Two unpublished Palmyrene funerary reliefs in North American museums

Fred C. Albertson
TWO UNPUBLISHED PALMYRENE FUNERARY RELIEFS
IN NORTH AMERICAN MUSEUMS

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Mots-clés – Syrie, Palmyre, relief, inscription, période romaine.

Abstract – Two limestone loculus plaques from Palmyra are published here for the first time: a male bust, representing Nûrœteh, son of Rabbi, now in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, and a female of a woman inscribed [. H/$] Y, daughter of (H)abîbā, found in the Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina (Saskatchewan). Both came to North America through the actions of Edgar J. Banks, an early 20th cent. archaeologist and antiques dealer. The reliefs are analyzed in terms of their dating and their relationships with the larger corpus of Palmyrene funerary images.

Key-Words – Syrie, Palmyre, relief, inscription, Roman period.

1. Prof. of Art History, Department of Art, Art and Communication building 200, The University of Memphis, Memphis, TN 38152 USA. falbrtsn@memphis.edu. My thanks to Prof. R. Schulz, Curator of Ancient Art, The Walters Art Museum, and B. H. Anderson, Collection Manager, MacKenzie Art Gallery, for permission to publish these reliefs, for information concerning their provenance, and assistance with photographic reproduction. Résumé en arabe par Ch. Hatoum.

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The two limestone reliefs, published here for the first time, share not only a common association with Palmyra, where they originally served as loculus plaques within one of the city’s family tombs, but also a common provenance. Both came to North America through the actions of Edgar J. Banks, an early 20th century archaeologist and antiquities dealer, and each relief was sold initially to a private collector, whose personal holdings became the core of a prominent public museum. The male bust, now in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, was purchased in 1929 by Henry Walters (1848-1931) directly from Banks (fig. 1). It entered the then Walters Art Gallery in 1931 following Walters’ death as part of his bequest. The female bust was sold by Banks in 1930 to Norman MacKenzie (1869-1936), a prominent Canadian lawyer and collector residing in Regina, Saskatchewan (fig. 2). This bust together with a large portion of MacKenzie’s collection was bequeathed in 1936 to the University of Saskatchewan for use at Regina College; in 1953 this material formed the core of the newly opened MacKenzie Art Gallery of Regina College, later the University of Saskatchewan, Regina campus, and ultimately the University of Regina.

Edgar James Banks (1866-1945) is a controversial figure —an image resulting not only from his activities as one of the first American professional Assyriologists to excavate in the Middle East but also from his business dealings following his retirement from academics. He attended Amherst College and then Harvard University, from the latter earning a B.A. in 1893 and an M.A. in 1895. Banks then went to Germany and completed his doctorate in 1897 at the University of Breslau. Late in that same year, Banks was appointed United States Consul at Baghdad, apparently not so much for his diplomatic duties but “to assist in the exploration and excavation of the ancient Assyrian cities and collect antiquities for the Semitic Museum at Harvard.” After Banks resigned from this position in the late spring of 1899, except for a return trip to the United States in summer-fall 1899, he remained in the Middle East and experienced a series of failures in his attempts to secure a permit to excavate. Banks had hoped initially to excavate at Ur, but even after securing funding and academic backing, his request was turned down by the Ottoman government. Then in 1903 Banks was selected as director of the “Oriental Exploration Fund (Babylonian Division) of the University of Chicago,” with the task of working for the university on any site to which he was able to obtain a concession. In October 1903 he was granted a firman to excavate Bismaya, the ancient Adab, in Mesopotamia. The excavations under Banks began in December 1903 and continued through May 1904. When work resumed in September, the excavations continued for only eight days, at which time the Turkish government closed the site. Banks was accused of stealing antiquities, and the University of Chicago was compelled to remove Banks as director in order for the Bismaya excavations to continue. Banks returned immediately to the United States, ultimately serving as Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Toledo from 1909 to 1921 and lecturing nationwide during this period on Assyriology and Biblical archaeology. He also is credited with a brief fling as a movie director specializing in Biblical films. Banks was to leave academia in 1921, retiring to an orange grove in Eustis, Florida, which he had purchased in 1916.

Beginning around 1913 and continuing until the late 1930’s, Banks became a dealer of antiquities, selling to museums, libraries, colleges, seminaries, historical societies, and individuals throughout the
United States. 9 His specialty was Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets and cylinder seals. Prospective clients, including university presidents, professors of religion, local librarians, and prominent business people, would be contacted by mail, most often initially through a form letter, in which Banks would offer to sell items from “his collection,” at times for as little as two to five dollars apiece. The sales method proved successful. Artifacts bearing a Banks provenance can be found today in almost every American collection of Mesopotamian tablets, regardless of size or reputation, in quantities ranging from one or two into the hundreds. Banks himself claims that he “distributed” over 11,000 tablets. 10 It seems that already during his initial time spent in the Middle East from 1898 to 1904, Banks was purchasing antiquities. On a return trip to Turkey and Iraq in 1912, Banks purchased another 6,000 tablets in Baghdad, ultimately shipped to the United States for later sale. 11 Afterwards, he maintained connections with dealers, primarily in Baghdad, during the 1920’s and 1930’s, to guarantee for himself a continuing supply of merchandise.

Palmyrene sculpture, however, was not a commodity normally offered by Banks to his clientele. The pieces sold by Banks to Henry Walters and Norman MacKenzie are, in fact, the only two known.

Yet, Banks was no stranger to Palmyra. He visited the site at least once, in 1903, on his way to begin the excavations at Bismaya. His experiences there are later recounted in his book, Bismaya or the Lost City of Adab, published in 1912:

“The Palmyrene busts, which former travelers eagerly sought, are no longer seen, and it is only occasionally now that the villager offers for sale Palmyrene seals of soft stone, or a face broken from some bas relief, or coins of ancient Rome and Greece, yet hidden away in the houses of the wealthier Arabs, sculptures or busts of considerable value may still exist. An Arab of Kariatain showed me six Palmyrene busts which decorated the court of his house; for one of a woman of unusual beauty, he demanded one hundred liras as the firstprice, but when Haidar Bey [the Turkish official assigned to Banks’ excavation] proudly informed him that he was an attaché of the Imperial Museum at Constantinople, to which all antiquities belong, the owner immediately froze up, and both he and the other owners of such forbidden wealth hastily made themselves invisible.” 12

However, in correspondence with MacKenzie in 1929, Banks offered the two Palmyrene reliefs for sale and states that:

“Nearly thirty years ago, in the city of Kariatain, near the ruins of Palmyra, in the Arabian Desert, I saw built into the walls of a house six large busts or statues of Palmyrene nobles, which had been taken from the ruins of Palmyra. I have just succeeded in obtaining two of them.” 13

The credibility of Banks’ account may be questioned. It is surprising that neither relief is mentioned by previous visitors to Qaryatein (ancient Nezala, 110 km. southeast of Palmyra), 14 especially as both bear an inscription. One also wonders as to how Banks was able to re-establish a contact with an owner, met briefly and by chance nearly twenty-five years before, purchase two items from the collection, and remove them to the United States. One suspects that they were simply less glamorous acquisitions made in the art market of Damascus or Beirut in the 1920’s.

12. BANKS 1912, p. 46.
14. For example, SAVIGNAC 1920; CANTINEAU 1930, p. 4-6.
Provenance: Purchased by Henry Walters in 1929 from Edgar J. Banks in Eustis, Florida; Walters Art Museum by bequest of Henry Walters, 1931.

Condition: Portions of the relief along the upper left, top, and right edge have been broken away and are now missing. The largest of these is a section including part of the rosette-pin and palm frond from the right field and a part of the bust in the lower right corner. Bust and head are in excellent condition. The surface is marred only by a few chips.

Inscription:
The inscription consists of three lines, written vertically on the left side. The first line, with the name of the deceased, appears to the left and outside the border of the funerary curtain. The second and third lines are located in the field between the palm frond and the head. The last letter of the second line, a yod, is inscribed on the curtain itself. The lettering combines both monumental (bet, yod, resh) and cursive scripts (ayin, he, waw, lamed, nun, taw). Resh is dotted in every instance.

Line 1: NWR•TH Nûr•ateh
Line 2: BR RBY son of Rabbî (or Rabbai)
Line 3: HBL Alas!

Line 1: NWR•TH, literally “Athe is light,” is a personal name documented at Palmyra in at least two other instances. This particular cursive form for nun has parallels on other funerary reliefs.

Line 2: RBY appears for the first time in Palmyrene Aramaic, although the name is known in Syriac and Hatran. RBY can be recognized as a variant of the common hypocoristicon, RB›, deriving from RB›L, “God is great.” The Walters relief is also the first documented instance at Palmyra where RBY and its more common form of RB› appear with BR, thus confirming its use as a personal name as well as an epithet (“the elder”).

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15. This occurs on another Palmyrene loculus plaque, specifically Dresden, Staatliche Skulpturensammlung inv. no. ZV 845: CIS, p. 438 no. 4506, pl. 45 and 47; INGHOLT 1928, p. 115 PS 226.
17. As, for example Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek inv. no. 2274; HVIDBERG-HANSEN 1998, p. 32 no. 7.
20. STARK 1971, p. 49, 111. For the use of the root RB as a (or part of a) personal name in Semitic languages, see FABRY, BLUM & RINGGREN 2004, p. 274-276.
Description:

The image depicts in bust form a young man with full, round face. A sparse mustache and beard, covering only the chin and a small area below the jaw, are rendered by sporadic short strokes of the chisel. The thin-lipped, V-shaped mouth turns down at the corners. The nose is relatively long and narrow, and characterized by a wide, flat plane from bridge to tip. The eyes, too, are relatively large. The large, nearly circular iris lacks a pupil. The incuse, high-arching brows parallel the line of the upper eyelid below. The hair consists of compacted, flat curls, extending toward the face. The hairline above the forehead slightly recedes on either side of the center.

The deceased, in standard Palmyrene fashion, wears a tunic beneath a himation. The tunic is visible beneath the neck as a series of V-shaped folds. The himation extends vertically from the right shoulder and curls underneath the right arm before moving in a bunched fold diagonally towards and ultimately over the left shoulder. The right hand is visible, pressed against the center of the chest, with the index finger extended. The left arm is wrapped tightly around the himation; the hand emerges to grasp the garment and create a looped-fold immediately above.

Behind the deceased is a funerary curtain or dorsalium, a feature well-known in Palmyrene funerary art. The curtain is attached at the top, on each side of the deceased’s head, by pins decorated with a rosette of seven petals. The tip of a palm frond projects out, at a slight inward curve, from beneath the rosette. The curtain itself splays out on the left side (deceased’s right arm) to mark the extent of its relatively short length, extending just below the curve of the shoulder. The second fold just inside the outside border has a scalloped edge.

Date: ca. AD 225-250

The bust of Nûr‹ateh in the Walters belongs to the second quarter of the Third century—a conclusion confirmed through a comparison with dated Palmyrene busts from this time frame. Most telling is the bust-form, with the left hand extended horizontally across the chest and grasping a looping fold of the himation. This is perhaps the most common type for Palmyrene male loculus plaques originating from the Third century. The Walters bust also shows a mantle falling vertically from the right shoulder, then curling underneath the right hand, before extending diagonally towards and ultimately over the left shoulder. This distinctive arrangement of the mantle, in association with the distinctive gesture of the left hand, appears together on two dated busts: Šim‹ôn, son of Hairan, from AD 233/234, and Taibbôl, son of Taibbôl, from AD 252/253. Also chronologically significant is the hairstyle, consisting of shortened, flat curls, whose hairline above the forehead recedes slightly on each side. Such a style is repeated on the funerary relief in Mainz portraying two brothers, Maqqai and Bari[k]â, the sons of Zebîdâ, son of Moqîmû, and originating from the Tomb of A‹ailamî and Zebîdâ (Tomb no. 85b). The Mainz relief can be securely dated to ca. AD 225-250 based on the dated loculus plaques of other family members found in the same tomb. The bust of Zebîdâ, the father of Maqqai and Bari[k]â, bears an inscribed date...
of AD 231, 27 while the funerary relief of a sister, Batḥabbai, also survives and dates to AD 226. 28 The sharp, angular carving of the Walters bust and the resulting emphasis on planar forms, most visible in the rendering of the hands, neck, and nose, are most apparent in Palmyrene funerary sculpture during the Third century. These features may again be seen on the Mainz double-bust of Maqqai and Barî[k]â, and the dated relief of Šîme-ôn, son of Hairan, in Oslo.

The Walters bust also betrays certain features which suggest our Palmyrene artist has been influenced by portraits of the Roman emperors, specifically those reigning from ca. AD 215 to 245. The long, thick sideburns, the thin mustache, and the sparse beard on the chin repeat the fashion of Elagabalus (AD 218-222) 29 and also that found on late portraits of Alexander Severus (AD 222-235). 30 The facial hair itself is created by short, cursory strokes of the chisel. Such a technique appears to have originated in Roman metropolitan workshops, first evidenced on portraits of Caracalla, then appearing more extensively on portraits beginning with Maximinus Thrax (AD 235-238), 31 and subsequently adopted at Palmyra by the second quarter of the Third century. 32 Among contemporary Palmyrene examples paralleling the Walters bust in terms of this technique would be the bust of Yarḥibîlê, son of Rabêl, in London, 33 and Ḥağôgô, son of Barâṭê, in Damascus. 34 The influence of imperial portraits on the artist of the Walters bust is best evidenced by the vertical cut on each side of the bridge of the nose, which when joined with the sharp drop of the eyebrows, reproduces the distinctive and expressive furrowing of the brow seen on the last portrait type of Caracalla and on images of Maximinus Thrax and Gordian III (AD 242-244). 35 Portraits of Gordian III are especially close to the Walters bust, with both sharing not only the furrows at the bridge of the nose but also the arching brows, a full rounded face with fleshy cheeks and jaw, eyelids sharply defined, the high forehead, and the overly large irises. 36

The Walters relief demonstrates how Palmyran sculptors continually expanded their repertoire of forms by drawing directly from the Graeco-Roman tradition, specifically contemporary funerary art and imperial portraiture. 37 There are features present on the Walters bust, however, which can only be labeled as anachronistic. The drapery over the chest, specifically on the deceased’s left side, shows an arrangement of diagonal catenaries set within a frame of compact V-shaped folds. Then over the left shoulder, just above where the himation is tucked between the chest and arm, are parallel, arrowhead-shaped folds. Both these patterns are not generally seen in the Third century but are more commonly

28. Damascus, National Museum inv. no. 9: CIS, p. 399 no. 4244, pl. 35; Ingholt 1928, p. 84-85 PS 51, pl. 15. 3; Zouhdi 1983, p. 315 no. 9, pl. 70b; Hillers & Cussini 1996, p. 111-112 PhT 0600.
33. British Museum no. 125346: CIS, p. 377-378 no. 4337, pl. 54; Ingholt 1928, p. 123 PS 286; Colledge 1976, p. 69, pl. 81.
35. Wood 1986, p. 28-29, 33-34, 36-38. This furrowing of the brow appears earlier in Palmyran funerary sculpture, on images from ca. AD 150-170, but the form and execution are different; see —Palmyra, Palmyra Museum inv. no. 1754/6578, (Zab)da[t]ih, son of Hannibel, from Hypogeum of Salamallat: Tanahe 1986, pl. 317 fig. 286; Sadurska & Tounni 1994, p. 155 no. 201, fig. 86.—Portland, Portland Art Museum inv. no. 54-3, Yarhai, son of ogâ: Ingholt 1928, p. 95 PS 65; CIS, p. 450 no. 4537, pl. 61; Parlasca 1990, p. 139 no. 6, fig. 6.
associated with busts of the first half of the Second century. This is the pattern found, for example, on the loculus plaque of Bar-‘aw, son of Zabd-‘ateh, with a date of AD 133/134 included within its inscription. Also unusual is the manner in which the funerary curtain flares out on either side of the deceased and, as a result, its abbreviated length is clearly indicated. Not only is this unusual for the Third century, it is unusual for loculus plaques as a whole, where the sides of the dorsalium customarily fall vertically behind the bust or down to the lower edge, thus making its length undeterminable. The arrangement on the Walters bust is more often found on stelae, depicting the full-bodied deceased standing with the curtain behind. Such full-length stelae are most common in the early to mid Second century and extremely rare afterwards. This may also explain why the seven-petalled rosettes serving as pins for the funerary curtain have no parallel among surviving loculus plaques, and the curtain’s wavy fold just inside the outside border is also unique.

A funerary relief carved ca. AD 225-250 incorporating features more in vogue from ca. AD 100-150 should not be surprising, especially from Palmyra. While scholars often speak of pattern books in Roman art as a means to transmit forms from one artist to those of the next generation, such books (if, in fact, they existed) would be unnecessary at Palmyra. Models would be provided by the tombs themselves, whose reliefs commemorating five, six, or even seven generations of the same extended family, covering a time span of one hundred to one hundred and fifty years, would presumably remain accessible during this entire period. The appearance of anachronistic forms, even after a long absence, as seen here on the Walters bust, could be explained by the nature of the tomb serving as a living “museum” of the city’s artistic traditions. As for the purpose behind such anachronisms, these forms would clearly link the image of the deceased to those representing members of previous generations and thus emphasize the continuity, and time-honored status, of the family.

One final observation can be made. The lettering on the Walters bust is matched by that found on the relief of Ma’nâ, freedman of Bôrôphâ, in the American University Museum, Beirut, also appearing as a vertical inscription. The image of Ma’nâ shares many of the stylistic features seen on the relief of Nûr-‘ateh and should be judged to be contemporary. The natural conclusion is the same inscriber was responsible for both inscriptions.

38. PLOUG 1995, p. 22-23. See the numerous examples from a datable context of ca. AD 100-150 published in Sadurska & Bounni 1994, p. 33-34 no. 34, fig. 25; 55-56 no. 67, fig. 24; 63-64 no. 83 fig. 23; 78 no. 104, fig. 26; 110 no. 151, fig. 28.
40. Sadurska & Bounni 1994, p. 21 no. 16 fig. 5; 21-22 no. 17 fig. 12; 74-75 no. 97 fig. 13. I can cite only two other loculus plaques with the shortened curtain similar to that on the Walters relief: 1.) a mid-Second century bust of Nabi, daughter of Yarhibol, from the Hypogeum of Sassan: Sadurska & Bounni 1994, p. 54-55 no. 65 fig. 169; 2.) a late Second century bust of Sîstâ, daughter of Kalbî: Christie’s, New York, 10 June 2010, Sale no. 2323, lot 21. There is possibly a third, contemporary in date to the Walters bust, but damage to both sides makes a conclusion tentative: Heraqlidâ, son of Sabinâ, in Istanbul, Archaeological Museum inv. no. 3743 T: CIS, p. 441 no. 4514, pl. 50; INGHOLT 1928, p. 122 PS 277; PLOUG 1995, p. 183 under no. 74 (cited as PS 277, for date).
42. Ling 2009, p. 602-603, with specific evidence for their existence among Greek and Roman painters.
43. For the related use of gesture in Palmyrene funerary art to denote relationships within both the nuclear and extended family, see Heyn 2010, p. 637-640.
44. Inv. no. 2748: CIS, 460-461 no. 4567 pl. 43; INGHOLT 1928, p. 121-122 PS 273.
Provenance: Purchased from Edgar Banks in 1930 by Norman Mackenzie. Bequeathed in 1936 to the University of Saskatchewan; in 1953 became part of the collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Saskatchewan, Regina campus, later renamed the University of Regina.

Dimensions: ht. 55.9 cm; w., 45.1 cm

Condition: The upper right corner of the panel, including a portion of the inscription, is broken away and now missing. Surface is weathered, with some details obscured, but otherwise in good condition.

Inscription:

The inscription consists of four lines located in the field to the right of the head. The reading of the individual letters is hindered by the fact that the sculptor did not prepare a smooth surface for the inscription, leaving instead the vertical grooves created by the four-toothed or claw chisel. When portions of this rough-hewn surface were summarily removed for the inscription, the poor preparation interfered with the engraving. Traces of red paint help to identify what is part of a letter versus what is a tool mark. The variations in letter size and the depth of carving bring into question whether the inscription is genuine or a modern addition. The letters themselves, however, illustrate documentable but not exceedingly common forms found within the repertoire of Palmyrene cursive script. One may cite, specifically, the rounded top of the lamed, the squared-form of the bet with the lengthy lower ligature (also seen on the het), and the zigzag taw. Admittedly, the inscription is simply not of high quality.

Line 1: [. . . H/Ş]Y
Line 2: [BRJT] daughter of
Line 3: [H]BYB› (H)ăbibă
Line 4: HBL Alas !

46. However, such a surface is not unique. Note New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art inv. no. 02.29.5, 〈Allat, daughter of Zabdiŏl: CIS, p. 348 no. 4260, pl. 39; INGHOZ 1928, p. 139 PS 420. Palmyra, Palmyra Museum inv. no. 1662/7117, Šalma, daughter of Zebdiă, from Hypogeum of Zebdiă: TANAE 1986, p. 377 fig. 346; SADURSKA & BOUNNI 1994, p. 95 no. 127, fig. 141.

47. All of which are repeated, for example, on the relief of Batmalkû in Rome, Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale inv. no. 6011/6827: CIS, p. 405-406 no. 4413, pl. 63a; INGHOZ 1928, p. 144 PS 462. On the variations of Palmyrene cursive, see KLOKKEST 1983.

48. One other scenario should be considered. The condition of the surface and the poor quality of the lettering may be the result of the bust’s reuse, perhaps during the Third century, when the current inscription was added by its new owner. Such an occurrence in Palmyrene funerary art is documented by the relief of Ḥanımă, son of Matani, in the Musei Vaticani inv. no. 56660 (Federico Zeri donation): CALLIERI 1986, p. 235-236 no. 6, fig. 64.1.
Line 1: The line contains a female personal name of three or perhaps four letters ending in yod. The long, curving ligature of the penultimate letter, with no trace of an extension above, suggests it is most likely a ḥet or a şade, although lamed and nun cannot be excluded.

Line 2: The final letter, a cursive taw, is definite, and traces of the previous letter suggest resh.

Line 3: The long ligature of the first letter suggests ḥet, in the same manner as it appears on line 4. The second and fourth letters are transcribed as bet (rather than samekh). Thus, one arrives at the masculine proper name, HBYB, “Ḥabîbî,” “Beloved one,” previously known from Palmyra in an inscription in the National Museum, Beirut. 49 Another variant of the same name, HBYBY, “Ḥabîbî,” is more common. 50

Description:
The bust depicts a mature woman in typical Palmyrene dress. She wears a long-sleeved tunic, recognized by a series of U-shaped folds below the neck; the ends of both sleeves are just visible at each wrist. Over the tunic is a himation, crossing the chest and tied near the deceased’s left shoulder with a brooch. Weathering on the brooch makes a reading difficult, but it appears to be the recognizable type with a feline head, which as seen here is generally accompanied by a slightly bulging, trapezoidal tab. 51

The surface of the tab appears to lack floral decoration and instead was divided into two symmetrical panels. From the brooch hangs an L-shaped key with a short stem and flower on the wand, etched with a cross to create four petals. 52 The third garment, a veil, covers the head and falls vertically over both shoulders and the sides of the bust, covering both arms to the wrist. The tension folds stretching from the shoulder and upper arm towards the wrist are a series of parallel ridges arranged in a near symmetrical pattern on each side. The hands are held in a horizontal position at the same level across the lower chest.

The left grasps a long, high-whorl spindle, with a circular knob at the end, and a large distaff, whose ball of unspun fibers are rendered by cross-hatched incisions. A single ring is worn on the little finger of the left hand; it is a common variety highlighting an oval cabochon. 53

The face is rounded and full, its features relatively proportional. The mouth is small and straight; the outside corner of the lips is marked with a crescent-shaped incision. The almond-shaped eyes are bordered by thick lids. The pupils are created by a shallow, circular cavity, while the irises are incised. Above the extremely low forehead is a diadem, divided into panels. The central panel over the forehead is decorated with a two-tiered acanthus calyx. On either side is a narrow vertical frame of embossed circles, and at each end is an undecorated metope approximately one-third the size of the central panel. Above the diadem is a narrow, two-layered turban with a knot in the center. The hair is visible only as two curls emerging from underneath the veil at the temple and as a single long tress falling on either side of the neck to the upper chest. Grape cluster earrings finalize the ornamentation. 54 One shallow groove is found on the neck.

Date: ca. AD 125

The Regina bust exhibits those features which characterize female loculus plaques from Palmyra during the first half of the Second century. The bust type—with the hands held at the same level across the lower chest, the left hand grasping a spindle and distaff, and the veil falling vertically over each shoulder in a symmetrical arrangement of straight, ridged folds—is one common to this period. 55

Such an arrangement is reproduced on two loculus plaques whose genealogy within their family tomb pinpoints closely the date of carving: the relief of Šalmat, daughter of Šamšigeram, from the Hypogeum...
of the Family of Artaban, from ca. AD 100-130, 56 and the image of Taimá, daughter of Ogeilû, from the Hypogeum of Aailamî and Hermes, ca. AD 110-140. 57 The latter is particularly close to the Regina relief. Except for the substitution of earcaps for grape-cluster earrings, Taimá displays identical attributes and jewelry. Additional features are also shared, such as the Venus-ring at the neck and the high diadem combined with a short, two-tiered turban.

Among the series of Palmyrene reliefs dated by their inscriptions, the bust of Tomalekê, daughter of Aušai, in Toronto, whose inscription bears a date of AD 123, is strikingly similar. 58 There are a few differences. Tomalekê grasps a looped fold in the right hand, while the Regina bust has no attribute in this hand; the drapery over the right shoulder is a series of lacerote folds, while those on the Regina bust are straight ridges. Otherwise, both share the same features: the position of the arms and hands, the arrangement of the veil, the spindle and distaff in the left hand, a feline-headed, trapezoidal brooch, the long curl falling on each side of the neck to sternum-level, the grape-cluster earrings, and a tall diadem with acanthus panel combined with a short, two-tiered turban.

The additional attribute of a key, hanging from a trapezoidal brooch, appears as well on the dated (AD 134/135) bust of Emmabû, daughter of Barâ, in Beirut. 59 Chronologically, this feature seems to appear ca. AD 125 and remain a part of the funerary repertoire of forms until the end of the century. 60 Parlasca has proposed that such keys, specifically those attached to brooches, relate to jewelry boxes rather than representing the keys to the tomb. 61 This conclusion would thus interpret such objects as emphasizing the deceased’s matronly position, a claim supported by the fact that these keys always appear together with the spindle and distaff.

The bust-form, lacking semi-circular folds over either shoulder, would suggest a date early in the century. However, the jewelry — the keys, the form of the brooch, and the acanthus motif in the central metope of the diadem — would be more typical of the period ca. AD 125-150.

56. SADURSKA & BOUNNI 1994, p. 33 no. 32, fig. 135.
58. Royal Ontario Museum inv. no. 953x94.1: INGHOLT 1928, p. 58 PS 33, pl. 10.4; PARLASCA 1985, p. 355, pl. 151.
59. American University Museum inv. no. 2740: CIS, p. 341 no. 4248, pl. 43; INGHOLT 1928, p. 60-61 PS 35, pl. 11.2.
60. PLOUG 1995, p. 91 under no. 23, with examples cited.
61. PARLASCA 1988, p. 216-217. Note that on Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek inv. no. 1065, the key with the inscription “House of Eternity” is one of three held in the hand: PARLASCA 1988, p. 216-220, pl. 46d; HVIDBERG-HANSEN 1998, p. 77-78 no. 89. Concerning the key, see further remarks by BALTY 1996, p. 438.
ABBREVIATIONS


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