

## A TANAGRA FIGURINE

THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM has recently acquired by purchase a very interesting Tanagra figurine. Of its authenticity there can be no question, for its history is known. It was bought in Greece by the late Rufus B. Richardson when he was Director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. The Museum has reason for satisfaction at this acquisition, as it had little in this branch of Greek art, most of the figurines in its possession being from Southern Italy, and not true Tanagras. Then, too, of all the different classes of antiquities known, these Tanagra figurines are, with the possible exception of bronzes, the easiest objects to be copied with success by the ubiquitous forger; so that to possess a figurine about whose authenticity there can be no question is most satisfactory.

The making of terracotta statuettes is apparently common to all primitive peoples. Small terracotta figurines are found in excavations in North, Central and South America and elsewhere, as well as among the Egyptians, Cypriotes, and Greeks. The reason for this prevalence of terracotta statuettes is not hard to seek. Clay is the easiest substance to be worked by hand, so that the earliest and crudest efforts of portraying the human form are of this material.

In Greece in the earlier periods we find the hand-made terracottas, very crude and primitive; then come the earlier mould-made examples, the "papádes," so called from their head-dress, which has a certain resemblance to that of the modern Greek priest, or "papás." Finally in the second half of the fourth century B.C., figurines reached their greatest perfection in the Tanagras. It is true that other styles, showing great technical skill, follow the Tanagras, especially in Asia Minor at Myrina, and in Southern Italy at Tarentum; but these products have not the delicacy nor grace of the true Tanagra figurines.

The question may be asked at this point: what was the purpose of these little statuettes; were they made as ornaments, or toys, or did they have a well defined use; were they objects of veneration, or votive offerings—in short, what were they? To answer this question adequately it is necessary to outline the development



FIG. 8.—A Tanagra figurine.

of their manufacture. The original hand-made terracottas seem, as is the case with nearly all primitive objects of this kind, to have been toys, if we may judge from the scenes they portray, such as a bakery, a barber shop, and the like. Terracotta toys persist right through the classical period, as can be seen by the jointed doll recently acquired by this Museum. This, by the way, I dated a century too early in publishing. The "papádes" seem to have had a certain religious significance, and were doubtless intended to be copies of statues of divinities. The Tanagras, however, gain in grace and variety at the expense of religious importance, until, by the time that they have reached their height of artistic perfection, this latter quality is completely lost, and we see the very beautiful and graceful little statuettes representing women and girls of everyday life, with no thought of religion whatever. We realize, then, that, in Greece at least, terracotta statuettes had almost ceased to be objects of reverence by the end of the fourth century. The Myrina figurines of Asia Minor give us examples of statuettes of Aphrodite and Eros, but, apart from that, they, too, seem to have no religious significance.

The fact that these Tanagra figurines have always been found in, or in the neighborhood of, tombs shows that they must have served as votive offerings. It seems to have been the custom to break them over a grave, as a sacrifice, perhaps, to the departed. I have heard the bringing of these figurines to the tomb compared with our custom of sending or taking flowers to a funeral, or to the grave of one long dead. This custom, if we analyze it, is in itself a survival of the idea of sacrifice; for we really put the flowers to death when we lay them on the tomb. And so the Greeks took these figurines and broke them on the graves of their departed.

That the Tanagra figurines are to be dated in the last half of the fourth century B. C. is proved by criteria not found in perfection in the specimen here to be discussed. True, we suspect from the freedom of the modelling that we are dealing with a late work of art; but there are other things which prove the late date of these figurines more conclusively. Some of the little ladies wear conical hats, and carry fans, and neither of these things was to any great extent used in Greece before the middle of the fourth century B.C.

The Tanagra of today is little more than a railroad station on the line from Athens to Thebes. There is little in the way of ancient remains to attract the tourist, nor would one give it a thought as one

passes north on the train, but for the beautiful terracottas found in its necropolis. These exquisite little statuettes, so different from any of the other things found in Greece, have made its name immortal wherever lovers of the beautiful exist.

That there was a settlement on the site of Tanagra at a very early period is proved by the presence of a small number of objects of the "Mycenaean" period (ca. 1100 B.C.) found there. Historically, however, Tanagra does not come into prominence till the fifth century B.C. It was at that time a member of the Boeotian League, and apparently did not follow the example of Thebes, the leading city of that League, and turn traitor in the Persian Wars, but remained faithful to Hellenism. As a reward, after the Greeks had defeated the barbarians at Salamis and Plataea, Tanagra seems to have been made the leader of the Boeotian League; for it, in place of Thebes, became the centre for the coinage of the League. This, however, did not last very long, for by 446 B.C., Thebes had regained the hegemony. In 457 B.C., Tanagra was the scene of a pitched battle between the Spartans and the Athenians under Pericles and the Cimonidae. The battle resulted in the technical supremacy of the Spartans; but they had been so hard pressed that they were unable to follow up their advantage, so that practically it amounted to a draw.

In the third century B.C., the traveller Heracleides visited Boeotia, and left an account of Tanagra as a flourishing and orderly city. He says nothing of the terracotta industry, nor does he mention the women of Tanagra; but his description of the women of Thebes is equally applicable for Tanagra as well.

In religion, the principal god worshipped appears to have been Hermes. As was quite natural in a small rural community like the early Tanagra, and particularly in an agricultural district like Boeotia, his attributes as a rustic god were much emphasized, and he is generally spoken of as *κριοφόρος*, "the sheep-bearer," although after the battle of Tanagra, he is referred to in an inscription as *πρόμαχος*, "the defender." We may suspect that, in the period of Alexander the Great, when the conquests of the Macedonians tended to increase commerce and trade, and to draw the world closer together, the eclecticism that forms the chief characteristic of the Hellenistic period should have reached Tanagra. Perhaps it was responsible for these lovely figurines, which have nothing of the rustic about them, but are, instead, by way of being rather sophisticated.

The example that is to be described is about 24.5 centimetres, or  $9\frac{5}{8}$  inches high. It represents a woman, playing upon a double flute, most of which, unfortunately, is lost. She leans against a pillar and rests her weight upon her right foot, with her left leg thrown across the right. Her neck and arms are bare, and her head is wreathed with laurel, her hair being very elaborately dressed. The nude parts of the body are rendered in flesh pink, and the hair in brown. The plinth on which she stands was originally covered with a white slip, and the pillar is painted in red, white, and black.

The little figure is clothed in a chiton and himation, the former being the undergarment. This chiton is made with a low neck, and is narrow at the shoulders, leaving the arms bare. Just below the breasts it is bound by a girdle, forming what is technically called the "kolpos"; from this, it falls in straight lines to the feet. Its countless fine folds prove that it was conceived as having been made of a thin, delicate material, perhaps of fine linen. This chiton seems originally to have been pink, but much of the color has come off, showing the technique used, which will be described later. From under the chiton the little foot of the figure appears, shod in a slipper of red and blue.

Over this garment is the himation, a robe of a heavier material. This our little lady wears over her left shoulder and winding round the body. The folds that fall from the shoulder are fastened at the left hip. This garment is to be thought of as heavier than the chiton, as can be seen from the manner of the folds. It is white, with borders of blue, lengthwise, at top and bottom.

The missing parts are (1) a portion of the plinth; (2) a large part of the double flute; (3) part of the wreath; (4) part of the right hand. The clay is very dark red. Over the clay is laid a white slip, covering the entire figure; the other colors are to be thought of as overcolor, not applied directly to the clay. They are delicate, and easily wear off, so that it is impracticable to clean one of these statuettes. It may be said, however, that in this figurine the preservation of the colors is remarkably good.

Apart from that, the statuette is a unique specimen. Most of these little figures represent women dressed for the street, as it were, closely draped in their himatia, wearing hats, and carrying fans. They are just little images. This statuette is really something more; it shows a woman doing something, even if only playing the flute. That she is thought of as being indoors, may be guessed from the

THE MUSEUM JOURNAL

easy and loosely fitting manner in which the himation is worn. Furthermore, the subject of a woman playing the flute seems to be quite unusual. The British Museum, which owns a large collection of these figurines, apparently has nothing like this one. It is, therefore, quite unique, and the University Museum is glad to possess such an interesting specimen.

S. B. L.