

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

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REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE

**Cambridge Antiquarian Society,**

AT ITS THIRTY-SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 15, 1876,

WITH AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY  
(INCLUDING THE ANNUAL REPORTS XXXIV, XXXV),  
1873—1876.

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ALSO

**Communications**

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XVIII.

BEING THE FOURTH AND CONCLUDING NUMBER OF THE  
THIRD VOLUME.

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CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED FOR THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY.  
SOLD BY DEIGHTON, BELL AND CO.,  
AND MACMILLAN AND CO.  
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, LONDON.

1879.

*Price Three Shillings.*

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COMMUNICATIONS,

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PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE MEETINGS

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CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A.

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

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TERRA COTTA STATUETTES,  
*Found at Tanagra in 1873*

*Drawn to size.*

*Camb. Ant. Soc. Comm. Vol. III.*



TERRA COTTA STATUETTE

*Found at Tanagra in 1873.*

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*Camb. Ant. Soc. Comm. Vol. III.*

## XXIX. ON THREE STATUETTES FOUND AT TANAGRA.

Communicated by the Rev. S. S. LEWIS, M.A.,  
Corpus Christi College.

[November 9, 1874.]

AS in these latter days the fertile Canton de Vaud and the rich pasture-lands of Wiltshire are said—it may be with a tinge of envy—to be less notable for *intellectual* culture; so in ancient Greece the quick-witted native of thin-soiled Attica loved to speak of his agricultural neighbour on the northern side as Βοιωτία ἴς—a sneer perpetuated even by one of themselves, the scholarly Plutarch<sup>1</sup> of Chaeroneia. Yet what could be more unjust? The beautiful land of Thebes and Helicon, whose legendary heroes were sung by Aeschylus and his successors, could surely appeal in justification to the military genius of Epaminondas and to the poetry of Hesiod, Corinna, and Pindar. Tanagra, the birth-place of Corinna and capital of Eastern Bœotia, has within the last year yielded a new and quite unexpected answer to the reproach.

The dependent sea-port of Aulis had been described by Pausanias<sup>2</sup> as chiefly inhabited by potters, and from the ruins of Tanagra herself a few notable statuettes in terra cotta had found their way to the Pourtalès-Gorgier<sup>3</sup> collection; but it was only in the winter of 1873 that the accidental discovery by some farm-labourers in the valley of the Vuriémi (the ancient *Asopos*) of tombs containing pottery of very varied form, both grotesque and graceful, proved that Tanagra had been the site of a flourishing school of this branch of Fine Art. Here, only 16 miles off the high road from Athens to Eubœa, one might

<sup>1</sup> τοὺς Βοιωτοὺς ἡμᾶς οἱ Ἀττικοὶ καὶ παχεῖς καὶ ἀναισθήτους καὶ ἡλιθίους  
... προσηγόρευον (Plut. *de esu carnis* 1. 6).

<sup>2</sup> ix. 19. § 8.

<sup>3</sup> See *Catalogue by Panofka* (Paris, 1834), pl. 31.

at first have suspected importation rather than production on the spot, yet the capital of Attica has yielded nothing at all comparable in terra cotta: a similar contrast is presented by Rubi (now *Ruvo*), which is scarcely mentioned in history, and yet has far surpassed its populous and storied neighbour Tarentum in the variety and beauty of the vases found in the sepulchres at her gates.

Of Tanagra we hear from Dicaearchus who visited it in the time of Cassander (318—307 B.C.) that the town stood on a steep hill and looked very bright from a distance; that the inhabitants were hospitable and wealthy, but frugal, and mostly landholders; that the houses were adorned with porticoes and encaustic paintings: while Pausanias writing in the time of the Antonines enumerates the temples of Dionysus, Themis, Aphrodite, Apollo and Hermes<sup>1</sup> (both *Kriophoros* and *Promachos*), and notes the peculiarity that these sacred buildings stood by themselves apart from the dwelling-houses. In this last respect, as well as in the good taste of her citizens, mediæval Pisa furnishes a close parallel to Tanagra.

The shape and depth of the recently discovered tombs are very various—sometimes sarcophagi covered with tiles from three to five feet deep in the soil, and occasionally close to the surface,—more often small square sepulchres sunk in the earth with a tiled roof, flat or arched, at the depth of from six to nine feet below the surface,—and occasionally walled in with blocks of stone for sides and roof and at a slighter depth. No law of orientation can be distinguished: though they more often lie towards the west or north.

Of the many hundreds of these statuettes which are finding their way into collections, both continental and English, but a small number are so distinguished by gesture or adjunct as to enable the critic at once to determine the artist's motive. In the veiled matron of noble mien we may see a *Hera* or *Demeter*,

<sup>1</sup> Whose birthplace was noted on the neighbouring Mount Kerykion—an obvious instance of *paronomasia*.

the nude figure holding a ruddy apple or a mirror may well be a victorious *Aphrodite*, the maidens<sup>1</sup> playing with astragali recall *Clytie* and *Cameiro*, as painted by Polygnotus, and the eager youth with petasus and purse a *Hermes*; but how are we to account for the great majority of the figures in which, as in the three given in the annexed woodcut, the most transcendental critic can find no more than homely life in noble and graceful attitude? A French<sup>2</sup> scholar has most ingeniously suggested that these calm but life-like figures were intended to keep the deceased in company,—that just as in an earlier age they sacrificed slaves and captives to form a retinue in the halls of Hades, so a later age, more humane and artistic, substituted for such victims the forms in clay most appropriate to the age and rank of the departed. A happier idea has been suggested—that, as the Roman was escorted to the tomb by the *imagines* of his distinguished ancestors, so in these life-like figures the more refined Greek was surrounded by portraits of his surviving relatives, who would thus accompany the lost one to the world below. One question yet remains—the period of Art-history to which they should be assigned; and here the critic feels less difficulty.

In the age of Alexander the Great and his immediate successors the Boeotian modellers were less ambitious to express the highest ideal of the Good and the Beautiful than—like Lysippus and Apelles—to portray the True in its most lovely and perfect form. *Genre* was then in fact the fashion in modelling as in sculpture and painting; but *genre* with more careful regard to purity, refinement, and nobility of type than has been generally associated with it in these latter days. In the three examples before us no care has been spared to render the contour of the figure, even where fully and doubly draped, and the few re-

<sup>1</sup> This group, perhaps the most charming object of the whole find, is now (1878) in the choice collection of Dr Imhoof-Blumer of Winterthur.

<sup>2</sup> M. Léon Heuzey in the *Monuments grecs publiés par la Société des études grecques*, nos. 2 and 3.

mains of colour prove that it was applied with an equal regard to simplicity and effect: the pose and style of the figures well bear out the remark of Dicaearchus<sup>1</sup>, that in Boeotia he found the most graceful and elegant ladies of all Greece. The hair in this case is of a reddish brown, and its arrangement is probably that which in the case of Theban dames was known as *λαμπαδίων*<sup>2</sup>: the long under-garment (*χιτὼν ποδηρῆς*) is of a rose colour, while the shawl (*πέπλος*) which falls over the shoulders and across the bosom is sky-blue. In some other cases it is thrown over the head, and thus unites veil and mantle. The seated youth<sup>3</sup> is clad in a short and almost sleeveless tunic, over which falls a cloak (*χλάμυς*) fastened on the right shoulder by a buckle. His broad-brimmed hat well deserves the epithet *ἡλιοσπερῆς* (parasol) given to that of Ismene in the *Oedipus Coloneus* (v. 313): it would doubtless have been made of felt, as we know was generally the case with the *καυσία*.

The hands in each case are only indicated under the folds of drapery—a gesture which very frequently occurs, and is perhaps significant of mourning: an opening behind of various shape supplies the technical necessity of an air-hole, which would be requisite for the process of baking. From the rear of the figure being, in every instance but one, left unfinished in detail, we may infer that these statuettes must have been intended to be placed each in its niche, or else to be ranged on shelves against the wall of the sepulchre.

In closing these remarks I gratefully acknowledge my obligations to an article by M. Henry Houssaye in the *Gazette Archéologique* (Paris, 1876), and to R. Kekulé's admirable monograph *Griechische Thonfiguren aus Tanagra* (Stuttgart, 1878).

<sup>1</sup> Dicaearchus, *Descr. Graec.* § 17, ed. C. Müller.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* § 19.

<sup>3</sup> The figure of the seated youth, and another standing, were exhibited at a subsequent meeting of the Society; but I have thought it better to unite the two notices in one, and to include three, of the four figures exhibited, in the group which is given in the plate which accompanies this paper.

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