

Evaluation by the reviewer

of the PhD thesis by

Helena Tůmová, MA

Il commercio del marmo a Ravenna nella Tarda Antichità:

I materiali del complesso di San Severo

The thesis was long in preparation and stemmed from her MA thesis on Ravenna sarcophagi. Its aim was to find out more detailed information on the system of trade connections of Ravenna on the field of marbles and other fine stones. The apogee of Ravenna's importance fell into 5th –6th centuries, and most of the documents studied belong to this time. The general part of the thesis discussing various aspects of history of Ravenna and Classe and the question of identification of ancient marbles attest the competence of the author in these fields; analysis of the Santo Severo marbles and other highly valuable stones using archaeometry in combination with geology and archaeology makes the main part of the thesis and represents one of the pioneer works on this particular field.

Proconnesian marble was used in most parts of the Late Roman Empire, relations between Ravenna and Constantinople were close in many fields. Because of the necessity of carrying "dead weight" the price of marble transport by sea was not too high. Proconnesos quarries yielded material and half-finished works (sarcophagi, architectonic members of the buildings). From my conversations with Nuşin Asğari and W.-D. Heilmeyer I got much specific information on various kinds of Proconnesian marble and its closely related varieties on the Asiatic side of the Marmara Sea, so I fully understand the difficulties with exact ascriptions of particular samples, but - as we also know from written sources - Marmara was the main source of white marble in Late Antiquity everywhere, while individual quarries used to have some specific traits.

Though I would certainly agree with the general statement that Ravenna had close ties with Constantinople and the court of the emperors there, my own experience from digs and studies at Byzantine Beirut, where most of the fine stones known from Ravenna were also used as architectonic parts, for ambones, lining of buildings, floor mosaics and paving of different kinds brought me to more general conclusions on the trade with precious stones in the East Roman empire. This picture gained from the Beirut project I was also able to improve by study of parallels to Beirut situation in Syria, Greece and Bulgaria - and by comparative studies by others made elsewhere in more profound way in Greece, Turkey, Tunis and Egypt- seem to confirm the general picture of distribution of valuable attractive stones, used in imperial public architecture, ecclesiastic and private buildings as well, being popular for their bright colours. Proconnesus marble, coloured marbles from Asia Minor and hard Egyptian stones like porphyres, were available to the whole Byzantine koine, notably at the time of Justinian and his first successors.

Who had the ships and good business relations in the harbours, could acquire fine stone and sell them freely, though the state-run economy had a large share in the distribution of these in the general opinion and taste of the age highly valued items. Parallel picture is shown also by the distribution of African sigillata, trade amphorae, sarcophagi, etc.; Ravenna and her harbour Classe

were integral parts of the Early Byzantine market koine until the 7th century Arab conquests of the Levant, North Africa and Spain.

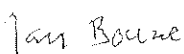
Equally interesting is the discussion by the author of the spolia reused in medieval buildings. It is also very common phenomenon in Italy, Istria and Dalmatia, Provence and elsewhere, even in the countries with Moslem religion prevailing.

The PhD thesis shows full competence of the author in her field, it brings new analyses of fine stone repertoire found in Classe, its classification and position in the world of Late Antiquity; it brings new aspects to study of marbles, other fine stone and their distribution in the frame of political and trade relations of the time.

It has fluent and well understandable language even for the foreigners, clear formulations with very few misprints, informative and well printed illustrations; all formal aspects are satisfying.

For all these reasons the PhD thesis of Helena Tůmová, MA, can be strongly recommended to the Bologna – Prague co-tutelle commission and for its defence.

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Prof Jan Bouzek, PhD