

A NEW GREEK BRONZE HEAD IN THE ACKLAND MUSEUM

(PLATES 42-44)

IN the fall of 1967 the William Hayes Ackland Memorial Museum in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, acquired the bronze head of a woman wearing a fillet and himation or veil.¹ Of approximately lifesize,² the head is in good condition except for the top and back parts which were completed by a separately cast himation, as in the recently published *Lady from the Sea*, now in the Izmir Museum.³ That the head is open in back affords opportunity to explore the casting process, and does not basically detract from the beauty of the face with its strongly Classical appearance.

Our piece consists of the front and side parts of the head and neck of a mature woman with rounded forehead, hair parted in the middle and brushed back in wavy strands from the temples, sharply profiled eyes set under arched brows, a long and rather fleshy nose which in profile makes a more or less straight line with the forehead, a large and well-modelled mouth and a firm chin. The head was apparently slightly inclined and turned toward her left, and to judge from the preserved lower boundary of the neck, her left shoulder was more elevated than her right.⁴ A narrow

¹ Acc. no. 6724.1. The head may have come from Asia Minor. In studying this head I have had much help from many people. Bernard Ashmole, Werner Fuchs, and Dorothy K. Hill have examined the head; Gisela M. A. Richter, Homer and Dorothy Thompson, and Denys Haynes have seen photographs only. Among all there was unanimity of opinion as to the authenticity and high quality of the head, but considerable diversity as to its date. The author, while relying much upon their separate opinions, assumes responsibility for the conclusions suggested here, and wishes to emphasize the tentative nature of this study. While much more remains to be done, it seems appropriate to publish this head as a tribute to Professor Rhys Carpenter, my former teacher and the long-time colleague of Joseph C. Sloane, director of the Ackland Museum. We both hope that he will welcome this head and the problems it raises.

² Height: from bridge of nose to tip of chin, 0.111 m. (compared with 0.12 m. in living model and 0.13 m. in *Lady from the Sea*; see note 3); from hair parting to chin 0.166 m.; from top of fillet to chin 0.204 m.; total height (including neck) 0.289 m. Width of face at cheekbone 0.116 m. (contrasted with 0.17 m. of *Lady from the Sea*). Left eye: length 0.035 m.; maximum height 0.014 m.; right eye: length 0.031 m.; maximum height 0.012 m. The average thickness of the bronze is 0.003 to 0.004 m., but ranges from paper thin (0.001 m.) in the himation to 0.01 m. where in contact with dripped bronze.

I wish to thank Mrs. Gay Hertzman, associate curator, for help in securing these measurements; Mr. John Hertzman for his technological observations; and Mr. Gaillard Ravenel for his assistance. The photographs were taken by Quentin R. Sawyer and my husband.

³ Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, "The Lady from the Sea: A Greek Bronze in Turkey," *A.J.A.*, LXXI, 1967, pp. 329-334 (hereafter Ridgway).

⁴ The straight lines at the sides of the neck appear to be original edges, and if vertical would give an inclination of the head as in Plates 43 and 44, b. They would presumably have been overlapped by the himation, and the rougher V-shaped boundary at the lower edge by the neck of the chiton or peplos. Cf. the *Lady from the Sea* (Ridgway, pl. 100, fig. 12) where the piecing is more

fillet crossed the top of her head and disappeared beneath the vertical edges of a himation⁵ pulled over the back of her head. This garment is better preserved on her right side, where, however, the bottom edge has been torn away and bent inward (Pl. 42). The right ear underneath is well-modelled in contrast to the summary execution of the left, which was apparently more completely hidden from the viewer either by the himation or by the turn of her head (Pl. 44, b).⁶

The top part of the hair and fillet has been eroded on both sides and the intervening section bent out of shape (Pl. 44, c).⁷ Furthermore, a blow on the left cheek has dented the bronze, and a smaller dent in the chin erroneously creates the impression of a dimple. A crack runs from the lower boundary of the neck up through the right cheek and eye, and can be picked up in the photograph where at the hairline it diverges into two branches. How much these injuries have damaged the original appearance of the head and to what extent they have been repaired are questions difficult to assess without further technological examination. The left cheek is noticeably flatter and the eye somewhat more highly arched and wider; however, this asymmetry disappears when the head is viewed from a position slightly turned to her left (Pl. 44, c). Certainly the disparity in eye size seems to have been intentional.⁸ Some re-engraving of the central part of the hair seems likely as the cold-work is less fine and precise in this bent portion, and the patina in the area of the crack from the neck upward to the forehead fluoresces differently under ultraviolet light.⁹

complicated, owing to the inclination of the head and the fluttering ends of the veil, six pieces in all compared to our two.

⁵ We have chosen to refer to this garment as a himation rather than a veil, because of the straight line across the top of the head and down the sides, an arrangement more like that of the Demeter of Knidos than the Lady from the Sea. However, the thinness of the casting and the fact that the preserved edge, admittedly bent, moves away from her right cheek leaves some doubt. There is a tooled line representing the selvedge, and another about an inch further in and not quite parallel (Pl. 43); in technique they resemble the two "Venus-rings" on the neck.

⁶ The himation on her left side came forward more, as on the Demeter of Knidos, a fact suggested by the greater amount of incrustation on this side of the neck. Perhaps, too, as Werner Fuchs has suggested, the turning of the head toward her left would also account for the less carefully rendered ear.

⁷ It would be impossible to continue the present line of the fillet without its reappearing near the edge of the himation.

⁸ Cf. the asymmetry of the Chatsworth Head and the special study of Ehrich Boehringer, "Gesichtshälften," *Röm. Mitt.*, LIX, 1944, pp. 7-16. See also the marble head in Berlin (no. 1478) referred to below, note 29.

⁹ The overall effect of the patina looks good, uniformly dark green with earthy or sandy incrustation on both sides of the neck. There are a few spots of copper red color (cupric oxide?). Under the microscope traces of yellowish glint can be detected in the re-engraved parts of the hair. This led to the initial assumption that the hair had been gilded, an assumption that now seems doubtful. No such glimmer can be detected in the engraving on the sides, and a few similar bright spots can be observed elsewhere where the bronze itself has been exposed. Chemical analyses have not yet been undertaken.

The inside of the head (Pl. 44, d) reveals a smooth and thin-walled casting averaging from 3 to 4 mm. in thickness, and therefore almost certainly prepared by the *cire perdue* process.¹⁰ In general it follows closely the exterior surface but with little reflection of exact details.¹¹ The major portion of the interior is covered with an earthy brown incrustation that occurs on the exterior on the sides of the neck, presumably where it collected under the himation. The most characteristic feature on the interior is a series of blobs or drips of molten metal, particularly numerous on the inside of the hair, but occurring also on the cheek and neck (Pl. 44, d). These seem definitely the result of attaching the himation rather than of the casting process.¹²

The Ackland head in itself is too nearly incomplete and without a sufficiently attested provenience to allow an interpretation and dating of the statue to which it belonged, and one is dependent upon stylistic comparisons with other female heads, particularly bronze heads. Unfortunately there are no more than a half dozen or so bronze female heads of comparable style and period. The new bronze Lady from the Sea comes first to mind, primarily because of the similarity of theme and her attested Turkish provenience, from a shipwreck off the Asia Minor coast.¹³ Certainly there are a number of technical similarities, which, however, might be found to be more widespread were we permitted to examine the interiors of more hollow cast bronze heads. Stylistically, however, the two works are not very close. The inclination of

¹⁰ In addition to K. Kluge and K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *Die Antiken Grossbronzen*, Berlin, 1927, see J. Charbonneaux, *Greek Bronzes*, New York, 1962; Dorothy K. Hill, *Catalogue of Classical Bronze Sculpture in the Walters Art Gallery*, Baltimore, 1949, pp. ix-xxvi. The whole problem of sand-casting versus *cire perdue* seems in need of further study.

¹¹ In appearance it differs somewhat from the interior of the bronze Aphrodite head from Armenia in the British Museum (Lullies-Hirmer, pl. 282) which I examined through the kindness of the Keeper, Denys Haynes. The Aphrodite, being over lifesize and with a far more plastic treatment of the hair, shows a closer correspondence of exterior details on the interior, and seems almost certainly to have been cast on the positive. For our head a negative or indirect process seems more likely (cf. Denys Haynes, *Röm. Mitt.*, LXVII, 1960, p. 46), where the mould of the face would have been lined with a layer of wax.

¹² They are different from the cast drips of wax on the interior of the Priestess from Nemi illustrated by Haynes (*Röm. Mitt.*, LXVII, 1960, pl. 20, 1) and agree rather closely with the soldering drips on the interior of the Lady from the Sea (Ridgway, p. 332, pl. 99, figs. 6-8). The fact that the himation was made separately and attached by such a process seems indicated by the blob of molten metal that appears on the *outside* of the neck by the right ear and under the himation. The two pieces must have been assembled while the statue was still open at the neck, and would thus require another horizontal joint in the himation at the back (effected by tongue and groove?). Compare the horizontal joints in the marble himatia of the Demeter of Knidos (*J.H.S.*, LXXI, 1951, pl. VI) and the seated statue from Chalkis (W. Fuchs, "Zur Rekonstruktion einer weiblichen Sitzstatue in Chalkis," *Jahrb. d. Berl. Mus.*, VIII, 1966, pp. 32-49, figs. 4-5).

¹³ The Izmir Lady has a bona fide provenance from a shipwreck discovered by sponge fishermen (cf. Ridgway, p. 329, note 2), whereas the origin of our head is not so clearly established. If one were to assume a shipwreck as a likely source, the surface of our head lacks the pitting and erosion of the Izmir bronze. Testing the accretion on the neck might reveal whether it contains marine elements.

the head of the Izmir Lady, the fluttering veil ends opposed to the straight himation, and the sweeter, more personal expression give quite a different effect and suggest the naturalism of the third century, as Mrs. Ridgway notes,¹⁴ and have led her to suggest a mortal woman rather than a divinity. She thus rejects the discoverer's identification of the statue as Demeter and the possible connection with the famous seated marble statue from Knidos in the British Museum.¹⁵ In contrast, our head has more of Classical grandeur and an impersonal quality, and might better qualify as a bronze relative of the Demeter, a comparison to which we return below.

Other bronze female heads of the early Hellenistic period, the "Hellenistic queens" and related works, are even less productive of comparison. Despite their predominantly Classical effect, they introduce elements of portraiture or contemporary hair style which are quite foreign to our head, for example the pulled back and flamelike tresses confined by a braid on the Perinthos and Naples heads, which also have cast rather than inset eyeballs,¹⁶ and specific individual traits which have led to the identification of the bronze head in the Ducal Palace in Mantua as a portrait of Arsinoe III¹⁷ or to the suggestion that the lovely girl's head in Boston is a portrait of Arsinoe II.¹⁸ Indeed the profile heads of Hellenistic queens on coins, sometimes with veil and diadem, bear more resemblance to our head than do the actual sculptured heads, but even these create a more individualized and contemporary effect, for example the melon coiffeur and fuller lips of Berenike II and the more indented nose bridge and rounder eyes of Arsinoe III.¹⁹ Although I do not think our head has enough individuality to qualify for a Hellenistic queen, there is something in the sharpness of the eyelids with their overlapping at the outer corners (Pl. 43) to suggest an acquaintance with a similar treatment found on certain examples of the queens.²⁰

This combined picture of portrait, if idealized, queens of the third century and the sweeter, more momentary naturalism of the bronze Lady in Izmir suggests that our head does not belong to this company and can hardly be considered a product of the third century.

¹⁴ Ridgway, p. 331 and note 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 329. G. E. Bean, *I.L.N.*, Nov. 7, 1953, pp. 747-749; *Art Treasures of Turkey*, Washington, 1966, no. 130.

¹⁶ Carpenter, *Greek Sculpture*, Chicago, 1960, pls. XXXV, XLIII, C.

¹⁷ M. Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age*, New York, 1961, pp. 92-93, figs. 354-355; G. M. A. Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, III, London, 1965, p. 265.

¹⁸ L. D. Caskey, *Catalogue of Greek and Roman Sculpture in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Boston, 1925, pp. 118-119, no. 56; Richter, *Portraits*, III, p. 262.

¹⁹ Bieber, *op. cit.*, figs. 344, 356. The portraits of Arsinoe II (Richter, *Portraits*, III, figs. 1802-1804) with her straight nose, firm chin and direct gaze create the most Classical impression.

²⁰ I am indebted to Mrs. Dorothy B. Thompson for calling this detail to my attention, a feature which she considers specifically influenced by Ptolemaic art; cf. the Egyptianized head of Berenike II (Bieber, *op. cit.*, figs. 348-349).

Another famous female bronze head is the lovely Aphrodite from Satala in Armenia, long a treasure of the British Museum and recently displayed at the Expo in Montreal.²¹ Here not only the more than life-sized proportions but the ideal beauty and absence of individualized features suggest a goddess, yet the greater contrast of light and shade in the highly modelled strands of hair and the dramatic turn of the head toward the left bespeak the more baroque transformation of the Classical in the second century, such as we find in the heads of goddesses on the Great Altar at Pergamon.²² Such restless beauty is quite different from the quiet self-containment of our head which conforms more closely to the principles of Classical art, either the style of the fourth century B.C. or its revival in a later period, presumably the late second century B.C.

A choice between these two is basically the dilemma posed by the Ackland head, and one on which opinions of scholars vary. Unfortunately for neither period do we have a comparable female bronze head, and we must have recourse to marble heads, either originals or Roman copies, or to bronze male heads.

Certainly the Demeter of Knidos²³ is worth considering as a parallel for our head. Both represent mature, idealized women with hair parted in the middle and brushed back in wavy strands confined by a fillet and covered in back by a himation which falls in more or less vertical folds and in each case seems to have come further forward on the left. Both heads are slightly turned toward the left, but ours seems to have been more inclined. Aside from these resemblances there are, however, notable differences: the broader oval of the Demeter head with greater breadth at eye level contrasted with the rectangular, narrower proportions of our head; also the higher more triangular forehead, the flowing locks of hair within the hollow created between himation and neck, the slight upward turn of the head and distant gaze of the Demeter which give her an appropriately melancholy look. While it might be argued that some of these details, such as the more coloristic treatment, are the result of the different medium, they are so completely absent from our head that, aside from the mantle, there is nothing distinctly Demeter-like in our piece and she might well be some other veiled goddess or even an idealized tomb figure.²⁴ Actually the profile view

²¹ Lullies-Hirmer, pl. 282.

²² Cf. the heads of Nyx and Artemis from the Gigantomachy frieze (H. Kähler, *Der Grosse Fries von Pergamon*, Berlin, 1948, pls. 26, 27). Other heads such as the Moira (pl. 62, left) and the Lion Goddess (pl. 17) are more tousled and baroque.

²³ Lullies-Hirmer, pls. 224-225, and the important article by Bernard Ashmole, "Demeter of Cnidus," *J.H.S.*, LXXI, 1951, pp. 13-28, pls. I-XVI. Whether the statue is a fourth-century original by Leochares, as Ashmole thinks, or a late second-century Classicizing work (Carpenter, *Greek Sculpture*, pp. 213-214) merely highlights the problem presented by our head.

²⁴ Cf. Ridgway, pp. 330-331 for possibilities other than Demeter for the Lady from the Sea. Aphrodite seems unlikely for our head, Hera a possibility (but a veil would be more usual than a himation). The slightly under lifesize proportions might better accord with an idealized tomb figure, although she has nothing of the momentary quality of the himation-covered mourners on the Sarcophagus from Sidon (Lullies-Hirmer, pls. 207-209).

with its slight downward inclination, longer nose, lower forehead and less fleshy chin recalls the profile of the Aphrodite of Knidos even more than that of the Demeter.²⁵ Although neither of these comparisons is indubitable evidence of fourth-century date, they suggest that our head may represent a goddess and one close in spirit to the Classical period. With only a head, however, it is difficult to propose an identification or even to decide whether the statue was seated or standing.²⁶

Another and perhaps more likely theory would regard the Ackland head as a Classicizing work of the late Hellenistic period, a period in which the sculptor of the Aphrodite of Melos could still borrow the head type from Praxiteles' Knidia. Here the Mahdia shipwreck with its cargo of bronze as well as marble pieces may be instructive, especially if this was made up of contemporary late second-century B.C. work as Werner Fuchs believes.²⁷ However, with the exception of the Eros Enagonios of Boethos, which is life-sized and a major work,²⁸ the bronzes are small statuettes or decorative attachments. There is one point of resemblance between the Eros and our head, namely the contrast between the very hard and linear eyelids and the extremely mobile and well-modelled mouth, a contrast I find it hard to reconcile with a fourth-century date for the Ackland head.²⁹ Otherwise the Eros statue with twisted centrifugal pose and highly modelled locks of hair is essentially different. Although the bronze female bust of Ariadne from the sheathing of a votive ship's prow³⁰ does not at first seem very similar to our head, it also combines a more linear treatment of the hair and eyes with a plastic and mobile mouth and chin. Furthermore, in some of

²⁵ Cf. Plate 44, b with Carpenter, *Greek Sculpture*, pl. XXXIX, A.

²⁶ Possibly one should propose a seated tomb figure in three-quarter view to the right; cf. the restoration proposed by Werner Fuchs for the seated statue from Chalkis (*Jahrb. d. Berl. Mus.*, VIII, 1966, p. 46, fig. 15) where she turns toward the spectator's left.

²⁷ Werner Fuchs, *Der Schiffsfund von Mahdia (Bilderhefte des deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Rom, II)*, Tübingen, 1963, pp. 11-12, dates everything except the fourth-century Attic inscriptions and votive reliefs, which may have served as ballast, to the second half of the second century B.C. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Fuchs for calling to my attention the pertinence of Mahdia, as well as for other helpful suggestions.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14, pls. 1-6.

²⁹ See above note 20. Such a contrast is not found in the Lady from the Sea, whose lids are more plastically rendered and whose lips were inlaid with copper. For fourth-century bronze heads, the eyes of the Boy from Marathon (Lullies-Hirmer, pl. 221) or the Antikythera Ballplayer (Lullies-Hirmer, pl. 220) are more difficult to assess since the eyeballs are still in place, but they lack the hardness at the outer corners seen in our head. A very perceptive study of the loss of plasticity in Classicizing marble heads based on fourth-century types is found in R. Horn's "Hellenistische Köpfe II," *Röm. Mitt.*, LIII, 1938, pp. 78-87, where he publishes a head in Berlin (pls. 11 and 17, 2) which like ours is characterized by a curious flattening of planes on one cheek and asymmetrical eyes, as well as by sharp outer corners of the eyelids contrasted with the well-modelled mouth. He dates this head to his second stage of Classicizing about 100 B.C., i.e. later than the Aphrodite of Melos. Our head is undeniably finer and being of bronze cannot so easily be fitted into the series; it should perhaps be assigned to his first stage.

³⁰ Fuchs, *Mahdia*, pl. 10.

the marble heads, badly weathered as they are, we find a similar contrast of hardness and plasticity, and in the best preserved head there is a comparable narrowness across the cheeks.³¹

Could the Ackland head have been created in a period of Classical revival other than the late second century B.C.? Classicizing tendencies were certainly present in mainland Greece earlier and recurred in the Augustan and Hadrianic periods. However, comparisons with the work of Damophon of Messene and Euboulides suggest for the earlier mainland revival a stronger dependence upon fifth-century than fourth-century prototypes; the faces are broader and the eyes more heavily lidded.³² Likewise any comparison with Roman mantle-hooded matrons, like the large woman from Herculaneum,³³ only serves to bring out the greater grace and idealism of our head. Whatever its actual date, the Ackland head is essentially fourth-century Greek in spirit and style, and was certainly the product of a Greek artist, most probably working in the Hellenistic East in the late second century B.C. For the Ackland Museum this is a major acquisition, and we hope that Professor Carpenter and others will pursue further the tentative conclusions reached in this paper.

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³¹ *Ibid.*, pls. 54-58. Cf. pl. 56 for the treatment of the outer corner of the eye; pl. 54 for the contrast between the rendering of the eyes and mouth as well as the narrowness of the face.

³² Bieber, *op. cit.*, figs. 669-670.

³³ *Ibid.*, figs. 748-749.



Bronze Head. Ackland Museum 6726.1

SARA ANDERSON IMMERWAHR: A NEW GREEK BRONZE HEAD IN THE ACKLAND MUSEUM



Ackland Head, Side View from Right

SARA ANDERSON IMMERWAHR: A NEW GREEK BRONZE HEAD IN THE ACKLAND MUSEUM



a. Three-quarter View from Left



b. Left Profile



c. Three-quarter View from Right



d. Inside of Casting