

Peter Zazoff, *Die antiken Gemmen*. Handbuch der Archäologie. Verlag C. H. Beck, München 1983. LI, 446 Seiten, 132 Tafeln.

Professor Dr. P. Zazoff made the impossible come true: a new and very enlightening survey of ancient glyptic art; the first truly usable book after Furtwängler's masterwork written in 1900. Both books carry the same title 'Die antiken Gemmen' – no coincidence, since it is stressed by the publisher that ancient gems always have been a major concern of the German *humaniora* and that connoisseurship in this field was handed down from von Stosch, Furtwängler, Arndt and Lippold to Zazoff. We may add Goethe, Tölken, Lippert and other previous students and writers in Germany, whose achievements were commented upon in Zazoff's other major work on glyptics: 'Gemmensammler und Gemmenforscher. Von einer noblen Passion zur Wissenschaft' (1983) – a book which (one would like to advise the more general reader on the subject) must be studied previous to or together with the volume under discussion.

Classical archaeology and the European collections have profited from this German tradition, as they will again from Zazoff's extensive knowledge on the subject as stored in this book. Like the Greek and Roman gold objects ancient engraved gems will always impress by the numerous very beautiful images that were created in the semiprecious stones and which seem far to surpass the creative possibilities of later European jewellery. The German glyptic collections in Munich, Berlin, Hannover, Braunschweig, Hamburg etc. possess outstanding specimens of this kind and it is one of the major assets of Zazoff's book that these specimens, which were earlier published in the thorough catalogues of the AGD-series (*Antike Gemmen in Deutschen Sammlungen*, 1968–1975), are here more widely discussed and situated amidst their contemporary and comparable gems from other collections, especially those from Leningrad, New York, Sofia, the Italian collections, Paris, London, Geneva, Copenhagen and The Hague (now Leiden). Thus, following Zazoff's guidance, we find ourselves easily absorbing his views on the developments in Greek or Etruscan gem engraving.

From Zazoff's discussion of the Archaic Greek gems it is clear (as we already learned from the important books by G. M. A. Richter and J. Boardman on the subject) that the extant gems known from this period are relatively few (some 230 specimens in all) and that because of their Ionian styles most of these archaic intagli are extremely difficult to date. In Zazoff's presentation the fine (and often signed) works are placed in the Severe Style, 490/470 B. C., on the earlier ones the author is rather vague. A much more certain footing is presented for the Greek classical master-engravers, for whose active periods the author suggests the following datings: Dexamenos of Chios 440–400; Sosias 430–400; Onatas 420–390; Pergamos 410–390; Phrygillos 430–399; Olympios 380–360. These are useful suggestions and certainly will stimulate discussions on the subject: I would have liked more firm comparisons with Ionian coins, since coins are closer to the gems than vase-paintings – as the author elsewhere in his book admits.

Zazoff's best insights are to be found in the section on Etruscan gems, as can be expected from the scholar who introduced this entire subject to the learned in his earlier book on the Etruscan scarabs: no student of Etruscan archaeology should be allowed to miss his views. Deftly the usual problems of dating the Etruscan works of art, contemporary with or much later than the Greek stylistic developments, are sidestepped in this book: the Etruscan scarabs and rings indeed do form so much a class of their own that they are grouped according to intrinsic traits. Moreover, reading this section on Etruscan glyptic art, it was relief to be led by Zazoff alone. In my opinion the earlier (Greek) and later (Roman) sections suffer from the author's extensive – and honest – treatment of the other opinions on the subject: Professor Boardman and Dr. Vollenweider are so much present in these pages (on and off their opinions are cited approvingly or

argued against) that Zazoff's book tends to lose focus for the non-specialist. For the gem-specialist, of course, it is quite useful precisely to know Professor Zazoff's opinions, which very much help to stimulate and sharpen one's own. To be quite frank, it was a disadvantage for the earlier (female) catalogue writers to have to compile the collections' catalogues while knowing only some of the other European collections and the previous literature: a number of gems thereby were wrongly dated or gems' subjects wrongly identified. But on the other hand, as appears from Zazoff's survey, the cataloguing ladies have been mostly right. This personal remark must be seen in the light of my disapproval of the ladies being put to writing catalogues and doing museum work as happens so often nowadays in art history and archaeology, while the male archaeologists are leading the excavations and writing the theoretical studies. I know only too well that female archaeologists tend to choose cataloguing for themselves, but they must be stimulated to be active in the theoretical field also.

Professor E. Zwierlein-Diehl and myself grouped gems according to their various shapes, materials and finally by the stylistic and technical information of the intagli. This theoretical grouping is not approved of by Zazoff. It is true that, as the author states, the *bouterolle* or lap-wheel are the instruments that were always in use for the glyptic engraving. It is also true that – as in all periods and all works of art – artists use their materials and their technical skills in their own – period learned – way. While grouping the works of art of unknown provenances according to their technical styles one may gain an insight in the development of an art form. Moreover, when comparable gems of known provenance turn up, one may ascribe a whole group to that location. This for instance seems to be the case now that gems with a very easily recognisable sketchy style, coming from excavated houses in Pompeii and Herculaneum have been published by Pannuti: a whole group of flat and round gems engraved in a sketchy manner (which E. Diehl termed 'flat *bouterolle*') and detailed with short and parallel grooves made by the lap-wheel (which I termed wheel grooves) are likely to have been produced in Campania.

This is not to say that the manner of dating, strongly advocated by the author, by trying to pin down local styles and regional developments should not be preferred: it is only that, when information on gem workshops and dated finds are lacking, it is better to group the gems according to technical styles than according to their motifs. Zazoff's section 'Funde und Lokalisierung' of the Italian and Roman Republican gems is unsurpassed and clearly demonstrates the author's thorough knowledge of the existing literature and the (often small) finds and collections in Italy. Obviously he has been visiting the collections and carefully and astutely taken notes and photographs.

It calls for eminent connoisseurship to be able directly to place the gems in their proper contexts and it is in this light that one would like to have fuller discussion for instance with p. 265, where the author introduces the gems of the Museo Nazionale in Rome with a remark on the Latin style of some of these. Very important in this section of the book is also his emphasis on the difference between the 'Grecianising' trend in Etruscan glyptic art and the Hellenising tendency of Italian Republican art in general. The usual distinction, made since Furtwängler, between a northern Etruscanising and a southern Campanian style during the later Republican period is no longer used by Zazoff. One would however have liked to have all this pointed out with more examples. Actually in some sections of the book there is too much of a tendency to cite only ADG gems as examples.

Also not very happy in this respect is the beginning of the book in my opinion, since after a concise enumeration of the (severe) dating problems for Minoan and Mycenaean gems, we are presented with a section 'Das CMS Unternehmen' in which we behold these problems new, but now seen through the eyes of Pini and others. Subsequently the author confines himself to an attempt at assessing only the specimens of Minoan and Mycenaean gem engraving which were already published in the volumes of the AGD. I do not like the drawings very much either, stripy and often unenlightening as they are: for instance fig. 22 no. b. gives a three-sided prism, but only one side is drawn, no. c. a four-sided prism which also has only one side shown, or nr. d. showing a seal in the shape of an animal – but what kind of animal utterly escapes me. These, however, are problems one can easily leave aside. The main idea, that of a handbook on glyptic art, in which the previous literature has been digested, the knowledge of the stylistic developments has been stored and the motifs fashionable on gems have been assembled, has been successfully achieved. It is to be hoped that the book may be the final push for other archaeologists at last to start incorporating gems into their analyses of ancient art and society.