

Apprentices' pieces and the training of sculptors at Aphrodisias

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Aphrodisias was an important center for the production of marble sculpture in the Roman world.¹ The excavation of the ancient city has uncovered a wide range of carved marbles, many of which were found in contexts that add to our understanding of the production and display of sculpture in antiquity. This paper presents a group of 28 marble hands and feet carved by sculptors' apprentices. These "apprentices' pieces", as they will be called, display distinctive technical characteristics that show that they played a rôle in the training of sculptors at the city. This body of material documents an important aspect of Roman sculptural production for which little clearly identifiable evidence survives and expands our knowledge of the organization and production methods of marble sculpture workshops at Aphrodisias and elsewhere.

Little is known about the training of Greek and Roman sculptors.² The literary evidence is confined to Lucian's recollection of his short, ill-fated tenure as an apprentice to his maternal uncle, a marble sculptor, which ended after a single day with a severe beating.³ The epigraphic record of ancient sculptors, while quite extensive, consists primarily of signatures and funerary inscriptions, which naturally yield more information about fully trained, prosperous craftsmen and workshop-owners than about apprentices;⁴ an apprentice had neither the need nor the means to commemorate his sculptural activity at such an early stage in his career. The artistic record runs parallel to that of the epigraphy: Greek vase-paintings and Roman funerary reliefs represent the owners of workshops and workshop scenes in which a variety of craftsmen perform a range of tasks.⁵ In such workshop images a hierarchy of craftsmen, indicated by size of figure, difference in age, and tasks performed, is apparent.⁶ It is not possible, however, to distinguish the precise status of the lower-level workers in the reliefs — that is, whether they are slaves, paid workers, or apprentices. Furthermore, these reliefs do not give an indica-

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2 General information about the training of craftsmen in antiquity has been collected by A. Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman society* (London 1972) 82-93.

3 Lucian, *Somn.* 3-4.

4 For inscriptions relating to ancient sculptors, see E. Lowy, *Inschriften griechische Bildhauer* (1885, repr. Osnabruck 1965). Several apprentices' contracts (none of which concerned sculptors) survive from Roman Egypt. They focus primarily on the legal obligations of the master and apprentice. See W. L. Westermann, "Apprentice contracts and the apprentice system in Roman Egypt," *CP* 9 (1914) 295-315.

5 For a selection of Roman sculpted reliefs with representations of sculptors, see G. Zimmer, *Römische Berufsdarstellungen* (Berlin 1982) nos. 75-83.

6 For example, a fragment from a long side of a sarcophagus from Ephesos, now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum (inv. no. 775), represents a workshop scene on the left and a gymnasium scene on the right. The sculpture workshop is inhabited by 5 figures, three adults assisted by two youths, engaged in the manufacture of a statue, a lion-headed table leg, and a bust: G. Mendel, *Musées Impériaux Ottomans. Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines* (Rome 1912) no. 13. The sarcophagus of Eutropos, in Urbino, represents a scene of sculptors making a sarcophagus, with a master sculptor guiding a running drill over the surface of the chest, assisted by a younger worker who is rotating the drill: G. M. Gabrielli, *I sarcofagi paleocristiani e altomedioevali delle Marche* (Ravenna 1961) 144-49. A fragment of a sarcophagus with a scene of a sculptor at work carving a bust was found at Aphrodisias (S-308, inv. 62-2): R. R. R. Smith and C. Ratte, *AJA* 100 (1996) 27, fig. 24.