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**PATAIKOS AMULET FROM TELL EL-‘UMEIRI, TRANSJORDAN**

Since 1984 an American expedition named Madaba Plains Project, sponsored by Andrews University\(^1\) in Berrien Springs, Michigan, has excavated in Central Transjordan. Several sites, including Tell el-‘Umeiri, Tell Jawa and Tell Jalul, have so far been researched\(^2\). The author has participated in this project since 1987\(^3\).

The 1992 season at Tell el-‘Umeiri yielded, among many interesting finds, a faience dwarf figurine, so called *Pataikos* amulet, allocated to the Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum at Andrews University (Fig. 1 and 2).

\(^1\) Andrews University works in consortium with Atlantic Union College, Canadian Union College, and Walla Walla College.


Fig. 1. Pataikos amulet from Tell el-'Umeiri. Egyptian faience, height 5.5 cm. Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan
Description

The figurine was found in Field F, Square 6L98, on the eastern slope of the tell, in an earth fill layer (Locus 77) just above the pavement, inside a possible house structure (Walls 6L98:44A and 6L98:44B) of undetermined function.

The object was made of “Egyptian faience”, i.e., pure, powdered quartz, which, in a state of moist and elastic paste, was put in a mold and then overlaid with glazing blend and baked in a kiln. The color of the resulting hard glaze surface — mainly blue and green, then red, black, and yellow-brown — depended on its chemical composition. In the case of our object, light green glaze originally covered the whole body, with the exception of the black-glazed scarab placed on top of the head.

The amulet, having presumably been in a relatively complete state, was crushed into many small and fragile pieces during excavation. Although most

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essential fragments were put together afterwards, lower parts of arms, the left leg, and a substantial part of the back are missing. The height is 5.5 cm. The glaze surface is worn in many places, especially on the head and face. Several fragments were left, and it was impossible to properly join them to other pieces.

The pottery from Pail 317, associated with the object, dates to Iron II, early Iron II, late Iron II/Persian periods. Dominant pottery for Locus 77 dates to late Iron II.

The faience figurine amulet represents a nude dwarf with a large ovoid head, protruding belly, disproportional arms and bowlegs; a black-glazed scarab, of which the lines marking prothorax and elytra are still recognizable, sits on top of the head; a band representing the hairline or the bottom limit of headgear or ribbon is visible on the head’s left side; a similar band visible on the face’s left side depicts the moustache; details of the face, such as the right eye and cheeks are partly visible; the dwarf wears a necklace consisting of two lines framing a row of projected beads; the navel is represented by a small depression on the prominent belly. A horizontal opening, through which a cord was pulled, was modeled on the back part of the figurine formed as a narrow pillar. Other unrecognized details, as indicated by the leftover fragments, were parts of the object (see below).

Typology, parallels and dating

Matzker, having researched the faience and stone amulets from Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin, distinguished eight typological groups of Pataikos amulets on the basis of various arrangements of the following main features, representative for these amulets: hairdo or headgear; two snakes and/or two knives held in hands; scarab placed on the head; necklace; two crocodiles on which the dwarf stands; winged Isis-Maat depicted (in relief) on the back; two falcons standing on each shoulder on both sides of the head; two goddesses, Isis and Nephthys, standing on both sides of the dwarf; double depiction; or the pillar on the back.

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Our object, though unfortunately incomplete and thus missing some details, may belong to Matzker’s Group 3, characterized by the presence of a scarab and the absence of crocodiles. The goddesses, falcons, hairdo/headgear, were apparently not represented on our amulet. As to the remaining features — snakes/knives held in hands and Isis-Maat relief on the back — one cannot determine whether they were originally present or not.

Similar types of faience and terracotta figurines, yet showing different styles, have been found in Egypt⁷, Palestine⁸, Phoenicia⁹, Cyprus¹⁰, Carthage¹¹, Sardinia¹², Etruria¹³ and as far north as modern southwestern Poland (Lusatian Culture)¹⁴.

Such dwarf-like representations are known in Egypt already in the Old Kingdom¹⁵. Together with other Egyptian faience amulets representing Sekhmet, Isis and Horus, Harpocrates, Bes, Nefertum, Mut, Horus eye, diverse animals, etc., Pataikoi found their way into Palestine in

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¹⁰ V. Wilson, The Iconography of Bes with Particular Reference to the Cypriot Evidence, Levant 7, 1975, 94, note 159, gives five examples of terracottas representing “the Egyptian god Ptah as a dwarf” which belong to the 6th and 5th centuries B. C.
¹⁵ S. Morenz, Ptah-Hephaistos, p. 289, note 52.
the 18th dynasty, i.e. the Late Bronze Age. They were common, both in Egypt and Palestine, in the Late Dynastic Period, and their great popularity occurred there in the 22nd, 25th and 26th Dynasties. They seem to have appeared in Phoenicia in the 8th century B.C., and for several centuries afterwards, down to the Hellenistic Period, they were popular in the Mediterranean comprising mostly territories of Phoenician influence.

As the Egyptians should be counted responsible for introducing the Pataikos amulets into Palestine, their wide distribution in the Mediterranean in later periods was due the Phoenician nation of merchants and seafarers.

Identification, symbolism and function

The Pataikos amulets from Egypt, depicting dwarfs, were a manifestation of folk religion. They are generally assumed to have been linked with the Memphite god Ptah on the following basis: some amulets bear a short hieroglyphic or demotic inscription containing a name Ptah; Herodotus III, 37 compares an image of Hephaistos (identified with Ptah) from his temple in Memphis with pygmy-like Pataikoi, with which the Phoenicians embellished the prows of their ships. Herodotus says also that the Kaberai, whom he identifies with sons of Hephaistos (Ptah), and who had their temple in Memphis as well, were of similar posture; dwarfs were frequently related to Ptah; some point to the proximity of the name Pataikos to that of Ptah, yet this is not certain. A dwarf-like image of the god Ptah is not his main appearance.

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16 O. Tufnell et al., Lachish II, loc. cit.; M. A. Murray, Faience Amulets, p. 379.
17 M. A. Murray, Faience Amulets, p. 379; H. Herter, Pataikoi, cols. 2553—2554.
18 H. Herter, loc. cit.
The iconography of Pataikos amulets resemble, however, representations of other related gods. “Horus-the-Child”, transliterated in Greek as Harpocrates, is often represented on small stelae, called Horus cippi, as standing on crocodiles, strangling snakes, and/or accompanied by Isis and Nephthys. This manifestation was very popular in the 26th Dynasty. The affinity to a hawk-headed deity, sometimes identified with Sokar/Sokaris, might be seen in double figurines representing both Pataikos, on one side of an amulet, and a hawk-headed dwarf, on the other. Some dwarfish representations of the Late Period were labeled Ptah-Sokaris. Pataikos dwarfs also show similarity to another very well known grotesque deity, Bes.

The function of Pataikoi represented on the prows of Phoenician triremes undoubtedly was apotropaic, i.e. to drive away any evil forces from seamen and their ships, as well as to frighten enemies on hostile ships and sea coasts.

The Pataikoi worn as amulets on an individual’s neck, as indicated by the loops on their backs and Egyptian texts, had parallel purposes to those on the prows of Phoenician ships and to Horus stelae and Bes amulets, i.e. to shield against any danger and illness, against bites of animals, to protect sleep, to serve the household, etc.

The Pataikos talismans with known archaeological context have been found in graves in a large number — this points to their magic role of providing protection in the afterlife as well — but also in temples and occupational strata.

Conclusion

The ḪUMEIRI amulet does not seem to have been made by either a local or itinerant artist. The material involved, manufacture and style, suggest it was imported to Central Transjordan from elsewhere. Since the object demonstrates clear Egyptian inspiration and is a part of the large group of

24 V. Wilson, Iconography of Bes, p. 81; cf. also E. S. Hall, Harpocrates and Other Child Deities in Ancient Egyptian Sculpture, Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 14, 1977, p. 56, and H. Bonnet, Patáke, fig. 143, p. 586.
26 V. Wilson, Iconography of Bes, pp. 77—103.
27 W. Spiegelberg, Zu dem Typus, p. 11.
28 G. Contenau, La Civilisation Phénicienne, fig. 57.
contemporary Egyptian amulets found in Palestine, one would point to an artist in the Delta as responsible for its modelling.\footnote{Phoenician mediation, however, cannot be excluded, cf. D. Homès-Ferrière, Possible Phoenician Influences in Jordan in the Iron Age, [in:] Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan III, ed. A. Hadidi, Amman 1987, pp. 89—96.}

Given the pottery evidence and the period of the Pataikoi popularity, the 'Umeiri amulet would fit in the 7th—6th centuries B. C.

The identification of the amulets with Ptah-like gods could have been perceived distinctively in different parts of the Mediterranean, including Jordan, where the motif was known. The 'Umeiri object could have been identified with a local divine being/genius. Its primary function, however, remained similar to amulets from Egypt and other parts of the Mediterranean.