

The Marble Group of Daidalos, Hellenism in Late Antique 'Ammān

During the early months of 1947 it was rumoured that a full scale marble statue had been found while clearing a level space for building a house nearly half way up the southeastern face of the Citadel hill in 'Ammān. The owner of the land had come upon fragments of the statue scattered about along a sort of terrace. A clearance of the immediately adjacent area by the Department of Antiquities revealed the remains of what had apparently been an exedra or platform for the group, a commanding location overlooking the theatre. Various architectural elements were found including several capitals. Due to lack of funds no further excavation was undertaken.

The fragments of the statue were brought to the then Palestine Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem (now the Rockefeller Museum), where they were photographed and studied, and a start was made on the reconstruction of the whole figure (FIG. 1a).¹ Owing, however, to the political situation the Jordanian government requested the return of the statue to 'Ammān. This was done but several fragments disappeared (cf. FIGS. 4a-5b), and what is now on exhibition in the Jordan Archaeological Museum, 'Ammān, is the main figure, standing 1.9 m tall (FIGS. 1b-c). Hopefully someday somebody will find the missing fragments!

Shortly after the discovery the statue was admirably

published by J. H. Iliffe.² Being no classicist Iliffe clarified the structure of the statue, related it as a work of art to the so-called School of Aphrodisias named after the city of that name in Caria, southwestern Asia Minor, which produced huge quantities of high quality sculpture from the Early to the Late Empire. He suggested a dating to the Antonine period, which has since been accepted—a dating I question.³ He failed to identify the subject. For this, however, he should not be blamed, since the group is unique as regards its subject. It was H. Möbius who two years later advanced the correct identification of the motif.⁴ The mythical artist Daidalos, one of whose works was the Labyrinth at Knossos also constructed two pairs of artificial wings for himself and his son Ikaros to escape the revenge of King Minos. In youthful arrogance Ikaros flew too close to the Sun and the wax of his wings melted. He fell and drowned in the Aegean Sea.

In anger and despair Daidalos rushes forward looking up at the burning Sun (FIGS. 1a-c) while carrying the body of Ikaros in his arms. The arms and the body of Ikaros are now missing (cf. FIG. 4b) and so are the wings of Daidalos which were probably made of metal. Two holes for attachment on the back (FIG. 2b), together with straps crossing the chest, attest that wings were fastened to the figure.⁵ Of Ikaros, who was rendered as a child, very little

¹ I am grateful to Ronny Reich, who has provided me with copies of the photographs taken when the statue was in Jerusalem. The photos used for FIGS. 1a; 2a-b; 4a-5b are published by courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (the rest of the photos were taken by the author in 'Ammān). It has sometimes been suggested that the missing parts of the group are still in Jerusalem (in the Rockefeller Museum), but this can be ruled out.

² "A Heroic Statue from Philadelphia-Amman" in *Studies Presented to D.M. Robinson I* (Saint Louis 1951) 705-12, pls. 75-80; T. Weber, *Gadara Decapolitana. Untersuchungen zur Topographie, Geschichte, Architektur und Bildende Kunst einer "Polis Hellenis" im Ostjordan*. Mainz 1995 cat. D.6 (with extensive bibliography) and passim. I am most grateful to Thomas Weber for having generously made available to me this preprint of his Habilitationsschrift. See also N. Hannestad, *Tradition in Late Antique Sculpture. Conservation - Modernization - Production* (Aarhus 1994) 144-9 with references and R. Reich, "A Hellenistic Statue of Daidalos and Icarus Discovered in Philadelphia/Amman" *Quaderniot* XXIX, 1 (1996)

39-43 (in Hebrew).

³ See Hannestad, *Tradition* (supra n. 2). The dating I propose is accepted by Amanda Claridge in a letter (26 October 1992): "I note that you cite the Amman Daidalos...Fine by me if you want to date the work far later than AD 200". In her review of my book in *JRA* 10 (1997) 447-53 her view has changed completely now to be entirely opposed to this (and to any idea proposed in the book, from: "- lots of plausible ideas") but even more strangely, she partly cites my text incorrectly in order to make her point.

⁴ "Ein hellenistischer Daidalos" *JdI* 68 (1953) 96-101. On the motif, cf. also *LIMC III* 320 no. 52.

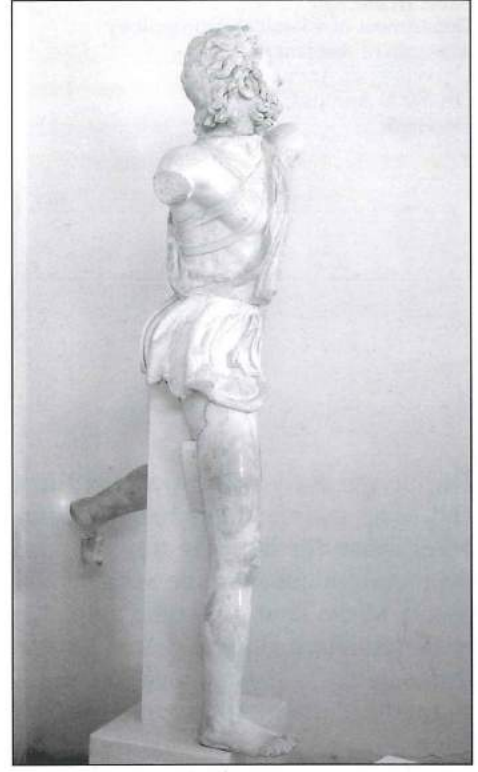
⁵ Weber (supra n. 2) 175 follows Iliffe 707, in seeing the twin holes on the back as attachment holes for metal cramps to secure the figure to the wall. One central (and bigger) hole would have been sufficient and Daidalos had made himself wings, so they must have been visible. A different material would have been obvious for an alien addition to the human body. Of course the fastening holes could have served both purposes.



1a. Provisional erection of Daidalos in Jerusalem.



1b. Final erection of Daidalos in 'Ammân, same view as FIG. 1a.



1c. Final erection of Daidalos in 'Ammân, profile view.



2a. Torso with head of Daidalos in Jerusalem, front view.



2b. Torso with head of Daidalos in Jerusalem, back view.



3a. Central part of torso of Daidalos, front view.



3b. Central part of torso of Daidalos, back view.

remains—or remained: this comprises part of the limbs and a fragment of the abdomen (FIG. 5b), which has been hollowed out to reduce the weight (FIG. 5a).

The construction of the figure, like the motif, is unique. It was made in separate parts, presumably in Aphrodisias, to be assembled in 'Ammān. The figure of Daidalos consists of five different pieces: One comprises the head and torso down to the belt at the waist (when the statue collapsed the head was severed from the torso). The two arms, of which the shoulders are preserved have been inserted in sockets. To hide the joints they correspond with the lines marked by the straps, the gown of the torso (FIGS. 2a-b) and the line of the belt (FIGS. 2a-3b). The lower part consists of two elements, the bottom part of the torso and the left leg. The right hip and leg of which only the knee is preserved carried the entire weight of the figure through an internal pole probably of metal (cf. FIG. 4c) ending in the right hip. The termination of the drill hole made by a tubular drill is visible in the low-

er fracture of the hip at the transition to the thigh (FIG. 4a). In the provisional reconstruction in Jerusalem a similar pole, but made of wood, was attached (FIG. 1a)⁶. Comparing this provisional installation with the present one in 'Ammān one notices how much of the figure has been blurred by plaster reconstruction. The arms, as shown by the now vanished fragments of the left one, were also strengthened by inlaid metal (FIG. 4b).

The marble is mostly bluish-grey as so often used for Aphrodisian sculpture, but the right hip and with it the knee are carved in a creamy white marble, also quarried in Aphrodisias. Actually this hip does not fit too well and on the back (FIG. 3b) one notes that, despite the fine carving, there is no consistency in the drapery above with that below the horizontal dividing line following the belt. It has been a considerable task to stabilize this very complicated group and, as mentioned, a most unusual solution has been chosen.⁷ It should be added that, technically, such a composition could not have been carved

⁶ This is shown in the reconstruction as illustrated in Reich (supra n. 2) but in this reconstruction the body of Ikaros is omitted.

⁷ On the structure, see A. Claridge "Ancient Techniques of Making

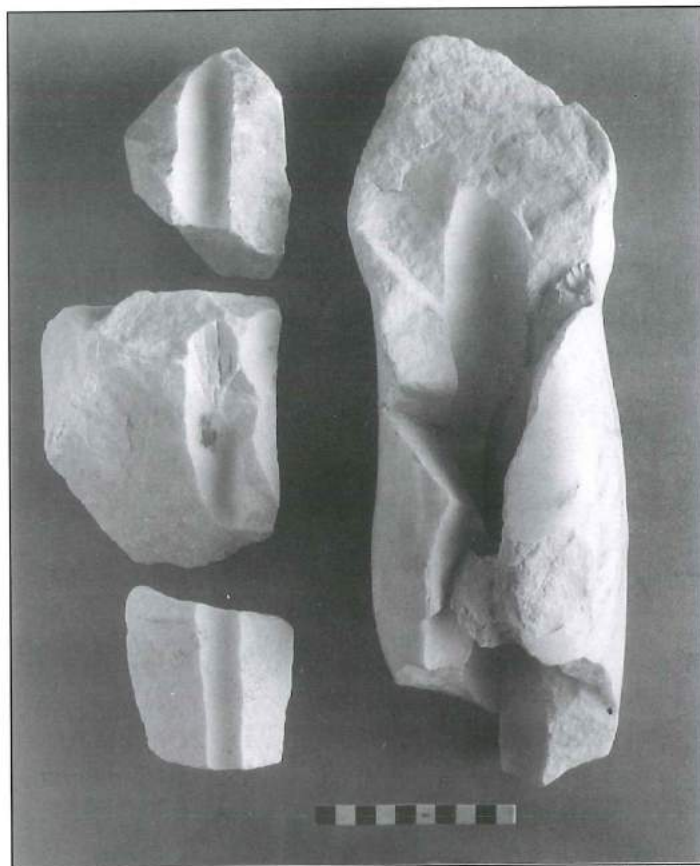
Joins in Marble Statuary" in *Marble. Art Historical and Scientific Perspectives on Ancient Sculpture* (Malibu 1990) 150-2.



4a. Upper right thigh of Daidalos, showing tubular drill-holes and remains of core.

from one block without a solid base and innumerable struts—only the trace of one strut at the side of the thigh of the left leg is preserved. Whether the sculpture reflects a bronze original or not is hard to say.

The technique is, however, not the only curious feature of this group. Several odd traits differentiate it from the style of the High Empire. Despite the high quality of the sculptural work and the superb polishing of the surface, some parts of the sculpture are of surprisingly coarse execution. The eyebrows are sketchy, and only the part of the hair close to the face is properly finished (FIG. 6a); moreover the drilled channels in the beard go in part below the level of the skin, a characteristic which is mostly seen in Late Antique sculpture. On the surviving foot (FIG. 6b), apparently broken during transport—it was repaired with an iron dowel in Antiquity—we notice that the toes are not properly shaped but separated from each other by linear furrows and the transverse wrinkles of the joints are only rudely carved. Other parts of the sculpture are markedly abstract. This applies particularly to the semicircular grooves above the knees and the rendering of the veins on the legs. The right part of the chest looks as if it has been squeezed in, and the nipples are



4b-c. Fragments of left arm of Daidalos and (c). fragment of right leg (back of knee).

shaped as though it were a metal statue. The lower border of the abdomen is definitely un-anatomical in its transition to the thigh (FIG. 3a). Finally one should note another peculiar trait: the iris of each eye is rendered as a semi-circle, nothing more. This is a feature first encountered about AD 300 and sometimes occurring in the fourth century.

The Daidalos group is most expressive, an offshoot of Hellenistic baroque. A similar baroque flavour sometimes appears in Antonine sculpture, hence the conventional dating. It is, however, mixed with a certain mannerism, a trait characteristic of Aphrodisian sculpture, not least in the late period. The Daidalos figure has, with reason, been compared with the so-called Esquiline group in Copenhagen, executed by Aphrodisian sculptors working in Rome and known to have been active in the late Constantinian period.⁸ The expressive composition, almost like an explosion, characterizes the Satyr of the Esquiline group, who seems virtually to be dancing forwards while smiling affectedly up at the infant Dionysos sitting on his left shoulder. Two more replicas together with some unfinished fragments of this group, Satyr with Dionysos, have been found in a workshop in Aphrodisias itself,

⁸ See Weber, *Gadara* (supra n. 2) 197, Hannestad, *Tradition* (supra n. 2) 110-3. A full scale publication of the group by Mette Moltesen

will appear in the *Antike Plastik*, Lief. 27.



5a. Fragment of abdomen of Ikaros, interior part.



5b. Fragments of abdomen, right arm and left foot of Ikaros.

which was destroyed in the fourth century by a result of an earthquake.⁹

When visiting the museums of present-day Jordan (or Syria) one gets the impression that as material for Roman sculpture in the high style, marble was much preferred to bronze. The large number of sculptures in the local limestone or basalt tends to follow a more provincial style albeit sometimes of considerable refinement. The proportion between the two surviving groups of material, marble and bronze, is not, however, a true reflection of how the use of one material compares with that of the other. Marble, especially when carved, is very difficult to transport compared to bronze. When we look at imperial portraits of the High Empire it is a clear pattern that the further East we go, the more common bronze becomes as a material. This is evidenced by the statue bases.¹⁰

Marble is not quarried in the Levant. More sculpture in marble will be found in areas close to the quarries or to which easy access by sea and rivers could be established. This means that marble is rarely found in the hinterland of the Eastern Roman provinces compared with the coastal zone of this same area. Prevailing conditions have also played their part in the formation of this pattern; and con-

ditions have been different for the two materials, marble and bronze. In contrast to many other parts of the former Roman empire, many structures in Syria and Jordan managed still to be standing and avoid being covered by earth throughout the Late Antique period; and even to be fairly intact when those areas were conquered by the forces of Islam. This means that sculptures had been exposed for a considerable period of time in societies which had long before lost any interest in sculpture. Sculpture then became a material for re-use and in this respect bronze was valuable, while marble could only be used for the limekilns. The fate of marble sculpture is mostly evidenced by pieces cut up in handy size for the limekiln. Very seldom was it deliberately smashed.¹¹ In addition, appreciation of ancient sculpture is a fairly recent phenomenon in these areas.

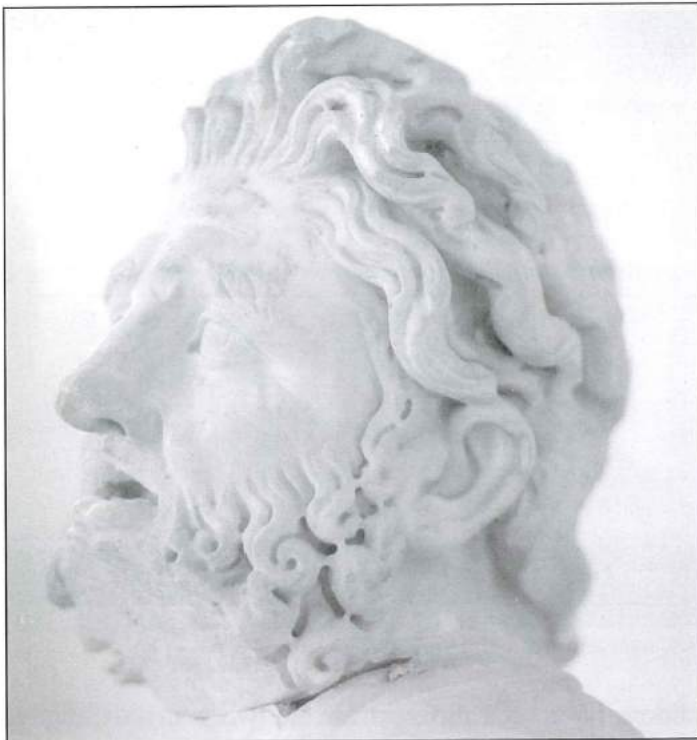
An idea of the relationship between bronze and marble (when it is a matter of portraits) may be obtained from the statue bases but it can for several reasons be difficult to work with this material. Thus bases are very often not properly registered and displayed or very inadequately published (the text of the inscription being considered the main priority). In this respect the consoles on columns are

⁹ See P. Rockwell, "Unfinished statuary associated with a sculptor's studio" in *Aphrodisias Papers 2* (Ann Arbor 1991) 127-143. It is suggested that the two well preserved statues were brought in for repair despite the find of four unfinished fragments of this same type. For a different view (i.e. that also the two statues were late antique products), see J. A. van Voorhis, "The sculptor's workshop at Aphrodisias and the production of ideal sculpture in Late Antiquity" Abstract from the 99th Annual Meeting. *AJA* 102/2 (1998) p. 409.

¹⁰ This ratio has attracted very little attention. An exception is made by K. Tuchelt, *Frühe Denkmäler Roms in Kleinasien I* (Tübingen

1979) 74-90, who enumerates 26 statues in bronze out of a total of 30 statues. A similar ratio seems to apply for emperor portraits in the East. The problem will be discussed in a forthcoming Ph.D. thesis by Jakob Munk Højte about ruler portraiture in the Hellenistic-Roman period.

¹¹ See Weber's Catalogue (supra n. 2) for instances of cut-up marble statuary, see also A. Schmidt-Collinet, "Skulpturen aus dem Nymphäum von Apamea/Syria" *AA* 1985: 119-33. On the attitude to sculpture in the later period, see N. Hannestad, "How did rising Christianity cope with pagans sculpture?" in *East and West. Proceedings of the first plenary conference at Merida* (in print).



6a. Head of Daidalos.

more helpful, such as those we encounter in Apamea or in Palmyra.

On the Agora of Palmyra, the consoles of the peristyle court are placed fairly low, for which reason they are easier to study compared to those in other places.¹² Respectively the sides framing the open square have 18 and 24 columns, which makes 80 altogether. They have all been provided with consoles of which 17 are sufficiently well-preserved to permit the front face to be studied. One front face is blank, the rest (i.e. 16) bear inscriptions saying that they have supported statues. Of these 13 can be proved to have been of bronze owing to the marks left in the stone. About the remaining three nothing can be said for certain, one is too weathered and two are lying on the ground upside down. In terms of statistics this means that more than 70 out of 80 consoles (94%) have supported statues and most likely all of these were made of bronze. In the museum in Palmyra there are only small fragments of one statue in bronze.

The type of stone statue designed for the consoles seems to have been a seated figure executed in the same material as the column itself.¹³ This must have been the



6b. Foot of Daidalos.

modest version of the honorific statue, and presumably what was placed on the top of the consoles without the aid of dowels. The seated statue could of course also have been carved in marble, but to my knowledge no trace of such a type has come to light.

The agora of Palmyra is only one example from a Semitic speaking city at the eastern fringe of the Roman Empire. If we relate this to the excellent catalogue in Thomas Weber's above mentioned *Gadara Decapolitana* (note 2) it appears that sculpture in marble is not abundant in the Hellenized cities compared to other areas of the Roman Empire, but this should rather be explained by the conditions of survival, and sculpture in local stone is abundant. Bronze had been, too. It should be stressed that nothing supports the sometimes proposed tension between human representation and anti-pictorial tendencies in the Semitic religions of the Ancient Near East.¹⁴

Apart from the Daidalos there is in 'Ammān a certain amount of marble statuary from the High empire and a few pieces from the third century, some of it of slightly provincial character other pieces of almost municipal Roman standard. Bringing marble to 'Ammān must have

¹² The complex was excavated in 1939-40. Most of the inscriptions of the date to the second century, see J. Starcky, *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre*, vol 10 (Damascus 1949). I wish to thank Jakob Munk Højte for valuable suggestions and discussion concerning the statuary of the agora at Palmyra.

¹³ Two such limestone statues are now placed in the court yard of the old museum in Ḥamāh. They have been acquired with no provenance and will be published in the forthcoming catalogue by Ilona

Skupinska-Løvset. In the Museum in Suwayda in the Hawrān is a funerary relief depicting this type of honorific monument, *Le Djebel al-'Arab. Hist. et patrimoine au musée de Suweida* (Cat. de H. Hatoum) (Paris 1991) Cat. 7,13.

¹⁴ See also Weber (supra n. 2) 135-8 and 207-10. Concerning the Hellenistic period the absence of sculpture corresponds with the absence of architecture. The evidence for the well-known Hellenistic foundations is scanty, indeed.

been relatively expensive but no major problem. Large scale statues existed, too, as indicated by a hand and elbow of a colossus, estimated to have been nine metres high found in the nearby Great Temple of the Citadel Hill.¹⁵

Against this background the Daidalos is totally different. The piecing together of marble to form a statue is a technique known to date back to the Hellenistic period when marble statuary was required in places distant from the centres of production. It is a different technique than that used for the Daidalos, but it reflects the same problem—the difficulties inherent in the transport of heavy goods, e.g. marble.

This was a problem the Aphrodisian workshops of the late period had learned to deal with. Sculptural embellishment became closely connected with the stately home of the nobility, the rural villa or the urban domus. Even in very remote areas such stately homes could be supplied with marble sculpture, and Aphrodisias became the great

supplier in the late period. Most sculpture produced for export was made small in size, typically about 1.20 m or less for a statue, since it could thus be loaded on a pack animal. The composition could be strengthened by heavy trunks or many struts or the sculpture could be sent semi-manufactured. However, Late Antique sculpture has many more breaks and repairs than sculpture of any other period, an example of which is the breaking off of the left foot of Daidalos.¹⁶

For the Daidalos a unique solution has been chosen. The work demonstrates a determination to acquire a full-scale marble group executed in the Classical tradition in Late Antique 'Ammān, despite all complications, not to mention the expense. A bronze statue would have been the easy solution. Most likely the customer was the owner of a large suburban villa. Among members of this social class real wealth existed combined with a great nostalgia for the glorious past.

¹⁵ Weber (supra n. 2) Cat. D.12. Being a cult statue marble would be the appropriate material.

¹⁶ See Hannestad (supra n. 2) esp. 155-7, also Hannestad, "Rising Christianity" (supra n. 11) passim.