

Palmyra, Syria, and ‘Imperial’ Marble

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Introduction

Perhaps one of the many memorable features of a visit to Palmyra are the reddish monolithic columns of Syene/Aswan granite, standing at the entrance, the *propylaeum* of the ‘Bains de Dioclétien’ (fig. 1). These baths had been partly excavated between 1959 and 1975 by the ‘Direction générale des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie’ under the auspices of Adnan Bounni, Khaled al-As‘ad, and others.¹ Two further campaigns were undertaken in 2008 and 2009 by Thibaud Fournet, but suspended in 2011, the preliminary results still pending full publication. Fournet’s re-evaluation of the site demonstrates clearly that the ‘Baths of Diocletian’ is a misnomer of sorts: although a block inscribed with a fragmentary Greek text found next to the red granite columns in 1930 by Jean Cantineau does note the baths as τὸ Διοκλητιανὸν Βαλαν(ε)ῖον, the operative term here is διακοσμοῦντος, ‘to reorder’, ‘to rebuild’, indicating that, perhaps, only the *propylaeum* with its red granite columns is of the Tetrarchic period.² We find the then provincial governor of Phoenice Libanensis, Sossianus Hierocles, in charge of this rather late refurbishment.³

The presence of red granite columns from Syene raises a series of questions: Were these the only large items of marble/granite from outside the Roman Levant to reach Palmyra? How did Palmyra compare with other centres in the Near East as to the import of columns, bases, capitals, etc. made of coloured stones? And in what ways were these items acquired? The aim of this paper is, firstly, to set the red granite columns of Palmyra in the wider context of marble and granite imports to the Roman Levant (i.e. the provinces of Syria, Iudaea/Syria Palaestina, and Arabia) — a context which has not received a comprehensive treatment as of yet — and to determine the role of the emperor and the local elites in their procurement. Of interest here are the weightier items, the architectural elements, used for the aggrandizement of public buildings, temples, sanctuaries, *basilicae*, theatres, baths, *nymphaea*, hippodromes, etc.

Hitherto, the scholarly default position has been to assume that the use of such marble was the result of euergetic acts by the emperor. In this paper I wish to offer up the hypothesis that not all

¹ Bounni and Al-As‘ad 1990, 78-79; Delplace 2017, 119-120.

² *IJLS* 17, 100.

³ *SEG* 7, 152 = *AE* 1932, 79; Seyrig 1931, 321-322.

imports of coloured marble (a) needed to involve the emperor and his administration, and (b) that not all the quarries from which the majority of coloured granite and marble elements derived were under permanent or full imperial control. The aim of this paper is to contextualize and offer a nuanced picture to the arrival of red Aswan granite at Palmyra.

Marble Imports to the Roman Levant

The red granite columns aside, Fournet argued that parts of the bath complex covering around 3,300 m² at Palmyra were begun as early as the 2nd half of the 2nd c. AD, and expanded step by step as the town of Palmyra grew.⁴ The baths yielded a wealth of statues and interior decorations, that is, *opus sectile* and wall revetments made of imported marble, documenting the availability at Palmyra of blocks and panels of polychrome and white marble from a number of quarries in the Mediterranean for prestigious building projects.⁵ The range of imported stones used for more cumbersome elements, such as capitals, bases, and monolithic column shafts, was more limited, as the dominant majority of these elements was made of a whitish and porous limestone quarried locally.⁶ Apart from the red granite columns in the *tetrakionion* and the *propylaeum* of the baths, Hazel Dodge noticed further shaft segments of Aswan granite around the sanctuary of Bel; fragments of *marmor Carystium* columns likely hailing from the Nymphaeum; segments of grey granite column shafts (possibly from the Troad) near the sanctuary of Bel, to the NW of the patrician houses, and in the peristyle building ('Caesareum') to the SE of the *tetrakionion*; a further fragment of a 'pavonazzetto' column discovered to the SSE of the theatre; and, finally, a number of capitals made of Prokonnesian marble found in the sanctuary of Bel, evidently in secondary use.⁷

This is unlikely to be the complete picture: Palmyra served as a quarry for later building projects in the area, such as Qaṣr al-Ḥayr aš-Šarqī. There, columns of red Aswan granite, and possibly 'marmo cipollino' are still visible today. Together with capitals and column bases brought in from the desert city they were used for the portico in the inner courtyard and just outside the southwestern corner of the 'palais'. In the south-eastern part of the 'grande enceinte' or 'large enclosure', grey

⁴ Fournet 2012, 224-225; Vannesse 2015, 115; Ostraz 1969, 113; Dodge 1988, 227-228.

⁵ Dodge 1988, 218; Wielgosz 2010, *passim*; Wielgosz 2013, 320-321.

⁶ Schmidt-Colinet 2017.

⁷ Dodge 1988, 223, 229. For the grey granite shaft from the 'Caesareum', see Genequand 2012, 58 fig. 32.

‘Troad(?)’ or red Aswan granite, together with other architectural elements quite clearly taken from Palmyra, embellished the mosque (fig. 2).⁸

Syrian ‘Hinterland’

Palmyra was not the only city under Roman rule and distant from the Mediterranean coast which received column shafts, capitals, and bases made of coloured and white marble or granite hailing from outside the Levant. The use of imported marble for public and sacred buildings in the Levant had its heyday under the Antonines and Severans, although importation of white marble from Greece is well attested in Sidon already in the 4th c. BC.⁹

In the early 1st c. AD the town of Cyrrhus, located in the upper reaches of the river Afrin, probably was the base of *legio X Fretensis*.¹⁰ Its theatre, dated to the 2nd half of the 2nd c. AD, still yields fragments of monolithic columns of grey Troad and red Aswan granite, and of *marmor Carystium*, i.e. ‘marmo cipollino verde’.¹¹ At Beroia/Aleppo the original context of the few grey granite and ‘pavonazzetto’ columns found on the citadel and in the Grand Mosque cannot be established.¹² It is a matter of speculation whether they once belonged to the temple of Zeus on the ‘acropolis’, which emperor Julian the Apostate visited and where he offered a white bull for sacrifice.¹³

Fragments of coloured marble columns were also discovered during recent excavations of the Roman theatre at Apameia, but the marble analysis (though promised) has not been published as of yet.¹⁴ The Danish excavations on the citadel of Epiphania/Hama yielded coloured monolithic shafts stemming from the central area of the mound: a tiny column of “yellowish marble with darker veins” is recorded in the central area of the citadel (grid H10, stratum A); the original context remains unclear as this marble column was found in the post-Roman/Byzantine stratum. Fragments of a fluted column in a “dark blueish marble” were also recovered in a secondary Islamic context on the mound. Ploug assumed that the latter originally derived from a quarry in Asia Minor.¹⁵ In the Great Mosque of Hama, destroyed in 1982 and subsequently rebuilt, two monolithic columns of imported marble

⁸ Genequand 2012, 97; personal observation 2010.

⁹ Stucky et al. 2005, 191.

¹⁰ Tac. *Ann* 2.57.

¹¹ Abdul Massih 2012, 169, 389-390.

¹² Dodge 1984, 327 with plate 43, 376 (Troad granite), 388 (pavonazzetto). Personal observation 2010.

¹³ Jul. *ep.* 399 D; Gonnella 2008, 12; Burns 2017a, 49.

¹⁴ Finlayson 2012, 116 A fragment of a small column of ‘marmo cipollino verde’ lay near the cafe across from the ticket office at the southern crossing of *cardo* and *decumanus*; its original context is not clear (personal observation 2010).

¹⁵ Ploug 1985, 142-143.

(white with grey streaks, Prokonnesian?) embellish the basin in the inner courtyard.¹⁶ In the inner courtyard II of the Al-Azm Palace (constructed in 1739-1740), four columns, two of red granite from Aswan and two of white marble with grey streaks, are used secondarily for the arcade in the northern facade.¹⁷ These spolia likely were taken from sites throughout Hama itself.¹⁸

Equal difficulties in establishing the original architectural context of monolithic columns are encountered at the citadel of Homs, ancient Emesa, where an unknown number of red granite columns from Aswan were observed during the Anglo-Syrian excavations of 1995-1999.¹⁹ A possible home for these columns might have been the large temple of Elagabalus, which, according to Herodian, was in or near Homs (5.3.9) and lavishly decorated with gold, silver and precious stones. Most peculiar in Herodian's estimation was the presence of an aniconic rock at the centre of the cult where a Roman would expect an anthropomorphic cult statue (5.3.4-5). A cult site for the god Elagabalus is attested through an altar found on the citadel, thus making its position on the mound very likely.²⁰

Perhaps the most conspicuous display of imported columns was at the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus in Baalbek. The initial temple was constructed in the Augustan period, possibly commissioned by king Herod (30-4 BC).²¹ In a second phase a large terrace was added, onto which a monumental pseudodipteral temple was placed; the preceding 'Great Courtyard' holding the altar ('Altarhof') was also elevated and likely equipped with a portico on the north and south side of the court. This change took place over a longer period, perhaps commencing under Tiberius and Caligula and, as the decorative style seems to indicate, the temple was nearly completed under Domitian.²² The 'Great Courtyard', however, remained an unfinished construction site, until some 186 column shafts of red granite from Aswan and grey granite (perhaps from Mons Claudianus or the Troad?) were brought in — 128 for the 'Altarhof', 46 for the 'Hexagonal Court', and 12 for the 'Propylon' (fig. 3).²³ The height of the columns in the 'Great Courtyard' appears to have been around 7.15 m; the three fully preserved columns — one of red granite, two of grey — measure 7.17 m, 7.14 and, slightly smaller, 7.05 m, respectively.²⁴ The 46 columns in the 'Hexagonal Court' were of the same size as in the 'Great Courtyard', whereas the twelve columns in the Propylon were taller with *c.* 8.6

¹⁶ Guidetti 2016, 24, fig. 2.3.

¹⁷ A. Ahmad, in Bartl and Farzat 2012, 58 with n. 229, Taf. 12 a and b.

¹⁸ For Epiphaneia on the Orontes / Hama, cf. Cohen 2006, 106-108 with further bibliography.

¹⁹ King 2002, 44, 55.

²⁰ Yon and Gatier 2009, 160-161, no. 43.

²¹ Lohmann 2017, 147-148.

²² Lohmann 2017, 160-164, 164-172.

²³ Aliquot 2009, 41 with n. 16; K. Rheidt, in Van Ess and Rheidt 2014 164.

²⁴ H. Wienholz, in Van Ess 2003 129-130; cf. also Seyrig 1961 109-125. The red granite column had a diameter of 0.894 m at the bottom and 0.805 m at the top, so on average a diameter of 0.8 m, cf. Schulz and Winnefeld 1921 77.

m.²⁵ Based on the architectural decoration the ‘Hexagonal Court’ and the ‘Propylon’ were completed in the late 2nd c. AD.²⁶

Damascus, the town SW of Palmyra and elevated to *metropolis* at some point in the late 1st or early 2nd c. AD, saw the import of column shafts for its large scale public building ventures.²⁷ The construction of the temple for Jupiter Damascenus in the early 1st c. AD and its significant refurbishment with new architectural decor in the late 2nd c. AD, is the likeliest project to merit the ostentatious use of coloured granites and marbles.²⁸ Much of the rich architectural decoration appears in secondary, perhaps even tertiary use, most notably in the Bab al-Barid, the entrance to the vast Umayyad mosque in Damascus, and in the inner courtyard of said mosque. The entrance displays four reused columns of grey granite with Roman bases and capitals in white limestone (fig. 4). The inner court has two rows of arcades with pilasters and columns; the supports of the lower arcade in the west consist of six monolithic columns of red (two) and grey granite (four). On the north side of the court only two column shafts of grey granite survive, whereas the eastern arcade has four columns of grey and red granite; the eastern gate shows two columns of grey granite.²⁹ The upper row of arcades consists of smaller columns of which some are furnished of imported marbles as well — red granite, ‘cipollino (?)’, and black stone stand out.³⁰ Based on the stylistic analysis of the capitals, Klaus Freyberger has suggested that much of the architectural decoration, including the monolithic columns, stems from the reign of Septimius Severus.³¹ Further columns are dispersed throughout the city in secondary use, their original context difficult to establish.³²

The Decapolis

The ‘Forum Area’ of Hippos-Sussita, consisted of a large rectangular square, embellished by a colonnade to the east and north. Ten monolithic column shafts of grey granite in the NE corner (4.65m high, diam. 0.65m, weight 3.7t) were discovered which had fallen into the square. The find context suggests that they were crowned by capitals of white marble, stood on white marble bases, and formed part of a colonnade. The colonnade of the forum may have been erected in the 2nd c. AD.³³ In the

²⁵ Schulz and Winnefeld 1921 Taf. 37 (Hexagonal Court), Taf. 41 (Propylon).

²⁶ D. Lohmann, in Van Ess and Rheidt 2014 77; H. Wienholz, in Van Ess and Rheidt 2014 154; Lohmann 2017 194.

²⁷ Vitale 2013 150-151 with n. 204 and further bibliography.

²⁸ Freyberger 2000, 214.

²⁹ Freyberger 1988, 75-79.

³⁰ Personal observation.

³¹ Freyberger 1988, 85; Freyberger 2000, 214.

³² E.g. Burns 2009, 110 (Mosque al-Aqsab).

³³ Segal et al. 2004, 9-10, 15.

adjacent ‘basilica’, built in the 2nd half of the 1st c. AD, recent excavations yielded no monolithic columns, but two lintels made of a monolithic architrave and frieze, and a large cornice of white-grey marble.³⁴ The ‘Cathedral’ / ‘South-East Church’, erected in the 6th c. AD, revealed the secondary use of two rows of nine monolithic columns each (height 5m), some of which were made of grey Troad and red Aswan granite³⁵, others of ‘cipollino verde’.³⁶

Nysa-Scythopolis saw the wide use of imported and polychrome marble in its large theatre (‘Severan Theater’) to the south of the centre. Based on the stylistic analysis of the architectural decoration the theatre (built on top of an earlier theatre) is dated to the late 2nd/ early 3rd c. AD.³⁷ The backdrop to the stage was provided by a “ three-storey-high columnar façade of the Corinthian order constructed of imported marble”; capitals and bases were made of white marble derived from Prokonnesos/Marmara and Aphrodisias; greenish ‘marmo cipollino’ hailed from Karystos on Euboea, the grey granite came from the Troad and the red from Syene/Aswan.³⁸ Imported marble may also have embellished the ‘Central Monument’, possibly a monumental altar dedicated to the imperial cult erected during the Antonine period; the columns and capitals assigned to this altar were made of ‘cipollino’ and Prokonnesian marble for capitals and bases.³⁹

Imported polychrome marble from outside Syria was also found at Gadara/Umm Qais: a monolithic column of *marmor Carystium* and capitals made of Prokonnesian marble may belong to the Nymphaeum which stood across from the ‘market basilica’ on the western terrace. An inscribed marble base found near the ‘Podienmonument’ makes reference to an Aurelius Diophantes, son of Gaianus, who, in the early 2nd c. AD, commissioned a Nymphaeum with a marble statue to his *patria*.⁴⁰ Capitals and bases of other buildings at Gadara are made of Prokonnesian marble and possibly were combined with monolithic shafts made of Troad granite; capitals/bases and columns were assigned to the Late Roman Baths (early 4th c. AD) on the *decumanus maximus* (‘Decumanus-Thermen’). Some columns of the five-aisled basilica (4th c. AD) were of Troad granite as well.⁴¹

³⁴ Segal et al. 2010, 32-33 with n. 54 and figs. 47, 48; also Segal et al. 2007, 23 with fig. 36.

³⁵ Williams-Thorpe and Henty 2000, 164, 166, 168.

³⁶ Epstein 1993, 635-636 with photo.

³⁷ Ovadia and Turnheim 1994, 125.

³⁸ Atrash and Mazor 2016, 141; Thorpe-Williams and Henty 2000, 164, 166, 169.

³⁹ Tsafirir and Foerster 2002, 76; Fischer 1998, 61. On the ‘Central Monument’ see now Mazor 2016, 370, and Hoffmann 1997.

⁴⁰ *AE* 2002, 1548; cf. Weber 2002, 286 (IS 14).

⁴¹ Weber 2002, 353-354 (BD 23), 369 (BD 31). A variety of imported coloured and white marbles is observable in the floor and wall decoration of the Twin Churches on the Roman-Byzantine Terrace (cf. U. Wagner-Lux, in Vriezen and Wagner-Lux 2015, 56) or the statuary found throughout Gadara (cf. Weber 2002, 33-34).

At Gerasa/Jerash, monolithic column shafts of red Aswan granite are positioned at the *tetrakionia* ('South Tetrapylon'). Kraeling describes the columns in the *tetrakionia* being of "mottled marble which was imported, was weathered badly, and has been deteriorating even more rapidly since excavation".⁴² Further column shafts of red granite are still visible today at the 'Propylaea Plaza/Piazza', i.e. the trapezoidal space in the propylaea of the Temple of Artemis east of the *cardo* and the apsis of the Propylaea Church, in secondary use at the latter.⁴³ The Temple of Artemis was begun in the Antonine period; the eastern propylaea were possibly completed by the end of the 2nd c. AD, only to be turned into a church by the mid 6th c. AD.⁴⁴ Whether the column shafts from Aswan were originally intended for the Eastern Propylaea in the 2nd c. AD or were used secondarily in the church was not a concern of the excavators. Like Gadara, other imported coloured stones and white marbles reached Gerasa as well: remains and fragments of statues from the North Hall of the East Baths provide a good sample.⁴⁵

Other communities of the Decapolis appear to have imported column shafts during the Principate, but much of the evidence hails from secondary locations: the late 5th/early 6th century 'Cruciform Church' at Abila/mod. Quweilbeh, for instance, yielded column bases of Prokonnesian and Parian marble, and columns made of Troad and Mysian grey granite, as well as *marmor Carystium*.⁴⁶ Evidently these were *spolia* taken from earlier buildings which, as of yet, have not been identified.⁴⁷ The same applies to the 'Cathedral' or 'Central Church' at Pella, begun in the early 5th c. AD, where some columns were made of a 'greenish marble'.⁴⁸

Coastal towns

Unlike the communities of the Decapolis or other cities in the hinterland such as Palmyra, the coastal towns had easy access to marble and granites from overseas.⁴⁹ The 'basilica/bouleuterion' at Ascalon, probably erected around the mid 1st c. AD, saw a considerable reconfiguration and the replacement of the 'bouleuterion' apse of the 'basilica' with a 'bouleuterion/odeion' in the Severan period; the

⁴² Kraeling 1938, 104.

⁴³ Dodge 1984, plates 35-37 Brizzi (2018, 89, 98) records an alabaster capital and revetment fragments made of 'verde antico' from Thessaly, 'serpentino verde', Egyptian red granite, and 'giallo antico'.

⁴⁴ Parapetti 1989, 327; Parapetti 2002, 26; March 2009, 130; Raja 2009; Raja 2012, 175.

⁴⁵ Friedland 2003, 417. 'Marmo cipollino' slabs were used as revetment in the first storey of the nymphaeum, see Brizzi 2018, 97 n. 37.

⁴⁶ Al-Bashaireh and Lazzarini 2016, *passim*. On the cruciform church at Abila, cf. Mare 2002, 56, with further bibliography.

⁴⁷ Chapmann 2011.

⁴⁸ Habas 2011, 391; Watson 2002, 70.

⁴⁹ Russell 2008; Russell 2013, 141-200.

basilica itself appears also to have undergone significant refurbishment. The architectural fragments associated with the *scenae frons* of the ‘bouleuterion/odeion’ and the interior colonnade of the basilica of the Severan period appear to consist of columns made of ‘pavonazzetto’ and white-grey marble, some identified as Prokonnesian.⁵⁰ Furthermore, monolithic grey granite columns, possibly belonging to the colonnaded street and clustered on the intersection of *cardo* and *decumanus*, hail from the Troad; only a small number of red granite columns derive from Aswan. Other red and grey granite columns were located near the ‘bouleuterion’, reused in the church ‘St. Mary the Green’, or in the sea wall fortification.⁵¹ Much of the marble imports to the Decapolis may have come through Caesarea Maritima, which itself sported white and coloured marble as well as granite columns at some public monuments in the town. The *scenae frons* of the theatre seems to have been embellished with red and grey granite columns, green ‘cipollino’, even porphyry, possibly in the second half of the 2nd c. AD/early 3rd c. AD.⁵² Granite columns from Aswan and the Troad were also discovered throughout the town in secondary use.⁵³

Up the coast, excavations at Tyros had revealed a great colonnaded street, which is now identified by the recent French ‘Mission de Tyr’ as a ‘basilique thermale’, a basilica of three naves with an adjacent bath complex to its south.⁵⁴ Soundings suggest a date for this complex in the late 4th / early 5th c. AD (pottery, coinage), but the excavators concede that the pedestals, bases, columns, and capitals originate from earlier buildings and were reused in this complex.⁵⁵ Based on stylistic considerations, Maurice Chéhab had dated these architectural elements to the 2nd or the early 3rd c. AD.⁵⁶ The monolithic columns (*ca.* 80) were made of *marmor Carystium*, *ca.* 7 m high, with capitals and bases of Prokonnesian marble.⁵⁷ In the SW *palaestra* of the adjacent baths the interior colonnade around the rectangular court, originally consisting of some 44 columns (as did the NE *palaestra*), seems to have been fitted with grey monolithic columns (*ca.* 5.30 m high) with white marble bases and capitals.⁵⁸ The neighbouring ‘bâtiment à gradins’ may have been embellished by grey granite columns standing on column bases of Prokonnesian marble found within this compound.⁵⁹ Moreover,

⁵⁰ For dating to the mid 1st c. AD ‘basilica/bouleuterion’, cf. Boehm et al. 2016, 288-291 (epigraphic evidence, pottery); for architectural elements, cf. Fischer et al. 1995, 123; Pensabene 1997, 361 with figs 111, 112; Boehm et al. 2016, 303-307.

⁵¹ Williams-Thorpe and Henty 2000, 167-168 (for granite).

⁵² Fischer 1998, 53; Dell’Amore et al. 1966, 132 fig. 153, 145 fig. 185, 179-180.

⁵³ Williams-Thorpe and Henty 2000, 167.

⁵⁴ Gatier 2012, 9-10.

⁵⁵ Gatier 2012, 10. One of the soundings in the complex yielded a grey granite column (‘secteur 3, sondage 1’).

⁵⁶ Chéhab 1962, 13-14; Gatier 2012, 7.

⁵⁷ Gatier et al. 2011, 14-15; Gatier 2012, 6.

⁵⁸ Gatier et al. 2011, 18-19 with fig. 15; Charpentier 2012, 148; Charpentier and Duvette 2014, 389 with fig. 11.

⁵⁹ Gatier et al. 2011, 22-23; Gatier 2012, 1533.

along a road in ‘secteur 4’ or the ‘insula’ north west of the ‘bâtiment à gradins’ monolithic column shafts of grey granite and Prokonnesian marble, equipped with capitals of Prokonnesian marble, provided the colonnade.⁶⁰ Columns of ‘cipollino’ were furthermore recovered from a colonnaded street near the Crusader cathedral.⁶¹ The Crusader cathedral itself was embellished with reused monolithic shafts of red Aswan granite, and grey granite columns were used for the foundations.⁶² Monolithic column shafts of red Aswan and Troad granite (the former for the grand obelisk of the *spina*), ‘marmo cipollino verde’ from Karystos, ‘breccia’, Prokonnesian, as well as imported white marble, are employed in the vast hippodrome at Tyre. The stylistic analysis of the capitals suggests that the hippodrome, erected in the 1st c. AD, experienced significant refurbishment during a second ‘Severan’ building phase in the late 2nd c. AD, to which the imported marble and granite column shafts appear to belong.⁶³

The *Colonia Iulia Augusta* at Berytus appears also to have received its fair share of column shafts, although the original context cannot always be established.⁶⁴ A rebuilt colonnade with monolithic shafts of grey granite still stands immediately west of the Maronite Saint Georges Cathedral.⁶⁵ Red Aswan granite columns are visible today to the northwest of it.⁶⁶ Column fragments and columns of Aswan and Troad granite, Karystian marble, and ‘africano’ were found reused in the Crusader Tower (Burj el Kashef) and the Crusader Castle.⁶⁷ The hippodrome was initially constructed in the Augustan period partly out of wood and rebuilt in stone under the Flavians, with further construction activity evident in the early 2nd c. and a refurbishment of the stands in the Severan period, as the architectural decor appears to indicate.⁶⁸ Under the Severans at the latest the southern stands of the hippodrome were embellished with a peristyle in the Corinthian order; this colonnade collapsed into the hippodrome during the earthquake of AD 551 with some of its monolithic columns of grey (Troad?) granite still *in situ*.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ Gatier et al. 2011, 57-58 with figs. 64, 66; Kahwagi-Janho 2012, 19 with fig. 7.

⁶¹ Gatier et al. 2011, 9, 58-59.

⁶² Gatier et al. 2011, 32, 33 with fig. 41, 59-60.

⁶³ Kahwagi-Janho 2012, 154-155, 176-177.

⁶⁴ <http://www.beirutreport.com/2017/05/how-did-ancient-beirut-get-tossed-in-a-pile.html>.

⁶⁵ Lauffray 1944-45, 74-75 with pl. 1, no. 22; Lauffray 1977, 159; Pensabene 1997, 329, 413.

⁶⁶ Pensabene 1997, 414.

⁶⁷ Pensabene 1997, 413-414 The basilica, which seemingly consisted of an Ionian peristyle, exhibited some 16 columns along its southern length, 9.20 m in height. At a later point another colonnade in the Corinthian order was added along the southern end with 24 columns, 9.74 m high. Of the latter, some four columns with capitals and entablature survive in front of the National Museum in Beirut; the reconstruction of the inscription on the architrave based on the dowel holes for golden letters, suggests a Flavian date for this later addition, cf. Lauffray 1944-45, 50, 52-53; Posamentir and Wienholz 2012, 163-167, 176. The columns are made of a local³ breccia, cf. Pensabene 1997, 331, fig. 76.

⁶⁸ Curvers et al. 2016, 210-211.

⁶⁹ U.-W. Gans et al. in Curvers et al 2016, 198-199, 209.

The *nymphaeum* at Byblus may also hail from the late 2nd or early 3rd c. AD; this is suggested by the architectural decoration. The bases of grey marble, the monolithic shafts of grey (Troad?) granite and the capitals of white marble might be imported.⁷⁰ The alleged ‘terrace sanctuary’ sported a colonnade in the Corinthian order with columns some 7m high, with six monolithic column shafts of grey and red granite with column bases and capitals made of ‘pavonazzetto’.⁷¹ Numerous red and grey granite columns emerge in secondary or tertiary use in the Church of St. John and the Crusader castle.⁷²

The Roman theatre at Gabala (mod. Ğablā), or rather, the architectural decoration of the *scenae frons*, has been assigned to the late 2nd/ early 3rd c. AD again.⁷³ The origin of the white marble used for the capitals is difficult to identify but the monolithic columns of red and grey granite from Aswan and the Troad(?) were clearly imported. The grey granite columns are far more numerous than the shafts brought in from Egypt, and the measurement of diameters suggests two different column sizes.⁷⁴

Throughout the city of Lattakia, once Laodicea ad Mare, Jean Sauvaget’s plan of the town shows four colonnaded streets (A-D), some evidently using monolithic shafts of grey Troad granite.⁷⁵ The architectural elements (capitals, cornice) of a colonnade erected on a roundabout has been dated by Pensabene to the Severan period.⁷⁶ Monolithic column shafts of Troad and Aswan granite (together with a fragment of a Prokonnesian marble column) were furthermore seen in the Museum of Latakia, which Pensabene believes, must have belonged to a monumental tetrapylon.⁷⁷ Already in the 1930s Sauvaget had noticed column shafts “de marbre blanc, de marbre rose, de marbre gris, de marbre vert [possibly ‘cipollino’], de syénite [red granite from Aswan]” in the harbour area.⁷⁸

In summation, public buildings (theatres, hippodromes, baths, *basilicae*, etc.) in coastal towns of varied importance predominantly received columns of grey granite from the Troad, to a lesser degree of red granite from Aswan, or monolithic shafts made of ‘cipollino verde’ from Euboea or ‘pavonazzetto’ from Dokimeion. For capitals and bases, roughed-out specimen in white or

⁷⁰ Lauffray 1940, 22-25. 35; cf. also 12, fig. 4, and pl. 4; Pensabene 1997, 310; Ertel et al. 2008, 100-101.

⁷¹ Pensabene 1997, 318; Ertel et al. 2008, 101 with further bibliography.

⁷² Pensabene 1997, 413-414.

⁷³ Pensabene 1997, 383.

⁷⁴ Frézouls 1952, 58; Pensabene 1997, 378-380; Patricio and Stevens 2003, 1606.

⁷⁵ Sauvaget 1934, 83 fig. 1, 84-87; Pensabene 1997, 385; Burns 2017*b*, 292-293.

⁷⁶ Pensabene 1997, 391.

⁷⁷ Pensabene 1997, 385, 414.

⁷⁸ Sauvaget 1934, 105.

Prokonnesian marble were shipped in from overseas. As for towns in the hinterland of the Levantine coast proximity to a seaport may have been an important factor in accessing certain marble or granite varieties popular in public buildings on the coast; a clear picture of distribution, however, is obscured by the removal, reuse, or destruction of architectural elements in later periods. As to how these large and heavy items were acquired, who funded their manufacture, transport, and installation on site, the written evidence rarely offers any specifics. The emperor is usually assigned a prominent role in the import of these marbles and granites, but a more nuanced model emerges when surveying lacunal written evidence on building projects in the Roman Levant.

Funding Public Buildings

The evidence for the involvement of the Roman emperor in building projects in the Levant is restricted to the ‘Chronographia’ of the 6th c. historiographer Malalas. He details the role of emperors in the construction of baths, theatres, city walls, etc. firstly in Antioch, but also in other cities throughout Syria and the Greek East.⁷⁹ On occasion, Malalas’ praise for an emperor’s involvement in building projects is misplaced: the surfacing of the main road in Antioch with marble and the construction of colonnades alongside it, for instance, is assigned by Josephus to Herod the Great.⁸⁰ Malalas, however, claims that the surfacing of the street outside Antioch was initiated by Herod but that emperor Tiberius provided for the two colonnades and had them equipped with bronze and marble (?) statues. Often, he does not disclose the exact nature of the emperor’s contribution, only that he was involved in building projects, or provided financial support towards the reconstruction of cities, especially in the aftermath of earthquakes.⁸² More importantly, euergetic contributions by people other than the emperor, i.e. by the local elites, are completely ignored.⁸³

⁷⁹ Moffatt 2017, 93.

⁸⁰ *Ant. Jud.* 16.148; *Bell. Jud.* 1.425

⁸² Horster 1997, 90-91. Financial support is provided at Antioch and Daphne under Caligula in AD 37 (Mal. 10.18-19 ed. Thurn), under Claudius (Mal. 10.23 ed. Thurn), and under Trajan after the earthquake of 13 December 115 (Malalas 11. 8-9 ed. Thurn). Claudius: Downey 1961, 196 with n. 145; Horster 1997, 86 with n. 204. Trajan: Horster 1997, 87-88. Following the First Jewish War (AD 66-73) Malalas claims that Vespasian used the spoils to pay for the construction of the so-called Cherubim at Antioch and a small theatre at Daphne and of an *odeion* on the spot of a former synagogue at Caesarea (10.45 f.), cf. Downey 1961, 206-207; Horster 1997, 89. Septimius Severus awarded Laodikeia by the Sea with the honorific title of *metropolis* and substantial financial assistance to the city for its support during the war against Pescennius Niger and its subsequent destruction by the latter’s troops; he also ordered funds established to aid Laodikeia in its rebuilding efforts (Mal. 12.21), cf. Downey 1961, 240-241 with n. 29; Horster 1997, 89-90.

⁸³ On Malalas and local benefactors, cf. Horster 1997, 8; Downey 1938, 300-311; Horster 1997, 84 with n. 197; Saliou 2016, 70.

Building inscriptions do attest imperial initiatives in the construction of roads and other infrastructural measures (bridges, canals, aqueducts etc.), executed by governors and other representatives of the state in the name of the emperor.⁸⁴ The epigraphic evidence, however, falls almost silent when it comes to the involvement of the emperor in instigating the (re-)construction of public buildings and temples.⁸⁵ The latter statement requires further qualification: this lack of testimonies is in part the result of the comparative poverty of inscriptions in Syria, Iudaea/Palaestina, and Arabia relative to the epigraphic wealth of Asia Minor where the contribution of the emperor towards public building projects in cities is well attested.⁸⁶ We therefore can be fairly certain that the emperor also had a hand in funding building projects in choice cities or at sacred precincts of the Roman Levant, maybe even providing marble or granites from his quarries for the aggrandizement of these constructions (as might have been the case at Heliopolis /Baalbek).

Other benefactors, of course, are well attested in the Roman Levant. Under the Julio-Claudian dynasty the generosity shown by local client-kings towards the towns of the Near Eastern provinces is reflected in local building inscriptions. In the mid 1st c. AD Agrippa II and his sister Berenice are named in a Latin inscription from Berytus as the instigators of the reconstruction and embellishment of a collapsed bath(?) their great-grandfather Herod the Great had built with marble statues and columns.⁸⁷ According to Josephus, Agrippa II furthermore built a theatre, funded games, distributed grain and oil, and furnished the city with statues and replicas of old artwork.⁸⁸ Along with Tyre, Herod had provided Berytus with exedras, halls, porticoes, and temples.⁸⁹ Agrippa I, father of both Agrippa II and Berenice, displayed his generosity towards these cities by funding the construction of a theatre, amphitheatre, porticoes, and baths — all lavishly executed with no costs spared.⁹⁰ Josephus describes further building projects of Herod in Ascalon, Ptolemais, Sidon, Byblos, Tripolis, Laodikeia-by-the-Sea, and Damascus and assigns the founding the new cities of Caesarea Maritima and Sebaste to Herod as well.⁹¹ In the last years of Trajan's reign the offspring of one of these local

⁸⁴ Claudius, for instance, was seemingly responsible for securing the water supply of Apameia-on-the-Orontes in AD 47/8, presumably in the aftermath of an earthquake (*aquas induxit*; *AE* 2000, 1495 with Balty 2000; Bru 2011, 78); M. Ulpius Traianus, governor of Syria and father of the later emperor, concluded a canal building project in AD 75 near Antioch on behalf of Vespasian (*AE* 1983, 927; *AE* 1986, 694); or the bridge over the river Chabina at Kiachta by the governor of Syria Coele for Septimius Severus are exemplary for the building activity undertaken by governors on a regular basis in the name of the emperor (*CIL* 3, 6709-6714).

⁸⁵ Bru 2011, 41-54.

⁸⁶ Winter 1996, 306-335.

⁸⁷ *AE* 2006, 1578, with Haensch 2006.

⁸⁸ *Ant. Jud.* 20.211-212.

⁸⁹ *Bell. Jud.* 1.422.

⁹⁰ *Ant. Jud.* 19.335-337).

⁹¹ *Bell. Jud.* 1.403, 409ff., 422.

dynasties, L. Iulius Agrippa, gifted Apameia-on-the-Orontes with baths and a basilica, fronted both with a portico, paid for their decoration, and provided bronze statues.⁹²

Elites of less illustrious lineage, men as well as women, and representatives of the Roman state emerge more frequently in our epigraphic corpus as sponsors of complete buildings.⁹³ In the early 3rd c. AD, for instance, the *astynomos* Aurelius Diophantos at Gerasa paid for the construction of a *nymphaeum* and embellished it with a marble statue.⁹⁴ And the Latin inscription on an ornamented architrave at Caesarea names the mother and heir of a deceased *duumvir* as the sponsor of a *porticus*.⁹⁵ The financial involvement of the local elite also extended to the religious sphere, with temples and sanctuaries being funded by individuals or groups: the latter appears to be the case with the *epimeletes* Martialis, who, together with five other men ('the six'), commissioned a temple/*naos* at Burj al-Qa'i for the deity Simea in AD 196/7.⁹⁶ During the reigns of Nero and Otho, an Apollophanes, 'father of the polis' (of Dion?), not only gifted a temple with decorations at Tafas to his fatherland, but also a portico.⁹⁷ Civilians aside, officers, soldiers and veterans of the provincial garrison had their contributions commemorated as well, and quite often we find members of *legio III Gallica* paying up⁹⁸: Iulius Germanus, a centurion of said legion and a notable benefactor of the Aireneans and *ktistes* (founder), sponsored a Tycheion with enclosure at Aire in 190/1.⁹⁹

The epigraphic evidence also reveals numerous contributions by individuals towards communal endeavours, either in cash or specific additions to existing buildings. Perhaps the most detailed list of money contributions is provided for Theon: in 69/70 he pays 7,100 drachmas 'of Tyrian silver' (on behalf of himself, his children and the temple slaves) towards the construction of the Temple of Zeus at Gerasa, after already having contributed some 1,500 drachmas towards the propylon (*I. Gerasa* 5). Theon then also contributed 1,314 drachmas towards the planned bronze statue of Zeus of Refuge,

⁹² Rey-Coquais 1979, 40 f. no. 1, 41-46 no. 2; Yon and Gatier 2009, 28-29 no. 2, 30-33 no. 3.

⁹³ If not otherwise mentioned, the inscription are in Greek.

⁹⁴ *AE* 2002, 1548; Weber 2002, 286, IS 14 with commentary *Bull. ép.* 2003, 585 (Gatier).

⁹⁵ *CIIP* 2, 1368; another portico, commissioned at Caesarea by a Iulia Ba[--]a, is referred to in papyrus TM 17460 = *PSI* 1026 = *CPL* 117 (22. Jan. AD 150). Further examples are a bath and a portico at Philadelphia / Amman in AD 150 sponsored by an unknown individual, group, or community (*IGLS* 21.2, 17). And a *toparchos* in charge of the territorial subdivision of Marathos / Amrit, paying for the costs of 100 stones, set up a non-descript building on the grounds of a village (*IGLS* 7, 4052).

⁹⁶ *IGLS* 5, 2089.

⁹⁷ *IGLS* 14.1, 260, 261. Numerous Greek inscriptions on an architrave and on fragmentary blocks, reused in the church of Blat near Byblos, name an Aspasios, son of Dionysios, as the person commissioning/dedicating a temple in AD 148/9. *AE* 1966, 1544 with Alpi and Nordiguan 1996.

⁹⁸ *IGLS* 15.1, 5.

⁹⁹ *IGLS* 15.2, 548. In 167/8 another centurion of the same legion pays for a gate (for a public or sacred building) at Arita from its 'foundation to its completion' (*IGLS* 15.2, 338). At Mseikeh in the Trachonitis a former soldier paid for the construction of a temple, enclosure, and cellar during the reign of Commodus (*IGLS* 15.1 140 a).

paying some 10,000 drachmas all in all (*I. Gerasa* 6).¹⁰⁰ Earlier contributions in cash towards this project are known as well: a priest of the imperial cult for Tiberius contributed 1,000 drachmas in 22/23¹⁰¹; and in the mid 1st c. two gymnasiarchs gave 1,500 drachmas each.¹⁰² Moving away from Gerasa, the inscriptions from the temple for Zeus Madbachos and to Selamanes on Djebel Sheikh Barakat detail the building costs (and the cubits built) of an enclosure, paid for by different contributors in the late 1st / early 2nd c. AD.¹⁰³ In the 3rd c. AD an Aurelia Procla paid some 400 denarii for an architrave for the Temple C at Hosn Sfire and further monies towards its completion.¹⁰⁴

Partial embellishments of sacred and public buildings were commissioned as well: in AD 129 Settia Sekounda gifted her *kome* at Me'ez with doors and a tiled roof for a banquet hall (ἀνδρών; as part of a sanctuary), in addition to the pavement and the tiled roof of the portico in front of the hall.¹⁰⁵ As a thanks for providing her husband with a seat on the council, Apollonia of Laodikeia-by-the-Sea paid for six doors and put in steps in twenty intercolumnar spaces, possibly for a public(?) building fronted by a colonnade.¹⁰⁶ And in the mid 2nd c. an unknown former centurion of *legio IIII Scythica* offered a significant sum for a building at Gadara, with six columns and an architrave being paid for by M. Antonius Akindunos and an unknown person (after receiving a bequest).¹⁰⁷

Singular architectural elements and other bits and bobs could be gifted as well. In 66/7 Aoueidos presented the temple of Zeus Kyrios at Akraba in the Gaulanitis with decorated door leaves and an altar.¹⁰⁸ A section of the temple for Zeus Kyrios at Aire was paid for by Eunomos and his brothers in 45/6; in 85/6 a Mabbogaios added a door decorated with little victories and lions and the door jambs to this temple; a similar door was provided by Kaiiamos and his sons at an unknown date.¹⁰⁹

There were not only private individuals who directed their surplus income towards building projects in the public sphere. Groups within a community or communities as a whole could commission public buildings or parts thereof. The *cives Romani* established at Bostra, for instance, funded the construction of a temple.¹¹⁰ And in AD 213, the *Arisenoi* and *Iachphirenoi*, possibly

¹⁰⁰ Rigsby 2000. The construction of the temple (and its costs) had been approved by the people.

¹⁰¹ *I. Gerasa* 2.

¹⁰² *I. Gerasa* 3, 4.

¹⁰³ Prentice 1908, nos. 100, 101 (AD 86); 102 (AD 109); *IGLS* II 465-469; with Millar 1993, 254-255.

¹⁰⁴ AE 2009, 1563 with Yon 2009, 194-197.

¹⁰⁵ *SEG* 52, 1547; *IGLS* 2, 584

¹⁰⁶ *IGLS* 4, 1259 (Principate).

¹⁰⁷ Mussies 1989, 124-128, esp. 128; *SEG* 39, 1624 = Weber 2002, 287, IS 15.

¹⁰⁸ *IGLS* 15.2, 512.

¹⁰⁹ *IGLS* 15.2, 558, 559, 560.

¹¹⁰ *IGLS* 13.2, 9475.

inhabitants of two distinct villages, sponsored the construction of the Tycheion at Zebireh in the Trachonitis.¹¹¹ On occasion we find officials overseeing construction on behalf of a community: at Qasr Hammara in the Beqa'a Valley the *epimeletes* of the village Ainkania constructed a *tetrastoon* (four porticoes ?) around the inner court of the temple of Zeus under oversight of the priests and paid for by the village Ainkania in the early 3rd c. AD.¹¹² At the temple of Mercurius at Ham in the Beqa'a Valley the priest, two treasurers of the temple, and the village of Chamon are noted as commissioners of an unnamed building with costs carried by the village.¹¹³ The construction of buildings could also be financed through interest from the bequest of private individuals: in AD 165/6 the community at Gerasa funded their *odeum* with the sums derived from two legacies.¹¹⁴

The revenues from assets belonging to a temple could also be tapped to pay for building projects: the deity Leukothea had a temple built for her at Rakhle in AD 283 under supervision of six *epimeletes* and the priest Mabogeos, paid for by the 'sacred treasury' of the deity; the treasury was partly sustained by interest (ἀπο τόκου) on assets.¹¹⁵ At Umm az-Zeitun, a temple for Kronos, again funded by the treasury of the deity, was built under the auspices of the treasurers in 249/50¹¹⁶; and in AD 281/2, the villagers and sacred treasury of Tyche financed the construction of a *kalybe* (not a hut, but a building with a cupola).¹¹⁷

This brief survey casts a spotlight on the variety of funding mechanisms for public and sacred buildings in place in the Roman provinces of Syria, Syria Palaestina, and Arabia. Besides large benefactions by the emperor and client kings, funds for building projects derived from the community as a whole and from the sacred treasuries of temples, or from both (as at Umm az-Zeitun). Wealthy citizens and army officers, mostly, shouldered the financial burden of a sanctuary, nymphaeum, or other public buildings on their own. The wealthy could also provide cash contributions especially to temples alongside other members of their community; or they funded specific elements such as gates,

¹¹¹ *IGLS* 15.1, 90. For further tribes or villagers paying for temples, cf. Nejran, where the *Maineinenoi*, pay for or contribute towards a sacred building for Heracles (*IGLS* 15.2, 360); or Birtha/Majadel, where the *Birthenoi*, represented by two *iatrotomeis*, 'surgeons', pay for the construction of a building in 226/7, the nature of which is not clear (*IGLS* 15.2, 457).

¹¹² *SEG* 37, 1445 with Aliquot 2009, 111, 333-335 nr. 88*.

¹¹³ *SEG* 63, 1500 with Aliquot 2009, 112, 306 no. 62.

¹¹⁴ *AE* 2004, 1592 with *Bull. ép.* 2006, 485 (Gatier).

¹¹⁵ *IGLS* 11, 22 with commentary; for the temple treasury, cf. *IGLS* 11, 23, 24, 27. For similar means of financing temple embellishments, cf. *IGLS* 11, 42 (AD 330).

¹¹⁶ *IGLS* 15.2, 449.

¹¹⁷ *IGLS* 15.2, 447, 448 with commentary.

roofs, enclosures, or other embellishments and additions to existing buildings, thus leaving their mark on the collective memory of the community.

The latter is of particular relevance to this paper as columns, capitals, etc. were also gifted to temples, sanctuaries, and public buildings. We have already taken notice of the columns for Berytus which Agrippa II and Berenice provided. Moreover, two equestrians noted on column bases as sponsors of columns for Berytus: M. Lucilius Agrippinianus, *u(ir) e(gregius)* and imperial procurator, and M. Lucilius Aufidianus, also *vir egregius*, on completion of his military service, commissioned three columns in AD 211. The term employed here is *columnam cum spirocephalo*; *spirocephalo*, not otherwise attested in Latin, derives from the Greek σπειροκέφαλος, and is understood by Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais to signify the attributes of a column, base, and capital.¹¹⁸ Which building these columns were intended for is unclear. This is also the case with a Q. Minicius Honoratus, a *beneficiarius* of the praetorian prefect: a fragmentary inscription on a column found at Bende, south of Laodikeia-by-the-Sea, states that Honoratus built a *prostylon* made of 18 columns (?). Nelis-Clément argued that this building might have been erected in the context of an imperial visit to the city, perhaps during a campaign which brought the emperor and the praetorian prefect to the East.¹¹⁹

Alongside dedications of statues, offered mostly by representatives of the Roman state (soldiers, officers, imperial officials) and other visitors to the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Baalbek, inscriptions on column bases in the *propylaeum* indicate the provision of two capitals in bronze by a speculator of *legio III Gallica* under Caracalla.¹²⁰ An imperial freedman of Septimius Severus is attested donating the same.¹²¹ In all these cases the stone used for the columns, capitals, and bases is not mentioned. On occasion, the donor is marked directly on the column: a granite column at Gaza with a Greek inscription was dedicated by an Ammonios on behalf of his son Domesticus in AD 229/230.¹²² Similarly gifted columns appear at Gerasa, at the east colonnade on the south end of the 'Forum': the names of Demetrianos; Sabeinos, son of Strategios; Hermelaos, son of Demetrios; and of Claudianus, son of Placcus, are inscribed in Greek on the columns, followed by ἐπλήρωσεν, i.e. 'fulfilled' or 'paid for'.¹²³

¹¹⁸ *AE* 2007, 1612-1614.

¹¹⁹ *IGLS* 4, 1253; Nelis-Clément 2000, 102-103, 267, 388.

¹²⁰ *IGLS* 6, 2711-2712.

¹²¹ *IGLS* 6, 2713.

¹²² *CIIP* 3, 2474; Lifshitz 1963, 90-91 no.1. The original context of the column remains unknown as it was reused for the boundaries of a Saracene race course

¹²³ *I. Gerasa* 75,76,76; *SEG* 46, 2059. Further evidence: Beereis and Aianes gift columns to the western sanctuary at Rakhle in the Hermon (*IGLS* 11, 32). Pakatos aka Ailamos and his brother, as a token of their piety, offer a column in a temple at Dhakir in the Trachonitis (*IGLS* 15.2, 496, undated). At Tell Nebi Mend two column bases were also gifted; the context remains unknown (*IGLS* V 2678, 2679; undated).

Members of the local elite in Tyre appear to have ‘crowd-funded’ the colonnades which were incorporated in the later ‘basilica thermale’: the inscriptions, mostly names in the genitive form, are still inscribed on some of the column bases.¹²⁴ The phrase *σπειροκεφάλω καὶ βωμῶ* on one of the bases may well indicate that the donors not only paid for the column base but for the whole column including base and capital.¹²⁵ Given that the originally roughly eighty monolithic columns of ca. 7 m in height in the ‘basilica thermale’ were made of ‘cipollino’ from the quarries of Karystos, it is possible that wealthy individuals from Tyre (a Claudius Berenicianus, a Iulius Doros, and an Aurelius Basilides are known) paid for the quarrying, transport, and installation of the columns. As we have seen above, the piecemeal funding of building projects by a whole array of different actors, be that communities, groups, and/or wealthy individuals is quite a common occurrence in our sources. At least in terms of buying power, wealthy communities (which Tyre or Berytus certainly were) can be imagined to have the capacity to spend lavishly on the luxurious embellishment of public building projects.

If one wishes to subscribe to the hypothesis of marbles being imported in the context of ‘crowd-funded’ building projects, the question arises to what degree, if at all, the help of the emperor would have been required in securing access to the quarried materials. This merits a brief recapitulation of what defines a quarry being ‘imperial’ and why the emperor ascertained control over choice quarries is merited, before we address this issue.

Imperial Benefaction?

Inscribed honorific, votive, and funerary monuments evincing the presence of imperial officials and soldiers and the use of Latin to mark roughed-out blocks and column shafts quarried at sites in the Greek East suggest some form of control — if not outright ownership — by the emperor/state of specific quarrying operations.¹²⁶ The rationale for this control or ownership of quarries may not primarily be driven by the urge to generate revenue for the imperial coffers.¹²⁷ As Ben Russell points out, this was done to ‘prevent the exhaustion’ of these marbles by private demand so that the emperor’s demand for specific polychrome marbles could be satisfied.¹²⁸ As I have argued recently, this imperial demand, in turn, was rooted in the factual monopolisation of large-scale public building

¹²⁴ *IGLTyr* 69-71.

¹²⁵ *IGLTyr* 66.

¹²⁶ For such imperial quarries, cf. Hirt 2015, 292-296.

¹²⁷ Hirt 2015 with bibliography.

¹²⁸ Russell 2013, 194.

activity in Rome by the emperor. The monopolisation of the right to celebrate a triumph by the emperor under Augustus and his exclusive right to all military success barred the senatorial elite from commemorating their own military achievements in the public sphere of the eternal city. By the Late Republic, the appropriation of wealth from the people and territories conquered by Rome was increasingly made manifest by the use of coloured stones and marble with connotations of victory, triumph, and conquest — a trend further amplified under Augustus, and nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the relocation of obelisks of red Aswan granite from Egypt to Rome. Consequently, the *princeps* emerged as the sole individual in Rome to demand coloured and white marble for architectural display.¹²⁹

With the control of certain quarries for the exclusive supply of imperial building projects in the capital, the emperor was provided with a further option to express his *liberalitas* towards provincial communities. Hadrian is the only emperor attested so far who provided columns from his imperial quarries to provincial cities: Athens received one hundred columns of Numidian marble for the Hadrianic library, another hundred of Phrygian marble for a colonnade, as well as ‘pavonazetto’ from the Bacakale quarries near Dokimeion for the statuary representation of Persians in the Olympieion (Paus. 1.18.8-9).¹³⁰ Smyrna got 72 columns of ‘Synnadian’ (i.e. Phrygian), 20 of ‘Numidian’, and 6 of porphyry, for the anointing room of the gymnasium at Smyrna.¹³¹

As for the Roman Levant, the amount of imported marble used for temples and public buildings pales in comparison to the sheer number of columns quarried, shipped, and transported over land to the temple of Jupiter at Heliopolis/Baalbek. Henry Seyrig offered the plausible suggestion that the purchase and import of these columns was well beyond the means of this community in the Bekaa valley. He thus strongly suspected the involvement of the emperor.¹³² The ‘Hexagonal Court’ and the ‘Propylon’ were completed in late 2nd c. AD, as the architectural decoration seems to suggest. Perhaps the finishing touches were applied to the site upon the presumed visit of emperor Caracalla in AD

¹²⁹ Hirt 2015; Hirt 2017, 231-238 with further bibliography.

¹³⁰ Paus. 1.18.8-9; Fant 1993, 148 with n.23, 156 with n. 73.

¹³¹ *IK Smyrna* 697+ II 2 pp.375-376, ll. 40-2: κείονας εἰς τὸ | ἀλειπτήριον Συναδίουσ οβ', | Νουμεδικούς κ', πορφυρείτας ζ'. The supply of columns aside, the emperor might also have expressed his *liberalitas* in granting access to this material, cf. Hirt 2015, 295.

¹³² Seyrig 1954, 95-8; Aliquot 2009, 283-284; Lohmann 2017, 181. Daniel Lohmann has suggested emperor Hadrian as responsible for the supply of monolithic columns to Heliopolis, but this is far from certain. His reasoning is based on a passage in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius (mid 5th c. AD) in which the death of Trajan is predicted by Heliopolis. Lohmann takes this prediction to be at the start of an increase in importance of the sanctuary, meriting a new construction phase and embellishment of the temple. *Macr. Sat.* 1.23.14-16; Lohmann 2017, 177; cf. also D. Lohmann, in Van Ess and Rheidt 2014, 71.

215.¹³³ Following the conclusion of the civil war against Pescennius Niger in AD 194, Septimius Severus awarded Heliopolis independence from Berytus (which had sided with Pescennius) and elevated it to the status of a *colonia*.¹³⁴ One therefore might speculate that perhaps Septimius Severus was instrumental in supplying columns of Aswan granite to the great temple at Heliopolis. Even so, the example of Baalbek does not give us licence to assume the emperor's involvement in all imports of larger items of marble or granite to the Levant.

Most of the polychrome stones imported to the Levant, where they have been identified, hail from Euboea ('cipollino' columns), from Aswan and the Troad (red and grey granite columns), or from Prokonnesos (bases, capitals). As for the status of these quarries, it is not quite clear to what degree the emperor had his hand on the source. The labels in Latin on blocks, columns, etc. of *marmor Carystium* ('marmo cipollino verde') found, rarely, at the quarries near Karystos and, more abundantly, at the marble yards in Ostia and Rome certainly indicate some form of imperial control over the quarries of Styra, Pyrgari, Haghios Nikolaos or Krio Nero on Euboea at least for certain periods. This is further substantiated by an inscribed honorific monument of the mid 1st c. AD, commissioned by an *a lapicidinis Carystiis*, and a votive inscription left by a *centurio* at the quarries near Karystos.¹³⁵

The quarries on the island of Prokonnesos /Marmara yielded a white marble with dark blue and grey streaks. A variety of architectural elements (columns, capitals, bases, entablatures, etc.) in various states of completion are still found *insitu* at those around the coastal town of Plataia, now Saraylar on Prokonnesos.¹³⁶ The quarries near Saraylar were under some form of imperial control in the Late Roman period, as legal texts indicate.¹³⁷ In addition, Greek inscriptions on quarry faces and quarried items were observed, dated to the Late Roman /Byzantine period.¹³⁸ What is more, brief texts in Latin were discovered as well and taken to evince imperial control during the High Empire.¹³⁹ These texts, however, are highly abbreviated and ligatured, and do not fit the usual formula known

¹³³ D. Lohmann, in Van Ess and Rheidt 2014, 77; H. Wienholz, in Van Ess and Rheidt 2014, 154; Lohmann 2017, 194. Malalas 9.280 may confuse Antoninus Pius with Caracalla here, whose full name is M. Aurelius Severus Antoninus Pius Augustus, cf. Lohmann 2017, 177-178.

¹³⁴ Millar 1993, 124; Sawaya 2009, 230.

¹³⁵ *CIL* III 563, 12286, 12289; VI 8486, cf. also Chidiroglu 2011, esp. 79. On the labels: Hirt 2010, app. nos. 601-786. For the cipollino quarries, cf. Van Hove 1996; Chidiroglu 2011. For further quarries on Euboea, cf. Russell and Fachard 2009.

¹³⁶ Beykan 2012: 8-9.

¹³⁷ *Coll.* 15.3.7 *CTh* 11.28.9 and 11; Millar 1984, 141.

¹³⁸ Asgari and Drew-Bear 2002, *passim*.

¹³⁹ Asgari and Drew-Bear 2002, 17; Beykan 2012, 8 with n. 34.

from quarry labels used at the imperial quarries of the 1st and 2nd c. AD.¹⁴⁰ As of yet, no imperial officials or soldiers are attested on site.

The quarries in the Troad produced a grey granite, the so-called *marmor Troadense*, which was distributed throughout Asia Minor, the Roman Levant, and the Mediterranean. Evidence for quarrying is found on the slopes of the Cıǵrı Dağ near Kocali with seven monolithic columns still in situ at Yedi Taşlar and others at Yarık Taş Tepe, and incomplete columns at Turplu Tepe and Küçükurplu Tepe.¹⁴¹ On the north slope of the Cıǵrı Dağ further evidence has been located at Erikli Sivritepe, where many unfinished column fragments suggest a high output of the quarries there.¹⁴² Some eleven monolithic columns and fragments *in situ* demonstrate further extractive operations near Kestanbol.¹⁴³ The find of undamaged columns made of Troad granite with protective bands or collars in the harbour of Alexandria Troas strongly suggests that some monolithic shafts were produced for export, brought down from the quarries to the sea and then loaded onto seagoing vessels.¹⁴⁴ A guild of dockworkers noted in the epigraphic evidence might have been involved in loading columns onto ships.¹⁴⁵ A recent survey of the use of Troad granite columns throughout the Mediterranean suggests that much of the quarrying activity must have commenced in the 2nd c. AD and seemingly continued down to Late Antiquity.¹⁴⁷ Graffiti or inscribed labels in Latin or Greek were not discovered, nor is there any indication, so far, of military personnel or imperial officials present on the territory of Alexandria Troas.¹⁴⁸

For Syene, it is assumed that the large red granite outcrop quarried there was in some form on public land.¹⁴⁹ The absence of epigraphic testimonies, however, for direct imperial oversight of

¹⁴⁰ Asgari and Drew-Bear 2002, nos. 1, 11-16, 24-26.

¹⁴¹ Ponti 1995, 293-294; see also Yavuz 2014.

¹⁴² Ponti 1995, 306-307.

¹⁴³ Ponti 1995, 309-312.

¹⁴⁴ Ponti 1995, 312, 313-315; Feuser 2009, 62-63; 122 (marble yard?); Feuser 2011, 259-260, 268-269.

¹⁴⁵ *IK* 53, 151-153. Feuser 2009, 119.

¹⁴⁷ Ponti 1995, 292, with *IRT* 467 (AD 313) and *CTh* 9. 28.9 (AD 414) and 9.28.11 (AD 416).

¹⁴⁸ Decrees issued in AD 408 and 414 mention the exclusion of the taxpayers at the quarries (*metalla*) of Dokimeion, Prokonnesos, and the Troas from the remission of taxes owed to the state (*CTh* 11.28.9 and 11). Whether this indicates imperial control of the Troad quarries cannot be decided conclusively.

¹⁴⁹ Kurt Fitzler, Claire Préaux, and others assumed that under the Ptolemies quarries in general were royal property, as demand for stone was thought to be mostly restricted to building works undertaken on the orders of the Ptolemaic king, cf. Fitzler 1910, 37; Wilcken 1912, 252; Heichelheim 1933, 173; Préaux 1939, 244; Huss 2012, 16, 55. Scholarly consensus sees royal land of the Ptolemies, the βασιλική γῆ, turned into 'public land', δημοσία γῆ or δημοσία ἐδάφη (equivalent to *ager publicus*) after Octavian had conquered Egypt in 30 BC, cf. Capponi 2005, 98; Rowlandson 2005, 175-176; Jördens 2009, 440-441; Monson 2012, 93. Under the Julio-Claudian emperors, some of these estates were handed to members of the imperial family or loyal supporters. These estates were ultimately returned to the emperor and were added to the οὔσιακή γῆ. From the early Flavian period the ubiquitous imperial estates de facto became another sub-category of public land, δημοσία γῆ; the revenues, however, sent to a separate account, the οὔσιακὸς λόγος. Crawford 1976, 40-41; Parassoglou 1978, 10-11, 28-29 (with Crawford 1980); Capponi 2005, 96-97, 104-106; Rowlandson 2005, 175; Monson 2012, 94; Tacoma 2015, 73-78. The emperor appears to have owned estates,

quarrying during the 1st and 2nd c. AD is conspicuous. Even though monolithic columns made of red Aswan granite reached Rome in the context of imperial building projects as early as the late 1st c. AD (e.g. the Domus Augustana of Domitian), we have no evidence, so far, for a permanent presence of imperial personnel supervising quarrying activities on site.¹⁵⁰ Even so, quarrying around Syene was sustained throughout the first two centuries AD, enough to supply free quarrymen (σκληρουργοί) with an income. This is suggested indirectly through testimonies from quarries in the Eastern Egyptian desert, of which a water ration list is the most notable: an ostrakon from Mons Claudianus (late Trajanic period) mentions 130 stone masons from Syene who were hired for quarry-work together with other stone-workers from Alexandria, Memphis, and the Arsinoite nome.¹⁵¹ These quarrymen were noted among the *paganoi*, the hired labour working at Mons Claudianus; evidently, the wages paid in these quarries of the Eastern Egyptian Desert were lucrative enough to attract quarrymen from the Nile Valley.¹⁵² The considerable size of the Syenite contingent at Mons Claudianus under Trajan not only suggests sustained quarrying activity in and near Aswan, but also highlights the opportunities it provided for free quarrymen.¹⁵³

Quarrying continued under Trajan, as documentary evidence and inscriptions on the quarry faces at Syene suggest.¹⁵⁴ Overall, there is textual evidence for stone cutting in the quarries of Syene/Elephantine throughout the 1st and 2nd c. AD, but there is little to suggest that all quarry

οὐσίαι, throughout Egypt, which de facto became another sub-category of public land. As of yet, no οὐσίαι are attested in Upper Egypt, cf. Crawford 1976, 37; Capponi 2005, 104-105.

¹⁵⁰ Pensabene 2016, 28; Richardson 1992, 115.

¹⁵¹ O. Claud.inv. 1538+2921, l.13; c. AD 110: Κοηνί(αι) σκλη(ρουργοῖς); with Cuvigny 2005, 312 (l.13), 317, 327-328. The find of a tax receipt mentioning tax collectors at Syene lends further support to the presence of Syenite quarrymen at Mons Claudianus, cf. O. Claud. 14 (AD 114): πράκτορες(!) ἀργυρικ[ῶ]ν Κοήνης. Also, two inscriptions attest quarry workers brought in from Syene to the quarries of Wadi Hammamat in the first half of the 1st century AD (IKoKo 49, AD 31/2: σκληρουργὸς τῶν ἀπὸ Σουήνης; IKoKo 91: χαλκοτύπος Σουηνεΐτης).

¹⁵² Hirt 2010, 206-207 with further bibliography.

¹⁵³ We do not know whether these men had quarried red granite specifically but given its ubiquity throughout the c. 20 sq. km quarrying zone this seems likely (Klemm and Klemm 1993, 304-305; for a recent survey, see Kelany et al. 2009). Red granite was certainly not the only type of stone quarried there, but certainly one of the most prominent; for Pliny the Elder red granite (*pyrrhopoecilus*, 'red coloured') is the embodiment of Syenite stone *per se* (HN 36.63 f.), cf. Locher 1999, 68-69.

¹⁵⁴ A quarry label in Greek on the base of the monolithic *columna divi Antonini* made of red Aswan granite and found in the city of Rome indicates that two fifty-foot columns were fashioned at Syene under the oversight of an ἀρχιτέκτων, cf. IG 14, 2421.1 (AD 105/6): Διοσκούρου / (ἔτει) θ Τραιανοῦ / [—] δύο ἀνὰ πόδες {πόδας} Ν / [—] τείδου ἀρχιτέκτων, cf. Dodge and Ward-Perkins 1992, 109. The name 'Diosko(u)ros' perhaps designates a quarry as at Mons Claudianus (cf. O. Claud. 748). A fragmentary text on an ostrakon from Elephantine offers a glimpse at some form of quarry work in the 2nd c. AD, the context of which seems not quite clear (P. Bingen 98 with commentary by Guy Wagner). The same applies to an ostrakon of the same period referring to a *dekania*² of stonemasons in a quarry (P. Worp 58). Greek graffiti and quarry marks from the Ġabal Ġ'ulāb quarries on the western bank of the Nile near Aswan are said to date to the Roman period based on palaeographic grounds and mention an ἀρχιτέκτων and a χαλκεύς, a smith; at Ġabal Tingar merely Greek graffiti rendering names were discovered. Fournet argued that two graffiti naming a Οὐρσῆς, an ἀρχιτέκτων, and a graffito of a Πρεπέλαως, a χαλκεύς Μέμωνων (read Μέμμωνος) date to the reign of Septimius Severus whom we know ordered the reparation of the Memnonkolossi at Thebes (cf. Fournet 1996, nos. 5 and 6 with pp. 144-146.; Locher 1999, 92).

operations were initiated or maintained by the Roman state/emperor. It is only through a Latin votive inscription on a column found in a quarry ‘2 ½ hours’ south east of Aswan that we learn that in the reign of Septimius Severus new quarries, *novae lapidicinae*, were opened and pillars and many large columns extracted under the *praefectus Aegypti* Ti. Claudius Subatianus Aquila (AD 206-211). The reading *operis dominici*, ‘work of the lord’, indicates that these quarries were opened on the order of the emperor.¹⁵⁵ Ostraca and papyri offer evidence for stone-masons and blacksmiths continuing work at the quarries of Syene throughout the 3rd c. AD.¹⁵⁶ But there is little to suggest direct and permanent oversight: the lengthy papyrus from the Chester Beatty library in Dublin, dated to AD 300, amongst other things, includes a demand by the procurator of the Lower Thebaid to the *strategoi* of his province to dispatch further ships to Syene. The ten ‘public ships’ (πλοίων δημοσίων) already dispatched to bring columns (likely of red Aswan granite) to Alexandria were not sufficient and, therefore, further ships were required. Rather than being state-owned vessels, it appears the additional ships were to be requisitioned.¹⁵⁷ Both the Beatty papyrus and the Latin votive text on the column imply quarrying activity under direct imperial oversight, limited both in time and scope and seemingly using the provincial resources *ad hoc*.¹⁵⁸

The observation that the quarries for Prokonnesian marble and Troad granite were not visibly, those of red Aswan granite perhaps only temporarily exploited under direct oversight of the imperial officials, raises the prospect of these quarries being either owned privately (Troas?) or being farmed out by local communities to private contractors or lessees.¹⁵⁹ It is also possible that the emperor allowed the quarries to be exploited as long as they were not exhausted and his demand was met. As argued earlier, the emperor did not have an economic motive to take control of quarries and their output, unless it was to ensure the proper supply of his construction projects with the desired marble or granites. Moreover, the notion of running quarries with an eye on generating revenue for the treasury from selling marble or granite jars with the imperial requirement that communities (i.e. the

¹⁵⁵ CIL III 75 = CIL III 6630; these ‘imperial works’ stood under the direction (*curam agente op(eris) d[o]minic(i)...*) of Aurelius Heraclides, *decurio* of an *ala Maurorum*.

¹⁵⁶ A fragmentary letter from the later third century AD from Elephantine, sent to Ammonas (a foreman and provisioner, κίβηριάρχο) by the foreman/ἐργοδότης Diodorus and his stone-masons and blacksmiths (σκληρουργοὶ καὶ χαλκεῖς), throws light on the progress of quarry work and complaints about expected food supplies (SB VI 9230; Porten 1996, 437 D16); a tax receipt inscribed on an ostrakon from AD 252 found on Elephantine and written by δεκάπρωτοι τοπαρχ(ίας) Σοή(νης) Ἀραβ(ίας), names a πλῆθος σκληρουργῶν, an association of stone-masons (*O. Eleph. DAIK* 66, cf. Locher 1999, 71).

¹⁵⁷ *P. Panop. Beatty* 2 ll.43-50 with Adams 2001, 186.

¹⁵⁸ Locher 1999, 83-86. There are auxiliary cohorts and cavalry *alae* stationed at Syene, but their *raison d’être* is probably not the protection of the quarries as in the Eastern Egyptian Desert, but guarding traffic up and down the Nile at the First Cataract.

¹⁵⁹ For evidence of privately owned quarries, cf. Hirt 2010, 89-90.

local elites) live within their financial means so that they fulfil their tax obligations: Pliny's secondment to Pontus-Bithynia is aimed exactly at putting towns like Nikaia and Nikomedia back on a sound financial footing after they had overspent on extravagant building projects and could not pay their taxes in time or in full; and, from the Flavian period onward, large scale building projects increasingly required permission of the governor.¹⁶⁰ To fuel bad fiscal habits by selling pricey marbles and granites to communities seems counterproductive to the restriction of extravagant expenditure on public buildings.

Actual evidence for the quarries in the Troad or at Prokonnesos being in private or communal hands remains absent, although the civic status of Alexandria Troas might well have provided ideal conditions for the private production and export of natural resources.¹⁶¹ As for the red granite from Aswan, the availability of some 130 Syenite quarrymen hired to work at Mons Claudianus suggests continued quarrying operations in and near Syene/Elephantine — operations not initiated by the Roman emperor exclusively, but possibly by other parties as well. In consequence, one might argue tentatively that not all granite columns quarried at Aswan and exported to other parts of the Mediterranean were manufactured on the orders of the emperor. This might help explain the relative ubiquity of red Aswan granite and, especially, of grey Troad granite in the Roman Levant.

Red Granite at Palmyra – Conclusion

The import of monolithic column shafts, bases, capitals, and other architectural elements made of polychrome marble or red and grey granites required the involvement of the imperial administration only in part. For some quarries, i.e. in the Troad, no imperial control, and for others (e.g. Syene), only temporary or partial imperial control is in evidence, opening up the possibility that access to at least some of the weightier building materials brought to the Roman Levant did not always require the *placet* of the emperor. The collective wealth of the communities along the coast and in the hinterland and the financial potency of their elites and dynasts may have allowed for columns, bases, or capitals made of certain coloured marbles or granites to be acquired freely — as long as the capacity of these

¹⁶⁰ Pliny, *Ep.* 10.23, 37-39, 41, 70, 90, 98; Macer, *Dig.* 50.10.3.pr.; Eck 2000, 276 with n. 46. Colin Adams, pers. comm.

¹⁶¹ The quarries of grey Troad granite appear to lie within the territory of the Roman colony Alexandria Troas which was awarded *ius Italicum* (perhaps already under Augustus? Gaius *Dig.* 50.15.7; Paulus, *Dig.* 50.15.89). This status allowed for proper private ownership by Roman citizens of land including quarries, unlike possession of provincial land which, technically, was public land owned by the state (Kaser and Knütel 2005, 111-112). One might speculate whether the award of *ius Italicum* to Alexandria Troas would have offered more securities for citizens establishing and running quarries. What is more, in 12 BC Alexandria Troas was granted immunity from import and export dues (*portoria*), making the production and export of grey granite columns more lucrative (Cottier et al. 2008, 69, *ll.* 103-105, § 44). Whether the rise of the Quintilii of Alexandria Troas and their acquisition of immense wealth was facilitated by these ideal conditions is a matter of speculation. For estates of the Quintilii, cf. Esch 2018, 33-35.

communities to pay their taxes was not infringed on. The possibility to contribute as an individual together with other citizens directly towards the completion or embellishment of a communal building project by donating a column or a capital, a portico or a roof, etc. (and having one's contribution commemorated), might have increased the purchasing power of communities like Tyre or Berytus when it came to ordering marble or granite from quarries overseas. As the example of the red granite columns at Heliopolis/Baalbek suggests, benefactions of the emperor are a major factor governing distribution patterns in the Levant, but they do not explain all.

How does Palmyra fit into this picture? The elite certainly had the accumulated wealth necessary to donate significant amounts towards the construction and embellishment of public buildings in the desert oasis. They did not need to shy comparison with local elites in Roman Asia Minor: when Hadrian visited the city in around AD 130/1 one Males provided oil for the army and the foreigners traveling with the emperor, for which he was honoured with a columnar console and statue by the council and people of Palmyra.¹⁶² The epigraphic evidence attests various contributions to building projects, such as the Temple of Bel which saw significant sponsorship by a Iedeibelos in c. AD 10-13 and an unknown donor in the 2nd half of the 2nd c. AD; the commissioning of the gates of the main *cella* and possibly a so called *hammana*[?] and a hall by an Akkeos in AD 108; and of bronze gates for the propylon to the temple precinct by Iariboles and Aoueidos in AD 175.¹⁶³ In the mid 2nd c. AD the Temple of Nabu received a portico by the wealthy Onainos; and an unknown donor provided two columns with architrave and roof and covered a pavilion for the god Borroaonos in silver.¹⁶⁴

Individual columns and even whole porticoes of the main colonnaded street were donated by Palmyrenean citizens: a section of the colonnade received a roof paid for by a Mucianus in the late 2nd or early 3rd c. AD; and an unnamed son of Malichos paid for ten columns including roof and decorations in AD 88/9.¹⁶⁵ An anonymous son of Nebuzabados furnished a portico of eight columns with roof and decorations in 219; a Bagesos commissioned an *exedra* in the 2nd c. AD, with all its decorations; and a fragmentary inscription appears to indicate that a Iulius Aurelius offered part of a *porticus* (perhaps 20 columns?) with foundations for some 3,500 denarii.¹⁶⁶ A section in the

¹⁶² *IGLS* 17, 145.

¹⁶³ *IGLS* 17, 21 (Iariboles, Aoueidos), 23 (Akkeos), 24 (Iedeibelos), 309 (anonym.)

¹⁶⁴ *IGLS* 17, 183 (Onainos), 308.

¹⁶⁵ *IGLS* 17, 80 (Mucianus), 94 (son of Malichos)

¹⁶⁶ *IGLS* 17, 95-97

‘transversal colonnade’, too, saw seven columns with their decoration being paid for by a Soraichos in AD 179.¹⁶⁷

As for the marble and granites imported to Palmyra, the financial potency of the Palmyrenean community was perhaps outweighed by the considerable costs of transport over land. The analysis of the monolithic columns of red Aswan granite offers some insight: the four column shafts used in the *propylaeum* are of different lengths, which were erected on pedestals of different height hewn again from local stone; these pedestal heights compensated for the varying column sizes. Hazel Dodge argued that the four columns had not been quarried and dressed for the *propylaeum*, but were left over from the *tetrakionion*. The *tetrakionion* may have been constructed sometime in the 2nd half of the 2nd c. AD or in the Severan period, others date its arrival in the 3rd c. AD or the Tetrarchic period.¹⁶⁸ Fully examined in 1963 by Antoni Ostrasz prior to its reconstruction by the Syrian authorities, the bases, capitals, and cornices of the *tetrakionion* were still fully accounted for; of the originally sixteen columns, however, only three fragmented shafts remained.¹⁶⁹ Here, too, the varying length of two of the columns is reflected in two higher pedestals; the average height of the columns would have been around c. 7m.¹⁷⁰

The unequal length of these red granite column shafts brought to Palmyra is the most striking feature. In general, column lengths could vary but not to the extent proposed for the *tetrakionion* and *propylaeum*.¹⁷¹ Dodge suggested that, when the columns of red granite were procured for the *tetrakionion*, four additional columns were brought along, perhaps to make up for potential losses during overland transport. Dodge therefore assumes that some 20 columns of varying lengths of up to 7m had been brought in, weighing some 15t each; these were initially intended for the *tetrakionion*.¹⁷² The different lengths of the 20 red granite columns brought to Palmyra could indicate that these were not ordered from the quarries in Aswan directly. Dodge rightfully assumed that the columns of Aswan granite were left-over materials kept at marble yards found at vast building sites such as the temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Baalbek, or the temple of Jupiter Damascenus at Damascus. Yards at a temple at Epiphania/Hama or the temple of Elagabalos at Emesa/ Homs are perhaps the likelier sources for the granite columns brought to Palmyra. If so, the use (or reuse?) of

¹⁶⁷ *IGLS* 17, 113.

¹⁶⁸ Tabaczek 2002, 30-31; Delplace 2017, 111, 125 (Severan); Filarska 1967, 157 (based on stylistic arguments).

¹⁶⁹ Ostrasz 1966, 49.

¹⁷⁰ Dodge 1988, 226-227.

¹⁷¹ Russell 2013, 221-224. Although column lengths of the great colonnade in this central section can vary, the lengths vary only from one column group to the next, not between individual columns. Tabaczek 2002, 32, following Ostrasz 1969.

¹⁷² Dodge 1988, 228.

imported columns, bases, etc., initially intended for other projects, offered a (cheaper?) alternative to some communities who wanted to keep up with other towns in the Roman Levant but faced higher transport costs due to their remote location in relation to the coast. Whether this hypothesis holds any water falls beyond the remit of this paper.

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Fig. 1: 'Baths of Diocletian', Palmyra; photo by author.

Fig. 2: Columns in the 'large enclosure' of Qaṣr al-Ḥayr aš-Šarqī; photo by author.

Fig. 3: Granite columns in NE corner of the 'Great Courtyard', Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, Baalbek; photo by author.

Fig. 4: Granite columns in the West Gate (Bab al-Barid), Umayyad Mosque, Damascus; photo by author.