

THE KELSEY EXPERIENCE JACKIER PRIZE

The Hunt

AAPTIS 277 (LAND OF ISRAEL/PALESTINE)

SECTION 013 (ADRIANNE SPUNAUGLE)

MAYA QUTOB

76282886

I have recently been introduced to the heavy history of what is known today as the land of Israel/Palestine. I would like to preface this essay by saying that I understand that I am breaking an unspoken rule by writing this essay in first person; however this class is more than a humanities requirement to me. I am a Palestinian who will never set foot in what is considered my homeland. I am a Muslim who will never visit two of the most holy places on earth, according to Islam. Even though I am faced with this harsh reality I still consider myself grateful. I possess the opportunity to understand and experience this sacred land more than anyone I know, including my father. Writing in first person only seems appropriate, for true passion cannot be expressed in formal writing. The flyer for the contest states that the paper should be written in an “engaging and interesting way”, and at the risk of a failing grade I would like to convey my passion for this land by exploring two ancient artifacts pertaining to Israel/Palestine. The two are connected, similar and yet very different in their own unique way. The evolution of the two is a very interesting story to tell. One is a beautiful ancient amulet; the other clay sculptures of amputated feet, hands, knees, breasts and eyes. Without further ado, in the words of the great Professor Eliav, let the hunt begin.

It’s difficult to imagine a time where people believed not in a god, but in holy spirits. The people of the land of Palestine were very superstitious; relying on a higher power to control events that were out of their hands. Spirits that controlled the good or evil that befell mankind;

life forces that created medicinal herbs, when found and tasted, would heal the ill (Aune, 112).

Spirits were thought of with a negative connotation; they were these mysterious powerful entities who roamed the earth unseen causing mayhem and misfortune to those who would not respect or believe in their existence. At the same time, they were believed to bring happiness and prosperity to those who chanted and lived in their reverence. Therefore, in order to have succeeded in life, the people of the stone, copper, and bronze age had to come up with ways to worship and appease these holy spirits, in order to escape a life of hardship. Some individuals claimed to have intimate relations with these holy spirits, and they would claim to have direct connections with the spirits. They claimed to have the ability to grant fortune and cast misery, due to their relationship with the mystical forces (Rodkinson, p.5). These individuals were soon casted as priests of sorts, and they were placed as mediators between the mere mortals and the higher powers. Another type of people to arise was the sorcerers and enchanter. Folks of magic would allegedly have mystical spells and potions that shielded them from intended harm. This, my friends, is the introduction to the concepts of amulets and votive offerings (Aldrete, np). Votive offerings are permanent gifts given to the higher power, whether it be spirits or gods, in order to appease and gain favors with either. We will revisit the amulet and offerings that sits comfortably in the Kelsey Museum in about seven thousand years. But for now let us turn our attention to the ancient use of charms and holy contributions in our land.

The evolution of the charms was simple; they were, in the beginning, used to cast away unwanted harm. They were cast with spells and inscribed with chants that, when seen by the spirits, would drive them away from the person wearing said charm. They were instructed to be worn visibly, as to allow them to be seen by the spirits. Soon, as time passed, these charms developed another use as fashionable ornaments. They were used to accessorize, and what the ornaments were made of signified wealth status. The wealthy would make their charms out of gold, silver, bronze, and precious stone (Wikipedia, np). The poor, on the other hand, had to make due with parchment, pieces of linen or woolen cloth, lace or embroidered fillets that were made by women to embellish their simple trinkets. Not only did the material used to make them differ, their shapes and sizes also varied based on culture and nation. By the late Bronze Age, with the introduction of monotheism, the belief in the oneness of God, these spiritual ornaments became widespread and affiliated with different gods and convictions. We see the use of the amulets shift from protection to worship. The names of these trinkets differed from nation to nation; Hindus referred to them as Talismans, Persians called them Hamaletes. The Romans were the first to appoint the term amulet to these charms. The ancient Egyptians and Hebrews termed them Totaphoth (Rodkinson, p.7). Even though the charms were appointed different names, their use was universal and agreed upon.

On the same note, although the votive offerings evolved in the same way, the extent of what the gifts became differs. Their origins date back to the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E, when small figurines of both animals and humans were scattered all over Greece. These statuettes were considered to be the beginning of Greek style and culture. Although evidence of these figurines exists abundantly, their significance at the time remains unclear. They are by no means used to gather information geared toward understanding early Greek religion; for they possess any information to do so. It is assumed that they were buried with the dead for protection of some sort; however, against whom is unclear. What we do know is that the offerings of animal figurines were more common than human figurines (Langdon, p.6) . These human shapes varied, as did the amulets. I do not believe them to be as widespread at the time, but the human figurines differed in quality and specificity of anatomical detail. These offerings grew and became more specific to certain regions of life. Offerings of health, for example, were reduced to clay figurines of anatomical body parts, as we see in our objects today .The idea of these offerings always existed, however they were not religiously relevant in our region until the rule of David and Solomon in 1010 B.C.E. For example, when Solomon built the first temple, also known as Solomon's Temple, in Jerusalem he built it with such excessive extravagance, it went above and beyond what was required of Moses on Mount Sinai (Wikipedia, np).

The amulets often changed shape, but never purpose. In Egypt they were head ornaments that consisted of a plate slightly curved; covering the forehead and its length was from ear to ear, known as Totaphoths. Totaphoths were also used by Hebrews, but that soon changed when they adopted customs from the Babylonians after the famous exile in 587 B.C.E. the Hebrews became accustomed to Tephillims, which is a term derived from the Babylonian term Tabhal, which means to enwrap. It was a head garment that encircled the head while fillets fell and draped over the shoulder and breasts. After the fall of the Babylonians, and under the rein of the Persian king Cyrus the Great, the Judeans began to return to Jerusalem, however they did not take the tradition of the Tephillims back with them (Rodkinson, pg. 14). The Judeans began to create their own versions of these amulets and charms, and it wasn't until the Greek empire that the amulets of back then start to resemble the amulets of today.

Throughout the course we have visited many time periods, from the Neolithic era to the later Islamic period up to WW1. The objects today are unique in that they transcend time; they originated at one time, became specifically significant in another, and are traditions we see in major religions today such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. The amulet and offerings being studied today was made in the Roman period, whether it was early or late is unclear, although we predict it was created sometime in the 4th century (Aune, p. 113). A major question arises here; how did the two objects come to be significant religious customs in both

roman and Judean religion? To answer this question, we must look at how the Greek culture seamlessly seeped into the culture of both romans and Jews, and how that influence came to effect the land of Palestine.

The Roman Empire was one of the strongest empires to rule our beloved land. The Romans slowly but surely took over the land from the Seleucids in the year 63 B.C.E. The land of Israel, before the romans, was the bottleneck between the Ptolemy and the Seleucids. Each one of these Greek kingdoms strived to obtain the bottleneck. The land had access to the Mediterranean, which was excellent for commerce, and was considered to be a great buffer zone between the two empires. From the days of Alexander to the Maccabean revolt in 167 B.C.E, those years in time were considered the Hellenistic period. The Hellenistic period was, by definition, defined politically by a series of battles between the two empires. Many of which were taking place in the land of Israel. In the year 198 B.C.E, The Seleucids emerged victorious over the previously ruling Ptolemaist. They established themselves in the area, and ruled up to the arrival of the Romans. Under the Hellenistic period, the culture in our land was undergoing Hellenization, which in its essence was the import of Greek culture after the days of Alexander to the Middle East, and the cultural revolution or transformation resulted from the people of the middle east adhering to their culture. It's important to understand that the Greek culture was not forced on anyone; instead, it was merely brought with the Greeks when they came to

power. The people of the Middle East admired the culture, and in a gradual process of conquer and Hellenization, the east became Greek. Under the Greeks, the ancient Semitic, Persian, Arab, and Jewish cultures were fused with the Greek culture. This fusion is known as syncretism.

With the Hellenization of the known world, people all around started adopting Greek tradition, culture, language, and spiritual norms. In our objects today we see examples of this fusion; the concept of votive offerings was introduced to the land with the Greeks as a religious practice. Even though the idea of offerings was present, it wasn't seen as a part of the religious identity of the land, whether it was roman spiritualism or Judaism. Similarly, the concept of the amulet was there, but it became termed amulet under the romans (Rodkinson, p.18).

Starting out in the city of Rome, and working their way to Persian land, conquering everything in their path. The Romans, over a span of 500 years or so, were able to conquer and accumulate land by violence, treaties, and manipulation. They are known to be the longest ruling empire of our land, ruling for seven hundred years. At the time of the takeover, the Jews were hostile against the romans; they took their land, their power. The romans, allowed the Judeans to practice Judaism; however, they were constantly oppressed and undermined under their rule. Judeans were considered second class citizens. This created tension in the land, and in stressful circumstances people resort to religion for guidance and relief. The romans ruled

with an iron fist; they were known for their military excellence, economic wealth, and most importantly their amazing technological advances.



Front and back of the amulet, as seen in the Kelsey Museum

Speaking of technological advances, if we were to take a closer look at our amulet, we see that its handle is a part of original molding, which was uncommon previously. Usually the amulet was made then the handle was placed later on, and it is visible due to excess metal molt around the area of where the neck of the amulet and the amulet itself meet. We did not find this distinction, which led us to believe that this particular amulet was made differently. It leads us to believe that the amulet was created using a pre-made cast. Why make a pre-made cast for one amulet? The cast was pre-made because the amulets back in the days of the romans were mass produced. The technology available included multiple casts that were made of stone.

Molten metal was then poured into the mold, and was left to dry. The two mold halves were then pressed into each other, and they become one. After the amulets dried, they were metal worked, in which the metal was heated again and hammered down to perfection. Most amulets were made of various metals, ranging from gold to bronze. Inscriptions on the amulet was optional, usually it depended on the intended use of the amulet as well as the type of people using it. As mentioned before, the amulets were believed to be charged with supernatural powers, which in the late Bronze Age became associated with specific higher power such as the God of Israel, YHWH. In the roman period, these amulets worked as prayers; they provided a way of worship, as well as a means of protection against disease and misfortune while at the same time providing opportunity for happiness and success (. They were, to finish off, attached to a cord or chain, to be able to keep it around the neck.

Our amulet was made of a mixture of copper and tin, and we know this based on the greenish discoloration due to oxidation and exposure to air and sweat. The amulet was carved in, and in this particular Jewish amulet was engraved with a Jewish prayer in which the prayer and the God of Israel, YHWH. The god was mentioned three times on the front and twice on the back. Just by looking at how these small trinkets were made, we can infer that the Roman Empire was extremely efficient. Personally, I do think that the Judeans resorted to prayer for solace, and that might have been one of the many reasons why this particular type of amulet

was mass produced. As we know, amulets became a part of religious worship, and something like that had to be mass produced, to provide amulets for all who worship. Even though the land flourished under the rule of the Romans, the oppression felt by the opposing party was too much to bear. In 70 B.C.E, what is known as the end of the Early Roman Period, the Romans destroyed the third temple, used to worship the god of Israel(Wikipedia, n.p).This led to the last revolt of the Jews against the romans in 137 B.C.E, and the revolt failed, resulting in the banishment of the Jews from Jerusalem. This resulted in a need for a new way to connect to the god of Israel; hence the amulets became even more popular. Many types of amulets were available in the Roman period; Egyptian Amulets, Greco-Roman amulets, and last but not least the Jewish Amulets. All three of these types of amulets were fairly similar, differences included shapes and sizes, material used, as well as inscriptions. (Wikipedia, n.p)



The Roman Votive Offerings, as seen at the Kelsey Museum, located on the second floor.

Interestingly enough, votive offerings differed from the amulet in that there wasn't a specific type of offering. These gifts ranged from small trinkets such as figurines to large extravagant buildings such as the temple. Basically anything of value to the individual that he was willing to give up was considered an offering. Offerings were made by both Judeans and Romans. The offerings were then placed in a place of holiness and left there for the gods, such as prayer areas. Offerings were made so frequently, people had to find new places to store them, for offerings to the gods cannot be destroyed (Aune, p.112). Different types of offerings were being made to the gods, people offered what they could, and while some people did it with pure intentions, others gifted were done for favors from the gods. Vases of grain were offered for prosperity in crop, artwork was also offered for wealth. Different offerings started to signify different expectations and wants from the Gods. If you were considered Roman, you most certainly had the means of gifting valuable antiquities. Even though the concept of offerings were practiced by many, almost all of the artifacts left were Roman, because they were sturdy and built well enough to withstand the test of time.

In the Roman Empire we see people of higher social ranking enjoyed lavishing elements such as health and personal care. The Romans believed in prevention and cure, and took many precautions against disease by exercising, eating right, and maintaining sanitary customs.

Doctors were available in Roman times; however, even with all these modern ways of protection, the people still relied on their gods for health. They would create clay sculptures of body parts and were given as offerings to the gods and goddesses of health, such as Asclepius, the snake goddess associated with healing, Bona Dea, the goddess of fertility, healing, virginity, and women dealings, Cardea, the goddess who supervised the heart and other organ functions, and Vejovis, the god of healing (Wikipedia, np)

The Romans came and gone, Constantine ruled as the first Christian leader, the Islamic world came into power, the Crusaders took over, and the Mamluks and Ottomans ruled. The creation of Islam consisted of the taking of different aspects of Judaism and Christianity, and Christianity was created in the midst of our land. What we saw happen was these two religions adapted the usage of the amulet and offerings. Their purpose over the course of time ceased to change, and what we see today is a divergence of these particular objects, for both the amulets and objects differed in who they worshipped.

To bring it all together, these ancient religious practices are traditions included in religions today such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. In Judaism and Christianity today, we see the candles and incense, furnishings of the Synagogue and Churches are all considered votive offerings. In Islam, the tradition of Zakat is executed (Wikipedia, n.p). According to Islam, 2% of your paycheck or income must be given to the poor, as ordered by

god. The idea of fasting is also included in Christianity and Islam. In Christianity, one must give up a loved food type and not eat it for three months, while in Islam one must go without food or water for a one month from dawn to dusk. I would consider fasting to be an offering, even though it is not considered a physical object. In Buddhism we see shrines created, and are believed to embody the spirits of the gods. In Islam, a necklace with a pendant shaped like an eye is given to infants and children as a token of good luck, as is to say someone's watching over you. They also have pendants with lines from the Quran engraved into it, used to represent cherishment of the Quran. Similarly, the Christians have cross necklaces. It's amazing to see objects made thousands of years ago still affect us and carry on into our daily practices to this very day, and these traditions have assimilated into our culture so seamlessly that it's hard to believe it's true.

In conclusion, what we experienced here today is a minor detail of the everyday life in Israel/Palestine. The amulet and anatomical votive offerings are found to have originated in the Neolithic period and are aspects of religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Offerings unaffiliated with religion, such as throwing a coin into a fountain, are all affiliated with our land its traditions. The land of what is considered Israel/ Palestine today has the richest history in comparison to the rest of the world, and to be able to learn and ride along on this journey was a privilege I will forever be grateful for.

Bibliography

1. "Votive Offerings." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*. Ed. Micheal Gagarin. Oxford University Press, 2010. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
2. Adkins, Roy A. *Dictionary of Roman Religion*. By Lesley Adkins. N.p.: Oxford UP, 2001. 243-45. *Dictionary of Roman Religion*. 08 Feb. 2001. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
3. "Temple of Solomon." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 04 Aug. 2013. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
4. "Votive Offering." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 04 Aug. 2013. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
5. Rouse, W. H. D. "Greek Votive Offerings". Cambridge: *The University press*, 1902.
6. Rouse, W. H. D. *Greek Votive Offerings: an Essay In the History of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: *University Press*, 1902.
7. Langdon, Susan Helen. *ART, RELIGION, AND SOCIETY IN THE GREEK GEOMETRIC PERIOD: BRONZE ANTHROPOMORPHIC VOTIVE FIGURINES.* , 1984.
8. "List of Health Deities." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 04 Aug. 2013. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
9. "Judea (Roman Province)." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 04 Sept. 2013. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
10. "Votive Deposit." *The Free Dictionary*. Farlex, n.d. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
11. "The Jewish Temples: The First Temple - Solomon's Temple." *The First Temple*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Apr. 2014.
12. "Monotheism." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 04 Sept. 2012. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
13. "Land of Israel." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 04 July 2007. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
14. "Amulets in Ancient Rome." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 10 Apr. 2014
15. .Aldrete, Gregory S. *Daily Life in the Roman City*. London: *Greenwood*, 2004. 148-51. 01 Jan. 2004. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
16. "Roman Empire." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 04 Oct. 2005. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.

17. Aune, David. "Amulets." Jesus, Gospel Tradition and Paul in the Context of Jewish and Greco-Roman Antiquity: Collected Essays II. N.p.: n.p., n.d. 112-15. May 2013. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
18. Rodkinson, Michael Levi. History of Amulets, Charms And Talismans. New York, 1893.