


30

Statuette of a Dancer

400-200 BC

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Object Details

Catalogue Number	30
Inventory Number	96.AD.246 
Typology	Statuette
Location	Taranto region
Dimensions	H: 23.7 cm; W: 10.4 cm

Fabric

Light beige in color (Munsell 10 yr 8/2–8/3), porous. Polychromy: on a white slip (white lead), pink (face), light blue and turquoise (leaves of the wreath), purple (hair), violet (himation and chiton), and white (clothing and face). Head and body were made with two bivalve molds; the back features an oval vent hole; there is a small hole where the statuette would have attached to a base.

Condition

The statuette has no supporting base and is missing its left foot. Also missing are a number of ornaments from the wreath. There are losses in the paint and ground layer overall and small chip losses in the leaves of the headdress and the bottom of the drapery. There is a modern hole drilled in the bottom (possibly for diagnostic testing); there are some root marks on the back surface and grayish accretions in many places, especially around the neck, the back of the shoulders, and the lower part of the drapery on both sides. There is a dark reddish brown stain-accretion on the left hip.

Provenance

– by 1994–1996, Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman (New York, New York), donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1996.

Bibliography

PASSION FOR ANTIQUITIES 1994, no. 221, p. 354; ACQUISITIONS 1996–98, p. 67; GETTY 2010, p. 117.

Description

The female dancer has a petite, elongated physique. Her left arm is bent and resting on the hip, while the right arm holds the folds of the himation in front as she makes a subtle dance step, in which the left leg extends in front of the right; the lowered head turns toward the right. The long chiton extends to the feet, the himation wraps softly around the figure, and a hem held back by the left hand falls to one side in zigzagging folds. Following the movement of the figure, the garments form a series of fluttering folds at the feet. The face has delicate features with large spherical earrings and the head features a melon-style hairdo, with a round bun on the top of the head and a wreath decorated with ivy and two small, round pieces of fruit.¹

The statuette can be assigned, both through typology and clay, to the Tarentine milieu. The type of female dancer articulated in space probably originated in Attica at the beginning of the fourth century BC.² It spread into the Tanagra repertory, recurring in South Italy and especially in Tarentine funerary deposits of the third century and the first quarter of the second century BC, when there was a notable recovery in Taranto of funerary coroplastic production with an enriched iconographic repertory and improved technical quality.³ A number of Tarentine statuettes present a similar iconographic scheme and stylistic characteristics, including the elongated torso and the dynamism of the figure, similar to the type of the late third-century BC bronze statuette in the Metropolitan Museum of Art known as the Baker Dancer, in which elements of Alexandrian style have been recognized.⁴

The Getty dancer shows a clear Dionysian character, to which the ivy wreath also points; Dionysian elements played a dominant role in the Tarentine funerary iconography of the fourth and third centuries BC.⁵ Further evidence of the popularity of the type in the coroplastic production comes from Sicily, particularly in a number of examples of female

dancers from Morgantina, Syracuse, Cefalù, and Monte Saraceno, generally dating from the third century BC.⁶

Female dancers are well attested in the Hellenistic period, including among the votive deposits of the sanctuaries of Demeter. Corinth, for instance, is the source of a number of examples datable between the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the third century BC. These show a number of recurring characteristics, such as the left arm on the hip; the drapery that entirely envelops the figure, forming fluttering folds in motion; and a foreshortened composition.⁷ Figures of female dancers that are very similar to this one, characterized by a rich movement of the drapery—which is reminiscent of the stylistic signature of some Hellenistic sculptors—have also been found in Priene, Pergamon, and Troy, where they would continue to be produced until the first century BC.⁸

Appendix

The statuette was examined under polarized light microscopy (PLM) and X-ray fluorescence. The blue was identified as Egyptian blue and the white as white lead. There is no indication of modern repainting.

Notes

1. For the clothing of the dancers, see L. Forti, “La vita quotidiana,” in PUGLIESE CARRATELLI 1988, pp. 285–326, see esp. fig. 353 (on the right, a statuette of a female dancer from the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Taranto, dating from the third century BC).
2. The pose of this type seems to derive from the Attic type of the veiled female dancer, see JEAMMET 2003b, cat. 95.
3. For the examples from the Tarentine funerary deposits, see GRAEPLER 1984, pp. 99–102, pl. XXVII, no. 2; and GRAEPLER 1997, pp. 125–29, figs. 95, 99–100, 101–2 (datable to between 225 and 175 BC), and p. 222, fig. 248 (a female dancer that presents a comparable pose and mode of drapery, datable to the third quarter of the third century BC); E. Lippolis, L. Giardino, and R. Sciotti, *Emergenze e problemi archeologici: Manduria, Taranto, Heraclea* (Manduria, 1990), p. 74 (dancer from a tomb in the Contrada Vaccarella in Taranto); and REEDER 1988, no. 86, p. 179 (draped female figure with hand on hip, from Taranto, datable to the third century BC). The type is also present in Metaponto; see P. C. Sestrieri, “Metaponto: Campagne di scavo (marzo–aprile 1939),” *NSc*, ser. 7, no. 1 (1940), pp. 51–122, esp. pp. 68–69, fig. 17.
4. For Hellenistic statuettes of dancers, see F. G. Naerebout, “The Baker Dancer and Other Hellenistic Statuettes of Dancers: Illustrating the Use of Imagery in the Study of Dance in Ancient Greek World,” *Imago Musicae* 18–19 (2001–2), pp. 59–83. For the Baker Dancer, see also D. B. Thompson, “A Bronze Dancer from Alexandria,” *AJA* 54, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1950), pp. 371–75.
5. On objects assignable to the Dionysian sphere in Tarentine funerary ritual, see D. Graepler, “La necropoli e la cultura funeraria,” in *Atti Taranto 41, 2001* (Taranto, 2002), pp. 193–218. In general, for the role of dance in the Dionysian cult, see M. H. Delavaud Roux, “Danse et transe: La danse au service du culte de Dionysos dans l’antiquité grecque,” in *Transe et théâtre: Actes de la table ronde internationale, Montpellier, 3–5 mars 1988* (Montpellier, 1989), pp. 31–53. See also G. Ricciardelli, “Mito e performance nelle associazioni dionisiache,” in *TRA ORFEO E PITAGORA** 2000, pp. 265–82; and H. A. Shapiro et al., s.v. “Dance,” **ThesCRA* 2 (2004), pp. 299–343, esp. p. 333. For the connections between the dancers and representations of nymphs, see JEAMMET 2003b, cat. 95.

6. For Centuripe, see BESQUES 1986, pl. 37a (statuette attributable to the third century BC); LIBERTINI 1947, pp. 287–88, no. 5, and p. 309, no. 2; BIEBER 1961b, figs. 553–56; WINTER 1903, p. 153, no. 9; SCHÜRMANN 1989, nos. 790–92, fig. 132 (end of the third century BC). For Morgantina, see BELL 1981, pp. 64–65, nos. 454–56 (group of dancers dating from the third century BC). For the statuette of a dancer found on the acropolis of Monte Saraceno datable to the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the third century BC, see A. Siracusano, *Monte Saraceno di Ravanusa: Un ventennio di ricerche e studi* (1996), pp. 7–40, pl. XXXVIII, no. 2. For female dancers from necropoleis of Cefalù of the end of the third century, see C. Greco, “Le terrecotte figurate,” in A. Tullio, ed., *Cefalù: La necropoli ellenistica 1* (Rome, 2008), pp. 121–26, TC 4–5, pl. XXIV, no. 2.
7. For the dancers of Corinth, see MERKER 2000, pp. 151–56.
8. On the relations between Taras, Pergamon, and Priene, see GRAEPLER 1996, p. 236; M. Bell, “Hellenistic Terracottas of South Italy and Sicily,” in UHLENBROCK 1990, pp. 64–70; R. Higgins, “Tarentine Terracottas,” in *Taranto nella civiltà della Magna Grecia, Atti Taranto 10, 1970* (Taranto, 1971), pp. 267–81. See the pieces in HIGGINS 1967, pl. 58c (from Priene, first century BC) and in E. Töpperwein, *Terrakotten von Pergamon* (Berlin, 1976), pp. 43–45, no. 169 (fragment of a statuette with a cluster of folds around the ankles, similar to this piece, datable to the third century BC). For a group of dancers from funerary deposits of the vicinity of Troy and datable to around 340 BC, see S. Besques, “Le commerce des figurines en terre-cuite au IV siècle av. J. C. entre les ateliers ioniens et l’attique,” in *Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Ankara–Izmir, 23–30 September 1973* (Ankara, 1978), pp. 617–26; see also the statuette of a dancer from Perge (Turkey), see J. Inan, “Eine hellenistische Tänzerin aus Perge,” in *Akten des XIII. Internationalen Kongress für Klassische Archäologie, Berlin 1988* (Mainz am Rhein, 1990), pp. 347–48.