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PERSONAL DISPLAY IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT AND THE QUESTION OF PHILISTINE CULTURAL ORIGINS

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Abstract: The archaeological artifacts of the Iron Age I–IIA periods found in the southern coastal plain of the Levant (about 1200–900 BC) have certain new features that suggest the appearance of the Philistines or other Sea Peoples. A study of Iron Age jewellery and its stylistic influences sheds light on a period of history that has as yet remained elusive and provides a foundation for constructive discussion of the relations and exchanges affecting the region. Often marginalized as "small finds", personal adornment is a crucial component in social interaction. The process of adorning the body can convey cultural identity, social status, ethnicity, gender, and age in a manner more immediate than verbal communication. An accurate jewellery typology for the period will assist our understanding of the cultural influences prevalent during the early stages of Philistine society. Using the Philistine Pentapolis sites, and drawing on other sites in the region, both east and west of the Jordan River, the author analyzes methods of cultural display. Using available personal adornment data and focusing on the motifs and technologies occurring in the various assemblages, the author aims is to contribute to the current discourse on cross-cultural exchanges in Philistia in the Early Iron Age.

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INTRODUCTION

In exploring issues of ancient ethnicity and cultural identity, archaeologists today are familiar with theoretical terms including acculturation (Stone 1995; Gitin 1998), hybridity (Zuckermann 2004; Kraidy 2005; Knapp 2008; Stockhammer 2012b; see Stockhammer 2012a), creolization (Yasur-Landau 2003; Ben-Shlomo, Shai, Maeir 2004: 20, 28; Killebrew 2005: 197–245), transculturalism (Hitchcock 2011) and entanglement (Hitchcock, Maeir 2013; Maeir, Hitchcock, Horwitz 2013). However, to better understand the relevance of jewellery and other modes of adornment in the ancient world, preference is given here to social theory's construction of cultural identity and mechanisms of intercultural discourse.

The body is now understood not just as a biological given, but also as a social construct producing multiple meaning (Bourdieu 1984; Csordas 1993: 135). Dress and adornment are part of the construction of those meanings, which include individual, group and geographic or territorial identities, incorporating such issues as ethnicity, gender, age, and status as well as economic, political and moral messages. The evidence from cemeteries in the southern Levant indicates that various categories of jewellery can be associated with age, gender or social status (Bloch-Smith 1992: 82; Levy *et alii* 2004: 84–86; Green 2007). Unfortunately, these do not include any Philistine cemeteries, although data from multiple burial Tomb 1 at Tell es-Safi/Gath suggest that metal jewellery was worn by both infants and mature individuals (if not in life, then certainly in death). Nonetheless, these aspects of identity do not sufficiently address the question of Philistine cultural identity formation. How we present ourselves demonstrates both our group and our regional belonging; it affects others' perception of us, while providing an outlet for individual expression (Foucault 1977; 1978).

Following this methodological approach, dress can be conceived of as acting on the body, in turn affecting the perception of self, as physical experiences strongly shape our view of our relationship with the world. Clothing and adornment move beyond their roles as a screen for the body to become a repository of information and symbols for communal consumption. The power of jewellery can therefore be understood in terms of communicability. It communicates the values of a society and provides the key to their perceptions of other people, forming the basis of their behavior towards them. Even today,

Fig. 1. Map showing major Philistine sites discussed in the text (Digital illustration J. Verduci)

how we perceive the aesthetic value of our bodies and our attire is dependent on cultural attitudes. In many societies the way the human body is treated — through modification, dress and adornment — is highly charged with meaning in culturally specific ways that convey individual, group, ethnic and geographic identities (Verduci 2008; 2012).

Focusing on items of personal adornment, particularly jewellery and clothing attachments, I examine what they might indicate about change and variability in population, specifically with regard to the Philistines of the Early Iron Age of approximately 1200–900 BC. Aegean, Cypriot and Anatolian style features are well documented at Philistine sites within Philistia, located in the southern coastal plain of the Levant [*Fig. 1*], where ethnic identity can be differentiated from other Levantine groups in distinctive motifs (spirals), cultic practices (notched scapulae), ceramics, cooking installations, non-Levantine architecture, non-Semitic Indo-European names and dietary preferences (pork) (for an overview, see Killebrew, Lehmann [eds] 2013; Maeir, Hitchcock, Horwitz 2013). Examination of costume and adornment will also contribute to the ongoing discussion of identification of ethnicity in the archaeological record; the Philistines are inferred to have had a distinctive appearance, based on their depiction on the relief from the mortuary temple of

Fig. 2. Detail from a relief depicting captive Sea Peoples being presented by Ramesses III to Amon and Mut (Drawing courtesy of the Oriental Institute of Chicago; Medinet Habu 1930: Pl. 44)

Ramesses III at Medinet Habu (*Medinet Habu* 1930: Pls 37, 39, 41, 44) [*Fig. 2*].

"Where did the Philistines come from?" is perhaps the wrong question and as a result, we are left with unsatisfactory answers. The notion that a concrete division existed between cultural groups should be reconsidered, as we acknowledge ebbs and flows in the continuity of forms, not to mention of people, who were in constant dialogue with the world around them: "In this way the concept of transculturalism allows a theoretical flexibility that can shift between normative and creative levels of exchange..." (Nielsen 2002: 26). Evidence contradicts what might be perceived as a blanket process of hybridization in the region, whereby the implication is that interaction only exists between two sub-groups (see Knapp 2008: 57–61). Rather, it appears that different imperatives were at play, by multiple identities, at different stages of the Early Iron Age.

A theoretical approach lifted from cultural anthropology and critical social theory enables identification of the essence of Philistine identity, allowing us to ask, "How did the Philistines use their material culture to define themselves?" Processes of material change have been explained most recently by the *entanglement* theory (Stockhammer 2012b). A foreign object is not entangled in itself; the step necessary for entanglement requires the joining of foreign and familiar, triggered by the object generating a change in the individual. This material entanglement can be identified, even if the function of the artifact cannot, and offers "insight into the individual practices, worldviews, and ideologies" of individual actors (Stockhammer 2012c: 100).

CULTURAL INTENTION

In the latter part of the 20th century, conceptual shifts emerged that addressed the notion of material culture as an active agent, used by individuals and groups to construct meanings and express identity (Hodder [ed.] 1982; 1989; Shanks, Tilley 1987; Conkey, Hastorf [eds] 1990: 15). In this sense material culture reflects the social and cultural processes of a culture or social group. Thomas argues that an object could be acquired due to its perceived meaning or made and imbued with a particular significance that may change over time, both representing what might be termed 'systems of significance' (Thomas 1996: 159). This notion of identity and its link to material culture is viewed by cultural anthropologists and sociologists (Barth [ed.] 1969; Bentley 1987; Eriksen 1993) as being a dynamic and fluid attribute and has been applied by archaeologists in multiple archaeological contexts (for example, Kobyliński [ed.] 1991; Shennan 1989; 1991; Jones 1996). The idea of the individual being a responsible agent in exercising free will and defining his or her individuality is an under-investigated notion (for references, see Wells 1998). *Cultural intention* is a means of explaining agency in the wearing of entangled material. Material culture resulting from entangled processes can thus be understood in terms of how it shapes and defines non-material culture (encompassing communication, sensory experience, thought and behavior) revealing the ways in which meaning in the ancient world was produced and disseminated through various adornment

practices. What distinguishes this avenue of research from other recent attempts to explain cultural processes is a concern with the relationship of material culture and individual experience. This notion requires, first, a demonstration of *appropriations* and *transformations* in material culture, and second, phenomenological and somatic understandings of identity to explain the *role* of material culture in shaping identity.

By analyzing a sample of material evidence, I argue that it is possible to identify firstly the transmission of a few forms that reflect Aegean, Cypriote and Anatolian traditions, secondly that this transmission was not unidirectional or limited to Philistia, and thirdly, that the appropriation and transformation of certain types representative of new social identities was the result of cultural interactions: "the process of appropriation result[s] in the creation of a new object that combines the familiar with the previously foreign" (Stockhammer 2012b: 50). This is particularly relevant in the southern coastal plain of the Levant, as social, economic and political upheavals occurred following the transition from the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age.

Although the ability to identify or differentiate between specific ethnic groups is notoriously problematic (Jones 1997: 1), the understanding here of dress and adornment does acknowledge that corporal modes of expression are closely tied to cultural boundaries and other expressions of identity, including ethnicity, gender, age and status-driven aspects of social practice, in that bonds to traditional costume and social situations are heavily involved in determining what people wore (Entwistle 2000: 44). Cultural identity encompasses both the individual and the group, the relationship between the two, and their connection to their larger world, although the broad issue of ethnic identity is perhaps more readily apparent than individual identity, as differences amongst the assemblage may be more highly visible (Eicher 1995). Identity can thus be defined in terms of a wide range of behaviors, including language, ceramics, diet, ritual, burial practice, dress and personal adornment.

The issue of identifying ethnicity is contentious (see, e.g., Mendenhall 1986: 534; Levy *et alli* 2004: 88–89; Sherratt 2005). The term ethnicity, with its implied notion of purity, is problematic, and as a result, contemporary archaeologists occasionally hesitate to employ this term (Bloch-Smith 2003). Criticisms has been leveled at the works of R.D. Miller (2005) and A.E. Killebrew (2005) for their tendency to assign the inhabitants of Israel an ethnic or bounded national identity. It is the tendency to assume the unified ethnic identity of groups that needs to be questioned, as does the "tendency to treat ethnic groups as the fundamental units of social analysis" (Nestor 2010: 1–10). Current research sees ethnicity as a social construct resulting from a repertoire of multiple and variable factors situated in daily practice (Hall 1995; Jones 1997). Finally, as recent scholarship has shown, a single origin for the Philistines is no longer an accepted paradigm (Maeir, Hitchcock, Horwitz 2013). Thus, ethnicity is a multi-faceted concept shaped by constant negotiation with the surrounding world. I would continue with the qualification that I do not claim to be able to identify an ethnic identity for the Philistines of the early Iron Age; rather, I identify the cultural affiliations

and influences that plausibly formed the heart of their group identity.

I claim that symbols are used to signify such group identity and coherence; their degree of visibility, that is, their position on the body, and social arenas in which they occur, can provide important insights into the construction and maintenance of cultural boundaries (for example, Wobst 1977; Hodder [ed.] 1982). Certain forms, decorative styles and manufacturing techniques are often associated with specific and identifiable groups. The Egyptians, for example, are often depicted wearing specific jewellery types, which are largely missing from the repertoire of Canaanite jewellery, while also depicting other nationalities in jewellery forms they themselves never wore, such as metal anklets (Tufnell 1958). This is the case with one or more heavy metal anklets shown worn by Asiatics in Egyptian art [*Fig. 3*]. With the caveat that iconographic evidence might be littered with artistic error or intentional notions of alterity, the Egyptian depictions are arguably linked to aspects of Levantine bondage and defeat (Green 2007: 301–303). The Neo-Assyrians were also depicted with distinctive pendants, earrings, and bangle forms on their relief carvings. Such displays may have played important propagandist roles in the power struggles within the Assyrian ruling elite (Barron 2010). The mystique of sovereignty, owing to descent and divine right, needed to be maintained

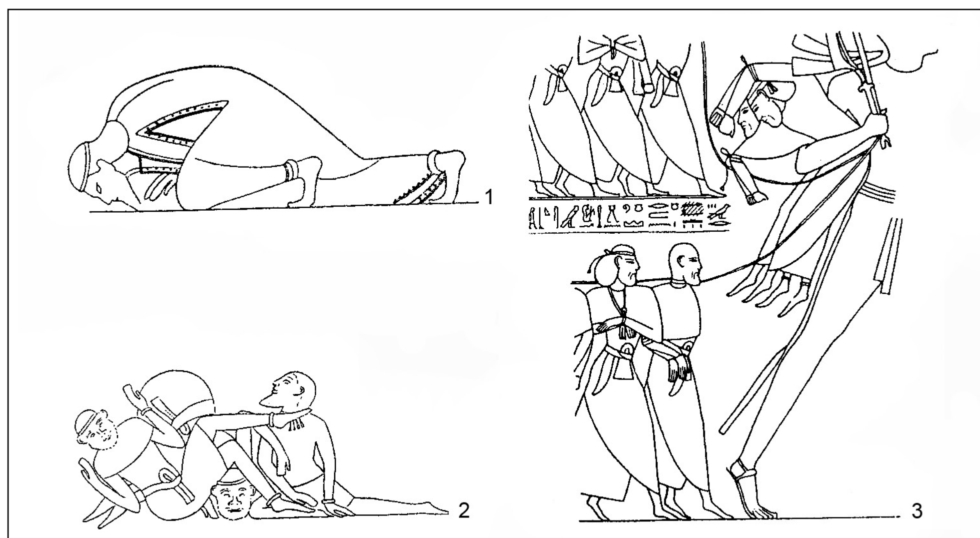

Fig. 3. Anklets in Egyptian iconography: 1 – painting from Tomb 4 at Gurneh depicting an Asiatic chieftain from the reign of Thutmosis III, approximately 15th century BC; 2 – triumphal stela depicting a Mitannian conquered in battle, from the reign of Amenhotep III, approximately 14th century BC; 3 – Karnak reliefs depicting "chiefs of Retenu" being carried away by a pharaoh, from the reign of Seti I, approximately 14th century BC (Drawings courtesy of the University College of London, as it has not been possible by reasonable inquiry to locate the current copyright holder; Tufnell 1958: Fig. 4)

to protect the throne, although not always successfully (Yoffee 1988: 58). Thus, it is plausible that the evolution of styles and technologies in the jewellery of Philistia reflects a change in social and cultural identities and population.

My approach to the problem was to commence with an examination of the spatial distribution of a range of non-Levantine forms whose first appearance is outside of the southern Levant, the main conclusion being that several of these objects correlate directly with the appearance of Philistines in the region. Unfortunately, our knowledge at present is based on very limited evidence; hopefully, the much-anticipated publication of material from several Philistine sites will shed more light on our understanding of the objects discussed here. The close degree of similarity between some objects, in particular examples from Tel Miqne-Ekron studied by Amir Golani and others by the author more recently at Tell es-Safi/Gath, with those from Aegean, Cypriot and Anatolian sites, presently evinces anomalies of the archaeological record rather than suggesting that the Philistines were consciously identifying themselves and linking their practices with those from the west. More significantly, the transformation of one particular form of earring might signal the manner in which a local group in the Levant asserted the changing nature of their identity in a departure from traditional styles.

JEWELLERY APPROPRIATIONS

CONUS MEDITERRANEUS

The first of these anomalies in the archaeological record of the Levant is the *Conus Mediterraneus* shell. The labial sides of these shells were ground down to produce a perforated flat surface and are often naturally holed at their apex (Golani 2013: 215–216, Fig. 35:7) [*Fig. 4:2*]. Often the shells are not modified at all (Reese 1983: 356; 2006). This type is known from Late Bronze Age occupational levels and burials throughout the Aegean and Cyprus (Reese 1983: 356; 1985: 344–345; 1988: 459; 2006). Although *Conus* shells are frequently found in the Ancient Near East, the ground-down *Conus Mediterraneus* is predominantly limited to Tel Miqne-Ekron in Philistia, where 53 of these shells were found, most in Iron I (about 1200–1000 BC) levels (Golani 2013: 215–216).[1] One further shell with labial perforation comes from Iron II settlement levels at Tell es-Safi/Gath [*Fig. 4:1*].

In the Aegean they have been found at Mycenae, where 500 shells were revealed, over two-thirds of them ground down and holed. In total, 323 were ground down and holed and eight were filled with lead; the latter possibly used as fishing or garment weights (Reese 1983: 354–356). They have also been found in MM II–LMII Crete, in occupational levels and burials dating to the Late Helladic II–III periods on the Greek mainland (Reese 1983: 356; 1985: 344–345; 2006; Golani 2013: 215), and in LC II–III contexts in Cyprus (Reese 1985: 340, 343–344; 1988: 458–459; Golani 2013: 216).

[1] As with much of the material from sites in Philistia, the exact details pertaining to context at Tel Miqne-Ekron await publication.

While beads made of shell may have been used by people of lower status who did not have access to more expensive materials, such as metals and semiprecious stones (Moorey 1999: 78), given they are imbued with water, life and health, acting as fertility symbolism, shell objects also are believed to have functioned as prestige goods (Trubitt 2003). Ground down *Conus* shells may have also functioned as gaming pieces or toys, as well as being worn as items of adornment (Reese 1983: 356; 1985: 353). The reason why these shells were ground down and the manner in which they were used remains unclear. What we do know is that ground-down *Conus* shells were characteristic of the Aegean and Cyprus towards the end of the Late Bronze Age and apparently were not found anywhere else at this time until their appearance at Tel Miqne-Ekron. It is possible that the population of Tell Miqne-Ekron utilized this form of adornment as a means of cultural differentiation from both the local Canaanite population and from other groups within Philistia (regional variation in Philistia has been discussed recently by Maeir, Hitchcock, Horwitz 2013).

SPIRAL RINGS

The double-stranded spiral made of one wire bent double and then wound around with a varying number of coils is also linked to Aegean traditions [*Fig. 4:3*]. A single gold specimen was located in Iron I levels, once again at Tel Miqne-Ekron (Golani 1996: Fig. 9.6; 2013: 130). Spirals from the Aegean are described as hair spirals, rather

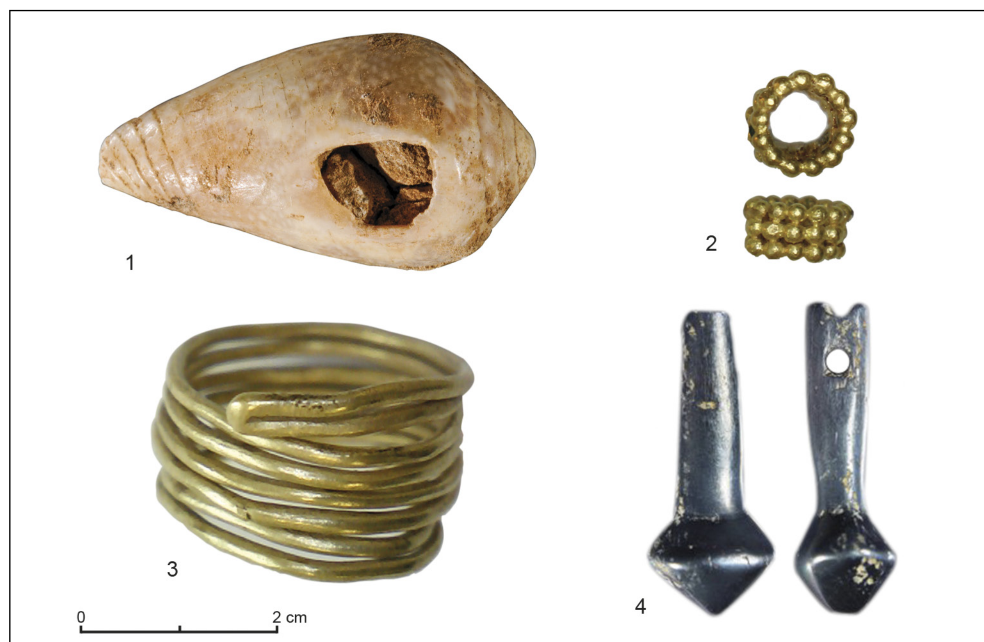

Fig. 4. Jewellery appropriations: 1 – Conus Mediterraneus shell, Tell el-Safi/Gath; 2 – granular bead, Tawilan; 3 – doubled wire spiral, Kerameikos; 4 – haematite pyramidal-headed pendants, Tell es-Safi/Gath (1, 4 Courtesy of the Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project; 2, 3 photo J. Verduci)

than finger rings, although they are much finer and larger than hair spirals typically found in the Levant. Examples of jewellery from the Sub-Mycenaean stage in the Aegean (approximately 11th century BC) are in the main comprised of such wire (Higgins 1961b: 102–103). These double-stranded spirals are particularly common in the tombs on Kerameikos (for example, Kübler 1943: IV, 32 Pl. 39), from Tiryns (Karo 1930: Pl. 2.5a, Suppl. 32; Kilian 1988: Fig. 37.11), and the Elgin Collection in the British Museum (Higgins 1961a: 91, Pl. 13b; 1961b XLIV.a.2-5, XLIII.e; 1969: Pl. 34d). The origin for this type is clearly from Central Europe, where it was widespread (for example, Gedl 1983: Pl. 51.C.3-7; Novotná 1980: Pls 56.C.14, 16, 18; 64.B.2, C.5–6; 1984: Pls 74.B.3, 5–6, C.7–10, D.14–19; 75.B.6, 10–12, C.2, 10). Additional examples from Central Europe, Italy and the Aegean are discussed by B. Eder and R. Jung (2005: 488–489), who suggest spiral rings were likely objects of exchange between Italy and Greece. In Mycenaean contexts, these spirals are thought to have been included in burials or hoards for their value rather than their function as hair or finger rings (Dakoronia 2007: 62).

GRANULAR BEADS

Cylindrical or tubular beads made by soldering granules together in rings, then stacking one upon the other, are also potentially important [*Fig. 4:2*]. The technique of granulation that these objects exhibit has been discussed as a link between the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, and where found in Cisjordan, they are considered as evidence of connections between the Aegean and Cyprus (Barnett 1951; Colburn 2008: 208, note 51). This type has a limited distribution in the Levant, although granulation is a metalworking technique known from as early as 2500 BC in beads from the Royal Tombs of Ur in Mesopotamia (Woolley 1934: 297). While much of the jewellery of this period is often assumed to show Egyptian inspiration, Egyptian jewellery of this period is almost devoid of granulation, although it is more prevalent in the Late New Kingdom goldwork (Ogden 1995: 70). This type of bead is particularly well known from the Mycenaean Age in LH III Greece (Higgins 1961a: 74, Pl. 106), and also from the Late Cypriote period of Cyprus (Curtis 1915–1916). Even earlier examples of granular beads are attested in Anatolia (Blegen *et alii* 1950: 351, No. 35-561, Figs 356–357).

In the Middle Bronze Age granular decoration is seen at Tell el-Ajjul, where a gold granular bead was found that may date to the 16th century BC (Petrie 1934: Pl. 18:96–97). Granular beads, however, are rare prior to the terminal Late Bronze Age and commonly appear in the Iron II through to Persian periods (see Golani 2013: 186–187). Examples in the southern Levant from this period include a gold granule bead from Megiddo, Stratum VIIA (Loud 1948: Pl. 215:106) and one of electrum from Tell el-Sa'idiyeh (Pritchard 1980: Figs 19:19–20, 49:2). In the Early Iron Age, this type was predominant in the Iron I period at Tell el-Far'ah(S), for example Tomb 532, where they were associated with Philistine pottery (Petrie 1930: Pl. 36:522; 37; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 227, Pl. 207). Further Early Iron Age examples also appeared in Tomb 101 at Tell el-Sa'idiyeh from the Iron I period (Green 2006: 167) and from a hoard at Tawilan dating to Iron IIA (Maxwell-Hyslop

1984; Ogden 1995: 72). Within Philistia this form did not appear again until a 7th century example from Tel Miqne-Ekron (Golani, Sass 1998: 72, Fig. 14:3).

PYRAMIDAL-HEAD PENDANTS

Amongst the 219 jewellery objects of stone, vitreous materials, metals and shells in Tomb 1 at Tell es-Safi/Gath, dating to the late Iron Age I/early Iron IIA (Faerman *et alii* 2011), there was an interesting anomaly — an unusual elongated pendant of haematite of a somewhat phallic form [*Fig. 4:4*]. The drop has a cylindrical shaft ending in a pyramidal head. The shaft narrows at its perforated end and has a notched surface with a perforation below the notch. This form might depict an arrow (A. Golani, personal communication), suggestive of military symbolism generally lacking in the archaeological record of Philistia. The purpose of this pendant remains unclear but it presumably held some amuletic function. If the end of the pendant was broken, then polished and redrilled, it would also highlight the significance attributed to the object. Parallels can be drawn, however, with the notched line across the tops of Anatolian pinheads from Boğazköy (Boehmer 1972: Pls XX: 419–420; XXII: 490; XXIV: 576–577) and Troy (Blegen *et alii* 1953: Pls 301: 37–388, 34–457, 36–769). The pyramidal head has similarities with Aegean and Anatolian Bronze Age pin-heads (Branigan 1974: 36; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 19–20; Blegen *et alii* 1950: Pl. 125:4, see also Pl. 358; Blegen *et alii* 1953: Pls 39:4, 47:34-421, 34-248, 34-192, 33-207, 234:33-21, 33-50; also Boehmer 1972: 83, Pls XVII:288, 289, 290, XVIII:346, 347, 348; XIX:384, 386; XXI:458–464). In Cyprus, pyramidal heads on toggle pins are known from Vasilia-Kilistra (Stewart 1962: Fig. 22:9). Pendants from the Aegean and Anatolia with a perforation at the narrow end and a domed or biconical head, Kilian-Dirlmeier's Type B.2 (Boehmer 1972: Pl. XXXIX:1184; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1979: 56) also present similarities. However, a dome-headed gold pendant with a square shank from Troy is perhaps the closest parallel to that from Tell es-Safi/Gath (Tolstikov, Treister 1996: Cat. Nos 78–79, 82, 84, 88–90, 92, 94, 96, 99 and 100), as are similar-ly shaped pendants made of greenish-blue picrolite from Erini on the southern coast of Cyprus (Golani, personal communication; see Dikaios 1939). The latter objects, housed in the Cyprus Archaeological Museum, date to the Chacolithic period, which is equivalent to the EB I–II in the Levant. Like the pendant from the southern Levant, picrolite pendants often demonstrate use-wear, are broken and have been re-perforated (Peltenburg 1991).

To my knowledge, no matches for this pendant exist elsewhere than those early ones from Anatolia and Cyprus, and one might assume that the inspiration or source of the Tell es-Safi/Gath example derived from those sites where they first appeared. But the huge time gap between this Philistine example and those from Anatolia and Cyprus indicates that any possible relationship between the regions remains tenuous, although it does suggest some degree of cultural contact into the Iron I/IIA. What it does achieve is a useful contribution to discussion on the agency of individual actors in introducing objects to the region, particularly those objects of rarity that are likely to denote status and identity within one's cultural group.

JEWELLERY TRANSFORMATIONS

The final item to be discussed is an earring whose development from bud to tassel offers one of the best opportunities to assess the cultural transformation of adornment in the Early Iron Age Levant. By the close of the Late Bronze Age, new distinctive types of floral drop-lunate varieties of earrings are attested. At Deir el-Balah, four gold earrings were found, made of elaborate gold trilobate pendants, with the appearance of a calyx or closed sepals covering a flower bud (Dothan 1979: 73–77, Fig. 164). These have close similarities to examples from Beth Shemesh Stratum IVB (Grant 1932: 21, Pls XVIII:top, XLIX:22; Tadmor, Misch-Brandl 1980: 77, Fig. 3), Ras Shamra (Schaeffer 1939: 144–145, Fig. 6), Tell el Far'ah(S) (Starkey, Harding 1932: 24, Pl. LI; Dothan 1979: 74, 76), and Tel Nami (Artzy 1991). Although possibly linked to local cultural elements, these earrings are strikingly similar to an example from Hala Sultan Tekke in Cyprus dated to the same chronological period in the terminal Late Bronze Age (Åström 1983: frontispiece, 8, Fig. 12) [*Fig. 5:1*].

TASSEL EARRINGS

By the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition an apparently unique form of earring had developed, possibly a derivative of the flower bud earrings. A crude version of the earring, occasionally flared, but more often rounded with incised lines in the manner of petals, was found at several sites in the Levant (Golani 2013: 114–116) [*Fig. 5:2*]. This form is generally suspended directly from a lunate hoop and has a horizontal line incised approximately a third down from the top of the pendant with vertical lines incised below that line.

Iron I examples come from Madaba (Harding 1953: 32, Nos 197–198), Deir 'Ain 'Abata (Tubb 2012: Fig. 128) [*Fig. 5:2*], Cave A4 in the Ba'qah Valley (McGovern 1986: Fig. 85:17) and Sahab (Dajani 1970). Similar earrings were excavated at other sites in the Levant, including examples at Tell el-Far'ah(S) (Petrie 1930: Pls 43:514; Laemmel 2004: Pl. 57:213) and Timna (Rothenberg, Bachmann 1988: Fig. 55:15). Flared examples like those from the Ba'qah Valley were located in Grave 371 at the Wadi Fidan 40 cemetery (Levy *et alii* 2005: 467).

An interesting development occurred towards the end of Iron I, in that the floral form of the pendant drop earrings was transformed into a tassel. Prototypes for tassel earrings are well known from Tell el-Far'ah (S), where they are associated with granular disc beads, with examples clearly demonstrating the transition from a bud with petals and sepals to what appears to be sepals covering tassel-like rows of granules (Petrie 1930; Starkey, Harding 1932: 14, Pl. XLIII; Ogden 1995: 75) [*Fig. 5:3*]. Four exceptional versions of these tassel earrings were also discovered amongst a 10th–9th century BC gold hoard at Tawilan in Jordan (Maxwell-Hyslop 1984; Ogden 1995) [*Fig. 5:4*]. Two coiled cones, possibly originally attached to tassel earrings, were also found in Cave A4 in the Baq'ah Valley alongside flared examples (McGovern 1986: Fig. 18.18, Pl. 33c). The construction of the coiled wire cone on many of these earrings, from which the tassel is suspended, is most similar to the coiled appendages hanging from a pair of gold earrings from

Fig. 5. Earring transformation: 1 – trilobate flowerbud earring, Hala Sultan Tekke; 2 – flowerbud earring, Deir 'Ain 'Abata; 3 – flowerbud/tassel transition earring, Tell el-Far'ah (S); 4 –tassel earring, Tawilan; 5 – "Philistine" tassel earring, Ashkelon; 6, 7 – rectangular tassel earring, Wadi el-Makkuk and Athens (Photos J. Verduci [1, 2, 4, 7]; after Starkey, Harding 1932: Pl. 43, courtesy Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London [3]; after Stager et alii [eds] 2008: Fig. 15.47, courtesy Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon [5]; after Sass 2002: Fig. 2 [6])

Lefkandi in Greece (Popham, Lemos 1996: Pl. 136.c). It is not certain that the pendant in fact represents an actual tassel but its complex form suggests it was meant to accurately represent a particular shape.

A large gold tassel earring demonstrating strong similarities to those from Tawilan, including the coiled wire cone, was found in 10th century BC levels at Philistine Ashkelon (King, Stager 2001: Ill. 155) [*Fig. 5:5*]. This may represent yet another link between Philistia and Arabian trade routes, Tawilan being only 10 km from Petra, a major resting place along the caravan route from Arabia. The structure of the most elaborate of the Tawilan examples has granules fixed to each other without a backing. The manner by which rows of large and smaller balls hang directly from the horizontal wire binding between thin strips of gold is most closely paralleled by a rectangular gold and electrum granulated tassel earring found in the Judean desert at Wadi el-Makkuk (Sass 2002: 23) [*Fig. 5:6*]. The earring was constructed of five cords, each made of three strands of granules, each outer cord topped by a gold plate that was then connected together into a square. The outer cords are four granules long and the inner is five granules long; the finial of each cord was finished with a single granule. Its form, though square rather than round, has much in common with the construction of granulated lines without a backing evident on the Tawilan example. This square tassel type can be compared to a strikingly similar one from Athens, whose date is unclear but is also suggested to be 10th–9th centuries BC (Lemerle 1938: 448, Pl. XLVIII.5) [*Fig. 5:7*].

Based on confident dating of earrings from Tell el-Far'ah (S), Madaba and Timna, it appears that the tassel earring was an innovation of the Iron Age I and continued into the early Iron II, after which it is no longer seen (Sass 2002). I believe the tassel may have been the appropriation and re-configuration of a local floral form to communicate a new cultural identity in the region or to negotiate new cultural boundaries. As its significance is not yet understood, we can speculatively look to examples on clothing for insights.

Tassels or fringes on the hem of garments have a long tradition in the ancient Near East (Bertman 1961: 121–122). In discussing the difference between tassels and fringes, Allison Thomason argues that both were used as symbolic elements of dress, reflecting the wearer's identity and agency (Thomason 2011). Indeed, she notes 1400 examples recorded in Neo-Assyrian art of a monumental and portable nature. The movement of the tassel and the exaggeration of movement as the embellishment acts as an extension of the body served not only to attract attention, but to indicate status as well, particularly in the case of tassels in that the expense incurred in their manufacture resulted from a greater labor output than mere fringes. In the case of Neo-Assyrian art, tassels were restricted to certain individuals and contexts and positioned in areas of the body that would have swayed the most and thus been most visible. The only known elements to be preserved archaeologically indeed come from elite burials at Nimrud (Crowfoot 1995).

Extra-biblical texts teach us that the ornate hem, and by extension the tassel, carried legal significance, and was considered a symbolic extension of the owner himself and more specifically of his rank and authority (for an overview, see Thomason 2011). And the more important

the individual, the more elaborate and ornate was the embroidery on the hem of his or her outer robe. The tassel must be understood as an extension of such a hem. It was connected both to the dowry and to divorce (Finkelstein 1976), and its usage was an alternative to a signature or thumbprint by being impressed in a clay tablet as a way of verifying a person's involvement in a transaction (Stephens 1931). Furthermore, it held status and political significance. Subservient individuals held the hemline, prostrating themselves in their efforts to touch it. Even the status of foreign elites in Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian art is indicated by the wearing of such elements (Bertman 1961).

From the time of Tuthmosis III and then of Seti I come wall paintings depicting Syrians bringing tribute to the pharaoh, wearing loincloths with tassels hanging from the corners. That tassels were also worn in the north is known from a Hittite sculpture (Wainwright 1963: 146, note 11). One series of illustrations from the tomb of Rekh-mi-Re depicts the tasseled kilt of the Keftiu (Bossert 1937: Fig. 545), the closest parallel being the tassels on the hems of the armed soldiers on the Warrior Vase from Mycenae. A Homeric epic also refers to plaited pendants or tassels (*Iliad* 2:440–454, 5:740–743, 14:177–178, 15:214–215, 17:483–484, 18:186–187, and 21:399). Returning to the Medinet Habu relief, each of the men depicted captured by the army of the pharaoh differs from the others in appearance, either by his dress, by the style of his hair or by the presence or absence of a beard [see *Fig. 2*]. Some of the captives, identified as Philistines, wear the scalloped loincloth decorated at the hem corners with cords and tassels in groups of three.

The tassel can thus be seen to have been not only a popular decorative motif in the Aegean and Cyprus, but one that enjoyed a long period of use, denoting status and cultural identity in the Levant and Anatolia.

SUMMARY

The development of certain jewellery forms during the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age transition in the southern Levant appears to reflect a multi-regional sphere of influence. Certain jewellery types, such as the double ring and *Conus* shell bead introduced during the Iron Age I in Philistia, have clear Aegean as well as Cypriote parallels. I contend that the transition from flower bud to tassel earring in the corpus of Levantine jewellery is contemporaneous with the appearance of Philistines in the region, and that it is the transition of the flower bud to tassel earring that heralds the visual demarcation of a distinct cultural group, which is defined through adornment according to cultural affiliations (if not ethnicity) and status.

The idea of ethnicity is not an absolute and can be both supplemented and altered according to needs and time. Therefore, to continue with the linguistic theme, so often called on when discussing dress and identity, and to borrow the words of P.R.S. Moorey, adornment should be thought of in terms of being "... a foreign 'accent' rather than ... a foreign 'language' " (Moorey 2005: 184). Leaving aside, for now, theoretical questions regarding

cultural processes, I return to a focus on the body as 'a site of representation'; a gathering of information and symbols for communal consumption, which increasingly views the ornaments on the surface of the body as a deliberate social strategy through which embodied identities were actively created (Joyce 2005). By viewing the material in terms of which traditional elements are retained, which amalgamations are apparent and which new forms have been introduced, we are able to discuss the means by which the Philistines were culturally distinct, rather than where the Philistines came from.

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