were depicted primarily through symbols and "substitute entities" like a tree, a scorpion, or a suckling mother animal (Keel and Uehlinger 1998, 128). This does not represent a significant or intentional departure from trends taking place elsewhere in ancient Southwest Asia.

Finds from Iron I–IIA that likely depict deity include stelai, metal statuary (with a caveat), objects in stone, terracotta cult stands, shrine models, shrine plaques, anthropomorphic terracotta vessels and figurines, worship scenes depicted on seals, and depictions of deity in or on clay (Uehlinger 1997; cf. Lewis 2020, 287–426).[19] Metal statuary depicting male deities does not appear to have been produced—or at least not widely—from the tenth century BCE on, which is sometimes taken as a sign of programmatic aniconism, but is more likely a shift in preference governed by the markets and available resources. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger (1995) convincingly argues that Israel and Judah were initially carrying on a "*de facto* aniconism" that was well known from the broader West Semitic social milieu (cf. Ornan 2005). This aniconism was not "the result of theological reflection. Instead, it must be seen as an inherited convention of religious expression which only later formed the basis for theological reflection" (Mettinger 1995, 195). Theological explanations often represent ad hoc rationalizations of practices that endure for a variety of more ordinary intuitive or reflective reasons. The more widespread use during this period of symbols and substitute entities suggests that the notion was no longer particularly salient—if it ever was—that the cultic image need approximate the appearance of the deity itself. The priority was presencing the deity, not looking like it (cf. Ornan 2004).

While some of the media mentioned above may have had primarily commemoratory or dedicatory functions, according to the institutions responsible for them, many would have been widely understood to presence or transmit divine or otherwise unseen agency, particularly if erected in a public setting and assigned a specific sociomaterial role in the functioning of the society. These media no doubt indexed a spectrum of unseen agency running the gamut from deceased kin to socially concerned deities. The archaeological bias towards the state and its elites has weighted our data overwhelmingly in favor of the few deities who predominated on a national or dynastic level, of course, so this interrogation cannot comment on the full range of that agency. Naturally, there will be more variability in the presencing media utilized privately by individuals and family units, as they generally do not answer to same broader prosocial forces.

Stelai represent the strongest candidates for presencing media from Iron Age Israel and Judah. The most explicit use of stelai in worship from Iron Age Judah no doubt comes from the broadroom temple that occupied Strata X and IX in the Judahite fortress of Arad (Herzog 2002; Bloch-Smith 2015; fig. 2.1). The temple

[19] The Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions and the Taanach cult stand contain the most explicit depictions of deity on clay. See Thomas 2016, but see also Gilmour 2009.