



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The Painted Hellenistic Funerary Stelai from Sidon

DIXON H. ¹, NITSCHKE J. ²*

¹ East Carolina University, Greenville, United States

² Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa

*Corresponding author

Abstract

Approximately 35 plastered and painted stone funerary stelai dated to the Hellenistic period have been found in various necropoleis situated around modern Saida, Lebanon. Among these are 25 with surviving imagery and 20 with surviving inscriptions. They were discovered mostly in the 19th century (by Renan, Macridy, and others), but some have also come to light from more recent excavations. The decoration typically consists of a painted scene featuring a full-length portrait of the deceased, sometimes surrounded by others, as well as painted ornamentation in the form of floral motifs and imitation architectural elements. Scattered in collections around the world (and in some cases lost), these stelai have never been studied together as a group. This paper will present an overview of the corpus, including: typology; analysis of the imagery; and an examination of the social and ethnic identities of the deceased. This type of painted stele is uncommon in the Levant in this period, so this corpus provides important data on the evolving and unique nature of Sidonian funerary beliefs and rituals in the last centuries of the first millennium BCE. The iconography and inscriptions likewise offer a window into self-representation and identity in the Hellenistic Levant.

Keywords

Phoenician, Hellenistic, Funerary Monument, Grave Stelai, Sidon

Session

4. The materiality of inscribed and figurative objects

Type of paper

Oral presentation