

Introduction

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The papers in this volume, ‘Positions and Professions in Palmyra’ are the result of a two part workshop organized by Annette Højen Sørensen and Tracey Long in 2014 at the University of Aarhus under the auspices of the Palmyra Portrait Project (PPP) and generously funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. We devised the workshop with the intention of exploring how different types of status were expressed within the archaeological record of the desert city from the first to the third centuries and its eventual downfall; both through inscriptions and visual, artistic means.

We are particularly grateful to our esteemed contributors, all of whom represent expertise in Palmyra and the Near East or in the interpretation of the kind of material found there. The Palmyra Portrait Project is the brainchild of Professor Rubina Raja, Aarhus University. The portraiture that is the core of the project from the ancient city of Palmyra is prolific. Whether in the form of funerary loculus reliefs, sarcophagus boxes and lids or honorific statues, nowhere else outside of Rome herself is there such an abundance of portrait material. The city flourished for just under three hundred years, so this is a quite remarkable collection of work. The style of the portraits is also unlike anything seen anywhere else in the ancient world and thanks to the painstaking work by some of the earliest scholars of iconography and style, each piece is generally dateable. Some can be dated to the exact year. This makes identifying trends simpler. Much of the material is the result of burial practice, with tomb towers and hypogea containing a honeycomb of tombs capped off with slab-like square reliefs with a carved image of the deceased, or banquet scenes and decorated sarcophagi bearing images of the dead.

What makes the people of the city of Palmyra of particular interest is not only the diversity and vast amount of surviving evidence available to study, but its location on the borders of two vastly different and powerful empires, of Rome and Parthia, and whose fortunes oscillated between the domineering presence of these two. Add to this, the independent and proud status of the Palmyrenes, who travelled widely and traded with distant lands. As a result, messages of position and profession are complicated. Sometimes plainly expressed, sometimes ambiguous in the extreme, only through careful study can we hope to capture some of the intended meanings in their words and imagery. Some of the material, such as the enigmatic and elusive funerary portraits, is of a complexity and style seen nowhere else.

Yet today these portraits are scattered across the museums, private collections and art and artefact markets across the globe. Tragically, we know that some have even been destroyed or lost as a result of the conflict in Syria. As such, studying them can at best be an anecdotal affair, with possible gaps in the evidence. It was the pressing need for them to be brought together into one location, to be made accessible as a research tool, which inspired the project to track them down and bring them into one central digitalised location.¹ The current situation in Syria is an unexpected and tragic instigation that has made the gathering of this precious archive even more relevant than ever before. But there are also the advances in portrait scholarship in tandem with the capacity to computerise the collection that make its creation pertinent at the present time.

1. Kropp and Raja, 2014.

Over recent years, the study of ancient portraiture has made significant developments. Studies of the material in the past had a tendency to focus on named, male or divine images. Faces that were generic were overlooked as goddesses or because they were not of an elite figure. In addition, Greek portraits carried layers of meaning in the body not present in the head, as with the Discobolus or the Doryphorus, and over time these inevitably become separated. Add to this the modern and problematic definition of a portrait as needing to resemble the individual represented and the subject was fraught with difficulties. However, these problems have been addressed in notable and important monographs that have dealt with Greek and Roman portraits, little known Hellenistic portraits, those of the non-elite, females and those from the provinces.² Work has built on that of major contributors such as Malcolm Colledge, and provided new theories and ideas that can be applied to the material from Palmyra. It is in the new spirit of the study of ancient portraits that we can re-assess the colossal corpus from this strategically and culturally important city, a notable omission from the recent scholarship.

Advances in technology has meant that a computerised system of collating and storing the material could be designed and developed specifically to contain each single portrait. In addition, all possible information of that object or portrait could be registered, from measurements to detailed descriptions, inscriptions, dates, references, current and original location and links to photographs and images. As such, the database could be used to cross-reference and search for all manner of information. Nothing like this has been done before, and it is ideally suited to absorb the myriad variety of the evidence. At present there are around 3,000 portraits in the database, almost double what the team originally anticipated were 'out there'. These include honorific statues, carved sarcophagi and covers, and probably the best known and most prolific portrait type in Palmyra, the *loculus* relief bust. The digitalised nature of the data-

2. For example, Walker 1995; Fejfer 2008; Dillon 2010; Alexandridis 2010; Trimble 2011; Davies 2013.

base has also meant that it could be constantly fed and edited by all contributors, and even as it grew, fascinating patterns and statistics have come to light that we could not have envisaged before now, some of which are shared in the papers which follow.

Palmyra has been a subject of great interest to scholars of the Near East for well over a century for so many reasons. The inscriptions from Palmyra have been collected and published separately since the 19th century.³ These have included tariffs and other publicly displayed civic information besides honorific inscriptions pertaining to public statues and more personal funerary examples, and remain an invaluable resource attempting to construct a image of how the citizens of the city viewed themselves. Subject matter as well as choice of one or more different languages demonstrates cultural tensions and political expression.⁴ But the art of Palmyra, and particularly the portraits of its people, has attracted relatively little attention until now. Notable exceptions to this has been the works of Harald Ingholt and Malcom Colledge, whose books of respectively 1928 and 1976 remain the most significant on the subject to the present date.⁵ There have been important contributions, such as Heyn's article of 2010,⁶ which studied the complexity of gestures found in the *loculus* reliefs. These have added depth and context to material, but have been based on a smaller corpus of portraits. As it currently stands, the database represents the largest single collection of Palmyrene portraits ever compiled by some considerable margin.⁷ As noted above, these come from the museum collections of the world, private and commercial galleries and those that remain *in situ*. But one of the most important resources for the project, and indeed the reason for the generous funding from the Carlsberg Foundation and involvement from the team at the University of Aarhus, has been the In-

3. CIS 1851-1951; Hillers and Cussini 1996; Yon 2012.

4. Edwell 2008.

5. Ingholt 1928; Colledge 1976.

6. Heyn 2010.

7. Kropp and Raja 2014 has a more comprehensive discussion of the significance of the PPP and its contribution to the scholarship of the art of Palmyra.

gholt Archive that contained over 1,000 photographic images of portraits, many of which now no longer exist in any other known publication or resource.⁸

Running alongside the compilation of the database has been a series of conferences, lively and stimulating lectures, seminars and workshops, set up to explore the wider context of Palmyra with a primary focus on art, portraiture and the people of the city. As noted above, the present volume includes papers given on the subject of ‘Position and Profession in Palmyra’ in 2014. Collaborators and guests of the project who are experts in the field of Palmyra and the Near East or of interpreting ancient material from other cities and regions were invited to offer their views on the subject of how the people of Palmyra expressed certain values in their portraits and inscriptions and of how they selected aspects of their individual lives or gender, familial contact and other factors to construct a view of themselves. In this case, of how they negotiated social and cultural factors of importance in relation to themselves and their family and peers. This included whether or not to include one’s profession in inscriptions on funerary portraits, altars or other display contexts. If so, what does it add, if not, why would the subject choose to overlook such an important aspect of their lives in the construction of a monument, altar or other source pertaining to them and their families. As well as something as specific as a ‘profession’ or vocation that has the potential to add distinction to an individual, there is the matter of ‘position’, a very general term intended to embrace all factors of representation involved in the expression of individual aspirations, affinities and collaborations. This is a complex matter. As well as deliberate choices available to the subject (or the commissioner of the piece), there were conventions to be observed and the same visual language to be addressed. Changes can be seen taking place over time, such as the increasing popularity of the banquet scene, which saw a steady rise towards the latter period of production. In loculus reliefs, changes in facial features or the length of

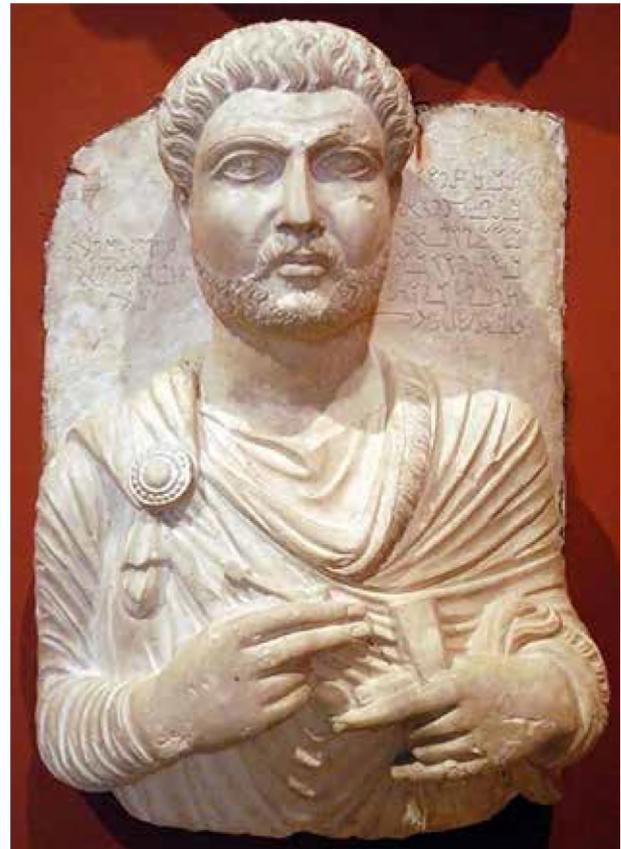


Fig. 1: A loculus relief of Hairan the Beneficiarius displaying the tools of his office. State Hermitage Museum inv. no. 8840; CIS II, 4292, PS19, Ingholt Archive. (© Palmyra Portrait Project. By permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

the bust also changes, with early portraits extending to the waist. After this time, the bust becomes reduced until it shows the upper chest only. Are these mere indicators of fashion and tastes or is some other factor identifiable, such as visual changes in the political climate and reflected in the tomb?

Very few professions are actually mentioned in the many inscriptions found in relation to the many limestone portraits and votive reliefs and most portraits also remain elusive in relation to attributing professions to the people of Palmyra. One example out of the many professions existing in Palmyra which may be distinguished clearly in the iconography is that of the priests who are portrayed as performing priests wearing the characteristic modius or having it beside

8. Ingholt Archive. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. See also, Raja and Sørensen 2015a; 2015b.



Fig. 2: A relief of a rider in Persian costume. Taimarsu. PS1173. Location Unknown. Ingholt Archive. (© Palmyra Portrait Project. By permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

them on the side on a pedestal. (See Krag fig. 9 and Raja figs. 10-18).

As we will see, one profession which might have been more visible in society on the same level as priests and caravaneers were the men employed in the army – combatants and non-combatants: cavalrymen, camel riders, archers and administrative officers. The first portrait with relation to the military administration is of Hairan, who was a *Beneficiarius* – which was a non-combatant employed in the administration. He is holding a stylus and a book-roll and these two attributes might allude to his office (fig. 1). The book-roll held by nearly 200 other male portraits could thus also allude to some kind of public office.

To compare – the number of men holding a stylus is rare – and we only see 7 examples in the database. Moving out into the battlefield, we find the represen-

tation of archers or sons of archers. There are also representations of 21 men holding swords within the database. In the first example we see a relief depicting Taimarsu who is a horseback riding figure wearing ‘Persian’ over-trousers and with an inscription saying that his father was an archer (fig 2.) – most probably he was either riding a horse as Taimarsu does, or riding a camel like the anonymous archer carrying a sword, whip and his quiver on the back seen in Cussi-ni fig. 1.

Other personnel perhaps related to the military could be the three people at the base of the sarcophagus seen in Long fig. 3 from the Tomb of Maqqai. On the lid a reclining male is seen in a Persian dress and wearing a mantle over his tunic and if we look closer at the sarcophagus itself we may observe three males, one of which is holding a horse and carrying a quiver. In his left hand he holds a sword – the person in the middle is holding a cone and a sword and is standing in front of an architectural structure crowned by the priestly modius on both sides. He is wearing a mantle and Persian trousers like the reclining man on the sarcophagus lid and could be the same man – and he is clearly the central figure of the scene. The last male is holding a bow and has a quiver on his back. Whether they represent gods or men in relation to some religious action is difficult to discern but the iconographic aesthetics seem to point in the direction of the military.

Another relief with a similar iconography is seen in Seland fig. 2 – where it seems we could also be dealing with parts of a sarcophagus. The attendant to the left is this time holding a camel and spear while the person to the right is holding a sword in his left hand and a cone in his right. Over his right shoulder a wreath on a piece of textile is sort of floating in the air. Both are wearing Persian dress and the camel seems to be wearing a saddle and a shield.

The last example of the same type of motif shown here is the famous sarcophagus in the garden of the Palmyra Museum depicted in Curtis fig. 15. The scene on the sarcophagus centres (not in the picture) around an offering, where a man with a wreath, the main person, is flanked by two of these floating pieces of textile; the one to the right is crowned by a modius. If we



Fig. 3: A rider in Parthian outfit. Bel sanctuary, Ingholt Archive. (© Palmyra Portrait Project. By permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

take a look at the figure on top of the sarcophagus we will see that he is reclining with his sword beneath him and that it is not his wife sitting at the end of the sarcophagus lid – but his horse is standing in the position she would normally occupy. So yet another horse owner in Persian outfit with long sleeved tunic, mantle, trousers and a sword. His attendant is standing next to the horse.

If we move into the actual action of horseback riding, one such scene is depicted in Curtis fig. 6, and another figure in action is seen above in fig. 3 – these two reliefs are probably votives but with the same iconography as seen before – one of the riders has a quiver or bow but both are horseback riding and wearing their Persian outfit. The man in Long fig. 5 and in the present figs. 4-5 wears a long sleeved tunic and a mantle like the equestrians seen before. They have a horse,



Fig. 4: Rider wearing (a long sleeved tunic and holding attributes possibly connecting them with the cavalry of Palmyra, PS119; The Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, Ingholt Archive. (© Palmyra Portrait Project. By permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

a sword and a whip and could thus again possibly be associated with the cavalry of Palmyra. In Long fig. 6 we may observe the cavalry man Apollinaris Vibius with his horse, his sword, whip, long sleeved tunic and mantle⁹ and again on the right this man is wearing a long sleeved tunic and a cloak and is clutching his sword and dagger.

Similarly the votive in fig. 6 shows the horse-riding god in trousers and with a quiver. The votive relief in fig. 7 depicts the gods Aršû and Azîzû riding on a camel and a horse. The camel riding god Aršû has bare legs, unlike the horseback riding god Azîzû who

9. Incription: 'Apollinaris Vibius cavalry squadron Herculian-ia Aelius Montanus, his heir'.



Fig. 5: Rider wearing long tunics and holding attributes possibly connecting them with the cavalry of Palmyra. The Snite Museum of Art, Indiana. Ingholt Archive (© Palmyra Portrait Project. By permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

wears a long garment.¹⁰ As a further matter of interest this relief carries an inscription separate to the dedication that mentions a sculptor. This direct reference is exceptionally rare. If we consider Cussini figure 1 as well as the present figure 8 we may note the camel in the background and that the man to the left has sword, whip, and quiver – he also has a long sleeved tunic, but his mantle is different to the ones worn by the horseback riders.

The man in figure 8 is not holding a sword but a book-roll and he is wearing a himation. He may not be

10. Damascus Museum, storeroom; Please note the naming of the sculptor in the inscription: 'To 'Arṣū and 'Azīzū the good gods who reward, Ba'lai has made [this], son of Jarhibole, priest of 'Azizu the good and merciful benevolent god, for his safety and that of his brothers; month Tisri', the year xxv. Let Iarhai, the sculptor, be remembered'. Translated by Rostovtzeff 1932, 109; Hvidberg-Hansen 2007; see Cussini and Gnoli, this volume.

a person connected to the army, but rather to the caravan trade with his book roll and packed camel in the background. In Seland fig. 3 and the present fig. 9, we again see a camel-back rider in action, with bare legs and a quiver on the back of the camel – one has a shield and both seem to be equipped for military action.

Lastly, if we furthermore consider the famous relief now in Cleveland¹¹ – again one gets the impression that the equestrians wore a different set of clothes from the camel riders – that is, the equestrians wore the Persian outfit with long sleeved tunic, trousers and a mantle – whereas the camel riders only occasionally had long sleeves and mantle but always bare legs. Only in one instance have we shown a camel associated with a Persian-dressed male; but then he is not seen actually riding the camel. Military personnel are thus as we have shown represented in three main ways – as non-combatants, as equestrians wearing Persian outfit and as camel riders with bare legs. The significance of costume in the promotion of position is pointed out by Curtis, Davies, Krag and Long. Raja focuses on the significance of representing oneself wearing priestly attire, while Cussini and Gnoli stress the lack of professions in the inscriptions of Palmyra and Seland delves into the use of the camel as a military and pack animal.

The papers presented in this volume cover a range of topics that address the above issues. They have been grouped to reflect connecting themes: the first section addresses the iconography of portraiture from two different perspectives, from gesture and use of the body to female adornment. Glenys Davies offers a fascinating glimpse of how gesture and posture can assist in determining cultural values and aspirations in both male and female funerary loculus busts. The paper takes as its starting point Roman Republican and freedman reliefs and sets out to determine if affinities between these and the Palmyrene funerary reliefs can be found and if so, what the implications of this might be. Of particular emphasis is uses of gesture, and Davies notes that some at least are specific to Palmyra, such as the outward facing palm. Others originate in

11. Cleveland Museum of Art, Procession of nobles, inv. 1970.15.

Fig. 6: The horse riding god in long trousers, PS1178, Palmyra Museum, Ingholt Archive. (© Palmyra Portrait Project. By permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

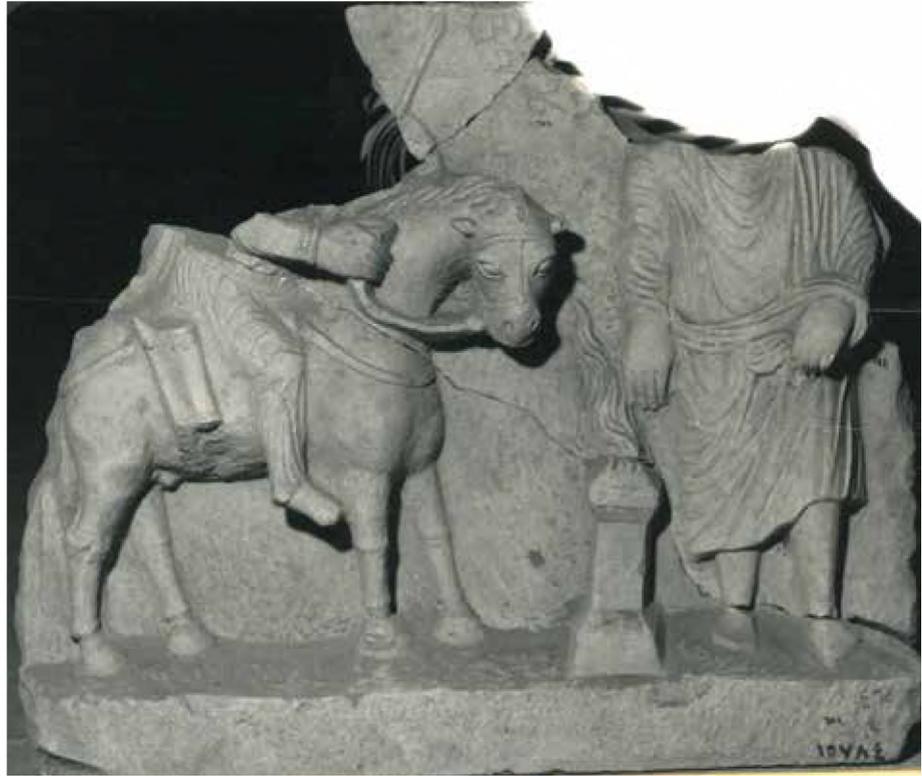


Fig. 7: The riding gods Aršû and 'Azîzû. Damascus Museum storeroom, CIS II, 3974, PAT 0320, PS22. (Photo: © National Museum of Damascus/ F. O. Hvidberg-Hansen).





Fig. 8: A loculus relief of a male with a camel in the background, possibly associating himself with the caravan trade rather than the military. PS649, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. (© Palmyra Portrait Project. By permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Greece or Rome. These, and arm positioning, are seen as having several connotations and meanings rather than one in particular. The ‘arm sling’ pose adopted by many males is identified as a localised version of the ideal Greek citizen gesture, more in line with Eastern and Asia Minor cities than Rome, and yet demonstrably more assertive than the Greek originator.

With regard to the female portraits, Davies notes the widespread use of the so-called Pudicitia type arm and hand gesture, observing the gender specific use, and also that this ambiguous pose generally represents the same general connotations as the arm-sling pose in males. It is representative of correct female behaviours of the elite and wealthy. The complexity and subtlety with which the Palmyrenes used gestures is demonstrated through the discussion of couples, or more accurately, groups of two adults, and the echoing and touching gestures they adopt to indicate a relationship, whether marriage or of blood.

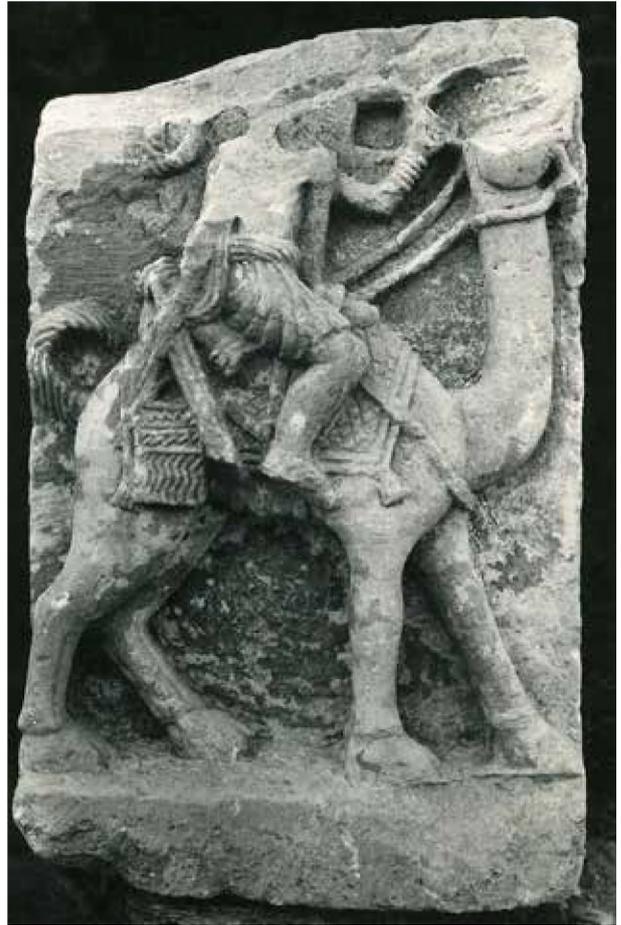


Fig. 9: A relief of a camel rider with bare legs and weapons. PS1159. Palmyra Museum, Ingholt Archive. (© Palmyra Portrait Project. By permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Finally, banquet scenes are used to show how hierarchy could be displayed through position within a specific display convention. Originating in the Greek world rather than Rome, once again Palmyrenes used an existing format and adapted it to their own particular situation. Women might be seated and veiled, thus demonstrating their lower status to the reclining, dining male. But they might also be depicted reclining beside males or alone. Davies concludes that it is apparent that artistic models were adopted from across the empire. Whether or not they reflected actual appearance or real gestures and postures is not clear, nor is to what extent the Palmyrenes re-interpreted them for their own use. Unlike the conscious

choice of costume, there may not have been the same degree of awareness of the adoption of gesture.

Signe Krag, in her paper on jewellery worn by females, takes the stance that it was heavily tied up with aspects of identity. The quantity and ways in which it is worn is unlike anything seen anywhere else. The use of jewellery changes greatly over time. The style of earrings changes from, for example, clusters of grapes, to the ubiquitous ‘dumbbell’ style. There is also a general increase in the amount of pieces worn to such an extent that these factors provide a useful dating tool. New elements such as pendants worn on the forehead over the headdress also begin to emerge in the second century and become increasingly common.

Krag makes the case for jewellery as a symbol of wealth and social status, and this is why it is included in the funerary portraits, even being presented in jewel caskets from which it overflows. The case is also made that jewellery had the added effects of purveying meaning to the viewer. Items such as keys gave off very particular symbolic messages, even if it is no longer clear to us what these meanings were. The use of colours and inclusion of jewellery, combined with the architectural settings and other precious objects, added to the visual richness within the tombs.

As well as these matters is the consideration that the amount and type of jewellery worn came in time to replace the humbler distaff and spindle once proudly held in the left hand and takes over the task of conveying appropriate female behaviour. Instead, Krag makes the compelling argument that women gradually come to wear the jewellery ‘for themselves’, at a time of increasing social influence of women, culminating in the rise of Zenobia. They could own property, have wealth of their own, and this social shift is reflected in personal adornment.

Jewellery as a functional part of costume is discussed in detail. The design of brooches especially are unique to the city and add a local twist. Such is the increase in the amount of necklaces worn in the second century that the whole upper torso is required for their display and thus affects the style of the *loculus* bust. One piece unique to Palmyrene women is the

bust necklace. It is not clear what the busts represent, but Krag observes they are of predominantly female figures and may represent ancestors or a city goddess, thus reflecting status onto the wearer.

Finally, it is noted that wearing no jewellery whatsoever was another way in which status and position could be expressed. Mourning females tend to wear no or very little jewellery, and especially where a mother accompanies the daughter, the latter wears the most pieces as if to draw attention to her, thus highlighting an alternative use of jewellery and an astuteness in its use as signifier of display and status.

The next papers concern costume and the many instances of the Parthian outfit that occur in portraits of males. Vesta Curtis discusses its significance in the wider region as well as how it is worn in Palmyra itself. It is, as she notes, completely alien to the Roman world of fashion, and, for that matter, to the Palmyrene tradition. It consists of a trouser suit of baggy pants and tunic. It might also have a belt, coat or other garments, such as soft boots. It could also be exquisitely embroidered in rich detail. It in fact originated in the Parthian East and became the ‘haute-couture’ of the non-Roman East. Curtis explains the costume had long been in use in the region, first appearing in Achaemenid art in the mid-sixth century BC, and was worn by males engaged in outdoor pursuits or religious contexts. Under the Arsacid dynasty it became a costume of prestige, being adopted by kings.

In Palmyra itself, we can be sure that such elaborate costume was worn because of textile fragments found in tombs. The trouser suit here seems restricted to a few garments, consisting of a round neck knee-length or shorter tunic, baggy trousers and leggings tucked into boots with a short himation clasped at the shoulder by a brooch. There are variations, but this basic outfit is most often represented in the funerary portraits and statues of the city. In banquet scenes, reclining figures and serving boys both wear the outfit. Unique to the city are details such as belts of plaques mounted on leather straps tied with a bow, slits in the sides of tunics and all tunics without fail are belted. Of great interest is the significance of belts, which Curtis notes in the Iranian tradition are usually

a symbol of kingship or rank. We also see, though much more rarely, the long overcoat.

She concludes that the Parthian costume was a highly desirable outfit that reflected rank and prestige, an exotic non-Roman costume of the East associated with the Caravan trade. It demonstrated choice; not all males elected to wear it. It could be used in a religious or secular context, and was frequently worn by priests. It was a status symbol of wealth and luxury and the trade with Parthia and beyond, the more elaborate the embroidery or detail, presumably the wealthier the subject who wore it.

Tracey Long's paper focuses more specifically on how Parthian costume was worn in Palmyra and what it reveals as an ideological signifier of status in a funerary context. The funerary portraits represent the wealthy elite of the city, and the choice of costume was a conscious decision taken to add a layer of important meaning to the way they wished to be represented; and an indicator of cultural, social and political affiliations. This might lean towards Rome, or distinctly away from it, or be distinctly Palmyrene.

Long notes that costume was one factor amongst many that make up the overall image of the deceased and should be interpreted accordingly, along with the face, hair, posture, attributes and inscription that contribute to the complete portrait. But it was always loaded with meaning. Gender and convention are other factors that might impact on a funerary portrait.

What is apparent is that the costume was worn by professional men, whether riders and caravan merchants or military personnel. It was not worn in the same way as the himation and tunic, the civic 'business' suit. It was also worn by children in funerary reliefs, a phenomenon rarely if ever seen outside the city.

Use of the Parthian costume in Palmyra became more widespread over time, its adoption more commonly seen in banquet scenes in the third century before the production of funerary portraits abruptly halts. The use in such a context is interesting, and Long concludes that in the act of dining and reclining, the subject wears not only his most luxurious outfit, but he is choosing in his leisure time to reflect a

more Eastern aspect, in the same way as Romans sometimes removed the toga at moments of otium and dined in Greek attire in their own homes. Luxuria and the exotic clearly meant looking east. As such, the use of the costume as 'local' is made more intimate and personal.

Finally it is noted that priests wear the costume more frequently in banquet scenes in the third century. The tone of these reliefs and sarcophagi become increasingly secular, with religious objects being replaced with cups and bowls, the accoutrements of dining, and signifying the use of Parthian costume as symbolic of wealth and high rank.

Eleonora Cussini and Tomasso Gnoli both look at epigraphic evidence to determine if profession is expressed in inscriptions and if so, how this is done. Both conclude separately that context is the determining factor. Whereas Cussini's focus is on the expression of specific profession, Gnoli concentrates on position, ethnicity and matters of representing self-identity.

Cussini notes that the total of surviving inscriptions that contain mention of a profession is fifteen; a very small number in the abundant corpus. These are most frequently to be found in funerary settings. Of the professions and business activities that we know must have taken place, very few are attested. Some people chose to express profession through tools or objects included as background elements, though we cannot always discern to what they referred, others referred to activities and educated status through inclusion of *schedulae*.

Of those professions specifically noted in inscriptions, Cussini provides examples of sculptors, scribes and the 'pious butcher', a baker and physicians. The latter is attested by archaeological evidence that shows skeletal evidence of healing processes most likely attended by physicians. The context of their inscriptions also highlights considerable personal wealth and elevated status, and Cussini hypothesises that the richly decorated *House of Achilles* in Palmyra may well have been owned by such a man.

The paper concludes that including one's occupation was not considered important within the funer-

ary sphere. In other contexts, such as the tariff, profession was included as a functional aspect. Value and qualification were not based on profession, but rather on social position. However, dedicatory religious contexts seem to have necessitated an inclusion of ‘mundane’ activity.

Gnoli observes that vocation or profession is rarely addressed in inscriptions within the city. Funerary inscriptions also rarely encroach beyond basic personal data of the deceased. By overlooking the mention of public or religious offices held and focusing instead on specified ‘crafts’ performed by artisans, he notes only twenty three instances out of the thousands of epigraphic examples that survive. Starting with the Tariff inscription, Gnoli identifies mention of guilds of silversmiths and goldsmiths, leatherworkers and also probably wheat-sifters, metal workers, and even artichoke growers. There is speculation about some translation, but all are connected with craft guilds and associated with artisan-type occupations. These societies should not be confused with the drinking societies identified in Palmyra, who identify themselves with quite different language. Yet in this formal and arbitrary context, Gnoli explains, these references do very little to assist in our understanding of constructed identity or self-representation, and they are restricted by a narrow date, AD 258. What is interesting is that these guilds are unlikely in his view to have had any influence, yet they are mentioned in this brief window and in this specific context. Certainly, no single person decided to define himself through acknowledgement of membership of such a group in their funerary inscription, or after this date.

Within the tomb itself, very few instances occur where family connection overlaps with occupation, in each case that of ‘master craftsman’ or physician. Like Cussini, Gnoli concludes that the expression of an occupation was of very little or no importance or consequence within the funerary context, or even outside of it. This ‘reticence’ is compared with Roman practices, with the case of Ravenna offered by way of example, where it was customary to mention one’s occupation in any funerary inscription. The difference, it is concluded, is attributable to cultural specificity. The argu-

ment is offered that Palmyra was, by the nature of its unique geographical, tribal and political circumstances, culturally distinct. Certainly, Palmyrenes who died a long way from home were at pains to connect themselves with their home-land in funerary inscriptions.

Gnoli elaborates that this cultural distinction owes its origins to Palmyrene society being nomadic in nature. A city built from the traditions of desert life, of tribal and agnatic structures. Occupations were more fluid, and not considered the defining characteristic of an individual. Shepherds might go to sea, farmers might become potters or fishermen, and expertise was distributed depending on need. It would seem then that perhaps no individual was identified solely by his profession in Palmyra, but ‘know-how’ was instead a shared societal phenomenon and other factors were more important to include in funerary inscriptions.

Eivind Seland investigates the caravan trade from the unique perspective of representations of camels in reliefs and mosaics not only in Palmyra but in Petra and across the region. Despite the fact that they were so integral a part of desert life, outside of Palmyra depictions of them in the iconographic record are relatively rare. Seland’s paper asks if such depictions can be used as evidence of caravan trade and other related professions. Also explored are recent theories on the impact of trade on the city, and the relatively low-status of trade as a profession and thus as an aspect of life largely lacking in the data.

The mercantile activities and trade of the region brought in considerable individual wealth and taxes, and it was made possible in the East by, as Seland notes, the ship of the desert: the camel. Studies of merchant activity have tended to focus on routes and distribution, but not on the ‘mechanisms’ by which it took place. So by turning to iconographic imagery of camels, we may not be able to determine scale or importance, but perhaps instead something of status and practicalities.

Camels were not a common motif in Roman iconography, even in Palmyra. Yet there are instances of dromedaries in the East and North Africa, where it was better suited to the arid climate, and Bactrian

camels in Anatolia, the two humped variety being more suitable in wet and mountainous conditions.

Camels appear in reliefs, sculpture and mosaics in two main forms, and they can be separated by considering form and context. Not all are caravan beasts. Seland provides evidence of a group of three camels identified by Ingholt as not being a caravan. Such camels, wearing reins and saddles with embroidered saddle rugs, shields and weaponry, are clearly not caravans, but animals used for military activities. So much of the art of Palmyra is funerary, and Seland observes that, although many of the elite may have benefitted financially from the caravan trade, they did not consider commercial activity worthy of sufficient status to be included in portraits or reliefs. However, the more elevated military association and affiliation with 'pastoral wealth' was made. Add to this, the 'standardisation' of depiction associated with military imagery, and Seland makes a strong case for the representation of military animals.

Regarding mercantile beasts, the argument is made that such imagery was used to honour traders and those associated with it rather than including the act of trade and trade activities itself. Despite the attractiveness of wealth, the actual process of how it was accumulated was less appealing to include in imagery than the reflection of the wealth itself, and the status it afforded.

Outside of Palmyra and the tomb context, a mosaic from Deir-al-Adas depicts a caravan of four camels and a driver. They are attached by reins from bridle to saddle and are loaded with pack saddles containing amphorae and other portable methods of goods. Thus we are able to see the mechanics of how goods were transported across long distances and desert terrain. The image and others like it are used to demonstrate the different status levels of those involved, from the lowly driver to the higher-status military personnel who are likely to have accompanied such a caravan. A depiction of a caravan and driver at the city-side entrance to Petra reminds locals and visitors to the Nabatean capital of the importance of nomadic life and the caravan trade to their kingdom.

Returning to Palmyra, it is noted that only one

third century depiction shows a caravan camel in a funerary image. An elite male stands with one arm around a ship and the other around a camel, a direct indication of trade from land transferred to the sea. The man or his heirs could have chosen from a number of motifs to make a gesture of wealth and status, but they have not. Despite it being an isolated example, this shows that at least by the third century, the direct involvement in the caravan business was no longer regarded as a stigma of low status.

Seland concludes that not all camel depictions are of the caravan trade, they also reflect military and nomadic lifestyles. The depictions we do have of the trade reflect the people associated with it; of handlers, aristocrats, organisers and investors, military personnel and others. They do indeed arguably reflect a difference in ideology and identity different from other Hellenistic-Roman cities, justifying the sobriquet of caravan city.

Rubina Raja gives an overview of the priestly representations and sets out to explain them as a distinct group of their own within the wider repertoire of the Palmyrene funerary portraiture. Having collected all portraits of priests registered in the database of the Palmyra Portrait Project this contribution aims at giving explanations as to why so many Palmyrene men were depicted as priests in their funerary portraits. She notes that one in five adult males were depicted in this way – a huge percentage that eclipses all other represented roles. As well as these, there are ex-priests, who have grown head and facial hair and don the ordinary clothes of their fellows, yet display the cap signifying their once held position on a pedestal. Clearly, it was considered a crucial aspect of one's life that should be included in a funerary portrait. Also noted is the increase in priestly portrayals at the height of production, the middle of the second century. As the rate of production begins to slow, so does the rate of priest images.

Raja's line of argument takes us to the conclusion that because priesthoods were held within families and extended upon male members within such families, priestly representations held a certain importance within the grave sphere, since they were direct expres-

sions of family and therefore societal status. As we have seen, professions and vocations were a rare aspect of the person shown in the funerary portrait. As such, the position of priest was clearly not regarded as a profession or vocation.

In summary, the contributions to the workshop of positions and professions in Palmyra have brought together exciting ideas from very different evidence. We will see that social and cultural position could be constructed and expressed both visually and epigraphically. Context plays a part, as does the unique geographical and cultural position of the city of Palmyra itself; within the heart of the desert, within the sphere of Roman and Parthian influence and the wider trade-route cities. Conscious decisions of representation through artistic means and the written word have been carefully chosen to construct an impression of the individual within a distinct society in order to demonstrate standing amongst peers and to other community dwellers. Some chose to refer directly to the profession or vocation with which they were associated. Yet others, by far the vast majority, have selected to dismiss this in favour of expressing position through gesture, jewellery, clothing, attributes and animals, inscriptions of familial links and affection and name. More broadly, it will be demonstrated that an eclectic range of evidence can be brought successfully together and interpreted to provide a satisfying, if incomplete, image of attitude to work and status in this most urbane of desert cities.

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