A STUDY OF UNPUBLISHED ANTHROPOMORPHIC TERRACOTTA FIGURINES FROM ANCIENT YEMEN

DHEKRA ABDULJABBAR AL-SHARGABI.

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MASTER OF SCIENCE
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A STUDY OF UNPUBLISHED ANTHROPOMORPHIC TERRACOTTA FIGURINES FROM ANCIENT YEMEN

By

DHEKRA ABDULJABBAR AL-SHARGABI

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

May 2005
DEDICATION

TO MY PARENTS WHO SACRIFICED A LOT AND MADE EVERY EFFORT TO MAKE ME THE PERSON I AM TODAY

TO MY LOVELY SISTERS AND BROTHERS.

TO MY LOVELY HUSBAND ABDULWAHID

TO EVERYONE WHO GOES FAR TO SEEK EDUCATION, I DEDICATE THIS RESEARCH.
Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science.

A STUDY OF UNPUBLISHED ANTHROPOMORPHIC TERRACOTTA FIGURINES FROM ANCIENT YEMEN

By

Dhekra AbdulJabbar Al-Shargabi

May 2005

Chairman: Dr. Zaid bin Ahmad, PhD

Faculty: Human Ecology

Yemen was called the Arabic Felix as it had a long history, which started in the third millennium BC and flourished throughout the kingdom of Saba, Ma’een, Qataban, and Hadhramout, Ousan and Hemyar. The Yemeni people were proficient in many aspects of life and had the capability to build a great civilization as they had many experiences, with different types of inventions, innovative arts and religious ideas at that time.

This study concentrates on one of the interesting aspects of the Yemen Civilization, i.e. an art that they were skilled in. The terracotta figurines were collected from three museums: The National Museum of Sana’a, The Military Museum in Sana’a, and the National Museum of Aden. These figurines were obtained either by donation or by purchase. There are one hundred eight including female and male terracotta figurines.

This study involved fieldwork that was done as follows: description of the overall shape, the position of the body, the method of manufacture, the decoration and the colour. The Fabric colour was measured using Munsell Soil Colour Charts and the hardness was measured using Moh’s scale. The aim was to create a database of the terracotta figurines for future references.
At present, Yemen is still lacking in ancient archaeological information concerning the art and religion. The terracotta figurines from museums showed some similarity with that from other sites in Yemen and Gulf countries that came from controlling excavations and have already been dated.

As a conclusion, a date was suggested in the first millennium BC-100AD period for the terracotta figurines in the Yemeni museums in Sana’a while the terracotta figurines from Aden museum were dated to the fourth millennium BC to the second millennium BC.

After extensive research and reading, we suggest that the significance of these terracotta figurines were clearly used for religious function i.e., it might have served either for worship of the mother Goddess or maybe an offering as a gift to the temples and their existence in ancient houses were to bring good luck and prevent bad luck. The male terracotta figurines were very rare but they might used as God or King or horseman or temple priest. The heads figurines might used as votive objects.
Abstrak yang dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia bagi memenuhi Keperluan Ijazah Master Sains

KAJIAN TERHADAP PATUNG TERRACOTTA DARI ZAMAN PURBA YEMEN TIDAK DITERBITKAN

Oleh

Dhekra AbdulJabbar al-Shargabi

Mai 2005

Pengerusi: Dr.Zaid bin Ahmad, PhD
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Moh’s. Tujuannya adalah untuk menciptakan pangkalan data untuk patung-patung terracotta bagi rujukan di masa akan datang. Pada masa ini, Yemen masih lagi kekurangan informasi arkeologi zaman purba yang berkaitan dengan bidang seni dan agama. Patung-patung terracotta dari beberapa muzium telah menunjukkan beberapa persamaan dengan patung-patung terracotta dari tempat-tempat lain di Yemen dan Negari-Negeri Teluk yang didapat dari pengawalan beberapa penggalian dan telahpun ditetapkan tarikhnya. Sebagai kesimpulan, tarikh penetapan bagi patung-patung terracotta dari muzium-muzium Yaman di Sana’a dianggarkan diantara 1000 tahun Sebelum Masehi hingga 100 tahun selepas masehi (1000 SM - 100), sedangkan patung-patung terracotta dari muzium di Aden tarikhnya ditetapkan antara 4000 SM hingga 2000 SM. Setelah mengadakan kajian yang luas, kami mencadangkan bahawa kegunaan patung-patung terracotta ini adalah sebagai fungsi keagamaan, misalnya ianya dipersembahkan untuk penyembahan Mahadewi atau mungkin sebagai hadiah untuk kuil-kuil, dan wujdnya di rumah-rumah lama telah dianggap membawa tuah serta menolak bala.
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In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. Praise be to the Almighty Allah for his exceeding ease and comfort. Praise him for helping me to accomplish this work, and he who thanks Allah, the Great and the Almighty, thanks people.

Many thanks also go to the financial sponsorship provided by M.T.C.P.

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Also I wish to express my sincere greetings to my friends in Yemen. And many thank to all my Yemeni friends in Malaysia who help me to complete this work.
I certify that an Examination Committee met on 11th April 2005 to conduct the final examination of Dhekra AbdulJabbar Al-Shargabi on her Master of Science thesis entitled “A Study of Unpublished Anthropomorphic Terracotta Figurines from Ancient Yemen” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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Date: 09 JUN 2005
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

DHEKRA ABDULJABBAR AI-SHARGABI
Date: 18/5/2005
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N.M  National museum of Sana’a
M.M  Military museum of Sana’a
A.M  National museum of Aden
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Yemen has a great prehistoric and historic heritage and is known in the Middle Eastern countries as the country of trade. This study will cover one hundred eight of unpublished terracotta figurines of Yemen from ancient times and during the rise of the Yemeni Kingdom (C.1000 B.C) until the rise of Islam in the six Century in the Christian era which is considered to be a witness of the main features of Yemen civilization. This type of study had not been done before except for two studies of which one was by Rathjens (1955) and another one by Yaseen, et al (1996).

This study will be reflecting the arts and religious beliefs of ancient Yemen, and it is basically a field work, which will focus on terracotta figurines in three museums in Yemen namely The National Museum of Sana’a, The Military Museum in Sana’a, and The National Museum of Aden. All terracotta figurines on display and some of undisplay were analyzed. Most of these figurines are without registration and documentation as to where they were found. The exact date when the figurines were made is unknown and only an estimated time period can be established.

Some of them arrived to these particular museums through purchase, or donations by people. Most of them did not come from organized excavations. Most of these figurines

\[1\] It is situated in the heart of the capital Sana’a in the Tahrir square
\[2\] It is situated in the heart of the capital Sana’a in the Tahrir square south of national museum
\[3\] It is located in Crater in Serh province, an old Sultan’s palace
date back to the ancient Yemeni kingdoms but the exact period of time when it was made is not known.

This study consists of six chapters. The initial four chapters are to provide the necessary background data for this study; firstly the introduction chapter will focus on research problems and the initial concepts as well as the Introduction, Objectives, Limitations and Methodology. Chapter two of this study will be the Literature review.

Chapter three consists of the geographical and historical background of Yemen. The name & location of Yemen will be considered. The geographical factors and influence of these factors on the rise of the Yemeni civilization is also discussed. The historical background of ancient Yemen will be discussed in brief from pre-historic period until the rise of Islam.

Chapter four consists of the Yemeni terracotta figurines background. It will focus on the background of the terracotta figurines in brief, which existed in Europe during the upper Paleolithic and during the Neolithic times in the near East and with special references to Arabia (Gulf States). The focus however, will be on the Yemeni terracotta figurines. This chapter is also going to concentrate on figurines in different shape and status, where it sometimes takes on human forms whether female or male. The terracotta figurines from the ancient sites in Yemen which had been based on an actual field work (excavation) in some places such as Ma’rib and Sabrlahj or other sites which had fixed dates of excavations will also be discussed.
Chapter five consists of the discussion of the Terracotta figurines from Museums of Yemen. The aims of this chapter are to discuss and concentrate on terracotta figurines from museums in Yemen (field work by the researcher) and will focus on the anthropomorphic figurines whether female or male as well as a general description of these figurines.

The relationship between the terracotta figurines from the museums in Yemen and neighboring countries shows that the figurines had some influence from neighboring areas or originally came from outside as a result of contacts whether by trade or movement of people for any reasons. This chapter also investigates whether the Yemeni terracotta figurines carried out in this study had features or any kinds of similarities with other figurines from neighboring countries.

Chapter six consists of the conclusion and recommendations. This chapter will have conclusion of all chapters, including the artistic style of the terracotta figurines and the significance of the female, male and heads terracotta figurines. The date is approximated for these terracotta figurines and there is a focus on the significance and usage of these terracotta figurines in the Near East, neighboring countries and essentially Yemen whether they were used as religious objects or others.

The study will end with the recommendations, bibliography and appendixes. The appendix contains the catalog that will cover female figurines, the male figurines and heads figurines which will include pictures, measurement and the type of manufacturing. The catalog contains some tables and diagrams of classification of figurines.
It is hoped that this study will shed some light on the important part of plastic art and religious beliefs which existed in the ancient Yemen civilization.