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THE IRON AGE FEMALE FIGURES FROM TRANSJORDAN*

REGINE HUNZIKER-RODEWALD

Les numéros correspondant à la pagination de la version imprimée sont placés entre crochets dans le texte et composés en gras.

<93> 1. The beginnings of my research on female figurines from Transjordan

In 2012, a successful networking of interdisciplinary interests led to the creation of a Franco-German project (Franco-German Figurines Project, FGFP) by an Old Testament scholar (Regine HUNZIKER-RODEWALD, Strasbourg), an archeologist of the ancient Near East (ASTRID NUNN, Wuerzbourg) and a computational archeologist (Thomas GRAICHEN, Mayence). The team, financed by the university of Strasbourg (more than two-thirds) and Wuerzbourg as well as private funds, began cataloguing during several Research stays the female terracotta figurines from Transjordan kept in museums, storage facilities and university collections in Jordan, the United States and Canada. For the recording procedure the RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging) technique was chosen because it generates very dense surface data from the photographed objects and goes far beyond conventional digital photography in terms of output format versatility.¹

2. The female terracotta figures from Transjordan

At present, 445 female terracotta figurines from the Iron Age II (1000-600 BC) and found in Transjordan are known. These figurines representing a female figure which is often nude, sometimes holding a tambourine, being pregnant or breastfeeding a baby, constitute a widespread category of artefacts in the Southern Levant, to the east as well as to the west of the Jordan River. Their identification and use are still unknown. Nevertheless, because of the similarities of technique and iconography of these figurines, question about their origin, diffusion and reception in different Levantine societies need to be asked about. The relations between Israel, Judah, Philistia, Ammon, Moab and Edom were often marked, according to the available texts including the Old Testament, by border conflicts and wars, on the other hand, figures taken from the same mould, on both sides of the Jordan River indicate a more complex reality. To demonstrate cultural exchanges between the societies concerned by means of these small craft objects, expert evolutions of archeological, <94> typological, ceramic, historical, religious and anthropological analyses are necessary. One of the crucial circumstances that has so far been neglected is, for example, the systematic identification and comparison of all objects found in the same square or locus of the excavation site.

More than three-quarters of the female figurines from Transjordan are stored in hard-to-reach reserves, and a little less than 10%, notably figures published between 1930 and 1970,

* Régine Hunziker-Rodewald, «The Iron Age Female Figures from Transjordan », *Azerbaijan Archaeology/Azərbaycan Arxeologiyası* 22/1, 2019, p. 93-101.

¹ http://www.tgraichen.de/?otw_pm_portfolio_category=rti;http://culturalheritageimaging.org/Technologies/RTI/.

appear to be unlocatable since then. An inventory of the existing objects is therefore necessary, especially in a region considered to be very sensitive politically.²

3. Continuation of my research on the female figurines from Transjordan

At the end of 2015, the Franco-German project on Transjordan figurines was accepted as a pilot project by the leaders of *Archives Ouvertes de la Connaissance* (AOC) project of the University of Strasbourg. Since then, computer scientists from the IT Department of the University of Strasbourg have begun to establish the structure of the relational database, which will be built by means of 3D animated RTI photographs, detailed descriptions, maps and information on the type of object, its conservation status, dimensions, provenance, production technique, archaeological context, inventory numbers and publications. The previously acquired RTI data are meanwhile stored on the server of the University of Strasbourg while the clarification of legal issues has been handled by specialists from the Library Service of the University of Strasbourg.

Since 2017, in the person of Peter Fornaro of the Digital Humanities Lab of the University of Basel,³ a Franco-Swiss-German cooperation is emerging intitled *FIGURINE3-documentation, restitution et contextualisation* vir Peter Fornaro's research, who replaced Thomas Graichen, covers modern camera technology, innovative scanning methods like Reflection Transforming Imaging (RTI), colour science and digital preservation. In January 2018, with financial support from the Fondation Université de Strasbourg, the Hunziker-Rodewald/Nunn/Fornaro team was able to take RTI/UVI photos of some 30 female figurines in museum in London (British Museum) and Leiden (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden). The overall objective of this cooperation is to make available to the international scientific community, in the form of an interactive database with a freely accessible user interface in four languages (English, French, German and Arabic) a corpus of ancient artefacts using advanced visualization technologies such as RTHI and 3D for the web. This database will also contain an <95> inventory of all data associated with these figurines as well as the result of ongoing research on their interpretation and function in the ancient societies concerned.

4. The AOC project of the University of Strasbourg a female figurines from Transjordan.

Due to the division of objects from excavations until the 1980, the Iron Age female terracotta figurines from Transjordan are allocated to different museums, warehouses and university collections all over Europe, North America, Australia and the Near East. So, for typological analysis and comparison, interpretation and evaluation of the whole corpus, high-resolution animated photographs, their recording in a perspective of sustainability and their long-term preservation are essential. The *FIGURINE3 project documentation, restitution et contextualisation virtuelles d'objets d'art antique en libre accès* is located at the interface between the humanities and natural sciences and thus represents a high degree of innovation. Never before has the figurines from Transjordan been inventoried, which is why the database of the AOC project is much awaited by the international specialists in the cultural and religious history of the Southern Levant.

With the *Archives Ouvertes de la Connaissance* project, the University of Strasbourg's objective is to apply the principle of openness to entire research process so that it concerns all

² Cf. <http://www.stephane-ostertag.fr/rti/>; <https://vimeo.com/150722204>

³ <http://dhlab.unibas.ch>

scientific production, whether in the form of publications or data. The University of Strasbourg is thus committed to open science, in line with the policy of the European Union⁴ and the roadmap for research data of the LERU (European Ligue of Research Universities)⁵, of which the University of Strasbourg is a member. Since September 2015, the *Archives Ouvertes de la Connaissance* component has been supporting four researchers in their project to put their data online, including the FIGURINE3 project. This two-year experiment continues with the creation of a *Calcul et Services avancés à la Recherche* (CESAR) cluster within the IT Department, in close collaboration with the Library Services, whose objective is to simplify the effort of researcher wishing to manage and use their data.

5. Work to be carried out during my research leave at the CSTT Centre at the University of Helsinki

Currently, the development of the FIGURINE3 database by computer scientists of the Archives Ouvertes project at the University of Strasbourg has entered an advanced phase which requires the input of research data collected since 2012 in different museums by the Franco-German Figurines Project <96> (FGFP) team. The data are stored in lists and Word files containing very detailed information about the shape, material and context of these objects. This work on the captured data of 445 figurines includes grouping, cleaning and unifying data, checking technical terms, first in English, consulting new search reports and evaluating RTI photos. Since the end of 2017, I have started, with an intern from the University of Strasbourg's Library Service, to convert the data from Word documents into tabular using an Excel file formatted with macros, in be able to import them into the future online website.

At least two thirds of this important working step can be accomplished in four months (September to December 2018), while furthering research on the context, typology and classification of these figurines. For this research, which bring together projects by internationally renowned researchers in different fields at the crossroads of sociology, archeology and history of religion, offers an ideal setting. The CSTT Centre aims at a more comprehensive understanding of the emergence and influence of the Hebrew Bible within the multicultural milieu of the ancient Near East.it provides an interdisciplinary approach to cultural, ideological and material changes in the 2nd/ 1st mill. BC, testified by material culture as well as texts. Regular working meetings will be an opportunity for mutual exchange, especially with the researchers of the center who study the Levantine cultures and notably the terracottas found in Israel.

For the project FIGURINE3- *documentation, restitution et contextualisation* they stay will open a new horizon of cooperation. Helsinki researchers are working on female figurines from Israel, which appear at the same time as those in Transjordan and are very similar in terms of production and typology. A long-term objective will be to establish a collaboration between the faculties of theology in Strasbourg and Helsinki of any profit, leading, for example, to the creation of a database of Levantine, Cis-and Trans-Jordanian feminine figurines.

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/programmers/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/open-science-open-acces>

⁵ LERU Roadmap for Research Data, decembre 2013.

6. Selected articles, by Regine Hunziker-Rodewald

- “Entre pleurs et éclats de rire: images de femmes dans la culture du Levant Sud”, *Bulletin 2018 de la Société des amis et anciens étudiants de la Faculté de Théologie protestante de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, PUS*, p. 4-8
- “Tonfiguren als Marker von Kulturkontakt: ein Fallbeispiel”, *Welt des Orients* 47/1 (2017) *Traders and the Exchange of Religious Ideas: Case Studies of Material Evidence*, p. 66-105
- “Experimental Archeology Workshop Terracota Female Figurines from the Ancient Near East (The Levant and Mesopotamia, II-I Millennium B.C.E)”, *Les carnets de l’ACost* 14, 2016, p. 2. <http://accost.org/818>
- “A beer jug with a female head attached”, in Yassine, Kh./van der Steen, E., *Tell el-Mazar II. Excavations on the Mound 1977-1981, Field 1, BAR IS 2430*, Oxford, 2012, p. 47-48.
- “The Franco-German Figurines Project (FGFP)”, *With trowel and high-tech. German archeological projects in Jordan* (ed. F.Kenkel and D.Vieweger, Wuppertal, Wichern), 2014, p. 23
- “Biblical World”: Diversity within Unity: Female Iron Age Faces in Palestine/Israel: *What is Bible?* (ed. K.Finsterbusch and A.Lange, Leuven, Peeters, CBET 67), 2012, p. 131-149
- “The Iron Age II Female Terracotta Figurines Found in Jordan” (co-author: A.Nunn), *CSIG News. Newsletter of the Coroplastic Studies Interest Group* 8, 2012, p. 2

Forthcoming:

- “The Franco-German Figurines Project (FGFP)” (co-authors : A.Nunnand, T.Graichen), *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (ADAJ)* 58, 2017 (25 p. Spring 2018)
- “Molds and Mold-links. A view on the Female Terracotta Figurines from Iron Age II Transjordan”, *Iron Age Terracotta Figurines in the Southern Levant*, ed. .D.Darby and I.J. de Hulster, Leiden, Brill, (Culture and History of the Ancient Near east) 2017, (30 S., summer 2018)
- “Conception, grossesse et accouchement. L’enchantement des figurines du Levant Sud à l’âge de fer” (25 p.), *Figurines féminines nues (Neolithique-IV e s.apr. J.C.). Proche-Orient, Egypte, Nubie, Méditerranée orientale, Asie centrale. Actes du colloque international, Strasbourg 25-26 juin 2015*, ed. S.Donnat, R.Hunziker-Rodewald and I.Weygand, Paris, Editions de Boccard (Collection: Études d’archéologie et d’histoire ancienne), 520 p., autumn 2018
- Review of Achim Lichtenberger, *Terrakotten aus Beit Nattif. Eine Untersuchung zur religiösen Alltagspraxis im spantiken Judaa*, Turnhout, Brepols (Contextualizing the Sacred, 7), 2016, 87, 2018 (6 p.)

7. Selected papers, by Regine Hunziker-Rodewald

17/11/2017 The Pregnants of Edom simply fertile! The Iron Age Female Terracotta Figurines from Edom, session “The Religion of Edom” ASOR Annual Meeting, Boston MA, 15-18/11/2017

16/10/2016 La danseuse d’argile. Présentation et discussion autour d’objets d’art antique, communication sur les figurines féminines de l’Age du Fer trouvées en Jordanie, Fête de la Science, University of Strasbourg, 8-16/10/2016

12/07/2016 The Figurines from Tall al-Umayri. MPP Town Hall Meeting : excavation campaign 2016 of the University of La Sierra (USA) at Tallal-Umayri (Jordan). 22/06-27/07/2016

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17/11/2015 “Made in Her Image?” The Iron Age Female Terracotta Figurines from Jordan, Colloquium “Faces from the Past: Ancient Near Eastern Figurines”, Theological Institute, Tallinn (Estonia), 17-19/09/2015

14/07/2015 Iron Age Figurines on the West and East Sides of River Jordan: the Case of Mould-links, Colloquium: ARAM Forty First International Conference: “The River Jordan” Oriental Institute, University of Oxford (England), 13-15/07/2015

26/06/2015 To Which Extent and on Which Basis May We Associate Nude Female Figurines with Cult? The evidence from Iron Age Transjordan, Colloque international “Figures féminines nues. Proche-Orient, Egypte, Nubie, Méditerranée, Asie centrale (Néolithique-IIIe siècle apr. J.-C.), University of Strasbourg, 25-26/06/2015

07/05/2015 Rethinking Figurines- Female from Petra and Beyond, “The Second International Conference on the Nabatean Culture”, University Brigham Young, Provo UT (USA), 06-09/05/2015

25/03/2015 Iron Age female terracotta figurines from Jordan, International Congress “Terracottas in the Mediterranean Through Time”, Zinman Institute of Archeology and the Department of Art History, University of Haifa (Israel), 23-26/03/2015

07/03/2015 Rethinking Figurines- Females from Rabbath-Amman and Beyond, Conference on Coroplastic Art of the Ancient World: iconography, ritual contexts and functions”, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (USA)

11/02/2014 A la decouverte des figurines Le projet franco-allemand sur les terres cuites de l’époque du Fer II à l’est du Jourdain, “Les mardis de la MISHA” University of Strasbourg

24/11/2013 Female Terracotta Figurines in Jordan: Molds and Mold-links, Session “Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Bible”, SBL Annual Meeting, Baltimore MD (USA), 23-26/11/2013

01/08/2013 Ashera-Astarte-Atargatis-Asteria in Palastina / Jordanien. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der weiblichen Terrakotta-Figurinen aus Jordanien, Session “Israel in the Ancient Near East I. Unity and Plurality: Merging and Differentiation of Deities”, EABS Meeting, Leipzig (Germany), 30/07-02/08/2013

07/07/2013 The Icon of a Nude Female on Three Inscribed Seals in the Moussaieff Collection, Session “Epigraphical and Paleological Studies to the Biblical World, SBL, International Meeting, St. Andrew (Scotland), 07-11/07/2013

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27/05/2013 “Figuring our Figurines”: The Franco-German Figurines Project (Iron Age, Jordan), German Protestant Institute of Archeology, Amman Jordan

10/05/2013 Iron Age II Terracotta Figurines from Jordan. The Franco-German Figurines Project, FGFP (with A.Nunn, Würzburg), 12th International Conference on the History and Archeology of Jordan (ICHAJ), University Humboldt, Berlin (Germany), 05-11/05/2013

18/04/201 The Franco-German Figurines Project, FGFP (with A.Nunn, T.Graichen), Andrews University, Berrien Springs MI (USA)

12/12/2012 Les figurines jordaniennes de l’âge du Fer (with A.Nunn, T.Graichen), MISHA, University of Strasbourg.