

Marble and Sculpture at Lepcis Magna (Tripolitania, Libya): a Preliminary Study Concerning Origin and Workshops

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MARBLE AND SCULPTURE AT LEPCIS MAGNA (TRIPOLITANIA, LIBYA): A PRELIMINARY STUDY CONCERNING ORIGIN AND WORKSHOPS

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Abstract

The sculptures of Lepcis Magna represent one of the richest and most important collections of ancient Tripolitania (Libya). Many of the statues were discovered during the excavations carried out in the first half of the 20th century. Archaeometric analysis on the white marble provenance was conducted on a selection of 36 statues kept in the storerooms and in the Museum of Lepcis Magna. These new data concerning the origin of sculpted marbles allow better consideration of several questions concerning the import of sculptural marbles and finished works, the presence of foreign craftsmen in the local context, the ability to identify local production with a distinct style and the organization of the Tripolitanian workshops. Of particular relevance is the copious use of Luna marble for statues from the 1st up to the 3rd century AD.

Keywords

Lepcis Magna, sculptures, marble provenance

Introduction

The excavations at Lepcis Magna, the most important city of ancient Tripolitania (Libya), have yielded a remarkable number of sculptures, which make up one of the most representative samples from North Africa. Many of the statues were discovered during the archaeological campaigns of the first half of the 20th century in the Hadrianic Baths,¹ the Severan Complex,² the Old

Forum,³ the Theatre,⁴ and the Serapeum;⁵ they are now on display in the National Museum of Tripoli and in the local Museum of Lepcis Magna, or stored in their reserves.

No marble quarries were present in ancient Tripolitania, so that all the rough and semifinished marble blocks destined for sculptural or architectural purposes had to be imported from renowned overseas marble quarries.

This paper presents the results of an archaeometric study on the provenance of white marble conducted in November 2013 on a selection of 36 statues, 31 of which have been kept since 2011 in the Old Museum of Lepcis Magna, now used for storage.

The criteria used for the selection (Tab. 1) reflect the accessibility of the statues themselves and take into account the indications provided by the Controller of the Department of Archaeology of Lepcis Magna. The togate statues (Fig. 2) make up the majority of the sample with 18 specimens (cat. nos. 6-10, 12-15, 17, 20, 22-24, 28-31), followed by 7 female portrait-statues⁶ (3 of which are inspired by the type of the “Large Herculanum Woman” (cat. nos. 2, 26, 35), 1 is inspired by the “Small Herculanum Woman” (cat. no. 18), 1 by the “Orans” type (cat. no. 37, Fig. 7), 1 by a variant of the “Ceres” type (cat. no. 1, Fig. 3) and 1 is a variant of the “Eumachia-Fundilia” type (cat. no. 25). Female ideal statues are attested as well as 6 times: 1 Muse (cat. no. 4), 1 seated female statue, most likely identifiable with a Muse (cat. no. 19), 1 female

1 BARTOCCINI 1929; FINOCCHI 2012.

2 FLORIANI SQUARCIAPINO 1974; FINOCCHI 2015.

3 AURIGEMMA 1941; MUSSO 1996a; DI VITA, LIVADIOTTI 2005.

4 CAPUTO, TRAVERSARI 1976.

5 DI VITA *et al.* 2003; KREIKENBOM 2005.

6 EQUINI SCHNEIDER, BIANCHI 1990; MUSSO 1996b; BUCCINO 2014.

Cat. no.	Object	Inv. no.	Provenance	Chronology
1	Headless draped female portrait-statue in Ceres type	L002300	Mausoleum of Gasr Duirat	First half of the 2 nd c. AD
2	Headless draped female portrait-statue in Large Herculeum Woman type	L002310	West to Wadi er-Rsaf funerary area	2 nd c. AD
3	Fragmentary relief with a female captive	L002301	Severan Arch	Early 3 rd c. AD
4	Headless draped female ideal statue (Muse)	L002304	-	2 nd c. AD
5	Headless draped female ideal statue (peplophoros)	L002305	-	2 nd c. AD
6	Headless togate statue	L002306	North to the passageway along the front side of the Severan Basilica	Early 2 nd c. AD
7	Headless togate statue	L002307	-	Late 1 st - early 2 nd c. AD
8	Headless togate statue	L002308	-	Late 2 nd - early 3 rd c. AD
9	Headless togate statue	L002309	-	1 st c. AD
10	Headless togate statue	L002333	Severan Forum, exedra, left niche	Late 2 nd - early 3 rd c. AD
11	Headless draped female ideal statue	L002332	Scavi Nuovi, Unfinished Baths	2 nd c. AD (?)
12	Headless togate statue	L002312	Old Forum	Late 2 nd - early 3 rd c. AD
13	Headless togate statue	L002311	-	Late 3 rd c. AD
14	Lower part of a togate statue	L002313	-	2 nd c. AD
15	Lower part of a togate statue	L002314	Hadrianic Baths, eastern exedra	First half of the 2 nd c. AD
16	Headless herm	L002315	-	Early 2 nd c. AD (?)
17	Headless togate statue of a boy with bulla	L002316	Severan Forum	Second half of the 1 st c. AD
18	Lower part of a draped female portrait-statue in Small Herculeum Woman type	L002317	-	1 st c. AD
19	Headless draped female ideal seated statue (Muse?)	L002318	Old Forum	Second half of the 2 nd c. AD
20	Headless togate statue	L002319	Severan Forum	2 nd c. AD
21	Headless draped female statue (peplophoros)	L002320	-	Late 2 nd - early 3 rd c. AD
22	Headless togate statue	L002322	-	2 nd c. AD
23	Headless togate statue	L002321	Theatre	1 st c. AD
24	Headless togate statue	L002323	Theatre	1 st c. AD
25	Headless draped female portrait-statue in Eumachia-Fundilia type (variant)	L002324	-	2 nd c. AD
26	Headless draped female portrait-statue in Large Herculeum Woman type	L002325	Calchidicum	2 nd c. AD
28	Headless togate statue	L002327	Theatre	1 st c. AD
29	Headless togate statue	L002328	Old Forum	1 st c. AD
30	Lower part of a togate statue	L002329	-	2 nd c. AD
31	Lower part of a togate statue	L002330	Area around the Serapeum	2 nd c. AD
32	Cuirassed torso	L002342	-	1 st c. AD
34	Headless male ideal statue (Aesculapius)	2322	Hadrianic Baths, frigidarium	Second half of the 2 nd c. AD
35	Headless draped female portrait-statue in Large Herculeum Woman type	2323	-	2 nd c. AD
36	Colossal headless female ideal statue (Virtus)	2161-2	once Tripoli, Orthodox Cemetery	Late 1 st - early 2 nd c. AD
37	Draped female portrait-statue in Orans type	498	Serapeum	Second half of the 2 nd c. AD
38	Draped female ideal statue (Tyche)	506	Serapeum	Second half of the 2 nd c. AD

Table 1. General overview of the 36 sculptures from Lepcis Magna with archaeological and chronological indications and analytical results of the tested marbles (isotopic data for sculpture cat. no. 38 are taken from LAZZARINI, TURI 2003)

Dolom. %	MGS mm	$\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ‰	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ‰	Intensity %	Distance	Prob.Rel. %	Prob.Ass %	Marble provenance
0	0.9	-7.73	2.60	155.0	0.6	100	99	Pentelic
0	0.9	-4.59	2.91	643	30	59	~ 0	Pentelic
0	1.75	-1.88	4.03	8.5	7.4	95	20	Proconnesos
0	1.1	-2.87	1.86	47.8	2.3	73	80	Luna
0	0.45	-2.16	2.08	21.9	8.7	88	12	Luna
100	1.3	-4.17	3.58	22.3	7	98	22	Thasos, Cape Vathy
0	0.65	-1.77	2.03	17.2	8.7	79	12	Luna
0	1.4	-1.07	2.78	17.3	5.9	79	32	Proconnesos
0	0.52	-1.78	2.11	63.9	5.9	100	32	Luna
0	1.4	-1.11	2.98	3.5	2.1	97	83	Proconnesos
0	0.8	-7.40	2.96	69.2	7.1	85	21	Pentelic
0	0.9	-2.70	4.91	3.3	8.2	99	15	Paros I Lychnites
21	0.55	-1.93	2.10	91.6	1.3	100	93	Luna
0	2.25	-3.80	1.87	16.3	2.6	71	76	Aphrodisias
14	1.75	-2.84	2.36	26.6	3.2	51	68	Aphrodisias
100	1.3	-3.66	3.51	54.2	4.3	95	51	Thasos, Cape Vathy
0	0.45	-2.03	2.01	86.6	3.1	100	69	Luna
0	0.75	-4.91	4.21	37.6	7.8	88	17	Ephesos 1
0	0.8	-7.74	2.50	277.9	1.5	100	92	Pentelic
0	1.1	-2.48	2.28	11.4	4.2	35	52	Paros II, Marathi
0	0.65	-6.41	2.45	162.6	4.2	90	52	Pentelic
0	1.3	-2.75	4.84	6.5	2.5	100	77	Paros I Lychnites
0	2.5	-0.74	2.32	25.3	2.1	81	84	Paros II, Chorodaki
0	0.7	-1.83	2.08	62.2	0.1	100	100	Luna
0	0.7	-1.44	2.42	22.9	2.6	93	76	Luna
26	0.7	-7.32	2.84	310.5	1.7	100	90	Pentelic
0	0.5	-1.52	2.34	67.8	2.1	100	83	Luna
0	0.4	-2.18	1.92	104.4	6.1	85	30	Luna
0	0.6	-1.87	2.31	55.9	1.0	100	97	Luna
0	1.1	-6.68	2.65	156.7	0.3	99	100	Pentelic
0	1.1	-4.27	2.48	151.4	1.7	92	89	Docimium
0	1.3	-3.53	2.77	8.8	4	67	55	Proconnesos
18	0.63	-5.86	2.74	135.3	3.5	81	62	Pentelic
0	0.45	-1.64	2.29	44.9	3.4	99	63	Luna
0	0.5	-2.69	3.00	1.6	5.4	81	38	Göktepe
-	fine	-2.82	2.50	-	-	-	-	Göktepe

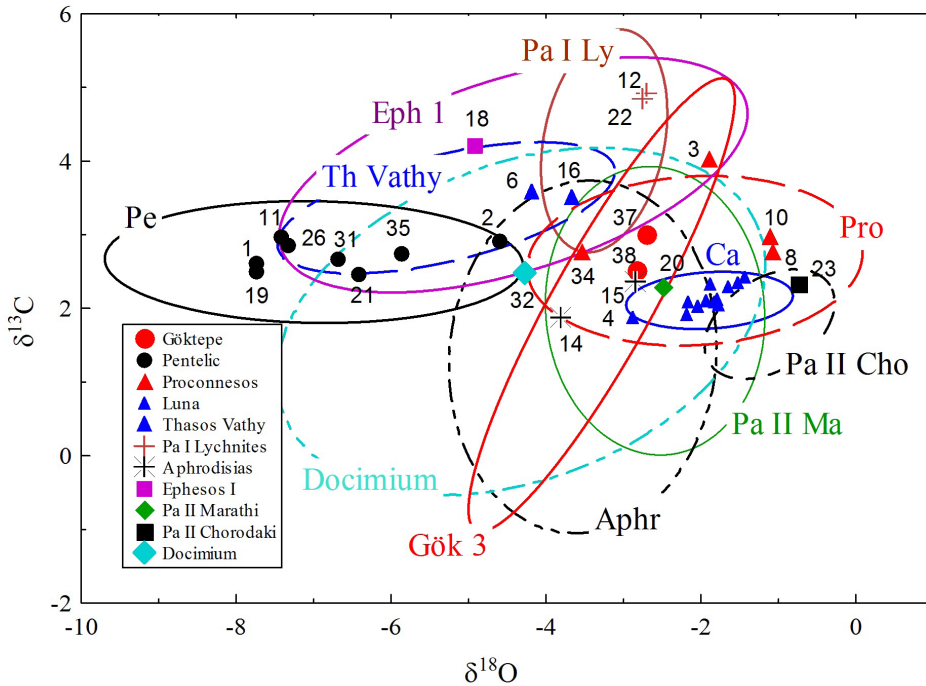


Fig. 1.
Isotopic diagram with
plotted data of the 36
Lepcis sculptures

figure wearing an Amazon style dress which has been interpreted as Dea Roma or, more likely, Virtus (cat. no. 36), 1 Tyche (cat. no. 38, Fig. 5), 1 unidentified (cat. no. 11) and 1 peplophoros (cat. no. 5; the second peplophoros, cat. no. 21, could be a portrait-statue). The sample also includes 1 male ideal statue of Aesculapius (cat. no. 34, Fig. 4), 1 cuirassed torso (cat. no. 32), 1 fragment of a relief showing a captive woman from the Severan Arch (cat. no. 3), and finally 1 headless herm (cat. no. 16). From a total of 36 pieces, 20 provenances are known with certainty (Tab. 1): the largest groups come from the Severan Complex (4), the Old Forum (3), the Theatre (3), the Serapeum (3), the Hadrianic Baths (2); the Calchidicum, the Severan Arch, the area of the so-called “Scavi Nuovi” next to the Unfinished Baths, the area of the Mausoleum of Gasr Duirat, and the funerary area of Wadi er-Rsaf are all represented only by one specimen.

The chronological range of the sculptures is quite large and, based on a still preliminary study, it extends from the 1st to the mid-late 3rd centuries AD.

The archaeometric analysis here presented, undertaken on a heterogeneous group of sculptures of provenance, typology, usages and chronology, provides the opportunity to combine observations about sculptural typology, style, and archaeological context of provenance, with those on the identification and origin of the marble. The aim of such an exercise is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the sculptural artefacts from Lepcis, from their execution to the identification of their workshops, and their place of production.

Archaeometric study

Since the eighties of the last century Susan Walker and Hafed Walda have been undertaking several sampling campaigns of different archaeological artefacts at Lepcis Magna, which included not only sculptures found in the city, but also a fair amount of architectural elements, such as the famous pillars of the Severan Basilica.⁷ Their analytical data were subsequently reviewed in comparison to the improved isotopic graphs, which over the years have undergone a remarkable transformation. In the following years other analyses were performed on more specific contexts, such as the Serapeum where several statues were discovered,⁸ while more recently archaeometric testing was undertaken on items of the Severan Complex,⁹ or on specific well attested marble types.¹⁰

In the frame of the Archaeological Mission of the University Roma Tre carried out in fall 2013, 31 statues in the Old Museum of Lepcis Magna (cat. nos. 1-26, 28-32) underwent archaeometric analysis with stable isotopes (Fig. 1), MGS, EPR (Tab. 1). To those we have added 5, previously analysed, statues, all of them on display in the Lepcis Museum (cat. nos. 34-38).

The obtained analytical data were compared with those of 15 Roman quarries (Tab. 2) of fine, medium and

7 WALKER, WALDA 1984; 1988.

8 LAZZARINI, TURI 2003.

9 BIANCHI *et al.* 2011; BIANCHI, BRUNO, PIKE 2015.

10 ATTANASIO *et al.* 2012.



Fig. 2. Lepcis Magna, Old Museum – Headless togate statue (cat. no. 24), Luna marble, from the Theatre (Archaeological Mission of the University Roma Tre, Fabian Baroni)



Fig. 3. Lepcis Magna, Old Museum – Headless draped female portrait-statue of the Ceres type (cat. no. 1), Pentelic marble, from the Mausoleum of Gasr Duirat (Archaeological Mission of the University Roma Tre, Fabian Baroni)

coarse grained white marble from Italy (Carrara/Luna), Greece (Pentelic; Paros I and II; Thasos Alike and Vathy) and Asia Minor (Göktepe; Aphrodisias; Docimium; Ephesos; Proconnesos).

It was thus possible to assign as many as 12 statues to the white Luna marble (cat. nos. 4-5, 7, 9, 13, 17, 24-25, 28-30, 36), followed by 8 statues of Pentelic (cat. nos. 1-2, 11, 19, 21, 26, 31, 35) and 4 sculptures of Proconnesian marble (cat. nos. 3, 8, 10, 34). The Parian lychnites from Marathi (cat. nos. 12, 22), the Paros II quality from Marathi/Chorodaki (cat. nos. 20, 23), the Cape Vathy marble from Thasos (cat. nos. 6, 16), and the Aphrodisian marble from the “city quarries” (cat. nos. 14-15) and that from Göktepe (cat. nos. 37-38) are each attested by two exemplars, while the white Docimium marble quality (cat. no. 32) and the coarser Ephesian marble (cat. no. 18) are present only once.

The white Göktepe marble was used for two statues from the Serapeum, the impressive female portrait-statue and the statue of Tyche (Figs. 5, 7).¹¹ Previously the marble

of these two sculptures was identified as Luna marble,¹² but the values of strontium and the high intensity of manganese allow us to attribute at least the draped female portrait-statue of the Orans type (cat. no. 37, Fig. 7) unequivocally to white Göktepe statuary marble, while for the statue of Tyche (cat. no. 38, Fig. 5) measurements are incomplete but the isotopic signature together with the fine grain of the marble unquestionably identifies Göktepe as the source quarry.¹³

White marbles and statues production at Lepcis Magna from the 1st to the 3rd century AD

The most surprising data detected by this first preliminary archaeometric study is that the majority of the sculptures are of Luna marble, for a total of 12 statues corresponding to 34%. The presence of Luna marble is totally unexpected and the fact that this marble is actually the

11 The statues are made of different pieces, but it was possible to sample only the lower ones of both sculptures. Nevertheless the marble quality of the other elements was identified macroscopically with the same high quality white Göktepe marble.

12 LAZZARINI, TURI 2003, 287-289.

13 The female portrait-statue (cat. no. 37) was resampled and tested again after macroscopic inspection and the autoptic identification with the white Göktepe marble. The statue of Tyche (cat. no. 38) was not accessible at that time and the archaeometric analysis could not be repeated.

No.	Site, no. of samples	MGS mm	$\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ‰	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ‰	EPR intensity %	EPR linewidth %
1	Carrara, 112	0.80 0.4, 1.4	-1.89 -3.0, -0.5	2.11 1.1, 2.6	68.5 10, 237	63.4 55, 80
2	Pentelicon, 154	0.96 0.6, 1.8	-7.00 -9.0, -3.8	2.63 1.9, 4.1	226.3 12.5, 1010	58.2 38, 100
10	Pa I, lychn, 41	1.70 1.0, 3.1	-3.25 -4.0, -2.6	4.27 3.0, 5.1	8.6 3.6, 22.8	48.6 41, 59
11	Pa II Ma, 28	2.11 1.0, 3.0	-2.59 -4.2, -1.9	1.97 -0.6, 3.4	9.8 3.6, 49.5	52.0 42, 59
12	Pa II Cho, 62	2.07 0.9, 3.0	-1.11 -2.6, -0.6	1.79 0.5, 2.2	19.5 1.8, 36.7	47.9 40, 57
13	Th Alike, 76	3.84 2.4, 7.5	-0.72 -4.8, 0.5	2.98 1.5, 3.6	130.8 3.6, 522.7	55.7 46, 69
14	Th Vathy, 37	1.85 0.9, 3.2	-5.29 -8.2, -3.2	3.37 2.0, 3.9	105.3 19.1, 633.9	75.8 62, 107
8	Göktepe 3, 72	0.62 0.2, 1.1	-3.33 -6.6, -2.6	2.11 -4.5, 3.4	3.5 1.1, 14.0	53.9 45, 64
9	Göktepe 4, 29	0.62 0.2, 1.3	-3.45 -7.1, -2.2	2.03 -1.5, 2.7	19.3 3.2, 47.1	46.0 37, 51
3	Docimium, 65	0.67 0.4, 1.2	-4.32 -7.7, -2.3	1.80 -1.4, 3.1	242.5 5.7, 626.6	53.9 40, 68
4	Aphrod, 103	2.12 0.1, 4.5	-3.53 -6.5, -2.05	1.34 -2.7, 2.6	43.4 3, 276	53.7 37, 72
5	Ephesos 1, 88	1.74 0.4, 4.6	-4.42 -8.3, -2.2	3.81 -0.6, 5.1	60.0 14.7, 51.3	56.4 42, 73
6	Ephesos 2, 38	1.71 1.3, 2.4	-3.14 -4.3, -2.6	0.35 -0.8, 1.5	41.8 23, 69	45.5 39, 60
7	Proconn 1, 380	1.72 0.4, 3.5	-2.08 -5.2, -0.3	2.65 -0.9, 3.9	6.0 0.8, 46.4	57.8 37, 87
15	Proconn 2, 14	1.68 1.2, 2.5	-6.78 -9.1, -5.5	2.59 2.3, 3.2	7.7 1.2, 53.1	58.9 40, 75

Table 2.
Summary of the database of the considered white marbles. Mean variable values are given in the first row, followed by minimum and maximum values in the second row. The isotopic and EPR variables are given as ‰ or % with respect to specific standards (Pee Dee Belemnite for isotopes and Dolomite N368 BCS for EPR). The maximum grain size (MGS) is given in mm

most attested is at odds with the evidence from the architectural materials in Lepcis¹⁴ and with what is so far known about the provenance of other sculptural marbles from North Africa.¹⁵ However it is clear that the Luna marble is among the earliest to have been used for statues of Lepcis and is the only one to be attested down to the late 3rd century AD. In fact, in the 1st century AD Luna marble is the most represented with 7 statues, 6 of which are togate (cat. nos. 7, 9, 17, 24, Fig. 2, 28-29), and one imposing statue of the goddess Roma, or rather Virtus (cat. no. 36), which dates between the 1st and the 2nd century AD. The Paros II from Chorodaki, the Ephesian and the white Docimian marble are attested only once, used respectively for a togate statue (cat. no. 23), a draped female portrait-statue (cat. no. 18) and a cuirassed torso (cat. no. 32).

The largest group of sculptures refers to the 2nd century AD, when Greek and Asiatic marbles take

precedence, but the use of Luna marble remains well attested. The most representative marble is the Attic Pentelic marble, with 6 female statues (cat. nos. 1, Figs. 3, 2, 11, 19, 26, 35), and one togate statue (cat. no. 31), followed by the Carian marbles: the marble from the so-called Aphrodisias “city quarries” attested by 2 togate statues (cat. nos. 14-15), and the fine grained marble from Göktepe quarry district used for 2 female statues from the Serapeum (cat. nos. 37-38, Figs. 5, 7). Luna marble is attested for 3 female statues (cat. nos. 4-5, 25) and one togate statue (cat. no. 30). The Parian marbles, to be distinguished in Lychnites Paros I from the Marathi valley (cat. no. 22) and Paros II from Marathi (cat. no. 20), were used for 2 togate statues, while the white dolomitic marble from Cape Vathy on Thasos island is attested twice, for a togate statue (cat. no. 6) and a headless herm (cat. no. 16). The coarse white-grey Proconnesian marble is attested only once, for a statue of Aesculapius from the frigidarium of the Hadrianic Baths (cat. no. 34, Fig. 4).

The period between the end of the 2nd and the early 3rd century AD is represented by 4 statues, made in three different marbles: the Parian Lychnites (cat. no. 12), and the Asiatic Proconnesian marble (cat. nos. 8, 10) were used for togate statues, while the Pentelic is

14 WARD PERKINS 1951; 1980; PENSABENE 2001, 2003; 2006; BRUNO, BIANCHI 2015, 31-46.

15 Cyrene and Cherchel represent two case-studies: ATTANASIO *et al.* 2006; ATTANASIO, BRUNO, LANDWEHR 2012; LANDWEHR *et al.* 2012-2013.



Fig. 4. Lepcis Magna, Museum – Headless statue of Aesculapius (cat. no. 34), Proconnesian marble, from the Hadrianic Baths (Archaeological Mission of the University Roma Tre, Fabian Baroni)



Fig. 5. Lepcis Magna, Museum – Statue of Tyche (cat. no. 38), Göktepe marble, from the Serapeum (Archaeological Mission of the University Roma Tre, Fabian Baroni)

represented by a peplophoros statue (cat. no. 21). In this period the use of Proconnesian marble gains prominence, a phenomenon amplified and made possible by the massive Severan building project, whose construction demanded the import from the quarries on Marmara Island of huge quantities of such material, as testified by the fragmentary relief with female captive from the Severan Arch (cat. no. 3). Finally, an additional togate statue made of Luna marble (cat. no. 13) may be dated to the late 3rd century AD.

Conclusions

At Lepcis Magna, the extensive use of marble in the public architecture begins with the construction of the great Hadrianic Baths, inaugurated in 137-138 AD, and reaches its peak, in terms of imported stocks, in the central decades of the 2nd century to continue in the Severan period: the Severan Complex testifies to the enormous imperial financial investment of L. Septimius Severus in his hometown.¹⁶

The picture of statuary marble provenance outlined so far bears witness to a variety of marbles of Greek and Asiatic origin already in the 1st century AD, in addition to the more attested Italic Luna marble. The number of marble types grows over the 2nd century, with a predominance of those of Greek origin, among which the Pentelic, accompanied yet by two insular qualities from Paros, the Lychnites and the Paros II variety, and Thasos, the dolomitic marble of Cape Vathy. With regard to Pentelic marble, its presence at Lepcis Magna is attested from a huge shapeless block recovered in the shipwreck found during the construction works of the new harbour of Misratah (Sidi Ahmad).¹⁷ What we know about the way Pentelic marble was marketed, would lead us to hypothesize that the shipments of shapeless blocks to be sculptured at destination were accompanied by Attic sculptors accustomed to a sophisticated and rich patronage,¹⁸ but nevertheless

16 BRUNO, BIANCHI 2015, 31-46.

17 BRUNO, BIANCHI 2015, 102.

18 For a very fine peplophoros statue in Pentelic marble, found in Lepcis Magna and dated to 1st century AD, see PORTALE 2012.



Fig. 6. Istanbul, Archaeological Museums – Draped female portrait-statue of the Ceres type, from Pisidian Antioch, sanctuary of Men (Photo courtesy of Roberto Lucignani, Rome)



Fig. 7. Lepcis Magna, Museum – Draped female portrait-statue of the Orans type (cat. no. 37), Göktepe marble, from the Serapeum (Archaeological Mission of the University Roma Tre, Fabian Baroni)

we should bear in mind that in the 2nd century AD many flourishing and accomplished local sculpture workshops were active in Lepcis (Fig. 3). These workshops could have met the demand of the local market and work with imported marbles, adapting to the stylistic trends in vogue at that time.

Significant too is the presence of Asiatic marbles, among them the white statuary from Göktepe for 2 female statues of the Serapeum, one an ideal type (cat. no. 38, Fig. 5), the other a portrait-statue (cat. no. 37, Fig. 7), which show remarkable stylistic differences even though they were made with the same material: the portrait-statue is stylistically very close to another from Pisidian Antioch (Fig. 6),¹⁹ whereas the ideal statue was executed in a less refined, more rigid way. The portrait-statue is, with some probability, an imported product, as would let us suppose the fact that it is executed in different pieces to be later reassembled, and it can therefore be assigned to a micro-Asiatic workshop. A different question is to

determine whether such workshop was based in Asia Minor or in Rome, since Rome worked as hub of artists and art pieces, other than as a production centre. As the case of the marble from Göktepe proves, the relation between material and those who sculpt it can be rather complex; there cannot be any simplistic assumption about the identity of provenance of material and artist. The evidence entails a wide range of possibilities: imported products, finished or almost-finished; statues sculpted by travelling artists, who work only with familiar marbles; local workshops working with imported marbles.

As for the Proconnesian marble, we can assume that, especially in the Severan age, unused architectural elements originally destined for the largest urban building projects of Lepcis, might have supplied local sculptural workshops; this phenomenon is well evidenced by a number of sculptures from the early 3rd century AD discovered in the so-called Nymphaeum of Hercules along the main road of Lepcis.²⁰ Two statues of Hercules (Fig. 8)

19 BUCCINO 2014, 23, Figs. 6-7.

20 TOMASELLO 2005, 57-111.



Fig. 8. Lepcis Magna, Museum – Statue of Hercules, with the remains of the reused architrave, Proconnesian marble, from the so-called Nymphaeum of Hercules (Archaeological Mission of the University Roma Tre, Matthias Bruno)

clearly show along their lower edge and on their back the remains of the decoration of the original architrave.²¹

In conclusion, this brief presentation shows the variety of issues raised by the archaeometric analysis of marbles combined with the formal study of the sculptures, beginning with the differentiation in terms of use of various marbles, also in connection with the cultural and commercial exchanges on the Mediterranean market of the Roman Empire.

The quite obvious connection between the type of marble and the provenance of the artists who travelled with the marble is plausible in the case of large and specific orders, but it cannot be assumed as the rule and must be carefully considered case by case. The knowledge of the local craftsmanship picture reveals a quite lively reality represented by workshops working with imported marble and reaching heterogeneous results with respect to quality of handcraft and influence of models.

To assess the relevance of the handcraft component that is foreign to the local context, we should not neglect the role of sculptural artefacts which are imported in a semi-worked condition or are completely finished and polished: they usually represent well defined and standardized types of works, as exemplified by the production of the Attic workshops for the export market.²²

These new data concerning the origins of sculpted marbles have provided an opportunity for dealing with an issue that moves from the provenance of the marbles to the core of artisanal production and its nodes and complexities. Such as, for example, the presence of foreign craftsmen in the local context, the importation of finished works, the ability to identify local production with a distinct style, but where different external influences are also visible, and finally the organization of the Tripolitanian workshops themselves.

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21 FLORIANI SQUARCIAPINO 1974, Pl. 81.

22 MUSSO 1996a.

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