

FOUR SCULPTURES FROM AMMAN

IN the beginning of this year a householder of Amman was removing soil from the courtyard of his house just outside the Roman city walls at the north end of the Citadel and turned up the four sculptures which form the subject of this article. Unfortunately, the work was completed before the news of the discovery reached the Department of Antiquities, and thus the possibility was lost that any circumstantial evidence might be found bearing on these statuettes and fragments about to be described. It is, however, tempting to suggest that this was a cache having some connection with a shrine. Mr. Lankester Harding (to whom I am grateful for his courtesy in inviting me to contribute these notes) has himself pointed out in the *Illustrated London News* of February 2, 1950, that particular importance and interest attach to this find because apart from two detached heads, one in the British Museum (BM 116739), the other in Amman, these are the first examples of native sculpture in the round of early date yet found on either side of the Jordan.

There are two complete statuettes, a head of another larger example, and a broken torso of a fourth.

The first (A, Pl. X) is of 'hard grey stone,' 81 cm. high. It represents a bearded male figure wearing a 'Syrian cap' or perhaps a version of the Egyptian crown of Osiris, with two Egyptian plumes. He is clad in a long tunic held by a girdle, the two ends of which hang down in front. Over this is wound obliquely a long garment like a shawl, crossing the left shoulder. He stands stiffly on his small plinth as if at attention with the right arm down, the left crossed on his chest, while his feet are placed together. The fact that they are bare suggests that he is regarded as standing on holy ground and is a mortal. Comparison, however, with the scene on the stele from Balu'a suggests that he is a god, for on that monument (*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1934, Pl. 1) the head-dress of our present figure is worn by a goddess. On the other hand, the rest of his costume is that worn by mortals in Phoenicia and North Syria (Bossert, *Altanatolien*, Fig. 474). The answer may be that in Moab the king on certain occasions wore a partly divine dress. The same head-dress is worn by the two detached heads mentioned in the first paragraph.¹

The second figure (B, Pl. XI), 45 cm. high, seems in some ways more advanced, but this impression may be largely because it has been carried out in an easier material, limestone. It represents a draped male figure, his expression milder than that of A. His jutting chin is covered with beard, and his eyes, which were once inlaid, must have looked very lively. His hair is carefully formed into long corkscrew curls, bound at the forehead with a cord, below which they fall on to his shoulders. Two small curls fall before his ears, in the Syrian manner enjoined upon the Hebrews, who were forbidden

¹ The one in the British Museum is of grey basalt, 60 cm. high, and shows a bearded male. It was found at Amman. (The other head is of limestone, 28 cm. high, and has a moustache as well as a beard; the neck is exceptionally long, and finished off with a flat base, presumably for inserting in a torso like D described here (p. 36) —G. L. H.)

to cut the 'corners of their beards' (Lev. v. 27). It is curious that this figure should wear them, as Edom, Ammon and Moab are all described by Jeremiah (ix. 25; xxv. 23) expressly as accustomed to cut them. This figure wears a tunic of crinkly material, most probably the fine linen of Egypt, girt with a girdle, and wrapped round with a shawl like A. But the shawl in this case is shown in greater detail, with a fringed edge and tassel. In his left hand he holds a lotus flower. His feet are bare, suggesting that he is standing on holy ground, and the left one is slightly advanced. There are many traces of red paint on both flesh and dress. On the base beneath the figure are the remains of a three-line inscription (Pl. XIII), which I would read ¹ tentatively as follows:

.....
]...Yareah-'azar
 son of ? Za] kir son of Shaphan

.....
 [שן ירח עזר
 בר זכר בר שפן

The name Shaphan ('badger') is frequent in the Bible. It is also known from a Phoenician inscription (*Répertoire d'épigraphie Sémitique*, 1913), and though the name Yareah-'azar does not occur, the name 'Abd-yareah is known (Clermont-Ganneau, Sceaux et Cachets, *Journal Asiatique*, 1883, 17).

The form of the letters would assign the piece to the ninth/eighth century B.C.

What of the style of these two figures? The block-like, four-square conception of the human figure in two planes (the face projecting into line with the toes is a reminder of the original cube from which it was shaped) recurs on the statue from Malatia (Bossert, *Altanatolien*, Fig. 793). That work, probably of the late eighth century, has both the same dress as A and B and the same posture of the hands and feet. Furthermore, it even employs the same safety-device as A of leaving a small piece uncut between the bottom of the skirt and the base. In the Malatia statue, again, there is the same absurd disproportion of head and feet to the rest of the body which we find in A and B. Again, it has another important detail in common with A, that the ear (Bossert, *op. cit.*, Fig. 794) is not rendered naturalistically but stylised into the form of a question mark. The motif of the advanced foot can also be paralleled in North Syria in a statue which is said to be from Mardin but is obviously from the workshop of Tell Halaf (Bossert, *op. cit.*, Fig. 956). This is, of course, a motif found in many a Phoenician bronze statuette and in the Nimrud ivories (*Iraq*, II, Pl. XXIII), and derives ultimately from Egypt. The same is true of the lotus which the Amman figure holds and which Barrekub also grasps at Zincirli (Bossert, *op. cit.*, Fig. 352). So, too, do the two figures on the top of the sarcophagus of Ahiiram. As in Egypt, the lotus is the symbol of life; it is carried by gods, and in Phoenicia and Syria was deemed appropriate for kings, especially dead kings, to hold, no doubt to show that they partake of the privileges of immortality.

There are thus strong connections in the present case both with North Syria and Phoenicia, and we may note that the same canon of proportions (or disproportions) which gives a huge head and feet to a small body recurs in the stone colossus from Byblos (Dunand, *Byblos*, Pl. XXVI). Tell Halaf and Zincirli figures exhibit the same dumpy proportions though in a less marked degree. This squatness of types is not an

¹ I am obliged to Mr. J. Leveen and Mr. C. Moss for help in restoration.

original feature of Phoenician nor of North Syrian art in the Bronze Age. Where, then, does it originate? Akurgal in his *Späthethitische Bildkunst* has recognised at Zincirli the existence of an 'Aramaic art,' and singles out as typical of it certain features of fashion, as corkscrew curls. In my opinion this is to select misleading criteria. It seems to me that the schools (rather than the arts) of different areas from Anatolia to the Egyptian border so deeply inter-penetrate each other, in the absence of firm political and geographical frontiers, that they can scarcely yet be sufficiently disentangled, and for us to identify an Aramaean art with any degree of safety is still premature. Yet it is very curious that Tell Halaf and Zincirli, and now Amman, are all places where either Aramaeans were in control or at least Aramaic was written. And since the Malatia statue and the Sakça-Gezü sculptures cannot be separated from the latest phase of Zincirli, it seems that they might also be suspected of undergoing the same influences, whatever they were. For all have certain stylistic features in common.

Phoenician art, or perhaps better the Phoenician style, is a term I for one have always tried to reserve for that art of the Syrian Palestinian coast which most openly imitated Egyptian models. Doubtless it grew up in several centres with varying gradations of Egyptian influence. One of these centres seems to have been developed far from the coast, in Moab and Ammon, and its products are certainly vigorous though somewhat crude. However that may have happened, it certainly may be argued that the Aramaeans played some part in disseminating this art. It does not seem enough to say that these artists were simply Phoenicians who wrote Aramaic when convenient. For in Moab Aramaic was not the normal dialect. The same confusing degree of crossed influences which we have discovered may be discovered in the ivories of Arslan Tash. There we have a group of works by common consent admitted to be Phoenician workmanship. Yet they are made for an Aramaic king, as it appears, and are dedicated with an Aramaic inscription, and in one of them we have what is evidently his portrait, wearing much the same costume as our figure B (Thureau-Dangin and others, *Arslan Tash*, Pl. XXXIII, Fig. 43).

C, the small bearded head (Pl. XII), is in features very close to (B), but the coiffure this time is treated in a Phoenician adaptation of the Egyptian system. For the beard it is hard to find a close parallel, but for shape we may compare it with the terracotta head of Early Iron Age found by Glueck at el-Medeiyneh (*The Other Side of Jordan*, Fig. 86), which is not unlike figure B.

The small hollow at the back of this head suggests that this head is from a seated figure which was fitted here to the back of his throne.

D, the last piece, is the upper half of a torso, almost life-size, of a figure wearing a shawl in the manner of B (Pl. XIII). The head was inserted separately into a hollow in the neck. This piece, though much battered, is valuable in showing that the scale on which the sculptors in Moab worked was not confined to statuettes. The scale-like decoration on the edge of the dress is painted alternately red and black (or dark blue).

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