

LES SCULPTURES FUNÉRAIRES DE PALMYRE, by Anna Sadurska and Adnan Bounni, with the collaboration of Khaled Al-Ass'ad and Krzysztof Makowski. (*RdA* Suppl. 13.) Pp. 213, figs. 255, plans 14. Giorgio Bretschneider, Rome 1994. ISSN 0392-0895, ISBN 88-7689-103-X.

This is the long-awaited publication of funerary sculpture from a dozen underground tombs in Palmyra, excavated mostly between 1956 and 1961. Some of these tombs have been published in Arabic by Khaled Ass'ad and Obeid Taha or in French by Adnan Bounni, Kazimierz Michalowski, and Anna Sadurska. Sadurska has here added some pieces from the tomb of 'Alainê, which she had published in detail in 1977, but most of the monuments assembled in this volume were previously treated only briefly and usually illustrated with inadequate photographs. Nine of the tombs and their sculptures remained unpublished until now.

All together, 238 items are illustrated, described, and

commented upon. This richness alone deserves high praise and makes this book the most substantial catalogue of Palmyrene sculpture in existence. While the text presents separately the monuments from each tomb, one after the other, the figures are arranged according to the subjects, such as standing figures (nos. 2-19), busts of men and couples (nos. 20-129), of women (nos. 130-205), statues, banqueting scenes, and miscellaneous. Plans of the relevant tombs are added. There are, fortunately, concordances between the catalogue and illustrations.

Most of the photographs were provided by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Damascus, and they are generally excellent. Some of the others are less so, which becomes annoying when some unpublished inscriptions cannot be verified from the plates. In the very first entry, however, one *can* read on figure 180 that the wife of Soraiku should be called Tamma and not Shalmat Taimha, and the neat family tree (p. 11) disintegrates as a result. All inscriptions should be looked up in the new epigraphic repertory by Delbert R. Hillers and Eleonora Cussini (*Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* [Baltimore 1995] 306-17): the authors could still include most new inscriptions from this volume, cited as *SFP*, but certain corrections remain guesswork because epitaphs on the relevant figures are unreadable.

The contents of the volume provide a considerable body of ancient sculpture to be treated not only as works of art, but also as a series of likenesses of over 200 individuals, often related among themselves. We already know by name more citizens of Palmyra than of any ancient city other than Rome and perhaps Athens. The problem is that we know next to nothing about the people of Palmyra as individuals, and this tantalizing discrepancy of evidence has prompted the authors to try to exploit in this direction the portrait gallery they have assembled.

To this end genealogy tables have been systematically collated for each tomb. The family relations thus established are meant to help to ascribe each person to the appropriate generation of the family (only five sculptures are dated directly) and so to assess the distance in time of his or her tombstone from the founding of the tomb itself. The relative dating so acquired is meant to confirm or refine the stylistic dating, and so to advance the study of Palmyrene art in general.

Dating by generation is, of course, only rough. Even so, it can be a useful check, provided we can rest assured as to the place of the represented person in the family tree. The trouble is that sometimes variant genealogies can be (and in some cases already were) assembled from the same set of data. In many details they remain tentative, though the reader is never told this. When the assigned place seems to be in disagreement with the stylistic assessment, however, the authors always favor the latter and so silently admit (with good reason, I think) that this is the safer criterion of the two.

So, for instance, a certain Maliku son of Dionysios is considered the father of the founder of the tomb of Shalamallat, and his portrait is declared for this reason "certainly posthumous," while the man could just as well be two generations younger, as I proposed in 1974. In the tomb of Arṭaban, a certain Shalamallat (p. 28, no. 23) has been assigned to the generation A.D. 130-160, but his portrait

is again dated later (probably rightly), and also said to be posthumous; in fact, his place in the family tree is arbitrary. The founder of the same tomb, 'Ogga son of Arṭaban, has been assigned two wives, one of them just because her father bore the same name as one of 'Ogga's sons (p. 23, no. 32). Another doubtful marriage in this book unites the priest Arṭaban Zabdūn and a lady Ba'altaga of the same family (her brother is known from *CIS* 3968, Hillers and Cussini, p. 75), though her portrait is "slightly later" than his.

The book closes with a summary chapter by Anna Sadurska, in which she puts together the chronological conclusions, the new or striking features of iconography, and stylistic remarks. The most interesting single monument in the collection is the portrait of Arṭaban, a priest of the ancestral gods 'Aglibol and Malakbel; the priestly *modius* is lacking here, as it was probably reserved for the priests of Bel. A series of reclining half-figures from the tomb of 'Ashtor, all dated in the late first century A.D. (pp. 16–17, figs. 208–14), seems to me important for the understanding of the banquet scenes in Palmyrene funerary art; later banquet slabs commonly set on sarcophagi could be seen as a development of such sculptures, as well as of full figures such as the couple of Zabda and Beltiḥan (pp. 138–39, figs. 220–21), to be dated with Sadurska as early as ca. A.D. 100. Unfortunately, none of these early pieces were found undisturbed, and so their original setting remains uncertain.

Sadurska has also tried, for the first time in studies of the art of Palmyra, to distinguish particular workshops and hands. It seems to me that the number of workshops active at any given time would not have been very high, and it should be possible to identify their products. Obviously, this attempt can be only a starting point of research taking into account the entire corpus of Palmyrene sculpture, but a good beginning has been made.

An important and now very thoroughly explored body of sculpture has been added to the existing collections. Unlike the recently published collections of the Louvre and Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, these pieces come from known contexts, and so provide more circumstantial information. Not since the seminal work of Harald Ingholt has a publication of such scope appeared in this field.

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