

GADARA-UMM QES, I, GADARA DECAPOLITANA

Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2002, 613 pp., 200 pls.

THOMAS MARIA WEBER

Thomas M. Weber's book comprises six main chapters plus two additional chapters of "Dokumentation" and "Anhang" (Appendix), each divided into a number of sub-sections, a list of abbreviations and a bibliography, indices and two hundred plates of black-and-white photographs.

The book focuses on one of the most important ancient cities of the Decapolis, which has been extensively surveyed and excavated, and whose monuments are in a good state of preservation and rather impressive.

This volume deals with a wide spectrum of subjects relating to this important city of the Decapolis. Indeed, the author discusses systematically and comprehensively such subjects as the topography, history, epigraphy, architecture and artistic media (mosaics, wall-paintings, sculpture, epigraphy, etc.), based mainly on the archaeological survey.

The first chapter (pp. 1-9) presents briefly the problems, methods and purposes of the study. The descriptions and explanations are presented precisely, clearly and accurately, leaving no uncertainties or obscure points.

The second chapter (pp. 11-56) examines and analyzes the geographical situation and topography of Gadara. This is a basic discussion that enables one to understand its exceptional location, in a mountainous area, its dominant strategic position and cultural, social and economic flourish for several hundred years.

The third chapter (pp. 57-88) describes consecutively and consequentially the history and prosopography of the city from the pre-Hellenistic period up to the Islamic era. This is a useful chronological summary of the history of Gadara, which sets its image against the background of various events. This chapter also facilitates an understanding of how Gadara was able to survive for so many years as one of the most important cities of the Decapolis.

The fourth chapter (pp. 89-165) deals with the architecture and city buildings. This chapter is characterized by its interdisciplinary features presenting a long list of buildings, the urban planning, the architecture of the fortifications, the Hellenistic Akra, the early and late city-walls, the tow-

er architecture, etc. An interesting discussion refers to the secular and sacred architecture of Gadara that no doubt reflects the cultural-religious aspects of the city, its richness and prosperity. The author not only presents a detailed list of secular buildings, such as bath-houses, theatres, odeia, hippodrome, gymnasium, palace, commercial buildings and others, but of particular interest is also his mention of the sacred buildings of the pagan, Jewish and Christian communities in Gadara, that is, temples related to various deities, a synagogue, churches and *martyria*. The sepulchral architecture (tombs, hypogea, etc.) is also dealt with, adding another aspect, namely the approach to death and to the life after death.

The fifth chapter (pp. 167-253) reveals the artistic characteristics, especially in sculpture, during the Graeco-Roman period. The author focuses on the iconographic elements of various statues that represent gods and goddesses (Zeus-Baalshamin, Kronos, Asklepius, Serapis, Artemis, Nemesis, Athena, Dionysos and many others), mythological themes, personifications, genre motifs, philosophers, athletes, official portraits (magistrates, officers, etc.) and others. Great effort has clearly been invested in collecting the various items, and in describing and analyzing them systematically on the basis of a wide comparative study. This collection forms an important repertoire and contributes to the understanding of sculptural art in the eastern Mediterranean from the Hellenistic through the Roman imperial period and up to the Byzantine and Muslim eras. This artistic medium also reveals the influences of important artistic centers in the East and West, as well as the connection between centre and periphery.

The many illustrations of statues add another dimension to this chapter, emphasizing the importance and need for this artistic medium in Gadara and other cities of the Decapolis, from the cultural, social and religious points of view.

The chapter "Dokumentation" (pp. 257-462) offers a basic and useful collection of the literary sources, Greek and Latin inscriptions, private and public buildings, sculpture, sarcophagi and altars.

The author has collected a broad-based variety of materials that he describes and analyzes systematically thoroughly and accurately, presenting a detailed bibliography for each item.

The final chapter "Anhang" (Appendix) (pp. 463-555) provides a detailed descriptive and analytic catalogue of the Greek-Roman sculpture in Ostjordanland (Transjordan), found in some cities of the Decapolis (Abila, Pella, Gerasa and Philadelphia), in Hauran, in Petra and in Jordan. This is a helpful and useful chapter, as the author has concentrated together in it otherwise scattered material, enabling the professional reader, student and scholar to quickly reach the desired item.

The rich and up-to-date bibliography together with the four indices complete this work.

Weber's book constitutes an important scientific synthesis and adds to the study of Gadara in particular and to the other cities of the Decapolis in general. This comprehensive and meticulous study contributes to a panoramic understanding of various aspects of the history, architectural development, urban planning and art of Gadara and its cultural heritage. It will be a focal work for historians, archaeologists and art historians for many years to come, as one of the essential works on Gadara (and the cities of the Decapolis).

In the present publication Weber displays a solid and methodological approach, examining carefully, intensively and extensively many fields

and disciplines. The author succeeds in demonstrating convincingly the correlation between the various subjects of his work by creating a common ground for understanding the complex archaeological-architectural, epigraphic and artistic material. In his research, Weber has taken into account a wide range of artistic and written testimonies spread over several centuries. His intimate acquaintance with the Middle East in the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods, as well as in Late Antiquity, has yielded interesting results and scholarly achievements.

Weber's book is sequentially and clearly written with great caution, circumspection and self-criticism. The book is well edited and organized. The new approach provided by the author attempts to bridge existing gaps in our knowledge and information about Gadara and the neighbouring cities of the Decapolis. He is fully conversant with all the published research work on the subject and other related fields, appreciates them fully, analyzes them thoroughly and copes with them critically and successfully. This is an accurate and meticulous work whose results and conclusions will be valuable to the study of Gadara and the other cities of the Decapolis.

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IL MAUSOLEO DI BLANDA JULIA

Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2003, pp. 136 con Tavv. XXXVIII f.t.

GIOACCHINO FRANCESCO LA TORRE

Piccolo centro della *Lucania* tirrenica, *Blanda Julia* da qualche anno sta attirando l'attenzione degli studiosi grazie alla ripresa delle indagini archeologiche. Ai lavori dedicati alla topografia della città e in particolare al suo centro forense – organizzato con portici intorno alla piazza sulla quale si affacciavano alcuni edifici templari¹ – si aggiunge questo volume nel quale l'A. affronta il tema delle necropoli extraurbane.

L'analisi si concentra su un importante mausoleo a tumulo scavato nel 1999 in contrada Pergolo, a poche centinaia di metri dalla collina di Palecastro, sede dell'insediamento urbano. Viene così localizzata una nuova area sepolcrale dell'antica *Blanda*, probabilmente collocata lungo la via che da *Capua* giungeva a *Rhegium*, forse in prossimità dell'antico ponte sul Noce e non lontano dal porto fluviale della colonia. Essa si aggiunge alle necropoli

¹ Per una recente sintesi: G.F. LA TORRE, 'Blanda sul Palecastro di Tortora; scavi 1990-1997: un bilancio', in G.F. LA TORRE, A. COLICELLI (a cura di), *Nella terra degli Enotri*, Atti Tortora 1998, Paestum 1999, pp. 99-110. In corso di pubblicazione è il volume *Blanda I. Scavi 1990-1997*, curato dallo stesso G.F. La Torre.