



## Summary :

The Roman sculpture in Asia Minor is stylistically different from the sculpture of Rome or the other provinces of the empire. The regional artistic tradition of the Hellenistic period played a decisive role in this. The major production centres were Pergamon, Aphrodisias, Ephesus, Side and Perge. The sculptural types include idealistic statues, portrait statues of the emperors and private individuals, figurines of gods and heroes, reliefs on public buildings, funerary and votive reliefs, as well as relief sarcophagi.

## Date

Roman period

## Geographical Location

Asia Minor

## 1. Influences and stylistic features

The regional Hellenistic traditions and the trends predominant in Rome, the capital of the empire, were the basic influences on the creations of the artists of Asia Minor. However, the local Hellenistic and the imported Italian features are very often not only exceptionally difficult to be detected but also to be distinguished. The works of the period of the Republic and of the Imperial times, although Roman in their conception, remained Greek in their style, typology and execution. They preserved their regional elements, without adopting the artistic trends which were developing in Rome and were followed by the workshops of other provinces, where, nevertheless, the tradition in sculpture was limited or almost non-existent. This conclusion can be drawn from the study of works from almost all the western provinces of the Roman Empire. Any differences in their works, in contrast to what seems to be the case in Asia Minor, occurs mainly due to lack of experience, skill and prototypes rather than the influences of certain local trends. In the Roman [province of Asia](#) and in the provinces of what is today central and eastern Turkey, Rome contributed a great deal, especially in typology. However, the Hellenistic tradition was decisive not only in typology, but also in the style and the aesthetics of sculpture.<sup>1</sup> Influences from the Hellenistic art survived even in several works of the 4th cent. AD.

The sculpture of the Roman period in Asia Minor preserves certain general shared characteristics. The latest studies have already started to deal with issues like the localisation, recording and classification of local traditions, but it is not yet possible to define all the particular characteristics of the regional workshops. This painstaking attempt is achieved through the comparison of the works from various cities and other sites of Asia Minor. However, it should be stressed that the place of discovery of a work does not always coincides with its place of production.

## 2. Workshops

The art of the [School of Pergamon](#) was the main influence on several of the major centres of production, such as [Ephesus](#), [Aphrodisias](#) and [Side](#). The School of Pergamon, mainly from the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. AD onwards, maintains its achievements, which had reached a peak already in the middle and the late [Hellenistic period](#). Side is mainly known for the production of classical and Hellenistic copies of exceptional quality. Their main characteristic is the accuracy in copying the classical prototype, which is achieved as the sculptor adheres closely to the details of the originals.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the works from nearby [Perge](#) are usually characterized by a tendency for linearity, which decreases the plasticity of the figures. Problems occur when we try to define the particular characteristics of the workshops of Ephesus. Although the production of this city is impressively rich, there are several divergences, which should be interpreted as the result of influences from a great number of workshops from various regions of Asia Minor. The only safe argument, mainly deriving from the study of the architectural sculptures of the public buildings in Ephesus, is that the execution of the sculptures adheres to the artistic features of the School of Pergamon.



[Aphrodisias](#) was also well-known for the artistic production, mainly from the first half of the 2nd cent. AD. A distinctive feature in the works from Aphrodisias is the strong contrast of light and dark, which is achieved with the intense use of the drill. Moreover, the sculpture of Aphrodisias influenced to a great extent the workshops of [Pisidian Antioch](#).

Roman sculpture have also been found in several other cities of Asia Minor, such as [Miletus](#) and [Didyma](#),<sup>3</sup>[Tralleis](#),<sup>4</sup>[Sagallastos](#),<sup>5</sup>[Boubon](#),<sup>6</sup> Antioch.<sup>7</sup> However, the research has not reached any conclusions that would allow extensive discussion on the subject.

The Roman sculptural works from Asia Minor very often copy classical types of the 5th and 4th cent. BC, as well as several Hellenistic ones. The ancient visitor would have admired copies of classical prototypes next to portrait statues of the Roman emperors or of eminent residents of the city, portrayed in one of the several known **idealistic** types or their variants.

### 3. Works of mass production

The study of the sculptural works of Asia Minor reveals the formation of two different tendencies, which correlate with the sophistication of the artists and the patrons, and what is more, with the artists' education and appreciation of the classical prototypes. This particular dualism justifies the differences in execution and generally in the level of quality between the numerous votive and funerary reliefs of the 2nd and 3rd cent. AD which feature a simpler style,<sup>8</sup> and the impressive public reliefs, such as the [Parthian monument](#) in Ephesus (169-180 AD).

Several marble figurines were included in the works intended for the wider public, from various places in Asia Minor.<sup>9</sup> Most of them represent male and female deities in types of the Classical and [Hellenistic period](#). A great number of them were produced in the workshops of Side and Docimium, which appear to have specialised in mass production. The statuettes of [Aphrodite](#) and [Tyche](#) (Fortuna), in various types and variants, were particularly popular, as their cult was probably quite widespread in the lower classes. The most prevailing male deities, in terms of numbers, were [Apollo](#) and [Asclepius](#).

### 4. Portraits

In the Hellenistic period the public places and buildings of the big cities in Asia Minor, such as Ephesus, Pergamum, Miletus and [Smyrna](#) were adorned with the statues of the rulers or of the important local officials, as well as with other sculptural works and groups. In the Roman period this particular tendency not only survived, but it was also taken a step further and it was adapted into the monumental character of the Roman public buildings: the **triumphal arches** and various types of fountains, whose tall facades were embellished with statues of the emperors, **private individuals**, deities and **heroes**. Multi-storeyed facades were added in many of the already existing [theatres](#) or in the open spaces in the central areas of the cities. This trend predominated in the 2nd cent. AD.

The Romans promoted the honours to the emperor further than the Attalids and the Seleucids.<sup>10</sup> The unique style of the [imperial portrait statues](#) in Asia Minor, influenced by the Hellenistic tradition was stressed very early.<sup>11</sup> The only exceptions are probably the statuary type of the cuirassier, as the pose of the figure, the cuirass type and most of all its decoration, do not differ from the similar statues of Rome and the western provinces.<sup>12</sup> Typical examples are two representations of [Nero](#) (54-68 AD) in the cuirassier type: one statue from Tralleis and a relief from Aphrodisias. Typologically they resemble the several examples of the West, but stylistically they deviate from them, as they display a soft form, lack of linearity and intense 'contraposto', remnants from the Hellenistic art tradition of the region.

The same ascertainment can be expressed for the idealistic types of the Roman Imperial portraits.<sup>13</sup> The typology of the statues adopted by the workshops in the Province of Asia is not different from the rest of the eastern and western Roman provinces. The examples from the Asia Minor are more than 20 and include statues as well as sculptured reliefs. Only their Italian counterparts exceed them in number.



## 5. Sculptured reliefs on public monuments

The reliefs on the public monuments, contrary to the imperial statues, are considerably different from those of the West. This discrepancy is caused by the Hellenistic reliefs with mythological, allegorical and less often historical scenes, which had their own peculiar character and survived during the Imperial period. These served again as the prototypes for the local sculptors until the 3rd cent. AD. The compositions with figures of intense movements and the twisting of the bodies were features unknown to the art of Rome. The citizens there were accustomed to a straightforward, frontal and isolated positioning of the figures, elements that do not occur in Asia Minor.

## 6. Grave stelae and sarcophagi

A considerable number of the sculptors of the Roman period had specialised in the production of sarcophagi and grave stelae. The Asia Minor [sarcophagi](#) differ in their iconography and typology from those from Italy and Attica. The major typological differentiation is in their form. While the architectural features and a tendency for decoration predominate in the Asia Minor sarcophagi, the rest are actually a relief area for narrative scenes with mythological, or less frequently, historical subjects. The sarcophagi from the [workshops of Lycia](#), with a slight concave lid, remained very popular until the 6th cent. AD.

The sarcophagi from Lycia and [Pamphylia](#) are sometimes decorated with mythological battle scenes, which often include the [Amazons](#). However, the choice of complicated scenes with compositions of figures does not appeal to the artists of the regional workshops.

The sarcophagi from Pamphylia, known from the finds of Side and Perge, are usually decorated with winged Nikai holding wreaths, an iconographic tradition of Rome. It is specifically adopted from the iconographic programme of the triumphal arch, a building of public character and Roman conception, whose monumental character is established in the Early Roman period. Another influence from Italy, particularly from Etruria, is the depiction of the deceased or of the couple sculptured on the lid of the sarcophagus, a type known in Rome already from the Antonine period (138-193 AD). In Asia Minor, from late 2nd cent. AD, the kline type lid often replaced the gabled lid in the form of a pediment roof. The major production centre of sarcophagi was Docimium in Phrygia, which exported most of its works to Rome and Attica.<sup>14</sup> The deceased and his relatives are frequently portrayed in [busts](#). A typical example from Laodicea Catacecaumene in [Lycaonia](#) portrays the busts of the deceased and his spouse surrounded by Erotes and Nikai. The coiffure of both figures reflect the iconographical types of [Antoninus Pius](#) (138-161 AD) and his spouse, Faustina the Younger, helping scholars to date it to the period of the emperor or a little later.

There is a preference towards the sarcophagi on which the figures are placed in the intercolumniations, either freestanding in the background or in niches, thus creating in effect small temples for their placement. These are called columnar sarcophagi. Their production flourished from the last third of the 2nd cent. AD and stopped abruptly in the decade 260-270 AD after a bad economic crisis.

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Glossary :

	<b>bust, the</b>
	The depiction of the head and the bust in sculpture. It often stands on a small square base. The lowest part of the portrait sometimes bears spikenard's leaves decoration.
	<b>idealized form, the</b>
	The depiction of an emperor or a citizen bearing the characteristics of a god.
	<b>triumphal arch</b>
	(Rom. :) A structure in the shape of a monumental archway, built to celebrate the victory of a Roman general or Emperor. (Byz. Archit.) The arch formed above the Horaia Pyle (Royal Door), which frames the curve of the conch of the apse and separates the bema from the nave.