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Des Tombeaux et des morts. Monuments funéraires, société et culture en Syrie du sud du I^{er} s. av. J-C. au VII^e s. apr. J-C. Volume I: Catalogue des monuments funéraires, des sarcophages et des bustes; Volume II: Synthèse by A. Sartre-Fauriat

Review by: Glenys Davies

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Pompeian houses demonstrate that the value of the House of the Menander hoard is what might be expected in residences of this size.

Ch. 3 reviews previous theories on the function of the silver plate. P. (25) concludes that it probably represents a dinner service for eight persons, each provided with two cups and three plates which were served from the other vessels. This makes some sense in terms of what we know about Roman wining and dining practices, although the actual number of settings is problematic because *triclinia* were normally intended for nine persons, a problem briefly and inconclusively discussed later in chs 5 and 6. Likewise the presence of several pieces of non-functional show silver is very much in keeping with the conspicuous consumption of the Roman bourgeoisie/aristocracy.

Ch. 4 provides a key discussion of the silver in its social context, always assuming that the silver actually belonged to the owner of the House of the Menander. Theories of ownership include: a member of the aristocratic/imperial gens Poppaea (Maiuri); a local decurion/duovir (Ling); a Roman senator or equivalent (Wallace-Hadrill). However, P. (35, 38) is correct to be wary of such social and ethnic identification of the owner, especially considering the potential wealth of contemporary freedmen.

The current publication is to be welcomed, not only because P. brings many modern and refreshing insights to the material, but also because Maiuri's original publication of 1933, *La Casa del Menandro e il suo tesoro di argenteria*, is not only rare but has never been translated for the English reader. However, there are some frustrating shortcomings which limit the value of this publication as a modern scientific tool. P.'s only personal examination of the silverware in the Museo Nazionale in Naples was as long ago as 1985 and was limited to the cups. Sue Bird's drawings of the objects (figs 1–8) are based on Maiuri's photographs, and even these are archival. Although the Neapolitan museum bureaucracy is notoriously difficult to penetrate, it must surely have been possible with the assistance of influential contacts such as local Professor Antonio Varone (cf. preface) to obtain proper access to the objects? The concluding ch. 6 is surprisingly subjective and fanciful about the possibility of the silver being used for open-air wining and dining. P.'s hypothetical *al fresco* scenario is based on the apparently insurmountable problem of the dinner service being intended for eight persons. But P. presents no evidence as to why the pieces have to be arranged in this way: for example, the wine-cups can be equally credibly divided stylistically into groups of four, three, or two (fig. 3). It must also remain a possibility that the lack of stylistic unity of some of the pieces which share the same function, such as the cups, could imply that these were a mixed collection of silverware of varying dates and provenances, collected and/or inherited over a period of time. They were perhaps intended to be used occasionally to impress small groups of guests, rather than to be presented as a unified service in the modern sense?

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DAVID BELLINGHAM

A. SARTRE-FAURIAT, *DES TOMBEAUX ET DES MORTS. MONUMENTS FUNÉRAIRES, SOCIÉTÉ ET CULTURE EN SYRIE DU SUD DU I^{er} S. AV. J.-C. AU VII^e S. APR. J.-C. VOLUME I: CATALOGUE DES MONUMENTS FUNÉRAIRES, DES SARCOPHAGES ET DES BUSTES; VOLUME II: SYNTHÈSE* (Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 158). Beyrouth: Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 2001. 2 vols: pp. 291, 389 figs; pp. 258, 28 figs, 7 maps. ISBN 2-912738-08-3; 2-912738-09-1. Fr 350.

Sartre-Fauriat's survey of the tombs, funerary inscriptions, sculpture, and grave goods of Southern Syria is in two volumes. The first catalogues the tombs according to site in alphabetical order, the sculptured sarcophagi, and funerary busts and statues. 118 tombs are recorded at fifty-four sites, one-third of them unpublished: sites such as Bosra and Umm al-Jimal have several necropoleis and monuments, others only one. Very few are well preserved (one being the Philippeion built for Philip the Arab's father at Shahba), or have intact grave goods (as the tomb of the warrior at Nawa with its two decorated helmets). Many are only known from records, drawings, and photographs of earlier travellers and scholars, and some are only attested by inscription. Even those discovered more recently were poorly excavated (some clandestinely), badly recorded, and their finds dispersed. The first entry (Amrah tomb 1) is symptomatic: unpublished, of unknown type, size, or method of burial, no finds recorded, excavated in 1986 without taking photographs.

Thirty-two sarcophagi are decorated in relief, all, apart from one Attic lid, made locally from basalt. They use rather banal Graeco-Roman themes (lion heads are the most popular) represented in a local style. Busts of men, women, and family groups appear mainly on stelai, but also on lintels from tombs, all without detailed provenance. It is not always certain they are funerary rather than votive or honorific. Despite the aesthetic shortcomings detailed by S.-F., they have considerable presence and display an engaging mixture of local style and Roman fashion.

Part 1 of vol. II analyses the tombs: places of burial (necropoleis and isolated monuments) and the tomb in epigraphy (the sixteen terms used for the tomb and the words for building them). Ch. 3

is an exhaustive survey of the typology of the tombs: simple fossae, tumuli, hypogea, surface monuments with or without hypogea below, square and round towers, dove-cot tombs, exedrae, and sarcophagi in the open air. Ch. 4 considers the tomb from the point of view of materials used (basalt), dimensions, roof types (pyramid, flat, or gabled?), and organization of interior space (various combinations of loculi, arcosolia, and sarcophagi).

Part 2 examines the insights into culture and society provided by the inscriptions and tombs. Most of the inscriptions (nearly 2,000) are on stelai, with c. 400 on lintels/blocks built into the tomb, and small numbers on altars (used by outsiders, mostly soldiers) and sarcophagi. 1,651 of those on stelai are in Greek, 170 in Nabataean, and 4 are bilingual; Nabataean inscriptions give only name and filiation — the few in Latin are more precise about age at death. S.-F. analyses the names, sex-ratios (2:1 in favour of men), evidence for professions (scanty) and geographical/ethnic origin (even more so), and the formulae used to praise the dead. Ch. 3 considers the ownership of tombs: many were built by one person for close family members, but there were some communal projects which required more complex legal arrangements, as did the problem of preventing strangers using the tomb. The cost of tombs recorded in inscriptions of the fourth century A.D. reveals galloping inflation.

Ch. 4 uses the evidence particularly of the seventy-four metrical Greek inscriptions and sculpture for the culture of the Hawran in the third and fourth centuries A.D., and ch. 5 looks at what they reveal about the conception of the afterlife (not much — but there are some Christian symbols and formulae). There is little evidence too for funerary rites and the burial rite was always inhumation. S.-F. concludes a degree of hellenization is detectable in the funerary art of the area with some acculturation under Roman rule, but persistent indigenous traditions give it a strong local character: in the fourth century A.D. at least Greek culture flourished among the wealthy tomb-builders.

It is details which capture the imagination: the equivalence of the stele and the *nephesh* of Nabataean tradition as an incarnation of the soul, apparently represented both by the monumental tomb of Chamrathe at Suweida and a stele carved in relief on a sarcophagus; the idea of the 'tombeau pigeonnier' — not, as I first assumed, a columbarium, but an actual pigeon loft built on top of tombs in the fourth century A.D.; two busts (one male, one female) with their hands raised in the air, palms forward, apparently calling on vengeance (his inscription says he was assassinated).

This is not an easy book for someone unfamiliar with the region: the geography of the area, with its differences between North and South, mountain region and plain, is clearly crucial for many of S.-F.'s conclusions, but is difficult to grasp from the overly complex maps provided. Indeed, several basic issues are never clearly explained, such as the chronology of the period (divided into pre-provincial, provincial, and Christian) or the fact that Greek inscriptions replace those in Nabataean early in the second century A.D. A vast amount of densely-packed material is recorded, and its analysis is both relentless and rather repetitive: it can be difficult to see the wood for the trees. Lavishly illustrated, it is a work of major importance — but I look forward to a shorter, more popularized version.

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GLENYS DAVIES

A. K. BOWMAN, H. M. COTTON, M. GOODMAN and S. PRICE (EDS), *REPRESENTATIONS OF EMPIRE: ROME AND THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD* (Proceedings of the British Academy 114). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. xii + 196, 17 figs, 3 tables, 3 maps. ISBN 0-19-726276-7. £22.50.

This broad and varied collection of essays is the final product arising from the academic festivities surrounding the sixty-fifth birthday of Fergus Millar, then Camden Professor of Ancient History, organized by a group of his former students. The numerous contributions to a two-day celebratory conference in London and Oxford in July 2000 have been whittled down to just eight pieces for the purposes of publication. The resulting volume encompasses a terrific range of subject matter; a point the editors are quick to acknowledge, whilst making a case for a degree of coherence. They argue that the work as a whole reflects Millar's roving historical interests, and is also united by certain cardinal features displayed time and again in Millar's own work. They regard these as being an emphasis on the importance of both the historical and historiographical contexts of evidence; on the need to be led by the evidence and to use it empirically, without being shackled by it; and on the importance of having a clear viewpoint from which to work.

It is certainly true that these features are heavily in evidence across the various contributions, but they do not have sufficient adhesive power to bind the volume together in the face of such a variety in subject matter. This reader found that with each successive contribution the work took another seven-league step in a new direction. This air of diversity and ill-cohesion is exemplified by John North's introductory piece comparing the practicalities of democracy in the Roman Republic and in the governance of modern universities. In fact, this 'introduction' neither previews the