

THE TERRACOTTA FIGURINES

The terracotta figurines discovered during the first campaign in the Athenian Agora show a wide variety of types, both native and foreign. Despite their fragmentary condition, they indicate something of the history of the craft of the coroplast in Athens, a history hitherto little known. In view, however, of the likelihood of discovering much more material in the coming campaigns, this report must be considered as tentative. It is, in fact, merely a commentary on the Catalogue to which it is referred.

Stratigraphic evidence for dating the figurines is unfortunately slight. An examination of the material according to the levels of discovery indicates that most of the areas were disturbed in Roman times. This conclusion had already been reached from a study of the other material.¹ The pottery which was found with individual figurines often can be used as evidence for the general dating, though rarely for more specific chronology. A closer dating can be obtained only by the comparative method. First, the figurines may be compared with other dated examples. Secondly, the technical details, such as the clay, the paint, the surface treatment, may be compared with those of pottery and of lamps. In this field the Agora excavations afford unusual opportunities to the student of terracottas by providing much pottery and many lamps for comparative purposes.

Of approximately fifty terracottas, only four pieces are datable before Hellenistic times, and some twelve examples are to be assigned to the period immediately before the Christian era. Of the remainder the major part date as late as the third and fourth centuries A. D.

EARLY PERIODS

One of the finest fragments in the whole group is a portion of a head representing a satyr (981-P 150). The well-washed clay, with its traces of reddening, the fine black glaze, and the white paint resemble those of late sixth century vases from Athens. In addition, the shape of the fragment suggests that it comes from a plastic vase. A somewhat similar piece of "Boeotian clay" indicates the type.² The fragment of the figure of a horse (435-T 35) is also evidently to be assigned to an early date. The mould of a seated draped figure (630-T 44), Fig. 1, 3, is stylistically assignable to the archaic

¹ I am much indebted to Dr. Thompson and Mr. Waagé for discussing the pottery with me and for many helpful suggestions.

² M. I. Maximova, *Les Vases plastiques dans l'antiquité*, Paris, 1927, II, pl. XLVII, 175.

period.¹ The proportions of the torso of a seated "doll" are certainly pre-Hellenistic (734—T 57),² Fig. 2, 2. In view of the long life of all these types, however, it is impossible to give a more exact dating than by periods.

HELLENISTIC PERIOD

The terracotta mould of a plastic vase in the shape of a knucklebone (430—T 30) can be dated in the third century B.C. (Fig. 1, 2). The type and the dimensions accord with

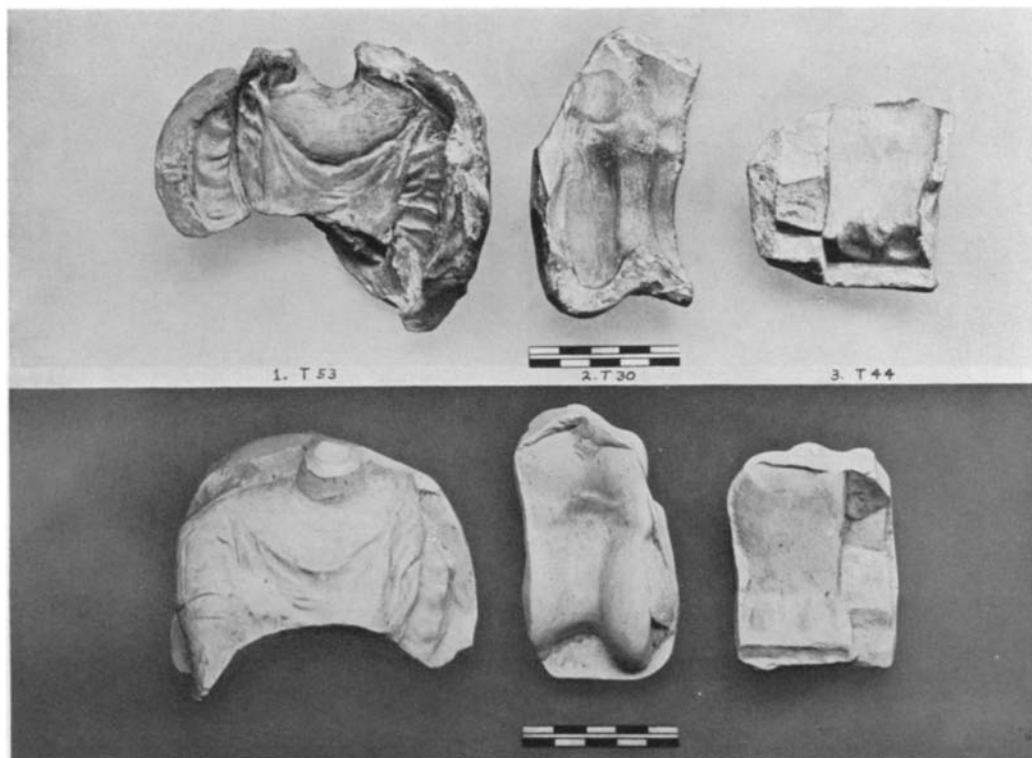


Fig. 1

those of three small vases, probably askoi, or lamp-feeders, in the National Museum in Athens.³ On one of these (National Museum, no. 2253), the ribbed handle is tied in a Herculean knot, which is a motif extremely common on Gnathia ware.⁴ The glaze, the handle, and the spout of the askoi are all of characteristic Gnathia types. From these

¹ Cf. F. Winter, *Die Typen der figürlichen Terrakotten* I, p. 44, no. 5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 165, nos. 4, 5.

³ F. Courby, *Les Vases grecs à reliefs*, Paris, 1922, pp. 222-3, National Museum, Room Γ', nos. 12289 (Boeotia), 2253-4 (Tanagra); G. Nicole, *Catalogue Vases d'Athènes*, supplement, p. 288, no. 1263.

⁴ E.g. *Corpus Vasorum*, *British Museum* I, IV D c, pl. 6, nos. 11, 15; pl. 7, no. 9.

parallels and because our mould was found with Hellenistic black glazed wares and with Megarian bowls, it can be dated in the third century. The significance of the inscribed Δ on the back is uncertain. Like ΔH on another mould (639-T 53), Fig. 1, 1, it may be the signature of a coroplast, or it is more probably merely a mark for the convenience of the workman. The presence of this mould in Athens suggests that the askoi were exported to Boeotia.

It is interesting to note that among the Agora figurines only one piece follows strictly the most popular Hellenistic tradition, which is exemplified especially in the

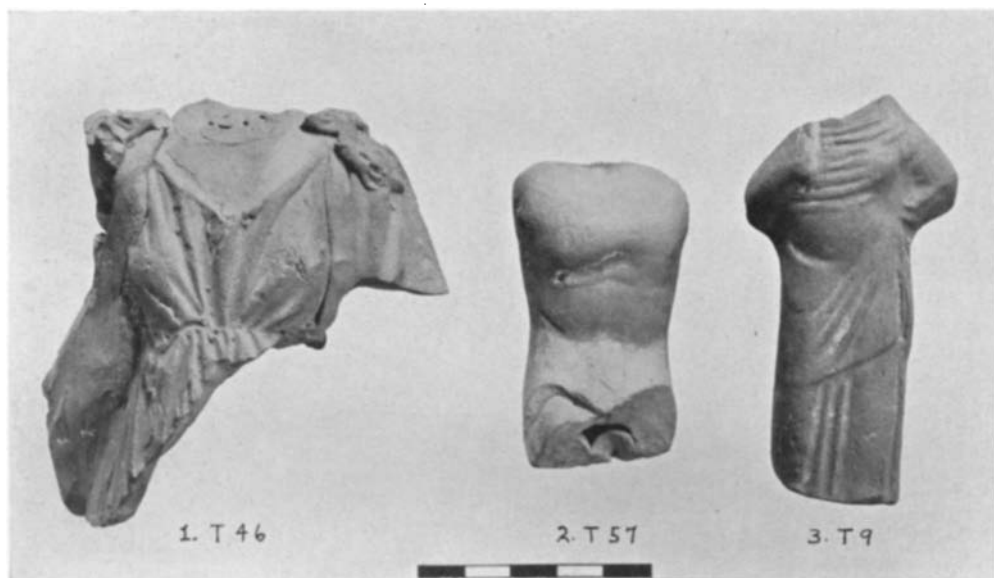


Fig. 2

terraccottas from Tanagra. This draped female figurine (365-T 9) illustrates a common fourth century type,¹ Fig. 2, 3. It is, however, rendered in a careless style that is attributable to the third century B.C. A finely characterized head of a female figurine (364-T 8), Fig. 3, 4, also found with much good third and second century pottery, is an interesting example of an Athenian version of a Tanagra type. This head is like one on a figure in the Loeb Collection² of which the proportions and the style suggest a date in the latter part of the third century. The size and the solidity of our head as well as the rather soft modelling, are also more advanced than those of the characteristic Tanagra specimens. Similarly, another charming female head (383-T 27), Fig. 4, 2, was found with good Hellenistic pottery. In its appealing grace it resembles a late third

¹ *Typenkatalog* II, p. 11, no. 1; p. 13, no. 6.

² J. Sieveking, *Die Terrakotten der Sammlung Loeb*, München, 1916, I, pl. 56.

century example in the Loeb Collection.¹ The clay seems to be Corinthian rather than Attic as it is found in a similar head in the Corinth Museum.² A later type (640-T 54), Fig. 4, 1, also found with Hellenistic pottery, is clearly of Attic manufacture. It shows the round face popular in the second century B.C.³ The incisive treatment of the hair in combination with the slovenly representation of the features is in accordance with the



Fig. 3

taste of the later Hellenistic period. A fragment (632-T 46), Fig. 2, 1, which was found in an Hellenistic deposit and a mould (639-T 53),⁴ Fig. 1, 1, both of which represent draped women, also show the style of the early Hellenistic period. The drapery is broadly modelled and the surface is left rather rough, as though the coroplast felt an artist's interest in exploiting his medium. The influence of contemporary sculpture may

¹ *Ibid.*, pl. 51.

² Corinth Museum, M. F. 1420.

³ Cf. A. Köster, *Die griechischen Terrakotten*, Berlin, 1926, pl. 97. Cf. also the heads on Pergamene sculpture.

⁴ Another mould with the same signature was found in the Agora in 1932 in a deposit not later than the third century.

be seen in these fragments.¹ More advanced in style is another fragment of drapery (641-T 55), Fig. 3, 5. The heavily rilled folds are characteristic of sculptural styles of the early first century B.C. as rendered in terracottas from Myrina and Delos.² Two fragments (428-T 28), Fig. 3, 2 and 3, of a seated draped figure show good late Hellenistic taste. Another piece of which the clay is like that from Asia Minor (434-T 34), Fig. 3, 1, is a later example of this same class.

Miscellaneous pieces, probably of the Hellenistic period, include a disk decorated with shells (439-T 39), Fig. 5, 2. It may represent shells for the toilet, such as were found in the graves of Myrina.³ The clay indicates that it is an importation. The crude



Fig. 4

representation of an animal, a mouse or possibly a dog, outstretched on an oval plaque (368-T 12), Fig. 5, 1, is an unusual type of uncertain date.⁴ Two plastic ornaments for vases are also included in the Catalogue: a clay shell (989-P 158) which was evidently the foot of a Megarian bowl⁵ and the defaced head of a satyr (985-P 154). The clay and glaze of the latter resemble those of Hellenistic lamps and of Megarian bowls. The

¹ Cf. the drapery and the locks of hair on the shoulder with those of Ge and of Athena on the Pergamene altar, *Allertümer von Pergamon* III, 2, pl. XII.

² Athens, National Museum, no. 5113 (Myrina), Delos Museum, no. A 312 α'.

³ Pottier and Reinach, *La Nécropole de Myrina*, pp. 245-6.

⁴ This may be a terracotta version of the marble statuettes such as are figured in C. C. Edgar, *Greek Sculpture*, Le Caire, 1903, pl. XVII, no. 27.520; G. M. A. Richter, *Animals in Greek Sculpture*, London, 1930, pl. LIII, fig. 169.

⁵ Cf. *B.S.A.* XXVI (1923-5), pp. 287 f.; fig. 4, p. 293.

milling at the edge indicates that it is probably a mask which was placed at the base of the handle of a Gnathia vase.¹ The Hellenistic braziers include two examples (982—P 151, 983—P 152), Fig. 6, 2, of the most common type representing a daimon of the cycle of Hephaistos wearing a pointed cap.² They are from the same mould and very possibly from the same vessel. Two other specimens (1062—P 189, 990—P 159) belong to the type of a bearded satyr,³ Fig. 6, 1. The mica and the clay of all these indicate that they are importations, like the numerous other specimens, from some large manufacturing centre, probably in Asia Minor.⁴



Fig. 5

ROMAN PERIOD

In Athens the Greek tradition continues well into Roman times. For the first two or three centuries after Christ the types do not appear to change very much. The same fact has been noted in Egypt.⁵ Technically Roman work betrays itself in the coarse clay, which is usually burned bright red or has a dusty yellow surface. The style and

¹ Cf. *British Museum Catalogue of Vases* IV, G 57; *Corp. Vas. Brit. Mus.* I, IV D c, pl. 5, nos. 7, 9, 11; pl. 6, no. 9.

² Conze, *Griechische Kohlenbecken*, *Jahrbuch* V (1890), pp. 118 ff., type I A, 1, pl. I, p. 138.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 126—7, type III A, no. 324.

⁴ In the Museum of Delos alone I noted twelve large packing cases of braziers.

⁵ This statement is based on the evidence from Corinth as kindly given me by Dr. Broneer and on the study of material from Asia Minor, Delos, and other sites; for Egypt, Flinders Petrie; *Roman Ehnasya*, Egyptian Exploration Fund, London, 1905, pp. 26—28.

the finish are careless and dull. Among early Roman pieces may be placed the face of a large figure of a child (431-T 31), Fig. 7, 7, which resembles Pompeian work.¹ Another child's head (433-T 33) is a Roman version of the Hellenistic Eros type. An interesting early Roman piece is the small torso of a boxer in action (359-T 3), Fig. 4, 3. The ring at the shoulder is evidently the top of the *caestus*, the metal glove which was worn by Roman boxers.² The micaceous clay, the size, and the emphatic musculature of this



Fig. 6

piece are characteristic of work from Smyrna where similar statuettes of boxers have been found.³ The yellow clay and peculiar purplish paint of another fragment representing a seated child resting his hand on his knee (377-T 21) indicate that it is also an importation. The type is that of a figure which was found in a Roman grave in South Russia.⁴ Similarly, the clay and the glaze of a curious fragment (373-T 17),

¹ A. Levi, *Le Terrecotte figurate del museo di Napoli*, Firenze, 1926, p. 184, fig. 139.

² J. Jüthner, *Über antike Turngeräthe*, *Abhandlungen des archäologisch-epigraphischen Seminars der Universität Wien* XII, Wien, 1896, pp. 87-95.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 88; *Typenkatalog* II, p. 445, no. 8; p. 446, no. 5.

⁴ *Compte Rendu*, 1876, pl. VI, no. 6, pp. 206 f.

Fig. 7, 1, which was found with very late pottery do not resemble those of Attic vases or lamps. It is in type possibly one of those small groups of late Hellenistic and Roman times which often show a column or a post standing upon a pedestal in the background.¹

Red paint such as occurs on later Roman lamps betrays the late date of the fragment of a standing youth (370-T 14), which appears to be of a type which was found in Cyprus and in Italy.² The clay resembles that of Asia Minor. The fragment of the figure of a boy in a pointed cap (363-T 7), Fig. 7, 8, belongs clearly to a plastic vase like two in the Museum at Corinth.³ These vases represent two children kissing, probably slave boys, although the earlier examples of children in pointed caps have been interpreted as twin godlings.⁴ The fragment of another boy wearing a pointed cap (361-T 5) is covered with a red paint similar to that which is used on lamps of Type XXVIII.⁵ Similar figures were found at Sparta in a deposit dating after 250 A.D.⁶ Another was found in the Asklepieion at Athens.⁷ Late lamps also take the form of a hooded boy.⁸ This type probably represents Telesphoros, the little attendant of Asklepios whose cult spread from Asia Minor or Thrace to Athens in the third century A.D.⁹ The style of this example and the fact that the eyes are not bored are indications that it is to be dated in the late third century A.D. It probably stood on a high base of the type of which a fragment was found in the Agora (631-T 45).

Related to this group is an interesting series of terracottas of crude style and workmanship. The types include male and female heads, grotesques, and animals. They are without published parallels, but similar pieces have been found at Corinth and in the Athenian Kerameikos.¹⁰ The Agora series begins with the fairly well modelled head of a female figurine (635-T 49), Fig. 7, 2, which is covered with red paint like that on the hooded child just mentioned (361-T 5). The thick white paint on the eyes is unlike any earlier paint, but it occurs frequently on terracottas from the Kerameikos which Dr. Kübler dates in the fourth century A.D. The type is given by a similar head of more advanced style (366-T 10), Fig. 7, 9. The following points are characteristic: a fat face with features set high, hair arranged in deep waves over the forehead, a ring around the head, a high and elaborate coiffure, and a convex mass of hair at the back.

¹ *Nécropole de Myrina*, pl. XX, no. 6; pl. XLIV, nos. 4 and 6.

² *Typenkatalog* II, p. 249, no. 1; p. 251, no. 7.

³ Corinth Museum, M. F. 7; Shear excavations, T 109-Te 22. See *Hesperia* I, 1932, p. 61, fig. 6.

⁴ F. Marx, *Dioskurenartige Gottheiten*, *Ath. Mitt.* X (1885), pp. 81 ff.

⁵ Cf. *Agora Catalogue*, Lamps, L 114.

⁶ R. M. Dawkins, *Artemis Orthia*, London, 1929, pl. XLV, 1-4, p. 160.

⁷ J. Martha, *Catalogue des figures en terre cuite d'Athènes*, Paris, 1880, p. 31, no. 148.

⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 147, National Museum, Room F', case 86, no. 3333, case 85, no. 2503; Room Δ', case 136, nos. 15006, 3823, 5776; cf. no. 15073.

⁹ W. Wroth, *Telesphoros*, *J. H. S.* III (1882), pp. 283 ff. P. Perdrizet, *Les Terres cuites grecques d'Égypte de la collection Fouquet*, Paris, 1921, pl. LXXIII, nos. 271-3, p. 105. Daremberg and Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités*, s. v. Telesphorus (Darier).

¹⁰ I am most grateful to Dr. Kübler for giving me the results of his study of the material from the Kerameikos, which are to appear shortly.

This type shows Graeco-Egyptian influence like the pottery of the same period.¹ By analogy with the pieces from Corinth² and the Kerameikos, the Agora examples may be assumed to have represented a seated or a standing woman, holding offerings or a child. Certain North African examples have been interpreted as Isis.³ The Egyptian connections of the Greek pieces may indicate the same identification for them. The degeneration of the type is traceable through certain crude pieces (634-T 48, Fig. 7, 11; 357-T 1) to absolutely barbaric examples (381-T 25, 360-T 4, 629-T 43, 376-T 20, 642-T 56,



Fig. 7

637-T 51, Fig. 7, 3). In the latter the features are rendered by deep gouging, which is a common mannerism on lamps of Type XXVIII.⁴ The linear style thus produced foreshadows the style of early Byzantine work.⁵

¹ K. Kübler, *Spätantike Stempelkeramik*, *Ath. Mitt.* LVI (1931), pp. 79 ff.

² Corinth Museum, M. F. 274, 329, etc.; Shear excavations, T 985-Tc 149.

³ R. P. Delattre, *Musée Lavignerie de St Louis de Carthage II*, Paris, 1899, pl. XI, nos. 3 and 10, p. 45.

⁴ O. Broneer, *Corinth, Terracotta Lamps*, pl. XVI, nos. 1167, 1177; pl. XVII, nos. 1244, 1250.

⁵ Cf. R. Delbrück, *Die Consulardiptychen*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1929, pls. 9; 24-5.

The male figures from the Agora are equally interesting.¹ According to Kübler, the type represents a priest of Isis. The shaved head and the facial type are similar to those from the Kerameikos (371-T 15, Fig. 7, 10; 638-T 52, Fig. 7, 6; 379-T 23; 380-T 24). Again the facial type resembles that of early Byzantine ivories.² Gross examples (735-T 58, 362-T 6) are similar to the worst female pieces and may be assigned to the late fourth century or to the early fifth century. Two heads must be classified as grotesques (432-T 32, 367-T 11, Fig. 7, 4), such as were also found in the Kerameikos. One fragment which apparently represents a similar face with matted locks of hair above it (372-T 16) resembles faces in the centre of lamps of Type XXVIII.³ A fragment of a lion mask (369-T 13) is like the late Roman masks from the Kerameikos.

Only four animal heads of this class have so far been found in the Agora. Two represent a ram (636-T 50, Fig. 7, 5; 382-T 26), one a sheep (375-T 19), and one a dog (378-T 22). They are all rendered by the gouged incisions that are characteristic of the technique of the late fourth century. Many similar examples were found in the Kerameikos and some are in the National Museum.⁴ A similar technique is observable in the plastic handles representing animal heads which occur on red pottery ornamented with white paint. The Agora excavations have produced several examples of these handles.⁵ Similar handles have been found in the Kerameikos, in other parts of Athens,⁶ in Eleusis,⁷ in Corinth,⁸ in Egypt,⁹ and in the Spartan deposit which is dated in the third century A.D.¹⁰

This survey of the terracotta figurines from the Agora teaches us something of the development of the taste of the common people of Athens. Even from the few early pieces which have survived we can see that hieratic tradition first dominated the craft of the coroplast. In the Hellenistic examples we find that craft first coming into an independent existence. The significance of the type dies out, and the subject is selected for its artistic interest. The coroplast treats his work, in its small way, from the same point of view as does the modern artist. To them both, style and manner are of paramount importance. We note also that at this time types are numerous and varied and that foreign types are imported or imitated. In the Roman period this same unity of culture continues. Even from our scanty material we can trace connections with

¹ There are also several examples in the Corinth Museum.

² Delbrück, *op. cit.*, pls. 11-12; 51-2.

³ Cf. *Agora Catalogue*, 855-L 289 and 856-L 290.

⁴ Room Δ', case 142, nos. 4457-8; case 138, no. 5942.

⁵ 751-P 84; 980-P 149; 984-P 153; 1010-P 171; 1011-P 172; 1012-P 173. See the article below on Roman pottery by F. Waagé.

⁶ National Museum, Room Α', case 156, no. 9940 (mould of a horse's head), 5471 (ram); Room Γ', case 56, no. 14762 A, and the heads of a horse, two rams, a boar.

⁷ Eleusis Museum, two rams' and two horses' heads, one lion (?).

⁸ Corinth Museum, C. P. 978, etc.

⁹ C. C. Edgar, *Greek Vases*, Le Caire, 1911, pl. XXVIII, 32.393 (ram).

¹⁰ *Artemis Orthia*, pl. XLVI, no. 8 (sheep?).

Smyrna, South Russia, Cyprus, Italy, and Egypt. These earlier Roman figurines merely repeat the classic tradition monotonously. By the fourth century A.D. the classic tradition is dead, and Orientalism invades Athens. Just before the establishment of Christianity a new energy breaks forth. Athens, ironically, begins to manufacture barbaric terracottas of vile workmanship. These terracottas reveal a certain vitality, but it is the vitality of a population of the soil, illiterate and sensitive to the fear of strange religions. The Athenian people become at last just another of the many Levantine slave populations to whom the only intellectual conceptions possible are those of superstition and of magic.

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