine #:** 6

**Exc. #:** 346

**Museum #:** JP 1141

**Site:** Zurrabeh, Petra, 1980. Area A.629.

**Measurements:**

**L:** 3.2 cm **W:** 2.8 cm.

**Fabric:** Reddish orange ware.  
Evenly fired.

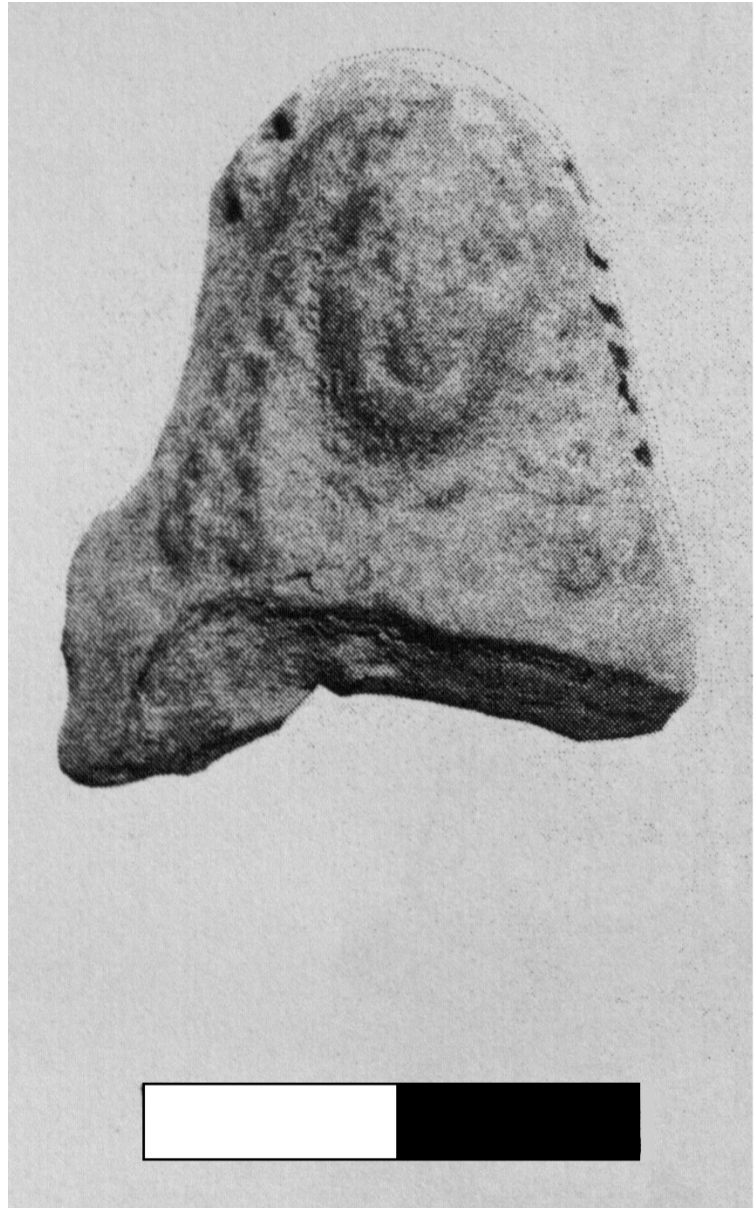
**Tech.:** Bivalve mold. Mold possibly worn as indicated by unclear details of the figurine.

**Anc.:** Unknown.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** “Head and shoulders of an enthroned goddess. The hair is parted from the middle, arranged in curly plaits at both sides of the head and falls to the shoulders. Rounded face, with calm features. Wide nose. Big eyes, with rounded iris.”<sup>165</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khoury<sup>166</sup>



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<sup>165</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 49.

<sup>166</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 150.

**Figurine #:** 7

**Exc. #:** 61

**Museum #:** JP 966

**Site:** Zurrabeh, Petra, 1980.  
Area A 10.8.

**Measurements:**  
**L:** 4.7cm **W:** 3.5cm

**Fabric:** “Reddish orange ware. Well-levigated Fine grits included. Evenly fired.”<sup>167</sup>

**Tech.:** Bivalve mold. Mold possibly worn as indicated by unclear details of the figurine.

**Anc.:** Unknown.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** “Lower part of the front half of an enthroned goddess. Legs are tightly close together. Big belly. Small details are blotted out and undistinguished.”<sup>168</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khoury<sup>169</sup>



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<sup>167</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 50.

<sup>168</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 50.

<sup>169</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 151.

**Figurine #:** 8

**Exc. #:** n/a

**Museum #:** JP 880

**Site:** Zurrabeh, Petra, 1980.  
Area A.3:19/46.

**Measurements:**  
**L:** 6.0cm **W:** 2.3cm

**Fabric:** “Orange ware. Fine white and grey grits included. Unevenly fired.”<sup>170</sup>

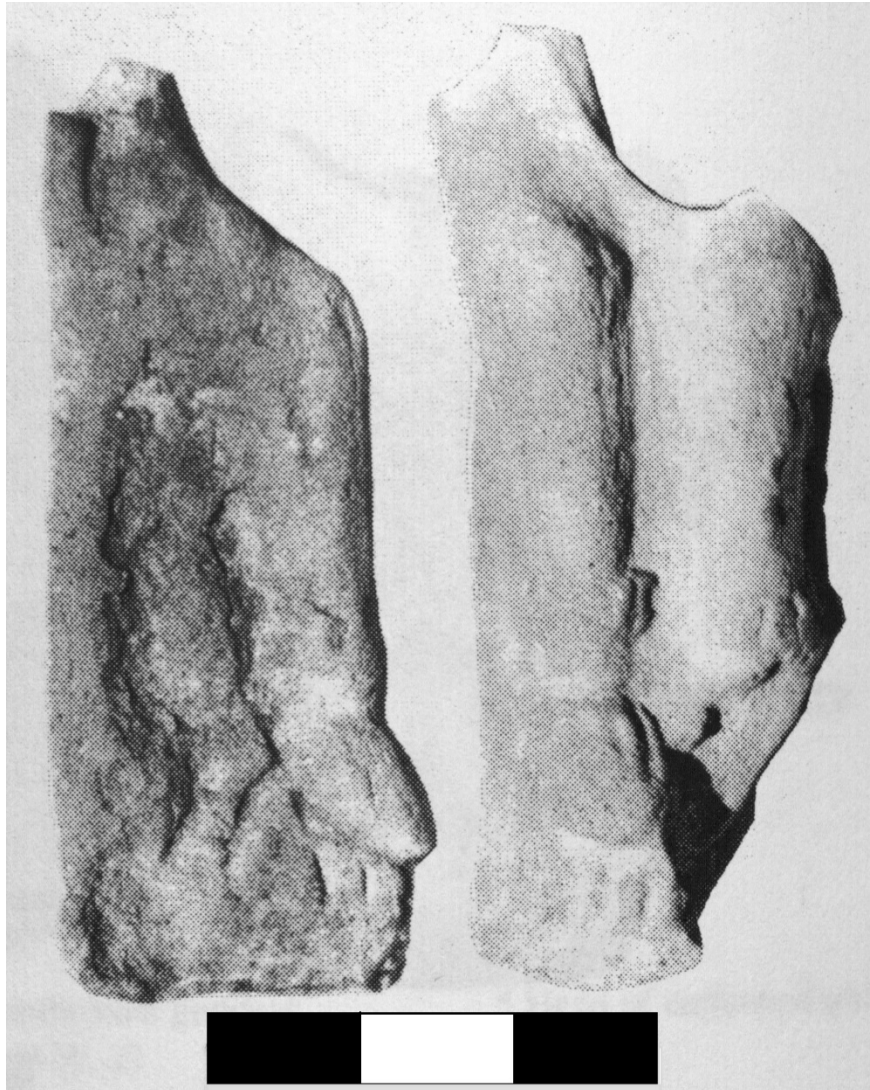
**Tech.:** Bivalve mold.

**Anc.:** Unknown.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** Lower part of the front half of an Enthroned Nude Female. A portion of the footstool remains extant. Details are not very clear, but grooves indicating footwear are somewhat visible, as is the impression of an anklet.

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khoury<sup>171</sup>



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<sup>170</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 50.

<sup>171</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 152.

**Figurine #:** 9

**Exc. #:** 187

**Museum #:** JP 992

**Site:** Zurrabeh, Petra, 1980.  
Area 4.5.4, 121.

**Measurements:**

**L:** 7.8cm **W:** 2.8cm

**D:** 1.5cm

**Fabric:** “Dark brown ware.  
Fine white grits included.  
Traces of white slip.  
Unevenly fired.”<sup>172</sup>

**Tech.:** Bivalve mold.

**Anc.:** Incision.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** “Head and lower front part of the body are missing. Enthroned nude female sitting on a solid throne, which is decorated from the backside with two incised cross lines surrounded by oblong pattern. The front part shows the deity sitting in a frontal pose, holding up her right hand, with the palm turned outwards. The hair in strands falls over the shoulders. The hair on her back is parted in the middle and arranged into plaits forming together a V shape.”<sup>173</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khoury<sup>174</sup>



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<sup>172</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 51.

<sup>173</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 51.

<sup>174</sup> El-Khoury 2002, 153.

**Figurine #:** 10

**Exc. #:** 12

**Museum #:** JP 965

**Site:** Zurrabeh, Petra, 1981.

**Measurements:**

**L:** 4.7cm **W:** 2.5cm

**Fabric:** "Pink clay. Fine grits included. Evenly fired."<sup>175</sup>

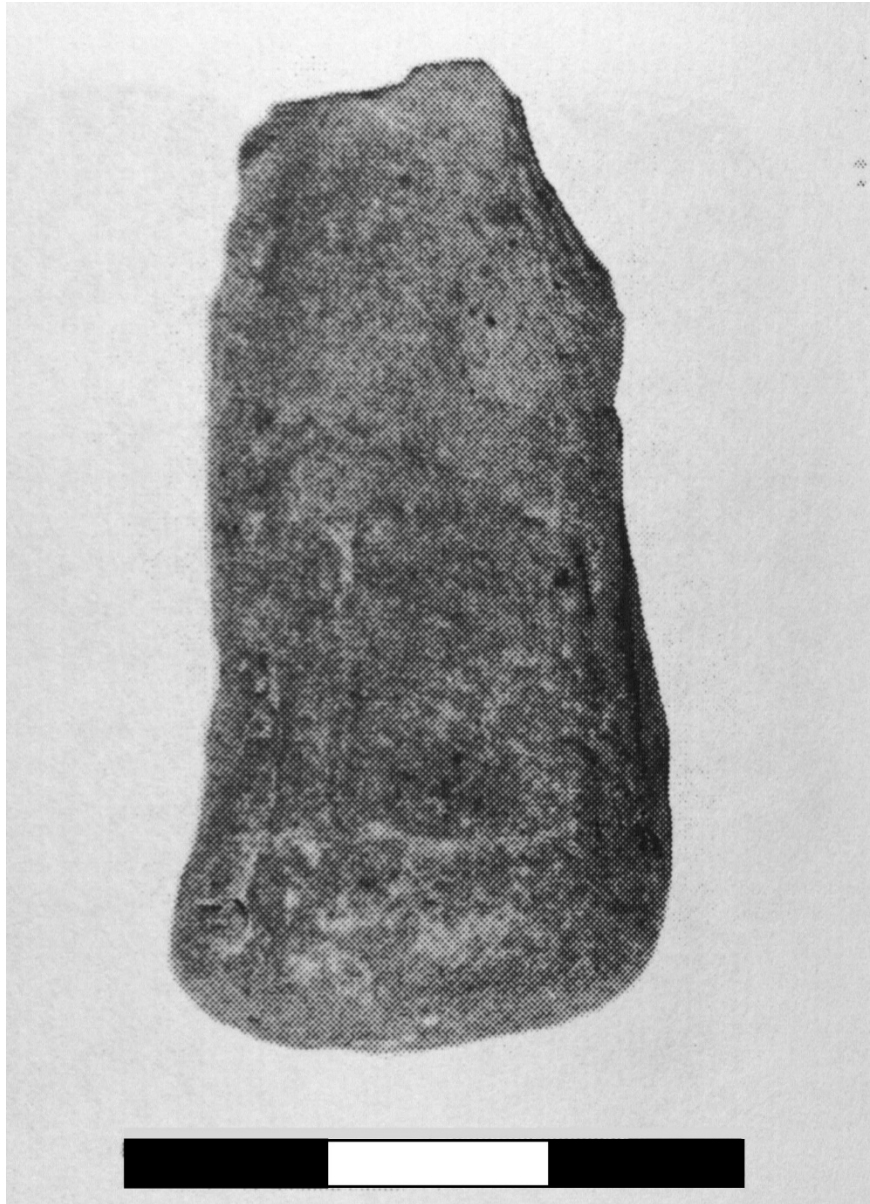
**Tech.:** Bivalve mold.

**Anc.:** Incision.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** "Lower part of the back half of an enthroned goddess. Description Sitting on a rectangular pedestal decorated with incised vertical lines. Details are blotted out."<sup>176</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Lamia el-Khour<sup>177</sup>



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<sup>175</sup> El-Khour<sup>177</sup> 2002, 52.

<sup>176</sup> El-Khour<sup>177</sup> 2002, 52.

<sup>177</sup> El-Khour<sup>177</sup> 2002, 154.



**Figurine #:** 11

**Exc. #:** 02-P-29

**Museum #:** JP 7482

**Site:** “PGT Upper Temenos Tr. 94, Loc. 53  
Residential Quarter, Room 7 – Fluvial  
deposit; Site Phase IX.”<sup>178</sup>

**Measurements:**

**L:** 4.7cm **W:** 2.8cm **D/H:** 2.3cm **Th:** 0.45cm **Wt:** 10.0g

**Fabric:** “Pink 5YR7/4; well-levigated; well-fired,  
color uniform; red slip.”<sup>179</sup>

**Tech.:** Bivalve mold.

**Anc.:** Incision.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** “Part of the head and face are preserved on the front; the hair, back, arms, and buttocks are preserved on the reverse. The eyes (pupils indicated), nose, and mouth (smiling) are extant. The hair on the front is parted in the middle, and one plait with faint molded curls is shown on each side of the face. The upper arms angle downward and the elbow bends are evident, indicating the forearms angled upward on the front. The buttocks are narrow and well-formed; the separating cleft is molded but re-incised, and extends above the buttocks to suggest the line of the spine. The artifact was likely made in a worn mold; most of the extant molded lines show signs of enhancement by incision. The join seams are not well done; the edges of the individual valve segments are still distinct, creating a visual discontinuity for the whole.”<sup>180</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Christopher Tuttle and Qais Tweissi<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Tuttle 2009, 372.

<sup>179</sup> Tuttle 2009, 372.

<sup>180</sup> Tuttle 2009, 372.

<sup>181</sup> Tuttle 2009, 372.





**Figurine #:** 12

**Exc. #:** 02-P-25

**Museum #:** JP 7478

**Measurements:** L: 4.4cm W: 2.7cm D/H: 2.25cm Th: 0.4cm Wt: 16.3g

**Fabric:** “Red 10R5/8; well-levigated; well-fired, color uniform; red slip.”<sup>182</sup>

**Tech.:** Bivalve mold

**Anc.:** Paring, incision.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** “Enthroned nude female figurine fragment. The head, torso, right arm, and back are preserved. The nose and upper lip are skewed to the left and flattened. The hair is arrayed in plaits of curls on both the front and rear; two plaits are articulated to each side of the face. Relief lines define the sweep of the tresses to each side of a central part on the forehead; the front plaits on the left appear to emerge from beneath the forehead tresses, which seem to be depicted wrapping to the back of the head; the right front plaits descend directly from the forehead tresses. The seven plaits on the rear have a naturalistic fall, with the central ones being longer than those to the side. The curls are articulated by parallel grooves along the same horizontal axes on associated plaits. The plane of the neck is distinct, and two curved parallel relief bands suggest a necklace which is divided into beads by four or five faint vertical lines; a faint relief dot in the center above the “clavicle” line may be a pendant. The breasts are molded in relief. The belly swells slightly, and its pendency is enhanced by the placement of the navel toward the apex of two parallel grooves molded in downward curves. The right forearm is raised against the torso with its palm outward; the fingers are roughly articulated by incisions; two molded horizontal

<sup>182</sup> Tuttle 2009, 373.

lines render a bracelet in relief on the wrist. Only the fingertips of the left hand are visible. On the rear, the molding defines the upper arms, and presents a vertical groove to indicate the spine. Many of the grooves are enhanced by incision. The joining of the two halves is poor, relative to the level of effort spent on the details of the figure, and on the finishing of the join seams by paring. The misalignment of the halves is evident at the top of the head. It may be that this artifact was assembled with halves from two different bivalve molds.”<sup>183</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Christopher Tuttle and Qais Tweissi<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Tuttle 2009, 373.

<sup>184</sup> Tuttle 2009, 373.



**Figurine #:** 13

**Exc. #:** X-16

**Museum #:** n/a

**Site:** North Ridge Project, Building 2,  
Locus 1140.

**Measurements:**

**L:** 3.5cm **W:** 2.1cm **D/H:** 1.2cm

**Th:** 0.5cm **Wt:** 7.2g

**Fabric:** “Light Red 10R6/6; well-levigated; well-fired; red slip.”<sup>185</sup>

**Tech.:** Bivalve mold.

**Anc.:** Incision, paring.

**Date:** Unknown.

**Description:** “Enthroned nude female figurine fragment. The lower edge of the buttocks and the reverse of the throne are extant. The curve of each buttock can be discerned along the top break; the buttocks are delineated from each other and the throne by molded grooves. The reverse face of the throne is decorated by two concentric rectilinear patterns rendered in molded relief; some of the division grooves between the rectangles are enhanced by incision. The sides of the throne are plain. The join seams are evident on three sides and show signs of paring; the join seam on the base is not pared flat, preventing the fragment from standing alone.”<sup>186</sup>

**Photo Credit:** Christopher Tuttle<sup>187</sup>



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<sup>185</sup> Tuttle 2009, 381.

<sup>186</sup> Tuttle 2009, 381.

<sup>187</sup> Tuttle 2009, 381.

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