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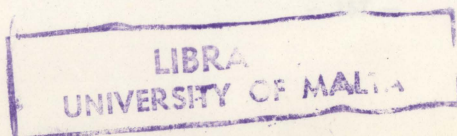
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## Imperial and Private Portraiture: a case of non - dependence

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There is no doubt that in Roman artistic production state-commissioned sculpture ushered in new fashions and tastes that were immediately, or in time, adopted in privately sponsored sculpture. This is generally taken for granted in the study of one of the most characteristic genres of Roman sculpture, namely portraiture. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out, this was not always the case. There were times when imperial portrait sculpture lagged behind in traditional schemes and conservative attitudes while private portraiture adopted new iconographic fashions and original stylistic idioms which were eventually taken up by official portraiture. This short paper deals with one instance of an iconographic nature, the wearing of the beard, which contends for precedence of private portraiture over the imperial one, whereas it is traditionally held that it was Hadrian who influenced its introduction into both imperial and private physiognomy.

Whereas Roman imperial iconography, as well as that of the late-Republican dignitaries, have depended almost exclusively on coinage, there exists no such iconographic aid for the identification and dating of private portraits. Hence the almost total reliance on comparison with imperial portraiture which presents a perceptible development of change in fashion and taste that can be followed in the coin issues.

Funerary relief portraiture, which flourished between the second quarter of the first century B. C. and the end of the principate of emperor Augustus<sup>(1)</sup>, shows the enormous influence mutually exerted between official sculpture and the private one, even though in this genre this influence becomes more and more one-sided and limited to iconographic elements since the uncompromising classicism of Augustan art is hardly reflected in contemporary funerary relief portraiture<sup>(2)</sup>. Iconographic influence is not limited to hairstyles, especially female ones, but can also be perceived in group schemes, such as the ones on two funerary reliefs (one in the Villa Doria Pamphilj and the other in the Musei Oliveriani, Pesaro) which have been rightly traced to the South Processional Frieze of the *Ara Pacis*<sup>(3)</sup>.

Portraiture seems to have disappeared from funerary reliefs just after the death of

(1) See of late KLEINER, D.E.E.: *Roman Group Portraiture: The Funerary Reliefs of the Late Republic and Early Empire* (New York & London, 1977).

(2) Even in free-standing portraiture of municipal notables this classicism is rarely noticeable. See, for example, ZANKER, P.: « Zur Rezeption des hellenistischen Individualporträts in Rom und in den italischen Städten », *Hellenismus in Mittelitalien*, 2 (1976), 581-605; *idem*: « Prinzipat und Herrscherbild », *Gymnasium*, 86 (1979), p. 360-362, pl. II-V.

(3) REBECCHI, F.: « Ritratto e iconografia romana. Aspetti del problema nell'Italia centro-settentrionale tra I sec. a.C. e II sec. d.C. », *ArchCl*, 32 (1980), p. 120-122, pl. XVII-XLIII.

Augustus. The production of the series of busts, mostly in relief, for setting up on tombs and funerary monuments virtually stopped and was replaced by richly decorated urns and small altars<sup>(4)</sup>, until these in turn started to make place for the larger sarcophagi at the time of Trajan. These sarcophagi, however, lacked portrait representations until Antonine times. We find ourselves, therefore, deprived of a rich class of private portraiture which could have thrown much light on the development of the bearded fashion before its almost universal adoption by the end of Hadrian's reign<sup>(5)</sup>.

One case of an innovation which appears to have been introduced in non-imperial imagery much before it occurs on imperial portraiture is precisely the wearing of the beard. The first known emperor to sport a full beard is Hadrian. His earliest portraits are dated to A.D. 117-118<sup>(6)</sup> but a bearded young man closely resembling him depicted on one of the attic panels of the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum could very well represent Trajan's heir to the imperial throne<sup>(7)</sup>. The earliest bearded imperial image, therefore, does not occur before A.D. 114<sup>(8)</sup>.

According to DONALD STRONG it was Polemo of Laodicea, one of Hadrian's chief advisers and a major exponent of the Greek physiognomic theory, who induced the emperor to wear a beard and have himself so represented in his official portraiture<sup>(9)</sup>. Apart from the uncertainties that surround the personality of Polemo of Laodicea<sup>(10)</sup> Hadrian's beard cannot be considered such an innovative element in the light of the apparent widely spread fashion already during Trajan's reign. This does not eliminate the fact that it was a new element in Roman imperial imagery, and the probability is that it was as much a mark of Hadrian's philhellenism as 'the result of a great deal of learned, even metaphysical, controversy as to how a ruler should appear before his subjects'. Besides, although he discusses the signs of character inherent in the different types of hair, as well as their distribution on the body, Polemo never actually encourages the wearing of a beard<sup>(11)</sup>.

The earliest certain surviving portrait of a Roman notable is that of the general T. Quinctius Flamininus on gold coins which he struck in honour of his achievements in 197 B.C. It is entirely Greek in style and it certainly follows the tradition of Hellenistic rulers in its

(4) Only rarely does one meet portrait heads or busts on these small altars, such as that inscribed with the name of Atellios Polybios (BASTET, F. L. & BRUNSTING, H.: *Corpus Signorum Classicorum Musei Antiquarii Lugduno-Batavi* (Zutphen, 1982), no. 232) and a group published by DALTRUP, G.: « Bildnisbüsten von Ehepaaren an römischen Grabaltären », in *Ekones, Studien zum Griechischen und Römischen Bildnis*, STUCKY, R. A. & JUCKER, I. eds., p. 85-88 (Basel, 1980), and dated to A.D. 100-130.

(5) One notable exception is the tomb of the Eaterii whose relief sculpture, as Strong admits, suggests « elements of opposition to the official taste » (STRONG, D.: *Roman Art* (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 80). Another is the sepulchral monument of a mother and her two sons in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (RICHTER, G.M.A.: *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Roman Portraits* (New York, 1948), no. 65), which is dated broadly to the period of Trajan or Hadrian in the plate caption, but more precisely to Trajanic art in the text. One of the male heads wears a hairstyle and a beard which are found in both Domitianic and Trajanic relief heads.

(6) WEGNER, M.: *Hadrian, Das Römische Herrscherbild*, II, 3 (Berlin, 1956), p. 53-54.

(7) See, among others, VON DOMASZEWSKI, V.: « Die politische Bedeutung des Trajansbogens in Benevent », *ÖJh*, 2 (1899), 177 ff., and TOYNBEE, J.M.C.: *The Hadrianic School* (Cambridge, 1934), p. 18. WEGNER: note (6), p. 31, 55, 64, 94, accepts the identification with some reservations. A second image of a bearded young man from another panel has also been identified with Hadrian. See discussion in BONANNO, A.: *Portraits and Other Heads on Roman Historical Relief* (Oxford, 1976), p. 88-89, notes 463-466.

(8) It is generally held that the Arch was completed after Trajan's death in 117: discussion and bibliography in ROTILI, M.: *L'Arco di Traiano a Benevento* (Rome, 1972), p. 55-59.

(9) STRONG: note (5), p. 95.

(10) FOERSTER, R. (ed.): *Scriptores Physiognomici Graeci et Latini* (Leipzig, 1893), LXXV-CLXXVIII.

(11) *Ibidem*, text in p. 95-294.



iconography, including the wearing of a beard<sup>(12)</sup>. Another early bearded coin portrait representing L. Titirius Sabinus (88 B.C.) has many iconographic elements in common with the well known and equally bearded bronze head of Brutus in the Conservatori which is assigned by some to the same age<sup>(13)</sup>.

In the late Republic the beard was definitely not a fashionable thing to wear since it was worn as a sign of mourning. From numismatic evidence it appears that Antony wore a beard between 44 and 42 B.C., almost certainly in mourning for the death of Caesar<sup>(14)</sup>. Octavian himself, whose iconography is normally assumed to be exclusively clean-shaven, is said to have worn a beard of mourning for his adoptive father until 39 B.C.<sup>(15)</sup>. Suetonius implies that sometimes he grew a beard, at other times he did not<sup>(16)</sup>. Indeed some of his coin portraits display a beard<sup>(17)</sup>, and of his portraits in the round a marble head from the *Cryptoporticus* at Arles and another from the Roman theatre at Verona, showing youthful, though somewhat mature features, sport a very slight beard<sup>(18)</sup>. Even Cnaeus Pompeius Junior and Sextus Pompeius, sons of Pompey, wear beards, presumably in mourning for their father, on coins struck by Sextus in Sicily between 42 and 38 B.C.<sup>(19)</sup>. Although one particular coin issue shows a bearded Agrippa, his other coin images and portraits show him clean-shaven<sup>(20)</sup>.

'In the Augustan period', we are told, 'a completely successful Julio-Claudian type was created — handsome, clean-shaven, compact, grave and serious, with hair simply arranged and always worn in a specific way'<sup>(21)</sup>. This 'Julio-Claudian type' was so successful that, while it is often extremely difficult to tell the princes of the Julio-Claudian house from one another, it was also taken over by private portraiture, both in the round and funerary reliefs, as well as on the unofficial commemorative reliefs; for instance, the bearers of the *Lares* in the *Vicomagistri* relief<sup>(22)</sup> (Fig. 1). Although the funerary portraiture of the early Empire remained faithful to a great extent to the Republican tradition, the 'Julio-Claudian type' emerges quite often among its busts. Perhaps we should see in this emulation the aspirations of the Roman middle classes to look like the members of the royal house.

The first emperor to break with this established Julio-Claudian tradition is the last one of that dynasty, Nero, one of whose portrait types represent him with very shallow whiskers that cover also his neck and part of his chin<sup>(23)</sup>. This slender beard, however, looks more like a soft unshaven *barbula* than a fully cultivated beard.

However, fully bearded images of portrait or quasi-portrait types, as well as of generic, stereotyped ones, appear on official commemorative reliefs as early as A.D. 43. The first

(12) STRONG: note (5), p. 13, pl. 7; TOYNBEE, J.M.C.: *Roman Historical Portraits* (London, 1978), p. 19-20.

(13) STRONG: note (5), p. 18, pl. 8, 13g. Cf. BIANCHI BANDINELLI, R.: *Roma, L'Arte Romana nel Centro del Potere* (Milan, 1976), p. 29, 399; and HENIG, M. ed.: *A Handbook of Roman Art* (Oxford, 1983), p. 23, 68.

(14) TOYNBEE: note (12), p. 41-42, fig. 40, 42, 43.

(15) DIO CASSIUS, *xlvi*, 34, 3.

(16) SUETONIUS, *Augustus*, 79.

(17) TOYNBEE, note (12), p. 51-54, fig. 61.

(18) *Ibidem*, p. 54, fig. 73-74.

(19) *Ibidem*, p. 56-59, fig. 77-78.

(20) *Ibidem*, p. 63-67, fig. 89-94.

(21) STRONG: note (5), p. 47.

(22) BONANNO: note (7), p. 48-49, pl. 107-108.

(23) See, for example, the portrait from the Palatine: HIESINGER, U. W.: *AJA*, 79 (1975), p. 119, pl. 24, 43-44; GIULIANO, A. ed.: *Museo Nazionale Romano, Le Sculture*, I, 1 (Rome, 1979), p. 272-273, no. 168.

time that men, as opposed to gods and personifications, are portrayed with bearded faces on Roman state reliefs, apart from the legendary figures of Faustulus (?) and Titus Tatius (?) on the Basilica Aemilia Frieze, and of Aeneas on one of the *Ara Pacis* panels, and apart from bearded barbarians, such as those on the frieze from the Temple of Apollo *in Circo*,



FIG. 1 — Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano. The Relief of the *Vicomagistri*. A *Lar* bearer.

is on the *Ara Pietatis* of Emperor Claudius<sup>(24)</sup>. Here one the background figures wears a full beard while other background heads and two foreground ones sport very long whiskers<sup>(25)</sup>. On official reliefs long whiskers can be observed already in the *Ara Pacis*, but here they are far more plastically raised and are punctuated by curly, almost circular locks. The beard of the fully bearded background head consists of circular locks accentuated by drilled holes in the centre<sup>(26)</sup> (Fig. 2).

<sup>(24)</sup> BONANNO: note (7), p. 35-40, bibl. in note 181.

<sup>(25)</sup> *Ibidem*, pl. 82, 84, 87.

<sup>(26)</sup> A similar type of beard occurs on the head of the *aquilifer* in a fragment of a relief panel showing a group of Roman military officers preserved in Louvre, which has been attributed to the Arch of Claudius in Rome: KOEPEL, G. M.: «Two reliefs from the Arch of Claudius in Rome», *RM*, 90 (1983), p. 103-106, pl. 42.



FIG. 2 — Rome, Villa Medici. Fragmentary relief slab from the *Ara Pietatis Augustae*.  
Bearded background figure behind Claudius.



FIG. 3 — Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano. Cancelleria Reliefs, Frieze B.  
A bearded *apparitor*.

Before it becomes an essential feature of imperial iconography with Hadrian the beard appears worn by background and secondary figures on the historical reliefs of four other imperial monuments, two Flavian and two Trajanic <sup>(27)</sup>.

The first one of these is the monument for which the panels known as the Cancellaria reliefs were intended <sup>(28)</sup>. Here the beard is given different degrees of volume and relief ranging from very shallow, hardly perceptible, short beard and whiskers, as on one of the background soldiers <sup>(29)</sup>, to a more voluminous and plastic, full beard, worn by a *licitor* in one frieze and an *apparitor* in the other <sup>(30)</sup> (Fig. 3), to an even bushier one sported by the military officer placed in the foreground in Frieze A. <sup>(31)</sup> (Fig. 4).

The second Flavian monument which carries bearded figures, albeit background ones, is the Arch of Titus on the Via Sacra in the Roman Forum <sup>(32)</sup>. It is not certain whether the last of the four rear porters of the Shrewbread Table had a beard or not since the face is very battered <sup>(33)</sup>. But the background *licitor* at the far left corner in the Chariot scene wears a distinctly full beard, and a moustache, formed of a compact mass of corkscrew curls with drilled holes in their centres <sup>(34)</sup> (Fig. 5).

The Column of Trajan unfolds in the narrative style the story of Trajan's war campaigns of 101-102 and 105-107 against the Dacians. By the time of the carving of the Column (dedicated in 113) the beard must have become a widely diffused fashion, especially among the Roman army because a great proportion of the soldiers portrayed on the spiral frieze are bearded. In several scenes, such as scenes III-VII, LI, XCVIII, XCIX, the overall majority of the soldiers and officers of the Roman army appear sporting a beard <sup>(35)</sup>. Trajan is on several occasions portrayed in the company of his officers some of whom are bearded as well. One of them has also been tentatively identified with Trajan's successor, Hadrian <sup>(36)</sup>.

The types of beard occurring on the relief panels of the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum are varied. A good proportion of the secondary figures standing on the outermost plane of relief and in the background are bearded. Their beards can be grouped under two types. The first is the one often met in previous reliefs, from the *Ara Pietatis* to the Cancellaria friezes. It consists mainly of circular, now even more S-shaped, curls with drilled round holes, the best example of which is worn by the *licitor* in the foreground right behind Trajan

<sup>(27)</sup> Apart from lesser monuments, like the *Suovetaurilia* relief in the Louvre (probably datable to A.D. 72-73) in which full-bodied, even if still short, beards are worn by two figures in the foreground and one in the background: BONANNO: note <sup>(7)</sup>, p. 45-46.

<sup>(28)</sup> Discussion and bibliography in *ibidem*, p. 52-61.

<sup>(29)</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59, pl. 128. The young Domitian in Frieze B wears a similar slight beard limited to a small area on the cheek and on the chin. He also wears side-burns. But it is generally agreed that this is no more than the *lanugo* which Roman young men left to grow before the *depositio barbae* at the age of twenty. See *ibidem*, p. 56, pl. 131-132.

<sup>(30)</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 58-59, pl. 122, 129.

<sup>(31)</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57, pl. 125. In its volume and plastic treatment it is comparable to those worn by Mars and the *Genius Senatus* in the same reliefs.

<sup>(32)</sup> MAGI, F.: «Ancora sull'Arco di Tito», *RM*, 84 (1977), p. 331-347; PFANNER, M.: *Der Titusbogen* (Mainz, 1983).

<sup>(33)</sup> MAGI: pl. 153, 1, 154, 2; PFANNER: fig. 10, pl. 62, 7-8.

<sup>(34)</sup> MAGI: pl. 156, 3; PFANNER: pl. 46, 4.

<sup>(35)</sup> See the monumental editions of the Column, such as: LEHMANN-HARTLEBEN, K.: *Die Trajanssäule* (Berlin & Leipzig, 1926); ROMANELLI, P.: *La Colonna Traiana* (Rome, 1942).

<sup>(36)</sup> BONANNO: note <sup>(7)</sup>, p. 72-73; GAUER, W.: *Untersuchungen zur Trajanssäule*, 1, *Darstellungsprogramm und Künstlerischer Entwurf* (Berlin, 1977), p. 60-65. See also HANNESSTAD, N.: «Thorvaldsen's small silver head — a ruined tondo portrait», *Meddelelser fra Thorvaldsens Museum* (1982), p. 56.



FIG. 4 — Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano. Cancelleria Reliefs, Frieze A. A bearded military officer.

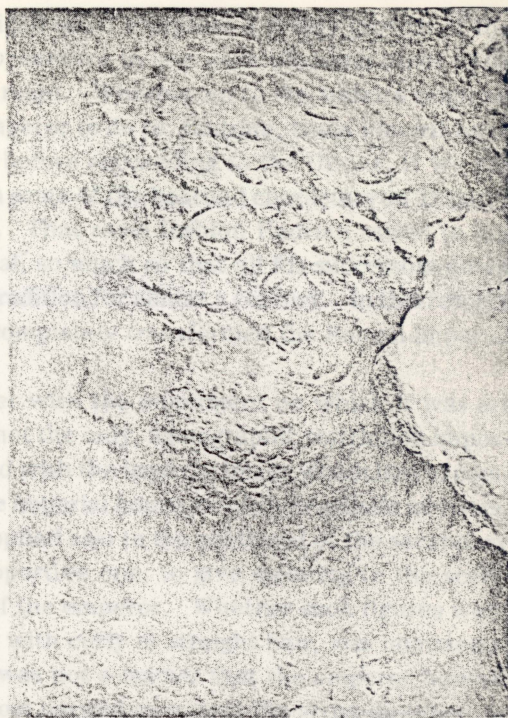


FIG. 5 — Rome, Arch of Titus. A lictor at the far left corner in the Chariot scene.

on the panel depicting the pacification of Germany<sup>(37)</sup>. The second type is made up of shallow, slightly plastic beards, this time with pointed and comparatively straight locks, such as those worn by the lictor behind Trajan on the attic panel showing the submission of a province, and by two other lictors standing on the far left angle of the panel referring to Trajan's reorganization of the army<sup>(38)</sup>. Finally, one particular figure, which seems to occupy a very important position in the attic panel showing Trajan's *adventus* (or *profectio*), carries a *sui generis* type of beard, one that is very closely similar to that worn by Hadrian in his free-standing portraits. This similarity and that of several other iconographic features, together with the prominence enjoyed by the figure in the picture, have suggested its identification with the future emperor, Hadrian<sup>(39)</sup>.

Whether the Arch at Beneventum was finished before or after Trajan's death in A.D. 117, and whether the relief sculptures on the attic were set up by Trajan himself or by his successor Hadrian, it can be safely assumed that the majority of the panels were completed before Hadrian's accession to the throne and, therefore, they pre-date the imperial sanctioning of the bearded fashion by the latter.

<sup>(37)</sup> BONANNO: note (7), p. 91, pl. 177.

<sup>(38)</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90, pl. 172-173; ROTILI, M.: *L'Arco di Traiano a Benevento* (Rome, 1972), fig. 117.

<sup>(39)</sup> See above, note (7).



From this brief survey of pre-Hadrianic official relief sculpture a steady growth of the bearded fashion can be traced from its timid appearance in late Julio-Claudian times to its widely spread adoption by the end of Trajan's reign. Whereas up to the latter's reign no emperor is known to have worn one the first emperor to do so, Hadrian, could himself have been a victim of that almost universal fashion before succeeding to the throne, if we are to assign any credibility to his being identified in some of the bearded characters on Trajan's Column in Rome and his Arch at Beneventum. That same fashion Hadrian raised to imperial dignity and rendered even more universal, so much so that all his successors down to Septimius Severus kept up this physiognomic tradition for almost a century. In this respect it is only too just to claim that his portraiture 'completely transformed the Roman imperial tradition' (40).

Although the historical relief itself, together with the monument on which it was set up, was official by its very nature, the major, if not the only, iconographic restriction imposed on the commissioned artist was that concerned with the imperial image which had to comply with the current tastes of the members of the imperial house, or of their artistic advisers. One would not expect this constraint to have applied also to the portrayal of the secondary figures whose role in the relief was only a supportive one, to give meaning to the scene represented and to sustain the glorified image of the emperor. Whether such figures were portrayed bearded or clean-shaven, or whether with curly or straight hair, was immaterial for the message conveyed by the picture, and was not a matter that the emperor himself would meddle in. Consequently it would be most natural to expect the artist-designer, or the sculptors engaged in the carving of the minor figures, to reproduce current, and not necessarily imperial, hairstyle and beard fashions, as well as dress fashions on these figures.

In conclusion it would seem that in the past in the study of private portraiture too much emphasis was laid on the imperial image as a standard for the dating of non-imperial portraits, both in terms of content and of style and technique. This paper is concerned only with the first aspect, that of representational content — in this case the beard — whereas for the latter two (style and technique) Roman historical reliefs of the following period, that of the Antonines, provide further evidence for a greater degree of independence of private portraiture from the official one. Greater use, therefore, could and should be made of the secondary figures on Roman historical reliefs as *comparanda* for the art-historical appraisal of Roman portraits of unknown individuals.

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(40) STRONG: note (5), p. 95.

