

Standardization and mass customization of architectural components: new perspectives on the Imperial marble construction industry

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The aim of this paper is to discuss the production and the use of “standardized” architectural elements by shifting the perspective from the economics of the interregional marble trade to the logistics of the marble construction industry during the 1st-3rd c. A.D. This chronological period coincides with the phenomenon of the “marmorization” of urban spaces in the Mediterranean; characterized by adorning public areas with marble architecture, it was responsible for an increasing demand for this material.¹ The paper focuses on the interregional distribution of marble and coloured stones for construction.² For methodological reasons, aspects related to the Roman “stone trade”, such as the supply of local construction material³ and the distribution of sarcophagi and statuary, will not

* *Frequently cited works:*

- Asgari 1988 = N. Asgari, “The stages of workmanship of the Corinthian capital in Proconnesus and its export form,” in N. Herz and M. Waelkens (edd.), *ASMOSIA 1* (Dordrecht 1988) 115-25;
- Asgari 1995 = N. Asgari, “The Proconnesian production of architectural elements in late antiquity, based on evidence from the marble quarry,” in C. Mango and G. Dagron (edd.), *Constantinople and its hinterland* (Cambridge 1995) 263-88;
- Barresi, *Costo del marmi* = P. Barresi, *Province dell’Asia Minore. Costo dei marmi, architettura pubblica e committenza* (Rome 2003);
- Russell, *Stone trade* = B. Russell, *The economics of the Roman stone trade* (Oxford 2013);
- Toma, “Kapitellproduktion” = N. Toma, “Von Marmorblock über Halbfabrikat zu korinthischem Kapitell. Zur Kapitellproduktion in der Kaiserzeit,” in J. Lipps and D. Maschek (edd.), *Antike Bauornamentik: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen ihrer Erforschung* (Wiesbaden 2014);
- Toma, *Diss.* = N. Toma, *Marmor und die Monumentalisierung der urbanen Landschaft römischer Städte. Der Handel mit vorgefertigten Marmorbauteilen und seine Auswirkungen auf das römische Bauwesen und das Erscheinungsbild römischer Städte (1.–3. Jh. n.Chr.)* (Ph.D. diss., Kiel 2015);
- Ward-Perkins, “Nicomedia” = J. B. Ward-Perkins, “Nicomedia and the marble trade,” *PBSR* 48 (1980) 23-69;
- Ward-Perkins, *Severan Lepcis* = J. B. Ward-Perkins, *The Severan buildings of Lepcis Magna* (London 1993);
- Wilson Jones, “Corinthian order” = M. Wilson Jones, “Designing the Roman Corinthian order,” *JRA* 2 (1989) 35-69;
- Wilson Jones, “Corinthian capital” = M. Wilson Jones, “Designing the Roman Corinthian capital,” *PBSR* 59 (1991) 89-150;
- Wilson Jones, *Principles* = M. Wilson Jones, *Principles of Roman architecture* (New Haven, CT 2000).

- 1 The three phenomena – marble trade, marble construction industry, and “marmorization” – are interdependent but they differ in terms of the scholarly emphasis, which is on economics, construction practices, and urban appearance, respectively; see Toma, *Diss.*
- 2 The Roman definition of marble is loose and applies to any stone taking a polish. In this paper, “marble” is not used in a strict geological sense but as a synonym for decorative stone. For the marbles and coloured stones considered representative for interregional trade see, e.g., H. Dodge and B. Ward-Perkins (edd.), *Marble in antiquity* (London 1992) Appendix 1.
- 3 On the methodologically-necessary differentiation between local stone and interregional marble coloured stones, see P. Pensabene, “Marmi pubblici e marmi privati. Note in margine ad un recente volume di Ben Russell,” *ArchCl* 66 (2015) 575-93 and Toma, *Diss.*