

## A SYRIAN FROM SOUNION

(PLATE 85)

DURING the excavation of the bothros in the southeast corner of the sanctuary of Poseidon at Sounion there was found a bronze figurine which is now in the National Museum in Athens (Pl. 85).<sup>1</sup> The small, stocky man wears a kilt around his loins and a conical cap on his head. His right arm is raised as if to swing a weapon, while his left arm, now broken, was bent at the elbow. The man has his nose “up in the air”; forehead and cap are positioned in such a way that the upper part of the face and the cap make a line which is nearly horizontal. A loop protruding from the back of the figurine, between the shoulder blades, indicates that the piece was used as a pendant, perhaps as an amulet.

Although not devoid of a certain rude vigor, this roughly cast bronze has little to commend it as a work of art; yet it is important as evidence of contact between Attica and the Levant. For this bronze is clearly Near Eastern and probably was made in Syria. Somewhat the same lumpy style occurs, for example, in a terracotta found at Al Mina and in a bronze figurine from Karpaso on Cyprus.<sup>2</sup> Near Eastern bronze figurines of the “warrior” type, to which the Sounion bronze belongs, are found in many museums and private collections. The god represented is the Near Eastern storm god—Reshef, Baal, or Hadad.<sup>3</sup>

The Near Eastern bronze was not the only overseas import in the bothros; Egyptian scarabs are another kind of souvenir which ancient sailors grateful for the first landfall in Attica dedicated at the windswept sanctuary.

Was the little bronze image of a Syrian god bought by a Greek sailor for insurance against storms? Was it brought directly from the Levant to Attica on an Attic or a Phoenician ship? We do not know the answers. The case for direct

<sup>1</sup> NM 14 926. Full cast. H. 0.065 m. Published, without further comment, by A. V. Stais, *Ἀρχ. Ἐφ.*, 1917, p. 195, fig. 7. I am grateful to Christos Karousos and Semni Karousou for permission to study and republish the piece. The note is a by-product of studies undertaken on a fellowship of the Bollingen Foundation as member of the American School of Classical Studies, Athens, in 1956-1957.

<sup>2</sup> *J.H.S.*, LVIII, 1938, p. 170, pl. 11, Level 8, dated *ca.* 750-700 B.C. by J. Du Plat-Taylor, *Iraq*, XXI, 1959, p. 85. Karpaso: H. Th. Bossert, *Altsyrien*, fig. 158, center. Bronzes of a similar type have been found in Asia Minor but their style is apt to be more angular.

<sup>3</sup> For the type cf. V. Müller, *Frühe Plastik in Griechenland und Vorderasien*, pp. 112 ff., 130 ff., esp. figs. 401, 403. Fogg Museum, *Ancient Art in American Private Collections*, no. 68 A, pl. 99. *Hesperia Art, Bulletin* II, 1959, nos. 56, 58, one said to be from Homs. St. Louis 235.50, unpublished. Additions to Müller's list in *Dergi*, VI, 1956, pp. 43 f.

traffic between Athens and the Levant has been argued recently by Friis-Johansen, who cites the sherds of an Attic krater found at Hama.<sup>4</sup> The famous ivory women found in a grave at Eleusis presuppose a thorough acquaintance with Phoenician ivories and with the Near Eastern technique of ivory carving on the part of their maker.<sup>5</sup> The contents of the bothros reflect a time when Sounion began to loom large in seafaring. The enchanting plaque by the Analatos Painter<sup>6</sup> (700-675 B.C.) is surely a dedication for the success of an important voyage; it was found in the precinct of Athena at Sounion. One would like to fancy that its donor celebrated a pioneering trip to the Near East but cogent proof for direct contact of Athens with the Levantine ports is, at present, unattainable. And small objects, such as bronze figurines and scarabs, could have changed hands many times between their country of origin and their final resting place at Sounion.

The dating of the bronze figurine is an interesting problem, though more interesting for the terminal date of these crude Syrian bronzes than for Greek chronology. The bothros contained Egyptian scarabs dated by von Bissing and Pendlebury after 650 B.C.<sup>7</sup> The Greek terracotta reliefs, which depict the contest of a hero with a lion, have been dated to the second half of the seventh century.<sup>8</sup> Finally, there was a Protocorinthian Subgeometric aryballos which in the opinion of J. L. Benson (by letter) belongs "about the first third of the seventh century."<sup>9</sup> It looks as if the material in the bothros spans the seventh century B.C. As far as I know, this is the first time that one of the Syrian bronze figurines of the warrior type has been found in reasonably definite seventh century context.

Thus the storm god from Sounion not only adds to the growing list of Near Eastern bronzes found in Greece<sup>10</sup> but also helps to anchor at least one phase in the development of a numerous but poorly dated series of Syrian figurines.

GEORGE M. A. HANFMANN

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

<sup>4</sup> "Exochi," *Acta Archaeologica*, XXVIII, 1957, p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> Most recently, R. D. Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories*, pp. 45, 51.

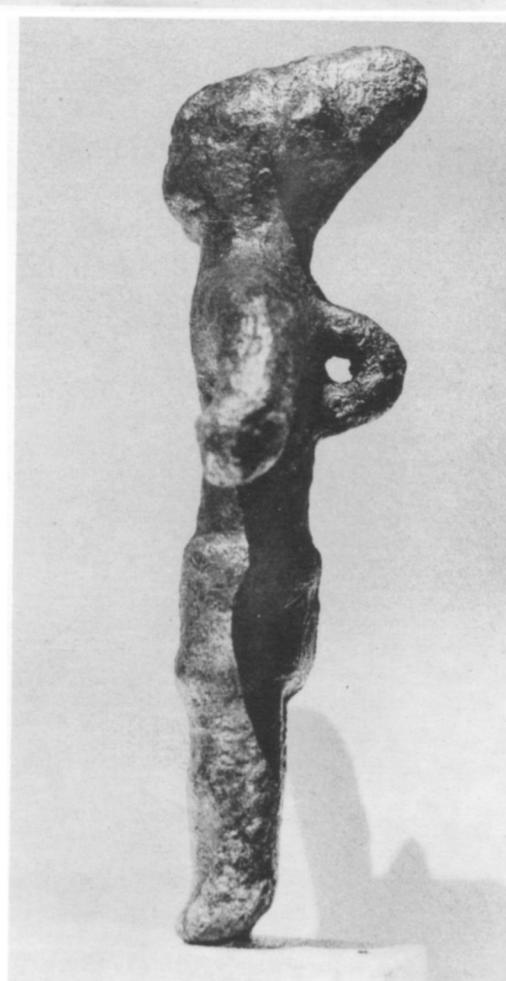
<sup>6</sup> 'Αρχ. 'Εφ., 1917, p. 209, fig. 19. J. M. Cook, *B.S.A.*, XXXV, 1934-1935, p. 173, pl. 40, b.

<sup>7</sup> *Πρακτικά*, 1907, p. 13. J. D. S. Pendlebury, *Aegyptiaca*, pp. 82 ff., nos. 176-225. Pendlebury was mistaken in thinking that any Greek object of the bothros was as late as the mid-sixth century.

<sup>8</sup> Stais, 'Αρχ. 'Εφ., 1917, p. 197, fig. 10 thought them not earlier than 550 B.C. but F. Matz, *Geschichte der griechischen Kunst*, I, p. 484, pl. 281, a, dates them to the end of the pre-Daedalic development, before the Netos Painter, i.e. 650-620 B.C. Cf. also E. Kunze, *Archaische Schildbaender*, Beil. 8:2.

<sup>9</sup> 'Αρχ. 'Εφ., 1917, p. 197, fig. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. E. Kunze, *Festschrift P. Reinecke*, pp. 96 ff. P. Amandry, *Syria*, XXXV, 1958, pp. 73 ff.; *Annales de l'Est* (Nancy), Memoire XIX, pp. 3 ff.; and *Gnomon*, XXX, 1958, pp. 45, 47. A Western Anatolian bronze in the National Museum is reproduced by Zervos, *L'art en Grece*, fig. 55.



GEORGE M. A. HANFMANN: A SYRIAN FROM SOUNION