



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Body ornaments or working tools? An investigation of the functions of stamp seals in the Iron Age southern Levant

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Abstract

This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of the function of stamp seals in the Iron Age southern Levant through the examination of their materials, shapes, base engravings, and find contexts. In this period, a variety of materials were used to produce stamp seals; they featured figurative and non-figurative shapes and included different proportions and sizes. All these determined how they were used and their significance: steatite, faience and semi-precious stones were used not only for stamping purposes but also as body ornaments, found within assemblages of beads and other items of dress. While such materials were imported from nearby regions, limestone was the locally available stone. This material is mostly known as building material, but it was also used for seals in several specific periods, including the Iron Age. These objects varied in shape and proportions; they were found together with working tools and other objects that were not necessarily related to dress. Their find contexts also suggest that they were inspired by other imported seals, imitating their appearance, yet were used differently. This comparison, between seals made of different materials, enables us to explore the various functions they had in the Iron Age southern Levant.

Keywords

stamp seals, functions, materials, Iron Age, southern Levant

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