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THE FIGURINE OF A WARRIOR

A bronze statuette of supposed Near Eastern origin in the Jagellonian University Collection

In 1973 an interesting bronze statuette of a warrior of supposed Near Eastern origin which for long was regarded lost, was recovered and included again in the University Collection\(^1\). As follows from the surviving archival records, this figurine was purchased by Constantine Przeździecki in St. Petersburg and offered by him to the Archaeological Cabinet of the Jagellonian University in 1881. Unfortunately no details of the discovery of this object are known.

This figurine represents a man in standing position (Fig. 1), with his right leg put slightly forward\(^2\). The arms bent in at the elbows at nearly right angles are stretched forward with the fists closed. The only piece of garment is a short loin cloth with the lower edge intended, held by a fairly wide belt.

The statuette has been rendered schematically and rather carelessly. The body is flat with a narrow waist and incorrect proportions. The head slightly differs in style of execution from the rest of the flat body. The face is oval and

\(^1\) Jagellonian University, Department of Mediterranean Archaeology. Inv. No. 10.627 (former No.7271). Bronze, solid cast. Grey-green patina, on the back of the figurine traces of red patina (perhaps a paint?). Height: 26.8 cm; width: 5.6 cm.

\(^2\) According to the opinion of Prof. Edith Porada (Columbia University, New York) expressed in the letter of October 14, 1974 "the slight forward step of the figure's foot is due to deformations of the original stance of the bronze — the feet were certainly meant to be parallel". Professor Porada's opinion was obtained through the mediation of Prof. William M. Calder III (Urbana, Illinois) whom I would like to express my deepest gratitude.
large, tapering towards the chin, the nose is prominent, broad and triangular in outline. The facial bones are pronounced. The eyebrow arches are distinct, the hollows for the eyes deep (the eyes have not been modelled). The ears are big, the lips thick and the chin is prominent. The hair forms spiral locks over the forehead. The head-dress is curious — possibly a kind of a plumed helmet. The surface of the ornamental part over the forehead bears a plastic decoration of a fish scale with an illegible „emblem” in its central part.

The back of the figurine is flattened and still less carefully treated. The back part of the head is flat, unelaborated, with a small depression in the centre (from this part of the figurine a sample of metal was taken for chemical analysis; a regular oval hollow, 2 mm deep, made by a borer, is distinctly visible). This figurine and a whole group of similar bronze statuettes have been discussed in several articles. Apart from the Cracow figurine another eight analogical statuettes are known: a twin figurine in the Warsaw National Museum, a statuette in the British Museum, London (purchased in 1884 from the Castellani collection), two figurines in the Historical Museum in Kalinin (formerly Tver), and two in the Hermitage, Leningrad (from the N.A. Meščersky collection); moreover in the private collection of T. Alexandrova.

3 The chemical composition of the alloy was established on S. Przeworski’s order by E. Zimiński and M. Kowalski. In the case of the Cracow figurine, the composition was as follows: Cu — 73.27%; Zn — 24.52%; Pb — 1.12%; Fe — 0.67%; Sn — 0.25%. Cf. Wiadomości Archeologiczne 10, 1929, p. 28. Zinc admixture in this proportion — like in modern brass — gives rise to doubts.


3 Concerning the above mentioned objects see the complete list with bibliography in: Majewski, O niektórych..., and newly Seeden, The Standing Armed Figurines..., p. 31 and also Bouzek, The Aegean, Anatolia and Europe..., p. 70.
Fig. 1. I. The figurine of a warrior from the collection of the Department of Mediterranean Archaeology of the Jagellonian University, Cracow. Bronze, height 26.8 cm
and I. Popov (Moscow) there are two statuettes which have not been included in the quoted papers (one of them well preserved, the second without legs). Unfortunately, the provenance of all these statuettes is also unknown.

S. Przeworski who introduced the Cracow statuette into the literature maintained that it belonged to the 9th century B.C. and assigned it to the so-called Syro-Hittite art. On the other hand V. Müller, abstaining from ethnic definitions, attributed the statuettes of this type (using those in Cracow and London as examples) to the group which he named "Asiano-syrische Gruppe". However, in the light of recent research a tendency has emerged to date these objects to the Middle Bronze Age II. This tendency is based on the very important study by E. Porada who on the basis of analogous representations shown on the Syro-Cappadocian seals dated the group of "Warriors with Plumed Helmet" (including the two objects from Poland) to the first quarter of the 2nd millenium B.C. Also D. P. Hansen dates this group to Middle Bronze Age IIA. O. Negbi, too, is inclined to accept the dates established by E. Porada and D. P. Hansen. M. Gimbutas who recently has dealt with this group dates it also to the 18th century B.C. W. Orthmann discussing the similar object in the British Museum collection dates it as well to about 1800 B.C. and associates it with the North Syrian workshops, suggesting even the Ugarit area. According to H. Seeden, the object from the British Museum collection belongs to the group IV (The Orontes Figurines) in her last classification.

The purpose and function of these figurines (that of Cracow including) is also far from clear. S. Przeworski assumed that these figurines, joined by a ring, were the foot of bronze cauldrons. These feet were supposed to consist of three statuettes permanently fixed by soldering to the walls of the cauldron. In the already cited publications, S. Przeworski regarded both figurines from the Polish collections as the first Hittite import on the territories of South Russia.

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6 B. Bor, Raznoobraznye formy, [in:] Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR, No. 2(87), Moskva 1965, p. 48.
7 Cf. note 4.
8 Müller, Frühe Plastik..., p. 107 ff.
10 D. P. Hansen, A Bronze in the Semitic Museum of Harvard University, BASOR 146, April 1957, p. 18 (table).
11 O. Negbi, On Two Bronze Figurines with Plumed Helmets from the Louvre Collection, IEJ 11, 1961, p. 113; ead., Canaanite Gods in Metal. An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figures, Tel Aviv 1976, p. 17.
12 Gimbutas, Hittite Figurines..., pp. 124—127.
13 W. Orthmann, [in:] Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 14, Berlin 1975, p. 478, Fig. 397 b. Taking into consideration the nature of the hollows in the surface of the statuette the author is of the opinion that its surface "mit Gold oder Silber plattiert war".
14 Seeden, The Standing Armed Figurines..., p. 30, No. 102, Pl. 23.
15 Przeworski, Bronzowe naczynie..., pp. 31—35.
16 Cf. the hypothetical reconstruction drawn by Przeworski, Bronzowe naczynie..., Fig. 3 on p. 33.
It is interesting that the described figures occurred, generally, in pairs, one of them usually with broken feet\(^{17}\). Apart from the obscure and uncertain provenance of all items in this group (the finding place has not been established for any figurine) some scholars have long expressed doubts, not quite unfounded, as to the origin and authenticity of these figurines. This concerns particularly the statuettes from the Polish and Soviet collections. They were regarded as forgeries by I. L. Snegirev (1931), K. Polikarpović (1933) and A. M. Tallgren (1938)\(^ {18}\). Also K. Majewski regarded the whole group consisting then of seven figurines as forgeries derived from one workshop active in the 19th century\(^ {19}\). This group is also considered by O. Negbi to be forgeries\(^ {20}\). On the other hand, R. D. Barnett is quite positive as to their authenticity\(^ {21}\); E. Porada is convinced that at least one object from the whole group discussed here is original\(^ {22}\). H. Seeden reserves this possibility for the object from the British Museum which in her opinion "probably provided the original prototype for the forgeries", the remaining three pairs of statuettes however, she decidedly considers to be forgeries\(^ {23}\).

Despite many arguments in favour of this view, it seems that only closer examination, particularly comparative analysis of all the objects, can contribute to a more definite solution of the question.

\(^{17}\) As it was mentioned above the analogical object to the Cracow one is the statuette in the National Museum in Warsaw (Inv. No. 32426). Analogical regularity can be seen in the case of the statuettes from the private collection in Moscow (cf. note 6).

\(^{18}\) Cf. the bibliography in Majewski's article (O niektórych...).

\(^{19}\) Majewski, O niektórych...

\(^{20}\) Negbi, Canaanite Gods..., p. 17, note 6 (only the object belonging to the British Museum collection is regarded as genuine; together with two items from the Louvre and two other from the Damascus National Museum he is classified as Type I: Male warriors in "Anatolian" pose, Class B, Group C, Cat. Nos. 94–97).


\(^{22}\) See the opinion expressed in the letter of October 14, 1974: "One of the figures is certainly genuine" and once more "one of the figure is doubtless old, and, while less sophisticated than the youthfull warrior with plumed helmet, it cannot be very much earlier".

\(^{23}\) Seeden, The Standing Armed Figurines..., pp. 30–31. As mentioned above, the same opinion is now expressed also by Negbi, Canaanite Gods..., p. 17. Bouzek, The Aegean, Anatolia and Europe..., p. 70 considering the objects allegedly found in the western Ukraine is of the opinion that all items known to him "are casts from an original which would fit well in the Syrian series, but the genuine prototype may be lost. Both Polish pieces seem to be modern casts [...]".