

A CLAY MODEL OF AN EPHEBE

(PLATE 32)

AMONG the innumerable activities undertaken by John Threpsiades as Ephor of the lower city of Athens was the supervision of archaeological exploration necessitated by modern construction. In August 1962, he was called in to observe an excavation at the northwest corner of the intersection of Hermes and Karaïskakis Streets. This point lies about 150 meters north of the presumed northern limit of the ancient Agora, and west of Monasteraki Square. It probably fell on the line of a road that issued from the Agora between the Stoa Poikile and the Stoa of the Herms and ran toward the Acharnian Gate.¹ Mr. Threpsiades followed the excavation, despite persistent ill health, up to the week before his death in September, 1962. Since he generously suggested that I publish the terracotta fragment which forms the subject of this note, it is here offered in gratitude for the many favors that were received from him and his assistants by members of the staff of the Agora excavations.

While digging the beddings for the concrete piers of a new building, the workmen came upon ancient remains some three meters below the modern surface. A few limestone walls survived, plastered on their inner faces. They apparently belonged to a dwelling of which the courtyard was flagged with roughly finished limestone slabs. Over this floor a large deposit of pottery had been thrown after the destruction of the house, presumably to raise the level. This deposit contained large fragments of late red-figure, many skyphoi, kantharoi, plates and bowls of ordinary black glaze. No stamped amphora handles appeared. A very few scraps of West Slope ware set the lowest date for the deposit in the very early third century B.C.²

The fragment of a seated figure³ to be discussed here (Pl. 32) was the only terracotta in the deposit. It is preserved virtually intact below the waist. The upper part, including all the left arm, the left foot and the right leg below the cloak are missing. Technically, the piece is unusual in having been entirely built up by hand, layer by layer. The underside of the rocky seat was then scooped out in order to facilitate baking. The back was left solid and unmodelled. The walls are remarkably thick, 1.5 cm.,⁴ and the figure is unusually heavy. A small hole in the stump of the

¹ J. I. Travlos, *Πολεοδομική Ἐξέλιξις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν*, Athens, 1960, p. 74, pl. III. Mr. Travlos kindly explained the topographical implications to me.

² Mr. Threpsiades kindly permitted Brian Sparkes to go over the pottery in detail with me; I am most obliged to him for his help in the dating and to Alison Frantz for her sympathetic photographs.

³ P. H. 8.3 cm.; P. W. 8.7 cm.; T. 8.6 cm. The original height was probably close to 16 cm.

⁴ For the general appearance of the interior, cf. B. Neutsch, *Studien zur vortanagräisch-attischen Koroplastik*, Berlin, 1952, pl. 4, 3; the bottom of our figure was smoothed to stand.

right leg shows that an armature had supported that portion of the leg which was detached from the background. The feet were not crossed. A round depression on the rock just below the left thigh, taken into connection with a break beside it, implies that the left hand held or supported an object at that point. The contours of the rock in this area make the restoration of a shield leaning against it not implausible. The break of the upper part of the body implies that it was swung forward on this side. The abrasion on the right knee appears to be fortuitous.

The technical details mark the fragment as a study piece, direct from the hand of the artist. The warm buff clay, burned slightly orange inside, resembles that of other Athenian models. The subject is one that was popular in fourth century art—the epebe. He sits on a rock, wrapped in his chlamys, his right arm hanging clear. The right hand may have held an object, but the opening would not permit a spear to pass through it. On analogy with similar pieces, we may assume that the youth wore boots, which were usually rendered in color. These would have been added on the figurine. The cloak has the rectangular corners of the Attic garment, not the rounded corners of the Macedonian. It hangs from a fastening on the right shoulder in two broad, slowly zigzagging folds. This must be an Athenian youth, resting for a moment while on military duty somewhere on the rocky frontier of Attica.

A figure sitting in a relaxed pose is an attractive subject for a skillful artist. The pose demands the presentation of the third dimension, if possible without the rigidity of the straightforward frontal solution. Throughout the fourth century, sculptors were refining the formula for seated figures and working toward the brilliant plurifacial creations of the third century as evinced particularly in the statues of the philosophers.⁵ In our figure, the cubic form, which was the peculiarly Hellenistic solution, is tentatively presented.⁶ The framework of the body is still clear and strong within the cube.⁷ The heavy texture of the cloak is emphasized by the taut folds that fan out from the right knee. They model rather than smother the body by a skillful play of triangular facets. This treatment, combining strong feeling for both structure and texture, is remarkably close to that on a terracotta of a seated woman from the Agora.⁸ On both these pieces, we note the masterly style compared by Kleiner with that of certain of the late Attic grave monuments.⁹ This monumental style is rare in terracotta, even in Athens.¹⁰ It seems probable, therefore, that both these figures are the products of one shop, possibly even of one coroplast. The brilliant planes and modulated surfaces suggest that the coroplasts of the period were closely in touch with

⁵ G. S. Dontas, *Εἰκόνας καθημένων πνευματικῶν ἀνθρώπων εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν Ἑλληνικὴν τέχνην*, Athens, 1960, pp. 37 ff., pls. 10 ff.

⁶ Cf. G. Kleiner, *Tanagrafiguren*, Berlin, 1942, p. 145.

⁷ The framework is fundamentally that of the seated bronze Hermes in Naples.

⁸ *Hesperia*, XXXI, 1962, pp. 249-253, pl. 88, T 139.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹⁰ E. g. Neutsch, *op. cit.*, pl. 22, but most of the figures in his study are later in spirit.

the creators of bronze statuettes. This style did not continue into the third century and was not copied at Tanagra.

These significant facts are immediately apparent when we glance at the numerous figures of seated youths in the "Tanagra" style.¹¹ A characteristic example of this series, now in Munich, is shown here (Pl. 32).¹² Although the type is similar to ours and even though the folds are also treated as thin and emphatic, the spirit is entirely different from that of the Athenian piece. Structurally, our figure is posed chiastically and lightly covered by a heavy cloak. In contrast, the Munich figure, like the other "Tanagra" examples, is composed as a more solid block which is deeply muffled in a cloak. The intricate patterns of folds that enliven these figures are merely printed upon the surface. The legs have been drawn sideways in order to avoid foreshortening. On the Athenian example the legs jut boldly forward toward the spectator, according to the principle developed on seated figures of the Parthenon pediments. Volume is given by splaying the legs at the knees and by repeating the triangle thus formed in the triangular facets of the cloak that are now reflecting light, now deep in shadow. Kleiner has shown that this classical solution is still retained in the statue of Aischines (*ca.* 315 B.C.), whereas the solid block design sketched with shallow surface patterns appears as early as the statue of Demosthenes (*ca.* 280 B.C.)¹³ In the next, purely Hellenistic phase, the legs are crossed and the composition pyramidal, as on the Tyche of Antioch.¹⁴

Our clay model is, then, a very late classical piece, perhaps a model for a bronze statuette. It was probably made in the last quarter of the fourth century B.C. It is another of several examples that indicate the Athenian inspiration of Tanagra types. This little figure therefore makes a fitting memorial for a scholar whose professional activity through most of his life was divided between Athens and Boeotia.

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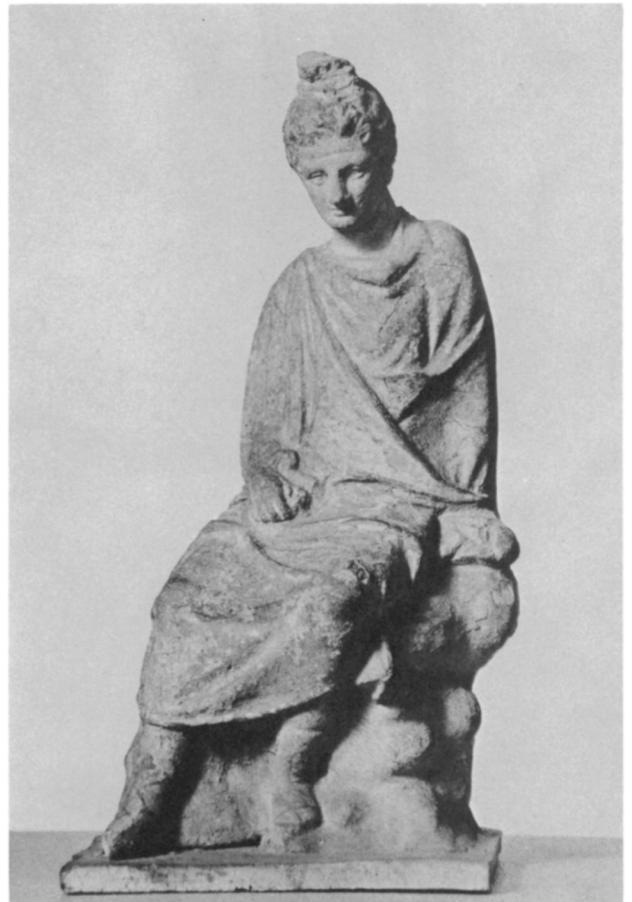
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¹¹ F. Winter, *Die Typen der figürlichen Terrakotten*, Berlin and Stuttgart, 1903, pp. 256-258. Cf. J. Charbonneaux, *Les Terres cuites grecques*, Paris, 1936, Nos. 47, 48; E. Paul, *Antike Welt in Ton*, Leipzig, n.d., pl. 55, Nos. 202, 203.

¹² J. Sieveking, *Die Bronzen, Terrakotten, Vasen der Sammlung Loeb*, Munich, 1930, pl. 10. H. 17 cm. I owe the photograph to the kindness of Dr. G. Kopcke. A similar figure was found in the Athenian Agora, T 3475 (P. H. 11.5 cm.) in a context of the first half of the third century B.C., but with considerable material of the fourth century. This piece, rather than the model, seems to represent the prototypes that were copied in Tanagra.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

¹⁴ T. Dohrn, *Die Tyche von Antiochia*, Berlin, 1960, with many illustrations. Cf. a terracotta version of the early third century, *Hesperia*, XXXI, 1962, pl. 88, T 1339.



Munich, Antikensammlungen, SL293



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