

10. FUNERARY ICONOGRAPHY ON AN INFANT BURIAL JAR

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THIRTY YEARS OF EXCAVATIONS within the Philistine Pentapolis have allowed us tremendous insight into the material culture, history, and religious practices of the immigrant Sea Peoples.¹ Nevertheless, we have little understanding of how the Philistines approached death and the ritual of burial. Iron I–II burials connected with Sea Peoples have been so attributed on the basis of essentially circumstantial evidence, their ethnicity assigned according to small amounts of Philistine-style pottery, presumed “regional” connections with Sea Peoples, or limited evidence of potential Aegean influence.² Ashkelon is the only Pentapolis site to feature a Philistine cemetery.

Recent excavations at Ashkelon, however, may finally allow us a small glimpse into some of the local burial customs in the Pentapolis itself. Ten intramural infant burials in pits and jars were uncovered in residential contexts in Grid 38 (see chapter 33). The burials span Iron I Phases 20A through 18B, a period dating to roughly the mid-twelfth to the mid-eleventh centuries. Similar intramural infant burials have been attested, though not yet fully published, in contemporary levels at the Philistine site of Tel Miqne-Ekron (Mazow 2005:449–52; Gitin, Meehl, and Dothan 2006:59). These intramural infant burials are therefore the first examples of Iron Age burials that are indisputably associated with Philistine settlements.

*Intramural burials*³

The Ashkelon infants were buried under the floors in rooms throughout the residential quarter in Grid 38. They were placed either in corners or near doorways, always along walls, rather than in the center of the

room (fig. 10.1). They seem to have been set mainly in high-traffic common areas, where household tasks and industrial activities were carried out, rather than being tossed out of the way in storage closets, or alternately, brought into the innermost living spaces.⁴ Their deliberate placement may thus reflect a type of liminality, in that the burials occur in rooms where, from a social and functional perspective, the transition from the public to the private domain takes place (Mazow 2005:451). None of the burials occur in outdoor spaces: they are altogether absent from alleys and streets.

The burials themselves are of two types: either simple pit interments or jar burials. Where jars were employed, the neck of the jar was broken off, likely to facilitate placement of the body; in at least one case, a stone was set over the break, perhaps to seal the jar after interment. Several of the burials—whether pit or jar—seem to have been marked, either with a ring of larger stones, or with a scattering of small stones and/or pithos sherds. The infants themselves are not uniformly oriented—the heads point in all directions—nor is there any clear pattern of the positioning of the infants within the graves. Those that were discovered intact seem to have been flexed or supine. All appear to be quite young: osteological analysis of the skeletons suggests that none were more than 1–2 months old. Grave goods were rare or absent; although beads and shells were occasionally found nearby, it is unclear whether they were intended as grave offerings or simply abandoned in the fill layers surrounding the burials.

The widespread popularity of intramural burial for infants and children makes it difficult to trace a clear path for the transmission of the custom, if indeed, there is one to be traced. As a general practice, intramural burial of infants and children is widely attested throughout the Mediterranean, from the Balkans to Egypt. Within the Levant, intramural burial was common throughout the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, but it was not the sole—or even the statistically preferred—burial type in any period. The practice continued in low frequency in the Early Bronze Age, experienced a resurgence in the Middle Bronze Age, and died out in the Late Bronze

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² So Azor (M. Dothan 1961; Ben-Shlomo 2008), Tell eṣ-Šafi (Maeir 2007), Tell es-Sa‘idiyeh (Pritchard 1980; Tubb 1988), Tell el-Far‘ah (S) (Waldbaum 1966; Stiebing 1970), Tell el-‘Ajjul (Petrie 1932), and ‘Aitun (Edelstein et al. 1971; Edelstein and Auran 1992); see also Ben-Shlomo 2008:50 for a discussion of the challenges of attribution.

³ This is only a brief overview of the Ashkelon infant burials and their parallels; details of their placement and context can be found in chapter 3–5.

⁴ A review of the available information suggests that all of the Ekron burials also seem to have been positioned in corners and alongside walls and in similarly transitional contexts (Gitin, Meehl, and Dothan 2006:54–55).

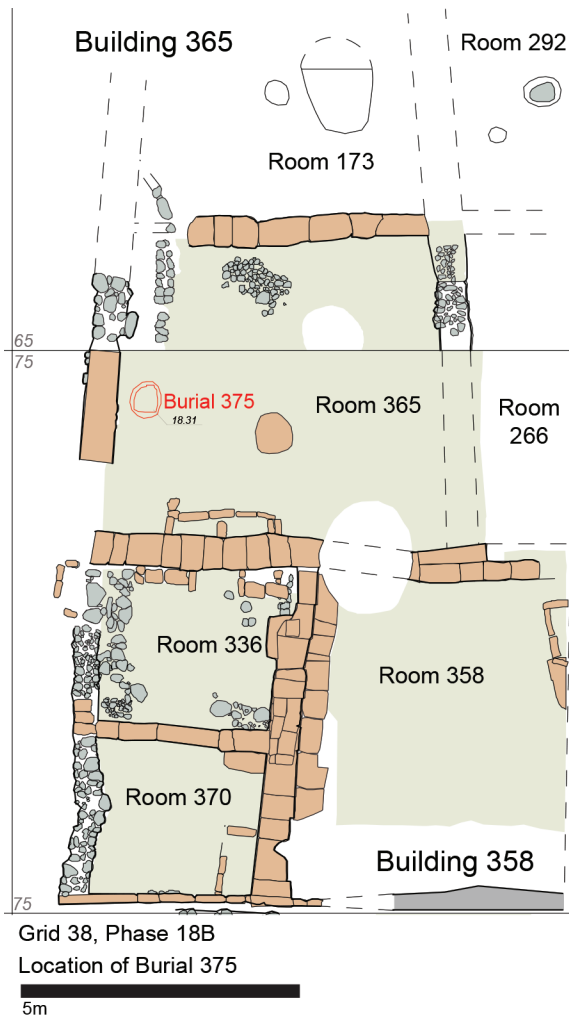


Figure 10.1: Location of inscribed jar burial, Ashkelon, Grid 38, Phase 18B. (Plan after Aja 2009).

Age I (Ilan 1997).⁵ However, the Levantine burials differ from the Pentapolis examples in that they are not limited exclusively to children but span a range of ages, and in that they frequently include multiple individuals within a single grave. Although technically “intramural,” these early burials occur in a variety of both domestic and semipublic spaces, both in interior rooms and in courtyards. The Levantine practice also differs from the Ashkelon intramural infants burials in the regular inclusion of ceramic grave offerings, typically juglets, even

for the very young.⁶ Thus, while there is precedent for the intramural burial of infants in Canaan prior to the Philistine settlement, these differences give us pause in arguing that the Pentapolis burials are simply the resurgence of an older, Canaanite, tradition—popular again after nearly 300 years.⁷

Infant subfloor burial was also practiced in Egypt, attested from at least the Middle Kingdom through the 19th–20th Dynasties and possibly earlier (though such burials are, lamentably, poorly published, if at all).⁸ From the little available data, it seems that the individuals—infants and children up to three or four years of age—were all buried in domestic spaces. They were deposited chiefly in pots, though some were interred in wooden chests or simple pits (Picardo 2006:40; Janot 2001–02; Dunand 2004). In all, however, the existence of dedicated infant cemeteries at Deir el-Medina and Gurob throughout the New Kingdom and Ramesside periods suggests that intramural burial was the exception, rather than the rule, during the thirteenth–twelfth centuries (Bruyère 1937:161–64; Meskell 1994; 2002:81–83; Janot 2003).

The most numerous and chronologically immediate predecessors to the Pentapolis burials appear in Greece, where infant subfloor burials are attested at more than 15 mainland sites throughout the Late Helladic period (Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1987). Several examples also occur at Knossos and Khania on Crete during the Late Minoan II–III, in houses that display Mycenaeanizing cultural traits (Warren 1982–83:63, 73, 80). There are similarities between the Aegean and Pentapolis burials in the specifics of the practice as well: in the use of stones to ring or line the burials and in the marking of the graves with a scattering of stones or pithos sherds (Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1987:19–20). Such features seem to be absent from Levantine and Egyptian burials. It may also be significant that although not the sole burial practice, intramural burial appears to have continued as the generally preferred rite for infants and children in mainland Greece throughout the following Sub-Mycenaean and Geometric periods until roughly

⁵ Intramural burials are attested in MB–LB I levels at Megiddo, Hazor, Tell el-‘Ajjul, Tel Dan, Tel Dothan, Jericho, Tel Mique-Ekron, Tell el-Far‘ah (N), and Beth Shean. Jar burials of both adults and children persist in the Iron Age, but such burials appear only in extramural contexts or dedicated cemeteries (Gonen 1992:15–21; Bloch-Smith 1992:31–32, 160–64, 220).

⁶ The only exception to this rule in Philistia is a pit burial set at the threshold of the entrance to Building 350 (Str. VC) at Tel Mique-Ekron, which was unusual in being the only burial with ceramic grave goods—a small juglet—and a nearby store jar base filled with ash and small bones (Mazow 2005:450). These elements suggest an affinity with Canaanite LB burial customs.

⁷ Cf. Mazow 2005:450; Ilan 1997:385; see also Kletter 2002.

⁸ Intramural burials are attested at Abydos (Picardo 2006:39–40), Kahun (Janssen and Janssen 1990:20–21; Petrie, Griffith, and Newberry 1890), Elephantine (von Pilgrim 1996:174), and Amarna (Herold 1999; Grajetzki 2003:53).



Figure 10.2: The infant skeleton

the eighth century B.C. (Musgrave and Popham 1991; Nicholls 1958/1959:126; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995:45).

The inscribed burial jar

The most intriguing of the group of Ashkelon infant burials was excavated during the 2007 season, in the anteroom of an Iron I house of Phase 18B and 18A (eleventh century B.C.) on the east side of Grid 38 (Square 75, Layer 375; see fig. 10.1). The burial pit was dug in the corner of the room, next to a mudbrick bin, and was ringed with large stones and potsherds (fig. 5.5.13). Unlike the other Ashkelon jar burials where Levantine jars were employed, this infant was placed in an Egyptian storage jar, which was broken off at the rim and across the base. The jar itself was roughly carved with an image on each side. The child within was buried face up, legs protruding from the bottom of the container from the knees down (fig. 10.2). This infant differs from the other intramural burials in the choice of container, as well as in the associated iconography. No grave goods appeared with the body.

The precise classification of the burial amphora is difficult to determine as both neck and base have been broken off to accommodate the body. Such difficulties notwithstanding, the jar seems to fit within Aston's categories of Egyptian Marl D amphorae Types B2 or B3, which are transitional Late Bronze–Iron Age derivatives of the traditional New Kingdom B1 wine amphorae. The slightly “baggier” base on the Ashkelon jar tilts the balance slightly in favor of the later B3 form, although its

width would not necessarily preclude the carination typical of the B2 base (Aston 2004:193, fig. 8). The ware of the Ashkelon jar, grayish brown with a rosier core, is covered with a greenish-cream slip, and the jar also shows some faint signs of crude vertical burnishing. Both the clay and the surface treatment of the Ashkelon jar are thus consistent with Aston's characterization of typical Marl D H1 fabric in which the B1–B3 amphora forms were often manufactured, although B2 and B3 amphorae were known to exhibit a number of variations (Aston 2004:185).

The B2 amphora was common from the time of Ramesses II until the end of the 19th Dynasty, after which it was supplanted by the B3 form, which persisted to the end of the 20th Dynasty, perhaps into the reign of Ramesses XI (Aston 2004:193). Depending, therefore, upon the precise classification of the form, the Ashkelon jar could be dated anywhere from the mid-thirteenth to the late eleventh century. It is possible that the jar might originally have been a Late Bronze import to the site—Egyptian pottery after all constituted nearly 30% of the LB II (Phase 21) assemblage at Ashkelon (Martin 2009:298)—and was preserved as a kind of “heirloom” for use by subsequent generations. However, the wide-bodied B3 form is otherwise unattested in LB II levels at the site. It is instead known from Iron Age I horizons at Beth Shean (Martin 2004:273–74), as well as several Negev sites (E. Oren, personal communication), and the B3 form is likewise known to have circulated at least as widely as Cyprus in the twelfth century B.C. (Eriksson 1995:201). The jar is therefore potentially contemporary with the burial, and though it may be considered unusual for the early Iron Age, it is by no means unique outside of Egypt.

The Iconography

The burial jar bears carvings on both sides: a smaller image (hereafter “side A”) on the shoulder of the jar between the handles and a second image (hereafter “side B”) carved over a larger area stretching from the handle zone down the side of the body. The markings on side A of the jar represent some kind of animal with ears protruding from the top of the head, an elongated tail, and a deliberately carved set of legs extending from the front of the animal (fig. 10.3). Although partially obscured by breaks in the jar, a second set of legs can be seen to protrude from the rear of the animal (Birney and Doak 2008). While the shape of the head and the curvature of the body is initially suggestive of the Egyptian horned viper, the reconstruction of four legs, a sloping tail, and distinctive upright “ears” clearly mark the creature as some type of canid. Crudely represented, the image is probably a jackal *passant* (walking) in the style of Egyptian jackal divinities, such as Anubis, or



Figure 10.3: Composite image of restored jar (side “A” on right, side “B” on left)

one of the lesser known figures, such as Upwawet, Sed (Brovarski 1984:779), or Khentyamentiu (who might be an early form of Anubis), among others (see Wilkinson 2003:186–92; DuQuesne 2005b; 2007a:17–21).

The most striking formal parallels to the jackal figure on side A occur on a group of nearly 600 incised limestone grave stelae from the private tomb of Djefaihapy at Asyut, dubbed the “Salakhana trove” (DuQuesne 2007a). The tomb from which they were recovered—the largest known private tomb in Egypt—belonged to Djefaihapy III, a 12th-Dynasty nomarch of Lycopolis, of which Asyut was the capital. Although the tomb itself dates to the Middle Kingdom, the majority of the stelae within are dated to the 18th and 19th Dynasties, albeit with a few later examples (DuQuesne 2007a:24).

Nearly all of the stelae were private votive offerings to jackal deities (Lacau 1922; DuQuesne 2000:6–12; 2007b:461–63).⁹ Most represent the dedicant, an offering table of some sort, and a representation of either the recipient in the form of a jackal-headed human, or a jackal riding on a standard (this last element is typically rendered as a sledge on a staff, adorned with uraeus and/or *shedshed*). On many of the stelae, the “main” deity—whether anthropomorphic or theriomorphic—is attended by more than a dozen smaller *passant* jackals, similar in shape but slightly smaller in size relative to the “main” jackal (whether standing or riding atop a standard; fig. 10.4).¹⁰

⁹ Less than 5% of the collection was devoted to other gods, including Sobek, Taweret, Amun-Re, Osiris, and Re-Horakhty. Stelae dedicated to the latter were the latest, attributed to the 25th–27th Dynasties, although due to poor publication, their inclusion in the overall corpus may be spurious (DuQuesne 2007a:28).

¹⁰ See DuQuesne 2007a:44, CM018; 45, CM380; 47, CM025; 48, CM031; 52, CM464, and many other examples. Note that these jackals are drawn quite differently from hunting dogs, which appear represented in packs on a handful of First



Figure 10.4: Private burial stela from Salakhana, Asyut CM # 025 (DuQuesne 2007a:47)

The two most prominent Egyptian jackal deities, Anubis and Upwawet, are so similar in their roles and iconography that it is at times difficult to distinguish them by their depictions alone. Anubis, a funerary deity whose primary role was as embalmer to the dead (Altenmüller 1975:327–33; Corteggiani 2007:42–45; Wilkinson 2003:186–90; Doxey 2002:21–22) or psychopomp (DuQuesne 1995), could be represented either as a human with a jackal head or as a jackal with no human features, the former being the convention in most free-standing three-dimensional images. When theriomorphic, Anubis was typically depicted as a jackal *couchant* (lying down with raised head). By contrast, Upwawet is most often depicted in fully canid form, as a jackal *passant*, although there are a few instances in which he appears anthropomorphized with a jackal head, as Anubis.¹¹ While these artistic conventions could be used to guide the viewer in identifying the appropriate god, it has been suggested that at times such images may have been intentionally ambiguous so as to serve double duty for the cults of both gods, both of whom could function

Intermediate Period stelae from Naqada (Fischer 1964:nos. 27, 26–60, pls. XXIV, XXXII–XXXIV.)

¹¹ For an example of Upwawet, see Hill et al. 1992:50, fig. 50; DuQuesne 2007a:38–39, A08–9.

as psychopomps and both of whom were significant in Asyut (DuQuesne 1995:41–42; 2002:11). Fortunately, the dedicants of the Salakhana stelae have come to our aid in distinguishing between the jackal deities to whom they were appealing. Although a number of the stelae invoke and represent Anubis, the majority of the inscriptions and dedicatory notes identify the primary recipient of these devotions as the god Upwawet of Upper Egypt, Controller of the Two Lands (*Wp-w3wt šm 'w 'b3-t3wy*). And indeed, the presence of Upwawet's worship in this particular locale is unsurprising as he was the tutelary god of Asyut (Spiegel 1973:32–35). The tomb of Djefaihapy seems to have been reused—in apparently unprecedented fashion—as a shrine for personal devotions, an attendant cult center, and a place of pilgrimage for Upwawet (so DuQuesne 2000:18; 2007a:30).¹²

The Salakhana stelae thus offer unique insight into “popular” or “personal” religion, as opposed to grandiose state expressions (Sadek 1987:40–42; DuQuesne 2007a:27–30). Few of the dedicants indicate any royal connection, instead the range of professions represented by the donors includes male and female cultic officials, members of the military, boatmen, washermen, and butchers. An unusually high proportion of the donors seem to be women, and family groupings are also represented (DuQuesne 2000:15; 2002:11; 2005a:44). The iconography is likewise a mixture of canonical and non-canonical: evidence for local and personal variation is extensive, and depictions range from the refined images of (presumably) wealthy worshippers¹³ to simple and sometimes awkward depictions of the invoked deity.¹⁴ Despite the variation exhibited there, the image of Upwawet on the Ashkelon jar would hardly be out of place among the representations on these stelae from Asyut; indeed, the position of the upright ears and the general curvature of the body on the Ashkelon jar suggest a close formal affinity with the Asyut examples.

Upwawet's funerary role is similar to that of Anubis, in that (according to royal funerary inscriptions) the king is required to transform into Upwawet in order to complete the process of resurrection. His role as an agent of rebirth is underscored in Pyramid Text 13, which proclaims that “Upwawet has made me fly to the sky.”¹⁵ Nor does this process appear to have been limited exclusively to the royal elite: the dedicant of Salakhana stele CM040, a woman, Nefer-ronpet, recorded the fol-

lowing hymn of praise for Upwawet: “I have made your *ka* content every day. I have brought to birth the jackal as a god,” which employs similar imagery of rebirth.¹⁶ Upwawet's particular temenos, however, seems to be a celestial one, in part due to an overlap between his role as protecting jackal and also as a manifestation of Horus in his role as avenger of Osiris.¹⁷ Thus, the image may be intended to invoke Upwawet in both his protective and his resurrective capacities. Alternatively, the jackal might represent Upwawet in his role as psychopomp, guiding the soul of the innocent in death.

The exact status and nature of the attendant jackals on the Salakhana stelae are unclear. It has been suggested that they may represent separate manifestations of the deity, additional beneficiaries of the offering, or animals fattened for sacrifice to Upwawet (Durisch 1993:217–88).¹⁸ According to DuQuesne, this repetitive arrangement emphasizes that each jackal image relates “closely to the deity, being probably regarded as *b3*-forms, in other words hypostases, earthly types, or manifestations of Upwawet and/or Anubis” (DuQuesne 2000:20). One particular representation contains several rows of jackals facing one another, with the name *Wp-w3wt* inscribed between each row. However, while it is typical on the Salakhana stelae for both a central figure on a standard and attendants to be represented, there are quite a few examples upon which only a single deity appears (e.g., CM035 and CM030, DuQuesne 2007a:47, 52), as on the Ashkelon jar.

The iconography on side B of the Ashkelon jar is somewhat more enigmatic (fig. 10.3). Unlike the jackal, which is set at the shoulder of the jar, the figure on the reverse spans the extant length of the jar, stretching from the shoulder down almost to the broken base. Although the identification of the image is uncertain, it is important to note the proportions of the jackal vis-à-vis this other, much larger, image on side B. Bearing this in mind, we offer here two possible interpretations of the side B image: as a divine standard or as an offering table.

Nearly all of the Salakhana stelae depict Upwawet in tandem with his divine standard, or “carrying-shrine” (DuQuesne 2004; Graefe 1986:863).¹⁹ The shape of the

¹² According to the original report, the tomb also contained several mummified jackal burials, though these artefacts are now lost (Beinlich 1975:493; DuQuesne 2000:9).

¹³ E.g., DuQuesne 2007a:43, CM165, 358; 44, CM018.

¹⁴ DuQuesne 2005b: figs. 13, 14; DuQuesne 2007a:71, CM184; 73, CM186, 395, 313.

¹⁵ Pyramid Text # 13 Spell 302, cited in DuQuesne 2005b:300.

¹⁶ DuQuesne (2005b:47) suggests that the reference to bringing “to birth the jackal as a god” pertains to some act of offering a cult image or processional arrangement, or else that the statement is an idiomatic expression of thanksgiving.

¹⁷ In the Abydos festival in particular Upwawet is referred to as a “victorious Horus” (Assmann 2001: 227) and in certain genealogies is specifically identified as the son of Osiris (Graefe 1986:863; DuQuesne 2007a:17).

¹⁸ For fattened animals, see, especially, Durisch 1993:figs. 4, 6, 7; DuQuesne 2007a:51, CM369.

¹⁹ See DuQuesne 2007a:43, CM165, CM358, etc.



Figure 10.5: Standard of Upwawet on Salakhana stelae CM # 309 (left) and CM # 184 (DuQuesne 2007a:23, 71).

Upwawet standards varies widely, and, though there is no exact parallel to the Ashkelon iconography, the general characteristics of the form—the slightly semicircular body and the upturned edges of the sledge—are similar to the image on side B (fig. 10.5). The Salakhana artists consistently adhered to some canonical notion of proportion between the jackal and the standard, and a similar sense of proportion is emphasized on this Ashkelon jar (fig. 10.3).²⁰

In the Egyptian representations, Upwawet's standard—typically, but not always, adorned with Upwawet's emblematic *shedshed* and uraeus—probably represented some sacred procession of the image of the deity (Durisch 1993:215ff.; DuQuesne 2004:30ff.; 2007a:27; Uphill 1965:370–76), and, although the procession of the jackal god played a prominent role in festivals of royal renewal, individuals of varying social and economic statuses were apparently included in the festivities at various levels (DuQuesne 2003:26). The presence of the “standard” on the Ashkelon burial jar in question may only be vestigial and need not refer to any actual procession of Upwawet at Ashkelon. Though a significant number of Egyptian examples depict various devotees at worship before the standard, or the cult image in the midst of royal procession with the king, many more examples portray the standard without attendants in a static position, as on the Ashkelon jar. It should be acknowledged, however, that it is unclear why Upwawet should be separated from his standard on the jar, unlike the parallels from Asyut. Perhaps the creator intended to flank the body with protective images on either side of the jar, thus shielding the infant from harm on all sides.



Figure 10.6: Offering tables on Salakhana stelae CM # 351 (left) and CM # 455 (right) (DuQuesne 2007a:54, 48).

The presence of the two spheres atop the “standard” on the jar is equally difficult to explain with confidence. It may be that the twin discs refer to some understanding of Upwawet's role as another son of Osiris or perhaps even a reference to the joint and overlapping role of both jackal deities—Anubis and Upwawet—in the guardianship and resurrection of the dead. Along with many other Egyptian deities, Upwawet shared certain solar and celestial affiliations.²¹ Toward this end, one might refer to an enigmatic funerary scene from Deir el-Bahri (Ritner 1985:150, fig. 1). Here Anubis is shown leaning over a similar, albeit singular, disc. Ritner suggests that the disc represents the moon and that the object stands in place of the body of Osiris, whom Anubis embalms in preparation for the journey upward into the heavens to achieve his reborn state (1985:152–54). The discs above the “standard” might therefore represent the body or “soul” of the infant as Osiris, the object of the jackal god's resurrective intentions.

As an alternative, the image on side B might also be seen simply as a crude version of the conventional offering table holding two bread loaves, imagery that appears not only in association with Upwawet on the Salakhana funerary stelae but in nearly every Egyptian burial context.²² Offering tables can be represented as detailed drawings or crude carvings, the latter especially in private settings, as illustrated by the Salakhana stelae. The less elegant versions are drawn as a simple upright line, representing the base, and a horizontal line,

²⁰ See, e.g., DuQuesne 2007a:54, CM175; 52, CM030; 47, CM025; Durisch 1993:figs. 5, 7).

²¹ E.g., DuQuesne 2007a:28, S12, where a winged sun disk appears in the lunette at the top of the stela.

²² An observation similarly made by Peter der Manuelian (personal communication, October 2008).

sometimes with slight thickness and upturned edges, as the tabletop. Food offerings on such tables tend to range from a single hieroglyph for bread (the tabletop and offering mimicking the hieroglyphs in the *htp-di-nsw* formula) to simple circles drawn or gouged out. The simple offering tables appearing on Salakhana stelae S20 and S56 provide the best parallels for the side B image as an offering table (fig. 10.6). Both are simply represented and laden with merely a few loaves of bread, signified by the drawn or gouged circles (DuQuesne 2007a:54, 75). Such an interpretation similarly takes into account the intent of the artist in preserving the relative proportions of the jackal of side A and the table of side B, mirroring the disparity in size between the *passant* canid figures and the offering tables of the Salakhana stelae.

Whether laden with simple bread loaves or elaborate feasts, funerary offering tables are understood to bear symbolic nourishment for the dead and/or food offerings for tutelary deities invoked for safe passage of the deceased. The two spheres at the top of the side B image might therefore represent two round bread loaves, a proportionally simple offering for a small person.

Discussion

The social significance of burials has been extensively discussed in both archaeological and anthropological literature, where the rite has been alternately hailed or decried as an indicator of ethnicity or class, or as a window into religious belief (Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Chapman 2003; Lorentz 2005). In large part, disagreements over the relative value of burials as meaningful mirrors of life and belief in the ancient world hinge on the inherent difficulty of distinguishing between personal devotion and public expression, as the rite arguably spans both spheres. This is particularly true of burials carried out in public spaces (cemeteries, tombs, courtyards), where the presence of an audience was possible, if not actively cultivated, and familial grief was often marked and measured in material terms.

Intramural infant burials, such as the one discussed here, are a somewhat different matter. It has frequently been suggested that infants and young children were not yet of age to be accorded full social “personhood” within the larger community. Having never fully entered society, therefore, society need not note their absence, and as such, they were often accorded different postmortem treatment from adults (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995:44–45; Richards 2005:170). Intramural infant burials themselves are certainly less likely to have been publicly observed, the deceased shielded from public scrutiny as much by their diminutive social status as by the walls of the private homes in which they were buried. It is therefore possible that the Ashkelon intramural infant burials might have been less subject to strategies of social

display, and therein would arguably constitute clearer reflections of personal belief and family expression.

The Pentapolis intramural infant burials are the first Iron Age burials that can be indisputably linked with a settlement of the Sea Peoples. Against the backdrop of the markedly Aegean material culture in the Pentapolis cities, the starkly Egyptian iconography on the Ashkelon jar is therefore striking.

It is, of course, possible that the resident of the jar may have been a child born of an Egyptian parent or parents living in Ashkelon, given that intermarriage between the Philistines and Egyptian (or Canaanite) women was always a possibility.²³ The presence of Egyptian iconography need not be taken as an indicator of ethnicity, however. At Ashkelon, the occupational Phase (Phase 18) in which the majority of intramural burials—including this one—appear is characterized by an increase in both Cypriot and Egyptian cultural traits. Scarabs, Egyptian stamp seals, and even religious figurines were recovered throughout the grid during this phase, and do not at present appear to have been confined to a single house. Whether these items reflect the growing availability of exotic trinkets as trading conditions improved in the Iron Age, or suggest a small influx of immigrants instead, Egyptian or Egyptianizing influence would not have been out of place during Phase 18.²⁴ The selection of the jar, too, may have been influenced more by its greater storage capacity, better suited to a slightly older child, than by any particular cultural affiliation. The Ashkelon jar thus need not be seen as a departure in substance from the local Pentapolis practice of intramural infant burial, but rather as the enhancement of local ritual through the use of exotic or personally meaningful images.²⁵

It is interesting to note that the one unifying feature of the burials that have been associated with the Sea Peoples, whether northern or southern, seems to be their *lack* of unifying features—that is, their mixed or “international” character. At Azor, for example, built tombs coexist with jar burials, simple pit burials, and cremations throughout the eleventh–ninth centuries B.C. (Ben-Shlomo 2008:51). Aegean and Cypriot customs have long been identified among Canaanite burials at

²³ Cf. Bunimowitz and Yasur-Landau 2002. In this light, it may be significant that such a high proportion of the Asyut stelae involving Wepwawet had female donors.

²⁴ See, e.g., Egyptian motifs in general in Philistine iconography, in T. Dothan 1982:172–85; Keel and Uehlinger 1998:110–16.

²⁵ One might view the Canaanite “accents” of the unusual threshold burial from Building 350 at Tel Miqne-Ekron (above, n. 5) in a similar light.

Tell el-‘Ajjul and Tell el-Far‘ah (S).²⁶ While the specific expression of intramural infant burial in the Philistine Pentapolis may be rooted in part in the Aegean world, the iconography on the jar from Ashkelon may stand not as a marker of particularly Philistine customs, but rather as an important emblem of the degree of ethnic diversity prevalent in the Philistine (or Sea Peoples’) cities even from quite early on. This runs counter to early ap-

proaches, which treated the Iron I material culture of the Pentapolis as exclusively Aegean, operating within an impermeable cultural “membrane”—a view informed largely by the dichotomy between Philistine and Canaanite or Israelite culture, as expressed by the biblical authors and which is gradually being deconstructed by archaeologists.

Ultimately, the Ashkelon infant burial and the iconography examined here may reflect the merger of the Egyptian and Mycenaean traditions in the economic, cultural, ethnic, and religious marketplace that was Iron Age Ashkelon.

²⁶ Waldbaum 1966; T. Dothan 1982:29–33; Gilmour 1995:155–63, *inter alia*.

