

A Study of Selected Terracotta Figurines from Tell Basta Museum¹ (Four Figurines)

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Abstract

This research examines four terracotta figurines preserved at the Tell Basta Museum in Zagazig City, Sharqiya Governorate. These figurines were discovered in various archaeological sites, these figurines date back to 2nd -3rd CE. The studied terracotta figurines depict human-like forms, some representing deities while others portraying ordinary individuals. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, the researcher explores their forms, current condition, potential uses, and their artistic, religious, and symbolic significance. This study may be beneficial in understanding of ancient daily life and religious beliefs in the Graeco-Roman period.

Keywords: Terracotta, Tell Basta, Harpocrates, Female figurines, Roman soldiers.

Introduction

This research presents a collection of fired clay sculptures known as "terracotta" dates back to 2nd to 3rd century CE, which emerged and became closely associated with Greek civilization before extending to Roman culture. Terracotta was widely used in the Greek world for creating both large and small sculptures, representing a distinct social level compared to those made of marble and bronze. In Egypt, however, the situation was different as clay was rarely used for making sculptures. The ancient Egyptians primarily crafted their statues from stone, faience, and bronze. However, by the beginning of the 6th century BCE, this began to change with the discovery of numerous terracotta figurines dating to this period from various regions in Egypt such as Memphis and Naucratis. The emergence of these terracotta figurines was linked to the presence of Greeks in Egypt who came either for trade or to work as mercenary soldiers. Before the Greeks arrived in Egypt, terracotta figurine production was in decline, being crudely handmade and lacking detail², Terracotta figurines reached their peak popularity and widespread use during the Hellenistic period in the 4th century BCE, with Alexandria becoming one of the most important production centers along with the Fayum. These figurines were characterized by their elegance, beauty, intricate hairstyles, bright colors, and low cost since they were small and made from local clay. The subjects depicted in these terracotta figurines were varied, including men, women, children, animals, and deities. Terracotta figurines were closely connected to the religious and funerary beliefs of that time.

We find that the term "terracotta" comes from the Latin word "Terra" meaning earth and "cocta" meaning cooking or baking. The term terracotta is used for various fired

¹ Academic Publication Approved by the Permanent Committee for Egyptian Antiquities on February 27, 2024, approval was granted for the study, photography, and review of archaeological records, as well as the academic publication of the artifacts.

² Fjeldhagen, M. (1995). *Catalogue of Greco-Roman Terracotta from Egypt*, NY Carlsberg Glyptotek, 10.

clay products such as pottery vessels, water pipes, sanitation systems, roof and floor tiles, and architectural decorations on building surfaces. The term terracotta is also used to refer to the natural orange-brown color³.

Terracotta Making Technique

The clay used in making terracotta figurines varied significantly from one location to another and from one workshop to another. While some preferred red clay, others used white clay, and some potters employed a mixture of both types⁴.

The clay was first carefully purified to remove any granular impurities, and then mixed with a small amount of water. In some cases, a proportion of red iron oxide was added and blended with the clay⁵. This prepared clay was then pressed into molds and smoothed by hand, as evidenced by the fingerprints still visible on many terracotta figurines while the clay was still wet. These fingerprints became distinctive markers, serving as unique identifiers of individual artisans⁶.

The first step in the molding process involves carefully coating the interior surface of the mold with soft clay, ensuring that every part is thoroughly covered. Fresh clay is then trimmed, allowing the piece to be removed from the mold; this typically forms only the front part of the figurine. As for back section, it was created separately, either using another mold or shaped by hand, and later attached to the front portion. The joining was done by applying excess clay along the edges⁷. For more complex figurines, artisans employed multiple molds. For instance, animal figurines like dogs required three separate molds: one mold for the front section and two additional molds for the side sections⁸.

There were two types of molds produced: molds made from plaster (gypsum) which was used on a limited scale because they wore out quickly. After producing approximately ten figurines inside them, the details of the figurines would start to fade. There are many examples of figurines with unclear features due to the use of old molds. In such cases, the artisan would enhance the faded details using a chisel or a sharp tool before firing them⁹. The more commonly used molds were made from the same fired clay, "Terracotta." These molds were fired at very high temperatures to become solid and could be reused multiple times¹⁰.

After the pieces are removed from the molds, we find the artisan assembling the different parts of the figurines. We know that both the head and the shoulders were molded separately and then welded onto the figurine afterward. The excess clay from the mold often formed protruding edges on many of the figurines. Before placing the

³ Wendt, J.A. & Erosoz Tugen, A. (2022). The art of terracotta from the perspective of cultural geography: Tavas case turkey, *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 43(3), 1005-1012.

⁴ Hala, N. (2006). *Terracotta Figurines in Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Faculty of Arts, Tanta University, 7.

⁵ Pterie, F. (1913). *Roman Ehnasiya Heracleopolis Magna*, London, 13.

⁶ Graindor, P. (1939). *Terre cuites De l'Egupte Greco-Romaine*, Antwerpen, 18.

⁷ Walters. H.B. (1903). *Cataogue of Terracotta*, the department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum, London, XXIII.

⁸ Safaa, S.D. (2022). A Study of Animal figurines Made of Fired Clay (Terracotta)-Unpublished, *Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels*, Mansoura University, Issue 11, 386-391.

⁹ Fjeldhagen, M. (1995). *Catalogue of Greco-Roman Terracotta from Egypt*, 12.

¹⁰ Abdel Hamid, M. (2004). *The Abu Qir Area during the Greco-Roman Period: An Archaeological Study*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University, 332-336.

figurines in the kiln, the artisan would make an opening in the back to allow air and gases to escape during the firing process to prevent deformation¹¹. However, this opening was not present in all figurines, as it was only used in hollow-bottomed figurines where there was no other way for the gases to escape during firing.

It is found that the terracotta figurines discovered in Fayoum are characterized by a hole in one of the feet. This hole was used to protect the figurine from cracking during firing, and the artisan used it to prepare the figurine and add final touches before firing. Additionally, some pieces may have been equipped with this hole for the purpose of hanging them¹², using a hook. Some figurines were provided with a hole used during the preparation stage, which was later welded shut once the missing part was added as seen in the figurine of the Deity Harpocrates, where the genital area was designated, and that part was inserted separately¹³.

The firing process was carried out in very primitive kilns made of unfired clay reinforced with bricks and pottery shards¹⁴. The firing process for the figurines of Alexandria and Fayoum was conducted at high temperatures, though in all cases below 700 degrees and they were fired in batches¹⁵. After firing, the terracotta figurines acquired a thick calcareous layer, which served as a suitable base for painting and coloring on a white ground. Most of the terracotta figurines displayed today have lost their colored layer, leaving only traces of white paint. White and black were used to outline the face and body, with touches of pink, while shades of yellow, green, brown, and red were applied to color clothing, jewelry, and accessories.

The production of fired clay figurines became widespread in various regions of Egypt, but it appears that mass production was concentrated in a few workshops located in cities with a Greek character. The early models of these terra-cotta productions were represented by high-quality figurines, crafted using imported Greek molds. These molds were notably discovered in Alexandria, particularly in the Greek necropolis, where they were placed alongside the deceased in their tombs - a practice following traditions from their homeland. Most of such figurines depicted standing women dressed in Greek attire, known as Tanagra figurines¹⁶.

The production of Greek-style figurines reached Alexandria by the end of the 4th century BCE. By the mid-3rd century BCE, workshops in Alexandria were capable of producing terracotta figurines using locally made molds¹⁷. These figurines became

¹¹ Seif el din, M. (1998). *The Gayer Anderson Collection of Plaster Moulds; in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, BCH*, suppl.33, 16.

¹² Nachtergaele, G. (1995). *Terre Cuites de l'Egypte Greco-Romaine*, 254.

¹³ Graindor, P. (1939). *Terres cuites de l'Egypte gréco-romaine*, Antwerp, 19.

¹⁴ Kauffmann, C. (1913). *Terrakotten der Agyptischen Griechischen-Romischen und Koptischen Epoch*, Cairo, 19.

¹⁵ Breccia, E. (1934). *terrecotte Figurate greche e Greco-egizie del Museo di Alessandria*, *Monuments de l'Egypte Greco-romaine*, II, 2, Bergamo, 21.

¹⁶ The Tanagra Figurine is a Terracotta mold cast type, produced from the 4th century BCE, named after Tanagra town in Boeotia: Fjeldhagen, M. (1995). *Catalogue of Greco-Roman Terracotta from Egypt*, 9.

¹⁷ Hala, N. (2006). *Terracotta Figurines in Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period*, 11.

widespread across Egyptian cities, whether they were produced locally or transported through trade, as pottery items were always easy to move from one place to another¹⁸.

Terracotta Figurines Uses

Fired clay figurines were used to express a variety of themes, depicting different subjects and reflecting their places of discovery and origins. Additionally, some literary references indicate the uses of these terracotta figurines. They served as religious symbols placed in the homes of their owners, where households sought blessings by keeping these sacred objects indoors. The figurines also represented the favored deities worshipped by the inhabitants, reflecting their religious devotion. In Roman houses, niches known as "Naiscoi"¹⁹ were used to display terracotta figurines for religious purposes²⁰. These niches functioned as domestic shrines or worship corners. Beyond their religious significance, terracotta figurines also included items like animal-shaped toys and other forms intended for children's amusement.

Terracotta figurines were used in temples as votive offerings and sacrifices to the deities. Although figurines originating from temples were rare, some were found buried in pits known as "Favissae"²¹. These were special pits where Greeks and Romans disposed of accumulated temple offerings by burying them²². Similar pits have been discovered in Egypt, particularly in the area of the Taposiris Magna temple east of Alexandria²³, most of which contained bronze objects²⁴.

Terracotta figurines were also found in large quantities within tombs²⁵. These were placed with the deceased to provide protection in the afterlife, possibly symbolizing the soul's triumph over death and its peaceful journey to the other world²⁶. This practice continued until the end of the Roman period and served to bring comfort to the deceased²⁷, paralleling the concept of ancient Egyptian Ushabti figurines. Most

¹⁸ Dunand, F. (1979). *Religion populaire en Égypte romaine Les terres cuites isiaques du Musée du Caire*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 10.

¹⁹ Naiscoi is a small temple often used as artificial motif in houses and tombs, it was found in attic Cemeteries: Richard, T. (2012). *Greek art and Archaeology: A new History C. 2500-c. 150 BCE*, Thames & Hudson, 301-310.

²⁰ Like Roman houses in Karanis and Skenobios contained wall openings where figurines were placed. For more information, refer to the provided reference: Boak A.R.E. & Peterson E.E. (1924-1928). *Karanis, topographical and Archeological report excavation*.

²¹ Favissae are cultic storage places, usually are underground Cellars, used for scared votive objects no longer in use: Nigro, L. (1997). Cultic Activities in the Sacred Area of Ishtar at Ebla during the Old Syrian Period: The "Favissae" F. 5327 and F. 5238, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*.

²² Graindor, P. (1913). *Terres cuites de l'Égypte gréco-romaine*, 30.

²³ The site of Taosiris Magna (Abu-Sir) is the one located to the west of Alexandria. The name Taposiris Magna means "great tomb of Osiris." It was established by Pharaoh Ptolemy II Philadelphus between 280 and 270 BC. The site is known for its temple dedicated to Osiris and the Abusir Lighthouse (a smaller replica of the famous Lighthouse of Alexandria): Abdou, Y. (2024). *Taposiris-Magna (Abusir-Mariout): Through lenses of the Historical Records; Excavations Missions and Restoration Works*, IWNW, Vol 3.

²⁴ Perdrizet, P. (1912). *Les terres cuites grecques d'egypte de la collection Fouquet*, nancy-Paris-Strasbourg, x; "Boubastiset Leontopolis".

²⁵ Like the figurines that came from Fayoum from "Sunfar", Walters, BMC, P: XVIII.

²⁶ Marti, L. (1979). *Ancient terracottas lasting impressions of the distant past*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1-12.

²⁷ Al-Hussein, I.A. (2013). *The History of Egypt during the Ptolemaic Era and Its Civilization*, Nancy Library, Damietta, 416.

funerary figurines depicted dancers, tambourine players, or orant figures (praying women) with one or both hands raised in a religious gesture. These were typically placed near the deceased's head to ensure protection beyond the tomb, eternally repeating prayers and seeking forgiveness through their upward-reaching hands²⁸. In some cases, two orant figures were placed in (Niches) flanking the tomb entrance for additional protection. Scholars have noted that these praying female figurines resemble the hieroglyphic Ka symbol (representing the life force), and their raised hands may signify reverence for deities or the veneration of the deceased²⁹.

The uses of terracotta figurines were remarkably diverse, appearing predominantly in temples, sacred sites, tombs, and private homes. These figurines could not have served just one purpose, even if their primary function was religious. For instance, religious figurines placed in homes were also buried with the deceased, as Greeks and Romans believed the dead; especially children and young adults lived an afterlife resembling earthly existence³⁰. Similarly, children's toys, like other figurines, would have been offered in temples. Historical and literary texts confirm that adolescents dedicated them or placed them in their tombs if they died young³¹. Other figurines served as amulets and talismans to ward off the evil eye, particularly small depictions such as childbirth scenes or exaggerated phallic imagery the latter almost weaponized against malevolent forces³². Figurines depicting daily life were also popular, often purchased by lower or middle-class individuals to decorate their homes, mirroring the wealthy who commissioned more expensive bronze or marble versions of similar themes. Ultimately, the connection between a terracotta figurine's use and its subject depended on the buyer's preference: whether to honor a favored deity, accompany a relative in burial, or adorn their household.

Description and analysis of the figurines

Figurine No. 1: Inventory No. 620 (Fig. 1)

Registration No.: 620 (Tell Basta Museum Register)

Current Location: Tell Basta Museum (Terracotta Display Cabinet in Exhibition Hall)

Source: Tukh - Al-Qaramous³³

Dimensions: Height: 15.7 cm

Current Condition: Missing both legs below the knees

Description: A standing figurine of the Egyptian deity Harpocrates, wearing a crown on his head. The deity is depicted with his right index finger placed at the mouth, while holding a cornucopia (horn of plenty) in his left hand. The figurine features a ventilation hole on the back.

²⁸ Hala, N. (2006). *Terracotta Figurines in Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period*, 14.

²⁹ Marti L. (1979). *Ancient terracottas lasting impressions of the distant past*, 1-12.

³⁰ Graindor, P. (1939). *Terres cuites de l'Egypte gréco-romaine*, 31.

³¹ Carroll, M. (2011). Infant Death and Burial in Roman Italy, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 24, 99-120.

³² Hala, N. (2006). *Terracotta Figurines in Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period*, 15.

³³ Tukh-Al-Qaramous is a huge archaeological mound representing one of the sites used as camps for Greko-Roman soldiers, located in Sharqiya Governorate, now days its inhabitants are famous for their papyrus Heritage industry.

Commentary:

Among the most frequently depicted subjects in terracotta figurines is the Egyptian child-god Hor-pa-khered (Horus-the-Child), known in the Graeco-Roman period as Harpocrates. As a member of the Alexandrian triad (alongside Serapis and Isis), he symbolized the first rays of the morning sun, illuminating and sanctifying all around him as a solar deity³⁴. He was also revered as a deity of fertility and protector of childhood, typically portrayed as a plump infant.

During the Graeco-Roman era, his iconography evolved into a nude boy with curled Hellenistic hair a marker of Greek identity contrasting with the "barbarians" of the north. Greeks prized elaborate curls, spending hours washing, braiding, oiling, and adorning their hair with combs (of bone, metal, or ivory) and even metal curling tongs³⁵. His signature gesture a right index finger to his lips inspired Graeco-Roman poets to associate him with secrecy and silence.

The figurine portrays the deity Harpocrates in Hellenized form as a nude standing boy wearing a composite crown consisting of Upper and Lower Egypt decorated with lotus buds on either side above a thick wreath of spotted flowers as Horus the child Symbolizing rebirth and resurrection by the lotus flower while also being a deity of fertility where infertile women would eat lotus to conceive³⁶ the figure leans on a support to his left holding a cornucopia with this depiction being extremely common during the Graeco-Roman period appearing in marble bronze terracotta figurines and Alexandrian coins likely representing his specific worship in Alexandria where early versions seem to date back to the Hellenistic era possibly connected to his shrine in the Serapeum of Alexandria built by Ptolemaic king Philopator in the 2nd century BCE³⁷. Harpocrates' pose leaning on the adjacent support to his left side shows influence from 4th century BCE youth figurines³⁸ the artisan excelled in rendering Harpocrates' bodily details showing the left breast with what appears to be a necklace he wears while the right arm covers the right breast raised upward with the index finger at his mouth expressing movement in the figurine with clearly visible knees and the left knee protruding forward in a dynamic position while at the back there is a vent hole for gas release during the production process and the craftsman carefully defined the buttocks and thigh shapes from behind.

Figurine No. 2: Inventory No. 618 (Fig. 2)

Registration No.: 618 (Tell Basta Museum Register)

Current Location: Tell Basta Museum (Terracotta Display Cabinet in Exhibition Hall)

³⁴ Plutarch believed that Harpocrates was the second son of the deity Isis and that he was born prematurely with weakened legs. For more details, refer to relevant sources.

Emma, S.H. (1977). Harpocrates and Other Child Deities in Ancient Egyptian Sculpture, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. 14, 55–58.

³⁵ Amira, K. (2024). A bust figurine of Nilos at Greco-Roman Museum Alexandria (No.842), *Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels-University of Sadat City*, Vol. 8, Issue (1/1), 285-286.

³⁶ Amal, H. (2005). *The Representation of the Child in the Alexandrian Triad in Egypt during the Greco-Roman Era*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Tanta University, 190.

³⁷ Wafaa, A. (1985). *Artistic Expression Methods of Egyptian Deities in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Tanta University, 240.

³⁸ Fjeldhagen, M. (1995). *Catalogue of Greco-Roman Terracotta from Egypt*, nos 10, 13, 14.

Source: El Medad El Ahmer³⁹

Dimensions: Height: 8.4 cm

Current Condition: Head of a female figurine preserved; remainder of body missing

Description: The piece is crafted from gypsum depicting a woman's head with distinct facial features including black-painted eyes and a brown-colored mouth; the hair styled in ringlet curls around the head and is painted in light brown, with the interior of the piece being hollow.

Commentary:

This distinctive terracotta fragment represents a rare surviving piece, though the rest of the figurine is missing demonstrating how terracotta artists produced numerous female figurines for daily religious and funerary purposes alongside ritual depictions; like dancers praying figures and offering bearers, as well as everyday women that caught artisans' attention for popular consumption this head was likely used as a votive offering known in Latin as "ex-votos" dedicated to deities either to fulfill vows, or seek divine blessings with most votive figurines representing body parts like; heads hands and legs predominantly found in healing sanctuaries where they symbolized afflicted body parts that patients offered to healing deities in healing sanctuaries hoping for cures⁴⁰ maybe the head with the rich crown resembles Goddess Isis-Aphrodite⁴¹, the head is meticulously crafted with the artisan carefully highlighting facial features using colors the eyebrows and eyes are sharply defined in black made from charcoal while the nose was molded to protrude prominently the full lips are painted and outlined in brown with the face and ears colored white this use of pigments aimed to mimic nature as the light-colored gypsum represented women's skin tones⁴², the hair is arranged in ringlet curls around the forehead and over the head topped with a white headband while the hair itself is colored brown reflecting Roman societal interest in hair dyeing and altering natural hair color with the brown dye derived from a mixture called "spuma-batava"⁴³ imported from what is now known as the Netherlands⁴⁴, the back of figurine was plain with no decorations or colors.

Figurine No. 3: Inventory No. 611 (Fig. 3)

Registration No.: 611 (Tell Basta Museum Register)

Current Location: Tell Basta Museum (Terracotta Display Cabinet in Exhibition Hall)

³⁹ This site is located near tall Al Tukh - Al-Qaramous in Sharqiya Governorate.

⁴⁰ Martie, L.A. (1979). *Ancient terracottas lasting impressions of the distant past*, 1-12.

⁴¹ Isis-Aphrodite is a form of the Ancient Egyptian Goddess Isis and the Greek Goddess Aphrodite, maybe both Derive from Goddess Ishtar, this Goddess emphasizes fertility, and she was concerned to marriage and childbirth: Jocelyn, C. (2021). *The Cult of Aphrodite under the Ptolemies: The Consolidation and Legitimization of a Dynasty*, McMaster University.

⁴² Walaa, M. (2012). *Colors and Their Significance in the Art of Painting in Egypt during the Roman Era*, University Thesis Series, King Saud University, Issue 2, 225.

⁴³ Spuma-batava which is known as Batavian foam was used to get the hair dye: Charles, L. (1923). *History of Feminine Beautification*, *Arch Derm Syphilol*, 26 (6): 1022-1031.

⁴⁴ Netherlands was first recorded at 4th CE which the region was a part of the Roman Empire: Norbert, H. (2005), *Hairstyles in the arts of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, *Journal of Investigative Dermatology Symposium Proceedings*, Vol 10, issue 3, 298-300.

Source: Tell El-Husseiniya⁴⁵

Dimensions: Length: 15.3 cm – Width: 7.5 cm

Current Condition: The figurine is complete, with minor flaking of the painted layer below the knees.

Description: A piece in the shape of a bed with two supports, depicting a woman in a reclining position. It retains traces of brown and white colors.

Commentary:

This figurine depicts a nude woman reclining in a relaxed position on an oval funerary bed with a single raised headrest at the woman's feet. Her face is turned to the left, suggesting she lies on her left side. The ancient Egyptian civilization was familiar with beds and their depiction as part of funerary equipment, as were the Greeks, who referred to them as "*Kline*". The representation of women on funerary beds was known in ancient Egypt from the early dynasties and became more widespread during the Saite period⁴⁶ particularly in cities like Naucratis and Memphis. The woman wears a thick, braided wig, with her right ear visible on the side of her face. Her eyes are indistinct, while her nose is prominent, with the mouth below. Her breasts are full, with her right hand resting comfortably beneath them and her left arm attached to the body placed beside her on the bed. Her abdomen is slightly rounded, and her thighs are well defined and full. Traces of a white base layer used for painting remain visible. This figurine resembles other nude female figures on funerary beds associated with the worship of deities like Isis, Hathor, and Mut, known as "*Concubines*", who accompanied deceased men in the afterlife for pleasure⁴⁷. The depiction of nude women reclining on funerary beds emerged in the Late Period as votive figurines and magical amulets, continuing into the Coptic era. These objects held a specific protective function safeguarding mothers and children, warding off harm, and aiding postpartum recovery. The bed itself symbolized healing for women after childbirth. In Naucratis, this style of female representation was known as "*Baubo*", linked to birth and fertility rituals⁴⁸. Such figurines were also placed on votive beds in temples and tombs. This figurine was clearly intended for protective rituals during and after childbirth, as well as for fertility purposes. Its funerary use is evident from the woman's wig, indicating she is fully adorned, suggesting the figurine was meant to assist in childbirth and provide protection in the afterlife as a symbol of rebirth and renewal.

Figurine No. 4: Inventory No. 621 (Fig. 4)

Registration No.: 621 (Tell Basta Museum Register)

Current Location: Tell Basta Museum (Terracotta Display Cabinet in Exhibition Hall)

⁴⁵ Tell El-Husayniyah is located in Sharqia Governorate, Egypt. The city of Al-Husayniyah was named after Sultan Hussein II. Before that, it was called Tell Faraoun, then Tell Nefis.

⁴⁶ Shahira, A. (2019). A Figurine of a Reclining Woman on a Funerary Bed at the Al-Waha Al-Kharga Museum, *Journal of the Faculty of Arts Research*, Menoufia University, 1681.

⁴⁷ Thomas, R. (1995). *Egyptian late period figures in terracotta and limestone*, British museum.

⁴⁸ Charlotte, R. (2017). *Childbirth magic: Deciphering bed Figurines for Ancient Egypt*, Expedition 58 (3), Penn Museum, 38-445.

Source: Tell Temai El-Amdeed⁴⁹

Dimensions: Height: 10.5 cm

Current figurine: Incomplete – arms and lower part missing

Description: A figurine of a person wearing a Roman cloak, possibly a military man, with visible facial features and a hanging loop on the back.

Commentary:

A terracotta figurine featuring Roman characteristics of a military man. The figurine depicts a military figure in a standing pose, with a bare torso except for a military cloak known as a "sagum" distinguished by its curved edges that allow the fabric to drape in flowing folds. A brooch at the center fastens the cloak around the neck⁵⁰, while a belt at the waist a defining feature of Roman soldiers' attire, particularly among veterans and cavalrymen⁵¹. The facial features are striking: almond-shaped eyes with pronounced upper eyelids, arched eyebrows, and a distant, upward military gaze. The nose is broad and flat, the lips full and prominent, and the cheeks are well-defined, with expressive lines around the mouth, between the eyes, and on the forehead conveying dignity and advanced age, suggesting wisdom. The hairstyle follows that of Alexander the Great, a signature look for kings and military leaders swept upward in the front while flowing down the back. The locks are well-defined and set, as Greeks and Romans used oils to style them. The hair is long, reaching the shoulders a Roman tradition, as they believed long hair symbolized longevity and that cutting it was an offering to the dead⁵². The right ear is partially visible beneath the hair. The figurine's head is turned slightly to the left, suggesting movement. The arms are missing, though it appears the left arm was at his side while the right may have been raised, possibly holding a shield or weapon. Despite depicting a middle-aged military man, the body is muscular, indicating strength and vitality. A portion of the right thigh is visible, showing defined musculature. The sculptor also detailed the cloak's folds around the neck and its draping at the back, where a hanging loop is present. Terracotta male figurines were common in Greco-Roman Egypt, often portraying daily life individuals practicing professions or emulating deities. In reality, these terracotta figures represented foreign residents in Egypt, reflecting their diverse nationalities and occupations, from soldiers to merchants, artisans, and wealthy Greeks and Macedonians⁵³. Male warrior figurines became prominent in the Roman era, as the Romans were a warlike society. Terracotta warriors are typically depicted standing, holding a round, oval, or square shield in the left hand, and are shown either clothed or nude. The portrayal of an aged warrior is rare possibly

⁴⁹ Tell Temai El-Amdeed is located in Dakahlia Governorate. It is located near the city of Temai and Tell El Roba', the archaeological site is known as " Mendes " which was the capital of the Fourteenth Pharaonic Nome, it was in Greco-Roman period a military fortress, the excavation in this site found Seven groups of pottery vessels, seven oil lamps, four amulets for Osiris, three for the child Horus, two amulets for Isis, a number of statues and ornaments, 19 ushabti statues, and a large number of Ptolemaic silver coins.

⁵⁰ Alexander, C. (2012). *Roman clothing and fashion*, Amberley publishing, London, 69-70.

⁵¹ Alexander, C. (2012). *Roman clothing and fashion*, 41-42.

⁵² Norbert, H. (2005). *Hairstyles in the arts of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, 298-300.

⁵³ Maha, M.E. (1992), *Depiction of Non-Greek Foreigners in Art in Egypt under the Ptolemies*, Master's Thesis, unpublished, Tanta University, 11.

indicating a funerary purpose, where such figurines were hung in tombs to protect the deceased.

Conclusion

The study of terracotta figurine models at the Tell Basta Museum reveals that diversity of subjects represented in the fired clay figurines in Egypt, including depictions of deities, women, men, and children. Variety of molding materials used, ranging from gypsum to fired clay. Diverse purposes and functions, including religious, funerary, and votive uses. The artisan's attention to facial features, hair, body details, and drapery in the first, second, and fourth models likely due to their religious and funerary significance. The use of colors in female figurines, particularly white for the body, black for outlining features, brown for hair, and lip adornment, reflecting the natural aesthetics of women of that era and their emphasis on beautification. Focus on hair details and styling, as Greeks and Romans placed great importance on their hair, spending extensive time in barbers shops dyeing it and following fashionable hairstyles of the period. Long, healthy hair was seen as a symbol of eternal life, and they avoided cutting it, instead offering shorn hair as sacrifices to the deceased. Emphasis on feminine body features in the third model, used in magical funerary rituals and as a symbol of fertility, while male figurines highlighted musculature to ward off evil and the evil eye. It is recommended for the integration of artificial intelligence methodologies within the field of archaeology, specifically concerning the study of terracotta figurines. This recommendation encompasses several key applications designed to enhance the understanding, preservation, and presentation of these artifacts. Firstly, AI techniques are proposed for the in-depth analysis of the clay and gypsum composition, providing valuable insights into the materials and production processes employed in their creation. Secondly, AI can be utilized to meticulously study the pigments present on the figurines, determining their chemical and organic makeup, which can shed light on ancient artistic practices and the availability of resources. Furthermore, it is suggested leveraging AI for the complex tasks of 3D reconstruction and virtual restoration of missing fragments, enabling a more complete visualization of the original objects. The application of AI in creating detailed and globally shareable archaeological records is also highlighted, promising to democratize access to research and foster broader scholarly collaboration. Ultimately, there is an envision that the development of innovative cultural exhibition products derived from AI analysis, such as interactive displays and virtual reality experiences, with the overarching goal of attracting a greater number of visitors to the Museum and enriching the overall quality and engagement of their visit.

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Figures

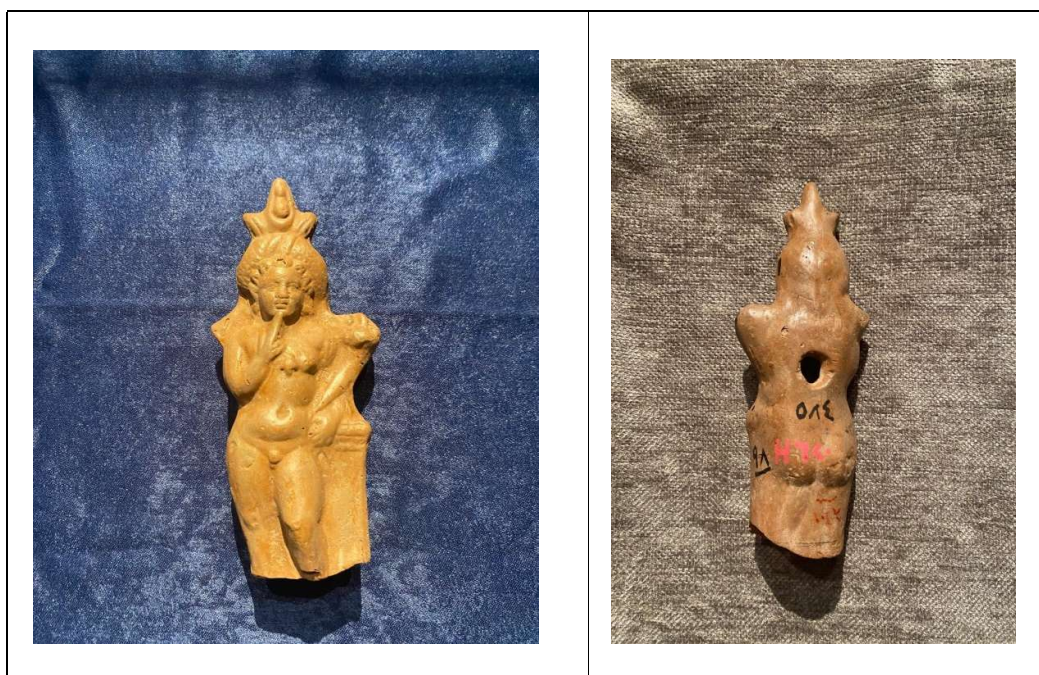


Fig. 1: God Harpocrates terracotta, Tell Basta Museum
(Taken by the researcher)



Fig. 2: Head of a female figurine, Tell Basta Museum
(Taken by the researcher)

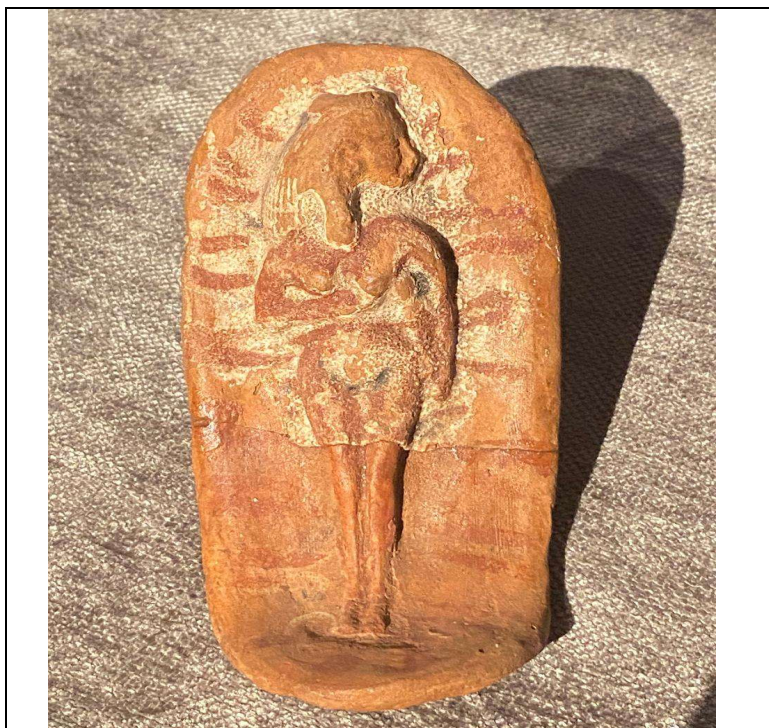


Fig. 3: Women lay on a bed Terracotta, Tell Basta Museum
(Taken by the researcher)



Fig. 4: Roman soldier terracotta, Tell Basta Museum
(Taken by the researcher)

دراسة لبعض نماذج من التيراكوتا من متحف تل بسطة (عدد اربع تماثيل)

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الملخص

يعرض البحث عدد اربع قطع من تماثيل التيراكوتا المحفوظة بمتحف تل بسطا في مدينة الزقازيق بمحافظة الشرقية , والتي عثر عليها في مناطق اثرية مختلفة , وتماثيل التيراكوتا التي يعرضها البحث ذات أشكال ادمية بعضها يصور الالهة والبعض الاخر يصور اشخاص من العامة , ومن خلال المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لتلك التماثيل يعرض الباحث اشكالها والوضع الحالي والعرض من استخدامها ودلالاتها الفنية والدينية والرمزية. قد تكون هذه الدراسة مفيدة لفهم عادات الحياة اليومية والمعتقدات الدينية في الفترة اليونانية الرومانية .

الكلمات الدالة: تيراكوتا , تل بسطا , حربوقراطيس , سيدات , جنود رومان .