

A BRONZE COUNTERPOISE OF ATHENA

(PLATE 26)

IN 1970 the Universities of British Columbia and Toronto conducted jointly their first major season of excavation at Anemurium (Eski Anamur) in Rough Cilicia.¹ One of the objects of the campaign was the testing of a large area east of the well-preserved eastern façade of the baths known as III 2 B,² where a sondage in a previous year had unearthed a long stretch of fine mosaic. By the end of this first season it was clear that the mosaic belonged to a palaestra connected with the baths.³ Subsequent annual campaigns have shown that the whole complex was built about the middle of the third century after Christ; that before the end of the fourth century the original purposes of the palaestra had been ignored, and by the beginning of the fifth small structures of coarse construction had filled much of the open piazza; and that after more than two hundred years of habitation the area was abandoned about A.D. 660.⁴

Among the small finds unearthed in association with these later structures is a bronze steelyard counterpoise molded in the shape of a bust of Athena.⁵ It was found in the area of the palaestra's eastern border of fine mosaic, four meters to the north of the northwest corner of the entrance stairway, and immediately south of the most southerly of the east-west walls built over the palaestra in this corner.⁶ At this point the fill remaining above the level of the mosaic amounted to little more than half a meter. Even though much of this fill was disturbed, it was still possible in places to isolate on top of the mosaic a stratum with a thickness of 0.20-0.25 m.⁷

¹ The co-directors were Professors Elisabeth Alföldi (Toronto) and James Russell (British Columbia), to both of whom I am grateful for the opportunity to make this report. To the latter I am also indebted for information, criticism, and, above all, patience. In less obvious ways I owe much to Neda Leipen and her meticulous study *Athena Parthenos: A Reconstruction*, Toronto, 1971.

² We have continued to use the system of enumeration established in the main preliminary report: E. Rosenbaum, G. Huber, S. Onurkan, *A Survey of Coastal Cities in Western Cilicia*, Ankara, 1967. The baths in question are described on pp. 11-14.

³ See, for example, the report of J. Russell quoted by M. J. Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," *A.J.A.* 75, 1971, p. 172.

⁴ J. Russell, "Excavations at Anemurium (Eski Anamur, 1971)," *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* 20, 1971 (published 1973), pp. 201-205; and "Recent Archaeological Research in Turkey," *Anatolian Studies* 22, 1972, pp. 32-34.

⁵ AN. '70, inv. no. 133, noted briefly, with the indication "of Byzantine date," in the directors' summaries for 1970 used in *A.J.A.* 75, 1971, p. 172, and "Recent Archaeological Research in Turkey," *Anatolian Studies* 21, 1971, p. 14.

⁶ J. Russell, *op. cit.* (note 4 above), p. 210, plan 1.

⁷ In a very few places there seemed to be evidence of a thin, whitish layer, perhaps of mortar,

In subsequent clearing this same stratum was widely found overlying the mosaic pavement, marking an "irregular ground level" for the secondary buildings placed within the palaestra. The bronze coins recovered from this layer were largely issues of Theodosius I, Arcadius, and Honorius.⁸ The bronze weight was discovered at a level of 0.20 m. above the mosaic, in all probability from directly above this same layer, but the details of the stratigraphy were not clear enough at the time or place of discovery to admit certainty.

The weight has a height of 0.28 m., a maximum width of 0.125 m., and a maximum depth, measured on the base, of 0.095 m. The hook, by which the weight was suspended from the steelyard, has a length of 0.275 m. The condition of both parts is good,⁹ except for the major fractures in the front and right sides of the spreading base, and some cracks and other surface irregularities on the left side of the neck. The latter look like early flaws, perhaps from the time of the casting, and may explain the rightward tilt of the head. The interior of the bust, including all but the lowest step of the base, is filled with lead, retained from below by a thin metal plate held in place by small rivets, now largely corroded and broken. Because of the lead the statuette is unexpectedly heavy, weighing with its hook 10.580 kilograms.¹⁰

The bust of Athena is of a familiar type, showing the goddess armed with helmet and aegis, the latter worn over a sleeved chiton. The helmet is broad rimmed, its crest divided by a groove and flaring wide at the crown to form two horn-like projections for the support of the suspension ring. Both sides of the helmet are incised with simple decoration: on the right a reversed S, on the left a trailing double line, closed at each end, a figure similar to the tendril on the base;¹¹ and there is a series of oblique nicks on the lower edge of the brim. Beneath the helmet Athena's hair protrudes with heavy locks parted in the middle, swept to either side above her forehead, and allowed to fall to the level of the neck in three broad, horizontal waves. If there is a certain softness in the treatment of the hair, the opposite is true of the details of the almost circular face: large, loosely shaped eyes with bored irises asym-

separating the main stratum from the mosaic, and thus acting as a floor covering no thicker than a few centimeters.

⁸ J. Russell, *op. cit.* (note 4 above), p. 205.

⁹ During the summer of 1971, the weight was cleaned and prepared for exhibition in the Alanya Museum by Frances Halahan.

¹⁰ In Roman terms, the weight and its hook weighed 32.3 pounds. That this figure does not fit the normal table is of no significance, for it is believed that steelyards were "constructed first and graduated afterwards" (D. K. Hill, "When Romans Went Shopping," *Archaeology* 5, 1952, p. 54). Since Miss Hill has demonstrated how a weight of four and a half Roman pounds can weigh items up to forty-seven Roman pounds, it is clear that a weight of thirty-two pounds was intended for use on a steelyard designed to handle very large amounts.

¹¹ These weak figures are all that is left of the elegant scrolls that frequently decorate Athena's helmet.

metrically placed;¹² straight nose, uncompromisingly flat on top and sides; and a thin, taut mouth.

On Athena's neck a series of incised lines represents a double necklace. The upper row is a zigzag between two strands, the points of intersection lightly drilled, probably an imitation of linked chains, the lower a series of vertical strokes, also drilled at their lower ends, probably to be understood as pendants, on either side of a centrally suspended oval disk pierced like an eye.¹³ Beyond the necklace on each shoulder is a brooch, little more than a formless blob to pin together dress and aegis. By contrast, the details of the latter are still recognizable. Medusa stares from the center, eyes like Athena's, more than a hint of her archaic ugliness lingering in the sneer of her upper lip and the heaviness of the lower. A fringe of disheveled hair above her forehead gives way on either side to a high-rising sickle-shaped wing, while the rest of her face is surrounded by two heavy tresses that descend in waves from alongside the temples and blend together under the chin.¹⁴ Four snakes glide towards Medusa from the edges of the aegis, the two above smaller and less distinctive, rather like slimy tadpoles, the two below bigger and more clearly marked, with eyes, ears, a finely striated body, and a hooked tail. As for the aegis itself, short, curving strokes mark its front as scaly. To Medusa's left, on a line with her eyes, an incised oval interrupts this design. Whether intended or not, it pinpoints the position of Athena's left breast. The right one is not so strikingly treated, but its swelling shape is indicated beneath the aegis at the level of Medusa's chin. The back of the cuirass appears quite different, being composed of five broad bands reminiscent of quilted layers, and one cannot help but think of a life-preserver. These bands are in fact meant to represent rows of overlapping scales, as can be deduced from other examples of this type,¹⁵ but here the vertical divisions and inner markings appropriate for a pattern of scales have been omitted.

Beneath the presumed lower edge of the aegis, a spreading, rectangular base in two steps supports Athena's bust. The upper, higher step is decorated on the front and two sides with a simple, repeated pattern of an undulating stem of ivy from which spring shoots with clusters of leaves or berries filling the spaces within the loops. On the back the pattern is more complex, less repetitive, with no sense of a

¹² To use the idiom, and experience, of today, she looks "stoned," a point I owe to my eldest son, but an image that De Quincey would have appreciated: "As the opium began to take effect, the whole living principle of the intellectual motions began to lose its elasticity, and, as it were, to petrify" (quoted by Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, London, 1968, p. 114).

¹³ One is tempted to interpret this disk as protective in function rather than merely the decorative centerpiece of the lower strand. If so, then the artist entirely forgot the power of Medusa, and added a prophylactic charm from his own time.

¹⁴ The origin of this rather ungainly frame of hair was presumably an intertwining of tresses and snakes. Is there a vestige of the latter in the furrows that cross the hair?

¹⁵ See the backs of the comparable weights in New York and Madrid, for which references are given below, note 18.

stiff, controlling design. Instead, the main stem moves with natural freedom; from it grow buds and spirals as well as the shoots that end in clusters, and their size and position are happily varied, yet not too haphazard. The lower step is decorated on the front ledge only: a simple wavy line on the left as far as the gaping fracture; thereafter a series of overlapping double-ended hooks.

The weight is attached by a ring above Athena's helmet to a heavy hook whose design shows close attention to both appearance and function. The central part is a six-sided shank between squared capitals, in length just right to fit inside a closed fist. At either end is a hook: the one that passes through Athena's ring is round in section and almost closed; the other is flat and open for fitting around the balance's long arm, the inner edges beveled to ensure an accurate reading of the weight.

Almost thirty years ago when Marvin C. Ross published his first notice on a Byzantine bronze weight, the state of the evidence was such that he concluded that the "Byzantines . . . confined themselves for the most part to busts or figures of emperors and empresses, the Minerva in the Sofia Museum being the only exception that has so far come to my attention."¹⁶ Publications and discoveries since then have shown that Athena, far from being a rarity, was in fact one of the most popular subjects for these Byzantine bronze weights, and her representations, in a variety of sizes and styles of attire and accouterment, have been found in places as distant as Spain and Syria.¹⁷ Of the "Sofia" type, characterized by its large size, the aegis worn frontally, and the spreading base, a type to which the weight from Anemurium belongs, there are now seven examples known to me.¹⁸

¹⁶ "A Byzantine Bronze Weight," *A.J.A.* 50, 1946, p. 369, but see his later remarks in "Byzantine Bronzes," *Arts in Virginia* 10, 1970, p. 35.

¹⁷ Roman weights in the form of a bust of Athena are even more widely dispersed. I note, for example, a most attractive one found in the treasure at Begram (F. M. Rice and B. Rowland, *Art in Afghanistan: Objects from the Kabul Museum*, London, 1971, pp. 11, 19, and 77, and plate 85).

¹⁸ Sofia: S. Ferri, *Arte Romana Sul Danubio*, Milan, 1933, pp. 356-358, and figs. 482-483 (on p. 360); Madrid: A. García y Bellido, *Esculturas Romanas de España y Portugal*, Madrid, 1949, pp. 452-453, and pl. 337; Damascus: S. and A. Abdul-Hak, *Catalogue illustré du Département des Antiquités Greco-Romaines au Musée de Damas*, Damascus, 1951, p. 145, no. 6.668, and pl. LV, 2, upper left-hand corner (the Athena in the upper right has a rectangular base); New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art: no. 61.112, exhibited in 1970 in The Los Angeles County Museum of Art and The Art Institute, Chicago, and included in the catalogue prepared by Vera K. Ostoia, *The Middle Ages: Treasures from The Cloisters and the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, p. 46, no. 17, with illustration on p. 47; Yassı Ada, now in Bodrum: G. F. Bass, "Underwater Excavations at Yassı Ada: A Byzantine Shipwreck," *Arch. Anz.* 77, 1962, col. 562 and figs. 18-20 (in footnote 34 Bass includes references to the four weights listed above); Acitrezza (near Catania, Sicily): F. Papò, "Lo Scandaglio come una bomba," *Mondo Sommerso: Mensile di Vita Subacqua* 5, 1963, pp. 123-124 (a reference I owe to the kindness of George Bass); and Anemurium. Of these seven, the published illustration of the one at Damascus is of such poor quality and at so small a scale that I can hardly recognize its type, and the weight rescued from the sea off Acitrezza I know only from a photocopy: thus I leave both of these examples out of the discussion that follows.

With a group of this number, united by a common scheme but with the individual members distinguished by equally obvious differences, one can frequently establish stylistic and chronological relations within the series. Such an attempt, however, would be less dependent upon subjective opinion if more were known about the circumstances of finding of the various weights. Apart from the example from Anemurium, the Athena recovered from the Byzantine shipwreck at Yassı Ada is the only one with a published context.¹⁹ The wreck is dated to the first half of the seventh century after Christ: there is thus a strong presumption that the steelyard with its weight comes from the early seventh or late sixth century. This is an important weight to date, for of the five that I can discuss with confidence it is surely the last in the series.²⁰ With its lack of understanding of the details of the aegis and the severe stylization of the face, it openly betrays the distance that separates it from its prototype.

The weight in the Metropolitan Museum of Art provides a strong contrast.²¹ Here is a good casting, much enhanced by delicate cold work, which, while ensuring a crispness of detail and drawing attention to the surface, does not hide the strong sense of modeling. Despite these signs of artistic ability and confidence, there is a certain coarseness about the details of the face: no attempt has been made to mask the thickness of the neck, and some of the elements of the aegis seem inadequately understood or portrayed—the snakes, the wings above Medusa's head; and what is the substance of the frame that links the wings to the face? But these are minor criticisms and do not significantly affect one's overall appreciation. There are no published archaeological grounds for establishing the piece's date, which must perforce, therefore, be a matter of style. An obvious parallel for both the quality and the emphasis on surface decoration is the bronze weight from Corinth cast as a male bust, tentatively identified as Constantine I, and thought to be from the fourth century after Christ.²² And there is much in common, particularly in the face, between "Constantine" and the weight in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in the form of an empress, possibly Aelia Eudoxia from the first half of the fifth century, one of the earliest and best examples of a large class "represented by

¹⁹ G. F. Bass, *op. cit.*, cols. 537-564; "Underwater Archaeology: Key to History's Warehouse," *National Geographic Magazine* 124, 1963, pp. 138-156; "A Byzantine Trading Venture," *Scientific American* 225, 1971, pp. 23-33; and F. van Doorninck in *A History of Seafaring Based on Underwater Archaeology*, edited by G. F. Bass, London, 1972, pp. 140-144.

²⁰ The weight from Acitrezza is also clearly earlier than that from Yassı Ada. I cannot see enough of the one in Damascus to form an opinion.

²¹ I am most grateful to Margaret Frazer, Associate Curator, Department of Medieval Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for a full description, including a photograph, of this weight. V. K. Ostoia, *op. cit.* (note 18 above), p. 46, dates this Athena to the fourth century. But as she does not document her date, I have felt free to establish my own arguments.

²² F. O. Waagé, "Bronze Objects from Old Corinth, Greece," *A.J.A.* 39, 1935, pp. 79-86; and G. R. Davidson, *Corinth, XII, The Minor Objects*, Princeton, 1952, pp. 212-213, no. 1638.

successive casting throughout the Byzantine period.”²³ While it is true that the reasons for these proposed identifications appear little more than tenuous, this particular lack of proof does not invalidate the suggested dates.²⁴ These limited parallels do provide, I am persuaded, a basis for dating the Metropolitan’s Athena to the century A.D. 350-450. I am further prepared to believe that Athena’s harsh features speak more for the fifth than the fourth century.²⁵

Despite the wide limits involved in the dating of these two weights, there can be no mistaking the direction of the stylistic development (or, rather, deterioration) between them, and it should thus be possible to place the remaining three examples of this class in relation to one or other of these fixed points. Two of them, those in Madrid and Sofia, both immediately recall the New York Athena and cannot be far removed from it in time. The similarities in type and quality, however, do not prevent differences, the most obvious being Madrid’s plumed helmet and Sofia’s spreading base, divergences which could be original with these pieces or inherited from their models.²⁶ There is much less reason for caution when considering the more subtle differences in the treatment of face and aegis. Note particularly the design of Athena’s eyes and brows: at Madrid they are closely related with the latter only moderately curved, at Sofia widely separated with the brows strongly arched; and the form of Medusa’s wings: at Madrid they seem part of a “Dutch” cap, at Sofia they look as if they belonged to Hermes. These variations are surely the marks, not of a tradition, but of individual craftsmen, who, at least in the case of the aegis, no longer fully understand that tradition.²⁷ Moreover, these artists naturally reflect

²³ M. Comstock and C. Vermeule, *Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Bronzes in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Boston, 1971, pp. 440-441, no. 644.

²⁴ Waagé states (*op. cit.*, note 22 above, p. 83) that “the externals of costume” establish “a fairly definite date” in the fourth century. As for the empress, R. Delbrück had earlier claimed this series for the fifth century, noting that the hair styles were those in vogue from the time of Flaccilla to the middle of the fifth century (*Spätantike Kaiserporträts von Constantinus Magnus bis zum Ende des Westreichs*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1933, pp. 229-231).

²⁵ Compare the Athena in Richmond, Va., published by M. C. Ross, “Byzantine Bronzes,” *Arts in Virginia* 10, 1970, p. 35, dated by him “probably in the third quarter of the fourth century.” It seems to possess more of the spirit of “the Late Antique period” than the New York Athena. But I hasten to admit that a matter of time is not the only possible explanation of this difference; it could also be a question of the place of manufacture. I also have an intuitive “late” reaction to Athena’s eyes with their horizontal slits, for which there is a parallel in the bronze steelyard weight in the British Museum thought to represent the emperor Phocas (O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities . . .*, London, 1901, p. 98, no. 485; F. O. Waagé, *op. cit.*, note 22 above, p. 81 and fig. 1). It is worth noting that this identification is accepted by P. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, II, 1, Washington, D. C., 1968, p. 89.

²⁶ I do not know how to choose between these alternatives without having a greater number of samples to compare. Given the existing evidence, I think of both as equally possible.

²⁷ This interaction between tradition and artist can also be seen in the engraved decoration on the base. Clearly, the artist felt bound to use a pattern of ivy leaves but free to determine its precise

contemporary styles. Thus of Athena at Sofia Ferri rightly notes: "sentiamo forse la vicinanza della mentalità bizantina."²⁸ Yet despite the significance of this observation, he associated the weight with a group of bronzes dated to the end of the second or the third century after Christ. By contrast, García y Bellido, who acknowledges the strong resemblance between the Sofia and Madrid Athenas, writes: "La obra sumamente ruda y debe datarse hacia el siglo iv."²⁹ Since there is no published archaeological context for either weight, both authors rely for a date on their assessment of style. And in neither case, particularly Ferri's, do their suggestions carry conviction, especially if they lead to considering these two Athenas earlier than that of New York. A more compelling order in my opinion, in view of the evidence of a breakdown of the classical (Greco-Roman) tradition and of a hint of the Byzantine style seen in one or other of the weights in Sofia and Madrid, is to place them a generation (or more) after the New York Athena, that is, in the fifth century after Christ, possibly in the second half.

In comparison with the three weights in New York, Madrid, and Sofia, the Athena from Anemurium is a less successful piece. It is weak in design, lacks a sense of monumentality, and even Athena appears more quizzical (or apologetic) than powerful. To these major faults one must add a loss of form and clarity in such important elements as the helmet and base, a decline in the quality and use³⁰ of modeling, and a general carelessness in the execution of engraved detail. Indeed, if one were to judge the workmanship solely by the treatment of the eyes, one would describe it as crude. In one respect, however, it is superior to both Madrid and Sofia: the details of the aegis are more clearly understood.³¹ But this one virtue is not sufficient to disguise the fact, as it seems to me, that in comparison with these two weights the Athena from Anemurium represents a further stage in the descent from the classical prototype. On the other hand, it is also clear by contrast with the weight from Yassı Ada that the nadir in this series of Athenas is not reached at Anemurium but in the shipwreck from the seventh century. Thus bracketed, there is good argument for dating the Athena from Anemurium to the sixth century after Christ.³²

character. The appearance of the fish on the Madrid Athena is thus quite unexpected. Is it an attempt to stamp this weight as Christian? See M. C. Ross, *op. cit.* (note 25 above), p. 35, for an Athena with a Christogram engraved on her arm. The Athena referred to below in footnote 32 also seems to bear a Christogram, this time over her left breast.

²⁸ S. Ferri, *op. cit.* (note 18 above), p. 357.

²⁹ A. García y Bellido, *op. cit.* (note 18 above), p. 453.

³⁰ For example, the necklace is no longer modeled but engraved, a development which may have chronological significance: see below, footnote 32.

³¹ Because of the sharpness and projection of the lower pair of snakes, one suspects that here the craftsman modeled them anew.

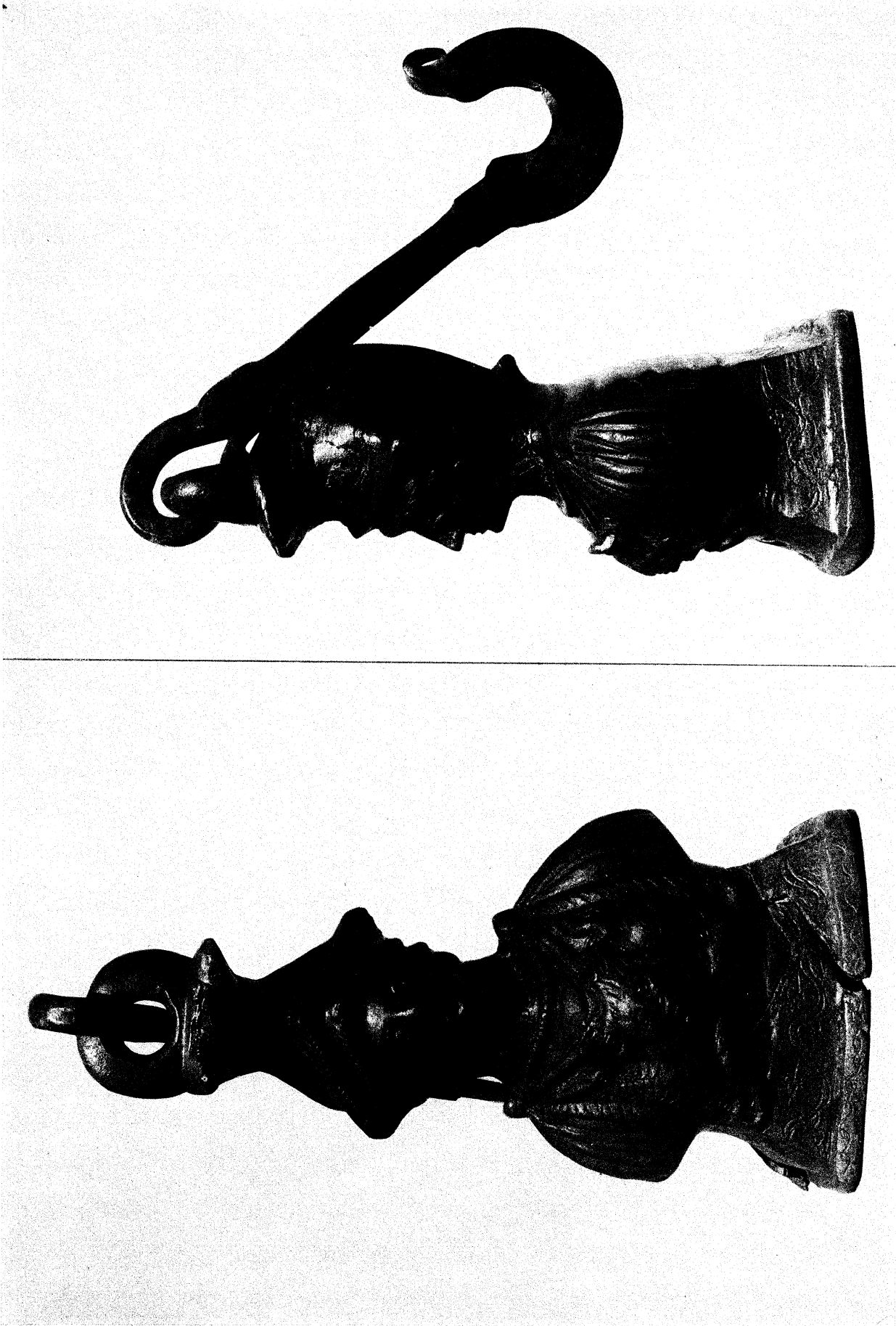
³² A bronze weight of Athena, said to be from Syria and dated "about" the sixth century, was auctioned in London at Christie, Manson, and Woods, on October 23, 1972: see the catalogue *Classical, Western Asiatic, Byzantine and Islamic Antiquities*, p. 16, no. 40. It too has an engraved

With a date for the manufacture of this weight so established, there can be little reason for hesitation in interpreting the archaeological context in which Athena was found. Like the city of Anemurium, she was a victim of the Arabic invasions that menaced the eastern Mediterranean in the reign of Constans II, and was abandoned about A.D. 660. For how long Athena and the steelyard for which she was designed had performed useful service at Anemurium before this end, we cannot tell.

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necklace, and might thus provide additional reason for placing the Athena from Anemurium in the sixth century. But I hesitate to use it, because the catalogue gives no arguments or references to sustain the proposed date.



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