

## CHAPTER 7 METAL OBJECTS

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Figure 7.1. Metal finds from the tomb.

No.	Reg. no.	Object	Quantity (total)	Material	Period
1	29	Arrowhead	1	Bronze	IA IB?
2	34-36	Bracelets / anklets	3	Bronze	IA IIA?
3	23, 26, 27, 47	Bracelet / anklet (4 fragments)	1?	Iron	IA IIA?
4	83	Fibula fragment	2?	Bronze	IA IIA?
5	53	Anthropomorphic pendant?	1	Bronze/copper?	?

### THE ASSEMBLAGE

#### *Arrowhead (n=1)*

Leaf-shaped, with one/two mid-ribs and a flat cross-section. The tang (broken) is rhombus-shaped in section. Similar pieces have been found at Iron Age IB Jatt (Artzy 2006: 38, Fig. 2.7:10, Pl.13:5).

Arrowheads are found more frequently with 10-6<sup>th</sup> century interments than with those of the 12-11<sup>th</sup> centuries (Bloch-Smith 1992: 91); almost all are

from cave or bench tombs. Bloch-Smith (*ibid.* 90) has observed that many high-status Iron Age tombs contain metal blades, spearheads and javelin heads like that found at Tsur Natan, as opposed to assemblages with “poor-quality” gifts such as flints, spindle whorls, loom weights and other daily life items of less material value. However, in this tomb we found both metal and flint items (the latter being non-indicative and therefore not published here). We must conclude that either such status designations are not quite so

pat, or that groups or individuals of different status were interred in this tomb.

#### *Bracelets/anklets (n=4)*

Three bronze bracelets and one made from iron. All have overlapping ends. The bronze bracelets bear heavy patina (verdigris) and the iron was severely corroded. Similar bracelets were found in a nearby IA II tomb at et-Taiyiba (Yannai 2002: 50, Fig. 10:10-14) and at Azor (Area D, Burial Structure A, Burial D30 [Ben-Shlomo 2012: Fig. 4.119:5]). Given the IA IIA predominance of the pottery from this Tsur Natan tomb, it seems reasonable to date these bracelets/anklets to that period also.

Bangles/bracelets/anklets such as we found in the Tsur Natan tomb are the most common decorative metal items in Iron Age southern Levantine burials, and have been found in all tomb and grave types except bathtub coffins (although few such burials at all have been recovered) (Bloch-Smith 1992: 82-3).

#### *Fibulae (n=2?)*

These represent the curving upper elements of at least two bronze fibulae, similar to finds from Abu Ghosh, Tell Abu Hawam II, Akhzip, Bet Shemesh Tombs 2, 4 and 5, and elsewhere (Bloch-Smith 1992: 87).

#### *Beads (n=2)*

Two small perforated bronze/copper beads. These are discussed by Ben Basat in this volume (see Chapter 6, p. 40 and Fig. 6.1:8).

#### *Anthropomorphic Pendant? (n=1)*

This comprises a probable anthropomorphic body. In place of the head is a metal loop (presumably a stringing hole for a necklace or chain). The preservation is not good enough to be sure but there appear to be remains of arms and legs, as well as a body that might be described as full, or corpulent.

Regarding this possible metal pendant or amulet, we can add little to the above description. Pendants are the least common Iron Age metal decorative/amuletic grave gifts, and are found mostly in cave and bench tombs, but also in pit and cist graves (Bloch-Smith 1992: 82). Often dismissed as mere family heirlooms

or for decoration only, McGovern (1980: 305) and Platt (1972: 46) contend that such pendants—which they consider in the same object class as scarabs and figurines—were associated with divine protection and favor. Bloch-Smith (1992: 82) notes that pendants are consistently found with Philistine, Cypriot, Cypro-Phoenician and Phoenician pottery. Interestingly, this was not the case at Tsur Natan. Other such pendants included scarabs, scaraboids, the Eye of Horus, Bes figurines and faience amulets (Bloch-Smith 1992: 83). Figurines—including pillar figurines—depicted Isis, Sekhet, Bast and Ptah-Sokher and less common types (*ibid.*; Egyptian amulets collected in McGovern 1980: 55-71).

It is worth mentioning again Ucko's (1962) study of the anthropology of these figurines, which inferred that they were never representations of a deity but rather were given as grave gifts for particular reasons or as 'vehicles for sympathetic magic' (Ucko 1962: 46).

### DISCUSSION

Metal objects are frequently found with pottery and other objects of all cultural designations, and in all burial types; the one exception are interments traditionally associated with the Philistines (Bloch-Smith 1992: 92). The majority of metal objects reported in tomb digs are not specified by metal type, but—ironically for the "Iron Age"—it appears that bronze was the preferred metal. Metal was less common in the 10-8<sup>th</sup> centuries and is found more in the highlands and northward, on the Phoenician coast. Metal incidences in burials decreased toward the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Iron Age populations throughout the Near East believed metals to have apotropaic powers (Bloch-Smith 1992: 81, citing Gaster 1973: 22; Stager 1985: 10). Again, like other "ornamentation objects" metals do not seem to be found more with one sex or the other (Bloch-Smith 1992: 81). At Tsur Natan we see some clustering of metal artifacts, with the potential that this might tell us something about their gender/age associations. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure which skeleton belongs with which artifact cluster (as discussed above, in Chapter 1). What is interesting is that there do seem to be some inter-cluster

patterns in artifact types: one cluster includes the only three recovered bronze bracelet/anklets and the arrowhead; another the only iron bracelet/anklet; a third contains the only fibulae and metal beads; and

all alone in the south side of the tomb—away from all interments and on the other side of the natural pillar in the cave—was found the anthropomorphic pendant.

## REFERENCES

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Table 7.1. Catalog of metal objects from the tomb.

Reg. no.	Object	Quantity	Material	Period
29	Arrowhead	1	Bronze	IA IB
34	Bracelet / anklet	1	Bronze	IA IIA?
35	Bracelet / anklet	1	Bronze	IA IIA?
36	Bracelet / anklet	1	Bronze	IA IA?
23, 26, 27, 47	Bracelet / anklet (4 fragments)	1?	Iron	IA IIA?
83, 87, 88	Fibulae (6 fragments)	2?	Bronze	
92	Bead	1	Bronze/copper?	
97	Bead	1	Bronze/copper?	
53	Anthropomorphic pendant?	1	Bronze/copper?	