

Imperial Porphyry in Roman Britain

F. Williams, David

Source / Izvornik: **ASMOSIA XI, Interdisciplinary Studies on Ancient Stone, Proceedings of the XI International Conference of ASMOSIA, 2018, 435 - 441**

Conference paper / Rad u zborniku

Publication status / Verzija rada: **Published version / Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)**

<https://doi.org/10.31534/XI.asmosia.2015/02.28>

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:123:932784>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-02-19**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[FCEAG Repository - Repository of the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy, University of Split](#)



UNIVERSITY OF SPLIT


DIGITALNI AKADEMSKI ARHIVI I REPOZITORIJI



ASMOSIA XI

Interdisciplinary Studies on Ancient Stone

PROCEEDINGS

of the XI ASMOSIA Conference, Split 2015

Edited by Daniela Matetić Poljak and Katja Marasović



Interdisciplinary Studies on Ancient Stone
Proceedings of the XI ASMOSIA Conference (Split 2015)

Publishers:

ARTS ACADEMY IN SPLIT
UNIVERSITY OF SPLIT

and

UNIVERSITY OF SPLIT
FACULTY OF CIVIL ENGINEERING,
ARCHITECTURE AND GEODESY

Technical editor:
Kate Bošković

English language editor:
Graham McMaster

Computer pre-press:
Nikola Križanac

Cover design:
Mladen Čulić

Cover page:

Sigma shaped mensa of pavonazzetto marble from Diocletian's palace in Split

ISBN 978-953-6617-49-4 (Arts Academy in Split)

ISBN 978-953-6116-75-1 (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy)

e-ISBN 978-953-6617-51-7 (Arts Academy in Split)

e-ISBN 978-953-6116-79-9 (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy)

CIP available at the digital catalogue of the University Library in Split, no 170529005

Association for the Study of Marble & Other Stones in Antiquity

ASMOSIA XI

Interdisciplinary Studies of Ancient Stone

Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of ASMOSIA,
Split, 18–22 May 2015

Edited by
Daniela Matetić Poljak
Katja Marasović



Split, 2018

Nota bene

All papers are subjected to an international review.

The quality of the images relies on the quality of the originals provided by the authors.

CONTENT

PRESENTATION	15
NECROLOGY: NORMAN HERZ (1923-2013) by Susan Kane	17
1. APPLICATIONS TO SPECIFIC ARCHEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS – USE OF MARBLE	
Hermaphrodites and Sleeping or Reclining Maenads: Production Centres and Quarry Marks <i>Patrizio Pensabene</i>	25
First Remarks about the Pavement of the Newly Discovered Mithraeum of the Colored Marbles at Ostia and New Investigations on Roman and Late Roman White and Colored Marbles from Insula IV, IX <i>Massimiliano David, Stefano Succi and Marcello Turci</i>	33
Alabaster. Quarrying and Trade in the Roman World: Evidence from Pompeii and Herculaneum <i>Simon J. Barker and Simona Perna</i>	45
Recent Work on the Stone at the Villa Arianna and the Villa San Marco (Castellammare di Stabia) and Their Context within the Vesuvian Area <i>Simon J. Barker and J. Clayton Fant</i>	65
Marble Wall Decorations from the Imperial Mausoleum (4 th C.) and the Basilica of San Lorenzo (5 th C.) in Milan: an Update on Colored Marbles in Late Antique Milan <i>Elisabetta Neri, Roberto Bugini and Silvia Gazzoli</i>	79
Sarcophagus Lids Sawn from their Chests <i>Dorothy H. Abramitis and John J. Herrmann</i>	89
The Re-Use of Monolithic Columns in the Invention and Persistence of Roman Architecture <i>Peter D. De Staebler</i>	95
The Trade in Small-Size Statues in the Roman Mediterranean: a Case Study from Alexandria <i>Patrizio Pensabene and Eleonora Gasparini</i>	101
The Marble Dedication of Komon, Son of Asklepiades, from Egypt: Material, Provenance, and Reinforcement of Meaning <i>Patricia A. Butz</i>	109
Multiple Reuse of Imported Marble Pedestals at Caesarea Maritima in Israel <i>Barbara Burrell</i>	117
Iasos and Iasian Marble between the Late Antique and Early Byzantine Eras <i>Diego Peirano</i>	123

Thassos, Known Inscriptions with New Data <i>Tony Kozelj and Manuela Wurch-Kozelj</i>	131
The Value of Marble in Roman <i>Hispalis</i> : Contextual, Typological and Lithological Analysis of an Assemblage of Large Architectural Elements Recovered at N° 17 Goyeneta Street (Seville, Spain) <i>Ruth Taylor, Oliva Rodríguez, Esther Ontiveros, María Luisa Loza, José Beltrán and Araceli Rodríguez</i>	143
<i>Giallo Antico</i> in Context. Distribution, Use and Commercial Actors According to New Stratigraphic Data from the Western Mediterranean (2 nd C. Bc – Late 1 st C. Ad) <i>Stefan Ardeleanu</i>	155
<i>Amethystus</i> : Ancient Properties and Iconographic Selection <i>Luigi Pedroni</i>	167
2. PROVENANCE IDENTIFICATION I: (MARBLE)	
Unraveling the Carrara – Göktepe Entanglement <i>Walter Prochaska, Donato Attanasio and Matthias Bruno</i>	175
The Marble of Roman Imperial Portraits <i>Donato Attanasio, Matthias Bruno, Walter Prochaska and Ali Bahadir Yavuz</i>	185
Tracing Alabaster (Gypsum or Anhydrite) Artwork Using Trace Element Analysis and a Multi-Isotope Approach (Sr, S, O) <i>Lise Leroux, Wolfram Kloppmann, Philippe Bromblet, Catherine Guerrot, Anthony H. Cooper, Pierre-Yves Le Pogam, Dominique Vingtain and Noel Worley</i>	195
Roman Monolithic Fountains and Thasian Marble <i>Annewies van den Hoek, Donato Attanasio and John J. Herrmann</i>	207
Archaeometric Analysis of the Alabaster Thresholds of Villa A, Oplontis (Torre Annunziata, Italy) and New Sr and Pb Isotopic Data for <i>Alabastro Ghiaccione del Circeo</i> <i>Simon J. Barker, Simona Perna, J. Clayton Fant, Lorenzo Lazzarini and Igor M. Villa</i>	215
Roman Villas of Lake Garda and the Occurrence of Coloured Marbles in the Western Part of “Regio X Venetia et Histria” (Northern Italy) <i>Roberto Bugini, Luisa Folli and Elisabetta Roffia</i>	231
Calcitic Marble from Thasos in the North Adriatic Basin: Ravenna, Aquileia, and Milan <i>John J. Herrmann, Robert H. Tykot and Annewies van den Hoek</i>	239
Characterisation of White Marble Objects from the Temple of Apollo and the House of Augustus (Palatine Hill, Rome) <i>Francesca Giustini, Mauro Brilli, Enrico Gallochio and Patrizio Pensabene</i>	247
Study and Archeometric Analysis of the Marble Elements Found in the Roman Theater at Aeclanum (Mirabella Eclano, Avellino - Italy) <i>Antonio Mesisca, Lorenzo Lazzarini, Stefano Cancelliere and Monica Salvadori</i>	255

Two Imperial Monuments in Puteoli: Use of Proconnesian Marble in the Domitianic and Trajanic Periods in Campania <i>Irene Bald Romano, Hans Rupprecht Goette, Donato Attanasio and Walter Prochaska</i>	267
Coloured Marbles in the Neapolitan Pavements (16 th And 17 th Centuries): the Church of <i>Santi Severino e Sossio</i> <i>Roberto Bugini, Luisa Folli and Martino Solito</i>	275
Roman and Early Byzantine Sarcophagi of Calcitic Marble from Thasos in Italy: Ostia and Siracusa <i>Donato Attanasio, John J. Herrmann, Robert H. Tykot and Annewies van den Hoek</i>	281
Revisiting the Origin and Destination of the Late Antique Marzamemi 'Church Wreck' Cargo <i>Justin Leidwanger, Scott H. Pike and Andrew Donnelly</i>	291
The Marbles of the Sculptures of Felix Romuliana in Serbia <i>Walter Prochaska and Maja Živić</i>	301
Calcitic Marble from Thasos and Proconnesos in Nea Anchialos (Thessaly) and Thessaloniki (Macedonia) <i>Vincent Barbin, John J. Herrmann, Aristotle Mentzos and Annewies van den Hoek</i>	311
Architectural Decoration of the Imperial Agora's Porticoes at Iasos <i>Fulvia Bianchi, Donato Attanasio and Walter Prochaska</i>	321
The Winged Victory of Samothrace - New Data on the Different Marbles Used for the Monument from the Sanctuary of the Great Gods <i>Annie Blanc, Philippe Blanc and Ludovic Laugier</i>	331
Polychrome Marbles from the Theatre of the Sanctuary of Apollo Pythios in Gortyna (Crete) <i>Jacopo Bonetto, Nicolò Mareso and Michele Bueno</i>	337
Paul the Silentiary, Hagia Sophia, Onyx, Lydia, and Breccia Corallina <i>John J. Herrmann and Annewies van den Hoek</i>	345
Incrustations from Colonia Ulpia Traiana (Near Modern Xanten, Germany) <i>Vilma Ruppiniè and Ulrich Schüssler</i>	351
Stone Objects from Vindobona (Austria) – Petrological Characterization and Provenance of Local Stone in a Historico-Economical Setting <i>Andreas Rohatsch, Michaela Kronberger, Sophie Insulander, Martin Mosser and Barbara Hodits</i>	363
Marbles Discovered on the Site of the Forum of Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse, France): Preliminary Results <i>Elsa Roux, Jean-Marc Mignon, Philippe Blanc and Annie Blanc</i>	373
Updated Characterisation of White Saint-Béat Marble. Discrimination Parameters from Classical Marbles <i>Hernando Royo Plumed, Pilar Lapeunte, José Antonio Cuchí, Mauro Brillì and Marie-Claire Savin</i>	379

Grey and Greyish Banded Marbles from the Estremoz Anticline in Lusitania <i>Pilar Lapuente, Trinidad Nogales-Basarrate, Hernando Royo Plumed, Mauro Brilli and Marie-Claire Savin</i>	391
New Data on Spanish Marbles: the Case of <i>Gallaecia</i> (NW Spain) <i>Anna Gutiérrez García-M., Hernando Royo Plumed and Silvia González Soutelo</i>	401
A New Roman Imperial Relief Said to Be from Southern Spain: Problems of Style, Iconography, and Marble Type in Determining Provenance <i>John Pollini, Pilar Lapuente, Trinidad Nogales-Basarrate and Jerry Podany</i>	413
Reuse of the <i>Marmora</i> from the Late Roman Palatial Building at Carranque (Toledo, Spain) in the Visigothic Necropolis <i>Virginia García-Entero, Anna Gutiérrez García-M. and Sergio Vidal Álvarez</i>	427
Imperial Porphyry in Roman Britain <i>David F. Williams</i>	435
Recycling of Marble: Apollonia/Sozousa/Arsuf (Israel) as a Case Study <i>Moshe Fischer, Dimitris Tambakopoulos and Yannis Maniatis</i>	443
Thasian Connections Overseas: Sculpture in the Cyrene Museum (Libya) Made of Dolomitic Marble from Thasos <i>John J. Herrmann and Donato Attanasio</i>	457
Marble on Rome's Southwestern Frontier: Thamugadi and Lambaesis <i>Robert H. Tykot, Ouahiba Bouzidi, John J. Herrmann and Annewies van den Hoek</i>	467
Marble and Sculpture at Lepcis Magna (Tripolitania, Libya): a Preliminary Study Concerning Origin and Workshops <i>Luisa Musso, Laura Buccino, Matthias Bruno, Donato Attanasio and Walter Prochaska</i>	481
The Pentelic Marble in the Carnegie Museum of Art Hall of Sculpture, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania <i>Albert D. Kollar</i>	491
Analysis of Classical Marble Sculptures in the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta <i>Robert H. Tykot, John J. Herrmann, Renée Stein, Jasper Gaunt, Susan Blevins and Anne R. Skinner</i>	501
3. PROVENANCE IDENTIFICATION II: (OTHER STONES)	
Aphrodisias and the Regional Marble Trade. The <i>Scaenae Frons</i> of the Theatre at Nysa <i>Natalia Toma</i>	513
The Stones of Felix Romuliana (Gamzigrad, Serbia) <i>Bojan Djurić, Divna Jovanović, Stefan Pop Lazić and Walter Prochaska</i>	523
Aspects of Characterisation of Stone Monuments from Southern Pannonia <i>Branka Migotti</i>	537

The Budakalász Travertine Production <i>Bojan Djurić, Sándor Kele and Igor Rižnar</i>	545
Stone Monuments from Carnuntum and Surrounding Areas (Austria) – Petrological Characterization and Quarry Location in a Historical Context <i>Gabrielle Kremer, Isabella Kitz, Beatrix Moshhammer, Maria Heinrich and Erich Draganits</i>	557
Espejón Limestone and Conglomerate (Soria, Spain): Archaeometric Characterization, Quarrying and Use in Roman Times <i>Virginia García-Entero, Anna Gutiérrez García-M, Sergio Vidal Álvarez, María J. Peréx Agorreta and Eva Zarco Martínez</i>	567
The Use of Alcover Stone in Roman Times (<i>Tarraco, Hispania Citerior</i>). Contributions to the <i>Officina Lapidaria Tarraconensis</i> <i>Diana Gorostidi Pi, Jordi López Vilar and Anna Gutiérrez García-M.</i>	577
4. ADVANCES IN PROVENANCE TECHNIQUES, METHODOLOGIES AND DATABASES	
Grainautline – a Supervised Grain Boundary Extraction Tool Supported by Image Processing and Pattern Recognition <i>Kristóf Csorba, Lilla Barancsuk, Balázs Székely and Judit Zöldföldi</i>	587
A Database and GIS Project about Quarrying, Circulation and Use of Stone During the Roman Age in <i>Regio X - Venetia et Histria</i> . The Case Study of the Euganean Trachyte <i>Caterine Previato and Arturo Zara</i>	597
5. QUARRIES AND GEOLOGY	
The Distribution of Troad Granite Columns as Evidence for Reconstructing the Management of Their Production <i>Patrizio Pensabene, Javier Á. Domingo and Isabel Rodà</i>	613
Ancient Quarries and Stonemasonry in Northern Choria Considiana <i>Hale Güney</i>	621
Polychromy in Larisaeon Quarries and its Relation to Architectural Conception <i>Gizem Mater and Ertunç Denктаş</i>	633
Euromos of Caria: the Origin of an Hitherto Unknown Grey Veined Stepped Marble of Roman Antiquity <i>Matthias Bruno, Donato Attanasio, Walter Prochaska and Ali Bahadır Yavuz</i>	639
Unknown Painted Quarry Inscriptions from Bacakale at <i>Docimium</i> (Turkey) <i>Matthias Bruno</i>	651
The Green Schist Marble Stone of Jebel El Hairech (North West of Tunisia): a Multi-Analytical Approach and its Uses in Antiquity <i>Ameur Younès, Mohamed Gaied and Wissem Gallala</i>	659
Building Materials and the Ancient Quarries at <i>Thamugadi</i> (East of Algeria), Case Study: Sandstone and Limestone <i>Younès Rezkallah and Ramdane Marmi</i>	673

The Local Quarries of the Ancient Roman City of <i>Valeria</i> (Cuenca, Spain) <i>Javier Atienza Fuente</i>	683
The Stone and Ancient Quarries of Montjuïc Mountain (Barcelona, Spain) <i>Aureli Álvarez</i>	693
<i>Notae Lapidinarum</i> : Preliminary Considerations about the Quarry Marks from the Provincial Forum of <i>Tarraco</i> <i>Maria Serena Vinci</i>	699
The Different Steps of the Rough-Hewing on a Monumental Sculpture at the Greek Archaic Period: the Unfinished Kouros of Thasos <i>Danièle Braunstein</i>	711
A Review of Copying Techniques in Greco-Roman Sculpture <i>Séverine Moureaud</i>	717
Labour Forces at Imperial Quarries <i>Ben Russell</i>	733
Social Position of Craftsmen inside the Stone and Marble Processing Trades in the Light of Diocletian's Edict on Prices <i>Krešimir Bosnić and Branko Matulić</i>	741
6. STONE PROPERTIES, WEATHERING EFFECTS AND RESTORATION, AS RELATED TO DIAGNOSIS PROBLEMS, MATCHING OF STONE FRAGMENTS AND AUTHENTICITY	
Methods of Consolidation and Protection of Pentelic Marble <i>Maria Apostolopoulou, Elissavet Drakopoulou, Maria Karoglou and Asterios Bakolas</i>	749
7. PIGMENTS AND PAINTINGS ON MARBLE	
Painting and Sculpture Conservation in Two Gallo-Roman Temples in Picardy (France): Champlieu and Pont-Sainte-Maxence <i>Véronique Brunet-Gaston and Christophe Gaston</i>	763
The Use of Colour on Roman Marble Sarcophagi <i>Eliana Siotto</i>	773
New Evidence for Ancient Gilding and Historic Restorations on a Portrait of Antinous in the San Antonio Museum of Art <i>Jessica Powers, Mark Abbe, Michelle Bushey and Scott H. Pike</i>	783
Schists and Pigments from Ancient Swat (Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan) <i>Francesco Mariottini, Gianluca Vignaroli, Maurizio Mariottini and Mauro Roma</i>	793
8. SPECIAL THEME SESSION: „THE USE OF MARBLE AND LIMESTONE IN THE ADRIATIC BASIN IN ANTIQUITY”	
Marble Sarcophagi of Roman Dalmatia Material – Provenance – Workmanship <i>Guntram Koch</i>	809

Funerary Monuments and Quarry Management in Middle Dalmatia <i>Nenad Cambi</i>	827
Marble Revetments of Diocletian's Palace <i>Katja Marasović and Vinka Marinković</i>	839
The Use of Limestones as Construction Materials for the Mosaics of Diocletian's Palace <i>Branko Matulić, Domagoj Mudronja and Krešimir Bosnić</i>	855
Restoration of the Peristyle of Diocletian's Palace in Split <i>Goran Nikšić</i>	863
Marble Slabs Used at the Archaeological Site of Sorna near Poreč Istria – Croatia <i>Đeni Gobić-Bravar</i>	871
Ancient Marbles from the Villa in Verige Bay, Brijuni Island, Croatia <i>Mira Pavletić and Đeni Gobić-Bravar</i>	879
Notes on Early Christian Ambos and Altars in the Light of some Fragments from the Islands of Pag and Rab <i>Mirja Jarak</i>	887
The Marbles in the Chapel of the Blessed John of Trogir in the Cathedral of St. Lawrence at Trogir <i>Đeni Gobić-Bravar and Daniela Matetić Poljak</i>	899
The Use of Limestone in the Roman Province of Dalmatia <i>Edisa Lozić and Igor Rižnar</i>	915
The Extraction and Use of Limestone in Istria in Antiquity <i>Klara Buršić-Matijašić and Robert Matijašić</i>	925
Aurisina Limestone in the Roman Age: from Karst Quarries to the Cities of the Adriatic Basin <i>Caterina Previato</i>	933
The Remains of Infrastructural Facilities of the Ancient Quarries on Zadar Islands (Croatia) <i>Mate Parica</i>	941
The Impact of Local Geomorphological and Geological Features of the Area for the Construction of the Burnum Amphitheatre <i>Miroslav Glavičić and Uroš Stepišnik</i>	951
Roman Quarry Klis Kosa near Salona <i>Ivan Alduk</i>	957
Marmore Lavdata Brattia <i>Miona Miliša and Vinka Marinković</i>	963
Quarries of the Lumbarda Archipelago <i>Ivka Lipanović and Vinka Marinković</i>	979

Island of Korčula – Importer and Exporter of Stone in Antiquity <i>Mate Parica and Igor Borzić</i>	985
Faux Marbling Motifs in Early Christian Frescoes in Central and South Dalmatia: Preliminary Report <i>Tonči Borovac, Antonija Gluhan and Nikola Radošević</i>	995
INDEX OF AUTHORS	1009

IMPERIAL PORPHYRY IN ROMAN BRITAIN

David F. Williams, FSA

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton, Avenue Campus,
Southampton, Hampshire, United Kingdom (dfw@soton.ac.uk)

Abstract

Imperial porphyry was greatly admired during the Roman and Byzantine periods because the deep purple of the stone was closely associated with the chosen colour of the Emperor. Outcrops of this hard volcanic rock are extremely restricted and only found in a small area of the eastern Egyptian desert. The quarries were kept under close Imperial control, with the vast majority of the items produced only intended for Imperial use or patronage: sculpture, columns, baths, basins and sarcophagi.

The numbers of imported coloured marbles in Roman Britain are not great and are generally restricted to small individual pieces, many of which show signs of having been cut to shape, suggesting they were employed essentially as a luxury item for decorative purposes in selected buildings of Roman Britain, or perhaps as *pietra dura* in furniture. Amongst these imported coloured marbles are a small number of pieces of Imperial porphyry, associated with a limited number of sites.

Keywords

Opus Sectile, Wall Veneer, *Pietra Dura*

Introduction

Imperial porphyry (*porfido rosso antico*) was greatly admired during the Roman and Byzantine periods because the deep purple of the stone was a colour worn exclusively by the Emperor himself (Fig. 1, massive rare purple porphyry blocks continuing the ideology of the exclusivity of the emperor, even in death). When Constantine was converted to Christianity in AD 324, purple was also adopted as a church colour. Imperial porphyry is an extremely hard volcanic rock, so much so that during its reuse in the 16th century, Giorgio Vasari mentions that it could only be worked by tempering tools in goat blood (BROWN 1907, 31). An exaggeration no doubt, but nevertheless an indication of the difficulties of working the stone. The rock itself is spotted with white and pink plagioclase feldspar inclusions and has been described as a quartz-andesite (BASTIA *et al.* 1980, 122-123; WILLIAMS-THORPE *et al.* 2001, 306) or



Fig. 1. Massive Imperial Porphyry sarcophagus displayed outside the Istanbul Archaeological Museum; originally housed in the Imperial church of Hagia Eirene (photo: author)

a porphyritic dacite (KLEMM, KLEMM 2008, 274-276; Fig. 2 in the hand-specimen and Fig. 3 in this section). The distinctive purple colour of the groundmass is due largely to the presence of the mineral piemontite, a manganese-rich member of the epidote group.

The outcrops of this unique and distinctive looking purple rock are extremely restricted and are only found in a small, remote area of the Red Sea Mountain range of the eastern Egyptian desert, at Mons Porphyrites, modern Gebel Dokhan, the “smoky mountain” (PEACOCK, MAXFIELD 1994, 24-26; SAMPELL 2003, 161-162; MAXFIELD, PEACOCK 2001, *passim*; KLEMM, KLEMM 2008, 274-280). There are three main quarry areas at Mons Porphyrites, each located on a mountain top, known in modern terms as Lykabetos, Lepsius and North-West (MAXFIELD, PEACOCK 2001, 2). These quarries as a whole operated from the Tiberian period until the fifth century AD and were kept under close Imperial control. This is one of the driest parts of the world, which must have presented difficulties in provisioning the large workforce that was needed to extract the rock from high up the mountains, bring it down to base level and then roughly work it to take off the surplus stone. This, combined with the logistical problems of shipping the stone over desert and by ship to Rome, the principal destination, meant that a considerable effort was required to obtain a rock that, after all, only had decorative applications. However, this may in part have



Fig. 2. Texture of Imperial Porphyry, Lykabettus quarries, Mons Porphyrites (photo: author)

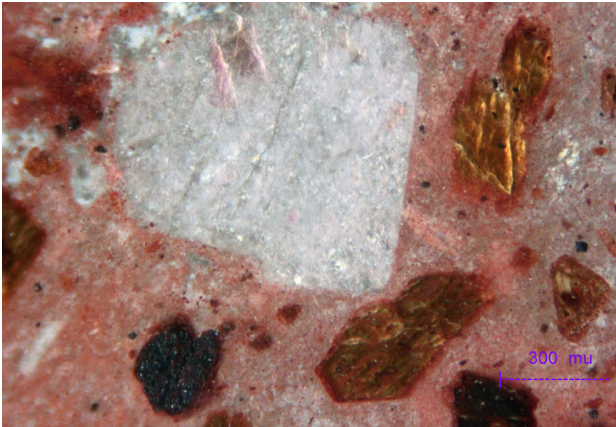


Fig. 3. Thin section showing the porphyritic texture of Imperial Porphyry (crossed nicols x 20). This shows a very fine groundmass with a large greyish-white lath-shaped phenocryst of altered plagioclase feldspar surrounded by coloured grains of basaltic hornblende (photo: author)

added to the stone's attractiveness, for it was a physical reminder of the power of the Roman Emperor, who could command large decorative stones to be brought to the capital from an inhospitable desert on the very outskirts of the Empire. This is a view already cogently argued by David Peacock to explain a similar situation in Egypt at the nearby Roman Imperial granite quarries of Mons Claudianus, which produced the famous *granito del foro* (PEACOCK 1992, 27-28).

Imperial porphyry was used selectively for sculpture, columns, baths, basins, sarcophagi and *opus sectile*, many of these items roughly finished in the quarries, and was almost always intended for Imperial use or patronage (MARMI ANTICHI 1998, 274; MALGOUYRES 2003, 27-43). Significant quantities of this stone are found in the Trajanic building projects at Rome but it became even more popular later, during the Tetrarchy and especially the Constantinian period, and its Imperial



Fig. 4. Statue of the Tetrarchs in Imperial Porphyry, fixed to a corner of St. Mark's Basilica, Venice (originally from the Philadelphion, Constantinople) (photo: B. Morris)

connotations ensured its continued popularity with the Byzantine Emperors (Fig. 4). In fact, so much Imperial porphyry was taken from Rome to Constantinople at this time, especially in the form of columns, that it was apparently known there as the "Roman stone" (MAXFIELD, PEACOCK, 2001, 320). Moreover, the "birthing" room in the Great Palace at Constantinople was clad with sheets of porphyry and called the *porphyra*, with the royal children born there given a special status as *porphyrogeniti*, hence the phrase "born to/in the purple" (MAXFIELD, PEACOCK 2001, 320). However, unlike the more exclusive *granito del foro*, small quantities did enter the private market, being used mostly as wall veneer, floor tiling and inlay, and the stone is listed in Diocletian's Price Edict of AD 301, which puts a high price of 250 denarii on a foot of porphyry (MALACRINO 2010, 30). The fact that the stone was such a rare commodity commanding a prodigious price, meant that it could only be afforded by the nobility; it therefore became a mark of rank and prestige. The special significance of the stone can also be seen in the fact that it was used to denote "Imperial" authority in both secular and religious contexts for many centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire (PEACOCK 1997, *passim*).

	Colchester	Fishbourne	London	Canterbury	Lincoln
Africano	59	0	0	0	0
Breccia Corallina	53	0	0	7	0
Cipollino	97	0	13	0	14
Giallo Antico	143	0	0	0	0
Porfido Verde	34	3	3	5	3
Pavonazzetto	181	1	20	4	6
Purbeck	182	630	71	Large quantity	1
Purple Porphyry	18	0	1	4	0
Rosso Antico	54	0	0	3	3
Rouge Antique	1	0	0	0	0
Travertine	1	0	0	0	0
Verde Antico	1	0	0	2	4
Campan Vert	0	22	15	0	0
Campan Rose	0	52	0	0	0
Pouillency Rose	0	62	0	0	0
Breccia Gialla	31	0	0	0	0

Fig 5. Numbers of Roman coloured marbles found at Fishbourne, London, Canterbury, Lincoln and the 4th century building at Colchester (cf. PEACOCK, WILLIAMS 1999)

Marble in Roman Britain

Exotic marble (i.e. different types of decorative stone that would take a high polish) was imported into Roman Britain from many sources all over the Mediterranean region and was used to decorate the more important urban buildings as well as the more luxurious villas. It was undoubtedly perceived as a symbol of wealth and power because it was imported, originating from some distance away, and thus expensive (ISSERLIN 1998, *passim*). It is most probable that this form of decoration was always limited to a few wealthy citizens who were receptive to new styles from abroad and could afford to pay well for their tastes. The thinness of many of these extant foreign marble fragments is indicative of their value and points to their use as wall sheathing and *opus sectile*, or perhaps as *pietra dura* in furniture, where the light-reflecting properties of the stones could be shown off to advantage. Moreover, these fragments were essentially small and easily transported, which made them a different proposition logistically to the massive and heavy marble columns and statues found

in other Roman provinces nearer to the actual quarry sites. Small pieces of coloured marble have been found in some quantity at town sites such as London, Colchester, Canterbury and Lincoln (PEACOCK, WILLIAMS 1999, 355-356). They are, however, mostly rare in British villas, with the large villa or “palace” at Fishbourne being alone in producing sizeable quantities (CUNLIFFE 1971, 15-37). Smaller numbers have come from villas such as Angmering and Woodchester and seem to date to the Flavian-Trajanic period (CLARKE 1982, Table 1). No marble columns have been found in the British province and comparatively few pieces of marble sculpture are known, with the exception of two sites, the Walbrook Mithraeum in London (TOYNBEE 1986, *passim*) and Woodchester Villa, Gloucestershire (CLARKE 1982, 207-209).

From this it is clear that imported decorative marbles were used far more sparingly than on the continent. The white marbles from Roman Britain (possibly representing some 30-40% of the total marble imports) are more difficult to characterize than the coloured ones that reached the province. A visual/hand-specimen identification based on the brightness of the white colour or the



Fig. 6. Polished slab of Purbeck marble showing texture (photo: author)

grain size, etc., is an uncertain method and can often be wrong. Indeed, samples from the same quarry can often be morphologically different, while samples from different quarries may have similar visual characteristics. Many archaeologists have assumed that the major source of white marbles found in Roman Britain are Italian on grounds of proximity and the prodigious output of the Carrara quarries. The late 1st century Richborough Monument, the only known building in Roman Britain to have external marble cladding (white), probably does suggest direct shipment from Italy, given the site's geographical position (STRONG 1968, 42). This view seems to be supported by spectroradiometry tests carried out at the University of Southampton, which point to a Carrara origin for the samples tested.

In Roman Britain, most of the coloured marble seems to have originated from the eastern Mediterranean region (particularly Asia Minor and Greece) or from the Pyrenees (see fig. 5; PEACOCK, WILLIAMS 1999, *passim*). Pritchard's (1986, fig. 4) survey of marble in Roman London identifies 21 different types found on 44 sites. This wide variety suggests that London may to some extent have been a secondary source of supply for other British sites, although differences in the pattern of distribution regarding Campan Vert from the Pyrenees may indicate other possibilities (PEACOCK, WILLIAMS 1999, 355). However, the current evidence shows that the overall sources of supply of coloured marbles to Britain were not constant and that chronological/geographical differences played a part in importation, due perhaps to difficulties of supply or changes in fashion. To supplement the relative paucity of coloured imported marbles, local materials, usually limestones that would take a fine polish (*lumachella* marbles), were used to a certain extent as decorative stones. The most important of these was Purbeck marble, which was exploited soon after the Roman Conquest. This is a hard freshwater limestone from the upper part of the Jurassic and found only on the Isle of Purbeck, south-eastern



Fig. 7. Left, small piece of shaped Imperial Porphyry from Rivenhall Roman Villa. Right, small piece of damaged Imperial Porphyry from excavations at Billericay (photos: author)

Dorset, though it had a very wide distribution. This dark coloured limestone is composed very largely of the fossilized shells of the small freshwater gastropod *Viviparus cariniferus*. The stone takes an exceptionally high polish, showing to good effect the many small, closely packed, circular fossil shells set in a fine-grained matrix, which combine to make a distinctive and attractive pattern on a smooth surface (Fig. 6). The colour is normally a bluish-grey but it can have a greenish or reddish tint.

Imperial Porphyry in Roman Britain

Imperial porphyry seems to have been used very sparingly in Roman Britain, a conclusion based on finds from the major towns and villas (Fig. 5 and below). In addition, there are no examples in a Roman context of that other Imperial Egyptian stone, the granodiorite from Mons Claudianus, the famous *granito del foro*, which overall seems to have had a much more restricted distribution in the Roman Empire. Thin strips of Imperial porphyry, veneer or *opus sectile*, it has been suggested, first appear in late 1st century contexts at the southern postern of the Richborough Fort (WILLIAMS-THORPE *et al.* 2001, Table 7.3) and at Building 2 at Rivenhall Villa, 10 miles south-west of Colchester (RODWELL, RODWELL 1973, 120). Imperial porphyry is also found in Canterbury and London, but most remarkable of all is the scatter of small pieces at rural establishments, such as Rivenhall, above (*ibid*; Fig. 7, left) and also Billericay (MEDLYCOTT *et al.* 2010, 78, SF173; Fig. 7, right) in Essex and Piddington Villa in Northamptonshire (FRIENDSHIP-TAYLOR, FRIENDSHIP-TAYLOR 2015, 6; fig. 8, left). It has been suggested, at least for Piddington, that the small shaped piece of Imperial porphyry from the site may have been part of a piece of *pietra dura* style furniture, in this particular case a table-top or chair-back



Fig. 8. Left, small piece of shaped Imperial Porphyry, on display at the Piddington Roman Villa Museum. Right, possible arrangement of an inset Pietra Dura design for a piece of furniture, on display at the Piddington Roman Villa Museum (photos: author)

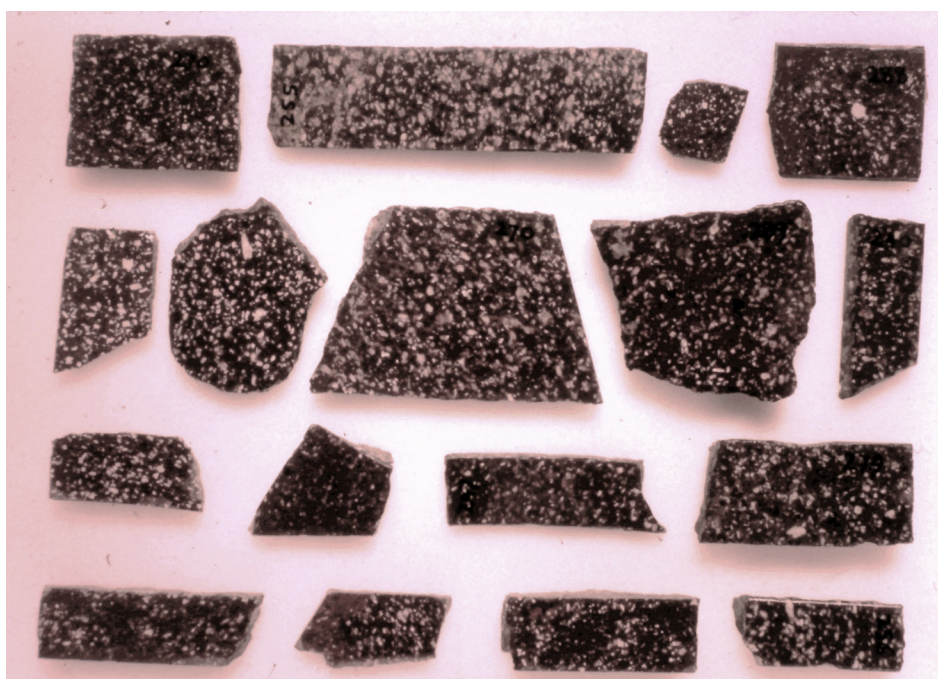


Fig. 9. Imperial Porphyry from Colchester (photo: author)

(FRIENDSHIP-TAYLOR, FRIENDSHIP-TAYLOR 2009, Pl. 10; see also Fig. 8, right and ISSERLIN 1998, 145). This suggestion has much to commend it, since the single pieces from Rivenhall, Billericay and Piddington are quite small and, given how expensive this stone appears in Diocletian's Price Edict (MALACRINO 2010, 30), the cost of producing a meaningful number for a pattern on wall veneer or *opus sectile* would have been quite high. Instead, a small amount, perhaps only one or two pieces, used in a limited way along with other "exotic" marbles inlaid for *pietra dura* style furniture, would create an equally impressive picture of luxury, as presumably was the case with the inlaid furniture at Fishbourne (CUNLIFFE 1971, 15-37). This view would also accommodate the notion of "Imperial gifts" to important local dignitaries. Much less likely does it seem that somehow these three pieces could have been deposited on their respective sites in the post-Roman period, when small pieces of marble, especially

Porfiro Verde but on rare occasions also red porphyry, seemed to have been brought back to Britain and Ireland from Italy by pilgrims as souvenirs (*cf.* LYNN 1984, *passim*). These appear to be secure finds and there seems no good evidence not to accept a Roman date for them.

The largest Imperial porphyry group in Roman Britain comes from Colchester, though even here we are talking about very small amounts, used again as wall veneer or *opus sectile*, more probably the latter (Fig. 9). These have mainly been recovered from excavations associated with the site of the Temple of Claudius at Colchester, the early Roman capital of the province (see refs. in DURY 1984). It is significant though that the wide range of exotic marbles associated with the site, which also included material from Asia Minor, Greece, the Aegean and North Africa (Fig. 10), almost certainly come from Period IVA, the Constantine reconstruction, when major alterations were made to the Temple site (*ibid.*).

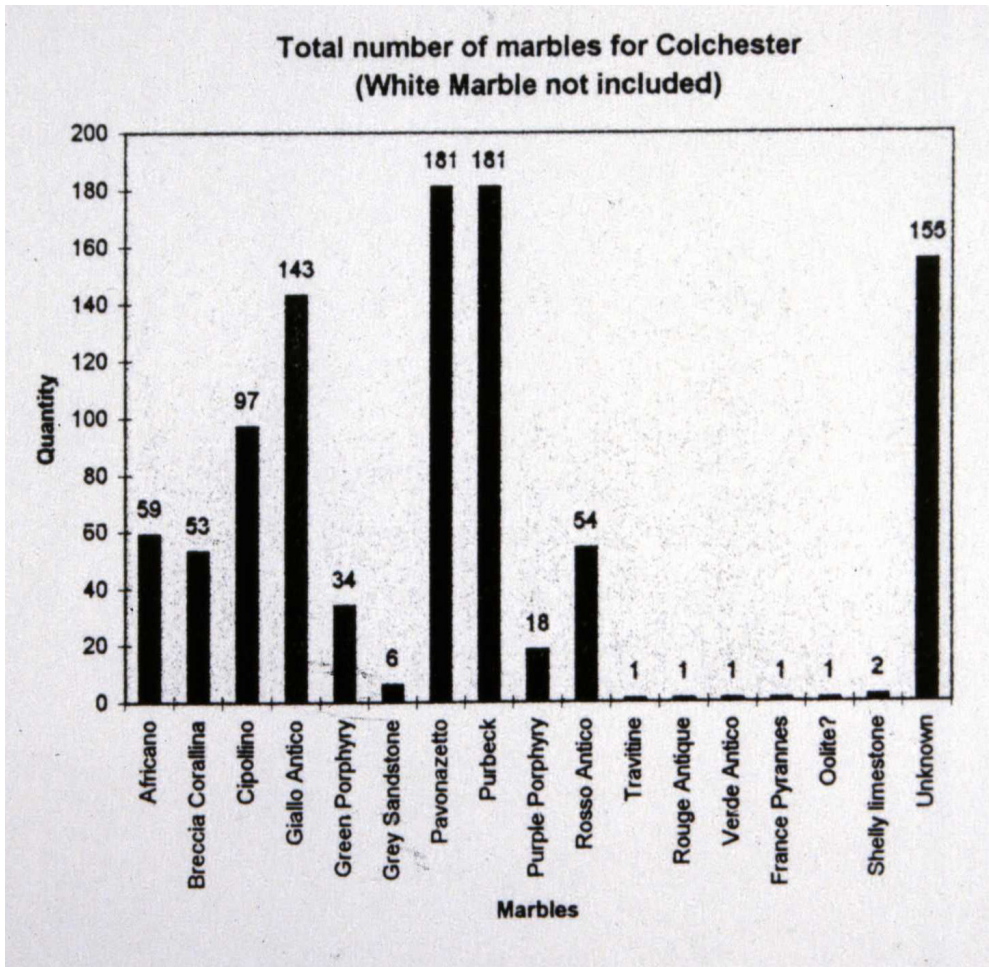


Fig. 10. Graph to show amount and type of marbles recovered from early 4th century layers at Colchester

There is no good evidence for true marble occurring in the early phases of the building, which was started c. AD 54 and then, following its destruction by Boudicca in AD 61, reconstructed shortly afterwards, A.D. 62-100 (*ibid.*). At some stage in the early 4th century AD, a large hall or basilica-type building, perhaps a reception or audience hall, was constructed on the podium of the Temple (*ibid.*). The positioning of this building on a sanctified Imperial Temple site suggests that it must have been built sometime after the Edict of Milan in AD 313, by which Constantine and Licinius established religious tolerance for Christianity within the Roman Empire, the former becoming a great patron of the Church (BOWDER 1978, 28-29, Chaps. III and IV). It is difficult to know whether at this late date these small pieces of Imperial porphyry from Colchester were re-cycled from other buildings, either from Britain or more likely from another nearby province given the sparse occurrence of this stone at other sites in Britain. The alternative, which on the whole seems less likely given the small size and quantity of this assemblage, is that they were specially imported directly from the Mons Porphyrites quarries in Egypt, some of which were certainly still operating as late as the late 4th / early 5th century (MAXFIELD, PEACOCK 2001, 319-321).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to B. Morris for permission to use the photograph in Fig. 4. I am very grateful to Roy Friendship-Taylor, Nick Wickenden, Museums Manager, Chelmsford Museum and Steve Yates, Collections Information Officer, Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service, for allowing me to study and photograph Imperial porphyry finds from Piddington Roman villa, Northamptonshire, the Billericay Roman excavations, Essex and Rivenhall Roman villa, Essex, respectively.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BASTA E. Z., KOTB H., AWADALLAH M. F. 1980: "Petrochemical and geochemical characteristics of the Dokhan Formation at the type locality, Jabal Dokhan, Eastern Desert, Egypt", in A. L. S. AL SHANTI (ed.): *Evolution and Mineralization of the Arabian-Nubian Shield*, I.A.G. Bulletin 3, 122-140.
- BOWDER D. 1978: *The Age of Constantine and Julian*, London.
- BROWN B. B. 1907: *Vasari on Technique*, London.
- CLARKE G. 1982: "The Roman villa at Woodchester", *Britannia* 13, 197-228.
- CUNLIFFE B. 1971: *Excavations at Fishbourne, 1961-1969*. vol. 2: *The Finds*, Res. Rep. Soc. Antiq., no. 27.
- DRURY P. J. 1984: "The Temple of Claudius at Colchester re-considered", *Britannia* 15, 7-50.
- FRIENDSHIP-TAYLOR R. M., FRIENDSHIP-TAYLOR D. E. 2009: *Iron Age & Roman Piddington: 7th interim report*, Piddington.
- FRIENDSHIP-TAYLOR R. M., FRIENDSHIP-TAYLOR D. E. 2015: *Iron Age & Roman Piddington: 12th interim report*, Piddington.
- ISSERLIN R. M. J. 1998: "A spirit of improvement? Marble and the culture of Roman Britain", in R. LAURENCE, J. BERRY (eds.): *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, London.
- KLEMM R., KLEMM D. D. 2008: *Stones and Quarries in Ancient Egypt*, London.
- LYNN C. J. 1984: "Some Fragments of Exotic Porphyry Found in Ireland", *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* 2, 19-32.
- MALACRINO C. 2010: *Constructing the Ancient World: Architectural Techniques of the Greeks and Romans*, Los Angeles.
- MALGOUYRES P. 2003: *Porphyre: La Pierre Pourpre des Ptoleemes aux Bonapart*, Paris.
- MARMI ANTICHI, collective work, 1998, Rome.
- MAXFIELD V., PEACOCK D. 2001: *The Roman Imperial Quarries Survey and Excavation at Mons Porphyrites 1994-1998, Vol. 1: Topography and Quarries*, London, 305-318.
- MEDLYCOTT M., WELLER S., BENIANS P. 2010: "Roman Billericay: excavations by the Billericay Archaeological and Historical Society 1970-1977", *Trans. Essex Archaeology & History Society*, 1, 4th Series, 51-108.
- PEACOCK D. 1992: *Rome in the Desert: A Symbol of Power*, Southampton.
- PEACOCK D. 1997: "Charlemagne's black stones: the re-use of Roman columns in early mediaeval Europe", *Antiquity* 71, 709-715.
- PEACOCK D., MAXFIELD V. 1994: "On the trail of Imperial Porphyry", *Egyptian Archaeology* 4-5, 24-26.
- PEACOCK D. P. S., WILLIAMS D. F. 1999: "Ornamental coloured marble in Roman Britain: an interim report", in *ASMOSIA IV*, 353-357.
- PRITCHARD F. A. 1986: "Ornamental stonework from Roman London", *Britannia* 17, 169-189.
- RODWELL W., RODWELL K. 1973: "The Roman Villa at Rivenhall, Essex: an interim report", *Britannia*, 4, 115-127.
- SAMPSELL B. 2003: *A Traveler's Guide to the Geology of Egypt, Cairo*.
- STRONG D. 1968: "The monument", in B. W. CUNLIFFE (ed.): *Fifth Report on the Excavations of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent*, Res. Rep. Soc. Antq, no. 23, 40-73.
- TOYNBEE J. M. C., 1986: *The Roman Art Treasures from the Temple of Mithras*, London.
- WILLIAMS-THORPE O., JONES M.C., POTTS P. J., RIGBY I. J. 2001: "Geology, mineralogy and characterization studies of Imperial Porphyry", in V. MAXFIELD, D. PEACOCK: *The Roman Imperial Quarries Survey and Excavation at Mons Porphyrites 1994-1998. Vol. 1: Topography and Quarries*, London, 305-318.