A BRONZE WARRIOR FROM CORINTH

(PLATES 20–22)

DURING THE EXCAVATIONS at Corinth in 1925 a bronze statuette of a standing figure wearing helmet, cuirass, tunic, and shoes was found in debris dating to the Roman period to the west of the Fountain of Glauke. In the published excavation report, Bert Hodge Hill discussed the figurine at some length, described it as approximately 0.25 m. in height, and tentatively identified it as an Ares "damaged by fire," who may once have held a spear in the right hand, a shield in the left one.[1] The statuette was photographed with the left knee restored and from an angle which gave the illusion that the figure was short-coupled and stocky, with awkwardly proportioned head and limbs (Pl. 20).

When next cited,[2] the statuette was identified as an Ares who had once held a shield in the raised right hand and a spear in the lowered left one. The height was given as 0.24 m., the date of excavation as 1927. The statuette had been mounted on a modern base for display in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, and it was illustrated from a better angle.

In 1952, after the statuette had been returned to Corinth, it was carefully described by Gladys Davidson, and a more accurate photograph was published.[3] The height now given was greater: 0.255 m. Fire was still considered to be the major cause of surface damage. Davidson like Hill assigned the missing spear to the right hand and the shield to the left one. She noted, accurately, that the figure had a disproportionately large left hand, but she must have glanced at the early photographs when she said that the statuette had "unusually massive" calves. She cited parallels in support of an identification as Mars and proposed a date of 1st or 2nd century after Christ.

It was not until 1968 that the statuette was again mentioned in print. This time, Christos Karouzos identified it as a Hellenistic *strategos* and noted its slender, graceful proportions, which he said were representative of the Corinthian tradition.[4] Furthermore, Karouzos saw signs of exalted emotion in the face, which he used to date the figurine to the first half of the 2nd century B.C. Both the description and the date contrast markedly with the observations of 1952.

During an examination of the piece in 1987, it was found that the back of the right knee, the lower thigh, and the hem of the chiton were modern plaster restorations painted to match the dark green patina of the bronze[5] (Pl. 21:a, b). None of the earlier publications

[1] B. H. Hill, "Excavations at Corinth 1925," *AJA* 30, 1926, pp. 45–46, fig. 1.

[2] B. D. Theophaneides, Δελτ 11, 1927–1928, Παράρτημα, no. 5, p. 13; fig. 19, p. 11. National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 15133.

[3] G. R. Davidson, *Corinth*, XII, *The Minor Objects*, Princeton 1952 (repr. 1987), no. 503, p. 66, pl. 48. Corinth Archaeological Museum, no. MF 4016.

[4] C. Karouzos, "Statuette d'un stratège en bronze," *RA* 1968, pp. 190–191, fig. 6. The difficulty in assigning this statuette to the Corinthian tradition becomes clear when we consider that no complete figure in any medium of this or similar type can be irrefutably assigned to Corinth. See B. S. Ridgway's discussion of the problem: *The Archaic Style in Greek Sculpture*, Princeton 1977, p. 70.

[5] I am grateful to Stella Bouzaki for discovering the plaster restoration and for discussing with me the condition of the bronze, to C. K. Williams, II for allowing me to study the piece, and to Nancy Bookidis for her

had referred to this restoration, but Hill had commented that "the skilful process of cleaning could not remove all traces of the damage by fire."[6] In fact, the surface damage to the figurine appears to have been caused not by fire but rather by overzealous chemical cleaning, which had not only removed all corrosion products but had also deeply pitted the bronze in many places.[7] New photographs were taken with the restorations removed (Pls. 21, 22).

In the light of these observations, it seemed appropriate to look again at the statuette and to present such new evidence as is available in an attempt to clarify its identity and its date and to give it a chance to secure its rightful place among the ranks of accepted Corinthian bronzes. Although Corinth was always famous for its bronzes and many works have been assigned to Corinth on the basis of style, this is the only complete human figure in bronze which up to the present has come from the excavations there.[8] Unfortunately, the statuette was one of 165 objects stolen from the Corinth Archaeological Museum in April, 1990, and it has not yet been recovered. It is thus all the more important that the statuette become more widely known.

The statuette was found in Late Roman destruction levels to the west of the Fountain of Glauke.[9] Its actual height is 0.235 m. The figure is a solid lost-wax casting, with the surface details incised freehand in the wax model. Some attempt was made to conserve bronze by leaving a hollow space about 0.018 m. deep between the legs under the hem of the tunic. The right hand and the attributes from both hands are lost. The surface is damaged or pitted on the right side of the helmet, the face, and the neck; the left shoulder, sleeve, and arm; the left side of the lappets and skirt; the left knee; the lower legs and shoes; and here and there on the cuirass.

The beardless male stands firmly on the right foot, the right arm raised, the left leg trailing, and the left arm held forward at waist level. The head is raised and turned sharply to the left. A Corinthian helmet is pushed back from the forehead, its high bushy crest divided at the peak, then joining to taper downwards and meet the back of the helmet, where it breaks off (Pl. 22:a). The two sides of the crest are detailed with deeply incised radiating lines, the left side somewhat more carefully marked than the right. A vine bearing tiny bunches of fruit, more delicately incised than the crest, twines gracefully around the crown of the helmet. The face is in poor condition, especially the left side where the surface is entirely

assistance in my work. I have benefited greatly from discussions with these individuals and am grateful to Charles M. Edwards, George L. Huxley, Nancy Winter, and Harriet C. Mattusch for their ideas and comments about the statuette.

An abbreviated version of this paper was delivered at the 11th International Bronze Congress in Madrid, 1990.

[6] Hill (note 1 above), p. 46.

[7] Hill (*ibid.*) may have alluded to this treatment in the quoted phrase.

[8] For ancient sources on Corinthian bronze see C. C. Mattusch, "Corinthian Metalworking: The Forum Area," *Hesperia* 46, 1977, p. 380 and J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Corinthian Bronze," *RBibl* 90, 1983, pp. 80–93.

[9] This area was most recently excavated in 1981 and 1982: see C. K. Williams, II and O. H. Zervos, "Corinth, 1981: East of the Theater," *Hesperia* 51, 1982, pp. 115–163 and *eidem*, "Corinth, 1982: East of the Theater," *Hesperia* 52, 1983, pp. 1–47.

lost, but the prominent forehead, large and deeply set eyes, aquiline nose, and strong beardless chin are still clearly visible (Pl. 22:b). Thick curls escape around the sides and back of the helmet. The neck now appears unusually thick and lumpy because of damage.

The young warrior wears a muscle cuirass over a chiton, and two rows of leather lappets bearing incised fringes are visible above both skirt and sleeves. The broad oval neckline of the cuirass is ringed by a wide raised band, the arms by a narrow rounded band, and the descending arc over the groin by a raised band of intermediate width. In the back, the lower border of the cuirass follows the waistline, where it is defined not by a border but by a shallow projecting edge (Pl. 21:c). Careful attention has been paid to the rendering of anatomical details on the cuirass: the pectoral and abdominal muscles, the sternum, shoulder blades, spine, nipples, and navel are all shown naturalistically in relief.

The cuirass has an unusually wide opening at the neck but is otherwise of a shape that is common from the 5th century B.C. onwards. At first these cuirasses were relatively simple and unadorned, but later ones often had more decoration and curved metal tabs above the leather lappets. Such cuirasses remained popular throughout the Roman period.

In the middle of the sternum, a small Gorgoneion is modeled in relief (Pl. 22:b). It is impossible to detect any snakes in the tousled hair, and the heavily rimmed eyes, squat nose, and small, thick, closed lips give a pouting and almost pacific expression that identifies this as the type known as the beautiful Gorgon.[10]

That the statuette's left foot is somewhat larger than the right one may be owing to the fact that the right foot lost more of its surface during the original cleaning of the bronze. The warrior wears open-toed boots having a sole with a curved front, a strap across the ball of the foot, and crossed laces over the instep (Pl. 22:c). Above this point, the surface on even the better-preserved left foot is too badly damaged to distinguish anything but the simple rolled top of boot or sock across the calf. Boots like these were worn by both males and females; they are illustrated in South Italian vase painting of the 4th century B.C. and in Hellenistic sculpture from Asia Minor. The closest parallels for this type of boot, though more elaborately decorated, are on several of the figures on the reliefs from the Altar of Zeus at Pergamon and on a fragmentary statue of perhaps about 200 B.C. from Kyme.[11]

The warrior from Corinth has slender, wiry legs. He bears his weight on the right leg, the right hip jutting out to the side (Pl. 21:a). The left leg trails behind, knee bent, the

[10] J. Floren (*Studien zur Typologie der Gorgoneion*, Münster Westfalen 1977, pp. 192–197) points out that this type of Gorgon is common from the 4th century B.C. onwards in all media and appears not in Athens but in the Greek East and in South Italy and Sicily. See also Janer Danforth Belson, "The Medusa Rondanini," *AJA* 84, 1980, pp. 373–378.

[11] For a discussion of these open-toed boots, see K. D. Morrow, *Greek Footwear and the Dating of Sculpture*, Madison 1985, pp. 121, 136, 138–139.

South Italian vase painting: volute krater by the Karneia Painter, Taranto, M.N. 8263, illustrated in P. E. Arias and M. Hirmer, *A History of 1000 Years of Greek Vase Painting*, New York n.d., p. 388, fig. 230: *ca.* 410 B.C.

Altar of Zeus at Pergamon: see Morrow, *op. cit.*, pls. 119, 120.

Fragments from Kyme: Istanbul, Archaeological Museum, no. 389, illustrated in M. Bieber, *Griechische Kleidung*, Berlin/Leipzig 1928, p. 91, pl. LXIV:5; see also G. Mendel, *Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines* III, Constantinople 1914, no. 803 (+ 804, 805), pp. 6–7.

balance maintained on the toes in the familiar stance of the Doryphoros. The right upper arm projects outwards at the horizontal, and the forearm is nearly vertical. Although the arm is broken at the wrist, we can be fairly certain that the warrior supported himself on a spear which rested vertically on the ground. The left forearm is raised to the horizontal, thumb and forefinger of the left hand meeting, and the rest of the fingers originally curled around some attribute, probably the strap of a shield or the handle of a sword.[12] Next to the slender arms, the left hand seems disproportionately large, a feature which was surely less noticeable when the attribute was in place.

There are many statuettes with the same or similar stance, gesture, and garb as the Corinth warrior. Many of them are Roman in date, and they are most commonly identified as Mars. A few are beardless nudes, helmeted and cloaked, but most of the beardless individuals of this type are armored, greaved, and cloaked.[13] The figurines with beards, armor, greaves, and often a cloak are universally identified as being based upon the statue of Mars Ultor which was erected by Augustus in Rome in 2 B.C. Very few of the statuettes retain their attributes, although we can assume that most of them carried a spear in the raised hand.[14] Many of the figurines of Mars wear elaborate helmets and cuirasses, an idea adopted by Augustus for large-scale portrait statues and retained by all the emperors thereafter, the complex iconography recalling the victory or campaign which the statue commemorates.[15]

None of the Roman figures, whether intended as a portrait or as Mars, is a particularly close parallel for the statuette from Corinth. Although this figure is armored, his cuirass is relatively plain and has an unusually wide oval opening at the neck. The lappets are shown

[12] The maximum diameter of the opening of the hand is 0.05 m. The uppermost joint on each of the last three fingers is now lost.

[13] For a general survey of such statuettes, see S. Reinach, *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine* II, i, Paris 1897, pp. 188–191. Other examples:

Beardless, helmeted nude with chlamys: S. Boucher, *Vienne: Bronzes antiques*, Paris 1971, no. 6, pp. 40–41.

Beardless, armored, greaved male with chlamys: M. Bieber, *Die antiken Skulpturen und Bronzen des königl. Museum Fridericianum in Cassel*, Marburg 1915, no. 136, p. 57; E. Babelon and J.-A. Blanchet, *Catalogue des bronzes antiques de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris 1895, no. 193, p. 87; M. Velickovic, *Petits bronzes figures romains au Musée National, Beograd*, Belgrade 1972, no. 8, p. 18; R. Fleischer, *Die römischen Bronzen aus Österreich*, Mainz 1967, no. 40, p. 52, pl. 28.

[14] Nude helmeted Mars with shield on left arm, spear in right hand: G. Faider-Feytmans, *Les bronzes romains de Belgiques*, Mainz 1979, no. 9, pp. 52–53, pls. 6, 7.

Nude helmeted Mars with sword in lowered hand: Faider-Feytmans, *op. cit.*, nos. 11, 12, pp. 53–54, pls. 8–10.

Armed and greaved Mars with sword in lowered hand: H. Menzel, *Die römischen Bronzen aus Deutschland*, I, *Speyer*, Mainz 1960, no. 4, p. 3, pl. 5.

[15] For Mars, see Babelon and Blanchet (note 13 above), nos. 190–192, p. 86; H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Bronzes, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman, in the British Museum*, London 1899, no. 798, p. 144, pl. XXIII; A. de Ridder, *Musée du Louvre: Les bronzes antiques*, Paris 1913, no. 484, p. 69, fig. 54; L. Ognenova-Marinova, *Statuettes en bronze du musée national archéologique à Sofia*, Sofia 1975, no. 73, pp. 78–79; A. Leibundgut, *Die römischen Bronzen der Schweiz*, III, *Westschweiz Bern und Wallis*, Mainz 1980, no. 11, pp. 20–22, pls. 16, 17.

For rulers and leaders, see G. M. A. Hanfmann and C. C. Vermeule, III, "A New Trajan," *AJA* 61, 1957, pp. 223–253, pls. 68–75.

For development of the type, see C. C. Vermeule, III, "Hellenistic and Roman Cuirassed Statues," *Berytus* 13, 1959/1960, pp. 1–82, pls. 1–26.

as long, fringed leather straps, but there are no rows of the oval metal flaps that are normally attached to the cuirass on the Roman examples.[16] The warrior wears neither cloak nor greaves, and he is not a mature bearded man but a clean-shaven youth with his shoulders thrown back, his head raised, and his gaze a confident, even arrogant one. Furthermore, he is more long-legged, slender, and simply dressed than the middle-aged, compact, and overdressed figures of Mars Ultor that are so familiar.

The Corinth figure's beardlessness, his elegant proportions, and his tousled hair evoke neither Mars Ultor nor the Roman imperial portraits of the 1st and 2nd centuries after Christ; they suggest instead an earlier tradition of heroic and commemorative statues which began in the 5th century B.C. with figures like the Riace Bronzes. Initially, the stance may have been based upon that of the Doryphoros, and nudity was standard, but the demeanor and eventually also the dress were changed to fit the new type, that of leader, strategos, ruler, or the like. The work of Lysippos in the 4th century B.C. evidently marked the turning point. In his portrait of Alexander with a lance, Lysippos was said to have emphasized the turn of the head, the gaze, and the sense of power. Further, Lysippos made figures with smaller heads, more vivid hair, and more slender proportions than had previously been customary.[17]

Alexandrine characteristics are evident in a series of bronze statuettes which are likely to have been based on the portrait by Lysippos.[18] One over-lifesize bronze statue of a Hellenistic ruler survives, and it too is certainly an adaptation of the famous statue of Alexander.[19] Although this enormous figure makes clear reference to the type of Alexander with a lance,[20] his facial features do not at all resemble those of his well-known predecessor. Here, as was the norm in coinage, Alexander's Hellenistic imitators replaced his physical appearance with their own.

The Corinth statuette falls into the same tradition, but it represents the next step in the process of redefining the image of the leader or ruler: this figure is no longer nude but wears helmet, cuirass, tunic, and boots as befits a mortal. This is obviously not intended to be Alexander himself but someone who follows in the same tradition, combining the sharply turned head, the tousled hair, and the upraised arm which held a staff or a lance with the proud bearing of Alexander.

[16] See Vermeule, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[17] Pliny, *NH* 34.65; Plutarch, *Alexander* 4.1; Plutarch, *de Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute* 2.2; *Anth. Pal.* 16.120.

[18] *Statuettes:*

Louvre MN 1576: M. Bieber, *Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art*, Chicago 1964, pp. 34–35, fig. 18, pl. X; M. Robertson, *A History of Greek Art*, Cambridge 1975, p. 514, note 26, p. 714, pl. 163:a; *The Search for Alexander: An Exhibition*, N. Yalouris *et al.*, edd., Boston 1980, no. 41, p. 120.

Treviso, M.C. 148: V. Galliazzo, *Bronzi romani del Museo Civico di Treviso*, Rome 1979, no. 1, pp. 39–44.

London, B.M. 1077 (hair and helmet are especially close to those of the Corinth statuette): Walters (note 15 above), p. 192, pl. 24; Bieber, figs. 65–67, pls. 33, 34.

[19] *Statue of Hellenistic ruler*, Rome, M.N. 1049: L. Laurenzi, *Ritratti Greci*, Florence n.d., no. 94, p. 129, pls. 38, 39; R. Lullies and M. Hirmer, *Greek Sculpture*, London 1960, p. 103, pls. 264, 265; Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 477, 520–521, 554, note 39, p. 716, pls. 163:c, 164:b.

[20] For the *Alexandrine type*, see Erkinger von Schwarzenberg, "Der lysippische Alexander," *BJb* 167, 1967, pp. 92–98.

Any viewer studying the iconographic features readily understands that the Corinth statuette is intended to represent an important and powerful individual, a leader who marches with confidence in the wake of Alexander. The curly hair and clean-shaven cheeks, the simply adorned helmet, cuirass, and lappets, the open-toed boots, and the slender and elegant proportions, which were not evident in the early photographs of the statuette, all point to a Hellenistic date. Although the statuette survived in Corinth until the Late Roman period, it was surely produced before the destruction of the city by Mummius in 146 B.C.

CAROL C. MATTUSCH

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Department of Art and Art History
4400 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

a. Front view

b. Rear view

Corinth MF 4016 (old photographs)

a. Front view b. Right-side view c. Rear view d. Left-side view

Corinth MF 4016 (1989 photographs)

C. C. Mattusch: A Bronze Warrior from Corinth

PLATE 21

PLATE 22

a. Detail of head, left rear view

b. Detail of cuirass

c. Detail of shoes