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Authenticating a Portrait of the Young Hadrian



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Since its acquisition nearly thirty years ago, scholars have occasionally posed questions regarding the authenticity of the Museum of Art and Archaeology's portrait of the youthful emperor Hadrian (Fig. 1). These disputes revolve around a number of copies of this portrait type that are seventeenth-century imitations of an ancient forerunner (Fig. 2). The portrait type itself is also unusual, which has compounded suspicions regarding authen-



Fig. 1. Portrait of the youthful emperor Hadrian. Roman, 138 CE, Göktepe marble, H. 54.4 cm. Museum of Art and Archaeology, Gilbreath-McLorn Museum Fund and gift of Museum Associates (89.1). Photo: Jeffrey Wilcox.



Fig. 2. Portrait of the emperor Hadrian. Seventeenth-century imitation of the Roman type, white marble set in colored marble bust, H. 110 cm. Photo: courtesy of Tomasso Brothers Fine Art, London.

ticity of the known examples. The type shows a youthful emperor wearing a neckbeard, contrary to the full beard characteristic of Hadrian's other imperial portraits. Additionally, heavy-lidded eyes and a languid turn of the head impart a dreamy artifice to the portrait, a bearing that also contrasts starkly to the virile stoicism of Hadrian's typical images. Most scholars have now concluded that this youthful portrait type is posthumous, created after Hadrian's death in 138 CE and meant to represent a *renatus*, or reborn, emperor, perhaps in an alternate guise; the various interpretations are further reviewed below. Iconography notwithstanding, the focus of this study will be on authenticating the portrait by the isotopic signature of its marble, a variety unlikely to have been used by seventeenth-century Italian sculptors or anyone attempting an outright forgery at some later date. The marble has been identified as one originating from Göktepe, a newly discovered marble site not far from the ancient Karian city of Aphrodisias in southwestern Anatolia (modern Turkey). Hadrian and some of his predecessors clearly held this city in great favor, and Hadrian seems to have had a fondness for Aphrodisias's renowned sculptors, some of whom he brought to Rome for various commissions. After the emperor's death, one or more of those same sculptors probably created the museum's portrait and at least one additional example in the same marble. The relationship between these two is discussed below.

The Portrait Type and Its Interpretations

The unusual "rejuvenated" portrait of Hadrian is unprecedented for a posthumous emperor portrait, particularly one who was sixty-two years old at the time of his death. A number of theories have been proposed to explain the portrait's remarkable iconography and its meaning regarding Hadrian's legacy.¹ Some scholars have sought to identify the youthful image with various numismatic and literary allusions to Hadrian and the legendary early Roman kings Romulus and Numa. While Hadrian may have lauded Numa as an *exemplum*, and therefore likened himself to this illustrious second king of Rome,² the fully bearded representations of Numa on Roman coins do not seem a credible match for the portrait in question.³ On the other hand, coins of Hadrian with Romulus on the reverse may establish a stronger link between the emperor and Rome's first king.⁴ Moreover, an image of Romulus carrying trophies (*spolia opima*)⁵ is said to be based on a statue type, which has been compared to the youthful Hadrian image, particularly regarding the turn of the head.⁶ An additional idea, also based on the youthful portrait's head-turn and neckbeard, identifies the emperor with the hero Diomedes, a subject known in a Greek statue type of the fourth century BCE.⁷ Others have connected the young image of Hadrian with a posthumous spiritual rebirth, rather than reincarnation as a heroic avatar. Various causes for the rebirth image have been suggested, including the sacrifice of Antinoös, the emperor's Bithynian lover who may have purposely drowned in the Nile in the belief that Hadrian would thus recover from ill health;⁸ Hadrian's initiation into the mysteries of the goddess Demeter at Eleusis in Greece;⁹ or a more generic rebirth that simply returned the emperor to youth, eradicated the sickness that had beset him in his later years, and thus made him a more suitable candidate for deification.¹⁰

Hadrian and Aphrodisias

Hadrian is known to have traveled the Roman provinces extensively, perhaps more than any other emperor. The *Historia Augusta* reports that no other traveled with so much speed and over so much territory.¹¹ Even more remarkable in comparison to his predecessors, Hadrian traveled for the sake of learning firsthand, in addition to requirements for the imperial business itinerary.¹² That itinerary was extensive, covering cities and towns in Europe, Asia, and North Africa.¹³ He visited Asia Minor at least twice, bestowing various places with imperial largesse, some projects colossal in scale.¹⁴ While a specific visit to Aphrodisias cannot be documented, the emperor's presence in Karia in 129/30 is confirmed,¹⁵ and the grand bathhouse known as the "Olympian Baths" was perhaps dedicated to him and Aphrodite, presumably in memory of his visit to the goddess's eponymous city.¹⁶ A letter from the emperor to the city also confirms that the city remained an imperial favorite and, as such, enjoyed tax exemptions.¹⁷ He may have also funded its aqueduct; at the very least, a letter confirms his interest in its completion.¹⁸ It is also evident that Hadrian was fond of the artists of Aphrodisias's celebrated school of sculpture, since he brought some of them to Rome for work and also imported their native marble. We can infer that they requested their local stone, knew its characteristics, and appreciated its high quality.¹⁹ We might further surmise that Hadrian himself liked exotic marbles and used them frequently in his building projects.²⁰

Marble Analysis of the Missouri Portrait

From the above evidence we can extrapolate that Hadrian, like several of his predecessors, regarded the Karian city of Aphrodisias with high esteem and thus accorded it special status. Additionally, Hadrian clearly had a liking for its sculptors, who had a strong presence in Rome and at the emperor's country estate at Tivoli. Aphrodisian work at Tivoli includes the now-famed "Furietti Centaurs" and perhaps the "Fauno Rosso."²¹ Additionally, other Aphrodisian



Fig. 3. Portrait of the youthful emperor Hadrian. Roman, 138 CE., Göktepe marble, H. 30 cm. From Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli, Italy, Museo della Villa Adriana, no. 2260. Photo: MIBACT-su concessione dell'Istituto Villa Adriana-Villa d'Este.

sculpture—with unknown, original contexts—includes the “Little Barbarians” from the Lesser Attalid Group, dated to the Hadrianic period,²² and the Esquiline Group in Copenhagen that most scholars consider a late antique work.²³ Even more relevant to the present study is another portrait of the emperor nearly identical to the Missouri head, found in the Canopus at Tivoli in 1954 (Fig. 3).²⁴ Petrographic and isotopic analyses of the marble of all these sculptures, both black and white, have shown that the marble is the variety now known as “Göktepe.” This marble, especially the white, carries a telltale strontium-rich signature. Black marble has much less strontium, and this is a less characteristic feature. This ancient quarry, which supplied Aphrodisias with both black and white stone, was only rediscovered in 2005,²⁵ making it highly unlikely that a seventeenth-century sculptor (or a later one) would have used marble from this source, since the quarry was only active through the fifth century CE.²⁶

In 2008, samples from nine white marble sculptures in the museum’s collections were sourced using isotopic and petrographic analyses. While the results of most of the samples were not unusual, the Göktepe result from the Hadrian portrait was unexpected.²⁷ To the list of Hadrianic work in Göktepe marble from Aphrodisias, we can now add the museum’s portrait of the young Hadrian. This eliminates the likelihood of it being a forgery since Göktepe marble ceased being imported into Rome after late antiquity. This result also establishes a connection between the museum’s portrait and the Tivoli head of the same stone, but we cannot currently reconstruct the specific context of these remarkable portraits. At the very least, we might conclude that they were created as part of cenotaphic monuments to the reborn, deified emperor.

NOTES

1. For the interpretation of the portrait as Diomedes, see F. Albertson, “A Portrait of Hadrian as Diomedes,” *Muse* 27–28 (1993–1994) pp. 1–29 and n. 29; as Romulus, see S. F. Schröder, “Hadrian as neuer Romulus? Zum letzten Porträt Kaiser Hadrians,” *Madridrer Mitteilungen* 36 (1995) pp. 292–297, and E. Haley, “Hadrian as Romulus or the Self-Representation of a Roman Emperor,” *Latomus* 64.4 (October–December 2005) pp. 969–980; as a rejuvenated initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries, see A. R. Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor* (Hove/East Sussex, 1997) p. 302 for the posthumous coin with the neckbeard portrait from which the portraits were identified; as *Hadrianus renatus*, reborn in youth with the dead Antinoös, see N. Hannestad, “Über das Grabmal des Antinoös: Topographische und thematische Studien im Canopus-Gebiet der Villa Adriana,” *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 11 (1982) pp. 98–99; as a suitable candidate for deification, relieved of sickness and returned to youth, see M. Beckmann, “The Youthful Portrait of Hadrian,” paper given in Toronto at the 2017 Archaeological Institute of America annual conference.

2. Birley, *Restless Emperor*, p. 111 and R. Zoepffel, “Hadrian und Numa,” *Chiron* 8 (1978) p. 412.

3. Haley, “Hadrian as Romulus,” p. 978. Zoepffel also points out that Hadrian’s full, graying beard and silver hair link him to descriptions of Numa. Given that proposition, this would eliminate any link between Numa and the youthful neckbeard image of Hadrian. See “Hadrian and Numa,” n. 86.

4. Haley, “Hadrian as Romulus,” p. 976.

5. A painted image of this Romulus is known from the House of M. Fabius Ululitremulus on the Via d’Abbondanza at Pompeii, recorded in 1913. See M. della Corte, “Campania, IV, Pompei, Continuazione dello scavo in via dell’Abbondanza,” *Notizie degli scavi di antichità* 10 (1913) p. 14.

6. Haley, "Hadrian as Romulus," pp. 978–979.
7. See Albertson, "Portrait of Hadrian," pp. 1–29 for the interpretation as Diomedes and n. 29 for others who also identify the portrait with the hero. For copies of the Greek statue type of Diomedes, see, for example, Munich Glyptothek, inv. no. 304 (B. Vierneisel-Schlörb, *Glyptothek München, Katalog der Skulpturen*, 2: *Klassische Skulpturen des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* [Munich, 1979] pp. 79–99, no. 9, pp. 100–105, figs. 38–46 and Albertson, "Portrait of Hadrian," n. 30) and Paris, Louvre, no. Ma890 (MR 265). This copy entered the Louvre collections in 1801, formerly the property of cardinal Armand Jean du Plessis, First Duke of Richelieu and Fronsac (1586–1642), French clergyman, nobleman, and statesman, who rose to prominence under the Bourbons. For further discussion of the Diomedes identified as a work of Kresilas and the various copies, see A. Furtwängler, *Meisterwerke der Griechischen Plastik: Kunstgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Leipzig, 1893) pp. 311–325, pp. 312–313 for the Louvre copy. Another copy in Naples, National Archaeological Museum, no. 144978, was excavated in 1925 in the Sanctuary of the Sibyl at Cumae. It was first published by A. Maiuri, *Il Diomede di Cuma (Istituto nazionale di archeologia e storia dell'arte, opera d'arte, fasc. 2* [Rome, 1930]) and in many later sources, including A. Andrew Stewart, "Notes on the Reception of the Polykleitan Style: Diomedes to Alexander," in *Polykleitos, the Doryphoros, and Tradition*, Warren G. Moon, ed. (Madison, Wisc., 1985) pp. 246–261, fig. 14.11.
8. Hannestad, "Über das Grabmal," pp. 98–100.
9. Birley, "Restless Emperor," p. 302.
10. Beckmann, unpublished hypothesis (above, n. 1). Beckmann also points to an image of Hadrian on Alexandrian coinage from early in the reign, which may reflect a three-dimensional portrait type with a neckbeard. This could possibly be the portrait type revived after Hadrian's death. It leaves the head-turn unexplained but other emperors also show this characteristic. Moreover, a portrait of Nero (Corinth Archaeological Museum, no. S1088), for example, shows both a head-turn and the neckbeard. See Brunilde S. Ridgeway, "Sculpture from Corinth," *Hesperia* 50 (2014) pls. 91–97. For the Alexandrian coin, see M. Bergmann, "Zu den Porträts des Trajan und Hadrian," in A. Caballos and P. León, eds., *Italica MMCC, Actas de las jornadas de 2.200 Aniversario de la Fundación de Italica* (Seville, 1997) pp. 139–148.
11. *Historia Augusta* 13.5.
12. *Ibid.*, 17.9.
13. *Inter alia*, see Birley, *Restless Emperor*, chapters 13–14 and H. Halfman, *Itinera principum: Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im Römischen Reich* (Stuttgart, 1986) pp. 188–210.
14. Perhaps most well-known is the colossal temple at Kyzikos. Parts of its seventy-foot colonnade were still standing as late as the fifteenth century when the antiquarian Cyriacus of Ancona documented it (B. Ashmole, "Cyriac of Ancona and the Temple of Hadrian at Cyzicus," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 19:3/4 [1956] pp. 179–191; *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels*, Edward W. Bodner and Clive Foss, eds. and translators [Cambridge, Mass., 2003] p. 73). The strobate is still visible today in the marshes near the town of Erdek.
15. Halfman, *Itinera principum*, pp. 193 (noting *Inscriptiones graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes*, vol. 4, 1033) and 204. J. H. Oliver, *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*, K. Clinton, ed. (Philadelphia, 1989) no. 68, I.12.
16. See A. Wilson, "The Hadrianic Olympian Baths at Aphrodisias: Layout, Operation, and Financing," in R. R. Smith, J. Lenaghan, A. Sokolicek, and K. Welch, eds., *Aphrodisias Papers 5: Excavation and Research at Aphrodisias* (Portsmouth, 2006–2012) p. 182, for the argument that the bath's dedicatory inscription, beginning with "for the emperor . . ." is to Hadrian.
17. Such a privilege may have been continuous since the time of Octavian (Augustus) who called the city "the only [one] in all of Asia that I have selected to be my own." Both Octavian's and Hadrian's letters come from the theater, where they are still in situ on the wall. See J. Reynolds, et al. at <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007/iAph080034.html>, nos. 8.29, 8.34 (accessed June 2018). See also

M. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (Princeton, 2000) p. 89, for more on Hadrian's clarification of Aphrodisias's tax exemptions.

18. See J. Reynolds, "New Letters from Hadrian to Aphrodisias: Trials, Taxes, Gladiators, and an Aqueduct," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 13 (2000) p. 5; *Supplementum epigraphicum graecum* 2000:1096.

19. D. Attanasio, M. Bruno, and A. B. Yavuz, "Quarries in the Region of Aphrodisias: The Black and White Marbles of Göktepe," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 22.1 (2009) p. 345.

20. The most obvious example would be the Pantheon, which includes stone from all three continents of the empire. The Tivoli estate is also rife with imported stone.

21. Today in the Capitoline Museums. These works were discovered in 1736 by antiquarian Cardinal Giuseppe Alessandro Furietti during his excavations of the *Accademia* at Tivoli. The centaurs, thought to be copies of Hellenistic sculptures in bronze, were carved by Aristeas and Papias of Aphrodisias. The sculptors' signatures survive on the plinths of both centaurs. While it is not certain that Aristeas and Papias carved the fragmentary faun, the red stone (*marmor Iassense rosso*) is from the Iasos quarry, not far from Aphrodisias. See D. Attanasio, M. Bruno, and W. Prochaska, "The Asiatic Marbles of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 40 (2013) pp. 4358–4368.

22. Though these were dated Republican in earlier studies, they have been redated to the Hadrianic period based on their marble identification. See D. Attanasio, M. Bruno, W. Prochaska, and A. B. Yavuz, "Aphrodisian Marble from the Göktepe Quarries: The Little Barbarians, Roman Copies from the Attalid Dedication in Athens," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 80 (2012) pp. 65–70.

23. The problematic group of deities, signed by Aphrodisian sculptors and now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (inv. nos. 619–623), might be late antique as suggested by many scholars. Found on the Esquiline in 1885, this group's original placement is unknown. See D. Attanasio, M. Bruno, W. Prochaska, and A. B. Yavuz, "Reevaluation of the Marble Provenance of The Esquiline Group Sculptures (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) Following the Discovery of the Aphrodisian Marble Quarries at Göktepe," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung* 121 (2015) pp. 567–589. For discussion of the group's confounding dating evidence, see M. Moltesen, "The Esquiline Group: Aphrodisian Statues in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek," *Antike Plastik* 27 (2000) pp. 111–131.

24. Albertson's "Tivoli-Columbia" type. See Albertson, "Portrait of Hadrian," p. 15.

25. Attanasio et al., "Quarries in the Region of Aphrodisias," p. 313. Bruno et al., "An Update on the Use and Distribution of White and Black Marbles from the First Century AD to Late Antiquity," *Interdisciplinary Studies on Ancient Stone: Proceedings of the IX Association for the Study of Marble and Other Stones in Antiquity* (ASMOSIA 10 [May 2012]) pp. 461–468.

26. Attanasio et al., "Quarries in the Region of Aphrodisias," p. 344. See also Bruno et al., "Update."

27. The museum thanks Robert Tykot for the initial testing and Donato Attanasio for the final identification of Göktepe for the portrait of Hadrian. See B. Kidd, D. Attanasio, and R. H. Tykot, "Determining White Marble Provenance of Greek and Roman Sculpture in the Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri," in ASMOSIA (Tarragona 2009) pp. 239–240.

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