

A BRONZE MAENAD FROM SARMIZEGETUSA

The statuette (Figs. 1-4 and the cover of this journal) comes from the capital of Roman Dacia, a colony founded by Trajan after the second Dacian war. The town was bearing - besides the usual imperial epithets (Ulpia Traiana Augusta) - the native name of Sarmizegetusa. The bronze Maenad discussed in this paper was found in may 1995 by Mr. Wyley E. Eaton, M. D., a detectorist from Global Research and Discovery Network, in a plowed field some 100 m East of the town's wall (conventionally called "field G2")¹. Due to its size the object was still detected even if it was at a depth of 25-30 cm. The next day, following an agreement with the owner of the land (the surface was planted with potatoes), a small one day trial excavation was carried out by me and my students. We have opened a square trench of 3 x 3 m and got to the depth of 40-45 cm, hoping to find besides the missing head some data about the context of the statuette. Under the topsoil there was a layer of disturbed tiles with some mortar traces, but no clear sign of any relevant archaeological feature could be identified. Although we had to give up before reaching a clear walking layer, the general impression was that place was the yard of a larger building.

The headless statuette has a height of 27 cm and was made of some 3-5 cm thick gilded bronze. Unfortunately, it has not been restored for the moment. It depicts a half naked woman which is sitting, her left hand relining on something and holding in the right hand an object that has left a circular hole in the fist (in which a match can fit well; see Fig. 3). The feet were originally crossed, but only the left one is still visible under the drapery. The position of the upper part of the body does not agree with the one of the lower part, proving that two, originally different, models were putted together. Judging after the upper part, the body must have been bent to the left, with both shoulders at the same level. The left hand was relying on a horizontal support that fits well under the arm (see Fig. 1). But, judging after the lower part, the women stood almost vertically, as clearly points out the end of the mantle hanging on the left side. Towards the same conclusion lead the cuts on the sides of the statuette. On the right side there is a straight cut at a right angle, indicating that the figurine was meant to be attached to a support which had a straight edge (Fig. 2). To the left the cut is higher and rounded. Here should have been attached another character or object on which the women was relying (Fig. 3). But if we put the figurine in vertical position (Figs. 2-3), the upper part of the body looks so unnatural that the only possible conclusion is that when the two different parts were combined the lower one was improperly used and the statuette was meant to stay inclined like in Fig. 1.

¹ A detailed account of the "periegesis" of Global Research in Sarmizegetusa and other sites of Roman Dacia will be published in the archaeological supplement of *Acta Musei Napocensis*. Unlike some other detectorists the members of Global Research are no "treasure hunters" as most archaeologists would call such people. All the objects found (most of them coins) were donated to the local museums and the activity in the field was performed only under strict archaeological supervision, the exact position of each discovery being mapped. Since the machines do not go deeper then 15-20 cm (in most cases even less) all the objects found come from archeological layers which were previously disturbed by plowing and there is no risk of extracting an artifact out of its original, antique, context. Thus such an "expedition" does not differ essentially from the regular field walk of common archaeologists. It only has richer results and prevents exposed sites being robbed by amateurs.

The elegant position and the perfect anatomic details of the hands and the foot show a high quality modelling. At the upper part of the body the volummes are correctly rendered, following the organic reality, but without insisting on any particular detail. The torso is rather massive while the bosom are small. The drapery of the lover part has very deep folds which produce a strong effect of contrasting light and shadows, accentuated by the glance of the gilded surface. But the deep modelling of the folds does not fall into illusionism, because the real shape and volume is still respected. Another sign of the high quality of the work is shown by the fact that the folds of the drapery are disposed in such manner that they render the anatomy of the feet beyond.

For such a masterpiece I could find no close analogy among the small bronzes from Roman Dacia, but some figurines depicting two Maenads on the late classical crater from Derveni show remarkable resemblances to our piece (Fig. 5-8)².

The statuettes, 30 cm high (as big as ours) were originally attached on the shoulders of the crater, together with two other statuettes depicting a sleeping Silenos and a young Dionysus. The four figurines were found apart, near the vase, and today they are placed in pairs: on the front side the young Dionysus and a sleeping Maenad (Fig. 5-6), and on the back the sleeping Silenos and another Maenad which slowly sprawls in ecstasy, or is about to wake up (Fig. 7-8). In this respect it is worth retaining a suggestion of R. Bianchi-Bandinelli³, that the two females could have originally been placed conversely, *i.e.* the awaking Maenad should have been attached on the front side of the crater, making pair with the young Dionysus, and the sleeping one should have been combined to the equally sleeping Silenos. A clew to this is the gesture of Dionysus which calls upon the Maenad at his left to wake her up in "ekstasis" and makes her perform further the orgiastic ritual. The meaning of the scene is elucidated by two passages from Euripides' *Baccantae* (677 ff and 1079 ff) where the god is shown acting like this, the tragedy of Euripides being clearly "quoted" several times by the author of the crater of Derveni. The prints of the two feminine figurines on the crater's shoulders are identical so that they give no clew to their initial position. The sleeping Maenad (Fig. 5-6) was considered by B. Barr-Sharrar⁴ to depict Ariadne, but I would favor the interpretation of G. Calcani⁵ which identifies it with Agave, daughter of king Kadmos and sister of Semele, who - awoken by the revenging Dionysus - and possessed by the god - killed her own son Pentheus during the orgy (Eurip. *Bacch.* 1079 ff). The fact that she is entirely dressed points to a women of high rank and not to an ordinary Maenad. The left superior limb, completely rolled in the drapery, including the hand, is a sign of mourning, and anticipates the grief of Agave when she will recover her consciousness and realize the monstrosity of her deeds (Eurip. *Bacch.* 913 ff and 1165 ff). On the other hand Ariadne could be a

²For the photos I am indebted to the director of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, dr. V. Grammenos and to dr. D. Ignatiadou from the same museum, who kindly answered to my request. For the two statuettes see E. ΓΙΟΥΡΕ, 'Ο κρατήρας του Δερβενίου (Αρχαιολογική Έταιρία), Athens 1978, p. 48-49, Pl. 72-78 and p. 51-53, Pl. 85-92.

³R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Il cratere di Derveni*, in *Dialoghi di Archaeologia*, 8, 2, 1974-75, p. 188-189.

⁴B. Barr-Sharrar, *Dionysos and the Derveni crater*, in *Archaeology* 35. 6 (nov.-dec. 1982), p. 15.

⁵s.v. *Cratere di Derveni*, in *EAA* (1994), secondo supplemento, II, p. 371-372.

⁶P. Moreno, *Scultura ellenistica*, Rome 1994, vol. I, p. 290-292, discussing the statue of Ariadne from Vatican (Fig. 360, p. 284) mentions as predecessors the statuette of Silenos and the figure in relief of Dionysus and the one of Pan from the Derveni crater, but does not take into account the awaking Maenad, which is actually the closest parallel to Ariadne (see in the same volume the relief from Villa Hadriana at Fig. 471, and supplementary commentaries at p. 597-598, cf. the same in LIMC III (1986) p. 1058, no. 68).

solution for the awaking Maenad (Fig. 7-8), because its sprawling position, with crossed legs and raised right arm, is clearly anticipating the common image of the goddess, which was created probably in Pergamon towards the 2nd century B C⁶.

The sleeping Maenad / Agave is very close to the figurine in Sarmizegetusa, the lower part of the two statuettes being almost identical. So the left foot is placed over the right one and the folds have the same disposition. The difference is that by the Roman copy the right foot from behind has disappeared and a large border appears to the side consequently to recurrent molding. Since the very dimensions of the two pieces are identical it is clear that the workshop that produced the statuette from Sarmizegetusa was using casts after pieces manufactured some 6 centuries earlier in late classical Greece. The combination between the upper and the lower part that do not match together must have taken place in between (most probably in Roman times due to the incoherence of the position), but if we take into consideration the style, the upper part of the body of the statuette from Sarmizegetusa could be late classical too.

The changing in position might indicate a different character in the case of the Roman copy. Indeed the absence of the head and attributes, not to mention the rest of the context from which the statuette from Sarmizegetusa comes, makes its identification with a Maenad uncertain, although it always remains the best solution. Another candidate could be a Nereid raiding on a sea-horse and holding armor pieces and weapons of Achilles, or vases, as depicted by several late classic / Hellenistic terra-cotta figurines (e.g. Fig. 9-10)⁷, or by wooden appliques on coffins from Kerc (Fig. 11)⁸.

Ariadne was sometimes depicted in a similar position while mourning for being abandoned in Naxos, but its iconography is in this case clearly influenced by images of lazily Maenads⁹. Some other times certain Muses were depicted with naked torso and seated with crossed legs¹⁰, and even Europa riding the bull presents certain similarities, but she is always holding her shawl with both hands¹¹. Clearly related to the Maenads from the Derveni crater is the Hellenistic Aphrodite from an "emblemata" found in Tarent (Fig. 12)¹² and the couple Céphalos and Procris (more probably than Adonis and Aphrodite) from the cup of Bari, which has undoubtedly Lisippian trends, and can be dated around 300 B C (Fig. 13)¹³.

⁶ N. Icard-Gianolino, A.-V. Szabados, s.v. *Nereides*, in *LIMC* VI (1992), p. 785 ff. E.g. the statuette from Kassel museum, coming from Tarent (here Fig. 9), that depicts a Nereid bearing a legging and bent in a similar position to the one in Sarmizegetusa. The piece was dated 350-320 B C (*aeadem*, op. cit. p. 811, no. 357). Another good parallel to the Sarmizegetusa figurine is the statuette from Louvre museum, coming from Apulia (here Fig. 10), and depicting a half naked Nereid carrying a shield. It was dated at the end of the 4th - beginning of the 3rd century B C (*aeadem*, op. cit. p. 811, no. 358).

⁸ M. Vaulina, A. Woisowicz, *Bois grecs et romains de l'Ermitage*, Wrocław 1974, p. 26 ff. Significant is the timber sarcophagus no. 12, found in a tumulus near Anapa and dated at the end of the 4th - beginning of the 3rd century B C. It was decorated with brackets of gilded wood representing Nereids among which no. 2 resembles the Sarmizegetusa figurine (*aeadem*, op. cit. p. 89, Fig. 36, Pl. 72; here Fig. 11). Other sarcophagi from Kerc were decorated with bronze appliques (some examples by M. Rostovcev, *Peinture décorative antique en Russie méridionale*, St. Petersburg 1913-14, Pl. 23/1-4).

⁹ C.f. W. A. Daszewski, s.v. *Ariadne*, in *LIMC* III (1986), addenda, p. 1067.

¹⁰ L. Faedo, s.v. *Mousa / Mousai*, in *LIMC* VII (1994), suppl. p. 1003, no. 265.

¹¹ M. Robertson, s.v. *Europa*, in *LIMC* IV (1988), p. 76-92.

¹² P. Wuillemier, *Le trésor de Tarente (collection Edmond de Rothschild)*, Paris 1930, p. 62-66, l. 10/2; *idem*, *Les disques de Tarente*, in *RevArch.*, janv.-juin 1932, p. 62, cf. the commentary of R. Horn, in *A.A.* 1937, p. 438-440 on the discovery from Canosa, which is a good analogy to the emblemata from Tarent, and which was dated by R. Bartocchini in the early Hellenistic period.

¹³ P. Wuillemier, *Le trésor de Tarente (collection Edmond de Rothschild)*, Paris 1930, p. 57-58, Pl. 8.

When and where were created the models for the Derveni Maenads and for so many other figurines and reliefs is not easy to answer. The homogenous group of graves from Derveni can be dated in the last two decades of the 4th century B.C. From grave B, where the famous crater was found, comes a quarter of a gold stater of Philippus from the mint of Pella, dated 323-315 B.C.¹⁴. The crater itself was dated on stylistic criteria between 350 and 320, and since it has an undoubtedly funerary character and was most probably ordered on purpose for the tomb of the noble owner of grave B, it could not have been manufactured long before the burial¹⁵.

On the other hand for the Maenads on the Derveni crater there are number of well dated analogies, pointing to the end of classical / beginning of the Hellenistic period. To the same funerary context like the Derveni crater, belongs the Nereid raiding on a sea-horse from coffin no. 12 in the necropolis of Kerc (Fig. 11), dated at the end of the 4th century, beginning of the 3rd century BC¹⁶. The ceramic statuette from Tarent rendering also a raiding Nereid (Fig. 9) was dated between 350-320 B.C.¹⁷, and the one from Apulia (Fig. 10), at the end of the 4th, beginning of the 3rd century B.C.¹⁸. Finally, still at the turn of the centuries is to be dated the cup of Bari (Fig. 13) (see above note 10). It might not be without any significance that our examples come from two, western and eastern, extremes of the Greek world. This pleads for a model of great prestige which imposed itself at the beginning of the Hellenistic age in the whole "oecumene" and which was soon used to render different feminine characters, especially Maenads and Nereids. The model itself must be late classical, the early Hellenistic contribution being the denuding of the torso. At this point it should be remained that soon after the middle of the 4th century B.C. appears on Attic vases a female person in the exact position as ours (Fig. 14)¹⁹. The only possible conclusion is that the Derveni Maenads were the creation of an exquisite bronze workshop, active sometimes between 350-330 B.C. and which was producing small figures for vases and furniture or chariots.

Anyhow the statuettes were not created on purpose for the Derveni crater. Some have already assigned the producing of the vase to a local workshop in Macedonia, due to stylistic similarities between the heads of some characters in relief on the Derveni crater and certain Macedonian coins²⁰. That it was not a serial product one might infer from the fact that it has no direct analogies and no copies of it are known²¹. Yet the four statuettes were worked apart and only then joint to the vases' shoulder. Thus they must come from the collection of models used in the workshop, but they could have been produced in any other place. However it seems obvious to me that the statuettes were

¹⁴ Other coins come one from Alexander III (Amphipolis mint), between 340-326 BC, from grave E, and another from the same king, but dated either between 340-326 or 336-328 BC and found in grave Δ. C.f. P. Themelis, s.v. *Derveni*, in *EAA* (1994), secondo supplemento, II, 1994, p. 369.

¹⁵ P. Themelis, *op.cit.* p. 369.

¹⁶ The timber coffins of this series are dated in the 4th century (M. Vaulina, A. Wasowicz, *op.cit.* at note 8, p. 26), but no. 12 is the latest of all. After K. Schefold the pottery found in it can be dated around 340-330, but from the same context comes a gold stater of Liysimachos, minted in 305 B.C., which places the burial around 300 B.C. (*eaedem*, *op. cit.* p. 91-94).

¹⁷ N. Icard-Gianolino, A.-V. Szabados, *op. cit.* at note 7, p. 811, no. 357.

¹⁸ *eaedem*, *op.cit.*, p. 811, no. 358.

¹⁹ K. Schefold, *Kertschner Vasen* 1930, Taf. 12; E. Buschor, *Griechische Vasen*, München 1940, p. 250, Fig. 265; P. E. Arias, M. Hirmer, *Tausend Jahre griechische Vasenkunst*, München, 1960 Pl. XLVII; D. J. Beazley, *Attic red-figure vase painters*, Oxford² 1963, nr. 1475, 4.

²⁰ B. Barr-Scharrar, *Dionysus and the Derveni crater*, in *Archaeology* 35.6 (nov. dec. 1982) p. 15 (see also R. Bianchi-Bandinelli, *op. cit.* at note 3, p. 194).

²¹ R. Bianchi-Bandinelli, *op. cit.* at note 3, p. 195.

meant at the beginning to be attached on an object which had an edged surface, something like a piece of furniture. The prove is the 90° cut on the right side of the statuette which does not match the rounded shape of the shoulder of the crater.

It is true that in classical Greece small bronze figurines deriving from ceramic λουτροφόροι²² were placed on the shoulders or richly decorated vases, especially on what we usually call "craters with volutes", and the ancient Greeks would denominate κρατήρ λακωνικός²³. Such statuettes are also attested by the description of Kallixenos, who mentions craters, chests and lids with various figurines of gilded bronze and silver in the great procession of Ptolemaios Philadelphos from the 3rd century B.C. (preserved in Athenaios, *Deinosoph.* 5, 199E, line 107 and 199F)²⁴. But there are also examples of small bronzes attached to the furniture, like the Maenad from Herculaneum, dating from the first century A.D.²⁵.

The figurine from Sarmizegetusa might have been attached to a piece of furniture since it has the same rectangular cut on the right side like the figurines from the Derveni crater²⁶. But as A. Alföldy has already proved it is less probable that Dionysian decorative patterns would have been used for the common furniture. It is more likely that such pieces came from funerary hearses, where they must have been related to the idea of immortality, associated at its turn to the Dionysian initiation²⁷. A beautiful example is the chariot from the Römisch-Germanisches Museum in Köln which comes from the surroundings of Thessaloniki. The end of its yoke is decorated with the image of a Maenad (wrongly taken by some for Abundantia or Flores et c.)²⁸. But besides funeral vehicles the gilded statuette from Sarmizegetusa could come from some stretcher or pageant for divine images, like the chariot in the National Museum from Athens, which was found at Nicomedia in Bithinia²⁹.

But only large scale archaeological excavations in the area where the figurine from Sarmizegetusa was found could solve the alternative: funeral or religious context, since the area East of the town, where the figurine was found, could belong to the nearby temples, or to the necropolis which is also documented in the vicinity.

²² Barr-Scharrar, *op. cit.* at note 4, p. 18.

²³ Some examples by K. Schefold, *Der basler Pan und der Krater von Derveni*, in *Antike Kunst* 1979, 2, p. 114-115, other by S. Karasu, *ΤΕΧΝΟΥΡΓΟΙ ΚΡΑΤΗΡΩΝ. Fragmente bronzenener Volutenkratere (Taf. 13-28)*, in *Ath. Mitt.* 94, 1979, p. 77-91. Significant for our problem is the Maenad from Dodona in Berlin museum which dates from the 5th century and is shown reclining on a rock (*eadem, op. cit.* p. 88; c.f. K. A. Neugebauer, *Antike Bronzestatuetten*, Berlin, 1921, p. 75-76, Taf. 40).

²⁴ B. Barr-Scharrar, *The private use of small bronze sculpture*, in *The fire of Hephaistos. Large classical bronzes from North American collections* (C. C. Mattush ed.), Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1996, p. 107-108.

²⁵ M. Elisa Micheli, in *Il bronzo dei Romani. Arredo e suppellettile* (a cura di L. Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli) Rome, 1990, p. 265, no. 45, Fig. 147-148.

²⁶ The same for two other figurines in the National Museum from Athens which were considered to come from some crater (S. Karasu, *op. cit.* at note 23, p. 83-84, Taf. 20-21), but which do not have a rounded back to fit the vases' shoulder.

²⁷ A. Alföldy, *Chars funéraires bachiques dans les provinces occidentales de l'empire romain*, in *L'Antiquité Classique*, 8,2 Bruxelles (1939), p. 351-354. See also Ch. Picard, *Chars bachiques funéraires d'Occident*, in *R.A.* 41, 1953, p. 96-98; A. Radnoti, *Der Fund von Geinsheim-Bäbingen*, in *Mitteilungen des historischen Vereines der Pfalz*, 67, 1969, p. 87-109.

²⁸ G. Seure, *Un char thraco-macédonien*, in *B.C.H.* 28, 1904, p. 215, Fig. 9.

²⁹ E. von Mercklin, *Wagenschmuck aus der römischen Kaiserzeit*, in *J.D.A.I.*, 48, 1933, p. 141-147 and especially Abb. 67-73 with two Nereides and a sea Centaur which provide good analogies for the position the bronze group from Sarmizegetusa might have had.



Fig. 1. The statuette from Sarmizegetusa, front view (photo Juliane Henky).

Fig. 2. The same statuette from the left (photo the author).



Fig. 3. The same statuette from the right (photo Juliane Henky).

Fig. 4. The same statuette from the back (photo Juliane Henky).





Fig. 5. Sleeping Maenad / Agave from the Derveni crater (photo by courtesy of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki).



Fig. 6. The same Maenad. Drawing of the author.



Fig. 7. Ariadne, or awaking Maenad from the Derveni crater (photo by courtesy of the Archaeological Museum Thessaloniki).



Fig. 8. The same Maenad Drawing, the author.

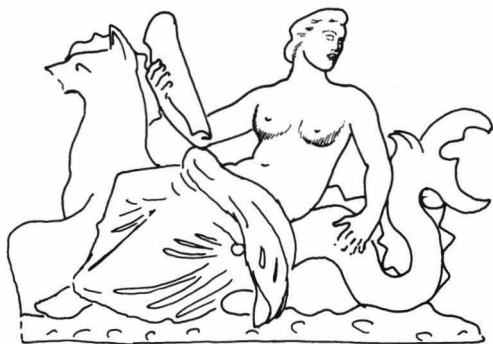


Fig. 9. Terra-cotta figurine depicting a Nereid from Tarent (Kassel museum), sketch by after LIMC VI no. 357.



Fig. 10. Terra-cotta Nereid from Apulia (Louvre museum), sketch by after LIMC VI no. 358.



Fig. 11. Wooden applique depicting a Nereid from a coffin in Kerc. Sketch after M. Vaulina, A. Wasowicz, *op. cit.* at note 8, Pl. 72.



Fig. 12. *Emblema* with Aphrodite from Tarent, sketch after Willeumier, *op. cit.* at note 13, Pl. 10/2.



Fig. 13. *Emblema* of the cup from Bari, sketch after Wuilleumier, *op. cit.* at note 13, Pl. 8.



Fig. 14. Red figure pelike no. 424 with Peleus and Thetis, sketch after K. Schefold, *op. cit.* at note 23, Taf. 12.