CHAPTER 9

CLASSICAL ART

S. A. Paspalas

Introduction

This chapter is intended to introduce to the wider scholarly community a range of important, recently discovered objects relevant to the cultural life of pre-Hellenistic Macedonia. The principal focus will be on the years 479–323 BC, the “Classical period,” an analytical unit not without relevance to Macedonian history, though there will also be reference to the links between art in this period and in the late “Archaic” period.¹ The changing political fortunes of Macedonia in this period make references to objects from areas neighbouring the core Macedonian territories, particularly the Chalcidian peninsula,² as well as consideration of culturally “Macedonian” artefacts found outside Macedonia, a necessary and enlightening part of this discussion. A discussion of Tomb II of the Great Tumulus at Vergina will not, however, be included, given that it is discussed elsewhere in this volume.³

¹ For the means through which objects produced elsewhere in the Aegean could reach Macedonia in the earlier part of the sixth century see Conrad M. Stibbe, The Sons of Hephaistos. Aspects of the Archaic Greek Bronze Industry (Rome, 2000), pp. 109–10 and Evdokia Skarlatidou, “Αρχαϊκή χάλκινη υδρία από το νεκροταφείο της Θέρμης (Σέδες) Θεσσαλονίκης,” in Ancient Macedonia 7. Macedonia from the Iron Age to the Death of Philip II. Papers read at the Seventh International Symposium held in Thessaloniki, October 14–18, 2002 (Thessaloniki, 2007), pp. 506–7 (where imports possibly deriving from southern Italy are also discussed).

² Note that Amyntas I could offer Anthemous, in the northwest of the Chalkidike, to Hippias (Hdt. 5.94). Note too the evidence for later Macedonian interests along the eastern coast of the inner-most region of the Thermaic Gulf (e.g. Thuc. 2.29.5). Hot debate still surrounds the origins of the populations of this entire area during the Archaic and Classical periods. Note the differing opinions of e.g. Manoles Andronikos, “Πρώτες σκέψεις για τα τελευταία ευρήματα της Βεργίνας,” Θρακική Επετηρίδα 7 (1987–1990), p. 32 and Nikola Theodorossev, “The Dead with Golden Faces II. Other Evidence and Connections,” OJA 19 (2000), 190–3.

³ For a recent survey of the literature on Tumulus II see Miltiades B. Hatzopoulos, “The Burial of the Dead (at Vergina) or The Unending Controversy on the Identity of the Occupants of Tomb II,” Τεκμήρια 9 (2008), 119–68.
Sculpture

Of the major arts it is sculpture which is first evident in Macedonia, and specifically from funerary contexts. Recent excavations at Aiane, a site identified as the seat of the lords of Elimeia, have radically altered our views of the art of the late Archaic and early Classical periods in Upper Macedonia. A variety of fragmentary funerary sculptures are now attested at the site, including kouroi and other male figures, at least one kore head (Fig. 4), lions, and palmette stelai.

These sculptures were associated with the tombs of the elite. Some may well have been enclosed within an architectural setting and others—it has been suggested by their excavator—may derive from pedimental compositions. The fact that one of the male statues was bearded may indicate that an attempt was made to individualise at least some of these images. All these pieces date to around 500 BC, that is to the period when Lower Macedonia, at least, was subjected to the Achaemenid Empire, and it is in this very period that East Greek elements, though apparent earlier in the northwestern Aegean, were particularly strong. The Aiane sculptures provide further evidence of a significant East Greek stylistic input, but also show Attic influence. While the kouroi and kore may have been used specifically as grave-markers, this is not certain and the excavator has suggested that there may have been shrines within the cemetery that would have housed sculptures.

The late Archaic sculptures from Aiane do not stand alone. A late kouros, though without a context, has long been known from Europos (Fig. 7) in the plain to the northeast, while two tomb-markers, both in the form of a sphinx, a type of tomb guardian particularly well-attested in Attica during the Archaic period, have recently been excavated at Archontiko, in the Pella plain, and at Pentavrysos, a site located far inland.

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