

Large Scale Rhodian Sculpture of Hellenistic and Roman Times

Η ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΡΟΔΙΑΚΗ ΠΛΑΣΤΙΚΗ ΤΩΝ
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΤΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΡΩΜΑΪΚΩΝ ΧΡΟΝΩΝ

Kalliope Bairami

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Introduction

The Rhodian production of lifesize and larger than life-size marble statues in the Hellenistic and Roman period, scarcely known so far, has motivated the present study. The catalogue includes sixty life size or larger than life size sculptures, presented in detail, most of them either excavation finds or presented by citizens to the Archaeological Service after 1950, while some of the works were probably found during the period of Italian Occupation of the Dodecanese, but had never been published. For a cohesive overview of the large scale Rhodian sculpture, forty-five (45) works of sculpture, mainly Italian finds, already published in *Clara Rhodos* series, are included in the catalogue alongside the unpublished works.

The fragmentary picture of the large scale Rhodian sculpture is due to the conditions of the archaeological research on the island. In the first half of the 20th cent. few marble sculptures from Rhodes were known. Most were found during the travels of C.T. Newton and A. Biliotti-A. Salzmänn in the Dodecanese and Asia Minor and ended up mostly in the British museum, while their exact find spot is still controversial.

The excavations of the Danish School in Lindos and of the Italian Archaeological School during the years 1900-1940, unearthed many statues and statuettes as well as a numerous group of inscribed statue bases with artistic signatures from Lindos, Kamiros and the city of Rhodes, providing evidence for the formation of the characteristics of a Rhodian school of sculpture and of a particular Rhodian group of artists. The Italian Archaeological School has published many of the sculptures in the reviews *Lindos*, *Clara Rhodos* and *Annuario*. After the second World War the Greek Archaeological Service separated the finds of Rhodes from those of Cos, which were repatriated, and conducted rescue excavations which enriched the sculpture collection of the Museum of Rhodes with new finds. In 1970 G. Merker in her Ph.D. study, published many of the sculpture of the Archaeological museum of Rhodes, also mentioning at the same time the new excavation finds, presented occasionally in the Proceedings of the Archaeological Society (PAE) and regularly in the *Archaeological Deltion*. The evaluation of the Rhodian sculpture has so far depended on her conclusions, mainly by the english-speaking research. A few years later the unpublished Italian finds, mostly statuettes, were published by G. Gualandi in *Annuario di Scuola di Atene* in 1976. His conclusions reflected the view of the Italian archaeologists for the Rhodian sculpture, hammered during their occupation of the island and the aspect they had for its artistic development, in connection to its architectural and urbanistic organisation.

After the incorporation of the Dodecanese in the Greek State (1948), the number of sculptures found increased. V. Machaira on behalf of the Academy of Athens undertook the task of compiling the Rhodian sculptures found up to 1974 in a catalogue. After 1974 the increasing building activity on the island, resulted in the intensification of rescue excavations and the consequent discovery of many life-size sculptures from the city and the necropolis, an area almost untouched so far by the Italian and Greek archaeologists. The publication of the recent finds alongside the previously known ones, the formulation of up to date aggregating conclusions, taking into consideration the excavation data, the significance and the use of statues, the material used and the carving methods, the artistic signatures and the examination -through the recent evidence- of the role of Rhodes and its interaction with the surrounding artistic centres, are the main axes of the study, attempting to contribute to the re-evaluation of Rhodian sculpture, keeping in mind the scepticism of modern research.

The history of research of the Rhodian sculpture and the historical frame which enabled the artistic production are presented in the first two chapters of the study. The recent finds are examined in the following chapters, according to their typology and subject, their excavation data, their chronological development through the stylistic features and the carving methods. The artistic signatures on marble sculptures and the relation of Rhodes to other artistic centres of East Mediterranean are also presented. In chapter 9 the final conclusions are drawn through a re-evaluation of the arguments of Merker and the existence of a Rhodian school of sculpture is examined. Chapter 10 is the catalogue of the works, each one with a detailed description comprising the state of preservation, the findspot, dimensions, technical details (i.e. dowels etc) and the kind of stone or marble used.

The artistic floruit of Rhodes, after the *synoecism* of the three city-states and the foundation of the new city at the northern tip of the island (408/7 B.C.), was due to the presence of famous artists of the 4th cent., such as Lysippos and his pupil Chares of Lindos, who created Colossus, after the failed siege of Demetrius. This floruit is indebted to the financial development of Rhodes in the Hellenistic period due to its emergence as a major commercial centre in the grain (wheat) trade from Alexandria, because of its proximity to the newly founded kingdoms of Alexander's Diadochoi. Cassius' plundering in 42 B.C. and the annexation of Alexandria in the Roman Empire, resulting to the transport of wheat directly to the new capital Rome, are important termini. The sculptural production continues, although significantly diminished, till the 3rd cent. A.D. The city gradually declines, partly as a result of the earthquakes of 142/155, 344/5 and 515 A.D.

The study focuses on the large scale sculpture, because the former studies examined altogether statues and statuettes without any typological or stylistic categorization, which would enable the common features to emerge. The distinction of works according to their size is based on their different use and function, given that life size statues are either funerary, votive or dedicatory portraits of mortals or depict gods, while statuettes are either decorative sculpture or used for the domestic worship or dedicated in sanctuaries. The origin of the two kinds of sculpture is also distinct: large scale sculpture is almost always found in the Rhodian sanctuaries or the necropolis, where they stood in funerary monuments (*naiskos*). Their typology and their subjects are further differentiated, although certain types are found in both large and small scale sculpture, mainly for deities. Common stylistic features in Rhodian statues and statuettes denote a common workshop origin or at least an interaction of the contemporary workshops. The statues presented do not belong in a single context, but their origin varies (city, necropolis, outskirts), neither their excavation data was sufficient enough for their dating, with the exception of a small group of sculptures from the necropolis. Therefore, their chronological evaluation depends on their stylistic features and the comparative material from other areas.

The Rhodian sculptures of the catalogue have been classified in three categories: Deities, mortals, portraits. The fragmentary state of preservation of most – parts of statues and heads that did not belong together, with a single exception, the statue cat. no 051 (Γ1283, pls. 177-183)- had as a result certain sculptures –heads mostly- to be classified as dubious identifications. Heads and statues of Aphrodite, Asclepios, Helios, Attis, Athena, Apollonian or Dionysian figures and a protome of chthonian deity belong to the category of divine depictions. Male himation-clad figures and female draped statues, male and female idealistic heads and a few child figures belong to the depictions of mortals. The Rhodian himation-clad figures represent all the varieties of the Hellenistic production of the type: *Normaltypus*, *Cos* type, *Demosthenes* type, Hipmantle with shoulderbunch. The female figures are depicted in the statuary types of the Muses, *Pudicitia*, Small Herculaneum woman, Polla Valeria and the «Artemisia/Delphi» classical type with the himantion roll under the breast. The female heads are either veiled or not and the male idealistic heads are in the athletic youth type, with short curly hair, swollen («cauliflower») ears and bulging brows. The portrait heads depict either Hellenistic rulers or mature aged males of a pronounced realism, a trend popular in the art of the Late Hellenistic period.

The decline of the Rhodian sculptural production in the Roman period is significant and can be traced from the still productive 1st cent. A.D. to a few portraits of the 2nd and 3rd cent. A.D. With the exception of a funerary himation-clad figure and a female small statue, only portraits of emperors and citizens are produced.

The study of the recent finds and their examination along with the older ones, determined the range of types and subjects of the sculptural production in the Hellenistic period, and distinguished groups of sculptures with common traits, allowing the tracing of typological and chronological evolution during a period of three centuries at least.

Rhodian School

The question of the existence of a distinct “Rhodian school” has been a major issue in the research of the Hellenistic art, depended on the ancient writers, the Rhodian artistic signatures and the -so far- known Rhodian works. Pliny, a main source for Rhodian marble production, in *Historia Naturalis* (Book 36) describes in detail the groups of Laocoon, the Punishment of Dirke and the Philiskos Muses. Laocoon and Farnese Bull, found in Rom in the 16th and 19th cent. respectively, Nike in the sanctuary of Kabeiroi in Samothrace, and statuettes of Muses connected with Philiskos, found in various places, have been for decades the pivotal works for the study of Rhodian sculpture. The scholars were not unanimous as to the characteristics of the Rhodian school, when the first sculptures were found in Rhodes. The bronze colossoi of the ancient sources and the attribution of the group of Laocoon and Nike of Samothrace to Rhodian artists contributed to the description of Rhodes as the “cradle” of Hellenistic baroque, a trend subsequently transmitted to Pergamon (Bieber, Alscher, Dickins). At the same time the number of decorative statuettes contributed to its characterization as centre of the parallel trend of “rococo”. The Italian archaeologists, judging from the sculptures found on the island, during the Italian Occupation, integrated the Rhodian sculptural production in the insular-Asia minor artistic *milieu*, identifying the attic classicizing influence, in the common statuary types. They invented the term “*virtuosismo veristico*”, to define a classicistic style, with precision in the rendering of figures and austerity in expressive means, without being academic.

The research of the last three decades has either doubted or rejected the Rhodian origin of sculptures such as Nike of Samothrace and Laocoon. Pergamon has emerged as the main artistic centre in the Southeast Aegean. The Sperlonga sculptural groups, signed by the Rhodians Athanodoros, Agesander and Polydoros, were interpreted as copies of bronze originals of Rhodian or Pergamene creation. The attribution to Rhodes of sculptures of different styles led to the rejection of its characterisation as a school. Rhodes is regarded as an artistic centre without any distinct style (Isager, Pollitt). This radical change of view is clearly reflected in the four volumes of the history of Hellenistic and Roman art edited by P.C. Bol, where there is no mention whatsoever to Rhodes, while in the older art history books written by Alscher and Bieber in the 1950s and 1960s a whole chapter was dedicated to Rhodes, just like Athens, Alexandria and Pergamon. Celani’s article in *Annuario* volume of 2005, criticises this view, as well as the overlooking of the fact that the artists travelled within wide artistic regions, where producing similar works.

The Works

The floruit of the sculptural production in the Hellenistic period followed a former artistic activity. A local tradition of sculpture in the archaic and classical period in Rhodes has been claimed by the modern research and is focused in the 6th cent. mainly in works carved in local stone, with Ionic features. In the 5th cent. certain funerary stelae and statuettes are attributed to itinerant Ionian artists, working in

**ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΑΠΟΔΙΣΤΡΙΑΚΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ
ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΚΗ ΣΧΟΛΗ
ΤΜΗΜΑ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ**

ΚΑΛΛΙΟΠΗ ΜΠΑΪΡΑΜΗ

**Η ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΡΟΔΙΑΚΗ ΠΛΑΣΤΙΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΤΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ
ΡΩΜΑΪΚΩΝ ΧΡΟΝΩΝ**

Διδακτορική Διατριβή

Η διατριβή εγκρίθηκε από το Τμήμα Ιστορίας-Αρχαιολογίας, της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Εθνικού Καποδιστριακού Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών στις 21 Φεβρουαρίου 2012. Η τριμελής επιτροπή αποτελείτο από τις κες Γ. Κοκκορού-Αλευρά (επόπτρια), Ο. Παλαγγιά και Π. Καραναστάση. Στην επταμελή επιτροπή συμμετείχαν οι κες Μπ. Σμιτ-Δούνα, Ι. Λεβέντη και οι κ.κ. Δ. Πλάντζος και Σ. Κατάκης.

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