

Two Ammonite Statuettes from Khirbet El-Hajjar

by

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On 20 October 71, Nasser Muti'im, an inhabitant of Khirbet el-Hajjar c. 7 km. southwest of Amman, brought to the Department of Antiquities, the lower part of a statuette (pl. 2 a). The author and three other members of the Department visited the site two days later. There, Nasser's uncle, Jamil Muti'ib, showed many pieces of the same material which he had collected in his house. After that, he showed the findspot, where he was digging foundations for a house. More small fragments were collected from the same place. The construction work was stopped.

On 25 Oct, a surface survey was conducted. It appears that the main occupation of the site was Iron Age as determined by the pottery and other objects such as basalt bowls and sling stones.¹ The site is a large one, surrounded by a city wall. A small mound in the center of the settlement appears to have been a fortified acropolis. Many caves and cisterns can also be seen. Judging by the topography, architectural remains and other finds, this was an important site in the first half of the first millennium B. C.

A small trial trench was begun at the find-

spot. The work continued for four days under the author's supervision and with the assistance of two colleagues, Hussein Qandil and Hazim Jasir, and two other workmen. The trial trench (5 m x 5 m) is on a terrace on the northeast side of the acropolis and immediately outside the acropolis wall. The trial trench was not too helpful since after 20 cm of surface soil, virgin soil, and then bedrock, was found.

At the east end of the trench was a pocket in the bedrock, where the statuettes were found. The nature or function of this pocket is not clear. The potsherds from the trench were the standard wares of the Iron II period.² More pieces of the statuettes were also found.³ It should be noted that the *breaks* are old.

On the basis of the above investigation, the following points might be noted:

- a. The statuettes were hidden under unknown circumstances and this explains the nature of the pocket in the bedrock.
- b. Or, they stood originally in the neighborhood of the findspot.

(1) The artifacts will be published in the near future.

(2) The author would like to express his thanks to Dr. Henry O. Thompson (Director of the American Center for Oriental Research) who visited the site and offered helpful observations

on the pottery and the site, and who also assisted in the translation of this article.

(3) Mr. Mahmoud Mustafa, Restorer in the Amman Museum, has expertly reconstructed the statuettes from many fragments, for which special thanks are also due.

c. Or, they were broken by enemy action.

These questions might be answered by stratigraphic excavation of the site.

About 50 m. east of the first trench, a second trial trench was dug down to investigate one of four small caves. The cave excavated is semi-circular in plan and section and measured 90 cm deep \times 120 cm wide \times 105 cm high. In front of it were fallen stones. Among them was a long (c. 50 cm) thin slab, rectangular in section. On one side was an incised line, resembling a long nail or needle. Beneath the stone were several broken storage jars. These plus a quantity of seeds suggest that the cave was used for storage. Other sherds were mixed in the fine grain, reddish brown soil.

Description and Comparative Study of the Statuettes

The male figure (pl. 2), 51 cm high, is of soft yellowish limestone. The face is broken but the beard can be seen in the side view. On the left side of the face are traces of red paint (the right side of the face is completely broken away). The figure wears the so-called Syrian cap or the Osiris headdress, the atef crown, ⁴ with the double plumes which are supported by the ears, while between the two plumes is a rounded hairdo. The diameter of the top of the hairdo is 8 cm. This type of headdress is well known from Ammonite statues from other sites. ⁵ This type of double crown, which represents Upper and Lower Egypt, is common in Egyptian representations

(mainly reliefs) of the gods, and also on the stele of Balu'a on the southern side of the Wadi el-Mojib, ⁶ among a hoard of bronzes from Ashkelon, ⁷ on bronze figures from Ugarit, ⁸ and at Carchemish. ⁹

The figure wears a long simple robe which reaches to the base and is cut away to show the bare feet, which are placed evenly side by side. The horizontal incisions which appear on the front of the figure are ancient and may represent folds in the cloth. These folds do not appear on the back or arms, except for one on the right shoulder. The right arm is placed straight down alongside the body. There is a bracelet on the wrist. The fingers are wrapped around an object (pl. 2 b). The arm is too long (25.2 cm) in proportion to the rest of the body. The left arm is held in a 90° angle across the chest. The chest and hand are broken away so it cannot be determined if the left hand was holding anything. The back of the robe is smooth and polished and blends with the base. The base is rectangular in shape, 15.4 cm long \times 12.3 wide \times 6.6 high.

Many aspects of the figure compare with a statue of Ashurnasirpal II from Nimrud. ¹⁰ One might note for example, the frontal stance, the placement of the arms, the bracelet on the right arm, the bare feet and the rectangular base. The Urartian bronze from Toprakkale lies in the same sphere of influence. ¹¹ Another comparative example is a statue of an Aramaean king on a base of lions from Sam'al (Zin-

(4) James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East Pictures* (Princeton: 1954), Nos. 556f.

(5) R. D. Barnett, *Four Sculptures from Amman*, *ADAJ*, I, 1951, pl. X. Several other, unpublished examples, are in the Amman Museum.

(6) References are noted by Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 304f, Nos. 470, 481. The stele has been thoroughly studied by W. A. Ward & M. F. Martin, *The Balu'a Stele: A New Transcription with Palaeographical and Historical Notes*, *ADJA* VIII-

IX (1964), especially p. 14, Fig. 1.

(7) J. H. Iliffe, *A Hoard of Bronzes from Askalon*, *QDAP* V (1956), 64ff, pl. XXX.

(8) G. E. Wright and F. V. Filson, *The Westminster Historical Atlas of the Bible* (Philadelphia: 1956), p. 35, Fig. 21.

(9) Carchemish, Part II: pl. 21b.

(10) B. Hrouda, *Handbuch de Archäologie, Vorderasien I* (München: 1971), Abb. 91.

(11) *Ibid.*, Abb. 92a, b.

jirli).¹² Especially notable are the frontal stance, the long robe, and the placement of the feet. There can be no doubt that the three statuettes from Amman are in the same tradition, although they represent better quality of workmanship.¹³

The female figure (pl. 3), 46 cm high, is of the same soft yellowish limestone. The smaller height combines with the stance to imply a humbler figure than the male. The rounded face is also broken, but the eyes, nose, mouth and chin are still discernible. The hair is made up in 16 "curls" divided in two equal parts down the back. The curls fall on the shoulders. They are very clearly executed. On each side, the four front curls have strands of hair finely incised (pl. 3 d, c). All of the curls end in a smooth semi-circle. The curls in the back are longer than those on the side. Two earrings hang over the first two curls on both sides. Earrings like our example, three balls hanging from a ring, are found on the statuette of 'Arajan¹⁴ of this Ammonite group of statuettes. Such prominent earrings appear continuously on the

Assyrian kings and personalities from Ashurnasirpal II until the time of Ashurbanipal.¹⁵

The workmanship of the hair seems to be a traditional style. The hairdo which reaches to the shoulders and is divided in the middle, is a style which appears in Egyptian art in various periods. For example, a bas relief of dancers at Sakkarah, tomb of Khai, shows the hairdo with incised curls on both sides of the face.¹⁶ The form is shown on a seated statue of Haremhab from Memphis.¹⁷ Much older examples are goddesses on the stele of Menkau-Re (Mycerinus) from Giza (4th Dynasty).¹⁸ This form of hair style is found in many examples of Ancient Near Eastern art. One is the head of a male terracotta figurine found at el-Medeiyineh in East Jordan and dated to the Iron II period.¹⁹ It might also be compared with an ivory figurine from Megiddo.²⁰ It reminds one also of the "Woman at the Window," from Samaria-Sebaste (Palestine),²¹ Arslan Tash (Syria),²² and Nimrud (ancient Calah in northern Iraq).²³ A better comparison is a limestone female head from Gaza which also

(12) E. Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittites*, (London: 1962), pl. 126f.

(13) Barnett, *op. cit.*, pls. X, XI. Cf. also Farah Ma'ayeh, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Jordan*, *ADAJ IV-V* (1960), 114f, pl. IV:1.

(14) Nabil Khairi, 'Arajan Statue, (in Arabic), *ADAJ XV* (1970), 15ff, pl. 1f; see especially p. 16 and the reference to Abdul Rahman Zaki, *Jewelry in History and Art* (in Arabic) (Cairo: 1965).

(15) Hrouda, *op. cit.*, Abb. 93, 97, 103 (Ashurnasirpal II), and Pritchard, *op. cit.*, Nos. 442f, 445-51.

(16) Pritchard, *op. cit.*, No. 211.

(17) *Ibid.*, No. 418; cf. also examples from the time of Amenhotep III (1414-1377 B. C.) nos. 397, 399.

(18) *Ibid.*, No. 378. It should be noted that the hair is longer here with the two parts resting on the chest and the curls are thinner than later

examples.

(19) Nelson Glueck, *The Other Side of the Jordan* (Cambridge: ASOR, 1970), Fig. 96, pp. 188f, and *Explorations in Eastern Palestine, I*, *AASOR XIV* (1934), 22ff.

(20) Gordon Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories* (Chicago: OIP Vol. LII), pl. 44:194; cf. also pl. 161:C, second and fourth figures from the left.

(21) J. W. and Grace M. Crewfoot, *Early Ivories from Samaria* (London: 1938), pl. XIII:2. The authors note that "the hair above the forehead is treated at Samaria and Nimrud as a row of curls with a naturally wavy edge whereas at Arslan Tash and Khorsabad it ends in a hard semi-circular furrow" (p. 29).

(22) Donald Hardon, *The Phoenicians* (London 1963), Fig. 61.

(23) *Ibid.*, Fig. 64; cf. also H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon* (London: 1962), pl. 61A.

has the ear showing outside the hair as in our Khirbet el-Hajjar figure. ²⁴ This method of showing the ear outside the hair, also appears on the sarcophagus of Eshmunazar, King of Sidon, ²⁵ and on the sandstone statue of the Egyptian pharaoh, Osorkon I, found at Byblos. ²⁶

A necklace appears from under the hair on the left shoulder. It is broken away and so does not continue around the front of the neck. Such necklaces appear in examples of Egyptian art. ²⁷

The ends of the hands are broken so it is not clear if they held a vase or a flower, or if they were folded. Terracotta female figurines (mostly Iron Ages I - II) are very common in Palestinian excavations. They are usually nude, and have the hands folded across the breasts. ²⁸

Our figure's dress seems to be a simple design of two parts. The upper part or blouse,

hangs loose with two tassels or ribbons down the front. Such tassels appear on the statuettes from Amman, published by Barnett. ²⁹ This style is also known from Hittite and/or North Syrian ³⁰ sculpture but is less common in Egyptian art. ³¹ The lower part of the dress is cut to show the position of the feet, as in the male figure's dress. The bare feet, the position of the feet, and the form of the base, are also similar to the male figure.

Interpretation and Dating

References to a group of Ammonite statuettes indicate a number of sculptures found in Amman and its vicinity. There are four known sites:

1. From Amman itself are the four sculptures published by Barnett and frequently noted. Also, at the end of 1968 four double faced limestone heads were found in the citadel of Amman, where they had been reused as part of the wall of a Hellenistic tunnel: ³² Cutting

(24) Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Gaza III* (London: 1955), pl. XVI:48, XVII. Petrie notes a "hard limestone head of a canopic jar, of fine work; found on the floor of the first palace, four feet under the floor of Dyn. XII, therefore of Dyn. VI or VII. Stone heads of so early a date are not known in Egypt. It may have been for an Egyptian occupation here til Dyn. XII" (p. 8). Petrie's date is uncertain.

(25) Pritchard *op. cit.*, No. 283 (9th century B. C.).

(26) Harden, *op. cit.*, Fig. 38, end of the 10th century; cf. also Maurice Chehab, "Noms de personnalités égyptiennes découvertes au Liban," *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth XXII* (1969), pl. X:1.

(27) Loud, *op. cit.*, pl. 7:21, 22a - b, pl. 18:173c. The "Queen of the Wild Beasts" ivory carving from Minet el-Beida wears a similar necklace - cf. Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 160; Crowfoot, *op. cit.*, pl. II:2.

(28) Cf. *Lachish III* (The Iron Age), pl. 27:1, 3f, 8, pl. 28:10f; Frances James, *The Iron Age at Beth-shan* (Philadelphia: 1966), Fig. 115f; *Megiddo II*: pls. 241 - 3; *Tell en-Nasbeh I*: pls. 85f; Kathlenn Kenyon, *Jerusalem - Excavating*

3,000 years of History (London: 1967), Figs. 9f; Pritchard, *Palestinian Figurines in Relation to Certain Goddesses Known through Literature* (American Oriental Series, Vol. 24; New Haven: 1943).

fixvbgk)L vbgk cmf vbgkw cmfw cmfw vbb vg (29) *op. cit.*, pls. upper left.

(30) D. G. Hogarth, *Carchemish - Report on the Excavation at Djerabis on behalf of the British Museum* (London: 1914), pl. BB; Akurgal, *op. cit.*, pl. 121. The twopart dress on a female figure from Sidon reminds one strongly of the example from Khirbet el-Hajjar (cf. Harden, *op. cit.*, Fig. 65, and probably also Fig. 63 from Beirut). Cf. further, Pritchard, *Ancient Near East in Pictures*, No. 530 (Zinjirli), 84 (bought in Aleppo and now in the Ashmolean Museum).

(31) No exact parallel was found but perhaps certain Egyptian ivory figurines could be compared, cf. Loud, *op. cit.*, pl. 8:24f; pl. 161:a, b, c.

(32) Safwan Tell, Recent Ammonite Finds, (in Arabic) *ADAJ XII-XIII* (1967-8), 9-12, pls. 1-4, and Fawzi Zayadin, "Classical Archaeological Excavations in Jordan," (in Arabic), *ADAJ XIV* (1969), 53f.

the second face has resulted in a thinness or flatness of the head. The eyes are inlaid with bitumen beads, some of which have Aramaic letters. These examples are surely later than the group under discussion but a more detailed study is pending.³³

2. About 12 or 13 partially broken statuettes were found in Abu 'Alanda about 7 km south of Amman. These are of the same type as the two statuettes from **Khirbet el-Hajjar**. They are of the same soft limestone and here too, the breaks are ancient. The pieces were collected by one of the inhabitants and are now being restored by the Department.³⁴

3. In 1966, the Department purchased a statuette from an inhabitant of 'Arajan (south of Amman) who claimed he found it in the vicinity of his home. The similarity of the earrings was noted earlier. The form of the base is also similar as is the soft stone and the scale. The placement of hands and feet differs as does style of hair and dress.³⁵

4. Khirbet el-Hajjar.

In addition to these four sites, four other heads (unpublished), three of which have the Osiris crown, are of uncertain provenance. All of the above examples are in the Amman Museum.

The above sites are within the area of the Ammonite kingdom whose capital was Am-

man.³⁶ At the present time, there is not a single example of this category of statuette from outside this area. While examples may yet appear from elsewhere, at present it seems that Amman or Rabbath Ammon was the center of this type of sculpture. Thus they represent the best examples of Ammonite art available.

Study of this group of sculptures meets many difficulties of which the most important are the following. Relatively little sculpture of the first millennium B. C., has been found in Palestine and Jordan. There are insufficient examples to show any continuous development of the art as this is known in Mesopotamia and Egypt. The isolated examples available show mostly the motifs of the great powers who alternately controlled Syria-Palestine. Now suddenly here is a group of sculptures in the round which appear in a limited geographical area.

A further difficulty is that no example of this group came from a stratified context since they are mostly accidental finds. Rabbath Ammon was destroyed and reoccupied several times. This adds to the problem of isolating iron age levels in the few places they have been found.

With the exception of a small defaced inscription on the base of one of these statuettes,³⁷ we know nothing about what might be called Ammonite writing from the 9th century. Even for this one inscription, there is no clarity about

(33) Dr. Zayadin of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, is preparing a detailed report. In a personal communication, he noted that the letters are later, of the first half of the 7th century B. C., based on epigraphic comparison.

(34) The author hopes to publish a detailed study of the Abu 'Alanda examples along with a restudy of the entire group in the near future.

(35) Khairi, *op. cit.*

(36) Cf. H. Gese, *Amonitische Grenzfestungen zwischen Wadi es-Sir und Na'ur*, ZDPV 74

(1958), 55ff; R. Hentschke, *Amonitische Grenzfestungen sudwestlich von 'Amman*, ZDPV 76 (1960), 103ff; G. Fohrer, *Eisenzeitliche Anlagen im Raume südlich vom Na'ur und die Südwest Grenze von 'Amman*, ZDPV 77 (1961), 56ff; H. G. Reventrow, *Das Ende der amonitischen Grenbefestigungskette*, ZDPV 79 (1963), 127ff; G. M. Landes, *The Material Civilization of the Ammonites*, BA, 1961, p. 65ff.

(37) Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 35, pl. XI.

the type of script. Barnett and Harding would like to compare it with the Mesha stele.³⁸ Aharoni on the other hand, considers a few of the letters later in date.³⁹

The above examples, with the two el-Hajjar statuettes, represent the oldest known sculpture and the largest group of sculptures in the round, at least in the first half of the first millennium B. C., from the Palestinian-Jordanian area. We can say with certainty that both of the el-Hajjar statuettes are from the same sculptor or school of sculpture. On the basis of the circumstances of the finds, and the antique details, there is no doubt that the two form a pair, that of a ruler with his wife or two deities (male and female).⁴⁰ The female figure appears to be quite unique in this geographical area. At least it is the best preserved free standing sculpture and probably the most important female statuette in this group.

It would be difficult to take the residue of Egyptian influence for an exact date. This indirect influence fell mainly in the beginning and the second part of the first millennium B. C. in Syria-Palestine, penetrated the so-called Phoenician art, and continued after the Assyrian conquest. But the Egyptian influence

was assimilated under the veneer of the dominant Assyrian power.

The history of the Near East, including Syria-Palestine, was determined by two important Assyrian kings, Ashurnasirpal II (884 - 858 B. C.) and Shalmaneser III (858 - 824) in the ninth century.⁴¹ Another important period is in the eight-seventh centuries characterized by Tiglath-pileser III (745 - 727 B. C.) and his successors, Sargon II (722 - 705), Sennacherib (705 - 681), Esarhaddon (681 - 669) and finally Ashurbanipal (669 - 627).⁴² Both of these periods are reflected in the development of art, not only in Assyria but also in neighboring areas under Assyrian influence. Important locations of both phases of Assyrian art influence are in north Syria and eastern Anatolia - Carchemish, Malatya, Zinjirli, Sakja-gozu, and Karatepe.⁴³

The motifs of the first phase which appear in our statuettes from Khirbet el-Hajjar and Amman, appear not only in the peripheral area but also in the original art of Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III (see above). A dual influence of Egypt and Assyria can be noted in the ivory carving from Arslan Tash and Nimrud. The latest discussion with a new dating

(38) *Ibid.*; cf. also G. L. Harding, *The Antiquities of Jordan* (London: 1967), p. 44.

(39) Y. Aharoni, *A New Ammonite Inscription*, *IEJ* 1 (1950 - 51), 219ff.

(40) Aharoni's note on the function or representation of such statuettes is interesting "The name and attributes indicate a deity. Similar pottery figurines are already known from other places in Trans-Jordan and the resemblance between the statue discussed and the head of a pottery figurine found by Glueck in el-Medeyienh is most interesting. It seems that the easily transportable figurines were made after the stone statues, and this too suggests that the latter represent deities." Aharoni, *op. cit.*, p. 222. Cf. also Glueck, *op. cit.* The question remains open because kings also used to dress themselves as deities

(Barhett, *op. cit.*, p. 34).

(41) This period has been thoroughly treated by Labat and Eissfeldt. René Labat, *Assyrien und seine Nachbarländer (Babylonien, Elam, Iran) von 1000 bis 617 v. Chr.*, and Otto Eissfeldt, *Syrien und Palästina vom Ausgang des 11. bis zum Ausgang des 6. Jahrtausends v. Chr.*, in *Fischer Weltgeschichte, Band 4, Die Altorientalische Reiche III, Die erste Hälfte des 1. Jahrtausends*, Fischer Bücherei (Frankfurt: 1967), pp. 9ff, 135ff. In the 12th century, Egyptian power was broken. From 1025 to 880, one can speak of the independence of Syria-Palestine (cf. Eissfeldt, pp. 137ff).

(42) See Hrouda, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

(43) For a discussion with references on both periods, see M. Visyra, *Hittite Art* (London: 1955), pp. 44ff; Akurgal, *op. cit.*, pp. 130ff.

of the Nimrud ivories, is by Ussishkin who notes that "the group of ivories from room SW 7 should be dated to about 800 B. C., or even earlier, to the last quarter of the ninth century B. C." ⁴⁴

The argument of Aharoni on the later dating of the inscription from that published by

Barnett must be taken into consideration although there is no agreement on the reading. ⁴⁵ To the author, however, the evidence supports an earlier dating, perhaps about the time of Shalmaneser III or even between Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III, about the middle of the ninth century B. C.

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(44) David Ussishkin, "On the Date of a Group of Ivories from Nimrud," *BASOR* 203 (1971), 22ff (quotation p. 27).

(45) Aharoni, *op. cit.*, p. 222: "It therefore seems to me most probable that the inscription is

of a later period than that of Mesha and must be related to the seventh or eighth century B. C." The possibility that the inscription is secondary is an open one; detailed study is necessary.