

INTRODUCTION.

The aim of this work is to examine the possible use of incense burning in the creation of religious atmospheres. I define Religious Atmospheres as atmospheres that are staged/created/perceived with conscious association to a religious context. In order to process atmospheres historically, it is necessary to consider both the sensory environment and the conceptual world of that time. Therefore, both incense burners and ritual instructions/descriptions associated with the burning of aromatics will be examined.

RESEACH QUESTIONS.

- What aspects that influence the atmospheric effect of incense can be identified?
- What atmospheric effects can be assumed for incense in a religious context in the Levantine Iron Age II?
- What archaeologically preserved spatial and site-related (e.g. architectural) features could have influenced the atmospheric effect?
- What are the physiological and/or physical effects of incense on the human body?

INCENSE AS A MEANS OF STAGING OF ATMOSPHERES.

In my definition we talk about atmosphere when we perceive “more” than we can attribute to explicit, con-sciously assignable sensory impres-sions. This “more” can be based on im-plicit knowledge of a situation/space (narratives, associations and pre-dictions); sensory impressions that are not consciously perceived; or an interplay of these factors. Incense products are easy to use and influence perception in many sensory areas: foremost olfactory (very characteristic odours),

and visual (smoke rising to the ceiling; limited visibility throughout a space due to smoke-filled air); but also haptic (the feeling of the incense/incense device in the hand; heat of the burning), and auditory (the hissing of the burning incense/rattling of the incense device), as well as spatial perception (a small, tangible thing is transformed into a room-filling, intangible ‘thing’). This makes incense a high impact tool for the staging of atmospheres.

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HOLY SMOKE ATMOSPHERIC BURNING OF INCENSE

