

Using Images in Late Antiquity

Identity, Commemoration, and Response

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Abstracts

Franz Alto Bauer

Communicating Sanctity in Late Antiquity: The Case of Hagios Demetrios in Thessalonica

In Late Antiquity, the cities identity could base on the glorious past, on conjuring up mythological roots as well as a meanwhile lost political importance. The other promising way of strengthening civic self-esteem was the Saint – a Saint who not only served as individual advocate and benefactor but as a civic patron who protected the inhabitants against distress and enemies. Such Saints were not just there; their presence and power are the result of a collective agreement with regard to the Saint's existence, effectiveness, and identification with the needs of the city.

Saint Demetrios of Thessalonica was such a Saint: his supposed burial place, baths within the city walls, does not speak in favor of a historical martyr as does not his comparatively late appearance in sources as late as the early sixth century onwards. Through building a magnificent church at the place of his supposed burial and through providing the church with a hexagonal shrine containing the icon of the Saint, the collective assumption of Demetrios' existence turned into a fact. His presence was furthermore enhanced by images – commissioned both by individuals, high clerics and possibly also high officials – in which the healing and protective power of the Saint was repeatedly shown. And finally, Demetrios' miracles were proven by spoken words: stories of how the Saint helped individuals and saved the city from enemies were narrated during the liturgy by the bishop. The church's interior thus turned into a interactive space in which architecture and images proved what was narrated, and words proved what was seen. Careful analysis of visual as well as written sources suggest that the collective construction of sanctity was not the result of deliberate strategy on the part of a specific

group such as the clergy but the result of collective needs, the collective wish for the presence of a Saint.

Sarah E. Bassett

Late Antique Honorific Sculpture in Constantinople

A visitor to Constantinople in late antiquity would have found a city rich in sculpture, ancient and contemporary. Antiquities of pre-fourth-century manufacture that had been gathered from the cities and sanctuaries of the Roman world stood in the capital's major public spaces. Selected and arranged around themes appropriate to the place, these monuments described the city's links to Troy and Rome and through them the capital's unique urban history. Works of contemporary manufacture complemented these displays. This paper examines the evidence, textual, sculptured and archaeological, for this sculpture. Particular attention will be paid to late antique honorific portraits, their display and reception.

Ine Jacobs

The Last Roman Heyday: Civic Representation around AD 400

Even though after the troubled third century the level of elite-competition and consequently also patronage benefiting the city declined in comparison with previous centuries, cities of the Eastern Mediterranean saw a resurgence of construction and renovation activities around AD 400. In fact, all major evolutions characterising Late Antiquity, including the appearance of fortification walls and heterogeneous street colonnades as well as the construction of monumental churches on highly visible locations, were either initiated or in full progress. Even though such later developments in the public sphere have often been labelled as inferior to those of the "golden" Roman era, it is possible to identify the presence of aesthetic principles and concerns similar to those of previous centuries. Moreover, this care for and energy invested in at least the most visited and visible infrastructure and monuments, implies the continued presence of an elite that made use of the civic landscape to express the identity and splendour of the city as a whole, but also strove to impress both local inhabitants and foreign visitors in order to fulfil their personal aspirations. Assuming that the initiators settled on the budget for a specific project-which in its turn influenced the materials used and the composition of the workforce-, the final appearance of walls, streets and churches constructed in the late fourth and early fifth century makes it possible to comment further on the exact identity, riches and motives of initiators in this period.

Paolo Liverani

Chi parla a chi? Epigrafia monumentale e immagine pubblica in epoca tardoantica

In età tardoantica si è sempre sottolineato un modo differente di uso dell'immagine, soprattutto per quel che riguarda quella di rappresentanza in ambito civile e quella monumentale in ambito cristiano, dove acquista sempre maggior peso la frontalità. Raramente questa dimensione viene però analizzata in maniera più approfondita. Essa infatti può svolgere più funzioni che non necessariamente sono mutuamente esclusive e che possono essere elencate in maniera sintetica e non esaustiva:

- funzione deittico-ostensiva (per esempio nei ritratti, dove viene presentato un personaggio) contrapposta a quella narrativa
- funzione autoritativa (il filosofo docente, l'imperatore, la divinità si impongono all'attenzione dello spettatore)
- funzione interpellante e dialogica (l'orante rivolto a Dio; i santi o Cristo rivolti verso il popolo)

Contemporaneamente anche l'epigrafia monumentale conosce un'evoluzione che non è stata sufficientemente valorizzata. Soprattutto nelle basiliche paleocristiane lo schema comunicativo impersonale e oggettivo delle dediche imperiali – si pensi ancora alla dedica dell'arco di Costantino – cede il passo in numerosi casi a una comunicazione personale e soggettiva – nel senso che coinvolge emittente e destinatario – precedentemente confinata all'epigrafia privata e soprattutto funeraria. Si può costruire una tipologia enunciazionale, che non tenga conto cioè del contenuto della comunicazione, ma della relazione – o meglio, trattandosi di testi scritti, del simulacro di relazione – che si instaura tra emittente e destinatario.

Il punto più interessante risiede però nell'integrazione tra le novità nella comunicazione attraverso l'immagine e attraverso i testi epigrafici, quando le due modalità compaiono insieme non possono più essere considerate semplicemente come ridondanti o complementari, ma instaurano un'interazione tra loro e con il lettore/spettatore il quale viene costituito come tale, attivando la dimensione pragmatica della comunicazione.

Il fenomeno si può riconoscere compiutamente agli inizi del IV secolo in ambito cristiano, ma quasi subito si estende anche in qualche misura all'ambito civile. Tale sviluppo va compreso da un lato nella nuova situazione sociale e religiosa, dall'altro nei suoi rapporti con la condizione di oralità – o per meglio dire di auralità – che permea la cultura tardoantica.

Stine Birk

Using Images for Self-Representation on Roman Sarcophagi

Questions of identity, self-representation and gender roles will be approached through the representations of women, men and children, as they appear on sarcophagus reliefs. I will argue that individualised figures on sarcophagi present analogies to roles, values and ideals generally accepted in society, as well as to individual virtues and qualities of the deceased. In the discussion of how to understand the complex relationship between the individual and mythological or otherwise idealised figures those represented with portraits will be the focal point. The aim is to see if it is possible to understand these kinds of self-representation as anything more than mere imitation of upper class ideals. The Christian adoption of this kind of self-representation on sarcophagi takes the discussion onto a Christian context and it will be explored what happens to imagery, when Christian use and patronage of sarcophagi begins to dominate the production.

Eric Varner

Maxentius and Constantine: Images and the Expropriation of Imperial Identity

The six year principate of Maxentius is remarkable for the scope of its artistic and architectural accomplishments which actively sought to re-assert the primacy of Rome. Maxentius's program of Roman renewal consciously re-engaged the imperial past and concomitant notions of aeternitas by

aligning him with revered predecessors, especially Hadrian. After Maxentius's defeat and death at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge on 28 October 312, Constantine freely expropriated his rival's monumental legacy, including the colossal portrait from the Basilica Nova which itself originally depicted Hadrian and may have been salvaged from Hadrian's Temple of Serapis on the Quirinal. Ultimately, Constantine eschewed the outright censure and suppression of Maxentian imagery in favor of the reclamation of its historicized rhetoric as he forged an enduring imperial identity of his own.

John Weisweiler

Aristocrats as Imperial Officials: Imperial Symbols of Authority in the Self-Representation of the Late Roman Aristocracy

Since the early fourth century, Rome no longer served as permanent residence of emperors. This paper charts the impact of the imperial withdrawal on the visual language in which resident aristocrats articulated their links with emperors and explores the socially transformative effects of the emergence of new images of authority.

In the early empire, senators had deliberately avoided the direct representation of items signalling closeness to the emperor, such as imperial letters of appointment (*codicilli*); as long as the emperor closely cohabited with the empire's ruling class in Rome, he managed his relations to senators through personal interaction, thus reasserting the republican fiction that they were the emperor's proclaimed peers and friends. In Late Antiquity, as most members of the imperial ruling class only rarely met with the emperor in person, a demand for public symbols of imperial closeness arose. In fourth-century sarcophagi and ivory diptychs, high-ranking urban aristocrats are represented with new insignia of office: judgement tables endowed with images of emperors, giant ink-pots with affixed imperial portraits and elaborate ivory diptychs containing imperial letters of appointment.

Through these new symbols of imperial closeness, senior representatives of the late-antique administration proclaimed their supremacy over those aristocrats who no longer could claim any connection to the now distant emperor. The artworks created a symbolic distinction between those who held high ranks in the imperial administration and entertained a privileged relationship to imperial power and those who did not. By the late fourth and early fifth centuries, imperial legislation formally enshrined this rank order based on imagined levels of closeness to the emperor. Symbolic distinctions had now transformed into legally-enforced class boundaries. The late-antique transformations in elite self-presentation were not merely passive reflections of social transformations, but actively contributed to the formation of new hierarchies in Roman society.

Arnaldo Marcone

Alla ricerca di un'identità. Tradizioni classiche nella prima iconografia cristiana

Nella delicata fase di conversione del mondo antico al cristianesimo conviene prendere atto dell'elusività di molti manufatti e di molte rappresentazioni spesso presentati, forse con troppa facilità, come documenti di resistenza pagana, intesa come manifestazione consapevolmente agguerrita e religiosamente motivata di circoli di pagani irriducibili. Conviene quindi interrogare con prudenza filologica le polisemie delle raffigurazioni mosaicali e verificare in che misura esse possano essere ancora portatrici di temi propri della decorazione pavimentale domestica delle *domus* tardoantiche. Sembra

altresì preferibile parlare di “persistenza” di tradizioni classiche anziché di paganesimo- che implica per associazione automatica un'opposizione e una resistenza al paganesimo- essenzialmente come quadro di riferimento condiviso. La creatività in questo campo è relativa. Si intende perciò indagare in che misura tale persistenza sia riconducibile a una ricerca di identità da parte delle élites sociali e politiche tardoantiche.

Trinidad Nogales Basarrate

Scultura della Tarda Antichità ad Augusta Emerita e nel suo territorio (Hispania): officine, modelli e circuiti

Augusta Emerita, Capitale della provincia ispana della *Lusitania*, raggiunse, dopo la riforma amministrativa di Diocleziano, un ruolo rilevante nel panorama dell'Impero, giacché divenne la *Diocesis Hispaniarum*, dalla quale dipendevano estesi territori.

Questa zona occidentale dell'Hispania aveva adottato con grande rapidità, già dall'epoca della colonizzazione augustea, i modelli scultorici romani, data l'assenza di una tradizione plastica pre-romana consolidata che potesse servire da substrato ai nuovi modelli iconografici arrivati dall'Italia.

Nel corso dell'età augustea e giulio-claudia, con il consolidamento del culto imperiale, i modelli scultorici ufficiali dell'*Urbs* si andarono imponendo nelle officine provinciali, il che determinò l'arrivo di artisti che conoscevano i modelli metropolitani, e così si andò consolidando un importante centro di produzione statuaria la cui base produttiva era costituita dalle cave di marmo locali, sfruttate a pieno ritmo dal I fino al IV sec.d.C.

L'epigrafia emeritense ci attesta l'interesse del periodo costantiniano, momento in cui hanno luogo i grandi rifacimenti di opere pubbliche urbane come il circo o il teatro. Dal teatro proviene una grande statua colossale, rinvenuta distrutta nel recinto, che abbiamo identificato come una statua in abbigliamento militare e che era ben possibile fosse collocata fra il teatro e l'anfiteatro, sulla scorta delle statue colossali tardo-antiche di Roma.

Le opere scultoriche private, specialmente i ritratti e la scultura decorativa domestica, avevano cominciato a subire, a partire dal III sec.d.C., un processo di adattamento ai tempi nuovi delle officine provinciali: il ritratto privato urbano, in quanto genere scultorico, cominciò a scendere sia in qualità che in quantità, venendo ad essere sostituito da altri tipi di sculture.

Le *villae* del *territorium* emeritense – le cui produzioni di mosaici sono di grande interesse nel IV sec.d.C. – alternavano, in campo decorativo, le produzioni scultoriche locali, di qualità assai inferiore alle opere urbane, con quelle importate, di enorme prestigio per i loro proprietari.

Un esempio eccezionale di queste opere importate è costituito dalle sculture di Quinta das Longas, una *villa* del *territorium* della capitale di provincia. In questa villa, in cui dovettero esservi varie fasi di occupazione, nella fiorente fase di IV sec.d.C. si registra una decorazione della *pars urbana* – forse, possibilmente, un ninfeo – con gruppi statuari che abbiamo associato alle officine orientali dell'area di Afrodisia. Queste sculture di importazione si rinvengono anche in altre *villae* ispane, come mostra l'interessante esempio di Valdetorres de Jarama.

Il programma decorativo di Quinta das Longas ci mostra che, nel IV secolo, le officine ed i materiali locali avevano fatto registrare un forte decadimento produttivo, nell'ambito di un processo che si concreterà nel costante riutilizzo di marmi della prima età imperiale a partire dal IV e V secolo,

raggiungendosi poi in pieno VI secolo il livello più alto di riutilizzo, come ben si vede nelle collezioni scultoriche emeritensi di epoca visigota.

La presenza ad Augusta Emerita di opere di prestigio come il *Missorium* di Teodosio, attribuita ad un'officina costantinopolitana, dimostra gli importanti vincoli artistici fra questo lontano e remoto Occidente dell'impero ed i grandi centri di produzione dell'Oriente.

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Niels Hannestad

Supply of Sculpture in 'Stately Homes' in Late Antiquity

In the ongoing discussion on sculptural settings in late antique 'stately homes' the focus has been mainly on style, typology and function. In this paper I will focus on another issue: how did the system of distribution work? All over the empire owners of villas in the countryside and *domus* in the cities were able to acquire mythological marble sculpture (bronze as well but we know so little). How did the workshops manage to deliver in a period when infrastructure was partly collapsed causing transport of heavy goods to be a major problem?

Donato Attanasio and Matthias Bruno

The newly discovered Göktepe quarries in ancient Caria near Aphrodisias: Use and distribution from the 1st century to Late Antiquity

Recent surveys in south-western Asia Minor allowed the discovery in ancient Caria (Göktepe, Muğla province) of a previously unknown quarrying district, which produced high quality white as well as black marbles. The quarries, opened during the second half of the 1st century AD approximately 50 km south from Aphrodisias, were exploited primarily by Aphrodisian sculptors, who manufactured their most renowned artworks at home and abroad using the Göktepe marbles. For this reason, as well as for their intrinsic quality, the marbles from the quarries of Göktepe can be rated among the most valuable sculptural marbles of classical antiquity, not lesser than Parian, Pentelicon or Docimium. Their use and distribution continued till late antiquity, as attested by the statues discovered at Aphrodisias and elsewhere, as well as by several graffiti carved on the quarry fronts.

Simon Malmberg

Above the Gate: Symbols on the gate, and the gate as symbol at Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople

This paper will look into both how gates could be used to display symbols, and how the gates themselves could be perceived as symbols. The relationship between city gates and imperial and papal residences will be discussed, together with the main gate to the residences themselves. The messages intended by location, design and decoration of the gate areas will be explored. Moreover, the use of these gates as symbols in themselves will be investigated, becoming shorthand for urban status, power or piety. In the words of Procopius: 'We know the lion, as they say, by his claw, and so those who read this will know the impressiveness of the Palace from the entrance building.'

Hendrik W. Dey

At the Intersection of 'Image' and 'Reality': The Use of Colonnaded Streets in Late Antiquity

After city walls, the single most ubiquitous visual/iconographical trope used to convey the concept of 'city' in late antiquity was the image of a street flanked on one or (usually) both sides by covered colonnades. Textual sources mirror the images in their insistence on covered porticoes and colonnaded streets as a defining feature of the late-antique cityscape, as – despite now largely canonical notions about the 'privatization' of public space, and the transformation of majestic colonnades into the teeming bazaars of the Middle Ages – does a great deal of archaeological evidence. At least as late as the fifth century in the West and the sixth in the East, colonnaded streets were either refurbished or built *ex novo* with remarkable frequency, above all in leading centers of civil and ecclesiastical administration, joining city walls and churches as much the most common monumental architectural forms of the era. After presenting the evidence for the renaissance of the colonnade in late antiquity, I will briefly outline my views about the causes and historical significance of the phenomenon, and conclude that the complex of ritual and ceremony so essential to the presentation and exercise of authority, civic and spiritual, in late antiquity would have been unthinkable without the architectural frame provided by receding vistas of stately columns.

Katherine M.D. Dunbabin

Myth, theatre, and performance: cultural identity in mosaics of the Graeco-Roman East

Any study of domestic decoration in the cities of the Graeco-Roman East in the later Empire reveals the extent to which the visual culture of the elite was dominated by the traditions of Greek mythology. The mosaics found in large numbers in Antioch, and more recently at Zeugma on the Euphrates, which date predominantly from the late second to the third century AD, illustrate an extraordinary range of themes from the mythological repertory, presenting not only familiar and well known subjects but also some that are much more obscure. The sources of this material, and the relationship between these scenes and the works of classical Greek literature which formed the core of Greek education, have long been disputed, and there has been much discussion of the role played by the theatre in this relationship. My paper re-examines these questions in the light both of new finds and of modern reassessments of the nature of dramatic performance at this period. I will argue that the interaction of art and performance

was much deeper than a simple matter of 'sources' or 'influence'; and that this interaction did much to shape the terms in which the members of the elite classes defined their Hellenic culture. I will end by looking at some examples of the treatment of mythological subject matter on the later mosaics of this region from the fourth and fifth centuries, to see whether they reveal a similar approach, and to what extent they reflect the changing character of the age.

Birte Poulsen

Images of City Personifications in Late Antiquity

Representations of cities and city personifications are two remarkable phenomena that are characteristic of late-antique art. Numerous representations of cities, first and foremost in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean, seem to indicate a strong focus on urban identity in Late Antiquity. Not only do the depictions of cities on the mosaics, such as the Madaba map, indicate a high degree of individuality but the city vignettes of for instance the Church of St Stephen in Umm Er-Rasas clearly display certain individual features. Besides the well-known personifications of Alexandria, Rome, Antioch, and Constantinopolis, images of new and previously unknown city personifications appear during this period. One may interpret these in line with the general tendency of using personifications during the period but some of them clearly emphasize strong local identities. My paper examines the use and interpretation of images of such city personifications in first and foremost mosaic pavements as evidence of elite identity and self representation in late-antique society.

Troels Myrup Kristensen

Christian Responses to 'Pagan' Statuary in Late Antique Scythopolis (Beit She'an)

Christian writings of Late Antiquity frequently contain vitriolic attacks on pagan idols. While these attacks are often rhetorical in nature, the material environment of the late antique cities in which many of these authors lived was full of mythological 'pagan' imagery which at times posed challenges to Christian viewers. As several recent studies have shown, Christian responses to such images were complex and changed over time. They were also deeply dependent on the local context of Christianisation. This paper thus turns to a series of sculptural assemblages from one individual city, late antique Scythopolis (Beit She'an) in modern Israel, one of the most 'Hellenised' urban centres of the Near East, to examine how different Christian responses to statuary can be identified and understood within a larger social and religious context.