The Baked Clay Figurines from Zairaqoun: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

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This thesis presents and discusses the eighteen baked clay figurines recovered from Zairaoun during the four seasons of excavation of 1985, 1987, 1988 and 1991.

Zairaoun is regarded as one of the most significant sites in the southern part of Bilad Al-Sham. This thesis is divided into four chapters: The first chapter deals with the historical background. In the first part of it, history of excavations at Zairaoun is introduced. Then, a general description of what was the situation like in the third millennium in the Near East is presented.

The second chapter concerns the study of the figurines themselves. It includes four main parts the first of which governs the descriptive aspect. These figurines are small in size, fragmentary in most of the cases. The second part concerns the technique in which these figurines were made. These were made under relatively simple conditions the clay of which was first prepared, then formed and finally baked. In the third part there is an attempt to identify them chronologically, but this creates much difficulty as the figurines were found in mixed contexts like surface or debris. The fourth part of chapter two aims at inferring the function these figurines served.

The third chapter presents the comparative study which is divided into two parts. In the first part parallels from contemporary sites were cited. There is an attempt to conclude some of ancient correlation's of Zairaoun through
art in the second part. It turned out that Zairaoun had relations with other city states in Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and even with farther places like Turkey and Iran.

The conclusion of the last chapter includes a summary of the main results of the study and it presents some recommendations for more study to get a clearer picture of the religious life of Zairaoun in the third millennium.