



Old woman; terracotta  
mask. Ht 17.5 cm

Gorgon; terracotta  
mask. Ht 16 cm



contained no dateable objects, nor do the other contexts help. On stylistic grounds Christou gives the whole series a range from about 625, the date he assigns to the jar from the theatre, to 550 for the latest of the fragments.<sup>1</sup> In what he considers the earliest jars, the shoulder is decorated with a conventional funeral procession of chariots and soldiers and the neck with a pattern of tongues and grooves. In the next stage, known only from fragments, a frieze of animals or mythical beasts was substituted for the neck pattern. In the final stage, of which the new jar is an example, this was developed into a scene of hunting or fighting, reflecting perhaps the interests of the deceased in life, and the lower part of the body is decorated with rosettes. The procession of chariots and soldiers in the main position is common to all, the same moulds being sometimes used for more than one jar. The handles and the areas between the panels were richly decorated with designs copied from metalwork, as probably were the main reliefs.

These jars seem to have been the product of a single workshop, possibly of a single master craftsman, though he would have had assistants, and their use lasted little more than a generation, whether because of a change in burial custom or because their maker died without a successor. Their production must in any case have involved difficult and specialized skills,

perhaps like those of the modern potters of Koroni in Messenia, who alone have the secret of making giant storage jars to-day.<sup>2</sup>

Peculiar to Sparta, and there to the Orthia site, are the clay masks, of which a very large number of fragments were found above the level of the sand foundation of the new temple, mostly with Laconian III and IV pottery, though in the form of Silenus masks and of miniatures they continued down to the Hellenistic period. There are several standard types; heavily wrinkled beardless faces ('old women'), realistically modelled male faces ('portraits'), youths, soldiers, grotesque faces, sileni and gorgons. It is generally supposed that they are models in clay of masks of wicker and cloth worn in ritual dances, presumably in honour of Orthia, since it is only at her temple that they are found. Some have openings for the eyes and mouth and holes for strings, others do not. The most characteristic types, the 'old women' and the grotesques, have no Greek analogies, but resemble masks found at some Phoenician sites.

Because the fragments of these masks were found packed closely in refuse dumps both of which were in use for a long time, no exact chronological conclusions are possible. They do however testify to an original streak, with a fondness for the grotesque and humorous, strongest in the sixth century but persisting well beyond it.

42

44, 43



44 Young man; terracotta  
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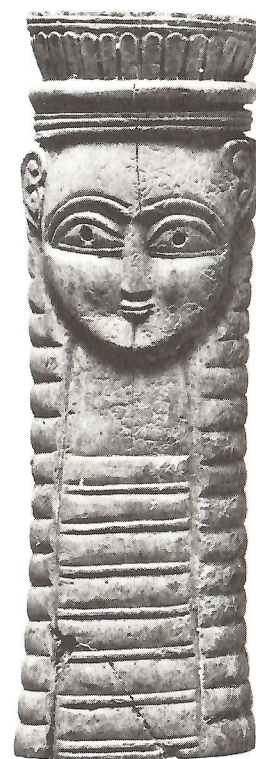


44 Young man; terracotta  
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74 Pair of facing horses; bone ornaments. The slight difference in height and the different treatment of the manes make it doubtful whether these were in fact a pair. Hts 9 cm, 9.2 cm



IVORY AND BONE CARVING

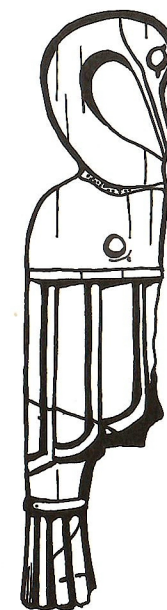
75 Bone relief of Orthia. A number of these reliefs were found in contexts with dates from 650 to 450. They were probably copies of a cult image of about 650. Ht 12 cm

76 Bone relief of Orthia. Another version of the cult image, somewhat later in style than the type shown in Ill. 75, resembling the font-support from Olympia (Ill. 81). While the first type is Syrian in origin, this goes back to a Phoenician model like the figure from Sidon now in the British Museum (London, BM 127136; AO fig. 117). Ht 11 cm

century, however, the import and use of ivory came to a sudden end, as it did also elsewhere in Greece, probably as a result of the Assyrian invasions of Syria which culminated in the siege of Tyre in 573 B.C. Bone had for some time been used as a cheap substitute for ivory, especially for mass-produced articles such as replicas of the cult-image of Orthia or seals topped with a Daedalic head in relief. Now that ivory was no longer available, the same techniques were used to produce ornamental bone plates for the decoration of furniture. Bone, however, could never take the place of ivory. This was done in part by bronze, while the primacy in pictorial art, and much of the repertory of the ivory-carver, passed to the vase painters of Laconian III.



78 Griffin; bone seal from the Orthia site, found with Geometric, Protocorinthian and Laconian I pottery, and so dated c. 650. Diam. 3 cm

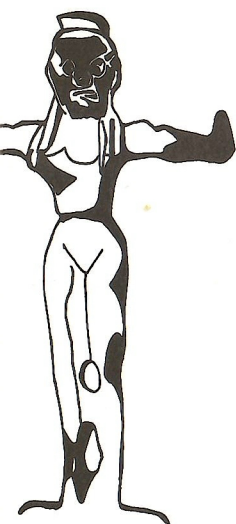


77 Water bird; bone ornament for a box or furniture. Twenty-one examples of this type of ornament were found, the majority with Laconian III and IV pottery (575-525), the rest up to Laconian VI (third century) Ht 8 cm





Stand for incense burner. Ht 21.6 cm



Bronze stand from Arcadia. The figure probably supported a basin. The head shows no trace of the attachment of mirror. Ht 11.5 cm

the range of Laconian bronzes was widened and their style became softer and more flexible without losing its distinctive character. The second half of the sixth century was the golden age of the Laconian bronzesmith for both quantity and quality, and Spartan bronzes found their way abroad in considerable numbers. Rather than attempt to discuss the whole of this output, we shall look more closely at a few of the most interesting and characteristic types.

The first is closely related to the female figures we have already considered, but with an important difference – the figures are unclothed. Four are separate votive statuettes, but the majority were stands for polished bronze mirrors.<sup>10</sup>

Since Praschniker first drew attention to these in 1912 their Spartan origin has been generally accepted.<sup>11</sup> Outside this group, female nudity is unknown in Archaic Greek art except, very rarely, in vase paintings of banquet scenes. This alone would raise a strong presumption of a single place of origin, which is supported by the similarity of style, allowing for the work of different artists over a long period. If we accept this, Sparta is easily the strongest candidate. Not only were the Spartans – alone of Greeks of the historical period – notoriously supposed to be tolerant of female nudity, especially among young girls, but all four statuettes, with the closely related terracotta figurines which provide a link with Phoenicia, come from Sparta, while three of the mirror-stands come from its immediate neighbourhood. No other site has yielded more than one. Of those of which the provenance is known, one is from Arcadia and three are from different places in the Argolid. Outside the Peloponnese, one comes from the acropolis at Athens and one from Viontza in north-western Greece; further afield, there is one from Cyprus and one from Sicily. Two found respectively in Yugoslavia and the Ukraine, like one of those from Sparta, are inferior fifth-century imitations, perhaps made locally. This distribution does not suggest multiple origins, and is quite consistent with Spartan manufacture. It does suggest that the mirrors were much sought-after, whether as works of art or as curiosities.

In time, the stands span nearly a century, but their greatest period was between 550 and 525. The oldest – if in fact it is a mirror stand, which seems doubtful – is a primitive and badly preserved figure from Arcadia which somewhat resembles the font-bearer from Olympia and must belong to the early part of the century. Two, or perhaps three, look as if they belong to the



second quarter of the century, but most fall into the decades after 550, showing in their modelling the softness and delicacy that reflect Ionian influence. Of the statuettes one, the flute-player from the temple of Orthia, is earlier than 550, the other three are later. In most the hair hangs in a mass down the back as in the earlier draped statues, sometimes with one or two crossed ribbons to keep it in place, and sometimes with a short tress in front of the ear. In two of the statuettes and a few of the mirror-stands it is cut short, in the fashion of the last quarter of the century.

The meaning of the figures is uncertain. They have been associated with Alcman's chorus of maidens, with the suggestion that they symbolize the participants in the ritual dance, by whom they were dedicated, but the fact that no mirrors and only one statuette were found at the Orthia site seems to rule this out. On the other hand, there are religious implications. Most of the figures wear a neckband with an amulet, and many also a crossband with charms over the right shoulder. Several carry cymbals or clappers; one is playing a flute and another may be conducting a choir. Others hold up a flower in the gesture familiar on stone reliefs, and a few hold a pomegranate. The mirrors were generally supported by figures perched on the girl's shoulder; most of these are now lost, but among those preserved are several pairs of griffins and one of sirens. Sometimes the base was formed by a lion or a frog. Some of this symbolism suggests Venus, but in a rather vague way; it is such as would be

131 Naked girl, perhaps conducting a choir or dance. Ht 8.7 cm

132 Bronze mirror supported by a naked girl with flower and fruit. The attachments on the shoulder are the remains of supplementary supports like the griffins in Ill. 133. Ht (with mirror) 23.7 cm; diam. of mirror 12.2 cm

133 Bronze mirror supported by a naked girl with necklace and charm belt, with griffins. Ht (with mirror) 33.8 cm

131, 132

nb. Charbonneau, *etc.* 176  
Hooker, *Spartans*, p. 93: 'The artist seems to have visualized a young woman taking part in some open-air festival...'