

CONVIVIALITY IN ANTIOCH ON THE ORONTES THROUGH THE STUDY OF FUNERARY STELES DATING FROM THE ANTIQUITY

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Abstract

The funerary steles at Antioch on the Orontes and its surrounding areas from the Antiquity reveal the most convivial aspect of the society. Such an atmosphere of conviviality is also described in ancient writings and brought to light by the excavations of Princeton University in the 1930s .

However, it was particularly difficult to propound the contribution of the steles to the conviviality of the society with certitude by means of either their iconographical or epigraphical testimony. For, the steles that represent more vividly such a social aspect were dispersed among Turkey, the United States of America, France, Syria and Lebanon. Moreover, their records were almost not illustrated at all. Therefore, none of the researches carried out throughout the 20th century offered a comparative study between the particular evidence provided by the funerary steles and the extant data. Observing such deficiencies in the preliminary studies, we attempted to constitute a most complete and illustrated corpus of steles and to analyze it as a major component of our doctoral thesis⁷⁷.

We shall present certain outcomes of the researches we conducted to determine how the conviviality is conceived on the steles, the mosaics and urban planning. We will also indicate principal similarities and differences between the steles and mosaics (in particular the representations of banquet which demonstrate most concretely the convivial ambience).

Keywords : Antioch on the Orontes, funerary steles, mosaics, banquet, antiquity

Introduction

Antioch is situated in the north-east of the eastern Mediterranean basin, connecting Asia Minor to the Middle East. It lies along the Orontes River at the foot of ‘Silpion’ Mount and above the fertile plain of Amuq. Antioch was the capital of the Seleucid dynasty during the Hellenistic period and the capital of the Roman province of Syria also one of the three largest cities in the eastern world throughout the Roman imperial period.

The funerary steles at Antioch on the Orontes and its surrounding areas dating from the Antiquity, although they result from a provincial manufacture devoid of precision in the details and the inscriptions are engraved on them roughly in the oral use of the language, are of significant value for the light they bring to our knowledge regarding the history of Antioch.

The funerary steles manifest notably the convivial aspect of the society as described in ancient writings and revealed during the excavations conducted by Princeton University in the 1930s. However, it was particularly difficult to claim with absolute certitude the contribution of the steles by means of either their iconographical or epigraphical testimony to our

⁷⁷ The present article is a part of our doctoral thesis entitled ‘Some aspects of the social, cultural and religious Antioch and its environs through the study of funerary steles in Antiquity’ and performed under the scientific direction of the Professors Ms. Bernadette Cabouret Laurioux and Ms. Dominique Kassab Tezgör in both the University Jean Moulin Lyon 3 in France and Bilkent University in Turkey.

knowledge concerning the convivial aspect of the society. Because the steles were scattered around the United States of America, France, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon due to the historical background of the Antiochene region, their records were for the most part not illustrated at all.

Therefore, none of the researches performed throughout the 20th century offered a comparative study between the particular evidence provided by the funerary steles and the extant data. Observing such deficiencies in the preliminary studies, we tried to constitute a most complete and illustrated corpus of steles and to elaborate this synthesis as a part of our doctoral thesis.

The present work aims to demonstrate the outcome of the researches we have done to determine how the conviviality is conceived on the steles, the mosaics, the architectural laying out and the urban planning. It also aims to show both the similarities and differences between the steles and the mosaics, in particular as reflected on the representations of banquet, which is most concrete manifestation of the conviviality.

I

The conviviality, the quality or state of being social, is exposed in the iconography. On some monuments, only the inscription mentions it, because either the part that preserves the representation has disappeared, or they are only epitaphs.

Before dealing with the representations of banquet on our steles, we refer to the mosaic of Megalopsychia whose borders offer snapshots of daily life and allow to grasp easily this Antiochian sociability and vitality (Lassus, 1972a : 138-139, pl. 56, n° 187 a, b, c, pl. CLXXXVII- CLXXXV). We may notice a traveler who carries his bag which is attached to a stick on his shoulder. A porter carries a rolled up carpet on his back. Some vendors prepare food on a portable tripod table. A man buys something from one of them, maybe a bread ? Another seller has before him, a table where are spread refreshments and some other products difficult to identify before stores. Others play board game that we can not identify maybe chess, dominoes, checkers or more precisely the dice according to D. Levi (1947a : 330, 1947b : LXXIX b, c), perhaps backgammon during their free time in front of a building or a place called *περίπατος* 'promenade', a meeting place of distraction (Cabouret, 1999: 147, fig 18a) whose façade is protected by a roof which gives shade. A mother who carries a burden on her shoulders took her child by the hand and crosses a bridge over the Orontes. A man greets them from the balcony of his house without balustrade, which seems to be on the second floor. We see a dolphin jumping on the Orontes in the background. The servants offer refreshments to their masters who are portrayed in a half-lying position, opening the way for important figures or for a woman on horseback, leading donkeys to another bridge, carry packages and baskets on their head and in their hand. The owner of one of the villas represented on the wooded road leading to Daphne holds the hand of a little boy to whom he seems to be speaking. Another man is praying in front of a building (perhaps the Great Church of Antioch also called Octagon) and people, perhaps pilgrims are waiting near *martyrion*.

The iconography of this mosaic is even more impressive if we consider the similarity between the bustling city of Antioch of yesteryear, more precisely of the fifth century A.D. according to G. Downey (1963 : fig. 52-25, 48-10, 55-35-36, 57-45, 54-33, 57-46, 49-13-12-14, 48-9, 58-47, 47-6, 59-50, 46-2, 51 -19, 57-43, 59-51, 48-8 , 58-49, 56-40, 50-18, 58-48) and Antakya of today. On this mosaic, we see in the background the great colonnaded street bordered by verandas, buildings with gallery (Cabouret, 1999 : 147, fig 18b, n° 24) and buildings or spaces such as the stadium, the octagonal church, *martyrion*, private and public baths, bridges over the Orontes enabling residents of Antioch and Daphne circulations of all kinds. We may not only note the sociability among the inhabitants of Antioch yet also the urban planning of the city in the background that allows them to encounter one other. In fact, the ancient teacher of rhetoric Libanios (in Festugière, 1959 : 25-26) for his native city

Antioch mentions so proudly how, unlike the residents of other cities, the Antiochians meet one other even under inconvenient weather conditions thanks to its main colonnaded street.

The architecture of the excavated residences reveals on the other hand not only the luxurious lifestyle of the rich Antiochians yet also their hospitality. The villa is organized indeed according to the reception of guests and seems to be done in order to impress them⁷⁸.

Copious banquets are probably the most concrete manifestations of the sociability. Plato (in Erhat and Eyüboğlu, 1958), in his philosophical text entitled ‘Symposium’, offers some valuable insights that elucidate the procedure of banquets whose origins are rooted in a remote past as far as archaic period, if not even farther. They display also very specific customs perpetuated throughout the centuries until the classical period as well as it would be so up to the Hellenistic and Roman imperial period.

Namely, we may note in the text of Plato that the banquet begins early in the evening and ends at the first light of dawn. It is held in honor of the tragic poet Agathon who won the first prize in the dramatic performances, during a festival held in 416, in Athens. It consists of two parts : the first of the meal, that is to say the dinner, during which banqueters eat and not converse much with one other whereas the second part with which we are more particularly concerned in this context, of drinking wine. It is the sacred part in which hymns and paeans are recited with the company of musical instruments in honor of the gods and the contradictory aspects of some exquisite intellectual issues are debated, in this case love. The guests are depicted in a half-lying position on couches placed in the form of horseshoe, settled there according to the hierchichal levels of their dignity from right to left . The guest of honor is placed at most left, to the right of host. Plato makes indeed Agathon, tragic poet and host of the rich domain, to accomodate Socrates, guest of honor and his own master next to him, to his right. Note that many domestics open the door, welcome the guests, wash their hands before they start to drink, that the players of musical instruments are asked to leave the dinning room while the banqueters are drinking and that some of them suggest a topic for speechs and ensure that they do not astray from the main subject.

⁷⁸ We can cite some examples of which the most striking is the particular positioning of the mosaics in the dining room of the Atrium House : two mosaics of Aphrodite and Adonis, currently preserved in the Art Museum of Princeton University (Elderkin, 1934 : 47-48, fig. 9-11 ; Jones, 1981 : 12, fig. 28) and Judgment of Paris, currently preserved in Louvre Museum, placed towards the entrance way to welcome guests while the three other mosaics are paved in opposite direction, to the back of the room, so as to face the banqueters at the feast, in the later stage of reception (Elderkin, 1934 : 42, fig. 1 ; Becker, Kondoleon, Newman and Wypyski, 2005 : 16-79). These are : the central panel of the mosaic called Bacchus lying in a symposium, discovered in 1932, currently preserved in the Worcester Art Museum, access n° 1933.36, dated to the early second century A.D. (Elderkin, 1934 : 42-45, pl. I, VI, panel B ; Jones, 1981 : 26 ; Kondoleon, 2000 : 68, 170 ; Kondoleon, 2005b : 178-181, n° 1), the left panel of the mosaic called Satyr dancing, also known as follower of Dionysus with panpipes and a grapevine wreath, currently preserved in the Baltimore Museum of Art, the access n° 33.52.2 (Elderkin, 1934 : pl VI , panel A ; Kondoleon, 2000: 172) and the right panel of the mosaic called Dancing maenad, now preserved in the Baltimore Museum of Art, the access n° 33.52.1 (Elderkin, 1934 : pl. VI, panel C ; Kondoleon, 2000 : 170). The excavations in the villa called Calendar, at the sector 15-R, in Antioch reveal a similar arrangement : ‘the guests reclining on the couches at the end of the large dining room had an array of varied and colorful figures in mosaic on the floor before them, and a little farther in the distance they could see a colonnade with the pool beyond it’ (Field Report, 1935 : 7). We observe the same planning in the areas quite far from Antioch, in the arrangement of mosaics at the entrance of the villa called Constantinian in Daphne (Field Report, 1935 : 27-28, fig. 41) and in the arrangement of mosaic Amerimnia in the funerary complex on the eastern slope of ‘Staurin’ Mount, of the American inv. n° b320-M138, currently preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Antakya, of the Turkish inv. n ° 968, dated to fourth century A.D. (Excavation Diary, 1938 : 197-205, pages numbered twice as 1-9 ; Campbell and Stillwell, 1941 : 181, 118, pl 54). In the residence called House of Drinking Contest at the sector 18-K, in Seleucia, the mosaic in the reception room which gives its name to the residence, is positioned so as to face the banqueters during the feast, as the mosaic called Eros and Psyche in the corridor.

Although the banquets go sometimes off the rails and turn into a sheer scandal, they have indeed a religious dimension : the libation covers a magical nature, hand washing is symbolic -a metaphor of pure and clean living notes N. Janowitz (1991)-, wearing wreaths indicates an initiation, even the eternal happiness of the dead is conceived as a banquet (Ksenophon in Örs, 1962).

In our corpus, the vast majority of funerary steles offer, indeed, the representations of a banquet. Of these, the bed may have the edges in the form of lyre or zoomorphic, in other words, imitating the bovid horns. It might also either have the edges of angular profile or do not have the edges at all. The other examples are too fragmentary or though complete, offer few clues to determine it with certainty. One of the edges, zoomorphic or angular, may be slightly higher either at the bedhead or at the foot of the bed. The edges of the bed are often pressed against the either side of the steles and force the frame of the representation. Only few examples have space on both sides at right or left. We have designated the bed without edges as a couch. Their presence is at times suggested by a simple mattress. The couch is often covered by a drapery with the semi-circular folds. There are also many examples where the couch is devoid of drapery.

The bedhead is always placed to the right except for a few examples. On the couches, the bedhead is often indicated by a high, big, flat, small or triangular pillow. This one may be either pressed against the side of the stele as well as put under the elbow of the figure. On beds with zoomorphic edges imitating the bovid horns, the bedhead is suggested by folded mattresses. In more rare examples the mattress may be either folded at the bedhead or at the foot of the bed. The craftsman wish to represent the mattress thick and padded, yet it often remains flat and in very low relief.

It is important to note that the composition of representations lack perspective. This enables us to see two legs of the bed. A single example shows the third leg in the middle of the bed. The legs can be conical, cylindrical, molded, without molding or provided with *fulcrum*. Some couches are carved precisely in the lower part, with the superimposed crossbars which connect the cylindrical legs. The legs of the bed may rise above a full, rectangular and fairly high base. The base can also be roughly cylindrical-shaped and low, in the concave profile or even triangular. The furniture in the lower part of the relief frame is often suggested by a slight refitting of the background instead of being in relief on a series of representations of banquet. It is there a common phenomenon which may reveal a concern of economy.

On the representations of banquet, we often observe the presence of a table. The rest, being too fragmentary or severely damaged, do not allow us to confirm its existence with certainty. The table is always placed in the foreground, often on the right, next to the bedhead. In some instances it is situated in the center. It is generally quite low, at the level of the bed frame and mattress.

There are two types of table in our corpus : the guéridon, type which constitutes the majority and the tripod table. Whether it is for the guéridon or tripod table, the plate may be represented according to both horizontal and vertical plan though most of the plates are vertical. The plate may be in the mid-ovoid shape, oval, round, oblong or ellipsoidal. We can not clearly distinguish the shape of certain plates, either because the full frontal plan does not allow it or for the reason that they are damaged.

The leg of the guéridon may be both straight and conical though most of the guéridons have conical legs. Those of the tripod table may be zoomorphic and imitate feline paws in the most summary manner, turned inward or outward. In a single example, the tripod table is characterized by two lower legs, turned outward and connected by a crossbar above to the central straight leg. In two other examples, the two outer legs set back widen downward with a concave line while the central leg remains straight. At times, the lack of precision in details or the wear do not allow to recognize the details of the table legs. We do not keep any example with two legs on record.

The table may be both used for serving foods and be empty though most of the tables are served. Lack of precision can be seen also in the motifs of foods that are often suggested by simple incisions. Among the foods, we can clearly distinguish only ring-shaped pastries and some dishware elements such as phials, situlas, krater with volute-shape handles and chalice. These objects may be either placed on the table or carried in the hand of the figures. Despite the damage suffered by one of the examples, the content seems to be the same on two funerary slabs except for the fact that the place of ring-shaped small pastries and that of the phial are reversed. Even though this does not exclude a metonymic interpretation, the representations of banquet does indeed show almost always light meal or only refreshments rather than a hearty meal. Certain representations of banquet did not even have a table. The figures are simply represented in a fairly summary manner holding a phial in the hand.

We note, on the other hand, the presence of a garland of leaves or both thin and thick wheat ears, which hangs in one or two festoons in the background ; it is arranged at the top of the field of certain representations of banquet. The festoons may be adorned with bands at the attachment points. Two great bovid horns may adorn them at the central attachment point and one other may decorate them at each corner. Amid festoons may hang two well spaced out flowers and two bunches of grapes.

A curtain is visible on a significant number of steles. The entire bottom of the field relief of the steles seem to be occupied by this drapery that cross through the small, horizontal, semi-circular and irregular folds, it is stretched between two cylindrical torchs fixed to the ground, in the background, decorated with moldings irregularly spaced out framing symmetrically the relief. On a small number of steles, the torchs are placed to the left, so that the drapery occupies only the left part of the background. Sometimes a simple line indicated hastily by an incision at the top or bottom is enough to suggest the presence of the drapery.

The scenes of banquets on the mosaics seem to compensate for the lack of details, colors and in particular perspective on the representations of banquet on the steles⁷⁹. On a certain number of steles, we see one or more half-lying figures on a bed at the head or foot of which are seated one or two other figures. At times, one or two servants are placed at their disposal. On the mosaic of Mnemosyne, we note also two half-lying women, leaning on their right elbows. A woman sitting on the left, at the foot of the bed, on a low stool provided with cushion, holds a roll of paper. To the right, a servant stretches out to these half-lying women, in the right hand, a bowl, perhaps so that they may wash their hands before the meal. She carries a jug in the other hand. To the left, are placed two standing women, each one carrying a canteen placed on the left shoulder.

The tunic of the figures are tightened up under the chest. The hang is quite consistent with the representations of steles. However the graceful pleats of their dress and fineness of the cloth are obviously much better rendered on the mosaic. The fallout of the *himation* from the left shoulder of the half-lying woman to the right, the knot of cloth which comes back from the other side and wraps around the left forearm of the woman on the left side, their representation up to the waist, one hiding the other, are not as schematic as they are on the

⁷⁹ Aion and Chronoi : mosaic discovered in the villa called Aion, in 1939, left *in situ* and covered again due to the lack of time to remove it, this is why it is not inventoried (Campbell and Stillwell, 1941 : 176-177, n° 111, pl. 51 ; Levi, 1944 : 270).

Menander : mosaic discovered in the small room 11, of the villa called House of Menander, of the American inv. n° c330-M172, currently preserved in the Marquand Library of Princeton University (Campbell and Stillwell, 1941 : 185-186, n° 131, pl. 63 ; Downey, 1963 : fig. 25 ; Jones, 1981 : 3-4).

Agros and Opora : mosaic panel discovered in Room 8 of the villa called Boat of Psyche at the sector 23/24-M/N sector in the area 200-217, in Daphne, in June 1934, of the American inv. n° 3756-M49, currently preserved at the Baltimore Museum of Art (Catalogue of Mosaics, 1938 : 185-186, n° 53, panel A, pl. 40 ; Jones, 1981 : 16). The last name Oinos corresponds to the servant.

In addition, the mosaics of Bacchus lying in a symposium Mnemosyne and Drinking contest.

steles. The deformation of the arm leaning on the elbow, which is often abnormally short on the steles, is represented artistically on the mosaic.

C. Kondoleon (2000 : 121-122) interprets the seated woman which opens the roll that she holds in her hands as deceased person. This image with the set of contrast of the colors allows better to identify this type of the hang which is often presented on our steles, this is a *himation* placed as a shawl on the shoulders and which leaves partially visible the bust and the right arm ; it entirely envelops the lower part of the body forming a rather thick roll of cloths. Unlike the representation provided by the steles, the right foot shod with sandals is detailed. The left hand of the woman in the middle rests on the head of the deceased, perhaps in order to comfort her.

The secondary figures, such as the domestics, are systematically neglected on the steles. On the mosaic of Mnemosyne, it is surprising to observe the treatment of the maid to the right, in the minutest details, with his name inscribed at the top of the panel. Her long tunic which does down to his heels, given a wide boat neckline, with droopy armholes and which tightens up under the chest a fine, thin, high belt, is clearly indicated. According to the chronicle of excavations (Excavation Diary, 1935 : 245), the two standing women to the left may be musicians. However, the absence of the *himation*, the canteen hanging down from their left shoulder and their availability to serve the refreshments suggest that they are rather servants.

The scene is animated, with the chiaroscuro colors, by many details, such as the expression rather grave of the face of the women of good condition, their hair wore in a bun on top of the head and puffed out on either side of the front, the earrings, the table served with the roast chicken, according to the chronicle of excavations⁸⁰, the crossbar connecting the slightly concave legs of the table, the jar placed in the foreground, the *loutrophoros* and the large curtain hung on the background.

C. Kondoleon (2000 : 121-122) states that the curtain hanging in the background, that recalls the aforesaid curtain visible on a significant number of steles, the *parapetasma*, is similar to what we see on the Roman sarcophagi showing married couples. It is certain that the curtain is not a background decor and is interpreted differently by many authors who attribute to it a religious sense (Lameere, 1939 : 44). According I. Lavin (2005 : 172), the reference is purely symbolic. The portraits of the deceased on the ancient funerary monuments are placed against a *parapetasma* that symbolizes their apotheosis, that is to say, their elevation to divine status.

Mnemosyne mosaic comes indeed from a funerary complex. It was discovered in a burial chamber dated from fourth century A.D⁸¹. C. Kondoleon also recalls that the funerary banquet is a very common motif in the decoration of the tombs and the mosaic offers a combination of reality and the ideal, for, according to the author, the banquets constitutes the essential part of the Roman funerary rituals ; the feast also symbolizes eternal generosity of the afterlife.

We often observe that the names of the figures are inscribed above their heads on the mosaics. Based on photographs *in situ* of the mosaic, before it is removed, only the names of the aristocratic and domestic women (both placed to the right) were legible. These are respectively Μνημοσύνη whose meaning is ‘memory’ and Αιωχία which would be a dialectal form, according to the phonetic usage, Εδωχία meaning ‘banquet’ notes C. Kondoleon . The author also considers that Mnemosyne was probably used to refer to a group of women who belonged to a funerary association that would be gathered at this particular place for regular funerary banquets (Kondoleon, 2000: 121-122).

⁸⁰ ‘In front of the seated figures is a tripod supporting a tray with a roasted fowl on it’ (Excavation Diary, 1935 : 245).

⁸¹ It is not uncommon to find mosaics in funerary complex also in the vicinity of Antioch including mosaic Amerimnia discovered on the eastern slope of ‘Staurin’ Mount.

However, we clearly see on the mosaic that the name Mnemosyne is not placed in the center, yet just above the head of the woman. It seems therefore to designate her rather than to refer to the whole composition, as well as the second name Αἰωχία, aligned to the right, designates the servant who is at the disposal of his mistress. We noted that the name of the domestic seem to provide a rapprochement with the notion αἰών, 'eternity'. On an inscription of our corpus reads our corpus, we read τὸν αἰῶνα which means 'eternity' in reference to the eternity of the memory of the deceased in the funeral context and especially by the direct address from third party to the deceased person.

On another mosaic called Agros and Opora, which also present a banquet scene yet not funerary one, as we see on steles, a half-lying man on a bed at the foot of which is seated a woman, to the right with a servant who stands at the entire disposal of his master.

The man leans the weight of his body on a pillow raised, at the bedhead. The fallout of his *himation* from his left shoulder is lined with a thick fold that envelops the forearm and constitutes, above the wrist, a drop of cloth in zigzag pattern. The other side wraps around the body, form a roll of thick cloth on the hips and crosses the fallout from the left shoulder. These features enable better to identify a type so known on our steles. The left hand holding a phial is represented with skill unlike those of our steles which rather evoke a mitten, a clamp or even a ladle with a long handle, because of the obvious disproportion. The *himation* leaves visible here, similarly, the right side of the torso where we note, by contrast, the absence of *chiton* that wear always all of the banqueters of our steles. The torso is on the other hand detailed, thanks to the chiaroscuro of colors, and are drawn pectoral and abdominal muscles. The man embraces the woman with his right arm.

The woman sitting at the foot of the bed reminds those of our steles save for few details. The *himation* slips off the left shoulder and wrap itself around the forearm forming a fine zigzag pattern that stretches out downward. The *himation* leaves the breast entirely visible envelopping the lower part of the body while the upper part of the women is never represented nude in this way on the steles. The feet are placed on a footrest whose shape is familiar to us. We do not see here in the illustration of the lower body of the figure subtracted from view, the clumsiness often encountered on the banquet representations of our steles.

The servant does not deviate from the type which is often placed next to the male master and simply wears a short tunic. However, contrary to what we see on our steles, he is apparently nude and his paunchy belly is well detailed.

The scene is animated with many details that are important for us such as the hair of women and that of men crowned with a wreath of various foliage, the necklace of flowers around their neck, an armful of fruits that the woman holds in her lap, the furniture, the utensils and the curtain stretched out in the background.

On the mosaic, the tripod table with zoomorphic legs imitating feline paws in the foreground is put into perspective with the clearly indicated phial and situla, contrary to what we see on the steles. The plate is often shown in a vertical plane on the steles, so that we can see if it is served or not. In cases when it is served, we may identify foods and utensils that are arranged, without precisely distinguishing the details however.

The curtain hangs in the background and two festoons animate it at the central attachment point, where the folds constitute two drops in a fine zigzag pattern from. This curtain differs from the one we see on our steles and on the mosaic called Mnemosyne. It is nonetheless possible that this curtain may also symbolize the celestial immortality of the souls yet it remains a hypothesis. The bed is much more detailed than those represented on our steles, essentially by the color contrast, the padded mattress, the drapery that covers it loosely and the cylindrical legs provided with *fulcrum*. Yet it does not seem to have any edges imitating bovid horns as on most of our steles.

The mosaic of Menander in documentation of the Archives comes from one of the greatest villas in Daphne. Although it represents a banquet scene, the context is not funerary.

However, it is valuable for the light it brings to our understanding of the iconography of funerary banquet. We see a man and a woman half lying side by side on a bed, shown, similar and rather awkward manner, up to the waist, with a woman next to them, to the left. The artist probably wanted to represent this woman seated, yet she seems so inconveniently placed at the end of the bed that she gives rather the impression of standing upright. The man represented slightly in three-quarter plane, leaning to the right, turns his head sharply to the woman, displaying his great interest towards her. He embraces her with his right arm, yet we do not see his hand. The *himation* which slips off the left shoulder forms a pile of cloth rolled up at the bend of the arm and leaves the torso naked, the pectoral and abdominal muscles clearly indicated by the contrasting colors.

We do not find neither this strength in the expression of the face nor the suggested exchange between the figures on the funerary steles where they rather seem in an absolute immobility. The quality of their execution aside, the figures on the steles often appear in a profound affliction that suffice to indicate in a quite simple or even caricatural manner, the head resting heavily on the hand brought under the chin, the thick drooping upper eyelids, the mouth with lips arched downward, conferring to the figures a sulky expression, the close-set or frowned eyebrows.

The woman placed in the middle of the mosaic wears a *chiton* whose given a deep boat neckline is attached to her shoulders. This constitutes a contrast with the long-sleeved *chiton* of the woman to the left who also wears a *himation* over the left shoulder. A mask in the left hand, a stick in the right one, she seems to have a message to convey. We note easily an object at her feet, perhaps a *capsa* with cover, object provided with a handle. Above the '*capsa*' stands another mask and an object difficult to distinguish, probably a *volumen*.

Details such as the couch covered with a padded mattress and a drapery drawing irregular and semi-circular folds as well as the cleared, oval and zoomorphic tripod table offer a living drawing of this representation of banquet on the steles. None of the figures of our steles is, on the other hand, wearing wreaths, in the same way as the half-lying man and woman shown in this mosaic.

Through the names mentioned above their head, the figures have been identified and analyzed in previous studies, allowing to better interpret the scene (Downey, 1963 : 207-208). The man apparently represents Menander, author of plays still much studied and quoted, of the fourth century B.C. and the woman to the left is his mistress. The second woman is the allegory of the comedy. The masks are constantly present on the borders of the mosaics. Yet two tragic masks contrast here with the allegory of the comedy. The theatrical themes are evidently recurrent on the mosaics of Antioch⁸².

The great domestic complex of Menander is situated not far from the famous 'theater' of Daphne⁸³. Moreover, all the scenes in reference to the tragedies of Euripides and the masks intertwined with the grape leaves that often decorate the mosaics, denote above all a most refined taste of the owners of these domestic areas for the theater and the literary works such as the storytelling in the *Iliad* (Weitzmann, 1941 : 233-251 ; Downey, 1963 : 207).

The mosaic of Aion and Chronoi retain our attention by the presence of several half-lying figures side by side, leaning on their elbow to the right, in the same position as on some steles of our corpus.

⁸² Mosaic of Bellerophon and Stheneboea shows Bellerophon, the hero and the son of the king of Corinth who, having committed a crime, went to Tiryns to the king Proetus whose wife Stheneboea falls in love with him. We see him on the mosaic rejecting her love.

Mosaic of Hippolytus, Phaedra and servant shows Hippolytus dedicated to Artemis, rejecting the love of Phaedra, his stepmother and wife of Theseus, his father.

Mosaic of Paris, Helen and Aphrodite shows love of Paris for Helen which, according to the legend, the origin of the Trojan War.

⁸³ According to the grid mapping system of the excavations of the 1930s, the complex of Menander would even not be at a distance of 1.5 miles away from the 'theater' of Daphne.

In the execution of certain representations of multiple banquets in our corpus, the craftsman seems to have wished to represent figures as half-lying and the lower part of the body of the last person to the left in his entirety, yet, after all, the figures are shown up to their waist and the lower part of the body of the last person to the left is shown only partially, which leads us to assume that the craftsman does not have enough available space to do so or he intended to create an illusion of perspective. It is, however, very curious to find an iconography close to our steles on this mosaic.

In addition, on the mosaic, the couch of banqueters corresponds to those of our steles. We systematically find the representations of multiple banquets with several figures. The drapery which covers it, is crossed through similarly with semi-circular folds, except that they form three festoons while those on our steles only one. The furniture placed in the foreground, next to the bed, which rather reminds the guéridons with conical legs of our corpus, is interpreted as a incense-burner (Levi , 1944 : 272-273).

Besides these mosaics, we know two other representations of banquet scenes where drinking contest takes place between Dionysus and Heracles. These mosaics were discovered in the dining rooms of two sumptuous villas in Antioch and Seleucia. They are positioned so as to be seen by the guests half-lying on the couches.

Both mosaics are similar, but differ in some details. With a majestic appearance, Dionysus is in half-lying position and rests on a large cushion placed under his left elbow ; he takes up much more space than the other figures. His *himation* leaves his torso half-naked, draping only the lower part of the body, which gives him an anatomy both athletic and childish. His radiant appearance is given, on the mosaic of Seleucia, with its head surrounded by a halo of light. It contrasts with Heracles who looks mature, dark and who is clumsily inserted into the composition. Dionysus raises his cup in the air, no doubt to show that he probably ended up drinking while his rival is still drinking, his goblet still brought to his mouth.

On the mosaic of Antioch, we see the old satyr half-naked announce the victory of Dionysus, raising his left arm in the air. A controversial figure (Foucher, 2000 : 203-204), which reminds us of Eros, and the maenad celebrate the superiority of Dionysos over Heracles, the first applauding, the second playing the aulos. We also note the sceptre resting on the left shoulder of Dionysus. On the mosaic of Seleucia, the old satyr and the figure evoking Eros are not represented, the kylix becomes drinking horn and the aulos, the tambourine.

There are, on the other hand, many mosaics where the figures, without attending a banquet in the proper sense of the term, are half-lying in the attitude of banqueters⁸⁴. The

⁸⁴ Ninus and Semiramis : mosaic discovered in the room 1 of the complex called House of the Man of Letters, at the sector 26-O/P, in Daphne, currently preserved in the Marquand Library of Princeton University (Campbell and Stillwell, 1941 : 203-204 , n° 100 , panel B , p 78), dated from the year 200 (Jones, 1981 : 3).

Erotes in a symposium : outer rectangular panel framing trapezoidal panels of the octagonal pool, discovered in the Roman villa called Constantinian, of the American inv. n° 5524-M93, currently in the Louvre Museum (Catalogue of Mosaics, 1938 : 198, n° 87, panel H, pl. 63).

Ladon and Psalis : mosaic pavement with the allegory of the river Ladon and the source Psalis, discovered in room 13 of the villa called House of Menander, of the American inv. n° c386-M178, currently preserved in the great hall, at the Archaeological Museum of Antakya, of the inv. n° 1015, dated between 250 and 275 (Campbell and Stillwell, 1941 : 188, 135, panel C , pl. 64).

Reclining Heracles : the one in the middle one of the three ellipsoidal mosaic pavements discovered in the entrance room 1 of the Roman villa called Constantinian, in the front of the octagonal pool, of the American inv. n° 5524-M93, currently preserved in the Art Museum Princeton University (Catalogue of Mosaics, 1938 : 200, 87, Aa panel, pl. 68 pl). ‘The pavement was a large rectangular one with two separate decorative systems although the pavement itself was continuous with no structural divisions (Fig. 41). One part served as the floor at the entrance; and the other, forming the pavement of the main part of the room, had picture panels grouped around an octagonal pool[...]

The part of the pavement toward the entrance was badly damaged since it was only a few inches beneath the surface of the ground. Just within the portal was a row of three figure panels in ellipsoid frames separated, the one from the other, by a rectangular panel containing one half of a perspective fret. The central figure was that of a reclining Heracles (Fig. 55) ; to the right was dancing bacchant’ (Field Report, 1935 : 27-28, fig. 41, 55 *in situ*).

mosaic called Buffet Supper allows us to better recognize the foods likely to be presented at the table especially ring-shaped pastries⁸⁵.

Conclusion

To conclude, it would be appropriate to emphasize various meanings of the concept of banquet. According to F. Cumont (1906 : 74 -79), it was long thought that we may recognize in these copious meals, in these Asian bacchanalia, the fervent followers and mystics of Eastern cults, eating well, becoming inebriated, devoting themselves to a state of ecstasy, to binge drinking and feasting, giving themselves up to an absolute debauchery and being practising any earthly, material and Epicurean philosophy. It would be a simple exhortation to enjoy the life and the present, for the rest is uncertain and an invitation to eat well, drink well, to entertain well, because life is ephemeral. However, the faith in immortality and a future judgment were opposing this. It should rather have been recognized in these banquets a kind of celebration among the initiated members, a preparation for the eternal feast of the blessed ones to which God was calling his elected ones. This feast was the very symbol of happiness in the afterlife reserved for the righteous, pious souls. We should concede that what were served in the dishes were foods of spiritual life.

As it is shown by P. Schmitt Pantel (1985), although the banquet, as a convivial activity came to correspond to various functions of the society from the archaic to the Constantinian period, it preserved the same gestures throughout the centuries. We will limit ourselves to recall merely this singular ambiguity that the author does discern : although connoted as a privilege of the aristocracy, the banquet is indeed an institutional, united and egalitarian practice of the city. Its actors, without knowing much what it truly means have perpetuated it ‘whatever are the historical conditions’ and though it has become an expression of modes ‘far remote from those of its origins’.

As for J. Scheid (1985), while drawing our attention to the sacrifice that preceded the banquet (that we can suggest its practice with a metonymic interpretation of bovid horns and

Tryphe : mosaic pavement with the allegory of the opulence discovered in the room 6 of the Roman villa known as the Calendar, of the American inv. n° 4779-M66, currently preserved in the great hall, at the Archaeological Museum of Antakya, of the Turkish inv. n° 862, dated from the third century A.D. (Catalogue of Mosaics, 1938, 193, n° 74, pl. 54).

Bios : mosaic pavement with the allegory of the life, discovered in room 6 of the Roman villa called Calendar, bearing the same American and Turkish inv. n°s 4779-M66 and 862 respectively as the mosaic of Tryphe preserved in the great hall of the Archaeological Museum of Antakya, dated from the third century AD (Field Report, 1935 : 10, fig. 16 *in situ*, fig. 18 ; Excavation Diary, 1935 : 242-245 ; Catalogue of Mosaics, 1938 : 193, n° 74, pl. 54).

Ocean and Tethys : mosaic discovered in room 1 of the villa known as the Calendar, of the American inv. n° 4776-M63, currently preserved in the Antakya Archaeological Museum, of the the Turkish inv. n° 850, dated second century A.D. (Catalogue of Mosaics, 1938 : 191, n° 71, panel B, pl. 51) .

Nereids, Hippocamps and Triton : mosaic pavement discovered in the colonnaded room 4 of the villa known as the House of the Triumph of Dionysus, of the American inv. n° 5438-M90, currently preserved in the Baltimore Museum of Art (Catalogue of Mosaics, 1941 : 196-197, n° 86, pl. 61 ; Jones, 1981 : 17).

Nereids and Tritons : mosaic discovered in the Bath E.

The border of the mosaic Megalopsychia (Downey, 1963 : fig. 48-9, 58-47) .

⁸⁵ Buffet supper : mosaic discovered in 1937, in the great complex called the House of Buffet Supper, currently preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Antakya. ‘22 May [1937]. [...] rectangulaire, avec un canthare des oiseaux [Fig. 2] et des enfants, sur un fond jaune, du type bien connu ; l’autre [panneau de mosaïque] par contre est très nouveau : il a la forme en demi-cercle outrepassé de ces énigmatiques - tables d’agapes - dont nous n’avons naguère trouvé, dans le voisinage, un si bel exemplaire. Le rapprochement s’impose d’autant plus qu’il s’agit ici d’une table de salle à manger tout autour du fer à cheval se trouvent en effet disposés les différents plats d’un magnifique repas : on trouve, de droite à gauche, un plat rond sur lequel sont posés [Fig. 2] deux œufs à la coque, dans leur coquetier, flanqués longues cuillères, deux artichauts, deux pieds de porc ; puis, c’est un poisson, servi dans un plat carré, évidemment en argenterie, ensuite on trouve un jambon, une grande coupe de vin, un canard rôti, puis un poulet, et au delà d’une lacune, un énorme gâteau. [...] [manuscrit illisible], et de petits pains ronds, bien levés, sont placés çà et là. Tous ces motifs sont traités très minutieusement, en teintes brillantes, avec emploi de smaltes de verre qui se détachent sur un fond sombre. [...]’

Le style de ce panneau central, comme celui du panneau des oiseaux et de la bordure invite à dater ce pavement du III^e siècle et plutôt sans doute de la seconde moitié’ (Excavation Diary, 1937 : 54). ‘Mosaic showing buffet supper ready to be served on a semicircular table, with a panel depicting Ganymede giving water to the eagle of Zeus. Found in a house of late second or early third century at Daphne. The courses of the meal are laid out in order, beginning at the spectator’s right’ (Downey, 1963 : 37-40).

some garlands on certain steles of our corpus) he demonstrates its evolution in Rome if not its decadence.

We may lastly concede through all these evidence, whether they appear on the steles, mosaics, urban planing or architectural laying out, that the conviviality is an essential aspect of the ancient Antiochene society. All the representations of banquets both on the steles and mosaics attest their popularity in Antioch yet the mosaics offer dynamic and colorful scenes rich in details. Its reflection on the steles translates an appurtenance if not of the whole society, at least of a group to an ancient tradition first and foremost spiritual.

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