

Valia Schild-Xenidou, **Corpus der boiotischen Grab- und Weihreliefs des 6. bis 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.** Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung, Zwanzigstes Beiheft. Publisher Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 2008. 365 pages, 48 plates.

Valia Schild-Xenidou's book, a greatly expanded version of the author's 1969 Munich dissertation that was originally published in unillustrated, photocopied form in 1972, is the latest in the distinguished series of catalogues of sculpture published by the German Archaeological Institute in Athens. The catalogue of the new version includes forty-three reliefs discovered or located since the original publication. Each entry consists of a detailed description, discussion of the inscription where relevant, and relatively up-to-date bibliography. The catalogue is fully illustrated with high-quality black and white photographs. Accompanying chapters consider the style, date, form, and iconography of the reliefs.

After an introduction outlining the rather limited scope of the early studies of Boeotian sculpture by Gustav Körte (*Die antiken Skulpturen aus Böotien*, Mitt. DAI Athen 3, 1878, 301–422) and Gerhard Rodenwaldt (*Thespische Reliefs*, Jahrb. DAI 28, 1913, 309–339), Schild-Xenidou tackles the challenge first posed by Christos Karousos in his catalogue of the Thebes Museum (*Τό Μουσείο τῆς Θήβας* [Athens 1934] 7), the collection and chronological ordering of all known Archaic and Classical Boeotian grave and votive reliefs. This second chapter, by far the longest of the book, consists of a descriptive analysis of the Boeotian reliefs from the earliest example, the grave monument of Kitylos and Dermys of about 580–570, to the grave and votive reliefs of the late fourth century. Since the original contexts of almost all of the pieces are unknown and since, in the case of the grave stelai, many of the inscriptions date from Hellenistic or Roman re-use of the stones, the objects are dated through their stylistic relationship to contemporary Attic and island grave, votive, and document reliefs.

Although the strong influence of Attic, Cycladic, and Ionian sculpture is apparent throughout, the local character of the reliefs presented is manifested even in the earliest examples. While Boeotian carving has frequently been characterized as provincial and »handwerklich«, and while Schild-Xenidou is quick to recognize the unassuming quality of many of the works, at the same time her sympathetic analysis reveals the often surprisingly original and expressive aspects of many of the reliefs. One wishes in fact that she had treated this

topic more directly and extensively, as it emerges only gradually in the discussion of the individual pieces. She concludes that Boeotian sculpture is stamped by its rural character and lacks the subtlety of Attic and island work. There is little interest in the underlying structure of the body and a strong preference for profile and frontal views; where the three-quarter view is used, it is usually in works strongly influenced by Attic or island sculpture. Although it is difficult to generalize across a span of about two centuries, other common traits of Boeotian relief that she identifies include a tendency toward bold, compact forms with strong contours, and stiff, hard drapery with flat, sparse folds revealing little of the body underneath. The outstanding and unusual exceptions are the well-known ›Black Stelai‹ produced in the late fifth and early fourth centuries by an apparently very specialized Theban workshop. These stelai, with their delicately engraved interior detail, three-quarter views, and landscape elements, are best characterized as more painterly in style. Although the distinctive character of this workshop is evident in every aspect of its production, the reasons for the author's attributions of other reliefs to workshops in Thebes, Tanagra, and Thespiai are not always so apparent. Many of the ascriptions apparently stem from the general find places and the use of distinctive local stones, but whether there are corresponding stylistic and iconographic signatures for these workshops is not fully explored. It is abundantly clear from Schild-Xenidou's study, however, that the sculptural production of Boeotia was not centralized and that a closer look at the major local areas of production might be warranted.

The third chapter considers the form of the stelai, their material, and inscriptions. There was no good source of marble in Boeotia. Although a few of the reliefs are carved from Pentelic and Hymettian marble imported from Attica, most of them are made from the several distinctive local limestones identified by Rodenwaldt in his work on Thespian reliefs – a blue-grey stone similar in appearance to Hymettian marble, the hard black stone used in the engraved reliefs from Thebes and Tanagra, a yellow-brown ›tufa‹ from the quarries near Tanagra, and the local limestone of Thespiai, often called ›Thespian marble‹. Schild-Xenidou examines the use of these materials in the major centres, as well as in the north-western area of Orchomenos and Lebadeia. She concludes that the choice of local limestone appears not to have been merely an economic consideration, since a number of the reliefs, including the Black Stelai, exhibit high-quality workmanship.

The stele forms and the frames of Boeotian reliefs were also influenced by island and Attic stelai and exhibit many of the same general types, pieces crowned with sphinxes and palmettes and those with or without pediments and frames. But like the sculpture itself, a certain originality and independence from outside influences can be seen in unusual deviations from the standard types, such as flat pediments that were probably originally painted, pediments indicated by grooves,

or a pediment carved against the background of the relief.

Although a fair number, about one third of the reliefs in her catalogue, preserve inscriptions, and although Schild-Xenidou is well aware of the potential significance of them, she nevertheless has to conclude that the study of them offers little in the way of information about the deceased or the dedicators. Even in cases in which the original inscription is preserved, there is little to be gleaned from them since the names are consistently in the nominative, with no ethnics or patronymics. Only one grave relief is inscribed with an epigram. The later inscriptions on the re-used pieces are duly noted in the catalogue, but the interesting phenomenon of re-use is not itself examined in detail and perhaps deserves further study, since all of them appear to have come from Thespiai and could perhaps be tied to local circumstances. The inscriptions on the votive reliefs are no more informative, giving usually only the names of the dedicators and the gods or heroes to whom they were dedicated.

The fourth chapter discusses the scenes and figure types of the grave reliefs. The figures again show Attic and island influence, but some independence of those traditions is also indicated by the relative rarity of the very popular Attic motifs of the so-called mistress and maid as well as dexiosis. Two late fifth-century figures of priestesses, identified by their temple keys, are the earliest examples of this kind of representation on grave reliefs to be found in Greek art. Notable among the male figures are armed and unarmed riders and charging warriors, a type found not only on the Black Stelai of Thebes but also on contemporary examples in yellow limestone and marble. It is not clear why the reliefs depicting the rider heroes and the so-called Totenmahlreliefs, actually images dedicated to banqueting heroes, are included in the chapter on grave reliefs, since their iconography and function are much more closely related to those of the votives treated in the next chapter. Schild-Xenidou considers the pieces depicting the rider heroes, who are usually accompanied by women pouring libations as well as by mortal worshippers, to have been erected by the families of the deceased who wanted to elevate them to hero status, yet there is no evidence that these reliefs came from cemeteries or that they were not dedicated to long-venerated local heroes. Likewise she considers the Totenmahlreliefs as dedications of the descendants of heroized dead, but there is no evidence for this type of relief in a funerary context until the Hellenistic period. The style and iconography of the Boeotian reliefs does not differ from that of Attic votive reliefs dedicated to banqueting heroes, and the fact that some of them are made of Pentelic marble even suggests that they might have been imported, as Schild-Xenidou herself notes.

The fifth chapter considers the iconography of Boeotian votive reliefs, which (excluding the rider hero and the Totenmahlreliefs) constitute a small part of the corpus, only some twenty reliefs dating from the late

fifth to the end of the fourth century. The marbles are dedicated to a relatively limited number of deities and heroes, some with only one dedication apiece: Kybele, Pan, Herakles, Demeter, Aphrodite, Dionysos, Artemis, Zeus Meilichios, and Agathos Daimon. The deities and heroes appear both alone and with mortal worshippers. The reliefs are of modest workmanship, made from local stone, and exhibit at the same time Attic influence and a certain local independence in their iconography. Kybele, for example, is depicted once in her familiar naiskos, yet not alone as usual but accompanied by worshippers, and in two other reliefs in the presence of a group of other, locally venerated gods. Theban-born Herakles is the most frequently represented. Although the specific find spots of the reliefs are rarely known, Schild-Xenidou provides a thorough background for the local cults and sanctuaries from which the sculptures might have come.

One might wish that Schild-Xenidou had broadened the outlines of her original investigation to include more discussion of such topics as the workshops and their styles and the phenomenon of the re-used stelai. But in her fully documented treatment of the sculpture, she has convincingly made the case that Boeotian reliefs constitute more than a mere provincial imitation of Attic and island work, and she has laid a firm foundation for further studies of Boeotian art in general.

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