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ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Minor Objects' and their Stories: Reassessing and Reinterpreting Clay Figurines from Ur in the Collections of the British Museum

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Abstract

The collection of clay figurines from Ur is mainly split between the Penn Museum in Philadelphia and the British Museum in London. Many of them have been published and an attempt to virtually reunite the two collections has been made in recent years through the UR Project. Despite the huge effort put into digitization projects, publications and, more recently, resumed excavations, there is still not enough focus on this type of artefacts which have been previously dismissed as 'minor objects'. This definition reflects the way the study of clay figurines has been approached, as well as how these objects have been catalogued in Museums. Lack of clear terminology and incomplete information on Museum databases often make it challenging for scholars to study this class of objects. As a result, the need to reassess and reinterpret clay figurines in light of new discoveries and theoretical approaches is necessary.

In this paper, I discuss the possibility of integrating an interdisciplinary approach (such as fingerprint analysis, ethnography and technological trace analysis) to the study of terracotta figurines from Ur and how this can positively impact not only Academia but also Museums by improving online databases and exploring new ideas for gallery displays.

Keywords

figurines, Ur, collections, museums

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