

# Analysis and Meaning of the Use of Red Porphyry (Mons Porphyrites) in Roman and late Roman Architecture: The Temple of the Sun in Rome and the Lateran Baptistery

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Izvorni znanstveni rad / Original Scientific Paper

Primljeno / Received: 30.8.2024.

Prihvaćeno / Accepted: 15.10.2024.



## Summary

Red porphyry, mined from the quarries of Mons Porphyrites (Gebel Dokhan, Egypt), has been a highly valued rock since ancient times for its durability, beauty, and strong symbolic association with imperial power and divinity, especially due to its purple colour. During the late Roman and early Christian periods, its meaning expanded, adding new connotations related to the blood of Christ, the sign of the New Covenant, and to the martyrs.

This study examines the use of porphyry in Roman architecture, from the imperial to the late Roman period, identifying some patterns in its use. Likewise, a possible origin is proposed for two of the largest column shafts made with this stone in Rome, and reused in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD in the vestibule of the Lateran baptistery. Based on archaeological data and references in ancient sources, its origin is suggested from the Temple of the Sun, erected in Rome by Emperor Aurelian.

**Keywords:** *porphyry, shaft, roman architecture, reuse, Temple of the Sun, Lateran baptistery*

## Introduction

Red porphyry, extracted from the quarries of Mons Porphyrites (Gebel Dokhan, Egypt), has been a highly valued rock since ancient times for its durability, beauty, and symbolic association with imperial power and divinity, thanks mainly to its purple color. These qualities favoured its use to be mainly reserved for buildings promoted by the imperial house,<sup>1</sup> as archaeology shows and illustrates very well; for example, the astonishment that Antoninus Pius felt when he found columns made with this rock in the house of his friend and consul of 152 AD *Homullus* (HA, *Ant. Pius*, 11, 8).<sup>2</sup>

The important symbolic connotations associated with the porphyry in imperial times mean that any study that intends to analyse the use of this stone must consider its meaning. Also, in the late Roman and early Christian period, when new values were added to this material, and when the reuse of architectural material spread on a large scale, a practice not always exempt from certain ideological implications. It is known that, despite the rather negative perception that the practice of reuse had in the classical Roman era,<sup>3</sup> the use of *spolia* was a perfectly accepted

resource in the late Roman period, so much so that from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD legislation will refer to it with the term of *rediviva saxa* (giving new life to the reused architectural elements, allowing the old to be perpetuated in the present).<sup>4</sup> Thus, the reuse of red porphyry architectural elements in early Christian architecture had the ability to update its original ideological meaning in a new context.

It is true that there have been multiple explanations for the exponential growth in the use of *spolia* since this period, and not always have symbolic and ideological reasons been the most accepted, with more practical and economic interpretations sometimes prevailing; among these are the lack of new construction material, the greater availability of *spolia* of buildings that have fallen into disuse, the technical inability to reproduce certain motifs or decorative elements, and the need to reduce construction costs. But it is also true that often several factors would converge at the same time, both practical and symbolic-ideological, without often being able to clearly discern which of them was the most decisive.<sup>5</sup> To cite one case, while previous studies have pointed out, as an example of a symbolic use of *spolia*, the recovery of columns and marbles from Rome and Ravenna by Charlemagne to decorate his palace in Aachen,<sup>6</sup> Eginard, author of the *Vita Karoli Magni*, written between 828 and 836 AD, states that the columns were actually brought from Rome because they could not be found anywhere else (*Vita Kar.* 26).<sup>7</sup> There is no doubt

- 1 There is also evidence of the use of this stone by private individuals, in a more limited way: a centurion of the *V Cohors Vigilum* of Rome could procure in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD porphyry columns to decorate an "aedicula," as recorded in an inscription from Monte Celio in Rome (CIL VI, 222) (Maria Luisa LUCCHI: *Il porfido nell'antichità*, *Archeologia Classica* XVI (1964), 245); a papyrus from the time of Gallienus (253–268 AD) (*C.P. Herm.* 86) reports that the *boulè* of Hermoupolis Magna commissioned one of its members to buy slabs of porphyry and other stones, with the guarantee of returning the anticipated sum (Patrizio PENSABENE: *Le vie del marmo. I blocchi di cava di Roma e di Ostia: Il fenomeno del Marmo nella Roma Antica (Itinerari Ostiensi VII)*, Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Soprintendenza archeologica di Ostia, 1994, 301; Patrizio Pensabene: *Il fenomeno del marmo nella Roma tardo-repubblicana e imperiale*, in: Patrizio Pensabene (ed.): *Marmi Antichi II. Cave e tecnica di lavorazione, provenienze e distribuzione (Studi Miscellanei 31)*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1998, 347; Patrizio PENSABENE: *I marmi nella Roma antica*, Roma: Carocci, 2013, 247); and, finally, the inclusion of this rock in Diocletian's Edict suggests that there was a private market (Patrizio PENSABENE: *I marmi nella Roma antica*, 251; Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, Turin: U. Allemandi & C., 2018a, 27).
- 2 L. Faedo interprets this surprise as the result not so much of the presence of this rock in a private environment as of the high cost it had, Lucia FAEDO: *Il gigantismo negli spazi pubblici: i porfidi e i colossi*, in: Serena Ensoli, Eugenio La Rocca (eds.): *Aurea Roma. Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2000, 63.
- 3 We can remember, for example, the reproach that Cicero made to *Aemilius Paulus* for wanting to rebuild the basilica Emilia using the same old columns of the building (Cic., *Att.* 4.17: "isdem antiquis columnis"), Elisha Ann DUMSER: *Visual Literacy and Reuse in the Architecture of Late Imperial Rome*, in: Diana Y. Ng, Molly Swetnam-Burland (eds.): *Reuse and Renovation in Roman Material Culture: Functions, Aesthetics,*

*Interpretations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 140.

- 4 Maria Fabricius HANSEN: *The Eloquence of Appropriation: Prolegomena to an Understanding of Spolia in Early Christian Rome*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2003, 14.
- 5 In similar terms, B. Ward-Perkins expresses himself in an article that analyses the reuse of architectural material between ideology and pragmatism when he states: "The truth, of course, is that the ideological and the pragmatic explanations are not necessarily in conflict: the patrons of the Arch [in reference to the Arch of Constantine] could have decided to cut corners (particularly since corner-cutting was perhaps already acceptable for triumphal monuments in the city), and its designers could have been aware that better reliefs were obtainable from older monuments than from contemporary craftsmen; but, at the same time, in re-using early imperial reliefs, they may have intended some deliberate ideological echoes of the past. Whether we see the decision as primarily pragmatic (with the ideological perhaps following as an excuse for a cheap solution), or whether we see the ideological as the motivating force, will be very much a matter of scholarly fashions, and personal taste and interpretation. Perhaps the answer is that these two seemingly contradictory motives were in fact inextricably linked, and even fostered each other," John Bryan WARD-PERKINS: *Re-using the Architectural Legacy of the Past, entre idéologie et pragmatisme*, in: G. P. Brogiolo, Bryan Ward-Perkins (eds.): *The Idea and Ideal of the Town Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Leide-Boston-Köln: Brill, 1999, 232–233.
- 6 Maria Fabricius HANSEN: *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, 157.
- 7 "Ad cuius structuram cum columnas et marmora aliunde habere non posset. Roma atque Ravenna devehenda curavit" (ed.: Alejandra de Riquer:

about the veracity of Eginardo's statement, since he was a direct witness to the events narrated,<sup>8</sup> thanks to the fact that he spent much of his life in the court of Charlemagne, where he developed mainly technical, artistic and cultural activities in addition to occupying the position of superintendent of the imperial buildings thanks to his knowledge in the field of architecture.<sup>9</sup> This example shows how a symbolic meaning would be added to an originally practical need, thanks to the prestigious origin of the materials recovered to decorate the Aachen palace.

Even so, we believe that the reuse of architectural elements in red porphyry should be read from a mainly ideological perspective (without eliminating the practical component), because of both the important symbolic charge that this stone had, in imperial and early Christian times, and its use mainly in imperial promotion architecture. In this way, its reuse in late Roman times implied not only "reviving" the symbolic charge, updating it to the new historical context, but also transferring the prestige that gave it its previous origin.

### The Use of Porphyry in Roman Times

The characteristic purple colour of the porphyry made this rock a symbol of the emperor and his political, civil, and religious power.<sup>10</sup> Some authors have suggested that this association could derive from the presence of columns

of this material in the royal palace of the Ptolemies in Alexandria, mentioned by the poet Lucan (*De bello civili*, X, v, III).<sup>11</sup> This would also partly explain the interest in controlling the porphyry quarries, discovered by Rome before 18 AD, as indicated by an inscription dedicated by *Caius Cominius Leugas*, who calls himself their discoverer.<sup>12</sup>

One of the earliest uses of porphyry in Rome is documented on the pavement of Caligula's ship in Lake Nemi, while the first sculptures made with this stone arrived in the *Urbs* in the time of Claudius, brought by the procurator of Egypt *Vitrasio Pollio*, although it seems that they were not much appreciated by the emperor (Plin., *NH*, XXXVI, 57: "non admodum probata novitatem; nemo postea Certain imitatus est"). With Nero, porphyry was used in the linings of the *Domus Transitoria* and in his village of Subiaco, as well as in some sarcophagi and even in the urn intended for his own ashes (Suet., *Nero*, c. 50). In this period, the use of this stone in private buildings is also documented for the first time, such as in the House of Ephebe in Pompeii.<sup>13</sup> Years later, Domitian placed several porphyry columns in

Eginardo. *Vida de Carlomagno*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2019).

8 He himself will say in the introduction of the *Vita* that he has been an eye-witness to the events narrated in it (*Vita Kar. Preface*).

9 Alejandra de RÍQUER: *Eginardo. Vida de Carlomagno*, 17.

10 Already Lactantius (*Div. Inst.*, IV, 7, 6) states that for the Romans, purple clothing ("indumentum purpurae insigne") represents royal dignity, and the emperor is described as "purpuratus" by a fourth-century AD panegyrist (*Pan. Lat.*, XI, 30, 3), Javier ARCE: *Insignia dominationis. Símbolos de poder y rango del emperador romano en la Antigüedad tardía*, Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2022, 39–40. On the colour purple and its symbolism in the ancient world, see: Meyer REINHOLD: *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity (Collection Latomus, 116)*, Brussels: Latomus, 1970, 48–61; Luigi BESSONE: *La porpora a Roma*, in: Oddone Longo (ed.): *La porpora. Realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico (Atti del Convegno di Studi, Venezia, 24–25 ottobre 1996)*, Venezia: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1998, 149–202; Mark BRADLEY: *Colour and Meaning in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 189–211. Ammianus Marcellinus speaks, for example, of the ceremony of the *adoratio purpurae*, perhaps introduced around 260–270 AD, which consisted of kneeling before the emperor to kiss the tip of his dress, as a sign of distinction and imperial favour towards the people received in audience, William T. AVERY: *The 'adoratio purpurae' and the Importance of the Imperial Purple in the Fourth Century of the Christian Era, Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome XVII (1940)*, 66–69; Meyer REINHOLD: *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity*, 60; Luigi BESSONE: *La porpora a Roma*, 188–194; Javier ARCE: *Insignia dominationis. Símbolos de poder y rango del emperador romano en la Antigüedad tardía*, 44–50.

11 Richard DELBRUECK: *Antike Porphywerke*, Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1932, 34–38; Maria Luisa LUCCI: *Il porfido nell'antichità*, 238–239; Patrizio PENSABENE: *I marmi nella Roma antica*, 246; Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 13–19; Elena GHISELLINI: *Sull'uso di pietre colorate nell'Egitto tolemaico fra tradizione e innovazione, Bolletino d'Arte* 37–38 (2018), 5. Regarding the use of this rock for late Roman imperial portraits as the result of an influence exerted by Hellenistic monarchs, see: Patrizio PENSABENE: *Il fenomeno del marmo nella Roma tardo-repubblicana e imperiale*, 346. Against, Lucia FAEDO: *Il gigantismo negli spazi pubblici: i porfidi e i colossi*, 62–63.

12 Wilfried VAN RENGEL: *A New Paneion at Mons Porphyrites, Chronique d'Égypte* 70 (1995), 240–241. It is possible that the quarries had already been exploited in the time of Augustus if, as it seems, a capital made with this material and preserved in the Vatican Museums could be dated at this time (Henner VON HESBERG: *Elemente der frühkaiserzeitlichen aedikulaarchitektur, Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes* 53 (1982), 44). There is also a portrait in porphyry, perhaps of *Cornelius Gallo*, first prefect of Egypt between 30–27 BC, Maria Luisa LUCCI: *Il porfido nell'antichità*, 240.

13 Patrizio PENSABENE: *Le vie del marmo*, 300; Patrizio PENSABENE: *Il fenomeno del marmo nella Roma tardo-repubblicana e imperiale*, 347. At this time, very realistic pictorial imitations of some imperial marbles are also made, in the paintings of Pompeii of the Fourth Style (c. 45–79 AD). Among the imitated marbles, the giallo antico, the pavonazzetto, the africano, the cipollino verde, and also, although to a lesser extent, the red porphyry stand out, as can be seen in the Casa degli Amorini Dorati, Simon J BARKER, Devi TAELMAN: *Painted Imitation Marble and the Marble Economy in the Roman Period: Examples from Pompeii*, in: Miguel Cisneros (ed.): *Imitaciones de piedras preciosas y ornamentales en época romana: color, simbolismo y lujo (Anejos AEspA XCIII)*, Madrid: CSIC, 2021, 245). Regarding the imitations of marbles in Pompeian paintings see: J. Clayton FANT: *Real and Painted (Imitation) Marble at Pompeii*, in: John J. Dobbins, Pedar W. Foss (eds.): *The World of Pompeii*, London; New York: Routledge, 2007, 336–346.

his imperial residence on the Palatine, in addition to some slabs on its pavements (Martial, *Epigr.*, 8,36).<sup>14</sup>

A significant increase in porphyry production took place during the second and third centuries AD, when it was probably used in the Forum of Trajan, where some late epigraphic and literary sources cite a *Porticus Porphyreticis*,<sup>15</sup> located perhaps next to the libraries,<sup>16</sup> and so named probably because it had porphyry columns<sup>17</sup> and because it was decorated with the five Dacian statues of 2.20–2.40 m high, made with this material, now preserved in Paris and Florence.<sup>18</sup> In the Piazza d'Oro of Villa Adriana, columns of 11–12 feet high were placed<sup>19</sup>; in the baths of Caracalla, there were eight shafts of 7 m high in the area of the *frigidarium*, two columns of 8.80 m high (with base and capital) located between the *frigidarium* and the *nata-tio*, where there was also a monumental basin of porphyry,<sup>20</sup> and some rotae in the pavement of the *frigidarium*, in addition to numerous tesserae of this material in the mosaics of some pavements.<sup>21</sup> Elagabalus paved the imperial residence of the Palatine with porphyry (HA, *Elagabalus*, 24.6),<sup>22</sup> and Aurelian used this rock in some columns of the Temple of the Sun, as we shall see later. The porphyry was also the protagonist of acts of imperial munificence, such as Hadrian's gift of 98 columns for the gymnasium of Smyrna, of which 6 were of porphyry, 72 of pavonazzetto

and 20 of giallo antico (*C.I.G.* II, 3148).<sup>23</sup>

During the reign of Diocletian, the quarries of Mons Porphyrites reached their greatest activity,<sup>24</sup> with the presence in them even of *damnati in metalla*, as narrated by the *Passio Sanctorum Quattuor Coronatorum*.<sup>25</sup> This rock will be frequently used in imperial portraits, sarcophagi intended for members of the imperial house,<sup>26</sup> and in the decoration of ceremonial spaces related to the emperor.<sup>27</sup> Expressions also now appear that redound to the emperor's relationship with divinity and the colour purple, such as "*natales purpurae*," referring to the anniversary of the emperor's investiture, or "*diuina purpura*."<sup>28</sup>

- 14 Maria Luisa LUCCI: Il porfido nell'antichità, 241–244; Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 22.
- 15 SHA, *Vita Probi* 2,1: "registis scribarum porticus porphyreticae, actis etiam senatus ac populi"; and an inscription on a slave's collar (CIL XV, 7191): "Tene me ne fugiam et revoca me in Foro Traiani in purpuretica ad Pascasium dominum meum."
- 16 Emanuele PAPI: Forum Traiani: Porticus Porphyretica, in: Eva Margareta Steinby (ed.): *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae. Volume Secondo*, Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 1995, 356.
- 17 Samuel Ball PLATNER, Thomas ASHBY: *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1965, 239.
- 18 On the provenance of the statues of this portico, see: Lucilla DE LACHENAL: *Fortuna dei prigionieri Daci a Roma (Quaderni di Xenia, 8)*, Roma: De Luca, 1987.
- 19 Patrizio PENSABENE: Le vie del marmo, 300; Patrizio PENSABENE: Il fenomeno del marmo nella Roma tardo-repubblicana e imperiale, 347.
- 20 Janet DeLAINE: *The Baths of Caracalla: A Study in the Design, Construction, and Economics of Large-scale Building Projects in Imperial Rome*, Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, Suppl. 25, 1997, 262–263.
- 21 Leonardo LOMBARDI, Angelo CORAZZA: *Le Terme di Caracalla*, Roma: Palombi editori, 1995, 126.
- 22 "stravit et saxa Laced[a]emoniis ac porphyreticis plateas in Palatio, quas Antonianas vocavit, quae saxa usque ad nostram memoriam manserunt, sed nuper eru[di]ta [et] exsecta sunt." This emperor also projected a porphyry column that was to be crowned by a statue of himself as Helios, a column that could not be made because of the difficulties in obtaining the necessary material (Maria Luisa LUCCI: Il porfido nell'antichità, 245–252).

- 23 J. Clayton FANT: Ideology, Gift, and Trade: A Distribution Model for the Roman Imperial Marbles, in: William Vernon Harris (ed.): *The Inscribed Economy: Production and Distribution in the Roman Empire in the Light of Instrumentum Domesticum*, Ann Arbor: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 155; Paolo BARRESI: *Province dell'Asia Minore. Costo dei marmi, architettura pubblica e committenza*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2003, 155–156; Paolo BARRESI: I porti di Efeso e Smirne come terminali della diffusione del marmo colorato asiatico in età romana imperiale, in: Simone Keay (ed.): *Rome, Portus and the Mediterranean*, Roma-London: British School at Rome, 2012, 359.
- 24 Lucia FAEDO: Il gigantismo negli spazi pubblici: i porfidi e i colossi, 63.
- 25 Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 27; David P. S. PEACOCK: The *Passio Sanctorum Quattuor Coronatorum*: A Petrological Approach, *Antiquity* 69, issue 263 (1995), 362–368; Yuri. A. MARANO: *Le cave di marmo nella tarda antichità: aspetti organizzativi e produttivi*, in: Jacopo Bonetto, Stefano Camporeale, Antonio Pizzo (eds.): *Arqueología de la Construcción IV. Las canteras en el mundo antiguo: sistemas de explotación y procesos productivos*, (Padova 2012), Mérida: CSIC, 2014, 418. Regarding the identification of the quarries mentioned in the *Passio* with those of Egypt, excluding those of Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica), see: Patrizio PENSABENE: *I marmi nella Roma antica*, 250; Maya MASKARINEC: Hagiography as History and the Enigma of the Quattro Coronati, *RACr* 93 (2017), 345–409; Dario DEL BUFALO: *Damnati ad Metalla*, in: Dario Del Bufalo (ed.): *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry, Power and Religion*, Turin: U. Allemandi & C., 2018b, 79–80.
- 26 Richard DELBRUECK: *Antike Porphyrwerke*, 11, 23–26.
- 27 We can mention the large porphyry rotae present in the places related to the imperial ceremonies, such as in the basilica of St. Peter in Rome, located one on the outside of the portal and surrounded by four smaller rotae; and another behind the portal, where the emperor and the Pope were located for the so-called "scrutinium" in the coronation ceremony. Also of porphyry were the pavement in front of St. Peter's tomb, where the emperor stood during the anointing ceremony, and the stairs leading to the choir, where the coronation ceremony concluded, just below a ciborium supported by a porphyry column and on a rotae of the same material (Maria Luisa LUCCI: Il porfido nell'antichità, 266–267). A similar situation is documented in the palace of Constantinople, where there were several porphyry rotae in the spaces related to the imperial ceremonies, such as in the *Consistorium* or in the *Magnaura*. Also in the basilica of Hagia Sophia there was a porphyry rotae located to the right of the altar, on which a throne was placed during the imperial coronation ceremonies (Maria Luisa LUCCI: Il porfido nell'antichità, 265–267).
- 28 Mark BRADLEY: *Colour and Meaning in Ancient Rome*, 207.

Diocletian used porphyry on the pavement in *opus sectile* of the Curia,<sup>29</sup> and also in his palace of Split,<sup>30</sup> built between 293 and 305 AD.<sup>31</sup> For example, the interior of the mausoleum in this palace had two orders of overlapping



**Figure 1.** Split, Mausoleum of Diocletian. Porphyry shafts located in the upper inner order of columns (photo: J. Á. Domingo).

columns, the upper one formed by four porphyry shafts (Figure 1) alternated with four others of *granito del Foro*, all of them 3.11–3.15 m high and 0.45 m in diameter, and the lower one formed by eight columns of Aswan red granite and *granito del Foro*;<sup>32</sup> some of them, however, were identified by J. B. Ward-Perkins as red porphyry.<sup>33</sup> It is possible that the entrance to the mausoleum was also preceded by a portico formed by four porphyry columns that would support a tympanum.<sup>34</sup> In addition to these examples, other

fragments of porphyry columns originating from the palace have been found, although they are no longer preserved *in situ*: two fragments found beneath the Vestibule; one fragment found at north of the Mausoleum; two fragments found in the southern part of the palace (the area of the imperial apartment east of the *triclinium* and part of the area of the Eastern bath); and one fragment of the upper part of a shaft with astragal found between the Central Hall and part of the triclinium.<sup>35</sup> Some of these fragments come from the southern area of the palace, where the emperor's private apartments were located—a space known to have been lavishly decorated with porphyry. This is evidenced by the numerous cladding slabs of this material found in the area, with some sections showing that half of all the slabs recovered are made of porphyry.<sup>36</sup>

Galerius also used the porphyry in his palace of Gamzigrad (*Felix Romuliana*), erected between 293–311 AD. With this material, some small column shaft fragments are preserved that likely adorned the gate of the eastern walls, a gate that led to the Magura hill, where there was a sacred area and a necropolis housing the emperor's tomb.<sup>37</sup> Some portraits of Galerius also come from the palace, many of them made of porphyry.<sup>38</sup>

But it is perhaps Maxentius the emperor who made greater use of this stone in architecture, reserving it almost exclusively for the construction he promoted along the Via Sacra

29 Maria Luisa LUCCI: *Il porfido nell'antichità*, 262.

30 I would like to thank Daniela Matetić Poljak for the information provided on the use of porphyry in Diocletian's palace.

31 David P. S. PEACOCK: *The Passio Sanctorum Quattuor Coronatorum: A Petrological Approach*, 362–368.

32 Katja MARASOVIĆ, Daniela MATETIĆ POLJAK, Đeni GOBIĆ-BRAVAR: *Colored Marbles of Diocletian's Palace in Split*, in: Patrizio Pensabene and Eleonora Gasparini (eds.): *Interdisciplinary Studies of Ancient Stone, Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of ASMOSIA*, (Roma 2012), Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2015, 1005–1006, fig. 4; Javier Á. DOMINGO, Daniela MATETIĆ POLJAK: *Diocletian's Mausoleum in the Imperial Palace of Split: A Review of its Architecture and an Estimate of its Financial Cost*, in: Simon J. Barker, Christopher Courault, Javier Á. Domingo, Dominik Maschek (eds.): *From Concept to Monument: Time and Costs of Construction in the Ancient World, Papers in Honour of Janet DeLaine*, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2023, 401: on the materials used in the shafts of the mausoleum, see Fig. 13 and Tab. 1.

33 John Bryan WARD-PERKINS: *Dalmatia and the Marble Trade, Disputationes Salonitanae* (1970), 38–44.

34 Heinz KÄHLER: *Domkirche*, en: Arif Müfid Mansel (eds.), *Mansel'e Armağan: Mélanges Mansel*, vol. II, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1974, 810; Javier Á. DOMINGO, Daniela MATETIĆ POLJAK: *Diocletian's Mausoleum in the Imperial Palace of Split*, 408.

35 Katja MARASOVIĆ, Daniela MATETIĆ POLJAK, Đeni GOBIĆ-BRAVAR: *Colored Marbles of Diocletian's Palace in Split, 1006–1010*. To these examples, we could add some of the porphyry shafts reused in the Romanesque pulpit of the Split Cathedral, which repurposes the structure of the Mausoleum, Katja MARASOVIĆ, Daniela MATETIĆ POLJAK, Đeni GOBIĆ-BRAVAR: *Colored Marbles of Diocletian's Palace in Split, 1017*, fig. 15.

36 About the materials used in the cladding slabs and their distribution within the Palace, see: Katja MARASOVIĆ, Daniela MATETIĆ POLJAK, Đeni GOBIĆ-BRAVAR: *Colored marbles of Diocletian's Palace in Split, 1010–1014*; Katja MARASOVIĆ, Vinka MARINKOVIĆ: *Marble revetements of the Diocletian's Palace*, in: Daniela Matetić Poljak, Katja Marasović (eds.): *Interdisciplinary Studies of Ancient Stone, Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of ASMOSIA, (Split 2015)*, Split: Arts Academy: University of Split, 2018, 839–853.

37 Bojan DJURIĆ, Divna JOVANOVIĆ, Stefan POP-LAZIĆ, Walter PROCHASKA: *The stones of Felix Romuliana (Gamzigrad, Serbia)*, in: Daniela Matetić Poljak, Katja Marasović (eds.): *Interdisciplinary Studies of Ancient Stone, Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of ASMOSIA, (Split 2015)*, Split: Arts Academy: University of Split, 2018, 530; Gordana JEREMIĆ: *Imperial art during the Tetrarchy period in the cultural space of the Balkans: the example of Galerius' foundation in Romuliana (Gamzigrad, Serbia)*, in: Vilma Ruppené (ed.): *Stone and Splendor: Interir Decorations in Late-antique Palaces and Villas, (Trier 2019)*, Trier: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2021, 125.

38 Gordana JEREMIĆ: *Imperial art during the Tetrarchy period in the cultural space of the Balkans*, 126 and 136.

in his passage through the vicinity of the Roman Forum<sup>39</sup> (except for some porphyry slabs from his palace on the Via Appia<sup>40</sup>). There, next to the Via Sacra, in 307 AD Maxentius built a huge civil basilica, completed by Constantine,<sup>41</sup> with a monumental access to the south formed by a staircase and four porphyry columns with a diameter of 85 cm<sup>42</sup> (Figure 2) (although it cannot be excluded that this portico was actually the work of Constantine<sup>43</sup>). He also erected the so-called temple of Romulus, whose door was flanked by two porphyry columns (Figure 3), while on the sides there were two pairs of cipollino columns.<sup>44</sup> In addition,

he restored the temple of Venus and Rome (Figure 4),<sup>45</sup> repaving the cells with large porphyry *rotae* of 2.52 m in diameter and placing numerous columns of this material: 16 columns on the side walls of the cells, with shafts of 74–82 cm in diameter; 4 columns flanking the two apses of the cells, with a diameter of 94 cm; and 32 columns in the internal niches, with a diameter of 35–40 cm.<sup>46</sup>

- 39 The use of porphyry in the other works promoted by this emperor is not documented: neither in the expansion of the imperial palace (Adolf HOFFMANN, Ulrike WULF: *Bade- oder Villenluxus? – Zur Neuinterpretation der 'domus Severiana'*, in: Adolf Hoffmann, Ulrike Wulf (eds.): *Kaiserpaläste auf dem Palatin in Rom*, Mainz am Rhein: Ph. von Zabern, 2004, 153–172), nor in the baths of the Quirinal that are supposed to have been initiated by Maxentius (Elzbieta JASTRZĘBOWSKA: *Maxentius's Damnatio Memoriae and Constantine's Inventio Basilicae in Rome*, in: Olof Brandt, Vincenzo Ficocchi Nicolai (eds.): *Costantino e i Costantinidi. L'innovazione costantiniana, le sue radici e i suoi sviluppi. Acta XVI Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae (Roma 2013)*, Città del Vaticano: PIAC, 2016, 509). Regarding the constructions promoted by Maxentius in Rome, see: Mats CULLHED: *Conservator Urbis suae: Studies in the Politics and Propaganda of the Emperor Maxentius*, Stockholm: Coronet Books Inc., 1994; Elizabeth MARLOWE: *Liberator urbis suae: Constantine and the Ghost of Maxentius*, in: Björn C. Ewald, Carlos F. Noreña (eds.): *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation, and Ritual (Yale Classical Studies, 35)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 199–219; Simon CORCORAN: *Maxentius: a Roman Emperor in Rome*, *AntTard* 25 (2017), 59–74.
- 40 These revetment slabs come from the Palatine hall (Diane A. CONLIN, Anne E. HAECKL, Gianni PONTI, *The Villa of Maxentius on the Via Appia: Report on the 2005 Excavations*, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 51–52 (2006–2007) 361), which can be dated to the time of Maxentius (Alessandro DELFINO, Michela ROSSI: *Villa di Massenzio. Relazione preliminare dello scavo effettuato presso il tratto nord-occidentale dell'ambulacro di collegamento tra l'Aula Palatina e il Pulvinare (Municipio VIII ex XI)*, *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 114 (2013), 342. With doubts: Diane A. CONLIN, Anne E. HAECKL, Gianni PONTI, *The Villa of Maxentius on the Via Appia: Report on the 2005 Excavations*, 356–358), and the area called L1, located west of the Palatine hall and intended as a place of representation, Giuseppina PISANI SARTORIO, Raissa CALZA: *La villa di Massenzio sulla Via Appia. Il palazzo. Le opere d'arte*, Roma: Istituto di studi romani, 1976, 86 and 124.
- 41 Hauke ZIEMSEN: *Maxentius und Rom – Das neue Bild der Ewigen Stadt*, in: Hartmut Leppin, Hauke Ziemssen (eds.): *Maxentius. Der letzte Kaiser in Rom*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern in Herder, 2007, 87–95; Ramiro DONCIU: *L'empereur Maxence*, Bari: Edipuglia, 2012, 132.
- 42 Alessandro CARÈ: *L'ornato architettonico della Basilica di Massenzio*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2005, 61.
- 43 Elizabeth MARLOWE: *Liberator urbis suae: Constantine and the Ghost of Maxentius*, 203; Mariarosa BARBERA: *Costantino e Roma, Costantino a Roma*, in: Mariarosa Barbera (ed.): *Costantino 313 d.C.*, Milano: Electa, 2013, 19–20.
- 44 Maria Luisa LUCCI: *Il porfido nell'antichità*, 261; Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma. Reimpiego architettonico, recupero dell'antico e trasformazioni urbane tra il III e il XIII secolo*, Città del Vaticano: PIAC, 2014, 82.



Figure 2. Rome, Basilica of Maxentius. Porphyry shafts at the south entrance (photo: J. Á. Domingo).



Figure 3. Rome, Temple of Romulus. Porphyry shafts flanking the entrance (photo: J. Á. Domingo).

- 45 Alessandro CARÈ: *L'ornato architettonico della Basilica di Massenzio*, 61.
- 46 Sandro LORENZATTI: *Vicende del tempio di Venere e Roma nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento*, *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 13 (1990), 133–134.



Figure 4. Rome, Temple of Venus and Rome. Porphyry shafts inside the cells: flanking the apses, on the side walls and in the internal niches (photo: J. Á. Domingo).

### The Use of Porphyry in Christian Architecture

The arrival of Christianity did not mean an interruption of the use of porphyry, despite the association of this rock with the figure of the emperor and the divinity, and despite the rejection by some Christian authors of the use of the colour purple, such as Tertullian (*De Idolatria* 18), who relates purple with idolatry, or Clement of Alexandria (*Paedag.* 2.108–109, 114–115), who despises brightly coloured dresses, such as purple, made with rich and delicate fabrics.<sup>47</sup> In reality, Christianity updated the symbolic meaning of the porphyry by relating its colour to the blood of Christ, the sign of the New Covenant,<sup>48</sup> and of

the martyrs.<sup>49</sup> These are meanings that allow us to better understand the use of this stone in some contexts: for example, from this reading key, K.M.D. Dunbabin highlights the presence of the porphyry in the inset of the *opus sectile* of Porta Marina, built towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>47</sup> Mark BRADLEY: *Colour and Meaning in Ancient Rome*, 201.

<sup>48</sup> Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 34–35. Cromacio of Aquilea, *Homiliae* 19,1d: "Tunicam quoque purpuream ut rex induitur, chlamydem vero coccineam ut martyrum princeps, quia sacro sanguine suo velut cocco pretioso refulget."

<sup>49</sup> On the relationship between the colour purple and the blood of the martyrs: Giovanni FILORAMO: *Variazioni simboliche sul tema della porpora nel Cristianesimo antico*, in: Oddone Longo (ed.): *La porpora. Realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico (Atti del Convegno di Studi, Venezia 1996)*, Venezia: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1998, 238. On biblical texts mentioning purple, see: Giovanni FILORAMO: *Variazioni simboliche sul tema della porpora nel Cristianesimo antico*, 231–233; Michelle BEGHELLI: *Porpora, oro e pietre preziose nei testi biblici*, in: Isabella Baldini, Anna Lina Morelli (eds.): *Oreficeria in Emilia Romagna. Archeologia e storia tra età romana e medioevo (Ornamenta II, Bologna 2009)*, Bologna: Ante Quem, 2010, 115–137.

AD in Ostia,<sup>50</sup> if the figure that appears inside was really an image of Christ.<sup>51</sup>

Constantine used porphyry to embellish some Christian buildings, such as St. Peter's Basilica: according to the *Liber Pontificalis* (hereinafter *LP*), the Apostle's tomb was adorned with columns of this material, together with other columns from the 2nd century AD of fine-grained white marble brought from Greece<sup>52</sup> (*LP* I, 34.16–18: "Et exornavit supra columnas porphyreticas et alias columnas vitineas quas de Grecias perduxit").<sup>53</sup>

The *LP* (I, 34.16) also reports that Constantine placed eight porphyry columns in the Lateran baptistery. M. F. Hansen suggests that these columns, whose height is between 5.03 and 5.41 m,<sup>54</sup> may have been manufactured *ex novo*,<sup>55</sup> and O. Brandt argues that they were attached to the internal angles of the perimeter walls of the building, until they were relocated by Sixtus III in the centre of the baptistery, where they are currently located (Figure 5).<sup>56</sup> The emperor also donated to this baptistery a porphyry baptismal font,



**Figure 5.** Rome, Lateran baptistery. Porphyry shafts in the centre of the baptistery (photo: J. Á. Domingo).

with a circular shape and octagonal edge, at the angles of which there was a golden lamb, flanked by the sculptures of Christ and St. John the Baptist, and seven silver deer, and in the centre of which there was also a porphyry column: "In medio fontis columna porphyretica qui portat fiala (sic) aurea ubi candela est" (*LP* I, 34.13–15).<sup>57</sup> This column is interpreted by some authors as a reference to the paschal candle and as a reminder of the column crowned with a cross that stood at the place of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River.<sup>58</sup>

Constantine also used large quantities of porphyry to decorate his new capital, Constantinople. There he erected two honorific columns with this stone.<sup>59</sup> The most imposing, located in the centre of its forum, was composed of several drums, of which seven are preserved with a height of 3.2 m each and a diameter of 2.90 m, and reached a

50 Giovanni BECATTI: *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina (Scavi di Ostia 6)*, Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1969, 41–47.

51 Katherine M. D. DUNBABIN: *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 265–266. Some authors consider it unlikely that the image depicted is a representation of Christ: Paul ZANKER: *The Mask of Sokrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, 315–316; Beat BRENK: *Ostia tardo antica*, *RAC* 74 (1998), 530–531.

52 John Bryan WARD-PERKINS: *The Shrine of St. Peter and Its Twelve Spiral Columns*, *The Journal of Roman Studies* 42 (1952), 24 and 30; Sible DE BLAAUW: *Cultus et Decor. Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale*, Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1994, 476–477; Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 141.

53 Maria Fabricius HANSEN: *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, 33. For J.B. WARD-PERKINS, the reference to porphyry columns could be a mistake, John Bryan WARD-PERKINS: *The Shrine of St. Peter and Its Twelve Spiral Columns*, 22.

54 Marco ROMANO: *Materiale di spoglio nel battistero di San Giovanni in Laterano: un riesame e nuove considerazioni*, *BdA*, s. 6, 76 (1991), 52–53; Maria Fabricius HANSEN: *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, 34; Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 271. The height of the porphyry shafts is: 5.36, 5.03, 5.03, 5.41, 5.41, 5.08, 5.08 and 5.35 m (Olof BRANDT: *Il battistero lateranense da Costantino a Ilario. Un riesame degli scavi*, *Opuscula Romana* 22–23 (1997–1998), 40). These columns support Corinthian capitals and an architrave on which are supported eight other white marble columns, perhaps placed there in the 16th century, Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 263; Marco AIMONE: *MAGNIFICUS STRUCTOR PARIETUM. Classicismo e innovazione nell'architettura cristiana di Roma al tempo di papa Sisto III (432–440 d. C.)*, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 52 (2009), 104.

55 Maria Fabricius HANSEN: *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, 68.

56 Olof BRANDT: *Il battistero lateranense da Costantino a Ilario*, 26–29. Hugo BRANDENBURG: *Le prime chiese di Roma. IV–VII secolo. L'inizio dell'architettura ecclesiastica occidentale*, Milano: Jaca Book, 2004, 39–42 discusses some interpretative problems about the chronology of the baptistery walls.

57 Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 264 and fig. 353. It is a circular baptismal pool of 8.5 m internal diameter and almost 11 m external diameter that can be ascribed to the Constantinian phase: from it come some marble revetments among which the porphyry has not been found, although this decoration could correspond to a successive remodelling to the Constantinian era (Olof BRANDT: *Il battistero lateranense da Costantino a Ilario*, 44–45).

58 Augusto COSENTINO: *Il fuoco sul Giordano, il cero pasquale, la colonna del Battistero Lateranense*, in: *L'edificio battesimale in Italia. Aspetti e problemi. Atti dell'VIII Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia (Genova, Sarzana, Albenga, Finale Ligure, Ventimiglia 1998)*, Bordighera: Ist. Studi Liguri, 2001, 534.

59 On the honorary columns erected in Constantinople, not all of them made of porphyry, see: Pelin YONCACI ARSLAN: *Towards a New Honorific Column: The Column of Constantine in Early Byzantine Urban Landscape*, *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* 33.1 (2016), 121–145.

total height of 50 m (Figure 6). Above, crowning it, was an image of Constantine as Helios, possibly made of gold. Some authors, such as R. Delbreuck,<sup>60</sup> M. L. Lucci,<sup>61</sup> G. Fowden,<sup>62</sup> and C. Barsanti,<sup>63</sup> based on some mainly medieval sources,<sup>64</sup> suggest that the column could have been erected by Diocletian in Rome and then moved to Constantinople. On the contrary, C. Mango<sup>65</sup> maintains that the porphyry used in it would have been ordered directly by Constantine in the quarries. The second column, which we know thanks to an inscription, was erected in the *Augusteion* of the city in honour of Saint Helena.<sup>66</sup> Later, at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, another porphyry column was dedicated to the Empress Eudoxia, in the square called *Pittakia*.<sup>67</sup>

In addition, Constantine also used the porphyry for the columns of the tetrastyle portico that gave access to the Senate of Constantinople,<sup>68</sup> located north of his forum,<sup>69</sup> for an honorary monument, the *Philadelphion*, which had a square porphyry base with historicized reliefs in the centre and a gold cross and jewels on top;<sup>70</sup> and for the building known as *Porphyra*, a cubical room with a pyramidal roof located in the centre of the imperial palace, completely covered with porphyry slabs and where the empresses, dressed in purple, gave birth to their children.<sup>71</sup> In addition, the Senate of Rome placed a porphyry revetment around



Figure 6. Istanbul, Forum of Constantine. Honorary column with porphyry shaft (photo: J. Á. Domingo).

the Hadrianic circular reliefs, *or tondi*, of the arch dedicated to the emperor in 315 AD in Rome.<sup>72</sup>

Another important time for the use of porphyry in Rome is documented in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, mainly during the papacy of Sixtus III (432–440 AD). This period coincides with the return of the emperors to the city in a stable way, by the hand of Valentinian III (425–455 AD)<sup>73</sup>—the last emperor who had resided continuously in Rome had been Maxentius (306–313 AD)—a return that signals a new

60 Richard DELBRUECK: *Antike Porphywerke*, 144.

61 Maria Luisa LUCCI: Il porfido nell'antichità, 260.

62 Garth FOWDEN: Constantine's Porphyry Columns: The Earliest Literary Allusion, *JRS* 81 (1991), 124.

63 Claudia BARSANTI: Costantinopoli: testimonianze archeologiche di età costantiniana, in: Giorgio Bonamente, Franca Fusco (eds.): *Costantino il Grande. Dall'Antichità all'Umanesimo, Tomo I (Macerata 1990)*, Macerata: Università degli studi di Macerata, 1992, 148.

64 Sarah BASSETT: *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 201 with a list of these sources.

65 Cyril MANGO: Constantine's Columns, *Studies on Constantinople, Aldershot III*, 1993, 5–6.

66 Maria Luisa LUCCI: Il porfido nell'antichità, 260; Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 30–31; Paolo BARONIO: *Lo spazio monumentale nella città tardoantica. Architettura e immagine di piazze e vie colonnate nei grandi centri del Mediterraneo orientale (Thiasos monografie 18)*, Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2021, 148.

67 Maria Luisa LUCCI: Il porfido nell'antichità, 260; Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 32.

68 Paolo BARONIO: *Lo spazio monumentale nella città tardoantica*, 107.

69 Claudia BARSANTI: Costantinopoli: testimonianze archeologiche di età costantiniana, 132–133; Paolo BARONIO: *Lo spazio monumentale nella città tardoantica*, 34–35, 106–107.

70 Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 30–31.

71 Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 31. Liutprando of Cremona attributes the construction of this building to Constantine (Liutprando di Cremona, *Antapodosis*, I.6, 3.30 and 31).

72 Patrizio PENSABENE, Clementina PANELLA: Reimpiego e progettazione architettonica nei monumenti tardo-antichi di Roma, *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia: Rendiconti* 66 (1993–1994), 184, 191–192.

73 On the presence of the emperors in Rome, see: Mark HUMPHRIES: Valentinian III and the City of Rome (AD 425–455): Patronage, Politics and Power, in: *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 161–182; Valerio MAROTTA: Onnipresenza dell'imperatore e ubiquità dell'Urbs, in: Valerio Marotta (ed.): *Esercizio e trasmissione del potere imperiale (secoli I–IV d.C.)*, Torino: Giappichelli, 2016, 99–122; Lucrezia SPERA: Roma, il suburbio e gli imperatori nel V secolo. Archeologia di un ritorno, *Archeologia Classica* 70 (2019), 455–498.

reevaluation of imperial ideology.<sup>74</sup> Valentinian III, together with his wife Licinia Eudoxia, actively participated in the constructive programs promoted by Pope Sixtus III, undertook a significant church building policy and made significant donations to the Church of Rome.<sup>75</sup>

Sixtus III remodelled the Lateran baptistery, relocating the eight porphyry columns brought there by Constantine to the centre of the building. He also built a vestibule to the south of the baptistery,<sup>76</sup> on the facade of which two large porphyry shafts were reused (Figure 7): the one on



**Figure 7.** Rome, Lateran baptistery. Porphyry shafts from the vestibule (photo: J. Á. Domingo).

the right with a height of 7.20 m and the one on the left of 7.28 m (approximately 24.5 feet),<sup>77</sup> and with a lower diameter of about 77 cm and an imoscap diameter of about 87 cm. These shafts were accompanied by bases of 74 and 65 cm in preserved height,<sup>78</sup> and by capitals of the asian composite type with a height of 103 and 104 cm, from the capitals and bases of the temple of Venus Genetrix in the Forum of Caesar.<sup>79</sup> On both sides of these columns there were two pilasters that supported an entablature of the 2nd century AD formed by a frieze-architrave very similar to that supported by the columns inside the baptistery and which comes from the portico of the temple of Hadrian in Rome.<sup>80</sup> The baptistery was internally decorated with a *opus sectile* that stood out for the use of white marble and porphyry, a decoration that could correspond to both the Constantinian phase and the reforms of Sixtus III.<sup>81</sup> It should be remembered that the baptismal pool donated by Constantine was also made of porphyry, as it has been said.

The *LP* (46.4) also notes the presence of porphyry columns in another baptistery erected by Sixtus III in Rome, located in the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore and now disappeared. It would probably be located on the left side of the basilica, and its access would coincide with the current Cesi e Sforza chapel: below it a circular wall has been identified with a diameter of approximately 7 meters that could correspond to the ancient baptistery.<sup>82</sup>

- 74 Richard KRAUTHEIMER: *The Architecture of Sixtus III: A Fifth-Century Renaissance?*, in: *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erving Panofsky*, New York: New York University Press, 1961, vol 1, 291–392; Giuseppe ZECCHINI: *Gesta de Xysti purgatione e le fazioni aristocratiche a Roma alla metà del V secolo*, *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 34 (1980), 60–74; Marco AIMONE: *MAGNIFICUS STRUCTOR PARIETUM*, 81–141.
- 75 Andrew GILETT: *Rome, Ravenna and the Emperors*, *PBSR* 69 (2001), 145; Mark HUMPHRIES: *Valentinian III and the City of Rome*, 167; Manuela GIANANDREA: *Il V secolo: da Innocenzo I (401–417) ad Anastasio II (496–498)*, in: Mario D'Onofrio (ed.): *La committenza artistica dei papi a Roma nel Medioevo*, Roma: Viella, 2016, 73–108; Manuela GIANANDREA: *The Rediscovery of Rome in Imperial Patronage of the Arts in the Fifth Century*, in: Ivan Foletti, Manuela Gianandrea (eds.): *The Fifth Century in Rome: Art, Liturgy, Patronage*, Roma: Viella, 2017, 249; Henry DEY: *Roma nel Medioevo. Un nuovo profilo della città, 400–1420*, Roma: Viella, 2023, 73, 77.
- 76 Olof BRANDT: *Il battistero lateranense da Costantino a Ilaro*, 48: the vestibule is attached to the walls of the baptistery, so it corresponds to a phase successive to the Constantinian one.

- 77 Marco ROMANO: *Materiale di spoglio nel battistero di San Giovanni in Laterano*, 38; Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 266.
- 78 The plinth has a height of 15 cm and a length of 120 and 122 cm, Heinz KÄHLER: *Zu den Spolien im Baptisterium der Lateransbasilika*, *RM* 52 (1937), 110.
- 79 Heinz KÄHLER: *Zu den Spolien im Baptisterium der Lateransbasilika*, 108–110; Carla Maria AMICI: *Il Foro di Cesare*, Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 1991, 94–95; Marco ROMANO: *Materiale di spoglio nel battistero di San Giovanni in Laterano*, 36–42; Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 171 and 266–267.
- 80 Marco ROMANO: *Materiale di spoglio nel battistero di San Giovanni in Laterano*, 42–43; Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 269. C. Parisi and M. Baldi document that the eleven friezes-architrave from the portico of the temple of Hadrian reused in the Lateran baptistery, three in the vestibule and eight in the interior, all retain their original full length (those located inside were lowered in height, eliminating the part of the architrave, and reworked in the back). Therefore, they conclude, they were dismantled directly from the portico of Hadrian's temple by Sixtus III, where they would still be *in situ*. The length of the pieces is 378 cm and the height 116–117 cm (Claudio PARISI, Massimo BALDI: *Hadrianeum. Il progetto architettonico e le fasi costruttive*, Roma-Bristol: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2024, 26–33 and 138–139). It follows that, most likely, the arrangement of the columns inside the baptistery was conditioned by the dimensions of the reused friezes-architrave.
- 81 Olof BRANDT: *Il battistero lateranense da Costantino a Ilaro*, 40.
- 82 Paolo LIVERANI: *Alarico in Laerano e sull'Esquilino*, in Johannes Lipps, Carlos Machado, Philipp Von Rummel (eds.): *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD. The Event, its Context and its Impact (Roma 2010)*, Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 2013, 286–287.

The choice of porphyry for these baptismal buildings does not seem to be accidental, as this rock does not appear in other constructions promoted directly or indirectly by Sixtus III, such as the Basilica of Santa Sabina on the Aventine hill, where however some slabs of this material are included in the lining of the walls between the arches of the columns,<sup>83</sup> the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore,<sup>84</sup> or the Basilica dedicated to San Lorenzo, which could correspond to the one located in the Verano area or in the Campo Marzio, called *in Lucina*.<sup>85</sup> During his pontificate, the basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, begun by Theodosius II and Eudocia, the mother of Licinia Eudoxia, was also completed, without the presence of porphyry having been documented either.

The Lateran baptistery was decorated with new porphyry columns in the second half of the 5th century AD. At this time, Pope Hilarius (461–468 AD) attached two oratories to the previous structure. One dedicated to Saint John the Baptist (Figure 8), whose entrance was flanked by two porphyry columns 2.06 m high and 69 cm in circumference at the base,<sup>86</sup> which supported capitals in serpentine marble and had bases of the same material 12 cm high and a plinth length of 30 × 30 cm on the right and 31 × 31 cm on the left. The columns rest on a porphyry plinth 21.5 cm high and 53 × 53 cm on the side. The other oratory was dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist (Figure 9), and its entrance was also flanked by two porphyry columns, 2.32 m high and 90.5 cm in circumference at the base,<sup>87</sup> which had capitals and bases in Lunense marble. In addition, Hilarius added a third oratory, dedicated to the Holy Cross, demolished in 1588–89, which was decorated with four porphyry columns.<sup>88</sup> In front of the oratory, the pope erected a nymphaeum and a triportic, where some ancient references also mention



**Figure 8.** Rome, Lateran baptistery. Porphyry shafts at the entrance of the oratory of Saint John Baptist (photo: J. Á. Domingo).



**Figure 9.** Rome, Lateran baptistery. Porphyry shafts at the entrance of the oratory of Saint John Evangelist (photo: J. Á. Domingo).

83 Manuela GIANANDREA: The Artistic Patronage of the Popes in Fifth-Century Rome, in: Ivan Foletti, Manuela Gianandrea (eds.): *The Fifth Century in Rome: Art, Liturgy, Patronage*, Roma: Viella, 2017b, 188–189.

84 The four porphyry columns of the baldachin are an addition from the 18th century. Previously, six porphyry shafts holding a white marble architrave were part of a “pergola” located just in front of the confession, built by Paschal I (817–824). This was replaced by another donated by Cardinal Guillaume d’Estouteville between 1445 and 1483, consisting of 4 porphyry columns, Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 257 and 261.

85 Manuela GIANANDREA: The Artistic Patronage of the Popes in Fifth-Century Rome, 191–192.

86 Marco ROMANO: Materiale di spoglio nel battistero di San Giovanni in Laterano, 59; Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 271–272.

87 Marco ROMANO: Materiale di spoglio nel battistero di San Giovanni in Laterano, 59; PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 271–272.

88 Some old drawings from the 15th century have survived from this oratory, Mark J. JOHNSON: The Fifth-Century Oratory of the Holy Cross at the Lateran in Rome, *Journal of the History of Architecture* (1995), 130, 135–136 and figs. 5 and 6.

the presence of porphyry columns and a basin of the same material in the centre.<sup>88</sup>

These examples show a certain association between the baptisteries erected by Sixtus III, the porphyry, and the colour purple. This relationship is supported by some literary references, such as a homily by Chromatius of Aquileia (*Homiliae* 19,2) where purple is compared, a product of nature that by itself has no value, but when immersed in water is transformed into a precious object, like the baptised man, who like purple is transformed by water, raising its value.<sup>89</sup> St. Paul also establishes a connection between the baptism and the death of Christ, whose blood, represented by the colour purple, is the sign of the New Covenant: “You know well enough that we who were taken up into Christ by baptism have been taken up, all of us, into his death. In our baptism, we have been buried with him, died like him, that so, just as Christ was raised up by his Father’s power from the dead, we too might live and move in a new kind of existence” (Rom. 6, 3–4).

Another outstanding use of the porphyry in the period of study addressed here is documented in a medieval guide to Rome, the “*Mirabilia urbis Romae*” (III,ii), which mentions that in the centre of the atrium of St. Peter’s Basilica there was a fountain built by Pope Symmachus (498–514 AD) with porphyry pillars. According to a drawing by Giovanni Antonio Dosio (1533–1609) preserved in the Uffizi (2555/A), the columns of this fountain were eight and held an architrave.<sup>90</sup>

### Reuse of shafts

The examples cited show the prestige that the porphyry had also during late antiquity. But its use at this time should not always be interpreted as a consequence of the recovery of spolia, since the quarries of Mons Porphyrites continued to operate until at least the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD,<sup>91</sup> and many of the Roman buildings decorated with porphyry shafts were still standing at this time, as we shall see. Therefore, it is

difficult to discern still in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century AD when the porphyry could have been *spolia* and when pieces made *ex novo*. An exception would be the two porphyry shafts placed in the vestibule of the Lateran baptistery because, according to our reconstruction, they would come from the Temple of the Sun that Aurelian (270–275 AD) built in the area of the current *Piazza San Silvestro*. This hypothesis is based on some archaeological data and some information contained in ancient texts.

1) The first data to consider is the collection of texts dedicated to the history and monuments of Constantinople, known as the “*Patria Costantinopolitana*,” or “*Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitarum*.” This collection contains an anonymous work, probably from the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, which reveals details about the reconstruction of the Hagia Sophia by Emperor Justinian, after the fire it suffered during the Nika revolt of 532 AD. According to this work Justinian commissioned his officials to look for columns, pilasters, revetment slabs and all kinds of useful materials, even going to the temples of the idols, houses, and ancient baths, if necessary. The work mentions a letter that narrates that a certain widow Marcia announced to the emperor that she had sent him eight Roman porphyry columns for Hagia Sophia, specifying that they came from the Temple of the Sun in Rome, had the same height, base and diameter, had received them as a dowry and sent them for the salvation of her soul.<sup>93</sup> These eight porphyry columns were placed on the four exedras of the Justinian basilica of Hagia Sophia, where they are still located (Figure 10), and thanks to this we know their measurements: they have an average height of 7.50 m (= 25 feet), although with some differences between them,<sup>94</sup> differences that A. Moneti

88 Mark J. JOHNSON: *The Fifth-Century Oratory of the Holy Cross at the Lateran in Rome*, 138.

89 Giovanni FILORAMO: *Variazioni simboliche sul tema della porpora nel Cristianesimo antico*, 237.

90 Maria Fabricius HANSEN: *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, 49 and fig. 24.

91 Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry. Red Imperial Porphyry. Power and Religion*, 18. After the quarries were abandoned, the presence of some Christian hermits in the area is documented, Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry. Red Imperial Porphyry. Power and Religion*, 61.

93 Maria Luisa LUCCHI: *Il porfido nell’antichità*, 227–228; Andrea MONETI: *La Santa Sofia di Giustiniano e il Tempio del Sole di Aureliano*, *Analecta Romana Istituti Danici XXI* (1993), 157; Maria Fabricius HANSEN: *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, 53–54; Paolo LIVERANI, *Reimpiego senza ideologia. La lettura antica degli spolia dall’arco di Costantino all’età carolingia*, *Römische Mitteilungen* 111 (2004), 427–428; Gilbert DAGRON: *Constantinople imaginaire. Études sur le recueil des ‘Patria’*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984, 196–211, with a translation of this work into French.

94 Andrea MONETI: *La Santa Sofia di Giustiniano e il Tempio del Sole di Aureliano*, 160. F. A. Bauer gives some more precise data about the dimensions of these shafts, which however cannot be measured. Through the dimensions of the podiums on which the columns rest, he distinguishes three more slender shafts and three more massive ones: southeast exedra: east shaft (base height 0.58; stylobate height 0.79; column height 9.69; diameter 0.86 m); west shaft (base height 0.60; stylobate height 0.78; column height 9.69; diameter 0.83 m); northeast exedra: east shaft (base height 0.63; stylobate height 0.88; column height 9.69; diameter 0.96 m); west shaft (base height 0.66; stylobate height 0.87; column height 9.69; diameter 0.96 m); southwest exedra: east shaft (base height

explains assuming that the shafts were already reused by Aureliano.<sup>95</sup> Although some authors have doubted the veracity of this story,<sup>96</sup> we know that the shafts arrived in Hagia Sophia as *spolia* because the quarries of Mons Porphyrites were already closed at this time, because Justinian ordered all kinds of materials to be recovered, and because at the time of placing the shafts inside the basilica they already had a series of fractures that forced several bronze rings of protection to be placed, both on the upper shaft, and on the lower shaft. These fractures would hardly be explained if the pieces had been made from *ex novo*.<sup>97</sup>

2) The second fact to consider is that the dimensions of the shafts of Hagia Sophia, despite the small differences between them, approximate those of the two specimens placed in the vestibule of the Lateran baptistery (the one on the right we have said with a height of 7.20 m and the one on the left of 7.28 m<sup>98</sup> = 24.5 feet; with a lower diameter of about 77 cm and a diameter of the flare, or *imoscapo*, of about 87 cm). Therefore, the same origin can hypothetically be considered for all of them, given the scarcity of known porphyry shafts with such high dimensions (Table I). It is true that in recent years, various hypotheses have been formulated about the origin of the shafts of the Lateran baptistery, none of which has taken into consideration the Temple of the Sun.<sup>99</sup> M. Romano, for example, lists

0.59; stylobate height 0.97; column height 10.00; diameter 0.94 m); west shaft (base height 0.59; stylobate height 0.92; column height 10.00; diameter 0.96 m); northwest exedra: east shaft (base height 0.60; stylobate height 0.92; column height 10.00; diameter 0.83 m); west shaft (base height 0.65; stylobate height 0.91; column height 10.00; diameter 0.84 m) (Franz Alto BAUER: *Sagenhafte Herkunft. Spolien im Umkreis des Byzantinischen Kaisers*, in: Thomas G. Schattner, Fernando Valdés Fernández (eds.): *Spolien im Umkreis der Macht / Spolia en el entorno del poder* (Toledo 2006), Mainz am Rhein: Diputación Provincial de Toledo, 2009, 59–62).

95 Andrea MONETI: *La Santa Sofia di Giustiniano e il Tempio del Sole di Aureliano*, 158–160.

96 Against the provenance of these shafts from the Temple of the Sun in Rome: Friedrich Wilhelm DEICHMANN: *Die Spolien in der spätantiken Architektur*, München: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975, 90; Franz Alto BAUER: *Sagenhafte Herkunft. Spolien im Umkreis des Byzantinischen Kaisers*, 59–62; Richard KRAUTHEIMER: *Architettura paleocristiana e bizantina*, Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1986, 239.

In favour of such a possibility: John Bryan WARD-PERKINS: *Roman Imperial Architecture*, Harmondsworth: Yale Univ Press, 1981, 417; Rowland J. MAINSTONE: *Hagia Sophia, Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1988, 256; Andrea MONETI: *La Santa Sofia di Giustiniano e il Tempio del Sole di Aureliano*, 158–160.

97 Eugenio RUSSO: *Le decorazioni di Isidoro il Giovane per S. Sofia di Costantinopoli*, Roma: Viella, 2011, 85; Eugenio RUSSO: *Ricerche su S. Sofia di Costantinopoli*, Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2018, 120.

98 Patrizio PENSABENE: *Roma su Roma*, 266.

99 Already in 1937 H. Kähler rejected the possibility that the shafts came



Figure 10. Istanbul, Hagia Sophia. Porphyry shafts from the Temple of the Sun in Rome (photo: J. Á. Domingo).

some of them:<sup>100</sup> 1) that all the porphyry shafts of the baptistery, both those located outside and inside, come from the "*Porticus Porphyretica*" which, we have said, was located in the Forum of Trajan. However, we do not know anything about this *porticus* and not even fragments of porphyry shafts have been found in the vicinity of the Forum of Trajan,<sup>101</sup> a forum that we know was still in use in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, when numerous honorific statues

from the forum of Caesar, despite already proposing then an origin of this place of the bases and capitals that are part of the same architectural order in their current placement, Heinz KÄHLER: *Zu den Spolien im Baptisterium der Lateransbasilika*, 112.

100 Marco ROMANO: *Materiale di spoglio nel battistero di San Giovanni in Laterano*, 60.

101 See: Marina MILELLA: *Foro Traiano. I ritrovamenti*, *ArchClass* XLI (1989), 55–100; Patrizio PENSABENE, Javier Á. DOMINGO: *Il cantiere, l'approvvigionamento dei marmi, il trasporto e costi dei grandi monoliti in Granito del Foro e in Sienite*, *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia. Rendiconti* LXXXIX (2017), 524–597.

continued to be placed there,<sup>102</sup> and whose pavement was not extracted until the second half of the 9th century AD;<sup>103</sup> 2) that the shafts come from some of the ancient structures that would be erected in the area of the baptistery and the St. John Lateran Basilica, from which no evidence of the presence of porphyry has been found; and 3) that they come from the temple of Venus and Rome, since some of their shafts have a diameter of 1,870 m, a measure that, according to M. Romano, would be similar to that of some copies of the Lateran baptistery.<sup>104</sup> It should be noted that no shaft of the baptistery has a similar measure to this, and that the shafts of the temple with this measure correspond to the columns of the *temenos* and not to the porphyry specimens.<sup>105</sup>

3) Finally, the third fact to consider is that a large part of the Roman buildings that used porphyry shafts were still standing at the time of construction of the vestibule of the Lateran baptistery. For example, the temple of Venus and Rome, with its 52 porphyry shafts, must have been very much intact if Pope Honorius I was still able in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD to extract some bronze tiles from its roof to repair St. Peter's Basilica (*LP I*, pp. 323, 279–280, n. 3).<sup>106</sup> Likewise, the basilica of Maxentius, probably the seat of the urban prefecture, was still in use in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>107</sup> (the last reference to a *praefectus urbi* dates from 599 AD).<sup>108</sup> And the baths of Caracalla were abandoned only after the siege of Rome by Vitige, king of the Goths, in 537 AD, when the supply of the *Aqua Antoniana Iovia*, a branch of the *Aqua Marcia* that supplied these baths, was interrupted.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, no clear similarities are observed

between the dimensions of the shafts of the vestibule of the Lateran baptistery and the shafts of these buildings. For example, of the porphyry shafts of the portico of the basilica of Maxentius we only know that they had a diameter of 85 cm. However, this measure corresponds to an average value of the preserved fragments, without it being possible to establish which part of the shaft it corresponds to, nor is it possible therefore to reconstruct its height.<sup>110</sup> The dimensions of the shafts arranged on the side walls of the cells of the Temple of Venus and Rome seem more similar, whose diameter is 72–78 cm, although we do not know what part of the shaft it corresponds to, while the height of these shafts has been reconstructed in only 6 m.<sup>111</sup> Finally, from the *frigidarium* of the baths of Caracalla come porphyry shafts about 7 m high, but as has been said, these baths were not abandoned until the siege of the city by the Gothic king Vitige in 537 AD.

However, to validate our proposal for the attribution of the shafts of the vestibule of the Lateran baptistery to the Temple of the Sun, it is necessary to verify two premises: on the one hand, if the Temple of the Sun really had red porphyry shafts (remember the doubts raised by some authors about the veracity of the story of Marcia) and, on the other hand, if at the time of construction of the vestibule of the Lateran baptistery, in the time of Pope Sixtus III, the temple had already been abandoned and dismantled at least in part.

1) The first premise is limited by the little data we have about the Temple of the Sun, of which we only know some ancient drawings, such as the one made by Andrea Palladio. This drawing shows a temple articulated in two bodies connected by a small square plan transition space: the first body is rectangular with short semicircular sides and the second has a rectangular plan, decorated on three sides by niches and with a circular temple inside.<sup>112</sup> The

102 For example, 7 of the 20 statutes dedicated to senators in this forum were placed at a date later than 410 AD, Robert CHERNAULT: *Statues of Senators in the Forum of Trajan and the Roman Forum in Late Antiquity*, *JRS* 102 (2012), 103–132; Michèle Renée SALZMANN: *The Falls of Rome: Crises, Resilience, and Resurgence in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, 120.

103 Roberto MENEGHINI: *Il Foro di Traiano nel Medioevo*, *MEFRM* 113.1 (2001), 156.

104 Marco ROMANO: *Materiale di spoglio nel battistero di San Giovanni in Laterano*, 69, nota 136.

105 Andrea BARATTOLO: *Il tempio di Venere e di Roma: un tempio Greco nell'Urbe*, *RM*, 85 (1978), 398.

106 Sandro LORENZATTI: *Vicende del tempio di Venere e Roma nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento*, 122; Mark HUMPHRIES: *From Emperor to Pope? Ceremonial, Space, and Authority at Rome from Constantine to Gregory the Great*, in: *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 54–55.

107 Filippo COARELLI: *Statio. I luoghi dell'amministrazione nell'antica Roma*, Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2019, 381–393.

108 Andrea Antonio VERARDI: *Le strutture del potere*, in: Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani (ed.): *Roma altomedievale. Paesaggio urbano, società e cultura (secoli V–X)*, Roma: Corocci editore, 2023, 98.

109 Filippo COARELLI: *Roma. Guide Archeologiche Laterza*, Bari-Roma:

Laterza, 2018, 428.

110 Alessandro CARÈ: *L'ornato architettonico della Basilica di Massenzio*, 61.

111 Sandro LORENZATTI: *Vicende del tempio di Venere e Roma nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento*, 134; Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, n. C9.

112 No remains of the temple are known, but a coin of Emperor Probus (276–282 AD) depicting *Sol Invictus* and a circular temple could confirm the shape of the building represented by Andrea Palladio (Michèle Renée SALZMAN: *A New 'Topography of Devotion': Aurelian and Solar Worship in Rome*, in: Asuman Lätzer-Lasar, Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli (eds.): *Urban Religion in Late Antiquity*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020, 157; Andrea CARANDINI (ed.): *Atlante di Roma Antica*, Milano: Electa, 2012, 286). Contrary to the fact that the temple was circular see: Jacqueline CALZINI GYSENS, Filippo COARELLI: *Sol, Templum, LTUR, IV*, Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 1999, 331–332; Orietta LANZARINI: *Il tempio del Sole*

most recent studies suggest that the set was arranged perpendicular to the via Lata,<sup>113</sup> at the height of the church of San Silvestro, opening to the road with only a semicircular body of approximately 55 x 75 m (from here would come shafts in africano and grey granite, with diameters of 30, 73, 80 and 100 cm), while the second body, with a rectangular plan and the temple inside, would have dimensions of 130 x 90 m (from here would come shafts in caristio marble, with a diameter of 60 cm).<sup>114</sup> We have no record of the discovery of porphyry shafts in the excavations carried out in the area during the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>115</sup> but interesting ancient information seems to support such a possibility. This information appears in a 1510 work by Francesco Albertini, *Opusculum de mirabilibus novae et veteris Urbis Romae*, which explains that: “In ecclesia S. Petri est capella cum choro et pulcherrimis columnas porphir., spolia thermarum Domiani (sic) quae vocatur Syxti capella,”<sup>116</sup> a

chapel that must be identified with the one that Sixtus IV dedicated to the Immaculate Conception in 1479, also destined to contain her burial. The news actually indicates that the columns come from the baths of Domitian, which M. G. Aurigemma initially identified with those of Trajan.<sup>117</sup> However, O. Lanzarini later observed that this identification was not possible, since Albertini cites later in his work the baths of Trajan, stating that they were near the church of S. Martino ai Monti, and positioned the baths of Domitian near the church of *San Silvestro*: “Thermae Domitiane, a Domitiano imperatore constructae, in campo Martio non longe ab ecclesia Sancti Silvestri: vestigia quarum adhuc apparent diruta marboribusque dispoliata.”<sup>118</sup> This last data ensures the origin of the porphyry shafts in the area of the *Piazza San Silvestro*, where the Temple of the Sun was located and where the baths of Domitian had been erroneously located since the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>119</sup> an error repeated by F. Albertini in his work.

di Aureliano a Roma in due disegni inediti del codice Destailleur B dell'Ermitage, San Pietroburgo, in: Alessandro Brodini. Giovanna Curcio (eds.): *Porre un limite all'infinito errore. Studi di storia dell'architettura dedicati a Christof Thoenes*, Roma: Campisano editore, 2012, 102.

- 113 Mario TORELLI: *Topografie e iconologia*. Arco di Portogallo, Ara Pacis, Ara Providentiae, Templum Solis, *Ostraka. Rivista di Antichità*, 1, 1 (1992), 113–122; Filippo COARELLI: *Statio. I luoghi dell'amministrazione nell'antica Roma*, 306. M.R. Salzman points out that this orientation would follow the course of the sun, from east to west, Michèle Renée SALZMAN: *A New 'Topography of Devotion'*, 157.
- 114 Mario TORELLI: *Topografie e iconologia*. Arco di Portogallo, Ara Pacis, Ara Providentiae, Templum Solis, 111–118; Filippo COARELLI: *Statio. I luoghi dell'amministrazione nell'antica Roma*, 313.
- 115 Numerous architectural elements have appeared in the area: “Notizie degli Scavi,” 1876, pp. 137–138: in the area of the convent of San Silvestro a fragment of entablature of 2.48 x 0.75 m was found, a fragment of frieze decorated with acanthus leaves and masks, a marble column base of 0.84 m in diameter, a composite capital volute of 0.25 m in diameter, and other sculptural fragments; “Notizie degli Scavi,” 1879, pp. 331–332: under the palace of Le Poste a 0.97 m high cornice fragment was found; “Notizie degli Scavi,” 1880, pp. 466: in the Piazza San Silvestro a fragment of cornice was found; “Notizie degli Scavi,” 1894, p. 248: in front of the church of San Silvestro a fragment of granite shaft 0.89 m high and 1.10 m in diameter was found; “Notizie degli Scavi,” V, 1908, pp. 231–233: under the apse of the church of San Silvestro was found a fragment of epistilium of 3.85 x 0.60 x 0.80 m, a fragment of entablature of 2.60 x 1.15 x 0.62 m decorated with leaves and masks, a fragment of cornice of 1.95 x 0.10 x 0.60 m and other decorative elements, such as a ribbed column of 5.90 m in height and with a diameter at the imoscapo of 0.80 m and at the summoscapo of 0.70 m, and half of a column base. G. Gati also reports the discovery next to the palace of Le Poste of an eastern granite column shaft, preserved for a height of 1.10 m, on one side cut at a right angle and on the other formed by two semi-columns attached, so it had to occupy the angle of a portico. Also a fragment of pink granite column with white marble attic base (Giuseppe GATTI: *Trovamenti riguardanti la topografia e la epigrafia urbana*, *BCom XIV* (1886), 193). On the architectural decoration of the Temple of the Sun, see: Heinz KÄHLER: *Zum Sonnentempel Aurelians*, *RM 52* (1937b), 94–105.
- 116 Francisco ALBERTINI: *Opusculum de mirabilibus novae et veteris Urbis Romae editum a Francisco de Albertinis Clerico Florentino*, Roma, 1510 (ed. of 1886), 44.

The porphyry shafts, originally located in the chapel of the Immaculate Conception, were relocated in 1610 to the Pauline Chapel of the Quirinal by order of Paul V. Later, Pius VI transferred them to the corridor that precedes the Sistine Library of the Vatican, where they are still located (Figure 11), a circumstance that has allowed us to know their dimensions.<sup>120</sup> These are two shafts 3.85 m high,<sup>121</sup> and in them the tetrarchs are represented (they represent the emperors of the first Tetrarchy: Diocletian, Maximian Herculus, Constantinus Chlorus and Galerius<sup>122</sup>), two in each column, with figures with a height of 56 cm. Although M.G. Aurigemma suggests that these figures could be of painted stucco,<sup>123</sup> and thus might have been added after the manufacture of the shafts — which, if originating from the Temple of the Sun, should be dated to the time of

- 117 Maria Giulia AURIGEMMA: *Osservazioni sulla Cappella dell'Immacolata Concezione in S. Pietro*, in: Fabio Benzi (ed.): *Sisto IV. Le Arti a Roma nel Primo Rinascimento. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi*, Roma: Arte e committenze pontificie, 2000, 463.
- 118 Orietta LANZARINI: *Il tempio del Sole di Aureliano a Roma in due disegni inediti*, 101–102 and footnote 8.
- 119 On the belief in the 15th century that the baths of Domitian rose in the area of Piazza San Silvestro, see: Jacqueline CALZINI GYSENS, Filippo COARELLI: *Sol, Templum*, 332.
- 120 Maria Giulia AURIGEMMA: *Osservazioni sulla Cappella dell'Immacolata Concezione in S. Pietro*, 463.
- 121 I. POPOVIĆ suggests a height of 3.20 m for these column shafts, Ivana POPOVIĆ: *Porphyry, Power of Emperors and dignity of Gods: Sculptures from Roman Towns and Palaces in Serbia*, Belgrade: Institute of Archaeology of Belgrade, 2017, 28.
- 122 Ivana POPOVIĆ: *Porphyry, Power of Emperors and Dignity of Gods: Sculptures from Roman Towns and Palaces in Serbia*, 24.
- 123 Maria Giulia AURIGEMMA: *Osservazioni sulla Cappella dell'Immacolata Concezione in S. Pietro*, 463.



Figure 11. Roma, Sistina Library of the Vatican. Porphyry shafts from the vicinity of Piazza San Silvestro in Rome (photo: Aurigemma 2000, 462, fig. 288).

Aurelian—we believe that the figures and the shafts were carved from the same block of porphyry. In that case, we would be looking at shafts that were likely added in some part of the Temple of the Sun during the Tetrarchy. Although the dimensions of these shafts do not coincide with those of the Lateran baptistery specimens or those reused in Hagia Sophia, they do endorse the probable presence of porphyry specimens in the Temple of the Sun,<sup>124</sup> thus giving greater veracity to the story of Marcia.

2) The second premise is also plausible, which states that the Temple of the Sun may have been dismantled in the time of Sixtus III (432–440 AD). We know that until a few years before this pontificate the temple was still in use: Julian the Apostate (361–363 AD) was a devotee of this divinity,<sup>125</sup> still at the end of the 4th century AD a pontiff of the Sun is documented (the “*Pontifices Solis Invicti*” created by Aurelian<sup>126</sup>) in the person of *Vettius Agorius Pretestato*, urban prefect in 367,<sup>127</sup> and the annual *Iudi* in honour of this divinity were still celebrated in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.<sup>128</sup> However, the situation had to change radically a few years before the pontificate of Sixtus III. A decree of 407/408 addressed to the praetorian prefect of Rome legalised and encouraged the reuse of materials from ancient buildings, including temples (CTh. Theod. 6.10.19).<sup>129</sup> In addition, an edict of Theodosius II of 435 AD authorised the destruction of the temples and the consequent purification of the place through the symbol of

the Cross (CTh 16,10,25).<sup>130</sup> And, finally, in 410 AD, Alaric’s troops must have passed very close to the Temple of the Sun, so it is plausible to suppose that they had caused it some damage: the troops entered Rome through the Porta Salaria, advanced through the Quirinal, where they probably caused damage to the Temple of Serapis and perhaps also to the baths of Constantine, located in this area: an inscription of the *praefectus urbi Petronius Perpenna* (CIL VI, 1750) mentions the restoration of these baths perhaps due to the damage caused by Alaric’s troops.<sup>131</sup> Subsequently, the troops, through the monumental staircase that allowed them to climb to the Serapeum, located at the top of the hill,<sup>132</sup> descended to an area near the Temple of the Sun.<sup>133</sup> In the porticoes of this temple were stored the “*vina fiscalia*”—as recalled in the *Historia Augusta (Aur., 48.1–4)* and as confirmed by the finding in the area of *Piazza San Silvestro* of an inscription that recalls the transport of the “*vina fiscalia*” to the Temple of the Sun (CIL VI 1785 = 31931)<sup>134</sup>— and near this temple was the *Forum Suarium*, where pork meat was distributed to the population of Rome,<sup>135</sup> an activity still ongoing in this period.<sup>136</sup> Since Alaric’s troops were in need of resources, it is very likely that they did not miss the opportunity to take these products, storming these buildings.

124 The presence of porphyry shafts could be related to the fact that this material was frequently used in objects (such as craters, amphorae, glasses, etc.) related to wine and the god Bacchus (Simona PERNA: Skeuomorphism and Manufacturing Considerations of Vases in Calcite Alabaster and Other Decorative Stone from the Roman Period, in: Miguel Cisneros Cunchillos (ed.): *Imitaciones de piedras preciosas y ornamentales en época romana: color, simbolismo y lujo, (Anejos de AEspA XCIII)*, Madrid: CSIC, 2021, 59; Virginia GARCÍA-ENTERO, Raul ARANDA, Simona PERNA: Vasa de Porfido Roddo. Ejemplares de Hispania, *Veleia*, 41 (2024), 159), and that already from the moment of creation of the Temple of the Sun the porticos of this enclosure were used to store the “*vina fiscalia*” (Filippo COARELLI: *Statio. I luoghi dell’amministrazione nell’antica Roma*, 297–298 and 303). Contrary to the fact that wine distributions in the Temple of the Sun had already taken place in Aurelian’s time, see: Domenico VERA: Aureliano, Valentiniano I e il vino del Populus Romanus, *AnTard* 13 (2006), 251–259.

125 Giovanni GENTILI: Aspetti della religiosità in età costantiniana, in: Gemma Sena Chiesa (ed.): *Costantino 313 d.C. L’Editto di Milano e il tempo della tolleranza*, Milano: Electa, 2012, 68.

126 Michèle Renée SALZMAN: A New ‘Topography of Devotion,’ 162–163; Donato COLLI: Costantino, il Sol Invictus e il palazzo Sessoriano. Spunti, dati e considerazioni per una ricostruzione della residenza imperiale, *Journal of Ancient Topography* XXX (2020), 289, foot note 130.

127 Giovanni GENTILI: Aspetti della religiosità in età costantiniana, 65–66.

128 Andrea CARANDINI (ed.): *Atlante di Roma Antica*, 486.

129 Maria Fabricius HANSEN: *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, 111.

130 Alison FRANTZ: From Paganism to Christianity in the Temples of Athens, *D.O.P.* 19 (1965), 187; Giancarlo RINALDI: *Pagani e cristiani. La storia di un conflitto (secoli I–IV)*, Roma: Carocci, 2020, 282.

131 Ottavio BUCARELLI: Il tempio di Serapide sul Quirinale. Note di archeologia e topografia tra Antichità e Medioevo, in: Eric C. De Sena (ed.): *The Roman Empire during the Severan Dynasty: Case Studies in History, Art, Architecture, Economy and Literature, Piscataway*: Gorgias Press, 2013, 2010–211.

132 On these monumental staircases, see: Enrico GALLOCCIO: Le strutture romane lungo il pendio del Quirinale, in: Maria Grazia Picozzi (ed.): *Palazzo Colonna. Giardini. La storia e le antichità*, Roma: De Luca Editori, 2018, 45–72.

133 Massimiliano GHILARDI: In una urbe totus orbis interiit. Il sacco alariciano di Roma tra mito e realtà, in: Gianluca Pilara (ed.): *I barbari che presero Roma. Il sacco del 410 e le sue conseguenze*, Roma: Aracne, 2010, 293–312; Riccardo SANTANGELI VALENZANI: Dall’evento al dato archeologico. Il sacco del 410 attraverso la documentazione archeologica, in: Johannes Lipps, Carlos Machado, Philipp Von Rummel (eds.): *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD: The Event, its Context and its Impact (Roma 2010)*, Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 2013, 35–39; Ottavio BUCARELLI: Il tempio di Serapide sul Quirinale, 2010–211.

134 Filippo COARELLI: *Statio. I luoghi dell’amministrazione nell’antica Roma*, 297–298 and 303.

135 Carlos MACHADO: *Urban Space and Aristocratic Power in Late Antique Rome, AD 270–535*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, 52–54.

136 Henry DEY: *Roma nel Medioevo*, 57–60.

## Conclusions

The use of porphyry was much more restricted than that of other materials, such as white marble, coloured marble and granite,<sup>137</sup> because of the hardness of the stone, which increased production costs, the difficulties derived from its extraction in the quarries and its transport through the Egyptian desert, its high cost, the highest of those collected in Diocletian's Edict (31.1: with a value of 250 denarii/p<sup>3</sup>), and its symbolic association with imperial power and divinity, which relegated its use mainly to imperial architecture. At the same time, there must have been a strict control over the production and use of this stone<sup>138</sup> (the preserved shafts suggest a production based on standardised measures, Table I), a control that perhaps favoured its distribution following channels different from that of other marbles, even those from imperial quarries. Indeed, no porphyry pieces have been documented either in the "statio marmorum" of Porto (where the material was subject to control by the state authority<sup>139</sup>), or in other state-owned warehouses in Rome.<sup>140</sup>

It was from the Tetrarchy that the use of porphyry experienced a greater diffusion, being now one of the preferred stones for the realisation of imperial portraits and sarcophagi intended for the most prominent members of the imperial family, but also to decorate architectural spaces of special relevance for the emperor, both from Rome and abroad, as can be seen in the palaces of Split and Felix Romuliana and, later, in the city of Constantinople. Coinciding with the return of the emperors to Rome, during the rule of Valentinian III, porphyry was once again very present in some constructions promoted by the papacy, mainly by Sixtus III.

Although many of the works erected at this time were promoted by the bishop of Rome, the presence of the porphyry cannot be explained without a direct intervention of the emperor. This is because the preservation and restoration

of public buildings had to pass during the administrative reforms of the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD to the *praefectura urbis* on which the *cura urbis* depended.<sup>141</sup> This office, which was under the direct authority of the emperor, was therefore responsible for the preservation of Rome's public structures and the management of the *spolia*.<sup>142</sup> On the contrary, the bishop of Rome still in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD did not have any authority over the buildings of Rome,<sup>143</sup> a prerogative that he will only assume from the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>144</sup>

Hence, it is the emperor, perhaps also through members of his family and the *praefectus urbi* and other officials, who grants the possibility of accessing certain *spolia* from public buildings in the city,<sup>145</sup> as would happen in a special way with the architectural elements in porphyry. The use of this stone, therefore, added to the prestige that imperial favour gave it, and appears in special way in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD linked to some of the most important baptisteries in the city (St John Lateran and St Mary Major), or in structures associated with water and purification, such as in the fountain arranged in the centre of the atrium of St Peter's Basilica. In addition, many of the architectural elements in porphyry used in early Christian architecture would be *spolia*, a circumstance that allowed adding to the normal symbolic connotations of this stone, the prestige that the place of origin of the pieces gave it. Just think of the vestibule of the Lateran baptistery, where the two large porphyry shafts, which we have assumed came from the Temple of the Sun, were arranged next to bases and capitals of the Temple of Venus Genetrix of the Forum of

137 On the use of porphyry in columns, see: Dario DEL BUFALO: *Porphyry, Red Imperial Porphyry: Power and Religion*, 177–193, n° C1–C89.

138 For example, in 108–109 AD the quarries of Mons Claudianus and Mons Porphyrites were placed under the responsibility of the same imperial slave, *Epaphroditos Kaisaros Sigerianus*, Patrizio PENSABENE, Javier Á. DOMINGO: Il cantiere, l'approvvigionamento dei marmi, il trasporto e costi dei grandi monoliti, 539, 555.

139 Simon J. KEAY: Making Rome a City of Marble: Reconsidering the Organization of Marble Import, Storage and Distribution at Portus, in: Diana Gorostidi Pi, Anna Gutiérrez García-M. (eds.): *Titvli – Images – Marmora. Materia y prestigio en mármol (Anejos AEspA XCV)*, Madrid: CSIC, 2022, 551–553.

140 See: Patrizio PENSABENE: *Le vie del marmo*.

141 André CHASTAGNOL: *La préfecture urbaine à Rome dans le Bas-Empire*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960, 30–36; Carlos MACHADO: *Urban Space and Aristocratic Power*, 65; Andrea Antonio VERARDI: *Le strutture del potere*, 90.

142 Carlos MACHADO: *Urban Space and Aristocratic Power*, 30–33, 183–184; Michèle Renée SALZMANN: *The Falls of Rome*, 56–57.

143 Michèle Renée SALZMANN: *The Falls of Rome*, 133–134; Julia HILLNER: Families, Patronage and the Titular Churches of Rome, in: Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner (eds.): *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 225–261; Kim BOWES: *Private Worship, Public Values and Religious Change in Late Antiquity*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

144 Lucrezia SPERA: Il papato e Roma nell'VIII secolo. Rileggere la svolta istituzionale attraverso la documentazione archeologica, *RACr* 92 (2016), 393–394, 412–414; Henry DEY: Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Construction Techniques in Early Medieval Rome, c. 650–750, *PBSR* 87 (2019), 177–205; Paolo DELOGU: *Roma all'inizio del Medioevo. Storie, luoghi, persone (secoli VI–IX)*, Roma: Carocci editore, 2022, 62, 171; Henry DEY: *Roma nel Medioevo*, 159–170.

145 Patrizio PENSABENE: L'architettura costantiniana e il fenomeno del reimpiego fra traditio e innovatio, in: Mariarosaria Barbera (ed.): *Costantino 313 d.C.*, Milano: Electa, 2013b, 35; Manuela GIANANDREA: The Artistic Patronage of the Popes in Fifth-Century Rome, 194.

Caesar, sharing space with friezes-architrave of the portico of the Temple of Hadrian.

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**Table 1: List of ancient porphyry shafts and their dimensions.**

Height	Diameter	Number of shafts	Location	Bibliography
750 cm approx.	Zavičajni	8	Hagia Sophia, Constantinople	Moneti 1993, 160; Bauer 2009, 59–62.
720–728 cm	Lower diameter: 77 cm; diameter of the flare, or imoscapo: 87 cm	2	Lateran baptistery, vestibule	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C12; Brandenburg 2004, 37–54; Pensabene 2014, 266. Diameters reconstructed by the author.
700 cm	88 cm		Baths of Caracalla, <i>frigidarium</i>	DeLaine 1997, 262.
< 880 cm <sup>1</sup>	96 cm		Baths of Caracalla, between the <i>frigidarium</i> and the <i>natatio</i>	DeLaine 1997, 263.
	94 cm	4	Temple of Venus and Rome, flanking the two apses of the cells	Lorenzatti 1990, 134
	85 cm	4	Basilica of Maxentius, at the south entrance	Carè 2005, 61.
600 cm	74–82 cm	16	Temple of Venus and Rome, on the side walls of the cells	Lorenzatti 1990, 134; Del Bufalo 2018, n. C9.
580 cm		2	St. Chrysogonus, altar arch	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C28.
503–541 cm		8	Lateran baptistery, in the centre of the baptistery	Pensabene 2014, 189–190; Del Bufalo 2018, n. C5.
480 cm		2	S. Paolo f/m, chapel of San Stefano	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C25.
420 cm		2	S. Maria in Domnica, triumphal arch	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C23.
410 cm		4	St Mary Major, altar	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C18.
385 cm		2	Sistine Library of the Vatican (from <i>Piazza San Silvestro</i> )	Aurigemma 2000, 463.
380 cm		1	Il Gesù, chapel of the Passion	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C22.
320 cm		4	S. Carlo ai Catinari, altar	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C19.
311–315	45	4	Mausoleum of Diocletian, Split	Domingo, Matetić Poljak 2023, 401.
300 cm		2	Next to the Curia	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C8.
300 cm		4	S. Maria in Trastevere	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C27.
280 cm		2	S. Marco, altar	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C21.
> 270 cm		1	Near to the Arch of Titus	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C7.
240 cm		4	St John Lateran, Corsini Chapel	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C13.
240 cm		1	Sancta Sanctorum Chapel	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C14.
240 cm		4	San Lorenzo f/m, altar	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C15.
240 cm		2	Pantheon, third altar on the right	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C20.
240 cm		2	S. Paolo f/m, chapel of San Lorenzo	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C24.
240 cm		2	S. Pietro in Vaticano, altar of S. Processus and Marinius	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C29.
240 cm		2	S. Pietro in Vaticano, transept altar	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C30.
235 cm		2	Santa Praxede, altar	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C16.
232 cm		2	Lateran baptistery, oratory of Saint John Evangelist	Pensabene 2014, 271–272; Del Bufalo 2018, n. C10.
220 cm		2	Temple of the Divo Romulo	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C6.
220 cm		10	St Mary Major, chapel of the Crucifix	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C17.
220 cm		4	S. Paolo f/m, altar of Confession	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C26.
220 cm		4	S. Pancraccio, altar	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C31.
206 cm		2	Lateran baptistery, oratory of Saint John Baptist	Pensabene 2014, 271–272; Del Bufalo 2018, n. C11.
160 cm		1	Catacomb of St Praetextatu	Del Bufalo 2018, n. C32.
	35–40 cm	32	Temple of Venus and Rome, in the internal niches	Lorenzatti 1990, 134.

1 This measurement corresponds to the total height of the column, including base, shaft, and capital.

## Sažetak

### Analiza i značenje uporabe crvenog porfira (Mons Porphyrites) u klasičnoj rimskoj i kasnoantičkoj arhitekturi: hram Sunca u Rimu i Lateranska krstionica

Crveni porfir iz kamenoloma Mons Porphyrites (Gebel, Dokhan, Egipat) u antici se visoko cijenio zbog svoje trajnosti, ljepote i povezanosti s carskom i božanskom moći, a posebno zbog svoje purpurne boje. Iako se izvorno koristio uglavnom na građevinama koje su promicale Carstvo, u kasnom rimskom i ranom kršćanskom razdoblju njegova se uporaba širila reciklažom materijala (spolia). Taj proces nije imao samo praktične razloge, kao što je oskudica kad je riječ o novim materijalima, nego i one ideološke, davao je simboličan status kamenu koji je valjalo osuvremeniti i prenijeti u novi povijesni kontekst.

Od vremena kada su Rimljani, prije osamnaeste godine pr. Kr., otkrili navedene kamenolome, porfir se koristio pri izgradnji važnih spomenika, poput carskih rezidencija, hramova i mauzoleja, čija je popularnost rasla tijekom drugog i trećeg stoljeća nove ere. S dolaskom kršćanstva porfir je dobio novo značenje, povezano s krvlju Krista i mučenika. Konstantin ga je rabio na kršćanskim građevinama, poput bazilike svetog Petra i Lateranske krstionice, kao i pri ukrašavanju nove prijestolnice, Konstantinopola.

Tijekom petoga stoljeća, u vrijeme papinstva Siksta III. (423.–440.), u Rimu je ponovo zaživjela uporaba porfira. To je koincidiralo s povratkom cara Valerijana u grad (zadnji car koji je u njemu stalno stolovao bio je Maksencije). Siksto III. obnovio je Lateransku krstionicu, premjestio porfirne stupove koje je bio donio Konstantin, dodajući u novom vestibulu još dva. Porfirni su stupovi uporabljeni i na krstionici bazilike *Santa Maria Maggiore*. Nekoliko desetljeća kasnije, papa Honorije Lateranskoj je krstionici dodao dva oratorija, a ulaz je također dobio dva bočna porfirna trupa stupa. U tom se razdoblju porfir posebno koristio za krstionice, povezujući purpurnu boju s kršćanskom simbolikom krštenja i krvi Kristove.

U posljednjem dijelu studije ukazuje se na to da su stupovi vestibula Lateranske krstionice bili skinuti iz hrama Sunca koji je Aurelije dao izgraditi u Rimu. Potvrda te hipoteze zasniva se na verifikaciji dvaju aspekata – je li hram Sunca doista imao porfirne stupove i je li napušten i rastavljen u vrijeme Siksta III. Kada je riječ o prvoj premisi, iako iskapanja nisu iznijela na vidjelo nikakve porfirne stupove, spominje ih tekst iz šesnaestog stoljeća. Usto, dimenzije trupova stupova iz Lateranske krstionice vrlo su slične dimenzijama osam porfirnih trupova stupova iz Aja Sofje u Konstantinopolu, za koje jedan tekst iz devetog stoljeća navodi da se nalaze u hramu Sunca. Druga premisa također je moguća jer uz carske dekrete iz ranog petog stoljeća, koji su ohrabivali reciklažu materijala iz poganskih hramova,

još neki podaci ukazuju na mogućnost da su Alaricovi *tropoas*-i 410. godine oštetili hram, olakšavajući time njegovo razaranje koje je ubrzo slijedilo.

**Ključne riječi:** porfir, tijelo stupa, rimska arhitektura, reutilizacija, Hram Sunca, Lateranska krstionica