MATERIAL ON THE CULT OF SARAPIS

Since the various Graeco-Egyptian and Graeco-Roman cults have been discussed frequently in recent numbers of this journal,¹ this seems to be a suitable time and place to assemble six unknown objects relating to the cult of Sarapis. All of them are in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. Sarapis, a deity who was once very widely venerated, is less thoroughly understood today than most of the ancient gods, and one of the prime reasons for our ignorance is that the total number of monuments relating to his worship is so tremendous that nothing like an adequate publication has ever been attempted. Toward such an eventual publication I am now contributing this group of objects. Individually they offer little new knowledge, but each corroborates something that was previously surmised about the images. Only after these and many more souvenirs have been studied will it be possible to answer the disturbing questions which arise whenever one considers Sarapis. Do all the works of art imitate one great cult statue? What was the date of the first statue? What were its distinguishing features? Was its sculptor named Bryaxis and, if so, was he the only sculptor of that name? Could the statue have been imported to Alexandria from faraway Sinope? Why was a deity who was politically so important for Egypt exclusively Greek in his physical manifestations? What was there about his cult to make him, in the end, influential throughout the Roman world? What rites were performed in his worship, and with what implements? What special part was played by those curious monuments, the detached feet of Sarapis? These are only a few of the queries for which answers are still to be found by scholars.

1. The first monument deserves to be known on its merits, for it is one of the comparatively few colossal works remaining from all antiquity. It is a marble head with neck, 0.52 m. tall (Figs. 1, 2).² It was purchased by Mr. Henry Walters in 1912 from a dealer who stated that it had been excavated at Baliana in Upper Egypt, and it has been at the Walters Art Gallery ever since. It is of crystalline white marble. The nose has been restored in marble. The locks above the forehead have been broken off and the mass of hair at the right of the neck has been shortened. The condition of other parts of the head is excellent.

The back and sides of the head were not worked in detail. The sketchy treatment of these parts does not necessarily imply that they were invisible. The sculptor knew

² Walters Art Gallery, no. 23. 120.
Fig. 1. Colossal Head of Sarapis, in Baltimore. Front View
Fig. 2. Colossal Head of Sarapis, in Baltimore. Diagonal View
that on a head of such great size, raised the appropriate distance above the ground, fine details of hair would not be easily discernible and therefore he yielded to the temptation to save labor on them. The face was the important part, since it had to be clearly visible at a great distance, and it therefore was given painstaking treatment.

Although the lower edge is slightly irregular, it appears not to have been broken but to have been cut. An original edge at just this place implies that the statue was draped and that the drapery ended a short distance from the neck. The size of the head almost requires that the god be in a seated pose.

On the very top of the head is a square cutting, 0.043 m. on a side and 0.05 m. deep, which was used for dowelling the modius or καλαθος, the headress usual with Sarapis and with certain other deities who had connections with the netherworld.

Since both the modius and the drapery were separate pieces, one should not overlook the possibility that they were of another color from the face. In that case the head would come from a rather complicated polychrome construction.\(^3\) Gilding on our head would be further evidence for what may have been a fairly general practice. Unfortunately, it is impossible to be absolutely certain about the original condition of this head. Although at no point is there any red matter which could not be due to patination alone, there is still a strong probability that red pigment was once applied to hair and beard, perhaps even to the entire surface.

The most striking features, that is, the wide calm eyes and the falling locks on the forehead, are copied from the traditional rendition of Zeus, as he was established for all time by Pheidias’ Olympian statue.\(^5\) However, the beard and mustache, and to an extent the hair, distinguish this as a Sarapis face, not a Zeus. It is characteristic of Sarapis that the locks on the forehead be five in number. The parted lips are framed by a stiff mustache which curls up into a spiral on the left cheek, but turns down on the right side. The beard is very curly, and it projects forward below the mouth in a great mass, so that in profile there appear to be two parts of the beard, an upper and a lower. When we view the beard from the front we see two parts once more, for it is long on both sides and short in the middle.

\(^3\) I know of no complete, large Sarapis statue of several materials, but there exist other detached heads which suggest such a construction. Cf. A.J.A., XLI, 1937, pp. 539 ff.; J.H.S., XLII, 1922, p. 31, fig. 1; and Edgar, Greek Sculpture (Catalogue général—du Musée du Caire), pl. II, no. 27432.


\(^5\) See Brunn, Griechische Götterideale, 1893, pp. 99 ff.
The head as a whole is impressive, and yet the effects of great plasticity and of light areas contrasting with shaded and shadowed were achieved by a lazy technique. Deep drilling separates the hair from the face, and the foremost locks on each side were separated from the others by the drill. The locks over the forehead were cut free in the same way. A couple of locks on top of the head were undercut. All the rest of the hair is only superficially blocked out.

The precise purpose of our head, is, of course, unknown. Its great size and the color scheme which we have hypothesized are enough to suggest that it may come from a cult statue. Even if this were true, the poor workmanship would militate against its being a very important monument. Possibly it came from a cult statue in a shrine or temple of slight importance.

2. The second item is a small head made of a marble which is very close to alabaster (Fig. 3). It is so smooth and so yellow that it was sold to Mr. Walters as an ivory carving. It is 0.07 m. tall, including its long neck, and it is complete except for a few locks of hair. The top of the head was sliced off so as to afford a smooth circular surface to which the modius was fastened by a dowel set in a round hole. The neck ends with a rounded, well finished lower surface. Like the colossal head, this small one was intended to be inserted in a statue of different material, and to wear a separately constructed modius. Once more we are inclined to believe in a figure of variegated color.

The type is the same as the large head, though the details are much finer and the general impression more delicate. The five locks of hair falling over the face were in contact with the forehead at their tips, but higher up they were undercut. The lower parts of some of the locks at the sides were freed from the head with the drill. The hair on the back of the head and the curls in the neck were carefully cut, in contrast to the sketchy treatment of the back of the first head. The beard and

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6 Walters Art Gallery, no. 23. 203.
7 For a statuette composed in this way see Amelung, Die Skulpturen des vaticanischen Museums, I, pl. 50, no. 225.
mustache are identical with those of the great head, even down to the curls at the ends of the mustache, but they were worked more accurately. The drill was used to make little holes at the centers of many curls. The eyes seem lively, since the corneas and pupils were marked by incision and given an upward glance by their position close to the upper lids.

3. The third object is a small bronze head, broken from a bust or statuette (Fig. 4). Including the *modius* and a small portion of the shoulders, it is 0.066 m. tall. The figure was cast hollow, with rather thin walls.

   Enough remains of the shoulders and back to prove that the statuette (or bust) was fully draped. The *modius* was cast with the head, and has a projecting ring at its base and three incised olive sprays on front and both sides. Face, hair and beard are almost standard. There are four locks above the forehead instead of the usual five, and the ends of the mustache are not clearly rendered. The curls of the beard are lumpy and the masses of loose hair beside the face were carelessly shaped. We should note that there is some slight undercutting of the locks of the forehead, though there is none at the sides. The pupils of the eyes are drilled dots, with an upward glance.

4. A fourth example is a head and bust made of blue moulded material which must be glass (Fig. 5). The right half of the neck and bust has been broken away, and the break passes through the round vertical hole which was used for the mounting in ancient times. The bust is of the large, fully draped type, deeply undercut with a small block reserved for support at the center of the back. In addition to the damage to the right half of the bust, a piece has been chipped from the forehead above the left eye and the tip of the nose is damaged.

   It should be emphasized that this object is not made of the common Egyptian faience, which has a blue glass coating and a core of white sand, but is blue through-

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Fig. 4. Small Bronze Sarapis Head from Statuette or Bust, in Baltimore

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8 Walters Art Gallery, no. 54.1119.
9 See Amelung, *Rev. arch.*, Ser. 4, II, 1903, p. 197. Amelung considers that such branches represent the complete trees on other replicas.
10 Walters Art Gallery, no. 47.106. Ht. 0.079 m. Published, *Pagan and Christian Egypt* (Exhibition Catalogue, Brooklyn Museum), 1941, no. 109 (not illustrated).
out and of a smooth, homogeneous texture. However, the exterior has a coating which is more vitreous than the interior. This coating is well preserved on the left side of the neck and face, but elsewhere is preserved only in the depressions.\footnote{Another glass head of Sarapis, a red one with a gray-green patina, is illustrated by Froehner, \textit{Collection Julien Gréau, Verrerie antique}, 1903, pl. XXXII, nos. 1 and 2. Two lapis busts of Sarapis are in the British Museum, Walters, \textit{Catalogue of Engraved Gems}, p. 368, nos. 3939, 3941, pl. XXXIII.}

As is inevitable with moulded objects, the details are not clear. The face and beard are conventional. The ends of the mustache merely droop, instead of curling. The \textit{modius} is placed rather far forward and a band surrounds the head. There are a dozen olive sprays instead of the usual three rendered in relief against the \textit{modius}.

The curious material recalls a story, very difficult to credit, which Clement of Alexandria told in late antique times. According to his tale, the great cult statue of Sarapis at Alexandria was made of many materials, metals and stones, pulverized, stained blue, and moulded. To the mixture there was added some material which remained after the funeral rites of the Osiris-Apis bull had been performed. It is impossible to believe such a story about the great statue, though it may have been predominate blue in color. A possible basis for Clement’s mistake would be a practice of moulding small imitations of the cult statue out of plastic blue material to which tiny fragments of elements supposedly endowed with religious significance were added. Our bust could have been composed in some such way, but we may not be certain that it has a connection with Clement’s statement, since it is bright blue, hardly blue-black, \textit{κόρανος}, as he described the colossos.\footnote{Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Protrepticus}, IV, 43 P (Loeb Library); IV, 48 (Dindorff). One may not altogether overlook a possible but rather dubious connection of this passage with Plutarch, \textit{De Sollertia animalium}, 36, where it is stated that a statue, apparently the statue of Isis which stood beside the Sarapis, was moulded after the Kore at Sinope. On this passage see S. Reinach, \textit{Cultes, Mythes et Religions}, II, 1906, pp. 338-355.}
5. On a very heavy bronze finger ring, which has the long bezel typical of the Hellenistic period, is a large draped bust of Sarapis in high relief, surmounted by a head completely in the round (Fig. 6).\textsuperscript{13} The object is somewhat worn and has been defaced by corrosion. At a few points on the ring there are traces of gilding, indicating that the whole object was an imitation of gold. The draping of the bust and the physiognomy of the god are about as usual. The modius is small, perched on top of the head, and a headband passes in front of it.

Since this is the last of our representations of Sarapis,\textsuperscript{14} we may now summarize what these five have shown. The dating of the individual pieces is illusive. The ring, No. 5, has a bezel of a form that was usual during the Hellenistic epoch. Perhaps one might date No. 2 within the same period, on the grounds of its delicacy of workmanship. But possibly this head, and certainly all the others, were made under the Roman Empire. This might have been expected, since most of the representations of Sarapis which were previously known date from that period.\textsuperscript{15}

In details, our pieces differ little from the usual run of images. The two marbles may have come from statues of variegated material, and of them the larger one must have been a seated statue. In one case color or gilding seems to have been applied to white marble. The modius is preserved on three examples, and is ornamented by three olive sprays on the bronze bust, with many such sprays on the blue glass bust, and is plain on the ring.

Iconographically, all the representations are very similar. Although some are weaker than others, the resemblances are close enough to mark them all as copies, more or less direct, of the face of one original. The similarity of No. 1, the colossal head, to No. 2, the miniature marble, is especially striking. The original of all these copies must have been the great cult statue at Alexandria.

This group serves to reopen the discussion of the date of the original, a matter that has been much in dispute because of the confused ancient traditions. The statue

\textsuperscript{13} Walters Art Gallery, no. 54.1624. Length of bezel, 0.04 m.

\textsuperscript{14} This exhausts the possible Sarapis representations in this collection except for some gems and jewelry of conventional type.

\textsuperscript{15} Cf. Walters, British Museum, Select Bronzes, commentary upon pl. XXI.
was believed to have been imported to Alexandria from Sinope in Pontus, according to some sources during the reign of Ptolemy I, according to others by Ptolemy II, and according to one by Ptolemy III. Clement of Alexandria, the chief writer on the subject of the statue, told this story but denied it. He said that the statue was made of moulded material as we have already described, in Egypt, by a sculptor named Bryaxis, not Bryaxis the Athenian, the well-known artist who worked on the Mausoleum, but another of the name. The earliest positively dated representation of the type of statue which we know is on a coin of Ptolemy IV. The story of the importation was generally credited throughout antiquity, as is proved by a series of coins depicting its transport issued during the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius.\(^{16}\)

Artistic criticism applied to this problem has tended to corroborate the dating within the fourth century, and thereby to make an attribution to the well-known Bryaxis quite plausible. To Amelung and to Six the style of Bryaxis seemed so well established by the Sarapis that other works could be attributed to him.\(^{17}\) However, Lawrence compared the body of the statue with the (headless) Dionysos from the choragic monument of Thrasyllos, dated it about 300 B.C., and accepted a second Bryaxis as the sculptor.\(^{18}\) The representations of Sarapis which have been presented in this article add little that is new, but they have some negative weight: they show not a single feature which must positively be dated within the fourth century. After studying them and the other replicas of the face, I presume to state my personal opinion that the great statue was not made at Alexandria immediately after the founding of that city (or in Sinope before its founding), but, rather, shows all the preoccupations of the Hellenistic age in its full flower. Although the undercut locks of hair occur on works associated with Skopas,\(^{19}\) their full exploitation was not achieved until long after his time. The striving for shadows around the hair and in the beard, though it is revealed to us only through copyists' techniques, suggests dramatic qualities in the original which would be in keeping with the Hellenistic spirit. The projection of the beard in two degrees seems to me to mitigate against a fourth-century date of the original. The overly placid features, which on every copy contrast with the exuberant foliage of the hair and beard, would, in my opinion, be more understandable as a reaction toward classicism from the intensity of the Skopaic tradition, than if attributed to one of his co-workers on the Mausoleum, that high


\(^{18}\) Lawrence, \textit{Later Greek Sculpture}, p. 107.

\(^{19}\) For example, the Fogg head of Meleager, Chase, \textit{Greek and Roman Sculpture in American Collections}, p. 89, fig. 101.
spot of emotional sculpture.\textsuperscript{20} For these reasons I should be inclined to date the original Sarapis at least as late as the time of Ptolemy II, and to insist that if the sculptor was named Bryaxis, he was not the famous Athenian.

6. But the most interesting of all these Walters objects is not a representation of a god but a bronze lamp in the form of a human right foot.\textsuperscript{21} It may with some probability, though not with complete certainty, be connected with the Sarapis cult (Figs. 7-8).

This object consists of three parts: the sandaled foot with the nozzle before the toe and two large rings at the back; the cover which is a disc with an edge cut to fit the leg and provided with a ring at the back; and a rod which passes through the three rings so as to connect the foot and the cover. The upper part of the rod is lost and the remaining part is broken in half. The foot is realistically rendered, even down to the wrinkles on the toes, the irregularities of the strap (which passes between the great and the first toe, and surrounds the ankle), and the lifts at toe and heel under the sole at the inside of the foot. These lifts would be added by a cobbler for the benefit of a person whose ankle was inclined to turn in. The cover is plain now, but there is a small lump to prove that something was once attached at the center. The rod is decorated with an uraeus, of which the tail is 0.045 m. above the top of the lamp, the head 0.11 m.

The pivotal rod at the back is fixed firmly in the two rings which are part of the foot, but the ring which is attached to the cover moves freely about the rod. This was a necessary arrangement, for the cover, with its undercut edge, had to be raised and turned when the lamp was to be filled with oil. It is very unfortunate that the rod is broken just at the level of the cover, between the loose ring and the upper of the two tight ones. We are moved to ask whether the upper part of the rod is an original part of the object. There is, indeed, no proof of such a supposition. However, the loose part of the rod is of the same size as the part which adheres, and the parts are identical in texture of bronze and in the type of corrosion. We are justified therefore in assuming that everything we possess is original.

\textsuperscript{20} A representation of Zeus based upon Phidias' great work but of the period of Praxiteles and Skopas is the head in Boston, Caskey, \textit{Catalogue of Greek and Roman Sculpture}, pp. 59 f., no. 25. The face, though serene, is more thoughtful and more intense than the Sarapis; one might say it is nearer to the Skopai ideal. The hair and beard are much more restrained than the Sarapis. Amelung mentioned this contrast (\textit{Ausonia}, III, 1908, p. 125), but did not consider it the result of a difference of date. The Boston head has been thought to come from the Mausoleum; see Caskey, \textit{loc. cit.}; and Furtwängler in Brunn and Bruckmann, \textit{Denkmäler griechischer und römischer Sculptur}, text to plates 572-573. Lippold, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 120, dated the Boston Zeus before the Mausoleum.

\textsuperscript{21} Walters Art Gallery, no. 54.1190, a and b; rod, no. 54.1519. Height of foot, 0.06 m.; height of rod, 0.175 m. Formerly Dattari Collection. Sale Catalogue, Paris, 1912, p. 53, no. 461.
Fig. 7. Bronze Lamp in form of Human Foot, in Baltimore

Fig. 8. Side View of the Baltimore Lamp

It is the rod with the uraeus which gives all the interest to the object. Lamps modelled after parts of the body, especially the foot, were very common in antiquity.22

22 Babelon and Blanchet, *Catalogue des bronzes antiques de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, p. 465, no. 1084; *C.I.L.*, XV, pt. II, 1, no. 6287; Daremberg and Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, III, pt. II, p. 1325, fig. 4583. Two terracotta lamps in the form of a foot wearing the same kind of sandal as ours are Waldhauer, Kaiserliche Ermitage, *Die antiken Tonlampen*, pl. XLVIII, no. 504; Walters, *Catalogue of Greek and Roman Lamps in the British Museum*, p. 61, no. 419. Although sandals of this type are frequently worn by Aphrodite, I con-
Such a lamp might reflect no more than a whimsical mood of a craftsman. But the uraeus immediately suggests a connection with the giant detached Sarapis feet, recently studied by Dow and Upson. On these monuments the uraeus is usually curled somewhere in the neighborhood of the ankle. Here it coils on a rod which rises at the back of the foot. The space between the top of the foot and the tail of the snake is great enough to accommodate a small bust of Sarapis, which would correspond in position to the busts on some of the stone feet. We have observed that something was attached to the cover, and may now suggest a bust of the god as the most plausible candidate. If the bust were placed in this position, the uraeus would appear to loom over the head of the god.

Sarapis was a familiar figure on Roman lamps, though his presence on a lamp in the form of a foot has not been previously suspected. He appears once as the steersman of Isis, represented in relief on a lamp in the form of a ship named, apparently, for him. He appears again in relief, either complete or as a bust, on the discs of numerous terracotta lamps. On others, and among these some lamps shaped like ships, there is a relief of his figure or bust on the handle. Most striking of all is a group of lamps of which the handle consists of the free modelled bust and head of Sarapis, wearing his modius. (Of this group, some are in place on various conventional lamps, others are detached and offer no more than a suggestion of the form of the original lamp.) The smoke rising before the god from a lamp would create an eery, religious effect. Although Sarapis was by no means the only deity honored on lamps, his frequent presence there is evidence for the probability of his guardianship over this bronze foot. Certainly, however, there are not good grounds for connecting all foot-shaped lamps with the Sarapis cult.

The object which we have hypothetically reconstructed as having both the form of a foot and the image of Sarapis might have ethical implication, too. One has only to think of the familiar couplet from a post-Exilic psalm (Psalms 119:105) “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path,” to realize how well such

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23 Loc. cit.
24 Walters, History of Ancient Pottery, II, p. 403, pl. LXIII, fig. 1 and Catalogue of Greek and Roman Lamps, pp. 55 f., no. 390.
26 Walters, Catalogue, p. 56, nos. 391 f.; also, p. 124, no. 826.
27 Walters, Catalogue, pp. 130 ff., nos. 862 ff. (all broken from terracotta lamps); Beger, Thesaurus electoralis Brandenburgici, III, 1701, pp. 440, 442, nos. I, L, M, ill. (terracotta and alabaster); Arch. Anz., 1915, p. 27, and S. Reinach, Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine, V, p. 8, no. 3 (bronze, no modius).
an object would accord with the religious imagery and expression current in the Middle East.28

Walters Art Gallery

28 I should like to call attention to still another Sarapis item, a bronze statuette which is in the Baltimore Museum of Art. See News (The Baltimore Museum of Art), May, 1945, pp. 3-5. This seems to be the statuette formerly in the Disney Collection in England, and still earlier in the Collection of Dr. Mead. It now lacks the left hand with its attribute, and shows evidence of rather violent cleaning executed in order to remove a black lacquer, some traces of which still adhere to the back. This hand with its attribute and also a dubious “patina” caused Disney to doubt the authenticity of the statuette, Museum Disceanum, 1849, plate LXXI and commentary. The doubts are now dispelled. Unusual features of this Sarapis rendition are the nudity of the upper half of the body and the remaining attribute which seems, in its mutilated condition, to be a thunderbolt. The identity is established, I think, by the modius, which has the three olive sprays usual with Sarapis.

ΣΤΕΦΑΝΩ, TITLE OF A PRIESTESS

'Αρρήτο(υ) τελετής πρόσολος σής, πότινα Δηρί,  
καὶ θυγατρὸς προθύρο(υ) κόσμον ἁγαλμα τόδε  
ἐστησεν στέφανω Λυσιστράτη συνε παρόντων  
φείδεται, ἀλλὰ θείς ἄφθονος ἐσ δύναμιν.

Inscription from the Eleusinion at Athens, στοιχείον, ca. 450 B.C., ed. Pritchett, Hesperia, IX, 1940, pp. 97-101, with photograph.1

στέφανῳ scripsi: στέφανῳ (dual) or Στέφανῳ (gen. of Στέφανος) edd.

As κοσμώ and τραπεζώ are titles of Attic Athena priestesses,2 στέφανω fits the title of an Attic Demeter priestess.

Lysistrate might be an ancestor of her namesake, the Athena priestess I.G., Π, 776; cf. Π, 3455.

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1 Reprinted: Karouzos in Επετύμβιον Τσούντα (1941), p. 568; Guarducci, Annuario Scuola Arch. di Atene, III-IV, 1941-2, pp. 133 f.
2 Lycurgus, Fr. 47 Bl., and Ister, Fr. 16 M., both in Hærpocr. s.v. τραπεζόφωρος; cf. Hesych. s.v. τραπεζό. On nouns in -ώ cf. Buck and Peterson, Reverse Index, pp. 24 f.