

# Multiple Reuse of Imported Marble Pedestals at Caesarea Maritima in Israel

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# MULTIPLE REUSE OF IMPORTED MARBLE PEDESTALS AT CAESAREA MARITIMA IN ISRAEL

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## Abstract

In 1990, two columnar statue bases were found at the Promontory Palace (identified as the Palace of Herod the Great, later Praetorium of the Roman governors) at Caesarea in Israel. The inscriptions on the pedestals range from the mid-second century to the Tetrarchic period. The grey marble with stepped dark bands of which both were made has been visually identified as coming from the quarry of Euromos in Caria. Each base was used at least four times after its initial import and use in Caesarea, having been turned or even flipped over to provide a new surface for inscription and an emplacement for the statue(s). There are other examples of this phenomenon at Caesarea, which like the rest of Israel had no native marble, and this study will show at what periods such intense reuse of marble occurred.

## Keywords

reuse of marble, inscriptions, Euromos quarry, Caesarea, Israel

Between 22 and 10 BCE, King Herod the Great of Judaea built one of the ancient world's largest artificial harbors on the coast of Israel, and founded a city around it, which he named Caesarea. He also built a seaside palace there for himself, and our team has excavated at the building so identified, which we call the Promontory Palace, since 1990.<sup>1</sup>

The land of Israel has no marble to speak of, so Herod mainly used local building materials for his palaces, though a few marble objects and tiles for *opus sectile* floors did trickle in.<sup>2</sup> Caesarea's local *kurkar* sandstone is unattractive and friable, but Herod's builders coated it with fine stucco and painted it so that it looked like more expensive marble or alabaster to the casual viewer. Most of the architectural fragments found in the Promontory Palace were exposed to the sea and have lost these coatings, unfortunately. Very little imported marble was used in the palace even after Herod's death in 4 BCE, when the Roman governors took over the building as their Praetorium, or headquarters. Many floors were mosaic and walls painted plaster, though varied marble wall revetments became popular around the second century, when marble was increasingly exported and shipped all around the Mediterranean.

In 1990, we found two columnar statue bases at the Promontory Palace. They lay in the seaside, residential part of the building, in the ruins of what had been a hypocaust-heated room in the early fourth century CE (Fig. 1). I published their inscriptions in 1993, and they were subsequently listed in the Joint Expedition to Caesarea's excavation report on the Greek and Latin Inscriptions, and later in the Caesarea volume of the *Corpus inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*.<sup>3</sup>

Palace. I would also like to thank Rina and Arnon Angert, Donato Attanasio, Matthias Bruno, Moshe Fischer, Peter Gendelman, Rivka Gersht, Kathryn Gleason, Holt Parker, Robert Tykot, and John Wallrodt for their help with the continuing study of these monuments; all errors are my own.

1 The excavation began as a joint effort of Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Its first season was directed by the late Ehud Netzer, who then allowed Kathryn Gleason and myself to take over as co-directors and permit-holders in subsequent seasons, but remained a valued collaborator. Palace and Praetorium: NETZER 2006, 106-112; BURRELL 1996. Special thanks to Katja Marasović and the other organizers of the ASMOSIA XI conference; it was a privilege to present monuments used under the tetrarchy at a conference in Diocletian's

2 FISCHER 1998, 36-37, 284-286; FISCHER 2012. Marble floor tiles at Herod's Third Palace in Jericho and his fortress, Cypros: SNYDER, AVRAHAM 2013. Ms. Snyder will publish a report on marble pieces found at the Promontory Palace in the excavation's final reports.

3 BURRELL 1993; LEHMANN, HOLUM 2000, nos. 12-17; *CIIP* 2 nos. 1266-1271. Such columnar statue bases are common in Caesarea, though rarer elsewhere: BURRELL 1993, 294; LEHMANN, HOLUM 2000, 7-8.





Fig. 1. Two marble pedestals as found in the Promontory Palace, Caesarea, August 1990 (Photo copyright Promontory Palace Excavations at Caesarea, Israel)

Extraordinarily, these pedestals were each used and inscribed at least five times, and the inscriptions can give us approximate dates for each reuse. Thus they themselves contain the documentation that may tell us when they were imported and how highly valued their dark grey banded marble seems to have been, despite the fact that words inscribed on this *cippolino*-like stone would have had to be brightly painted to be legible from any distance, as even modern photographs show that each pedestal's particular patterns and colors (Figs. 2, 3) almost completely obscure the lettering.

Both appear to be made of the same type of marble, probably having arrived from the quarry as a pair or part of a larger shipment. Donato Attanasio and Matthias Bruno have identified the stone from photographs, by its characteristic dark grey to black stepped bands, and attributed it to a recently rediscovered quarry in Euromos in Caria.<sup>4</sup> This quarry supplied the marble for local projects like a well-preserved Hadrianic temple to Zeus Lepsynos nearby, whose columns are helpfully labeled with the names of the dedicators who paid for them.<sup>5</sup> Drs. Attanasio and Bruno now recognize it as the source for marble objects found not just throughout Asia Minor, but in Israel, North Africa, and Italy.

Assuming that the two pedestals did come from the same quarry at Euromos, they may have remained close enough to one another over a span of almost two hundred years, perhaps in or near the Promontory Palace itself, that they ended up as they may have begun, with matching inscriptions as bases for a pair or a larger group of statues. But in the meantime, they each underwent

four or even five possible episodes of reuse, in extraordinarily complicated ways.

It is startling to consider how often these substantial pedestals, which now sit sedately in the Sdot Yam Museum near Caesarea, were manhandled over the course of time. Even moving them from their findspot to a safer place within the Promontory Palace took the efforts of our brawniest excavators, plus two local residents and a couple of volunteers from an Israeli army unit (Fig. 4), and I could only read and transcribe their various inscriptions as they rolled.<sup>6</sup>

When first imported, both bases were set with their torate necking rings up, and each had a text inscribed just below the rings. The statues were probably attached to a separate crowning member on top; there are no anchoring holes on top or bottom of either base. We cannot tell whom the first inscriptions commemorated, as both of them were subsequently thoroughly erased for reuse.

The statues also had to be removed, because for this reuse both bases were turned upside down. It is therefore unlikely that the actual statues, whether bronze or marble, were simply reused without change; if they had been, the workers could have just rotated them on their pedestals to get a fresh writing surface, or the new inscriptions could have been chiseled over the erasure of the old ones. On the contrary, as both pedestals were turned upside down, here the choice must have been to remove the statues completely.<sup>7</sup>

Pedestal 1 got its second inscription for a very important official, the senatorial governor of the province, Decimus Seius Seneca, who probably lived in the Promontory Palace itself from 155 to 157 CE (Fig. 2). In order to present a smooth face for the elegant Latin letters, the upside-down base was turned around, where the opposite side from the erasure presented a new surface. Pedestal 2 was similarly turned upside down, but its erased first inscription was left exposed on the front. Its new statue was of a philosopher, Flavius Maximus, hailed as patron by Varius Seleukos, curator of ships of the colony of Caesarea; so this was a private dedication, in Greek, the cultured language suitable to philosophy (Fig. 3). This inscription was itself cut into a lightly chiseled area, so it is possible that there was even *another* inscription before it; and three holes evenly spaced around the shaft

4 Personal communications of D. Attanasio, Sept. 4, 2014, and M. Bruno, May 6, 2015; see their article on the Euromos quarry in this volume.

5 BARRESI 2003, 348-350.

6 BURRELL, GLEASON, NETZER 1993, 50, 56-57, 76.

7 ECK (2010, 179) compared the reuse of these pedestals to that practiced by the Rhodians and decried by Dio Chrysostomos (*Oration 31, to the Rhodians* 9, 43, 72, 105, 107, 141), but they are not quite the same. The Rhodians left the ensemble of pedestal and statue in place, but erased the old inscription and engraved the name of a currently more powerful potentate on top.





Fig. 2. Pedestal 1, showing inscription honoring Decimus Seius Seneca, in Sdot Yam Museum, July 2013 (Photo copyright Promontory Palace Excavations at Caesarea, Israel)



Fig. 3. Pedestal 2, showing inscription honoring Flavius Maximus, in Sdot Yam Museum, July 2013 (Photo copyright Promontory Palace Excavations at Caesarea, Israel)

above the inscription were probably for attachments to hold a new statue or its support in place.<sup>8</sup>

Presumably some time elapsed before another change was made, and both pedestals received a third inscription. For these, pedestal 2 was simply turned around, so the Greek inscription and the previous erasure couldn't be seen, but pedestal 1, which already had two inscriptions on its opposite sides, was turned back right side up (again, ensuring that its statue must have been removed), and its third inscription added on the same side on which the second inscription, for the governor Seneca, stood. Unfortunately, these third inscriptions were later thoroughly erased from both bases, so we can't tell when or for whom they were written.

In the next stage, neither base was turned upside down, so it is just possible that the statues stayed in place, though there is no way to tell. Both were reinscribed

to honor the emperor Probus, who reigned from 276 to 282. To attain the space for a fourth inscription, pedestal 1 was kept right side up and just turned around to the opposite side, so the new inscription went on top of the original but erased first inscription; pedestal 2 was also turned around but remained upside down, and the new inscription was engraved over the erased third inscription. The dedicators were two different governors of Syria Palaestina, Acilius Cleobulus (pedestal 1) and Passenianus (pedestal 2), so the dedications must have been in different years, even if for the same emperor.

Though Probus was officially deified after his death, both his inscriptions, and likely his statues, were replaced by new ones on these bases perhaps as few as eleven years later. Pedestal 1 remained right side up and was again rotated 180°, so that a new fifth inscription could be added over the erasure of the third and part of the second. But pedestal 2 was now also turned right side up, again assuring that its statue had to be removed, and rotated 180° so its fifth inscription could be written over the erasure of its first. This meant that both pedestals finally stood again with necking rings up, marking them more clearly as a pair. The new inscriptions were for the

8 One of the holes falls directly and noticeably above the center of the Flavius Maximus inscription; the holes could also have been associated with the fourth inscription, for Probus, on the opposite side.



Fig. 4. Ehud Netzer (in white hat) supervising one of the inscribed pedestals being moved from its findspot in the Promontory Palace, August 1990 (Photo copyright Promontory Palace Excavations at Caesarea, Israel)

two junior members of the Tetrarchy, the Caesars Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, and this time both were dedicated by the same governor of the province, Aufidius Priscus.<sup>9</sup> Thus they were more likely part of a group, almost certainly including two other statues and pedestals, as the senior emperors Diocletian and Maximian would have had to be honored as well. These tetrarchic memorials must have been installed in the Praetorium between 293 and 305.

Even if the erased first inscriptions on these pedestals were made only a generation before the second one on pedestal 1, that brings us to around 125, early in the reign of Hadrian. That was a great time for expansion of

the marble trade throughout the Mediterranean, though in this province also the unsettled period that led up to the Second Jewish Revolt. Caesarea was the major seaport of the province, and shiploads of foreign marble would naturally be landed there.<sup>10</sup> Many pieces would have stayed, as this was a wealthy city of Helleno-Roman culture, as well as the headquarters of the governor; but some undoubtedly filtered inland to fill demand in other important cities, like Nysa-Scythopolis, or Hippos-Sussita in the Decapolis.<sup>11</sup> It would be interesting to trace the path of similar pedestals as they made their way to these more remote destinations; their inscriptions might also track their history.

There are other examples of frequent reuse at Caesarea, especially for grey marbles. For example, a similar grey columnar base with necking bands was found in the headquarters of the financial procurator of the province.<sup>12</sup> Its earliest inscription dates to the reign of Caracalla, which was replaced by another, subsequently erased, and then another, also erased, before it got a late third century inscription for an acting governor. Finally it was used for a statue of Diocletian, which makes it part of another four-person tetrarchic monument similar to the last use of the pedestals from the Promontory Palace, though dedicated by a different official, the financial procurator of the province. Though likely imported to the site later than our two pedestals, it too was used five times in total, though it remains to be seen whether it came from the Euromos quarry or some other source of *bigio*-type stone.

Another stone that shows persistent reuse at Caesarea is a colorful breccia, described in the publications as either “purple and yellow limestone” or “purplish/pale yellow limestone”; those who publish inscriptions now, commendably, include pictures of the actual object, but still tend to treat the stone as if it were merely a surface for text, rather than being of importance in its own right. The first pedestal in this stone started with a securely dated third century inscription to a prefect of Mesopotamia and Osrhoene, and was then turned around to the

9 The same governor apparently dedicated another set of Tetrarchs, found in front of the Praetorium, as well: *CIIP* 2 no. 1272 is a grey granite columnar base dedicated by Aufidius Priscus to Galerius Caesar; it bears no trace of reuse, nor do the two other round granite columnar bases found in Caesarea, both with late antique metrical inscriptions: *CIIP* 2 nos. 1260, 1264 (see below, n. 15).

10 FISCHER 1998, esp. 259-261; RUSSELL 2013, 151-153.

11 PEARL, MAGARITZ 1991 compared white marble sources from Scythopolis and Caesarea, distinguishing marbles that came as groups for particular monuments. For colored marbles in Sussita, SEGAL, EISENBERG 2015, 572, for the blue-grey marble pedestal similar in color to the Promontory Palace pedestals, with inscription dating to 238/9 CE (ŁAJTAR 2013, 253-256 no. 3); and 568, showing the varied marble and granite columns of the South Church/Cathedral.

12 *CIIP* 2 nos. 1284, 1288, 1286 (in date order) = LEHMANN, HOLM 2000, nos. 4, 5, 6; ECK 2010, 179.



opposite side and, without erasure, reused shortly after for the statue of a financial procurator.<sup>13</sup> The other began with a second or third century inscription for a senatorial governor of the province, which was erased and turned around to bear a statue of Maximian as Augustus.<sup>14</sup> Neither got turned upside down or reused further. If they were imported as a pair, they probably arrived after Caesarea received the title *metropolis*, which appears on them, during the reign of Severus Alexander (222-235), and were in use as late as the Tetrarchic period, up to 293 CE. It is not unexpected that almost all of these pedestals were reused in the time of the Tetrarchs, since four times as many statue bases would have been needed just to commemorate the current emperors.

Columnar bases not only adapted well to this habit of reuse, they may have prompted the cutting down of full columns, and perhaps the salvaging of damaged ones, for reuse as pedestals for statues. Despite the fact that granite is a difficult medium to inscribe, at least two grey granite bases found at Caesarea were probably trimmed down from monolithic columns for such reuse.<sup>15</sup> At 69 and 75 centimeters respectively, their top diameters are far larger than that needed for other columnar statue bases found at Caesarea. Both have single inscriptions with late antique letter forms, and both inscriptions were written in meter. Fortunately, one commemorates a known personality, Nomus, the *magister officiorum* of the East, giving a secure date from 443 to 446 CE for its inscription.

There is much other evidence for a deeply conservationist attitude towards marbles at Caesarea, probably due to decreasing ability to access new stone in a country without its own marble at a time when both the building boom and long distance trade in architectural elements may have begun to falter, after the Severan period.<sup>16</sup> The Promontory Palace has produced scraps of opisthographic inscriptions, where even a thin marble plaque was turned over and reinscribed, and there are others from Caesarea

with more substantial texts.<sup>17</sup> Even more common are cases where damaged inscribed plaques have been recut so that their plain sides could be used for revetment, though those texts are rarely extensive enough to be datable.

The two marble pedestals from the Promontory Palace can already tell us a good deal about their lifetime of frequent use and change over about 170 years. We will continue to pursue the question of their origin using scientific testing. The evidence of these pedestals, when allied with that from similar bases found elsewhere in Caesarea and in the cities beyond, can give much-needed chronology to less precisely datable marble architectural elements and statuary, and can illumine the import and reuse of foreign stones in Israel.

13 CIIP 2 nos. 1278, 1279 = LEHMANN, HOLUM 2000, nos. 10, 11.

14 CIIP 2 nos. 1234, 1213 = LEHMANN, HOLUM 2000, nos. 8, 9.

15 LEHMANN, HOLUM 2000, nos. 25, 26 = CIIP 2 nos. 1260, 1264, the former with inscription for a golden statue of Nomus. See above n. 9 for another grey granite pedestal, CIIP 2 no. 1272, dedicated by Aufidius Priscus to Galerius Caesar; this has a smaller diameter than the others, 63.5 cm at the top, but at 2.73 m. is unusually tall, despite having been trimmed down.

16 FISCHER 1998, esp. 267; RUSSELL 2013, 17-18 on the chronology of demand, 115-118 on the shipwreck evidence.

17 E.g., CIIP 2 nos. 1246 and 1802, 1891, 1922, 1928.

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