Early Cretan Armorers

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Book Reviews

HERBERT HOFFMANN, *Early Cretan Armorers*, with the collaboration of A. E. Raubitschek (*Fogg Museum Monographs in Art and Archeology*, 1), Mainz, Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1972. Pp. 69; 4 color pls., 53 black-and-white ills. 98DM.

There is no need for a lengthy introduction to the Afrati armor. Two exhibitions and three publications have helped to spread its fame and some information.[1] It is gratifying that through the efforts of S. Alexiou and A. Lembessis the esteemed Federigo Halbherr (1857–1930) was exculpated from any connection with what turned out to be freebooter's loot of 1964.[2] The find of armor – a total of thirty pieces – consists of five helmets (two with figural relief); nine parts of cuirasses (one with extensive figural relief, now in the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, where Hoffman served with distinction as a curator till 1973); sixteen mitrai (four with figural relief)[3]; and one spearhead. Three helmets, two cuirasses and eight mitrai are inscribed. These inscriptions mention the name (in some instances the patronymic too) of someone who "took this," that is, they confirm that we are dealing with booty stripped from those who succumbed in battle. Identical inscriptions allow for the certain attribution of six pieces to three panoplies, and in one case such an attribution can be verified on stylistic grounds (page 30).[4] It seems in any case a likely enough assumption that one craftsman would fashion a complete set to order. It is interesting to note with Raubitschek that, in contrast to inscribed armor from Olympia, inscriptions here "are not dedicatory, properly speaking, for nowhere does a dedicatory formula or the name of the divinity occur" (page 15). The Afrati armor may have been simply on display or stored in some kind of a building (since a trophy seems to be excluded). Reportedly, the find comes from a fairly spacious structure (12 × 6.80m.), conjectured to be a shrine ("hieron") by Alexiou, and a treasury by Hoffmann (page 1).[5] However, features like the oblong orientation and benches around the walls suit a "Banketthaus," on Crete more specifically the "Andreion," and this may well have been a suitable place in which to commemorate a victory.[6] Another difference from armor recovered from Olympia, which may or may not be explained by this context, is the absence of despoliation in order to prevent future use and to make the object "sacred" (R. Hampe, U. Jantzen, *I. Bericht ueber die Ausgrabungen in Olympia 1936/37*, Berlin, 1937, 52).

Besides the armor from Afrati, Hoffmann was able to include a number of valuable illustrations to aid his discussion. Among these, deserving special mention are the details of the newly recovered Crowe corselet (plate 25), of the Rethymnon mitra with epiphany (plate 43), and of the remarkable Copenhagen relief pithos (plate 50) whose heraldic composition offers somewhat more to please the eye than the usual dull productions of the Cretan pithos potters.[7] In addition, the open-work reliefs ("cut-outs") may now be studied together and in greater detail.[8] Their number has been significantly increased in the meantime by finds from Viannos (Afrati region), and another exquisitely decorated mitra of Cretan manufacture may also be added to the list.[9]

In the original as well as in reproduction, these bronzes are a magnificent sight, but most of them – and especially the richly decorated ones – have been cosmetically restored, and one wishes they had not been.

For the original condition of helmets No. 1 and No. 2 previous illustrations in *Master Bronzes*, *Art and Technology*, *and Daedalische Kunst* may be compared. The drawing of helmet No. 1 is accurate, of No. 2 not quite (cf. pages 4 and 30 on the horse's eye). In spite of the author's assurance (page 4, footnote) – no details supplied – the frontlet now mounted on No. 1 looks more convincing to me on No. 2, where it seems to have protected the underlying surface to some extent.[10] For helmets No. 4 and No. 5 Hoffmann himself rightly prefers the view prior to the last restoration, though this has the disadvantage of incorporationg a yet earlier incorrect restorers' addition (page 6). Hoffmann feels that the earlier open-faced helmet, actually preserved here in the earliest known example (No. 5), developed on Crete into the Cretan-type helmet proper, independently of the Corinthian helmet (pages 1, 57, notes 7, 8). But the Gortyn Athena's helmet – his missing link in this metamorphosis – is almost certainly incorrectly restored (which Hoffmann notes), though it probably belongs with the statuette (E. Simon, *Die Goetter der Griechen*, Munich, 1969, 188). As for the crest of the later Cretan helmet, provisions for fastening preserved on most of the extant examples allow for a general idea of its appearance, which, however, does not seem to conform to Snodgrass's implied definition of the "fore and aft" type.[11]

Among the iconographic motifs none is more arresting than the snake tamers of helmet No. 1. To state that these enigmatic youths

*I wish to thank Miss Patricia Orfanos, doctoral candidate at the Institute of Fine Arts, for valuable criticism and for assisting me in preparing this manuscript for the printer.

[1] D. G. Mitten, S. F. Doeringer, *Master Bronzes from the Classical World*, Fogg Art Museum Exhibition, Mainz, 1967; *Art and Technology. A Symposium on Classical Bronzes*, Fogg Art Museum and MIT, MIT Press, 1970; *Daedalische Kunst auf Kreta im 7. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, Mainz, 1970. All with contributions by Herbert Hoffmann.

[2] Assertion in *Master Bronzes*, 45. On the excavation, S. Alexiou, *ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΟΝ ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ, ΧΡΟΝΙΚΑ*, XXIV, 1969, pt. 2, 415f.

[3] Mitra: roughly semicircular shield, to be suspended from the belt beneath the cuirass and meant to protect the lower abdomen. According to Hoffmann, especially effective as a defensive weapon against archers (page 10).

[4] Panoply: the hoplite's armor, the main parts of which are shield, helmet, cuirass, greaves, sword and lance.

[5] Alexiou, *ΧΡΟΝΙΚΑ*, 417.

[6] A. Frickenhaus, "Griechische Banketthäuser," *Jahrbuch des kaiserlich deutschen Archaeologischen Institutes*, XXXII, 1917, 114f. H. Drerup, "Griechische Architektur zur Zeit Homers," *Archaeologischer Anzeiger*, 1964, 213f.

[7] For all that is preserved, see *Art and Technology*, 146, fig. 1. A yet undetermined number of pithoi and pithos fragments, this one among them, appears to be part of the same Afrati find; *Daedalische Kunst*, 57, pl. 23f.

[8] It is hardly justified to call these "hesitant and unsure" (page 29) even in comparison to helmet No. 1, pl. 1. See E. Hommann-Wedeking, *Archaisches Griechenland*, Baden-Baden, 1966, 42. For a new and striking interpretation, see K. Fittschen, *Untersuchungen zum Beginn der Sagendarstellungen bei den Griechen*, Berlin, 1969, 67.

[9] Cut-outs: [S. Alexiou], *"Περιαυλογὴ ἀρχαίων,"* *ΤΟ ΕΡΓΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΙΑΣ*, 1972, 125f., figs. 119, 120. [S. Alexiou], *ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΑΝΑΛΕΚΤΑ ΕΞ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ*, VI, 1973, 109f. Mitra: J. P. Michaud, "Chronique des fouilles," *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellenique*, XCVI, 1972, 678, fig. 212.

[10] *Daedalische Kunst*, 30; *Master Bronzes*, 48.

[11] Pages 2, 57, n. 8; A. Snodgrass, *Early Greek Armour and Weapons*, Edinburgh, 1964, 6f.

supplied with wings are shown "in the archaic Knielauf position" (page 2) does not do justice to the Cretan craftsman's achievement. Neither the halting step suggestive of momentary action, nor any similar agitation in facial outline or gestural attitude can be found anywhere else in contemporary Greek art.[12] A telling indication of the artist's ability and intention is the way in which he renders the hair-tresses widely parted and flung across chest and shoulder as if by the force of the head's violent motion. Such pictorial interest in the spontaneous and sudden recalls Minoan works like the famous fresco dancer from Hagia Triada, or the Toreador frescoes.[13] The affinity has, of course, nothing to do with material survival or mere transmission of motifs. A more germane kind of continuity must be postulated.[14] The agility and lightness of the winged youths, though not their electrifying vigor, is shared by the configurations on the Hamburg cuirass (plates 19–23). In this case, however, as on many other pieces of Cretan armor, stock motifs or "formulas" make up for invention. The lion rampant, striding griffin and, to a minor extent, the kneeling warrior are just this, arranged and displayed in a suitable way. The lack of "meaning" beyond the purpose of animated decoration and patterning is, at least in my opinion, conspicuous. I suspect that ultimately the snake tamers may not be any more "meaningful" than those stock types, being simply a more fanciful concoction of spellbinding elements, and a more imaginative paraphrase of the symmetrical composition formula. Hoffmann calls them Athena's "minions or acolytes," referring to anonymity and indistinctness as a characteristic trait of such Cretan daemons or spirits (pages 36f.; 60, note 32). A more facile interpretation is decidedly and rightly rejected.[15]

There can be no doubt that the peculiarities of seventh-century Cretan bronze relief stand out much more clearly through this publication. To mention just one important result: it will be impossible in the future to call the Crowe corselet a Cretan work (see below). Yet much remains to be compared and articulated, and more attention may be paid to Cretan morphology in the future. One may find some similarity to earlier and contemporary Cycladic production, but differences are appreciable.[16] Cycladic forms are more severely structured and lack lushness and exuberance in comparison to this armor. Of course there is ample room for disagreement here, especially since the Cycladic side is only represented by paintings on pots.[17] Mimetic interest, as seen in this Cretan style, perceives movement rather than structure when it comes to the rendering of the living organism, hence the main emphasis is upon an expressive and smoothly flowing outline, in contrast to a more "sculptural" articulation, which receives comparatively little attention. Differing tradition and motivation aside, a similar observation may be made with respect to the best Phoenician ivories, and I wonder whether their aesthetics may not have had at least a reassuring and at most a formative influence upon a peculiarly Cretan propensity.[18] Affinity and differences can best be assessed in a study of the lion rampant, a motif developed by the Cretan armorers with obvious fervor and independence.[19] A comparison of cut-out reliefs to the fine Phoenician slave carrying some of the merchant's more exotic cargo is to me equally suggestive of Orient-related interests, with respect to both iconography (choice of "everyday" motif) and style.[20] We may be dealing here with another complicated and individual response to fertilizing Eastern stimuli; complicated, because the *motivgeschichtliche* aspect – main criterion for the term orientalizing – is only part of the discernible influence.

The bulk of the Cretan armor and the cut-outs are assigned by Hoffmann to the late seventh and early sixth centuries (page 43f.). He dates the Hamburg cuirass (plate 20) and the Axos mitra with epiphany (plate 44; Athena, rather than Apollon, *pace* Hoffmann, page 37) about a generation earlier, to the middle of the seventh century (page 43). With these he would include the Olympia cuirass of 1959, but the drawing of it – all that is published so far – is considered unreliable (page 39).[21] The Olympia mitra (plate 47, 2)[22] and the mitra from Rethymnon (plate 47, 1) seem an unlikely pair to come from the same workshop (pages 32; 46: 630–620). All of the Afrati armor may well be of more or less the same date, and I concur with Hoffmann in assuming this to be some time early in the last third of the seventh century. It is difficult and rather arbitrary to argue such a date, since matching this Cretan material with the well-established Corinthian pottery sequence proves to be almost impossible. Beyond the bronzes, not much is gained by accepting the Chigi Olpe and the Afrati pitcher (plate 51, 3) as contemporary.[23] References to the Nessos Painter and to Early Corinthian style cannot make us feel we are standing on any firmer ground (page 44).

In Appendix II Hoffmann convincingly dissociates the Crowe corselet from Cretan fabric. But it cannot be called Corinthian or Attic either. The drawing of the bull (plate 25b) is most similar in its general appearance to Late Protocorinthian/Transitional design but lacks the organic substance and anatomical command usually characteristic of this school. I was tempted to speculate about a

[12] On the other hand, the closeness to the more spontaneous and less restrained Protoattic style should not go unobserved: daemons from the Aegisthos Krater, *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, Berlin 1, Munich, 1938, pl. 20.

[13] L. Banti, "Minoico-Micenea, Arte," *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica*, v, Rome, 1963, 59, color pl. A. Evans, M. Cameron, S. Hood, *Fresco Atlas*, Farnborough, 1967, pls. 9, 10. A. Evans, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*, III, London, 1930, 209f.

[14] E. Langlotz, *Corolla Ludwig Curtius*, Stuttgart, 1937, 62. Compare Doro Levi's comments on an illuminating error by Emil Kunze, "Gleanings from Crete," *The Journal of the Archaeological Institute of America*, XLIX, 1945, 292f. The material aspects of survival have been dealt with by the same author in "Continuità della Tradizione Micenea nell'Arte Greca Archaica," *Atti e Memorie del I° Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia*, Rome, 1967, 185f.

[15] The following references will enter future iconographical considerations: Krater with "dragon's" head, from Miletos, ca. mid-7th century: G. Kleiner, *Alt-Milet*, Wiesbaden, 1966, pl. 17., fig. 23. Decorative use of horse-protomai: H. V. Herrmann, "*Frühgriechischer Pferdeschmuck vom Luristantypus*, *JdI*, LXXXIII, 1968, 1f. B. Freyer-Schauenburg, *Elfenbeine aus dem samischen Heraion*, Hamburg, 1966, No. 4, 26f.

[16] For instance, F. Salviat, N. Weill. "Un plat du VII^e siècle à Thasos," *BCH*, CXXXIV, 1960, pl. 4. G. Daux, *Guide de Thasos*, 2nd ed., 1968, 9, fig. 2.

[17] Fittschen's list of "Cycladic" bronze reliefs as yet lacks confirmation by finds from the same area and will surely be challenged in the future (*Untersuchungen*, 118, n. 582).

[18] I realize the difficulties in arguing this point, especially in the context of a review. One Phoenician example is the Nubian being mauled by a lion: M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains*, I, London, 1966, frontispiece.

[19] Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains*, II, *passim*, shows variously related Eastern versions. The "boneless" and powerful Oriental outline was known on the island possibly as early as the 9th century. (Compare shield in E. Kunze, *Kretische Bronzereliefs*, Stuttgart, 1931, No. 1. pl. 1, to the ivory of 9th-century date (?) in Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains*, I, 59, fig. 22. See also J. Muhly, "Homer and the Phoenicians," *Berytus*, XIX, 1970, 48.) The progressive assimilation can roughly be traced through Cretan shields (Kunze, *Kretische Bronzereliefs*, No. 8, pl. 21f.) to the lion of the Hamburg cuirass. Compare H. Kyrieleis in *Gnomon*, XLIV, 1972, 708, whereas Boardman in his fundamental contribution (see below, n. 23) denies any links between Idaean bronzes and Afrati armor. Cypriote versions like V. Karageorghis, *Salamis*, New York, 1969, 79, fig. 20, may also have to be taken into consideration.

[20] Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains*, II, 528f., ills.

[21] H. V. Herrmann, "Urartu und Griechenland," *JdI*, LXXXI, 1966, 136, n. 189.

[22] Helena Walter-Karydi raises the possibility that Menelaos and Helen are shown on the Olympia mitra: "*Ελένης ἀνακαλυπτήρια*," *KPHTIKA XPONIKA*, XXII, 1970, 316f.

[23] Chigi Olpe: P. Arias, M. Hirmer, B. Shefton, *A History of Greek Vase Painting*, London, 1962, pl. 16f.

Boeotian or Euboean origin, but no evident confirmation can be gained from pottery of the latter area.[24]

I am in no position to discuss either the technological (H. Hoffmann and H. Drescher), or the epigraphical contributions. The fashioning of the helmet in two halves (and the comparative thinness of the material used?) enabled the armorer to deck it out with relief (pages 1, 17). Such considerations aside, the variety and sumptuousness of design among the Afrati material seem specifically Cretan and point to a special pride taken in imaginative creations. Professor Raubitschek, in discussing the legal inscription on the mitra Brit. Mus. 1969. 4–2.1. suggests on the basis of the use of *φοινικαζειν* for "to write" that the Phoenicians themselves were the first ones to write Greek among Greeks.[25] The fact that the evidence for Phoenician settlers in Greece is scant if not non-existent so far should not persuade us to take Raubitschek's suggestion lightly. Not only is it conceivable that future excavations will substantially alter present conceptions, but one ought to be sensitive as well to the fact that archaeological evidence is never a perfect record of what actually happened in history. Some scholars are being led currently to speculate about the presence of foreigners among the Greek population from evidence which others will find still inconclusive or insufficient.[26]

The Philipp von Zabern publishing company has a long-established reputation for good taste, quality and reasonably-priced work, and these advantages are equally characteristic of this production. Herbert Hoffmann is to be warmly commended for making this wealth of old and new material available to us in superb and carefully selected illustrations. I am less satisfied with the art-historical contribution. In my opinion, this study should have focused on a descriptive evaluation of formal appearances, emphasizing their unique and specifically Cretan qualities. The affinities and, to some extent at least, the roots of this particular production could have been exposed by including more references to the Cretan Shields and a good many other indigenous and foreign parallels. This approach would have helped Hoffmann's somewhat academic exposé of iconographical features, by providing a tangible context for references to traditional and Eastern sources. He might also have been led to stress the striking range of directions in the so-called "Daedalic Style."[27] (A remark on stylistic distinctions between Afrati and Gortyn materials, for instance, could have been profitably pursued; page 31.) With the particulars of this armor's style sharply outlined against the backdrop of our "Daedalic idea," the chapters on "Grouping" and "Chronology" too would have made more interesting reading. Since the aesthetic format of this publication seemed to invite the non-specialist to participate in scholarly endeavor, I looked forward to more fluent and accessible writing. This need not imply loss of relevant detail. As for the specialist, he will wish to probe further into the puzzle posed by these Cretan eccentricities. Herbert Hoffman has sharpened our curiosity and made a major contribution towards a future monograph on Cretan Orientalizing Art.

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[24] J. Boardman, "Pottery from Eretria," *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, XLVII, 1952, 23f.

[25] See also: A. E. Raubitschek, rev. of L. H. Jeffrey, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* in *Gnomon*, XXXIV, 1962, 226.

[26] R. A. Higgins, "Early Greek Jewellery," *BSA*, LXIV, 1969, 143f., 146. J. Boardman, "Orientalen auf Kreta" in *Daedalische Kunst*, 14f.

[27] The most penetrating analysis of Cretan style is still the one offered by E. Homann-Wedeking, *Die Anfänge der griechischen Grossplastik*, Berlin, 1950, 110f. K. Schefold and C. Davaras try once more to make Crete the home and fountainhead of monumental sculpture in Greece, an idea which Wedeking, on the basis of structural anaylsis, specifically took issue with (C. Davaras, *Die Statue aus Astritsi*, *Antike Kunst*, Beiheft 8, Bern, 1972, 3, 44f.). With a widespread acceptance of the 8th-century date for the Dreros [Sphyrelata as proposed by J. Boardman, with the discovery of the Astritsi and Gortyn torsos; and with rich evidence of a mature and refined Daedalic style forthcoming from the latter site, such a question may be well worth asking again.

JAMES E. PACKER, *The Insulae of Imperial Ostia* (*Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, XXXI), Rome, American Academy in Rome, 1971. Pp. xxviii+217; 3 tables, 74 figs., 327 ills., 1 folding plan. (n.p.).

Since excavations began at Ostia in the nineteenth century, the importance of the evidence preserved there has become increasingly more apparent. It is now clear that the remains of Roman Ostia offer unique information on the character of a great ancient city. That city is not Ostia itself, but Rome. Yet for all the number and size of its ancient monuments, Rome's historical preeminence has been its physical undoing: the greatest destroyers of Rome have been the Romans, it is said. For more than twenty-seven hundred years, Rome has been a living organism. As a result, in the great city itself what are preserved of antiquity today are its sacred memorials and those ancient structures most notable for their staggering size and, seemingly, their consequent indestructability. Most of the remainder has vanished, most, in other words, of the anonymous buildings that filled up the interstices between the great thermae, the templa and the fora, the basilicas and the palaces, and which made up so much of the fabric of the ancient city. Fragments of this fabric are visible in Rome today, but it is the context of those fragments, the ambience of the whole to which Rome can no longer testify. For it was upon the foundation of the anonymous buildings of antiquity that the successive new Romes arose, the Romes of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Baroque and the Risorgimento. It is against this background that Ostia makes its historical contribution, for Ostia substantially preserves the physical context of ancient city life, and as many believe, the context of anonymous building as it looked in Rome itself at its greatest extent, namely, in the second century. The work under review deals therefore with a subject of considerable interest, and one not previously treated as a whole. It should be noted here, parenthetically, that shortened but otherwise essentially verbatim versions of two of Packer's four chapters have appeared elsewhere, Chapter II in *Technology and Culture*, IX, 1968, 357–388, and Chapter IV in *Journal of Roman Studies*, LVII, 1967, 80–95.

The principal form of anonymous building in ancient Rome, to judge from the documentary sources, was the *insula*. It has been supposed by some that the multi-storied buildings of Ostia are models of this type, but the identification is something less than positive, as ancient authors seem to have given the word more than one meaning. The word "insula" of course means "island"; it was applied by transference to a block of land defined by streets on all sides, then to a large building, finally to a floor of such a building or even a single apartment. Packer equates the term with the phrase "Roman apartment house" (page 2), but since under this head he includes buildings incorporating many different functions, readers unfamiliar with this material will be at a loss from the start. Not until the end of Packer's text (page 79) do we learn that "It would seem more reasonable, therefore, to regard *insula* as meaning not 'apartment house,' as Calza has suggested, but only 'multiple dwelling,' a definition not firmly connected with any architectural type."

His own definition notwithstanding, Packer devotes his first chapter to classification of the Ostian evidence by building type, beginning with a discussion of the various systems of classifying Ostian buildings developed by previous students of the material. Rejecting other systems, Packer concludes that "it seems more logical to classify Ostian multiple dwellings on the basis of the use made of their ground floors" (page 6), and then discusses various examples put forward as demonstrations of his scheme. The new scheme is summarized at the end of the chapter, and deserves careful scrutiny, for from it depends the remainder of Packer's analysis and conclusions. Ostian buildings are here classified as follows: *Type I*, buildings in which the ground floor is composed of shops, subdivided into: IA, single rows of shops with apartments above; IB, two rows of shops, back to back; IC, a row of shops with back rooms used as dwellings. *Type II*, structures which use the ground floor for habitation, subdivided into: IIA, a single back room attached to a shop; IIB, a row of rooms: IIC, apartments with atrium-hall; IID, apartments with atrium-hall and