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A Terracotta Horse and Rider from Kerch

In the National Museum in Warsaw a hand-made terracotta group is kept, representing a rider on a horse, Inv. nos. 147527 (horse), 147515 (rider). This group was bought from a Mr. Pawłowski in 1948¹. Total height — 0.15 m; horse height — 0.127 m, width 0.033 m rider height 0.113 m; width 0.053 m.

The horse is mended from 2 fragments, right legs, tail and right ear missing, on the back there are traces of glue; the rider has his left leg broken near the hip, his right leg in the knee. On the left hand, preserved to the ankle, traces of glue are still visible. Both figurines are covered with white crust.

Technique: fine grit clay, brown with an orange tint, well baked, with small particles of slag². Figurines have been modelled separately, and joined together after baking. The rider has been cut out of a thick, flat lump of clay, and the final shape achieved through very simple and uncomplicated operations. The figurine has flat back with clearly visible traces of squeezing and hand modelling. Finger traces are particularly evident on the waist and the neck, semicircular from the front, with sharply projecting edges on the back. Body and legs of the horse were made separately from the neck and head. Joints are easily visible. Many fingerprint traces have been left on the roughly levelled surface. Both figurines must have been modelled from overdried clay. That these two terracottas formed a single group

¹ The figurine was broken into pieces; they bear the following numbers written in black India ink: T 156(1), T. 156(2), T 156(3).

² The "Kerch" clay is described in: М. М. Кобылина, *Терракотовые статуэтки Пантикапея и Панагории*, Москва 1961, p. 140; П. Ф. Силантева, *Терракоты Пантикапея*, p. 36., in: *Археология СССР, Свод археологических источников*, вып. Г 1-11, *Терракотовые статуэтки, часть III, Пантикапей*, Москва 1974 (SAI-G1-11).

is indicated by exact fit between the horse and the rider, which must have simply been set upon it, as well as by the identical technique.

The rider is sitting on the horseback near the horse neck, with his left broken hand extended forward below the horse's head. Straight, vertical back of the rider passes gradually into the semicircle of head and neck, bent forward. Rider's chin is on the level of the horse head. Proportion between the figurines is therefore preserved. From the body of the horse with triangular cross-section heavy, widely separated legs with marked hoofs outgrow. The body is somewhat flattened on

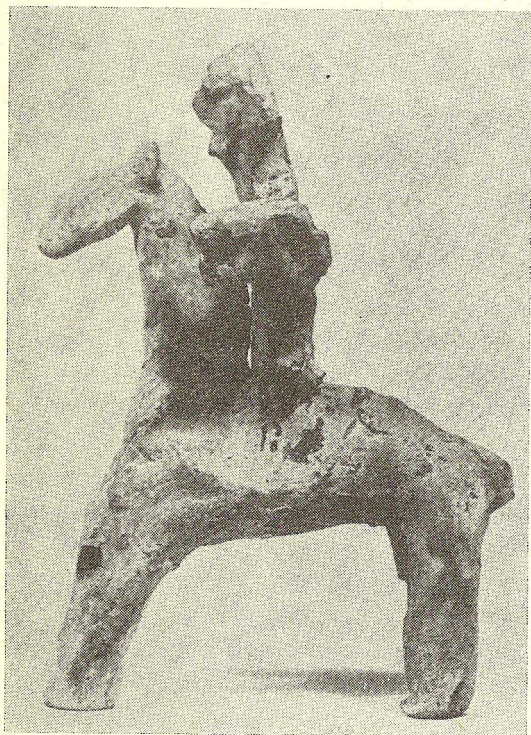


Fig. 1. Horse-and-rider, National Museum in Warsaw. Inv. 147515, 147527. Phot. A. Wichniewicz

the back, and steadily lowers. Front legs, pushed forward, are slightly rounded. The high, stiff neck passes gradually into a sharp-edged mane, what gives a triangular section. The neck narrows visibly upwards and is disproportionately thin, compared to the body. Head is oval, rounded at the front, bulging at top, with a flat chin, and has little, oval, projecting ears. Masculine figurine is summarily modelled, with widely separated straight legs. The body is deeply narrowed in the waist, and widens in the shoulders. The right shoulder curves down steeply forming a hand, touching the thigh. The left forearm, bent at right angle, stretches forward. Its outer surface is flat and forms a sharp edge projecting far backwards. The neck is thick, and the head flat at the back, rounded at the front. The ears are large and flat. The chin covers partly the neck and jaws are pronounced by hollows and grooves on both sides of the head. Eyes are formed as protruding oval stumps and the nose

protrudes between the eyes, ending level with the ears. Under it, an incision marks the mouth and separates the nose from the chin.

All close analogies, known to me and kept in the Soviet museums in Moscow, Leningrad and Odessa, are said to come from Kerch³. A closer look on them follows:

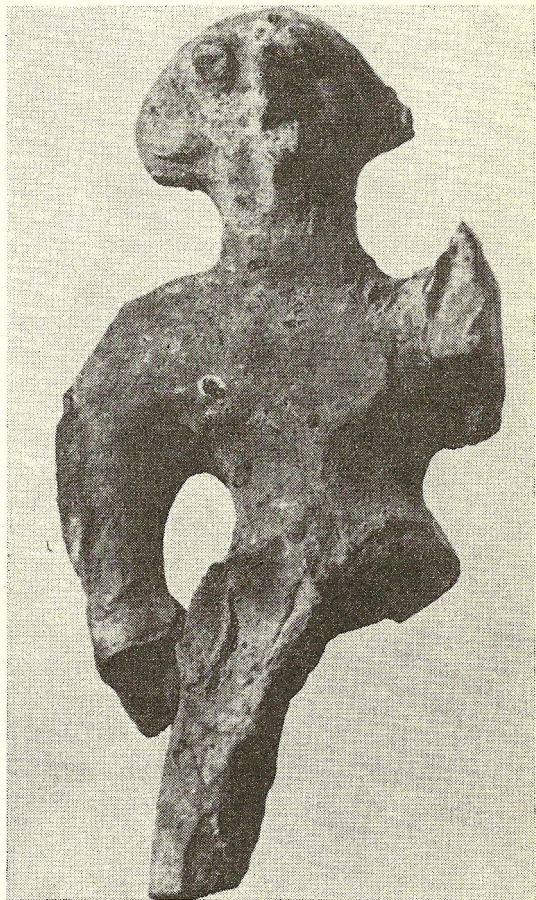


Fig. 2. Rider, National Museum in Warsaw.
Inv. 147515. Phot. A. Wichniewicz

1 — National Historical Museum, Moscow, inv. 173306. Height 0.14 m, publication: Sokolskij⁴, dated: 1st–4th cent. A.D. mentioned by Kobylina⁵, who emphasizes the red clay typical for Kerch, the long neck and elongated round (i.e. — probably oval) head, widely separated thick legs and a short, narrowing tail. Describing the rider she stresses that one of his hands touches the neck of the

³ These figurines have no field cards, nor any other field documents, cf. notes 4–9.

⁴ Bought from a Mr Zaporozskij, published by Н. И. Соколовский, *О боспорских ицтах*, KSIIMK, 58, 1955, p. 21, fig. 2, 4.

⁵ Kobylina, 1961, op. cit., p. 168 f., note 30.

horse, and the other hangs loosely. The horse and the rider have both deformed bodies, without any detail. The head, which received most of the attention, is flat at the back, set upon a thick, long neck. From the flat body spread wide, narrowing flat arms and flat legs. A large round shield with slightly projecting central boss is fixed on the left side⁶.

2 — National Historical Museum, Moscow, inv. 23923. Height 0.18 m, dated by Kobylina to the 2nd–3rd cent. A.D., has a head more schematic than the one mentioned above⁷.

3 — National Museum of Ermitage, inv. Г — 2630. Height 0.118 m, dated to 3rd cent. A.D., find context and reasons for such dating are not given by Silanteva, though general provenience is said to be Pantikapaion. Almost totally unmodelled face of the rider and the great roughness of work are emphasized⁸.

4 — Odessa Museum, inv. 24730. Height 0.17 m, according to the catalogue comes from Kul-Oba, obtained in 1896 from A. A. Dirin⁹. The Author of the description stresses that the horse is disproportionately small for the rider. A similar lack of due relation appears also in a group of a hunter on a horse from Odessa Museum, inv. 22065¹⁰, dated to the 2nd–3rd cent. A.D. Stylistic features similar to the Warsaw terracotta are visible in the horse and general position of the rider, as well as in the arrangement of his hands — the left one touching the neck of the horse, the right holding loosely the prey. In general the head form is also like in other groups, only the face is carefully rendered in naturalistic fashion.

There is no doubt that the characteristic features of the Kerch figurines fit well to the above described terracottas, and that the missing shield and the horse's tail could be reconstructed. It seems sure that it belongs to the same coroplastic workshop. Attention should be paid to the round shield with slightly bulging umbo. Such shields are found in many representations from the Bosporan Kingdom region, e.g. a funerary stele of a warrior — Ermitage Museum inv. π 1889.10, dated to the 2nd cent. B.C., where four round shields form decorative ornaments¹¹. Shields of that type appear also on the coins of the Bosporan State in the 1st and 2nd cent.

⁶ The remaining terracottas are described in the same terms. Therefore only differences are mentioned.

⁷ Kobylina, 1961, op. cit. p. 169, pl. XXXVII, 4. the "Kerch" clay.

⁸ Silanteva, op. cit., p. 36, no 225, pl 50, 3. In the introduction, p. 5 f., however, a short report of the excavations in Kerch is given, with a remark saying that only figurines of a sure provenience are published in the book.

⁹ Silanteva, op. cit., p. 36 f. no 227; TOAM, II, 1898, pl. XI, 2. (Терракоты Одесского археологического музея.)

¹⁰ Silanteva, op. cit., p. 37, no 228, pl. 50, 4. This was bought in 1901 as coming from Kerch.

¹¹ G. Kieseritzky, C. Watzinger, *Griechische Grabreliefs aus Südrussland*, Berlin 1909, p. 71, 407, fig. XXVIII; Г. Соколов, *Античное Причерноморье*, Ленинград 1973, pp. 92, 93.

Fig. 3. Horse-and-rider, National Historical Museum, Moscow, inv. 23 923. Phot. A. Wichniewicz

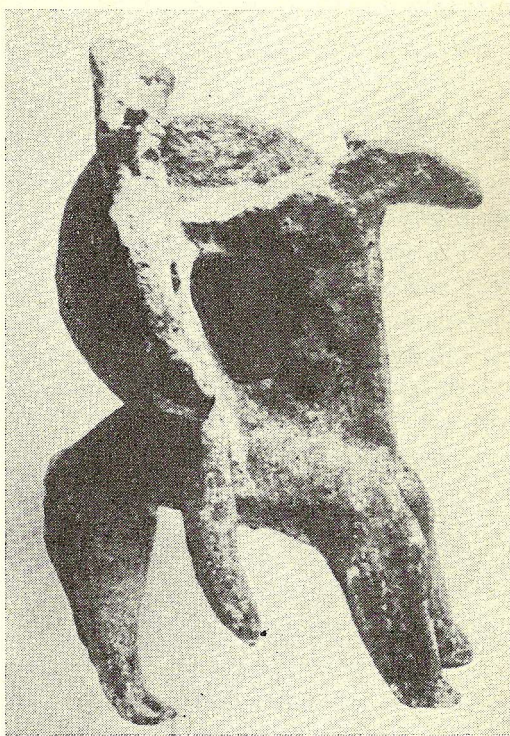


Fig. 4. Horse-and-rider, National Museum of Ermitage, Leningrad, inv. — 2630. Phot. A. Wichniewicz

A.D.¹² A terracotta figurine, representing a standing warrior with a round shield comes from Pantikapaion, and is dated within 2nd–3rd cent. A.D.¹³

Further comparisons may be made with Parthian horse-and-rider statuettes hand-made of clay, dated within the 1st–3rd cent. A.D. Some of the riders found in Suse have a Macedonian head-gear, flat “causia” on their heads, usually carry round, convex shields, and the composition of the group is similar to the Kerch group¹⁴.

The way the horse is represented, and its specific features, a small head, a long neck and a sloping back, along with thick legs and hoofs always marked, are also important details. The legs are certainly far from naturalistic, and their heaviness may derive either from the material or from the simplifying style, observable in the larger representations in the funerary stelae in the wall painting of the Kerch barrows¹⁵.

In conclusion, the two figurines in the National Museum in Warsaw form a single group, a rider with a large, round shield on a horse. Similar terracottas are known from Kerch — ancient Pantikapaion and come probably from the barrows mentioned by M. I. Rostovcev and N. Kondakof¹⁶, though their exact provenience is unknown. These were found in the 19th cent. and usually found their way to the museums through intermediaries. Comparison made with the reliefs and paint-

¹² А. Н. Зограф, *Античные монеты*, Ленинград 1951, pl. XLVI, 16, 17. p. 247 — monetary emissions of King Ruskuporid II are dated within 68–92 A.D., in: MIA 16; А. Н. Зограф, *Денежное обращение и монетное дело*, p. 160, pl. 31, 1–2, in: *Античные города Северного Причерноморья*, Москва 1955; N. Kondakof, J. Tolstoi, S. Reinach, *Antiquités de la Russie Méridionale*, Paris 1891, p. 144, fig. 157 monetary emissions of King Cotys I are dated within 46–63 A.D., fig. 158 monetary emissions of King Rhescuporis II are dated within 69–94 A.D., fig. 160 monetary emissions of King Rhoemetalces are dated 132–154 A.D.

¹³ И. Д. Марченко, *Марионетки и культовые статуэтки Пантикапея*, p. 54, no 15, pl. 54, 65, in: SAI-G 1–11 1974.

¹⁴ R. Ghirshman, *Iran Parthians and Sassanians*, London 1962, p. 104, fig. 118. Teheran Museum. ... “round buckler never used by the Iranian cavalryman”...; also М. Ростовцев, *Античная декоративная живопись на юге России*, Ст.-П. 1914, p. 329; “round shield were never used by Bosporan cavalry”; however Sokolskij, op. cit. p. 21, argues on the contrary after some terracottas from Kerch. This evidence is perhaps inconclusive. Maybe the round shield is only an attribute.

¹⁵ Ростовцев, op. cit. passim; Е. В. Ерштедт, *Монументальная живопись Северного Причерноморья*, p. 258, in: *Античные...*, Москва 1955; М. И. Максимова, М. А. Наливкина, *Скульптура*, pp. 297 ff., in: *Античные...*, 1955.

¹⁶ Ростовцев, op. cit., p. 8, informs that there are no precise data on the inventory of the graves dug in the 19th cent. and that they have never been published in full. The existing reports give only short notices on many terracottas found. Also Kondakof, op. cit., p. 32, says that in the Kerch “catacombs” dating from 2nd–3rd cent. A.D., primitive figurines, mainly grotesque, appeared among small finds.

ings of the Kerch barrows, and the distribution of the motive of the round shield on Bosporan and Iranian finds support the provenience, identification and the dating to 2nd-3rd cent. A.D., as well as allow to connect our figurine with the period of the Sarmatian influence in the Bosporan State¹⁷.

These conclusions are further substantiated by the material and technique which allow to ascribe all mentioned terracottas to a single coroplastic workshop from the ancient Pantikapaion region, specialized in the summary rendering of the general form and stressing specific features of the represented subjects.

Such a way of modelling fits well into the general framework of the Sarmatian art in the 2nd and 3rd cent. A.D., when hand-made figurines eliminate the mould impressed terracottas, when the tendency to geometrization and, what the Russian scholars call "schematisation", prevails also in larger forms¹⁸. It may be said, that this is the process of a conscious departure from the naturalism.

¹⁷ Cf. note 15; Silanteva, op. cit., pp. 6, 15; М. М. Кобылина, *Терракотовые статуэтки Северного Причерноморья*, p. 21, SAI-G 1-11; В. Ф. Гайдукевич, *Боспорское царство*, Москва 1949 passim; T. Sulimirski, *Sarmatians*, London 1970, p. 150; В. Д. Блаватский, *Пантикапей*, Москва 1964, pp. 161-202; И. Б. Зеест, *Пантикапейская керамика сарматского времени*, p. 159 f., in: *Пантикапей*, Москва 1957, МИА 56.

¹⁸ Kobylina, 1961, op. cit., pp. 155, 156, 158, 168, 170, 171; Kobylina, 1970, op. cit., pp. 6, 20, 21; Ростовцев, op. cit., p. 424f.; cf. note 15; В. А. Гордцов, *Результаты археологических исследований в Изюмском уезде Харьковской губ. в 1901 г.*, „Труды Археологического съезда”, vol. I, 1905, pp. 174-225.