Anatolian Elements in the Order Architecture of Philippopolis

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Abstract: Roman Philippopolis is the city with the finest monumental architecture within the boundaries of present-day Bulgaria. This Thracian centre shows us the entire development of architectural orders from Late Hellenistic age to the early Byzantine period. In the beginning was the Doric order, used in the decoration of the agora of the city as early as the Flavian times. But only a few decades later, at the beginning of the 2nd c. AD, a number of significant changes occurred. Monumental complexes in the agora, stadium, theatre, and a number of other complexes that today are not known by archaeological data, were decorated in the Ionic, Corinthian and Composite orders.

The decorative models from the architectural environment of Philippopolis are almost entirely copied from the original productions of Asia Minor cities. Most clearly visible are the decorative models taken from Pergamon, Ephesos, Aphrodisias and Nicomedia.

The main purpose of the paper is to show the great wealth of architectural models in the biggest Thracian city of the Roman era and to put research of architectural decoration in Thrace to the required level. In contrast to studies of Anatolian influences on the luxurious Villa Armira, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, Abritus, Odessos and the Black Sea region, we must acknowledge that the studies of the vast complexes in today’s Plovdiv are significantly less.

Keywords: Philippopolis, Asia Minor, Roman order architecture, workshops, stone-carving.

Introduction

The monumental complexes of the agora, the stadium, the theatre and a number of other buildings in Philippopolis were decorated in the Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and even Composite orders (Tsontchev 1947; Топалилов 2012, 106-147, обр. 2-71; Димитров 2009, 85-115; Мартинова-Кюцова / Пировска 2011, 211-233, обр. 5, 11-15; Матеев 1993, 72, 77; Кесикова 2004, 9-74; Кесикова 1999).

The decoration models for the architecture of Philippopolis are almost exact replicas of the original production in major Anatolian cities – Pergamon, Ephesos, Aphrodisias, Miletos, Nicomedia and others.

The main purpose of this paper is to show the great diversity of architectural models in the biggest Thracian city during the Roman period, and to put the study of the architectural decoration of this region at the level it deserves. Unlike the studies of Anatolian influence in Villa Armira, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, Abritus, Odessoss and the settlements along the Pontic coast, the analyses of the huge complexes of in present-day Plovdiv are significantly less and its architectural details must be properly examined.

State of research

The problem of the origin of the architectural decoration in the order complexes constructed in the Thracian lands during the time of the
Roman Empire has long been discussed in scholarly circles. As early as the 1920s – 1930s Prof. Sava Bobchev noted that the architectural monuments of Nicopolis ad Istrum were based on Anatolian stone-carving originals (Бобчев 1929, 56-75). Later on, the thesis was upheld by Dimitar Tsontchev, who worked on the details from Philippopolis (Tsontchev 1947; Цончев 1956, 141-175), and also by Prof. Theophil Ivanov, who studied Abritus, Oescus and Nicopolis ad Istrum (Иванов 1979, 1-11; Иванов 1965; Ivanov 1986, 498-504). Unfortunately, most of the studies simply offer a general conclusion that the architectural decoration in Roman Thrace is of Anatolian origin and that it exhibits certain influence from the Eastern provinces of the Empire.

The first profound and thoroughly professional studies based on an in-depth analysis of the architectural details by applying accurate comparative methods were produced only in the 1970s. At that time, the Bulgarian scholar Yanka Mladenova of the Department of Antiquities at the Institute of Archaeology studied Roman architectural decoration through the examination of particular details (Mladenova 1979, 91-94; Младенова 1979, 45-47; Mladenova 1981, 38-48; Младенова 1991). She brought up the question of travelling teams of Anatolian stone-carvers in Roman Thrace. In the 1980s Y. Mladenova offered a wonderful approach to the exploration of architectural decoration of the Roman Villa Armira, near present-day Ivaylovgrad, which no doubt was the work of Anatolian stone-carvers (Mladenova 1979, 91-94; Mladenova 1981, 38-48; Младенова 1991, 149, 157-158).

Apart from Y. Mladenova, the issue of Anatolian elements in the order architecture of Roman Thrace was also tackled by Prof. John Ward-Perkins. He studied the works of Anatolian stone-carvers on imported marble. The study of J. Ward-Perkins focused on details from the West Pontic coast – Tomis, Odessos, Callatis, as well as Marcianopolis and Nicopolis ad Istrum (Ward-Perkins 1980, 50-51, 53-57, pl. XV-XX, XXIII). From a historical point of view, the problems of the presence of Anatolians in Thrace was investigated by Prof. Margarita Tacheva of Sofia University (Тацева 1969, 115-123; Tatscheva-Chitova 1970, 87-89; Тацева-Хитова 1976, 81-88).

Nowadays, about 40 years after the works of J. Ward-Perkins, Y. Mladenova and M. Tacheva, I believe that this line of research needs to be continued. We are in the position to analyse significantly more architectural details after many new excavations. In this respect, I consider that the pressing issues calling for attention today are the following:

The studies so far have not focused on the links between the Thracian architectural environment and the Anatolian stone-working schools and workshops, and there has been no comment or analysis on the largest architectural group in Roman Thrace – the one in Philippopolis;

The studies by Y. Mladenova and J. Ward-Perkins highlight the recognizable presence of models from Aphrodisias and Nicomedia in the territory of Thrace, but so far relatively little is known about the copies of originals from Pergamon and Ephesos. Although the work of stone-carvers from Ephesos and Pergamon has been mentioned in scholarly publications too, it has always been referred to as a constant and indisputable point of departure, without any previous analysis, precise substantiation of facts or examination of individual architectural details;
The large architectural ensembles in Philippopolis have altogether remained unpublished, which makes it difficult to study this Thracian city. Today there is an urgent need to explore the immense number of details of order architecture – similarly to the way my colleague Maya Martinova and I examined the complex to the north of the agora in 2005-2007;

The entire collection of architectural details from the Roman period in the province of Thrace needs to be catalogued and a corpus has to be published; this will inevitably facilitate further studies and eventually, various new connections might be identified between the architectural environment of the cities and the Anatolian stone-carving centres.

The main focus of this study is not to establish whether there were Anatolian architectural decorative models in Philippopolis, but to identify the exact architectural details produced by Anatolian sculptors and date them.

Main goals

My main objective here would be to pinpoint the original Anatolian models which infiltrated the Thracian architectural environment and led to the development and subsequent local reproduction of entire series of high quality architectural works in the finest form of architecture – the order decoration of buildings. I am of the opinion that in Philippopolis one must first identify and trace this process, which has already been evidenced in the study and analysis of Villa Armira and particularly so along the west coastline of Pontus.

The architectural units in Philippopolis, which are the subject of this paper and which show very distinctly Anatolian elements in the order architecture, are:

The agora of Philippopolis – more precisely, the ensemble of the odeion-bouleuterion located at the north-eastern part of the square and studied by M. Martinova of the Regional Museum of Archaeology in Plovdiv;

The Eastern Gate of Philippopolis – an elaborate structure with a long history and various functions throughout time. The earliest period of this complex – the rule of Emperor Hadrian – is crucial for this study. Excavated in the 1980s by Elena Kesyakova;

The theatre of Philippopolis – studied long ago by L. Botusharova, but still unpublished;

The stadium of Philippopolis – studied and published in 1947 by D. Tsontchev;

The recently localized Late Antique fortress wall to the south of the Three hills – a number of architectural details built in the foundations of the wall constitute new finds, and nothing is known about the original buildings to which they belonged. Excavated by Zh. Tankova.

The odeion-bouleuterion

Some of the latest excavations in Philippopolis directed by M. Martinova provided the best data about the “Anatolian elements in the order architecture of Philippopolis” (Мартинова 2004, 135-136; Мартинова 2003, 101-102; Мартинова / Боспачиева 2002, 187-188, обр. 6). During her investigation of a large public building to the north-east of the open-air space of the agora, the odeion-bouleuteri-
on, a good deal of architectural details in the Corinthian order were unearthed (Plate 1). The building displays a number of construction periods and phases and its decoration was renovated several times. However, I shall dwell on the original order, dating to the period of Emperor Hadrian and more precisely to the late years of his reign – the AD 130s.

The Corinthian capitals from the scaena of the complex are probably the best preserved ones and, from this point of view, they are crucial for the analysis of the architectural environment of Roman Philippopolis. These are Corinthian capitals produced following models from Pergamon (Rohmann 1998, 71-81, Taf. 44-47). The exact analogies run in three lines:

In terms of the architectural decoration of the set of elements in the capital;

In terms of the carving style of the stone surface;

In terms of production from the same period – the Late Hadrianic period, the AD 130s.

With regard to the architectural decorative features, the capitals from the scaena of the odeion may be analysed by considering the acanthus band, the upper third of the calathus, volutes and helices.

The acanthus band has two rows of eight acanthus leaves each. Each of the leaves follows the model typical of the stone-carving school in Pergamon. There is no difference whatsoever between the acanthus leaves from the Asklepieion in Pergamon and the ones in Philippopolis. The same is true about the examples from the Traianeum (Plate 1 and 2). The replication of the Anatolian model can be noticed in the tips of the leaves, in the bending palms, and especially in the carving of the individual figures in between.

Exact replicas of the Anatolian model can be seen also in the caulis of the capitals, the acanthus cups and, best of all, in the carving of the scrolls of the volutes and helices in the details (Plate 1 and 2). The proportions between the acanthus band and the upper third of the calathus are also strictly observed.

The carving style of the stone surface must also be analysed. The overall replication of the Pergamene model in Philippopolis is not an unusual fact. However, the most substantial information in this case is that this allows us to determine the origin of the carving works very accurately. In my opinion, the capitals from the scaena of the odeion in Philippopolis are not just replicas from the capitals of the Asklepieion in Pergamon, but were produced on the spot by Anatolian stone-carvers. The style of the Pergamene carvers is best seen in the small details of the helices, the acanthus tips and the abacus flowers (Plate 1 and 2). Quite distinct is the high relief of the acanthus band, the fretwork of some stems in the volutes, the helices and the horns below the abacus slab in the upper third of the calathus.

One of the most characteristic techniques applied by Anatolian craftsmen is the use of a drill. The traces of this instrument are everywhere, but mainly over the abacus flowers of the capitals. Another very important element is the perfect execution of three-dimensional technique (Plate 1 b, e, f and Plate 2 a, b). For example, in the fully preserved Corinthian capital from the odeion-bouleuterion, one could see the unique carving of the upper part of the acanthus leaf – it is fully three-dimensional and fully turned down, decorated also by drilling,
just like the main examples from the Asklepieion in Pergamon (Plate 1 and 2).

The Eastern Gate of Philippopolis (Plate 3).

Architectural details from diverse complexes of the Roman city lie around the present-day ensemble of the Eastern Gate of Philippopolis. During the reign of Constantine the Great, and probably later during Late Antiquity, order-decorated complexes were constructed in this zone, where architectural elements from earlier buildings were reused (Топалилов 2012, 140-141).

A reliable chronological marker is the anta-pier from the passages of the earliest complex in this zone (Plate 3 e, f). It is built inside the Late Antique fortress wall. Actually, this detail, an "engaged pier of a rectangular section and floral decoration", originally belonged to the arch of Hadrian's reign, which was erected in this zone of Philippopolis in the 2nd century (Dimitrov 2013, 808-809).

In this area, plenty of architectural details have been collected and their original models came from well distinguished complexes in
Pergamon and Ephesos (the Library of Celsus, the so-called Temple of Hadrian, the Fountain of Trajan, Agora, etc.) (Strocka 1988, 291-307, Taf. 39-47) (Plates 2, 4).

In the capitals we see perfect Pergamene and Ephesian acanthus models (Plate 3 a-d), but probably the most important and well visible Anatolian elements are the three types of helices. There are helices connected with an abacus flower; palmetto helices; and a normal type, but made in the so-called snail-formed shape (See: Rohmann 1998, 71-88, 90-93, 102-104, 132-136, Taf. 42-47, 50-51, 55-56; Ward-Perkins 1980, 52-55, pl. XIIIa, # 1; Pl. XVId, # 12; Idil 1981, 164, Abb. 5; 167, Abb. 6; Strocka 1988, Taf. 43, Abb. 6).

The most distinct detail from the Hadrianic era at the Eastern Gate ensemble is the anta-pier decorated with the so-called “Ranken-Motive”. The prototype of this decorative model has been thoroughly studied in complexes of the same period in the whole western region of Asia Minor, but most often is recognizable as an element in the architecture of Ephesos – from the Library of Celsus, the so-called Temple of Hadrian, as well as in many other buildings in Aphrodisias, Smyrna, Miletos, Bithynion-Claudiopolis and Pergamon (Bammer 1980, 70-71, 90, Abb. 2-4, 25; Strocka 1988, 295-296, 299-300, Taf. 40, 44; Ward-Perkins 1980, 58-59, pl. XXIVb, # 31; XVa-b, # 32-33; XXVla, # 34; Erim 1967b, 233-243, fig. 3-4; Mendel 1914, 176-184, # 493; Naumann / Kantar 1950, Taf. 24d, 25c; Melink 1973, fig. 39; Ward-Perkins 1980, 59, pl. XXVIlc-d, #. 38-39; Gerkan / Krischen 1928, Abb. 59-60, 65-67; Koller 2002, 128-135, Taf. 82).
At the Eastern Gate there are further elements of Anatolian carving – such is the use of drills (best known from Aphrodisias, Pergamon and Ephesos) in the Ionic and Lesbian cyma, the cassette-roof slabs and the abacus flowers of the Corinthian capitals (Plate 3 d). Clear Asia Minor origin can be observed also in the garland decoration with bulls’ heads, and in the soffitte ornamentation of the frieze-architrave blocks.

The theatre (Plate 5 c-g).

This large and, regretfully, yet unpublished architectural complex in Philippopolis abounds in similarities to Anatolian architecture. If one delves deep in the ornamentation of the cushions of the Ionic capitals from the scaena, they will recognize floral motifs originating from Pergamon, Ephesos, Nicomedia, and especially from Laodicea ad Lycum and Hierapolis (See: Bingöl 1980, with all models of Anatolian Ionic capitals and their decoration). This, however, deserves to be the subject of a separate study. Identical is the situation with the frieze-architraves that are decorated with garlands and bulls’ heads, very similar to the 1st century models from Ephesos and Miletos.

I would like to discuss here the second floor of the scaena, where the Composite order can be observed (Plate 5 g). The capitals of this order are produced in a rather specific manner, not following the standards. Indeed, these represent a combination of the upper third, which is an echinus from an Ionic capital generally following the dec-

Plate 3. Architectural details and models from the so-called Eastern Gate in Philippopolis (all photos: Z. Dimitrov): a corinthian capital from the Eastern Gate – with all elements in the scheme and palmetto helices; b Corinthian capital from the Eastern Gate – with all elements in the scheme and normal helices; c Corinthian capital from the Eastern Gate – with all elements in the scheme and helices connected with an abacus plate; d detail of the abacus flower from the Corinthian capital in the complex of the Eastern Gate (detail of Pl. 3 b) – drill carving; e anta-pier from the construction of Hadrian’s arch, reused in the Eastern Gate during Late Antiquity – floral decoration of Anatolian origin; f detail of the acanthus scrolls, flowers, Lesbian cyma and astragalus

3 The latest studies of “Hanghaus 2” in Ephesos demonstrate the finest details of this carving technique, and offer a comparison with other models from Asia Minor: Koller 2002, 125-135, Taf. 72-82.
orative scheme of the Composite detail, with a lower non-standard part. The **calathus** of the capitals, i.e. the lower two-thirds of the details, is covered with diverse floral motifs, and not with **acanthus** foliage as is typical for the main examples in Rome and Italy. The entire lower part of the Composite capitals from the theatre is covered with tendrils, leaves, small flowers and rosettes – a model whose origins cannot be mistaken. This pattern is again a replica from Ephesos, and one of those that provide an accurate date of the architectural monuments at that, as it was no longer produced in Ephesian schools after the mid-2nd century. The details come from the Fountain of Domitian, the Library of Celsus, and the so-called Temple of Hadrian. These elements date to the end of the 1st century and mainly in the 120s and 130s (Bammer 1980, 69-71, 73-75, Abb. 1-4, 7-8; Strocka 1988, 294-297, Taf. 39-42). One could see the same models also in Smyrna and its region (Naumann / Kantar 1950, Taf. 24a; Idil 1981, 151-152, 174, Abb. 1-2, 7a). It is interesting that these very rich floral scrolls, leaves and flowers appear also everywhere in the Ionic and Corinthian cornices in the theatre (Plate 5 c-d).

Plate 4. Ephesos. Origins of the architectural models used in Philippopolis: a Corinthian capital from the anastylosis of the Roman Agora – Anatolian models of **acanthus** foliage and so-called snail-shaped helices (photo: M. Raycheva); b Composite capital from the Fountain of Trajan – Anatolian models of **acanthus** foliage (photo: M. Raycheva); c Corinthian capital from the so-called Temple of Hadrian – Anatolian models of **acanthus** foliage, normal helices and abacus flowers (photo: M. Raycheva); d composite capital exhibited in the Agora – Anatolian models of **acanthus** foliage (photo: M. Raycheva); e-f details of the piers of the exedrae in the Library of Celsus – **acanthus** scroll decorations (photos: M. Kamisheva)
In the order decoration of the theatre the typical Anatolian drill workings are also well visible – mainly in the astragalus elements of the Ionic and Lesbian cyma (Plate 5 e-f).

**The stadium (Plate 5 a-b).**

This well-known architectural complex, luckily published by D. Tsontchev, is perhaps of a later date than the above mentioned agora, the arch at the Eastern Gate, and the theatre – it is dated to the late 2nd century and the early Severan period. However, all architectural decorative features of the details from the stadium lead again to Asia Minor – the pattern of the garland ornamentation in the frieze-architraves with bulls’ heads, the columns at the entrance and, certainly, the Corinthian capitals and cornices. Here one can see good reproductions of the Anatolian
originals created by local stone carvers and decorators on the basis of the well-developed architectural environment of Philippopolis.

The Late antique wall
A new find from about five years ago could also contribute significantly to the advance of the studies of architectural decoration in Philippopolis and its similarities to Anatolian prototypes. A great number of architectural details were found in the fortress wall from Late Antiquity, which was localized in front of the Trimontium zone by my colleague Zheni Tankova. They were incorporated as spolia in the base and plinth rows of the fortification. At first sight one can spot details from completely unknown complexes – most probably temple ensembles and types of buildings from the Trimontium. Most of the details belong chronologically to the first half of the 2nd c. – the time of Trajan and Hadrian.

Conclusion
In conclusion, I should point out that the problem of Anatolian elements in the order architecture of Philippopolis from the period of the Empire is of immense importance and rather insufficiently studied. As commented so far, this is an issue that can hardly be resolved at one go. In fact, the first data about the Anatolian elements in the architectural

Plate 6. Aphrodisian marble carvings on a group of architectural details from Roman Thrace and Aphrodisias:
a acroterium from Ulpia Oescus in the exhibition of the National Archaeological Museum – Sofia (photo: Z. Dimitrov);
b details of the "Aphrodisian style" of carvings in sculpture and acanthus foliage (photo: Z. Dimitrov);
c-d two pilaster capitals from Aphrodisias – origins of the works in Villa Armira, Oescus and Philippopolis in Roman Thrace (publ.: Erim 1967a, 26, fig. 16; photos: M. Raycheva);
e newly found anta capital from the Roman villa near Kasnakovo village, Haskovo region (excavations and photo: V. Kazarova)
decoration of the Thracian city were only touched upon by D. Tsontchev in 1956, followed by a long period without publications or specific analyses, and the process of acquiring further information is still ongoing.

It is evident that the major urban structures of Philippopolis in the early 2nd c. were decorated through the application of Anatolian models in the order architecture. One can observe not only the Ionic order, but also the Corinthian and Composite orders as well. The details are significant in terms of their value, location and content for the Thracian city and its architectural environment. The prototypes come mainly from Pergamon (the Asklepieion and the Traianeum), Ephesos (the Library of Celsus and the so-called Temple of Hadrian), but also from other Anatolian cities, e.g. Aphrodisias, Miletos, Smyrna, Hierapolis, Bithynion-Claudiopolis, Laodicea ad Lycum and Nicomedia.

The drill works are some of the finest found in the contemporary Bulgarian lands (Plate 6). In this aspect, the Anatolian origin is absolutely certain, especially with regard to the Aphrodisian monuments (Erim 1967a, 18-28, fig. 16; here see: Plate 6 c-d). There is sufficient evidence of travelling groups active in Thrace, originating from this important and best developed in terms of sculpture town of Asia Minor. The examples come not only from Villa Armira and Philippopolis; some of the finest monuments are in fact an acroterium from Oescus (Mercklin 1962, 39, Abb. 185; Дмитров 2007, 218-234; Plate 6 a-b) and another new detail from Kasnakovo (Кацарова 2015а, 559; Кацарова 2015b, 30) (Plate 6 e).
The chronology of this process of direct import of architectural models and, most probably, even their partial reproduction in Thrace by Anatolian stone-carvers, is also easy to perceive. This is definitely a tendency encountered in other zones of Thrace – the western coastline of Pontus, Villa Armira, Ulpia Oescus, Ulpia Ratiaria, Abritus, Marcianopolis and Nicopolis ad Istrum, which developed in the late years of Trajan’s reign and especially during the entire reign of Emperor Hadrian. An identical situation can be seen in other regions of the Roman Empire, for instance in the Orient. One very important, but little known monument, is the private grave complex from Gerasa – the so-called Tomb of Germanus (Schumacher 1902, 109-177; Dimitrov 2016, 369-383; Plate 7 a-d). In this Roman mausoleum one can very well trace all abovementioned definite Anatolian features of the order architecture, e.g. acanthus foliage, curls of helices, three-dimensional techniques, relief ribs in the grooves of the leaves and helices.

And finally, according to the architectural monuments, but also to the historical evidence and ways of distribution of marble (Plate 7 e), one can follow the export of architectural models and technique of the stone-carving schools of Asia Minor (Plate 7 f).

The ambition of this paper is to bring the attention of international scholars to the architectural decoration of Philippopolis. A major future task would be to publish completely all architectural details from the city, as well as the entire Bulgarian part of Roman Thrace, and then many of these clearly discernible Anatolian elements and influences would be identified and studied properly (see Plate 7 e-f). In this respect, I would like to believe that our efforts will find support among experts in Greece and Turkey. Thus, overcoming contemporary boundaries, we could produce highly professional studies of the architectural environment of Thrace (today falling within the boundaries of the three countries) and get in contact through the truly impressive masterpieces of stone art from Anatolia.

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