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Book Review

LES SCULPTURES ROMAINES DU MUSÉE NATIONAL DU BARDO. 1, LES PORTRAITS: EMPEREURS ET PERSONNAGES MASCULINS PRIVÉS, STATUES CUIRASSÉES, PERSONNAGES EN TOGE, IMPÉRATRICES ET FEMMES PRIVÉES, STATUES FÉMININES DRAPÉES

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The Musée national du Bardo in Tunis contains one of the most important collections of Roman sculpture anywhere in the world. The significance of this material, however, has been overshadowed by the wealth of other materials in its collection, notably its mosaics. Many of the c. 800 pieces of Roman sculpture in the Bardo are included in the *Catalogue du musée Alaoui*, published in three volumes between 1897 and 1923, but their entries tend to be brief and are mostly unillustrated. While some of the works in the collection are well known and justifiably famous, others have never been published before.

The present volume is the first in a planned series and concentrates on the 175 portraits in the Bardo collections. It results from a Tunisian–French collaboration started in 2010 and overseen by three of the editors of this volume, François Baratte, Fathi Bejaoui and Nathalie De Chaisemartin, alongside three successive directors of the Bardo, Taher Ghalia, Moncef Ben Moussa and Fatma Naït-Yghil, the last being the fourth co-editor of this volume. Beyond these project directors, much of the content here has been generated by a team of Tunisian and French researchers (Sarah Andrès, Sarah Berraho, Chloé Damay, Khaoula Ferjani, Noémie Kopczynski, Nesrine Nasr, Afef Riahi and Aurora Taiuti), with Elisabetta Neri taking the lead on the analysis of the polychromy. The project has two laudable aims: to produce a published catalogue of all the Roman sculpture in the Bardo collection; and to provide training and professional development opportunities for young researchers in Tunisia and France.

This volume is a catalogue above all else. Following a short introduction, the material is divided into Hellenistic portraits and male imperial portraits (section 1), cuirassed statues (2), heroic statues (3), portraits of private male individuals (4), togate statues (5), empresses and women of the imperial family (6), portraits of private female individuals (7), draped women (8) and doubtful examples, of which there is just one unfortunate (9). A critical assessment in two parts follows, the first an overview of the portraits as a collection, the second on the evidence for polychromy. These two discussion chapters are short and there are no thematic chapters. The authors limit themselves to commenting on broader trends only when they are supported by the material in the Bardo collection or when comparable datasets are not available elsewhere in the region, as in the case of the polychromy. Their focus is on providing accurate, detailed descriptions and commentaries of each work, alongside good-quality, new photographs, all of which are in colour.

Among the Roman imperial portraits given careful treatment here are some of the best-known masterpieces of Roman sculpture from Tunisia, notably the remarkable seated statues of Marcus Aurelius (cat. 12) and Lucius Verus (cat. 15) from the theatre at Bulla Regia, and the fine portrait of a youth, variously identified as either Caracalla or Geta, from Thuburbo Maius (cat. 23). The entries on these works provide a good, up-to-date summary of the *status quo* of scholarship on them. But, importantly, there are also less well-known works even among the group of imperial portraits, such as that of an Antonine prince (cat. 11), also from Thuburbo Maius, found before 1950, probably close to a portrait of Antoninus Pius (cat. 10). The portrait bears a resemblance to youthful images of both Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus but has a distinctive hairstyle, with *anastole*, which the authors argue places it among a group of portraits that Fittschen (1999) connects with the young Marcus Aurelius Fulvus Antoninus, one of the (biological) sons of Antoninus Pius who died some time before AD 138. To date this particular portrait has received little attention. Another interesting portrait (cat. 28) from Bulla Regia has recently been identified as a Tetrarch – Constantius Chlorus is proposed here.

Other portraits that are well known are analysed in different lights here. This is true of the striking Augustus (cat. 4) from Thysdrus, which is most notable for its evidence of reworking and extant polychromy. Traces of white, yellow and blue paint can still be seen on the skin of the face and neck; irises, pupils and tear ducts preserve black and blue paint; on the hair, shades of yellow-brown at the front and orange-brown further back can be noted, again with darker traces. Traces of paint can even be seen on the roughly worked rear of the head, where marks of rough point and tooth chiselling have been interpreted previously as evidence of reworking. Here the authors follow the earlier suggestion put forward by Fittschen and Zanker (1985, 5) that this was originally a portrait of Gaius transformed into an Augustus, perhaps during the reign of Claudius. A portrait of Vespasian (cat. 5) might have undergone similar treatment, beginning life as a portrait of Nero. The sides and rear of the head are certainly crudely worked, giving it a blocky appearance, but it is proposed here that its display context probably concealed this fact, privileging a frontal view. Like so many of the finer portraits in the

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Bardo it again comes from Bulla Regia and was found in the courtyard of the Temple of Apollo, even though it was perhaps originally displayed in the forum.

While there is nothing distinctively regional about the handling of the Thysdrus Augustus or Bulla Regia Vespasian, the Trajan from Thuburbo Maius (cat. 6), like similar portraits of that emperor from Utica (now in Leiden) and Sousse, seems to bear the hallmarks of a local reception of an imperial type – in its compact form, round eyes and somewhat schematically rendered locks of hair. Different but presumably also produced locally is a portrait identified as Hadrian (cat. 9) again from Bulla Regia, with a high, impressive laurel crown. The profile, much more so than the frontal view (with its close-together eyes), suggests this is Hadrian, though the product again of 'un atelier provincial', perhaps as the authors propose 'négligent ou peu informé des modèles de la capitale' but possibly also just content with their own vision of the emperor. We can add a large but fairly schematic portrait of Marcus Aurelius from Utica, loosely based on that emperor's third type, to this category; it has drill holes in the curls of the beard that are typical of other African images of this sort, such as the Commodus from Markouna, now in the Louvre (de Kersauson 1996, 326–27, no. 149). The Commodus was carved in dolomitic Thasian marble (Calligaro *et al.* 2013) and this Utican Marcus is also identified as Thasian, at least macroscopically (a minor criticism of the volume is that all the marbles are identified only visually, which is not, in most cases, reliable). Even if, as the catalogue's authors propose, this was the product of 'un atelier africain enclin à la simplification', this was a workshop with access to one of the best (and most challenging to carve) sculptural marbles, capable of producing colossal works. There is scope here, using this material, for a more detailed discussion of the local, African reception and adaptation of imperial models; this is a corpus of material that allows for such an analysis.

The only male imperial portrait in this catalogue not previously published in some form is a small fragment of a possible portrait of Septimius Severus of unknown provenance (cat. 21). However, there are more portraits of female members of the imperial family that are new to scholarship. There are two, perhaps three, portraits of Faustina the Younger, for example, all sadly of uncertain provenance (cat. 130, 131 and 133), which are published here for the first time. A colossal, though fragmentary head (0.84 m in height), made for insertion into an acrolithic statue, is identified as possibly an Antonine empress (cat. 136); its provenance is uncertain. There are numerous previously unpublished works in the sections on private portraits, too, among them: a portrait of a young man or child, perhaps first century AD in date from an unknown provenance but made for insertion into a statue (cat. 47); a fragmentary male head, of early first century date, identified here as a private individual but equally possibly a Julio-Claudian prince (cat. 48); two portraits of children, both of uncertain provenance (cat. 53 and 55), which are listed alongside a portrait of a child from Utica (cat. 52), which has only received limited attention and is carved in fine white marble (proposed as Dokimeian, but Göktepe or even high-grade Luna are possibilities, if this is based on visual analysis only); a third-century male portrait from Thugga that seems to have been recarved from a Julio-Claudian portrait (cat. 77); a fragment of a probably Tetrarchic image, on which the firm outlining of the stubbled beard can be seen (cat. 82); a part-worked togate statue, intended for a separately worked head, unfortunately of unknown provenance (cat. 102); a head of a young girl (cat. 148); the fragmentary portrait of a Severan woman with Julia Domna-style hair (cat. 150); and an extraordinary, heavily damaged slither of a portrait of a woman from Thugga, the preserved eye on which is large and wide open, with a hollowed-out iris, prompting the authors to offer a Tetrarchic date.

Alongside well-known works and entirely new ones, other pieces are published in full here for the first time, even though they have been discussed previously in scholarship. Among these is the fine male bust found at Utica in 1948 (cat. 62). Initially identified as a young Marcus Aurelius, the subject is more likely a non-imperial male of the Antonine period. It was found with a similarly formatted female bust (cat. 146). In a contribution examining new and old sculpture from the basilica at Utica, I proposed that these busts might originally have been displayed as *imagines clipeatae*, like a bust of Jupiter recovered from excavations in this complex in 2013 (Russell 2019, 221–23). The new Jupiter has a flat rear with a wedge-shaped projection running down its centre, which locked into a corresponding socket on a separately carved circular *clipeus* frame; fragments belonging to at least five *clipei* have been found in excavations in the area of the basilica. The rear of the two busts in the Bardo, which I was not previously able to examine myself, are not formatted in the same way, as the photographs in this catalogue clearly show. The rear of the bust is recessed rather than flat. As the authors note, however, my hypothesis remains 'séduisante': both figures, they remark, have strong downward gazes, which are explicable if they were mounted high on a building. And while the rears of the busts are handled differently to the Jupiter, the circular form of the back of each bust, and the fact that the profile left around the edge of the recess is flattened, might support the proposal that these busts were designed to be mounted on something. In both cases the figures are also of similar dimensions and proportions to the Jupiter, the three measuring 0.54/0.56/0.60 m tall, 0.38/0.47/0.49 m wide and a maximum of 0.25/0.32/0.30 m thick. The proposal 'reste à vérifier'.

Several works carved in local limestones in the Bardo collection are also worthy of note for what they reveal about artistic currents beyond the major urban centres. A portrait of a man from Mornag (cat. 49), with strikingly facetted cheekbones and incised wrinkles, can be compared to late first-century BC ('veristic') funerary images from Italy. An expressive, bearded male portrait from Makhtar, probably of Antonine date, on which the locks of the hair and beard have a particular angular flavour, is another good example of the product of a local workshop. Many more works of this sort, of course, can be found in local and regional museums around Tunisia: the Bardo collection, as the authors of the catalogue note, is not representative of all Roman sculpture from the region. The high proportion of white marble sculpture represented here reflects this fact – it is testament to the demand for high-quality sculpture in the region in the Roman period, and the purchasing power of local commissioners, but most of the works in the collection come from a limited number of wealthy centres, notably Carthage, Bulla Regia, Thuburbo Maius and, to a lesser extent, Thugga and Utica. Considerably more works that are representative of local and regional sculptural trends in Africa Proconsularis can be found in local and site museums across Tunisia (and indeed neighbouring countries).

Discussion of polychromy runs through the catalogue and is dealt with in its own right in a brief section at the end of the volume, authored by Elisabetta Neri and her collaborators. The topic warrants particular attention here, both because so few sculptures in North African collections have been analysed from this perspective but also because of the suggestive results. Detailed analysis of polychromy is made more possible at the Bardo because a number of sculptures in the collection have been neither restored nor intensively cleaned ('abusivement nettoyées') in the way they were in many European collections. A total of 25 of the sculptures presented in this catalogue were analysed, among them some of the best-known works in the Bardo. Notable here

is the Livia from Carthage (cat. 118). While the catalogue entry summarises the state of the discussion of this statue to date, genuinely new insight is provided by the analysis of its polychromy. Intriguingly, the new analysis proposes that the statue was gilded and, where the gold leaf is not extant, painted in shades of red and ochre. Neri argues that the intent was seemingly to imitate a painted bronze. Similar observations are made on perhaps the best-known of the private male portraits in the Bardo collection, the nude male wearing helmet, chlamys and baldric ('in the guise of Mars') from Carthage (cat. 54), which has previously been identified as Hadrian but is more likely to be a member of the local elite of the first half of the second century. This piece was seemingly finished with a combination of gilding and yellow-brown paint, perhaps to make it appear as if it were golden. A quite different effect can be identified in the well-preserved traces of paint, particularly around the eyes, on the eyebrows and on the hair and crown still visible, and on the head of the statue of Faustina the Younger in the guise of Ceres from Bulla Regia (cat. 128).

What Neri argues here is that two different approaches to polychromy are at play. On certain works, including many that seem most likely to have been produced in Rome, paint was used to enhance the realism of the portrait – to give colour to hair or make eyes, eyebrows and lips more visible. But on the majority of the sculptures analysed (18 out of 25) paint was used in a different way. The producers of these works favoured shades of ochre, orange and red all over, with even areas of skin being painted shades of yellow; partial gilding is found on two of these – the Livia and nude male with helmet from Carthage already mentioned (cat. 118 and 54). Three of the statues in this category have whitened flesh areas. The aim here, Neri and her collaborators propose, was to imitate polychrome bronze, gilded bronze or ivory and metal statues. This supports evidence gathered from other studies, notably by the Tracking Colour project in Copenhagen, for the gilding of white marble statues. This is an important proposal, so it is a shame that the authors did not spend more time expanding their discussion to consider the implications of these results.

This volume represents a milestone in scholarship on Roman sculpture from Tunisia and has been greatly anticipated. It is thorough and well illustrated. Minor errors (some bibliographic entries missing, issues with cross-referencing and with the index) and the unfortunate brevity of some of the discussion do not detract from this. It will draw renewed attention to the remarkable sculptural heritage of the cities of this region of North Africa. For scholars already familiar with the Bardo collection it contains new insights on well-known works, especially on their polychromy, but also includes entries on works that have never before been studied and others that have received only passing attention. It will become a standard reference work and we can only look forward to the next volumes in the series.

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