

TORSO OF A ‘WEARY HERACLES’ MARBLE STATUETTE FROM HORBAT ṬARBENET

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The statuette discovered at Horbat Ṭarbenet (see Atrash and Mazor, this volume) depicts a free-standing naked male figure of Heracles, leaning to his left on a club wrapped with a lion-skin and holding three apples in his right hand behind his back (Fig. 1:a). The statuette is broken, and some parts are missing: the head and neck, the left palm, the right arm except its palm, and both legs below the knees, the feet, and the lower part of the club. The statuette most probably stood over a plinth with the club resting on a rock or a bull’s head (Palagia 1988: Nos. 702, 735). The fingers of the right palm, at the back, are broken off. The right thigh and left arm with the lion-skin wrapped over the club were found separately and were reattached to the torso. An old crack runs horizontally under the chest, while new minor splits were observed on the right side of the chest and the right shoulder, the upper part of the pelt, and across the left knee and the statuette’s back (Fig. 1:b).

1. Torso of ‘Weary Heracles’

Findspot: L79, B1492¹

Material: White marble²

Dimensions: H 0.31 m (restored c. 0.5 m)

Archaeological Context: Fill layer over the Roman/Byzantine pool (54.56–53.85 m asl)

Date: Late Hellenistic (late second–early first century BCE)

Description

The statuette, presenting a muscular anatomy, is carved in the round. It leans slightly to the left, its weight supported by the club under the leaning left armpit and the left leg. The left arm, slightly bent forward at the armpit, hangs freely on the lion’s pelt. Its missing palm

¹ The statuette was revealed in the second excavation season conducted by Abdallah Mokary in July 2011 (Mokary 2015). We thank the excavator for his permission to publish the statuette. The statuette parts were restored by Oded Raviv and photographed by Clara Amit. Its artistic reconstruction was executed by Tania Meltsen.

² Unfortunately, no analysis of the marble was conducted. The white, delicate-grain, superb marble might point to a Parian origin, although Aphrodisian marble cannot be ruled out.

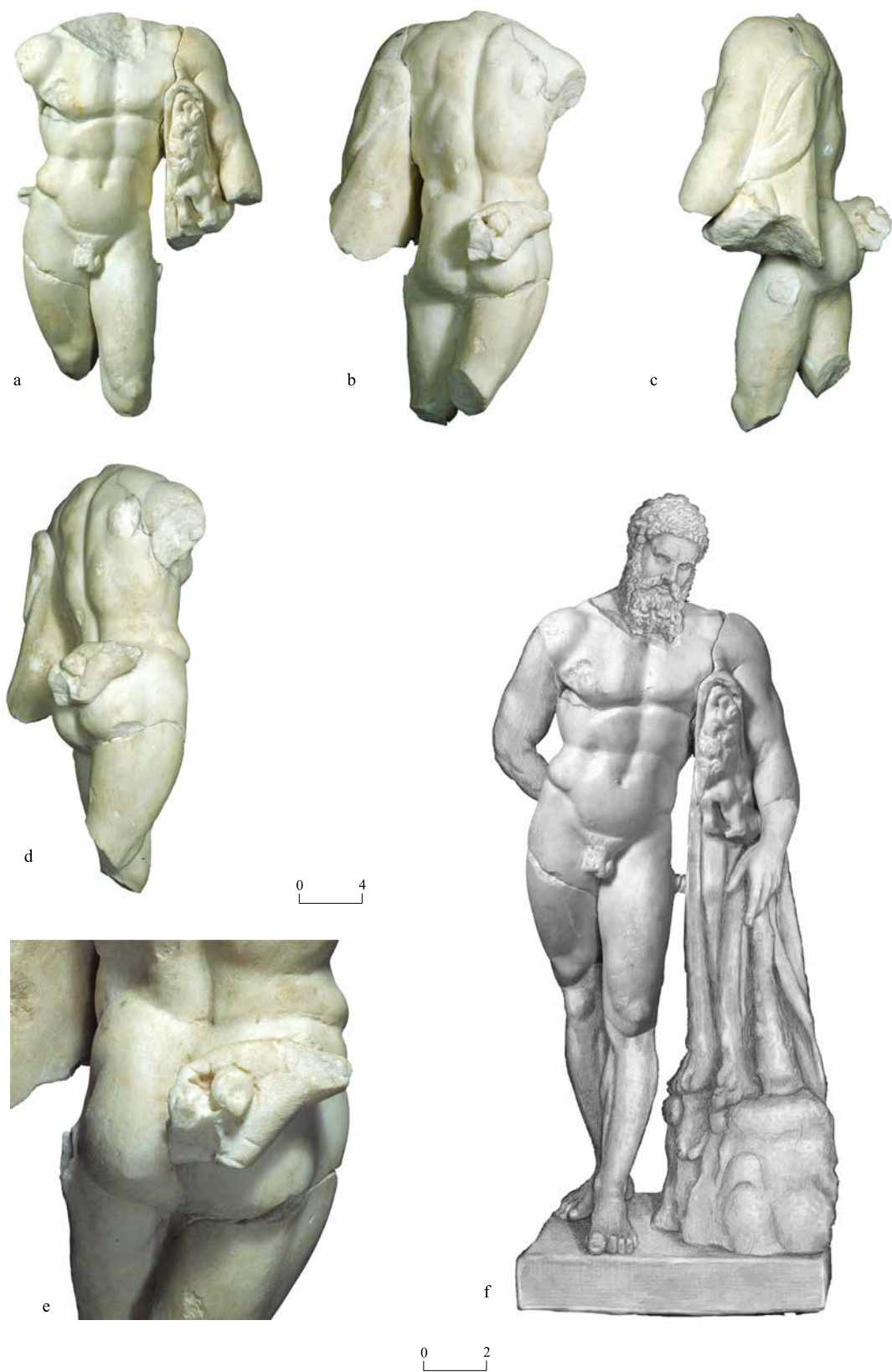


Fig. 1. Weary Heracles: (a) front; (b) back; (c) left; (d) right; (e) close-up of right hand palm; (f) artistic reconstruction.

might have been either empty (Palagia 1988: Nos. 702, 703) or, less likely, held a bow or plate (Fig. 1:c). The right (missing) arm was bent behind the back (Fig. 1:d); its preserved palm rests on the statuette's right buttock and holds three apples (Fig. 1:e). The left hip is slightly lower, and the left foot, carrying the weight of the figure, steps forward, while the right leg with a rounded hip is stretched behind. The left shoulder is slightly higher than the right one. The muscles of the acromion and arm are gently carved, depicting a delicate, muscular, yet not exaggerated body. The left shoulder-blade is distinguished by three shallow depressions: vertical, horizontal and diagonal, while the right shoulder-blade is marked by a single shallow depression. The armpit and elbow-pit are designed by shallow grooves. The muscles of the chest and abdomen curve gently and are separated in various zones by horizontal grooves. Belly muscles are well-rendered, and the transition from belly to thighs is marked by a rounded ledge that also distinguishes the genitals. The thighs gently curve, and the kneecaps are roundly pronounced. The muscular back with the curving spine is wide and separated from the buttocks by the waist. The muscular buttocks are detailed and well-sculpted; the left buttock is slightly higher than the right. The club was attached to the left thigh by a small bridge whose connection point has been preserved. The lion's pelt under the left armpit covers the upper part of the club, with its snout in profile. The lion's curly mane is delicately illustrated in high relief. The lion's mouth is gaped and shows the teeth. The eye is marked by a triangular slot, and the ear is pulled back.

The muscular figure is relatively slender, with natural proportions, and its posture awards it a high sense of movement as the torso and legs (and probably the missing head too), placed at different angles, impart a well-planed twist to the figure granting it considerable freedom of pose and mobility. The uneven distribution of the weight with the pronounced difference between both sides of the figure—emphasized by the S-shaped curving meridian line in front and the spine on the back, both marked by shallow carvings—and the curving of the illusionary line between both legs convey to the statuette a feeling of movement and plasticity. The rounded and natural depiction of the body and the turning of the shoulders, pelvis, and knees in different directions counterbalance one another and grant the composition its elasticity, realistic rendering, harmony, a graceful pose, and well-narrated vitality and strength.

Iconography

Heracles, a venerated Greek cult figure, was widely celebrated in the art of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Various titles were commonly associated with the Greek hero in historical and literal sources, inscriptions and coins. Heracles Πρόμαχος—a title designating the champion of the city of Thebes; Heracles Οπλοφύλαξ—the guardian of weapons; Αρήτης, Ιπποδέτης Καλλίνικος—the triumphant; Ανίκητος—the invincible; Αλεξίκακος or Αλεξίς or Απολλαξίκακος—the averter of evil; Σωτήρ—the savior (Farnell 1921:146–147). Heracles was celebrated as the patron of war, with athletic contests and the term Καλλίνικος used as a formal cult-appellative in Egypt. In Ephesus, his cult as Αποτρόπαιος, the averter of evil, is attested by Philostratos (*Vita Apoll. Tyan.* 4, p. 68). He was also associated with healing,

natural springs, hot baths, and was considered a warder-off of evil and diseases (Farnell 1921:150). His association with bathhouses is attested by Aelius Aristides (I, 62), who states that the pleasantness of natural baths and fountain sources of rivers is named after Heracles. Accordingly, his appearances in baths are also quite numerous (Manderscheid 1981).

Heracles gained rather wide popularity in Syria Palaestina and Arabia during the Late Hellenistic and Roman periods (Freyne 2004:56–59), as evidenced by his depictions in Mosaic floors and statues. Seyrig and Starcky (1949:245) suggested that the cult of Heracles reached Syria from the *Decapolis*, where it was attested mainly by coins, though an earlier Phoenician cult of the sixth century BCE, identifying Heracles as Melqart (Bonnet 1988), is a more likely source of origin.

Heracles' attributes, as observed on the Ṭarbenet Heracles, exhibit two of his labors: the slaying of the Nemean lion, a monstrous offspring of Orthus and Echidna (Apollodorus 2.4.9–10; Pausanias 9.27.6–7, 9.29.9); and the last one, retrieving the apples of the Hesperides. In the depictions of his first labor, Heracles is often rendered wearing the lion's pelt as a clock, or carrying it wrapped over his club, as in the Ṭarbenet statuette (Palagia 1988: Nos. 660–737). The golden apples that Heracles holds behind his back in this statuette are the apples of the Hesperides (nymphs, daughters of Evening). After his earliest labors, Heracles seized the apples, with Atlas' help, and brought them to Eurystheus (Apollodorus 2.5.11). After completing the final labor, Heracles was destined to immortality, as predicted by the Pythia. Heracles seems to be the earliest example, in Greek religion, of apotheosis: first an outstanding man; then, a hero; and lastly, a god. Pindarus (3.22), using a unique combination of terms, refers to Heracles as ἥρως θεός, not necessarily indicating the existence of a practiced cult, as no ναός was dedicated to Heracles throughout the Greek world, apart from the few Heroon complexes (Farnell 1921:94–145). Heracles' ascension on Mount Oeta and fiery death gained him his immortality.

Heracles, a man turned god by virtue of his beneficial deeds, became a prototype for Roman emperors, who could become a god and acquire an official cult in Rome only posthumously and by Senate decree.³ Among the Roman emperors, Commodus was the most obsessed by the man-hero-god cycle. On many of his coins, one finds the title ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ. Well-known, for example, is the colossal statue of the Farnese Heracles bearing the head of Commodus, now in Palazzo Pitti in Florence, and the bust of Commodus-Heracles from the Esquiline, clad in a lion-skin tied on the chest, with apples and club (Palagia 1988:728–733). The emperor also renamed his fleet Commodiana Herculea and adopted a calendar based on Heracles' labors (Cassius Dio 73.15.3). Commodus was proclaimed god in 197 CE and named Herculeus Commodianus (Scriptores Historiae Augustae:17.11). In the

³ Alexander the Great and Ptolemy II Philadelphus were venerated as descendants of Heracles in 'Akko-Ptolemais (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996:1271). For the statuette of Ptolemy II as Heracles-Dionysos-Alexander, see Palagia 1988:728–733. Various Roman emperors were associated in ancient sources with Heracles (Gersht 2009:220–221, and see references therein).

Baths of Caracalla, Heracles is represented in numerous statues. These statues embodied the therapeutic powers of the god and presented him as protector of the state and the emperor, thus firmly intertwining the qualities of hero and emperor (Manderscheid 1981; Kleiner 1992:276).

Stylistic Analysis

The Tarbenet Heracles was sculpted in high-quality white marble and was most certainly imported as a complete statuette, probably from one of the fine workshops of Greece (Paros?) or Asia Minor (Aphrodisias?), where it was executed by a talented artist. The pose and fine execution of the figure, the delicate and naturalistic depiction of the muscles, and its slender figure are remarkable. The small-scale statuette seems to be an outstanding example of the 'Weary Heracles' type, a rather popular statue of the hero; numerous Hellenistic and Roman copies, in marble or bronze, were found from the sixteenth century CE on.

The original late fourth-century BCE bronze statue, from which those copies presumably sprung, was created by Lysippos or his Sikyon School for either Sikyon or Argos.⁴ It depicted a life-size or colossal statue of a naked, bearded, elder, and weary Heracles, leaning on a club, wrapped in lion-skin, and holding the apples of the Hesperides behind his back. In a rather meaningful and even slightly ironic gesture, Heracles hides the apples of the Hesperides behind his back, reflecting in his posture and expression his weary mood and conflicting feelings once his Praxeis ended and he awaits apotheosis. He knows that eating the apples without Hera's consent carries a curse. It might grant him physical immortality but will bar him from Olympus, as he will lose Kleos, the glory of immortality in an honored name. It seems to be Lysippos' intention to present the Weary Heracles fighting the ultimate temptation of gaining immortality, while defying Hera by hiding the apples behind his back.

The new Hellenistic three-dimensional dynamic space, where the viewer has to observe the statue from all sides (Boardman 1985:190; Pollitt 1988:48), might have triggered that remarkable posture where front and back play a significant part in the narrative. Was the unique gesture of the hidden right palm with the apples derived from a composed psychological idea, an artistic feature, or, perhaps both? Alexander the Great, for whom Lysippos worked, saw himself as a descendant of Heracles; he, too, accepted great toils, performed great deeds, went beyond mortal limitations, and became a god, the penultimate phase of the cycle that might have fascinated Lysippos, who successfully captured in his statues unique stages of the human psyche.

Some copies of the Weary Heracles by Lysippos are miniature, others life-size, and some even colossal. During the early Hellenistic period, a copy was made for Athens, and around 200 BCE, a baroque-style statue was executed for Pergamon (Vermeule 1975:323). Forty-four statues and five heads, all copies of the Heracles bronze statue prototype, were known

⁴ For further detailed attributes of Heracles statues by various scholars, see Gersht 2009:216, nn. 4–6 and references therein.

when Johnson (1927:197–200) published his book on Lysippos. Almost fifty years later, Vermeule classified that type of statues, termed at the time as the ‘Weary Heracles,’ into four dated groups (Vermeule 1975:324–328).

The first group included the copies closest to the original, probably made in the third–second centuries BCE. Of this group, a statue from the Gymnasium at Salamis stands out (Karageorghis and Vermeule 1966: Fig. 17f, Pl. 15); its torso-anatomy depiction closely resembles that of the Tarbenet Heracles and might reflect a distinct phase within the numerous copies of the Lesippian origin. The second group was composed of second–first-century BCE Hellenistic copies, probably originating in Asia Minor, among which a small statuette from Salamis now exhibited in the Detroit Institute of Arts stands out. This statuette also reflects the same torso-anatomy depiction as the Tarbenet Heracles (Karageorghis and Vermeule 1966:19, Fig. 6), and might relate to the school of Aphrodisias. The third group, represented by the colossal ‘Farnese Heracles’ from the Baths of Caracalla, was dated to the Roman period, when the type gained popularity (for the issue of Roman copies of Greek sculpture, see Ridgway 1984:111). Vermeule’s fourth group, also dated to the Roman period and closely related to the former, included statues from the era when Heracles’ cult became an instrument of Roman imperial imagery.

Based on figure posture, attributes, and stylistic analysis, Palagia classified all the upright standing Heracles representations known at the time (1988:732, Nos. 271–910) into twenty-six groups—the ‘Weary Heracles’ type comprised Group V (Nos. 660–737). There are different copies of the type, ranging from the muscular dramatic rendering to slender and restrained examples, some of the latter mainly represented in statuettes.

Since the sixteenth century CE, scholars have been engaged, in most cases unsuccessfully, in defining the scale and artistic features of the original works of Lysippos, from which the existing copies must have derived, a task for which the ancient sources were of little help. In the absence of any confirmed data concerning Lysippos’ original statue features, it would be rather difficult to define how close the Tarbenet Heracles was to the original prototype, or how far it drifted away from it. It would seem that Lysippos introduced new proportion sets (Richter 1930:292) and consciously turned to nature as his prime working source (Pliny the Elder, *NH* XXXIV: 65).

His compositions had no single viewpoint, and the viewer was forced to look at the statue from all sides (Pollit 1988:48). He also reintroduced the colossal scale in his work, for instance, in the bronze statue of Zeus, the statue of Heracles at Tarentum, and presumably also the prototype of the statue known as the ‘Farnese Heracles’ (Pollit 1988:49). The latter, a colossal free-standing marble statue (Height 3.25 m) of the ‘Weary Heracles’ type, was found in 1546 in the Baths of Caracalla—Terme Antoniane, dedicated in 216 CE (Richter 1974:226, 246, Fig. 801; Palagia 1988:732, No. 702; Pollitt 1988:50). The torso was found without the right arm and both legs, and the head was revealed in a well in Trastevere (Marvin 1983:357, No. 53). The legs were recovered later on, during further excavations in the bath, and were reattached to the statue in the eighteenth century (Haskell and Penny 1981:229–232). The restored statue adorned the Palazzo Farnese in Rome and

hence received its name, the 'Farnese Heracles;' in 1787, it was transferred to the National Museum of Naples. The statue depicts a naked heavy figure of a 'Weary Heracles,' resting from his labors, with dramatically exaggerated musculature, a bearded face, short curly hair, and a weary expression, face down and to the left. The weight is on the right leg, while the left slightly steps forward; the feet are almost aligned with each other. The left armpit rests over a club draped by the Nemean lion-skin that is double folded over it. The left arm hangs, motionless, forward, while the right arm hides behind the back, with the hand holding the apples of the Hesperides (Uhlenbrock 1986:11). The colossal marble statue, signed by Glycon of Athens, is assumed to be a third-century CE copy of a prototype by Lysippos or his Sikyon School. Despite the similar compositional features, the 'Farnese Heracles' differs from the Tarbenet Heracles stylistically, even if we assume that, in the latter, the missing head, presumably facing left and down, also depicted an elder bearded Heracles with curly hair and a weary expression. Although smaller, the slender stylistic rendering of the Tarbenet Heracles statuette seems to predate that of the colossal 'Farnese Heracles.' Notwithstanding, fundamentally, they might have been related in their depiction of the same prototype (Vermeule 1975:326, No. 2).

The Tarbenet Heracles displays the body features of the 'Weary Heracles' as a slenderer, more delicately rendered athletic figure, with natural, unexaggerated and delicate muscles (Fig. 1:f). In its delicacy, it resembles a statue discovered by divers in 1900 at the island of Antikythera, northwest of Crete, in a shipwreck from the second quarter of the first century BCE (Weinberg et al. 1965:3–48). The shipwreck carried bronze statues of the fourth century BCE and marble copies of the first century BCE. Among the latter was a life-size headless marble statue of a 'Weary Heracles' similar in its posture to the 'Farnese Heracles.' Except for its missing head and part of the left arm, the statue is complete, depicting a naked, slender athletic figure in a moving pose (Palagia 1988:763, No. 699). As with the Tarbenet Heracles, the torso and thighs are slender, and the muscles are delicately and naturally depicted. Weight is on the right leg, while the left steps forward. The left armpit rests over a club, draped by the Nemean lion-skin that leans on a rock. The left arm (partly broken) hangs motionless forward, while the right arm hides behind the back, the hand holding the apples of the Hesperides. Despite the size difference, the 'Antikythera Heracles' and the Tarbenet Heracles, both examples of superb artistic work, are stylistically similar. They seem to belong to Vermeule's second group (1975:325–326). Together with the statue and the statuette from Salamis (Vermeule 1975:325, No. 4, Pl. 51, Fig. 2, P. 326, No. 17, Pl. 53, Fig. 5), mentioned above, they seem to represent closer and more faithful late Hellenistic, second–first-century BCE copies of the original Lysippian or his Sikyon School Heracles. It should be pointed out, however, that later, rather slender, and quite delicately executed examples, where the muscles are naturally rendered, are known, presumably dating from the Roman period, such as a headless marble statue from the baths at Argos dating, perhaps, from the late second century CE (Vermeule 1975:326, No. 2). The heavily restored statue of the 'Argos Heracles' makes dating it and comparing its features and posture with any other Heracles of the same type difficult. Vermeule placed both the Antikythera and Argos statues

in his third ‘Farnese Heracles’ group. Since the former cannot be dated to later than 80–65 BCE, he concluded that the third group “can be proven to be late Hellenistic rather than purely Antonine or Severan in origin.”

Depictions of Heracles are numerous in the region, and quite a few of them represent a ‘Weary Heracles.’ A relief in Palmyra shows Heracles standing, holding a club in his right hand and lion-skin over the left arm (Downey 1969:9, No. 3). A life-size headless marble statue of the ‘Farnese Heracles’ type was found in the eastern bath at Nysa-Scythopolis (unpublished). In this well-preserved statue, lion paws are knotted on Heracles’ chest; his left hand rests on a club, wrapped with the lion-skin and positioned on a bull’s head, while his right hand, behind his back, holds the apples of the Hesperides. The torso of a ‘Farnese Heracles’ type from Si also bears lion paws knotted over the chest (Dunand 1934: No. 48, Pl. XVIII). The statues from Nysa-Scythopolis and Si resemble a marble statue from Pozzuoli (Palagia 1988:765), now in the National Museum of Naples (No. 128823) and classified, by Palagia, as variant b of the ‘Farnese Heracles’ type.

A probable ‘Heracles Farnese’ type statue comes from Amman/Philadelphia (Friedland and Tykot 2010:177–187, Fig. 6). A second statue was found at Banias (Friedland 2012:127–129), and a third one, at Gadara (Weber 2002:211–213 with references to other Heracles statues therein). A headless, life-size marble statue of a ‘Weary Heracles’ of the Albertini Type was found at Petra; the head, lower parts of legs, and right hand are missing (Weber and Wenning 1997:121, Fig 132a). Two statues of Heracles, executed in local limestone, probably by local artists, perhaps to copy marble imported statues, were also found. The one from Ḥ. Buseima, near Sha‘ar Ha-‘Amaqim (Gaba), dated to the Roman period, is a limestone torso (0.47 m high) of a standing Heracles with the right hand on a club and a lion skin over his left arm (Gersht 2009:214–227, Figs. 1–5). A life-size limestone statue fragment of Heracles, of which only the lion-skin over the club was preserved, is exhibited at the Hecht Museum of the University of Haifa. Of unknown provenance, it seems to date from the Roman period. A plaster relief of a ‘Weary Heracles’ head and torso, with the lion skin knotted over the chest, was found in the Hippos Roman bath (Eisenberg 2016:12).

Context and Dating

The Tarbenet Heracles was found in a fill partially covering a village bath that included a well-preserved rectangular natatio and fragments of *tubuli* (see Atrash and Mazor, this volume). Heracles’ appearance in Roman baths in the region is also witnessed in the eastern bath of Nysa-Scythopolis and possibly, the bath at Ḥamat Gader (Ben-Arieh 1997), and elsewhere, in the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, and those at Argos.⁵ In most cases, except for the Baths of Caracalla where hero and emperor were strongly intertwined, Heracles

⁵ According to Manderscheid (1981:28), Heracles is outnumbered (10%) by various other appearances of deities in baths, for instance, Asclepius and Hygea (18%). In the eastern bath at Nysa-Scythopolis, Heracles appears only once, while Aphrodite, Apollo and Athena, each appear twice.

sculptures in baths were part of a varied assemblage of statues (mostly gods), void of ideological subtext (Manderscheid 1981). Those statues formed part of the bath décor and were usually set in adorned niches in the frigidarium walls, the palestra, and the natatio (Marvin 1983:377–380). In the eastern bath at Nysa-Scythopolis, the 'Farnese Heracles' was part of a larger assemblage of life-size marble statues that also included presentations of Zeus, Aphrodite (2), Apollo (2), Athena (2), Leda, Dionysos, a cuirassed emperor, and a citizen wearing a toga.

Ḥorbat Ṭarbenet is a rather remote village located over a small, c. 60 m high hill in the Jezreel Valley, about 4 km northwest of 'Afula. The pottery assemblage revealed during the quite limited excavations included Hellenistic pottery (late second century BCE; see Vincenz, this volume: Fig. 1), stamped Rhodian amphora handles (see Finkielsztein, this volume) and vessels from the Roman and Byzantine periods. Based on Rabbinic sources (JT Megilla 4, 5; see Neusner 1982–1984), in the Early Byzantine-Umayyad period, this was a Jewish village with a school. No data are available for the village's ethnicity during the late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods, and no data confirm whether the village was Jewish or of mixed ethnicity in its earliest stage. A statuette of Heracles in a bathhouse, although not an exceptional Hellenic cultural expression, would still be rather unique in a remote Jewish village unless a late Hellenistic or Early Roman non-Jewish chapter of the village might be confirmed in future excavations.

Regarding the date of the Ṭarbenet Heracles, the inconclusive stratified evidence from the site's excavations seems to leave this issue open. On the one hand, if related to the bath where it was found, although this is highly improbable, and perhaps forming part of its décor, it might be defined as a Roman second-century CE copy (Ridgway 1984:111). On the other hand, it may be related to the late Hellenistic pottery randomly found at the site along with several Rhodian amphora handles. In this case, it would be a late Hellenistic statue of the early first century BCE, similar to the Heracles statue and statuette from Salamis and the 'Antikythera Heracles,' all dated by Vermeule to the late Hellenistic period and stylistically close to the one from Ṭarbenet.

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