NEW FIND OF A RELIEF WITH A DEPICTION OF HERACLES IN THE NORTH-WEST OF THE CRIMEA

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In 1993 at the city-site of Chaika near Evpatoria a relief with a depiction of Heracles was found on the floor of Room No. 10 in a mansion dating from the end of the 4th or first third of the 3rd century BC. Apart from the relief, fragments of no particular interest from a Thasos terracotta were also found there as well as ceramic material widespread in sites of the 3rd-century BC. The relief measured 50 × 35 cm. It was made from local limestone. The figure was depicted in very high relief, the figure was also three-dimensional like a sculpture (Fig. 1).

Heracles is depicted standing calmly: on his right shoulder he holds a club and there is a lion’s skin over his left arm which is hanging down to the ground. The hero is standing with his weight supported by his right leg and his right hip is turned slightly to the right: this stance is underlined by the curve of the figure’s torso as well. The left leg is bent at the knee turned out to the side slightly behind the right one, which makes the figure seem to be moving. This pose combined with the slight turn of the head to the right makes the figure seem very alive, as if he has stopped in his tracks. Balance in the overall composition has been achieved thanks to the lion’s skin that falls to the ground: the curve of the skin echoes the movement of the left leg. It is clear that the sculptor was well-versed in human anatomy on account of the way the chest muscles have been moulded and also those of the arms and legs and also on account of the way the abdominal tension has been captured. The way the limbs are joined to the torso is emphasized by a clear ridge in the abdominal muscles—a device typical in Late Classical and Hellenistic sculpture. Given the disproportionate nature of the figure—the legs are short in relation to the torso and the head is too large, since it accounts for a fifth of the overall height of the figure, while in Classical monumental sculpture there would never be a ratio of more than 1 : 6 or 1 : 7—the figure appears massive and heavy, which in accordance with the artist's original conception of the figure was meant to underline the physical strength of the depicted hero. The evident imperfection in this depiction can be explained to a certain extent by the artist's lack of skill, but it should also be seen as resulting in part from the nature of the material used. The soft porousness of