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A PROCESS OF GLOCALISATION? ROMAN MARBLE IMPORTS AND THE RISE OF BLOCKED-OUT CAPITALS IN LOCAL STONE

ABSTRACT

In the Augustan Age, a new aesthetic preference was propagated in the Roman Empire – the surface of white marble was valued as it symbolised the strength and superiority of the ‘new age’. Soon, an immense trade in high quality marble over land and sea developed to meet the emergent demand. While the development and scale of this trade is well studied, the repercussions that the new aesthetic preference had on the local architectural traditions in areas where no marble was close at hand is not commonly considered. In this contribution, two developments are traced, taking the Corinthian capital as the leitmotif. First, in the short period between c. 40

and 10 BC, patrons would choose imitation of marble in plaster to meet up with the demands of the new standard and to demonstrate their adherence to the Empire. In the second line of development, a different path was taken – a conscious use of local materials which went hand in hand with the development of a new type of capital, the so-called ‘Nabataean blocked-out’ capital. This combination turned into a new vernacular tradition across large parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Both developments were local responses to a new ‘global’ trend and can therefore be viewed as a phenomenon of glocalisation in the Roman Period.

Keywords: materiality, eastern Mediterranean architecture, Corinthian capitals, ‘Nabataean’ capitals, vernacular building traditions, plaster

Introduction

The scholarly interest in the marble trade in the Mediterranean began, or at least increased considerably, with the publication of a seminal article by John Ward-Perkins in 1951 and was later conceptualised by the same author.¹ In a meticulous and at the same time extensive collection of epigraphical and archaeological evidence, he provided a model capable of explaining how the trade in marbles was shaped by commercial, social, and economic factors and how the spread of certain styles was tied to this material basis. First of all, the marble trade did concern the public building sector, but its impact was of great importance for the domestic architecture as well.

On the following pages, I will sketch some developments which went hand in hand with the spread of a new aesthetic preference for marble when, in the aftermath of the battle of *Actium*, the whole Mediterranean coast was effectively integrated into the Roman Empire. I will especially investigate the reverberations of the

newly propagated marble style in the provinces and the local reactions to it. The Corinthian capitals will serve as the leitmotif of this survey.

Building materials and regionalism in Hellenistic architecture

Travelling back in time to some date in the late Hellenistic Period, a visitor to different regions and towns of the Mediterranean would hardly ever have encountered two buildings with the same ornamental apparatus. From the perspective of architectural decoration, the age of Hellenism was a heterogeneous world. The strongly marked differences between regions are mirrored in the specialised terminology – historians of architecture speak of Rhodian, Pergamene, or Ptolemaic console cornices, to name an example. Even within one and the same region, a large variety of models were available, as indicated, for instance, by the choice of the French terms ‘*hétérodoxe*’

¹ Ward-Perkins 1951; 1980.

or ‘*libre*’ by Daniel Schlumberger to characterise the pre-Roman production of the Corinthian capitals in the wider Syrian region.² This stands in stark contrast to the developments in the Roman Period. An exemplary case is the occurrence of the ‘normal’ Corinthian capital, a standard design common to all parts of the ancient world.³

In the Hellenistic times, there was not only a plurality of forms but also of building materials. As a logical choice, architectural ornaments were carved from the stones quarried nearby. In Greece and Asia Minor, marble and limestone of good quality was often available, but in some places within this area and in other regions hard volcanic rocks, for instance in Pergamon or in parts of Egypt, or soft sandstones or calcarenites, like in large parts of the Peloponnese, Northern Africa, Cyprus, and the Levant, had to be mastered to carve such fine details

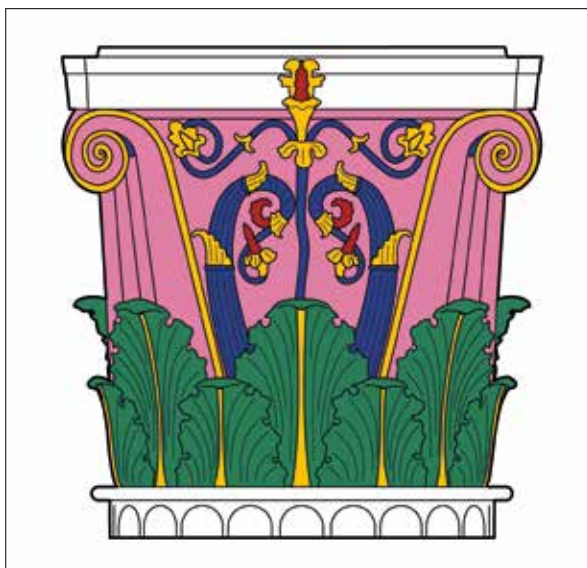


Fig. 1. Corinthian capital from *Hermoupolis Magna*, reconstruction of the colour scheme (drawing by M. Grawehr; after Baranski 2004, pl. 28).

as the acanthus leaves of the Corinthian order. Surviving traces of paint demonstrate the varied palette of colours applied on the capitals (Fig. 1).⁴ Where no stones were available at all, like in the megalopolis Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, baked brick was used.⁵ There seems to have been no super-regional predilection for certain styles or materials, or at least it did not lead to a long-distance trade in architectural blocks or stones on a larger scale.⁶ Differently so in the Roman Period, where we are confronted with the most unlikely of all cases, that is the shipping of bulky freight, such as marble, over distances of hundreds of kilometres by sea and by land on a large scale.⁷

The Roman marble trade: a global trend

Globalisation, the connectedness of the entire world, is a phenomenon of the modern age. But if one allows the term to be used for interrelations across the entire *known* world, then it can easily be applied to the Roman Period as well. In fact, the encomium on Rome by the orator Aelius Aristides, delivered in 155 AD, can be explicitly read as a manifesto of globalisation. Aristides describes Rome as a city extending without end, covering the earth like snow,⁸ with a circuit of walls encompassing not only the city of Rome but the whole Roman Empire. He continues that these walls were not ‘built of bitumen or baked brick, nor gleaming with stucco’ but were ‘fitted with stones’.⁹ Aristides notes how people not only from Rome itself but from all over the Empire enjoyed common citizenship,¹⁰ and he understands the city of Rome as the centre of a globalised economy, ‘like a factory common to the whole earth’.¹¹ Furthermore, for Aristides there was one visual language, one ‘corporate design’ common to all places within the Roman Empire: ‘The whole inhabited world [...] has laid aside its old dress, [...] and has turned [...] to adornments and all kinds of pleasures. [...] Everything is full of gymnasiums, fountains, gateways, temples, handicrafts, and schools. [...] Indeed, the cities shine with radiance and grace’.¹²

² Schlumberger 1933, 287–302.

³ Heilmeyer 1970.

⁴ See for example: Mausoleum at Belevi, c. 290–270 BC (Praschniker, Theuer 1979, 61–65, figs 29 a, 49, 49 a); *Hermoupolis Magna*, end of the 3rd century BC (Wace *et al.* 1959, pl. 1; Baranski 2004).

⁵ Invernizzi 1994.

⁶ A sporadic and project-based trade in high-quality marbles for architecture is attested at least since the 6th century BC, is especially present in the 4th century BC, but becomes much less pronounced in the Hellenistic Period; see Russell 2013, 12–13; Stucky 2016.

⁷ Russell 2013, 142.

⁸ Aristid. *Or.* 26, 7.

⁹ Aristid. *Or.* 26, 83: ‘τὰ δὲ οὐκ ἀσφάλτῳ οὐδὲ πλίνθῳ ὀπτῇ δέδμηται, οὐδὲ κόνει στυλῶν ἔστηκεν [...] καὶ τοῖς λίθοις [...] πυκνῶς ἅμα καὶ ἀκριβῶς ἡρμοσμένα’ (translation based on Behr 1981, 90).

¹⁰ Aristid. *Or.* 26, 63.

¹¹ Aristid. *Or.* 26, 11: ‘ὥστ’ εἰκέναι τὴν πόλιν κοινῶ τινὶ τῆς γῆς ἐργαστηρίῳ’ (translation: Behr 1981, 75).

¹² Aristid. *Or.* 26, 97–99: ‘πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη τὸ μὲν παλαιὸν φόρημα [...] κατέθετο, εἰς δὲ κόσμον καὶ πάσας εὐφροσύνας τέτραπται σὺν ἐξουσίᾳ. [...] πάντα δὲ μεστὰ γυμνασίων, κρητῶν, προπυλαίων, νεῶν, δημιουργιῶν, διδασκάλων [...]. πόλεις τε οὖν δὴ που λάμπουσιν αἴγλη καὶ χάριτι’ (translation based on Behr 1981, 94–95).

The materials (stone *vs* brick and stucco) that Aristides describes in his speech remind one of the famous remark of Augustus, purportedly issued on his deathbed, as an allegory for the new strength of the Empire: ‘I leave to you of marble, what I found of brick’.¹³ Backed up by such sources, it is not daring to state that in the Roman world the use of shining white stone (occasionally with a golden tint¹⁴) had not only become a new aesthetic standard for public architecture but that it also symbolised the Empire’s strength and the superiority of the new Roman order.¹⁵

Between 50 BC and 150 AD, an immense machinery was set in action to fulfil the vision of the material appearance of the Empire.¹⁶ The marble quarries at *Luna*, *Proconnesos*, *Docimium*, and elsewhere were put under imperial control and produced mountain-loads of white or very light grey marble, in a literal sense. First, roughed-out blocks (accompanied or not by stonemasons) and then, to an increasing degree, also finished products were loaded on carts and ships, and transported to distant regions. While most of the evidence for these processes starts in the Augustan Age, the development did not affect all the provinces at the same pace. In the Gaulish and Spanish provinces as well as in the capital of the client kingdom of *Mauretania* and in *Africa Proconsularis* the available evidence points to a relatively early impact of white imported marble. An Augustan dating was proposed for a monument in the Federal sanctuary at Lyon, Augustan capitals are documented from Autun, and in *Tarraco* the temple of Augustus was being erected in *Luna* marble from 15 AD onwards, to mention just a few examples.¹⁷ In Cherchel and around Carthage, *Luna* marble capitals appeared in the Augustan period as well.¹⁸ In the German provinces, on the other hand, imports of marble capitals are recorded from the Flavian Period onwards.¹⁹ Further east, in North Africa from *Mauretania* to Egypt,

in the Levant, and in Cyprus, besides very few earlier pieces,²⁰ a large scale import of marble occurs relatively late, in the Hadrianic Period.²¹

In addition to the import of white marble of well-established quality, the new preference for whitish stone of high quality is also elucidated by the parallel exploration of new quarries to supply the local markets with local marbles or similar marble-like stones.²²

Marble import *vs* local stone

The immense efforts that were put into the procurement of shining white or very light grey stones during the Roman Period leave little doubt that these materials were prestigious and sought-after for building. Some of the written sources corroborating this fact have already been mentioned. In addition, reference could be made to the well-known *Testament du Lingon*, who in the 2nd century AD expressively ordered oversea-marble and marble from *Luna* to be used for his grave monument and urn, documenting his refined taste.²³ In the light of such evidence, it is understandable, though inappropriate, that archaeologists have taken over this attitude when describing the qualities of decorations in different stones – local and imported. Too often, the products made from local stones are described as being inferior, while the imported marble ornaments are regarded as superior. Naïdé Ferchiou, for example, when describing the Corinthian capitals from *Africa Proconsularis* made in local stones, speaks of ‘products of inferior quality, issued from handicraft shops rather than from proper ateliers’ and of the ‘clumsiness of the executors’.²⁴ Instead of emphasising the perfect adaptation of the shape of the capitals to the properties of the local stone, resulting often in a lower depth of the relief,²⁵ she discredits the makers.

¹³ Suet. *Aug.* 28, 3: ‘sit marmoream se relinquere, quam latericium accepisset’. Cf. Cass. Dio 56, 30, 3–4: ‘ἔφη ὅτι “τὴν Ῥώμην γήνινην παραλαβὼν λιθίνην ὑμῖν καταλείπω.” τοῦτο μὲν οὖν οὐ πρὸς τὸ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων αὐτῆς ἀκριβὲς ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἰσχυρὸν ἐνεδείξατο’ [‘He said: “I found Rome of clay; I leave it to you of stone”. By this he did not refer literally to the appearance of its buildings, but rather to the strength of the empire’].

¹⁴ Zink, Piening 2009.

¹⁵ For marble as an expression of imperial ideology, see Rodá 2004, 413; Fejfer 2013, 192–194.

¹⁶ Russell 2013, 38–52, 184–200.

¹⁷ Pensabene 2004, 428–429; Bartette 2017; Maligorne 2017, 213–214. See now for Lyon: Fellague *et al.* 2015, 129; for Autun: Brunet-Gaston 2010, 493; for *Tarraco*: Pensabene, Mar 2010.

¹⁸ Pensabene 1982, esp. 69–72; 1986, 297; Ferchiou 1989, 223–226.

¹⁹ Blin 2017, 260.

²⁰ For example Fischer 1990, 27–30.

²¹ *Mauretania*: Pensabene 1982, 73; Mugnai 2017, 365–367; 2018, 176–177; *Africa Proconsularis*: Pensabene 1986, 297; Ferchiou 1989, 230–231; Egypt: Pensabene 1993, 153–156; Levant: Fischer 1990, 21–55; Cyprus: Kiessel 2013.

²² Well-known cases are, for example, the establishment of the quarries of Estremoz in Portugal in the first half of the 1st century AD (Mañas Romero 2008, 490–496), at Keddell in Tunisia in the beginning of the 2nd century AD (Ferchiou 1976), or the employment of the ‘marble of Neuchâtel’ for the Cigognier-sanctuary at Avenches in Switzerland under Vespasian (Bourgeois 1909; Hufschmid 2017, 181–182).

²³ CIL XIII 5708, 1. 3, 5, 8–10: *ex lapide transmarino* and *ex lapide Lunensi*.

²⁴ Ferchiou 1989, 211.

²⁵ For such an evaluation, see for example Pensabene 1982, 56, no. 160.

In the following section, I will sketch two local reactions to the new standards set by the propagation of marble as a superior material and by the emerging marble trade: at first, we encounter imitations of marble in plaster, and as a second strategy we witness the rise of a vernacular tradition with a reduced ornamental apparatus.

Local reaction I: imitating marble in plaster

In a very short period between *c.* 40 and 10 BC, in different regions of the Mediterranean, solutions were sought to imitate the colouristic and plastic qualities of shining white or light grey marble by adding the ornamental details of the Ionic and Corinthian capitals in plaster over a rough core made from local stone. The related evidence will be quickly reviewed below, proceeding from the West to the East.

For the Spanish provinces, a paradigmatic case is the ‘temple of Diana’ in *Augusta Emerita* (modern Mérida in south-western Spain). Being the main temple of *Emerita*, it was a part of the urbanistic starting kit of the Roman colony, founded in 25 BC, and its architecture relied entirely on the local granite, on which a plaster finish was applied (Fig. 2).²⁶ The same technique was used for the Ionic capitals of the theatre in *Augusta Emerita* (16 BC)²⁷ and for the similar Ionic and Corinthian capitals from the theatre in Lisbon, of which only the calcarenite cores are preserved.²⁸ In *Augusta Emerita*, from the mid-1st century AD onwards, the newly available imported marble from the quarries of Estremoz did put an end to this practice.

One of the stylistically earliest capitals from Carthage, re-founded in 29 BC, with no reported findspot within the city, has a core made of soft sandstone and all the ornamental details added in plaster.²⁹ A similar date of 30–20 BC has been proposed for a Corinthian capital with an added plaster finish from the so-called ‘House of Lucius Verus’ in *Thysdrus*, a sumptuous mansion next to the town’s Forum.³⁰ Certainly more famous are the eponymous capitals of the ‘House of the figural capitals’ from *Utica*, dated to *c.* 40/30 BC, with their acanthus leaves and figural busts meticulously modelled from plaster (Fig. 3).³¹ The state of preservation of these capitals illustrates the coarse grained surface of the sandstone core and informs us that already in Antiquity no paint altered



Fig. 2. Corinthian capital of the ‘temple of Diana’ at *Augusta Emerita*/Mérida in Spain (photo by M. Grawehr).



Fig. 3. Figure capital from the ‘House of the Figured Capitals’ at *Utica* in Tunisia (photo by A. Lézine; <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/marbilder/713888>, accessed 15.04.2020).

the white appearance of the stucco, as exclusively the eyes of the figures were emphasised by painting.

From early Roman Egypt, to my knowledge, only column shafts and cornices with a thick layer of plaster finish are known, for example from an early Roman house in Alexandria³² or from secondary contexts in the temple precinct at *Hermoupolis Magna*.³³ The technique is documented more frequently in the palaces of King Herod.

²⁶ De la Barrera 2000, 135–167; Álvarez Martínez, Nogales Basarrate 2003; Trillmich 2004, 322.

²⁷ Hauschild 1990, pl. 38 b.

²⁸ Hauschild 1990, 378–380, pl. 35 e–g.

²⁹ Ferchiou 1989, 217–218, no. IX.IA.2.3, pl. 56 c.

³⁰ Ferchiou 1989, 215–216, no. IX.IA.2.1, pl. 56 a, b. For the ‘House of Lucius Verus’, see Slim 1990a; 1990b, 190–192, fig. 8.

³¹ Lézine 1956, 8–22; Ferchiou 1989, 249–251, n. IX.III.B.1, pl. 66 b, c. Further examples are noted by Lézine 1956, 12–13.

³² Kołataj *et al.* 2007, 18, fig. 13.

³³ Pensabene 1993, 326–327, nos. 65–69, pl. 10.

In the Western palace on *Masada*, c. 35 BC, a Ionic capital from a distyle entrance to a reception room was formed in plaster over a sandstone core that closely resembles a coarsely-shaped Doric capital.³⁴ In the courtyard peristyle of the palace at *Machaerus*, the sandstone core of a Ionic plaster capital of the same date already prefigures the Ionic forms (Fig. 4).³⁵ Entirely or in large parts cast(?) in plaster are the Ionic capitals from the Western Courtyard of Herod's Third Palace at Jericho, c. 15 BC. They topped columns with a diameter of 0.42 m built of small, brick-shaped sandstone blocks and equipped with plaster bases and flutings.³⁶ In the same casting technique may have been made the Corinthian pilaster capitals, dated to c. 25 BC and of a considerable height amounting to c. 0.4 m, from the *caldarium* of the bathhouse on *Masada* framing the room's northern apse.³⁷ Finally, three more Corinthian capitals with plaster finish modelled over a coarsely worked core have come to light at Petra, the capital of the Nabataean kingdom, but they cannot be dated more precisely.³⁸

It is most curious to note that this mere dozen of examples, to the best of our knowledge, can be dated to a very short period of time of approximately 30 years between 40 and 10 BC.³⁹ Apparently, it was not the introduction of new shapes that led to the use of plaster, as intricate ornaments, such as the acanthus leaves, had already been carved in the local stone material of these regions for a long time before, but it must have been the emergence of a new preference for the imperial aesthetics of shining white or very light grey marble. One of the cases detailed above is especially illuminating – the Third Palace in Jericho itself is a statement of the pro-imperial policy of 'King Herod, friend of the Romans'.⁴⁰ After the battle of *Actium*, Herod vowed his loyalty to Octavian, toured the East with him, inaugurated 'Isactian' games on Octavian's birthday, introduced gladiatorial combats, built temples in his honour at *Paneas* and *Samaria*, renamed the latter to *Sebaste* and Straton's tower to *Caesarea*, and entertained close relations with the emperor and his court.⁴¹ In the storerooms on *Masada*, Herod did hold a collection of supreme Italian wines sent to him in a special shipment in 19 BC and on



Fig. 4. Corinthian capital of the peristyle in the Herodian palace at *Machaerus* in Jordan (photo by M. Grawehr).

other occasions.⁴² Moreover, on the basis of the use of the *opus reticulatum* at *Paneas* and in the Third Palace at Jericho, many have argued that Herod employed workmen from the Italian peninsula for these projects. The same has been said about the wall paintings in this palace and in the newly-discovered Royal Room at *Herodium*. Finally, Roman engineering skills and pozzolanic ash were imported to create the new harbour of *Caesarea*.⁴³ To find plaster imitations of white marble capitals in this environment certainly comes as no surprise.

Local reaction II: the birth of a vernacular tradition

While the imitation of marble in plaster was a short-lived option made obsolete by the rapid growth of the Roman marble trade, there was a second, very different way of counter-reacting to the new aesthetic standards. It found its expression in the continuous use of local stone materials, even for prestigious building projects, in combination with the use of a new type of capital. In my view, at the beginning of this development lies a careful re-evaluation of the properties of local stones in the context of the new choices available. A competent advisor on the deficiencies and virtues of different local

³⁴ Foerster 1995, 46–50.

³⁵ Vörös 2013, 299, 327.

³⁶ Peleg, Rozenberg 2008, 485–491; see also Netzer 2001, 240–244. I suggest that the pieces were cast, because their surface (in contrast to the surface of the bases, flutings, and cornices) exhibits many small cavities that may represent air bubbles forming on the walls of the moulds during the casting process.

³⁷ Foerster 1995, 44–46.

³⁸ Zayadine 1987, 139, fig. 18; McKenzie 1990, 117, pl. 49 d; Fiema *et al.* 2001, 177, fig. 58.

³⁹ There are also a few later examples, *e.g.* Czerner 2009, 91, AA 002–004.

⁴⁰ IG² II 3440: βασιλέα Ἡρώδη Φιλορώμαιον.

⁴¹ For summaries of the evidence in Flavius Josephus and elsewhere, see Curran 2013; 2014. See also Jacobson, Kokkinos 2009.

⁴² Cotton, Geiger 1989, 140–158.

⁴³ For summaries, see Schmid 2009, 351–352; Rozenberg 2013, 188–195.



Fig. 5. 'Nabataean blocked-out' capital of the 'ed-Deir' at Petra in Jordan (photo by the Aerial Photographic Archive of Archaeology in the Middle East, APAAME, APAAMEG_20081014_DLK-0039, photographer: David Kennedy, courtesy of APAAME).

stones is Vitruvius (*De arch.* 2, 7). Among his criteria are hardness, workability, and resistance to fire and weathering, and in his view the best building stones are found near *Ferentinum* in Lazio, 'because [in this stone] they [the Ferentini] have large statues, finely made, and small sculpture, even flowers and acanthus elegantly sculpted, which, even if old, appear as fresh as if they were just made'.⁴⁴ In the eastern Mediterranean, common stones are soft and friable sandstones or calcarenites, just the opposite of what Vitruvius would have liked. And it is exactly in the second half of the 1st century BC that a new type of capital emerged, which was perfectly adapted to the properties of this material – the so-called 'Nabataean' capital (Fig. 5).⁴⁵ At Petra, the type is clearly a blocked-out version of the Corinthian floral capital, and different subtypes exist which refer to different finished versions, even the Ionic ones. The standard type is characterised



Fig. 6. 'Nabataean blocked-out' capital from Alexandria (photo courtesy of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, W. Jerke).

by the lower part being shaped as an inverted bell, corresponding to the two rows of acanthus leaves, and the upper part with marked corners, sometimes described as 'horns' and corresponding to the corner volutes. Different than what is sometimes assumed, these capitals were neither refined with plastic additions in plaster nor with an accurate drawing which would substitute the left-out details of the ornamentation.⁴⁶ If painted, either an unmodulated colour scheme was applied (Fig. 6),⁴⁷ or the veining of precious stones like alabaster was imitated.⁴⁸ The deliberate choice of the blocked-out shape in the rock-cut architecture of Petra, since around 50 BC,⁴⁹ can be easily explained by the wish to adapt the shape specifically to the friable nature of the rock and to avoid the unpleasant sight of badly weathered ornamental details. The same is valid for the occurrence of the type in other locations within similar geological settings, such as Marina el-Alamein on the Egyptian coast, 100 km west of Alexandria,⁵⁰ or *Nea Paphos* on the western coast of Cyprus.⁵¹ It is sometimes thought that the 'Nabataean' capitals in the different regions of the eastern Mediterranean depended on a single prototype

⁴⁴ Vitruvius, *De arch.* 2, 7, 4: 'Namque habent et statuas amplas factas egregie et minora sigilla floresque et acanthos eleganter scalptos; quae, cum sint vetusta, sic apparent recentia, uti si sint modo facta' (translation based on Granger 1950, 109).

⁴⁵ Schlumberger 1933, 289, note 10; Fischer 1990, 26; McKenzie 1990, 116–117, 190, diagram 14; Patrich 1996; Laroche-Traunecker 2000; Netzer 2003, 162–164, fig. 222; Czerner 2009, 5–12, 36–37; Grawehr, Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming.

⁴⁶ Grawehr, Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming.

⁴⁷ Tkaczow 2010, 99–100, 128, no. 38, pls 25, A.

⁴⁸ Grawehr 2017, 106, fig. 3.

⁴⁹ At Petra, the earliest dated façades using the 'Nabataean blocked-out' capitals come from c. 50 BC; see Farajat, Nawafleh 2005.

⁵⁰ Daszewski 1990; Czerner 2009, 36–37, 100–102, pls 6–7.

⁵¹ Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming.

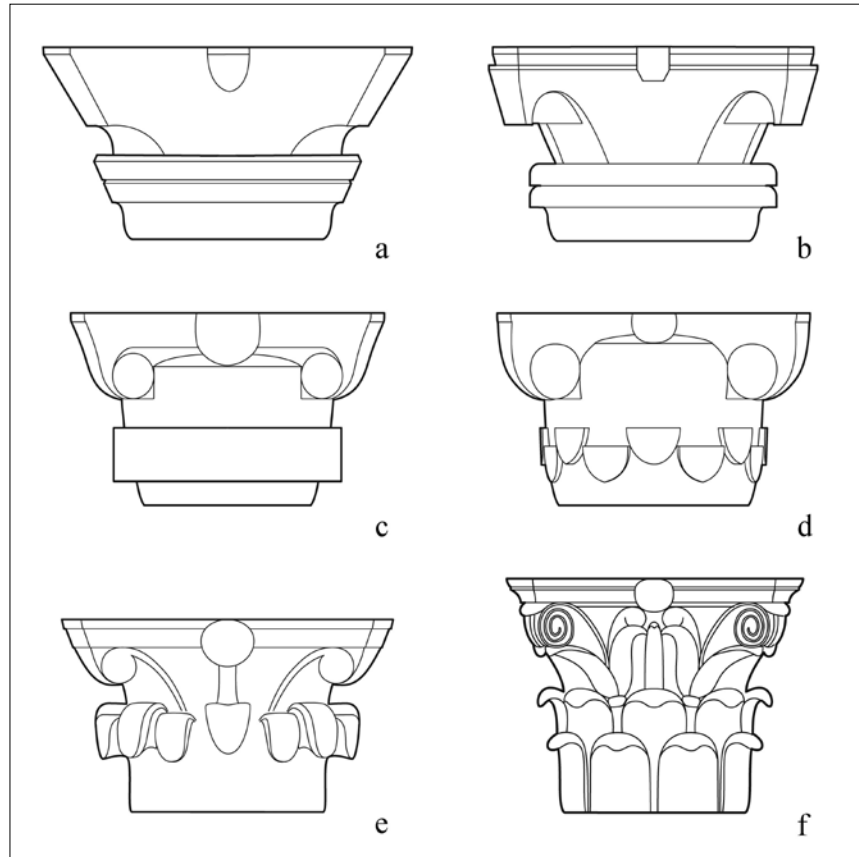


Fig. 7. Various variants of the 'blocked-out' capitals from Petra (a), *Salamis* (b), Marina el-Alamein (c, d), Jerash (e), and Baalbek (f) (drawings by M. Grawehr).

from Alexandria,⁵² but in fact the type is not as much defined by the specific shape but rather by the practice of using the capital in its blocked-out state, which can take different forms according to different traditions and models of local stonemasons (Fig. 7).

If the marble style contained an imperial note, as argued above, what ideology stood behind this new local style? When evaluating the choice of materials for statuary on Cyprus – bronze and limestone *vs* marble – Jane Fejfer has recently argued for an emphasis on the local tradition which convinced patrons to favour the local materials even when other options were at hand.⁵³ In want of detailed written sources, the validity of the same explanation for the use of the 'Nabataean blocked-

out' capital and the local materials in architecture will remain open. The new style was certainly not only used in low-profile domestic architecture but also for prestigious temples of the age-old traditional local gods: in Baalbek blocked-out capitals appear on the earliest temple in the newly-founded colony (15 BC) in the area of Santa Barbara,⁵⁴ at Qala'at Faqra in Lebanon in the temple of Zeus Belgalasos (c. 40–60 AD),⁵⁵ at *Kourion* in the temple of Apollo Hylates⁵⁶ and of Aphrodite at *Amathous*⁵⁷ on Cyprus (both c. 70–100 AD), as well as at Sabratha in the temples of Isis and Liber Pater (both c. 70/80 AD).⁵⁸ But we find it also in the 'imperial' temple of Augustus at *Philae* in Upper Egypt (13/12 BC)⁵⁹ or in the Herodian North Palace on *Masada* (c. 25 BC),⁶⁰ and the case is not

⁵² See Grawehr, Brzozowska-Jawornicka forthcoming, note 17; but see also Börker 1971, 54, note 139; C. Börker in Hesberg 1978, 143.

⁵³ Fejfer 2013.

⁵⁴ Wienholz 2008, 273–274, fig. 3; Hoebel 2014, 85–86, fig. 102.

⁵⁵ Krencker, Zschietzschmann 1938, 41, fig. 60. The date is given here based on an analogy to the neighbouring structures, which are dated epigraphically; for two other opinions, see Rey-Coquais 1999; Kropp 2009, 113.

⁵⁶ Scranton 1967, 22–25, fig. 16 c; Sinos 1990, 145–156, 227–229, fig. 250.

⁵⁷ Aupert 1977, 808–809, figs 53, 54; Aupert, Hermary 1982, 748–749, figs 5–7; Hermary, Schmid 1985; Schmid 1988, 144, fig. 2.

⁵⁸ Di Vita 2017.

⁵⁹ Lyons 1896, 29–30, pls 20, 21, 47; Borchardt 1903; McKenzie 2007, 166–168; Fauerbach, Sählhof 2012.

⁶⁰ Foerster 1995, 114–119.

as straightforward as one might wish. Leaving the connotation that consciously emphasised the local tradition open to question, it is clear that we witness the birth of a vernacular tradition that was not a short-lived fashion, but endured and developed.

One development that the 'Nabataean blocked-out' capitals underwent was the addition of a central ornament to the surface of the capital, often a palmette, flower, or fruit (Fig. 8), with examples from Hegra and Tayma in Saudi-Arabia, Egyptian Fayyum, Umm el-Jimal in Jordan, or Jerusalem,⁶¹ to name just a few. Also relatively early, in the 1st century AD, the new style was transferred to regions where the local stone was generally better suited for carving fine details, such as Cilicia or other limestone areas in the Levant.⁶² As a second development stage, starting in the 1st century AD and continuing well into late Antiquity, the shape of the originally blocked-out capitals became more and more detached from the finished versions (Fig. 9).⁶³ At the end of this process often stand the ubiquitous leaf capitals of the early Islamic Period (Fig. 10).

The austere appearance of the 'Nabataean' capital has by some been considered to be conditioned by the supposed aesthetic predilection of the desert-dwelling population for simple shapes⁶⁴ or to stem from the lack of competent stonemasons in this remote region on the edge of the Roman world.⁶⁵ Instead of this deterministic model, I favour an explanation which sees the preference for the blocked-out shapes as a counter-reaction to the rising interconnectedness of the ancient world after the battle of *Actium* and to the propagation of the new imperial marble style in the Augustan Age. The new vernacular style is not a product of a cultural backwater but a result of the new wave of globalisation in the ancient world. It is based on local and relatively easy-to-use materials, as the capital's production is simplified by the eschewal of ornamentation. It therefore turns into a vernacular tradition. Regional styles have been detected in other areas of the Roman Empire,⁶⁶ and they make up for the plurality once again growing in the Roman Empire on its way to late Antiquity.

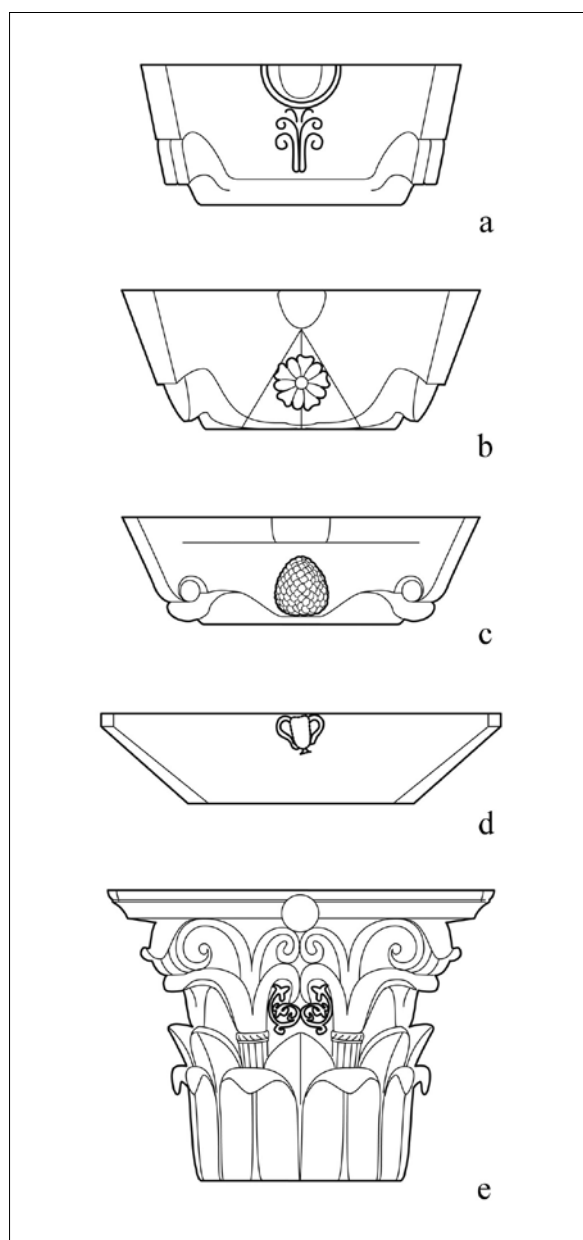


Fig. 8. 'Blocked-out' capitals with the addition of a central ornament from Hegra (a), Tayma (b), Medinet Madi (c), Umm el-Jimal (d), and Jerusalem (e) (drawings by M. Grawehr).

⁶¹ From Hegra: Dentzer-Feydy 2015, 293 figs 5.63, 5.65, 294 fig. 5.77, 295 figs 5.79, 5.86, 296 figs 5.91, 5.93, 5.94, 297 fig. 5.95, 301; from Tayma: Hausleiter 2010, 236, fig. 12; from the Fayyum: Rubensohn 1905, 6–7, fig. 9 left; Bresciani 1968, 40–41, pls 24, 25; Pensabene 1993, 390, no. 370; from Umm el-Jimal: Butler 1913, 156, fig. 132; from Jerusalem: Fischer 1990, 25–26, no. 39, pl. 7, 8.

⁶² For Cilicia: Equini Schneider 1999, 268–273; 2003, 141 fig. 123, 365–366, 399, 628–631; Berns 2003, 86 note 213, 89–95; Borgia 2010, 295–296, fig. 15 a, b; Spanu 2011, 56; Kaplan

2014; for Lebanon: see above note 54; for Jerash: Detweiler 1938, 119–122, pls 22, 23, plan 19.

⁶³ For example from Si'a: Butler 1919, 391–395; from the Negev area in southern Israel: Negev 1974; Rosenthal-Hegginbottom 1982, 132–133; Negev 1988, 75–94; from *Kourion* on Cyprus: Karageorghis 1974, 894, fig. 80; Sinos 1990, 227–228, fig. 250; from Akoris in Egypt: Palaeological Association of Japan 1995, 208 pls 123, 7, 124, 4.

⁶⁴ Jaussen, Savignac 1909, 397; Patrich 1996, 206.

⁶⁵ McKenzie 1990, 117.

⁶⁶ Quatember 2016; Hufschmid 2017.

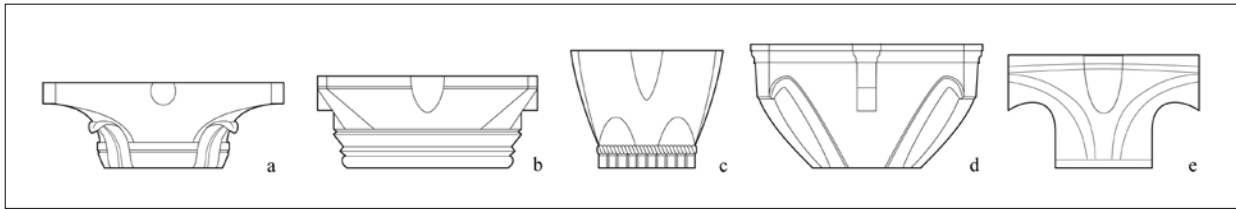


Fig. 9. ‘Blocked-out’ capitals illustrating developments within this class between the 1st and 6th centuries AD, from Si’a (a), *Mampsis* (b), *Elusa* (c), *Kourion* (d), and *Akoris* (e) (drawings by M. Grawehr).

Conclusion

The model proposed here, namely that the propagation of the new marble aesthetics after the battle of *Actium* with its imperial connotations led to a number of local reactions in a process of glocalisation, is one that credits the material world with agency. People reacted to the new emphasis that was given to marble and to its visual effects of brightness and radiance. Prior to the arrival of marble imports on a larger scale at nearby ports, some opted for imitating marble in plaster. The applied stucco surface masked the ‘deficiencies’ of local stones which had previously been thought good enough to sculpt detailed ornament, and the new whiteness substituted the broader colour palette of the local stones which, in addition, had often been painted in vivid colours. Others, on the other hand, turned deliberately to the local materials and developed a new style by omitting all the detailed ornamentation, continuing the use of coloured stones, and occasionally applying colours on them. In short, ideas in art not only did spread in



Fig. 10. Leaf capital in the National Museum at Damascus (photo by M. Grawehr).

the Roman Empire in ways demonstrated by Ward-Perkins but their spread also gave rise to new ideas on the local level.

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