


35

Relief with a Fighting Arimasps

350-300 BC

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Object Details

Catalogue Number	35
Inventory Number	71.AD.221 
Typology	Relief
Location	Taranto region
Dimensions	H: 6.5 cm; W: 8 cm

Fabric

Beige in color, with reflective inclusions, thoroughly baked, with a yellowish slip and foil gilding.

Condition

Reassembled from two fragments; worn surface, cracks on the cloak and on the right thigh; gilding detached in many areas. The upper part of the cloak has been restored. On the *pelta* (shield), a layer of enamel is visible, probably applied in a previous restoration.

Provenance

– 1969, Fallani (Rome, Italy); 1971, Royal Athena Galleries (New York, New York), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1971.

Bibliography

SELECTED WORKS 1971, no. 63; KINGSLEY 1976, p. 14, fig. 42; LULLIES 1977, pp. 243, 244, 248, no. 4.

Description

The Arimasps with a Phrygian cap is portrayed in profile facing to his right, with sword unsheathed. He is portrayed in the act of striking his adversary, probably a griffin, while leaning on the *pelta* set on the ground. His right leg is bent and thrust forward, the left kneels on the ground, and the bust is rigidly inclined backward. In keeping with the iconography of the fourth century BC, the Eastern warrior wears a Phrygian cap, a short chiton belted under the chest and, over it, a *chlamys* that, following the warrior's motions, is lifting to one side, forming a series of fluted folds.¹

Arimasps were depicted in Attic products from the fourth century BC that are documented in Taranto. They are often shown battling griffins and conform to conventional iconographic schemes, such as the short tunic, the crescent shield, and the pointed hat. In other Tarentine appliquéés, Arimasps are depicted fighting one or two griffins, a recurring theme both in Apulian vase decorations and in Tarentine soft-stone reliefs, which show the same fondness for movement, often precarious, and for fluttering drapery.² According to the analysis proposed by Weisner, the iconography of the Arimasps originated in the Black Sea and in the Greek colonies of the Pontos region, and then established itself in Magna Graecia and in Taras also, through the intermediary of Metaponto. It became a favorite motif among the Pythagoreans inasmuch as it symbolized hope for an afterlife.³

Notes

1. On the iconography of the Arimasps, see GORBOUNOVA 1997, esp. no. 21, datable to the second half of the fourth century BC. See also K. Schauenburg, "Arimaspen in Unteritalien," *RA*, no. 2 (1982), pp. 249–62. Very similar to this piece is a relief found in a Tarentine tomb from the end of the fourth century BC, LIPPOLIS 1994, pp. 131–32, fig. 101; L. Bernabò Brea, "Taranto: Rinvenimenti nella necropoli dal 12 novembre 1938 al 31 maggio 1939," *NSc*, ser. 7, no. 1 (1940), fig. 29, pp. 426–505, esp. p. 456. Many such reliefs flowed into the antiquities market; see for instance, *Antiquities and Islamic Art*, Sotheby's New York, sale cat., June 4, 1998, lot 116; LULLIES 1962, pl. 2, no. 2.
2. On the diffusion of the iconography in Taranto, see LIPPOLIS 1994, p. 127, chart 3. For the formal affinities between appliquéés and sculpture and, in particular, on the taste for fluttering drapery, see BERNABÒ BREA 1952, figs. 41, 93, 114–15, and p. 139; for the Arimasps fighting on his knees, see *idem.*, pp. 200–201, figs. 184–85; for the frieze from the Palmieri hypogeum in Lecce, with various warriors in this position, dating from the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the third century BC, *idem.*, pp. 78–79, figs. 53–54. For the appliqué with the Arimasps being attacked by griffins, see DE JULIIS AND LOIACONO 1985, p. 332, no. 396. For Arimasps in Apulian vase-painting, see H. R. W. Smith, *Funerary Symbolism in Apulian Vase-Painting* (Berkeley, 1976), fig. 7. On relations between Taras, Greece, and the East, see S. Besques, "Transferts de thèmes, simulacres de bijoux en terre cuite dorée et appliques de Tarente," *Bulletin de la Société nationale des antiquaires France* (1988), pp. 53–60.
3. In this connection, see J. Wiesner, "Studien zu dem Arimaspenmotiv auf tarentiner Sarkophagen," *JdI* 78 (1963), pp. 200–17; MOREL 2002, pp. 566–68.