

Sculptures of Emperor Antoninus Pius in Egypt

أعمال النحت الخاصة بالإمبراطور أنطونينوس بيوس في مصر

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Abstract

During the reign of the emperor Antoninus Pius, Egypt received attention. As a state of the Roman Empire, which resulted in a lot of artistic works such as architectural and religious buildings, sculptures, Alexandrian coins, etc. which have their own characteristics, and these features can be used to know the dates of these works, and many of these works are still in good condition. This paper particularly concerned with studying the Sculptures of the emperor Antoninus Pius, that were found in Egypt. This study includes an introduction, then a historical overview of the emperor Antoninus Pius during his reign, followed by a descriptive study of some of Antoninus Pius sculptures that have been found in Egypt, whether formal sculptures or religious reliefs. In addition to research analysis of these works, which is to display its technical features, followed by a conclusion, a list of references and a list of figures.

Key words: Drill, light and shadow, portrait, temples, wall- reliefs.

المخلص

حظيت مصر خلال فترة حكم الإمبراطور أنطونينوس بيوس كولاية من الولايات التابعة للإمبراطورية الرومانية على الاهتمام الذي نتج عنه الكثير من الأعمال الفنية مثل المنشآت المعمارية والدينية والمنحوتات والعملات السكندرية وغيرها والتي لها ما يميزها من السمات الخاصة بها حيث يمكن استخدام هذه السمات في تأريخ هذه الأعمال، وما زال العديد من تلك الأعمال باقي بحالة جيدة، وقد اهتمت هذا الورقة البحثية بصفة خاصة بدراسة أعمال النحت الخاصة بالإمبراطور أنطونينوس بيوس التي عُثِرَ عليها في مصر. وقد اشتمل هذا البحث على مقدمة ثم نبذة تاريخية عن أعمال الإمبراطور أنطونينوس بيوس أثناء فترة حكمه، ثم دراسة وصفية لبعض أعمال النحت الخاصة بأنطونينوس بيوس التي عُثِرَ عليها في مصر سواء نحت رسمي أو نحت ديني، ثم دراسة تحليلية لهذه الأعمال والتي تتمثل في عرض السمات الفنية الخاصة بها ويليه خاتمة ثم قائمة المراجع وملحق الأشكال.

الكلمات الدالة: المتقاب، الضوء والظل، الصور الشخصية، المعابد، النحت الجداري.

1-Introduction

Antoninus Pius reigned for twenty-three years. He ruled from 138 to 161 AD. It was a period of prosperity and stability that spanned the entire Roman Empire and it

resulted in many artworks that express interest in art¹, the most notable of which are sculptures of Emperor Antoninus Pius, whether standalone sculptures or wall-reliefs.

2-Historical overview of Emperor Antoninus Pius

In 138 AD, Emperor Antoninus Pius succeeded Emperor Hadrian. At that time, he was 52 years old; Hadrian adopted him shortly before his death, and the Senate referred to him as (Pius), which means the pious. He was very loyal to Hadrian², Emperor Antoninus Pius was considered one of the best Roman emperors, and he was known for his efficiency in managing the affairs of the empire, He was generous, sociable and loved by all and tolerant of people of other religions³.

His reign was peaceful; no new wars were fought to maintain the integrity of the empire⁴, He was satisfied with the borders drawn by Hadrian to the empire⁵, and the public treasury was full of money, and he used this money for construction and reconstruction, he also spent on social care, health and education⁶. Numerous works of art, particularly sculptures, from the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius have survived. They can be categorized as follows:

3-Formal sculpture

The main reason for the popularity of Formal sculptures of the Roman emperors is that the people of the various Roman states, including Egypt, are familiar with the emperor who sits on the throne of Rome, so it was necessary for Rome to send one or more portraits representing the Roman emperor to the various Roman states to copy other portraits from them and circulate them in the states⁷. Portraits of Emperor Antoninus Pius discovered in Egypt include:

3.1- Portrait-head of Antoninus Pius (Fig. 1.A,B)

¹- Grant, (Michael), *The Antonines (The Roman Empire in Transition)*, London& New York,1996, p.9.

²- Grant,*The Antonines*, p.21.

³-Richard, (D. Weigel), *Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161)*, Western, 1998, p.84.

⁴-Magie, (David), *Historia Augusta, Life of Hadrian*, Vol. I, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921, pp.103:117.

⁵- Richard, *Antoninus Pius*, p.85.

⁶-Williams, (Walter), "*Antoninus Pius and the Control of Provincial Embassies*", *Historia* 16, 1967, pp. 470.

⁷-Grégoire, (Henri), *Byzantion*, IV, Germany, 1964, p.479.

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Over-life-size portrait-head of Antoninus Pius found in Kom Ombo, kept now in the Sohag Museum Inv. 2097, it depicts a middle-aged man. This is evident in the facial features, which appear in frontal pose with individual facial features; Soft forehead and The eyebrows are light incised with individual hairs, the eyes are almost almond-shaped and look forward, the iris is circular shape but not complete, the pupil is slightly hidden under the upper eyelids, the cheeks are fleshy without visible face wrinkles or thick flesh folds, the mouth is closed with thin lips, there are two nasal folds encircle the mouth, but not deep and not clearly visible. The frontal view with a slightly looking upwards expresses a serious look. The hair, beard and mustache are meticulously sculpted by a highly experienced sculptor; the hair on the neck and back of the head looks soft and is simply handled. Hair appears wavy, emerging from the center of the head in different directions and each strand appears to have been carefully treated, while strands at the front of the head and forehead become more wavy and stand out of the face and ears⁸.

The drill was used to dig tufts of hair at the front of the head and forehead to reflect light and shadow. The mustache was carved in the shape of semi-vertical tufts positioned around the mouth. It is split in the middle of the upper lip and extends downwards to connect with seemingly light and short beard, sculpted into neat tufts arranged in several semi-vertical separated rows. The mustache and beard resemble tufts of hair on the front of the head. The portrait-head has been restored, especially in the chin and mouth, and the nose is completely broken. This portrait follows the first type of the portraits of Antoninus Pius, known as the Formia Type. It is likely that it dates from 138 to 140 AD⁹.

4.2- Portrait-head of Antoninus Pius (Fig. 2.A,B)

Portrait-head of Antoninus Pius found in Ashmounin, kept now in Cairo Museum Inv. JE. 41650, he is depicted with his typical individual facial features: elongated head, long face, and arched eyebrows¹⁰. His eyelids are thick, his eyes are smooth and sunken, featuring human eye dimples, his mouth is half open, his nose is wide¹¹, and his mustache is dense and separated from the center by the crease of his

⁸-Masoud,(Abdel Hamid), "A new portrait-head of Antoninus Pius from Egypt", Classical Papers, vol. xvii, Cairo, 2022, pp. 33:34.

⁹-Masoud, A new portrait-head, p. 35.

¹⁰-De Water, (Anouk), *The imperial statues of Roman Egypt: Is there a connection between their style, placement and function*, Master Thesis Classics and ancient civilizations: Egyptology, Leiden, 2006, p.29, nr.33.

¹¹- Mommsen, (Theodor), *Das Weltreich, der Cäsaren*, Leipzig, 1933, p.493.

upper lip, and falls down, leading to the thick, spiky beard with long wavy hair¹². The beard tufts on the cheeks are thick, long and wavy; some of them are shaped like boucles, reflecting the influence of light and shadow. The chin is long and slightly pointed¹³.

The forehead appears raised, topped with prominent, simplified tufts of hair, which appear to have been eroded and completed with estuary. The hair on the back of the head appears as thin, irregular tufts¹⁴, The neck appears long, and part of the nose, right eyebrow, and chin are smashed, and this portrait displays indications of aging through the sharp folds around the mouth and nose. This portrait-head follows the second type of Antoninus Pius' portraits, which is classified as Sala Croce Greca 595 type, thought to have been created between 147-149 AD¹⁵.

5-Religious wall-reliefs

Many religious wall-reliefs, both standalone and mounted on temple walls, that date to the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius have been discovered in Egypt. They include:

5.1-A wall-relief depicting Antoninus Pius(Fig. 3)

A stela in the Egyptian style found in Koptos, kept now in Cairo Museum Inv.JE. 27084, which is rectangular with rounded-top, it contains Greek text. This stela has three registers. The first register is decorated from the top of the winged sun disc with a cobra snake dangles from it¹⁶.

The second register, which is the main scene, it is surrounded from above by the symbol of the sky and from below Antoninus Pius appears to the right in the Egyptian pose with unclear facial features¹⁷. He wears the white crown, and a royal kilt with a bull's tail hanging from behind. He makes offerings with his both hands to

¹²-Graindor, (Paul), *Bustes et statues-portraits d Égypte romaine*, Le Caire, 1953, p.53, pl.XIIa,b.

¹³-Vermeule, (Cornelius), *Greek and Roman sculpture in America*, California, 1981, pp. 275, 394, no. 13.

¹⁴-Kiss, (Zsolt), *Étude sur le portrait imperial romain en Égypte*, TCAM 23, Varsovie, 1984, pp.61,158, figs.130-131.

¹⁵- Grimm, (Günter), *Kunst der Ptolemäer und Römerzeit im Ägyptischen Museum Kairo*, Mainz am Rhein, 1975, p.20, taf.37,40-41.

¹⁶-Bernand, (André), *Pan du désert*, Leiden, 1977, pp.205, 206.

¹⁷-Milne, (Joseph), *A History of Egypt under Roman Rule*, London, 1924, p.49, fig.43.

Harpokrates, who is depicted in the middle of the scene wearing a crown consisting of a sun disk and two feathers, he puts a long cloak on his shoulders falling on his back and he holds a scepter in his right hand¹⁸. While he is putting his finger in his mouth and behind him Goddess Isis is sitting on the throne, wearing Hathor's crown and breastfeeding Harpokrates the child, who is depicted again from her left breast. There are a table with different kinds of offerings between the emperor and Harpokrates¹⁹.

The third registerit contains a dedicatory Greek text with eight lines²⁰, They include the titles of Emperor Antoninus Pius, as well as mentioning the renovation of two walls of the temple. This stela is dedicated to the Goddess Isis and her son Harpokrates. This stela was established by the priest of Isis, Paniskos, the son of ptollis and it dates back to the 12th year of the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius²¹.

5.2- A wall-relief depicting Antoninus Pius (Fig. 4)

Emperor Antoninus Pius is depicted on the facade of the so-called Hours gate to the East of Dendera main Temple, standing and wearing a short royal kilt with a bull's tail hanging from behind. He is also wearing a headdress and a *hemhem* crown on top, holding a long spear in both hands that is shaped like a falcon's head from the top and resembles the spear of Horus, with which he vanquishes evil²².

Horus of Behdet, who is standing in front of the emperor with a human body and a falcon head, wearing a double crown compounded with a feather crown. Horus of Behdet is holding the *was* scepter in his left hand and the *ankh* sign on his right, while the emperor performs the ritual of killing a crocodile. Isis appears behind Horus of Behdet, holding the *waj* scepter in her left hand and the *ankh* sign on her right. She is wearing a feathered crown with a sun disc²³.

6-An analytical study

Numerous works of art, particularly sculptures, from the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius were discovered in Egypt and have greatly influenced our understanding of the distinctive artistic characteristics of this time.

¹⁸-Bernand, (André), *Les portes du désert recueil des inscriptions grecques d'Antinopolis, Tentyris, Koptos, Apolonopolis Prava et Apollonopolis Magna*, Paris 1984, pp. 217, 218, pl.48, no. 73.

¹⁹-Milne, (Joseph), *Greek Inscriptions*, CGC 18, Le Caire, 1905, p.31, pl.III, no. 9252.

²⁰-Bernand, *Pan du desert*, pp.205, 206.

²¹-Milne, *A History of Egypt*, p.49, fig.43.

²²-Porter, (Bertha), & Moss, (Rosalind), *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*, vol.6, Oxford, 1991, S. 102 (2).

²³-Cauville, (Sylvie), *Dendara. La Porte d'Horus*, Le Cairo, 2021, p.37.

6-1First: formal sculpture

Emperor Antoninus Pius was depicted in his formal sculpture with hairstyle that was similar to one of the hairstyles that Emperor Hadrian adopted in his personal portraits. While his moustache was thinner than Hadrian's, and his beard covered the entirety of his chin, particularly below the mouth. It was pointed below the chin as opposed to Hadrian's beard which appeared round, and it was longer in its tufts than Hadrian's tufts. Before the time of the emperor Hadrian, the eye was smooth; neither²⁴. the pupil nor the human eye was carved. By contrast, during the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, the human eye and pupil were carved, but only in a limited range. Emperor Antoninus Pius's individual portraits can be categorized into three²⁵. basic types:

6.1.1The first type

This type, known as Formia type, shows Antoninus Pius as a middle-aged man. The hair is soft on the neck and the back of the head, but the tufts on the front of the head and forehead grow thicker and more wavy. The hair on the forehead is combed downward into heavy tufts, and there are three tufts arranged clearly above the middle of the forehead²⁶. A drill was used to dig the hair tufts from the forehead and front of the head in order to reflect light and shadow. The hair on the head stands out from the face and ears. The moustache was carved as a series of semi-vertical tufts positioned around the mouth. It is connected to the hair on the head and takes the shape of neatly placed tufts in numerous distinct semi-vertical rows; the tufts of the moustache and beard resemble the tufts of hair on the front of the head. This type may have first appeared between 138 and 140 AD.²⁷.

6.1.2The second type

Sala Croce Greca 595 type is the name of this type²⁸, which has thick tufts of hair styled above the forehead and combed down toward it, may have first appeared

²⁴-Abou El Dahab, (Hanan), *The carved portraits in Roman Egypt*, an unpublished master's thesis, Faculty of Arts, University of Alexandria, 1990, p.256.

²⁵-Graindor, *Bustes et statues-portraits*, p.53.

²⁶-Wegner, (Max), *Die Herrscherbildnisse in antoninischerZeit, Das römischeHerrscherbild II*, Band.4, Berlin, 1939, pp. 16,141, taf.3.

²⁷- Kleiner, (Diana), *Roman Sculpture*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1992, p. 268, fig. 231.

²⁸-Wegner, *Die Herrscherbildnisse in antoninischerZeit*, pp. 22,145, taf.4a.

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between 147 and 149 AD. It differs from the Formia type in that its hairstyle is simpler and has fewer tufts above the middle of the forehead. Its facial features are also more developed than those of the Formia type²⁹.

6.1.3 The third type

This type, known as the Vicennalia type, that appeared in only four portraits of Antoninus Pius, one of which is a bust that is still on display in the Vatican Museum³⁰. This type may have first appeared about 158 AD. The hair strands are thicker and more wavy than in the previous two styles, which is how it is distinguished. They resemble the youthful tufts Marcus Aurelius had, yet he too exhibited indications of age. Wrinkles appear on the forehead and around the nose³¹.

6.2 Second: religious wall -reliefs

The art of religious wall-reliefs in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods followed the pure Egyptian style, which appeared on the independent wall-reliefs used as religious monuments placed in places of worship, as well as the wall-reliefs that appeared on temple walls. There are many massive Egyptian temples from the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (Philae, Edfu, Kom Ombo, Dendera, Esna, and others), with religious murals in the Egyptian style on their walls³².

Several characteristics set religious-reliefs apart from official sculpture, including the use of Egyptian sculpting techniques like grid planning, frontal depiction, and indefinite facial features that do not express a personality on their own, the use of royal titles within royal cartouches, and the emperor being portrayed in an Egyptian form wearing Egyptian clothes, crowns, and insignia³³.

The continuity of depicting the rituals and offerings that the emperor performs in front of the Egyptian deities that were depicted on the walls of the temples before the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, the use of the ancient Egyptian language in the texts accompanying the scenes depicted on the religious wall-reliefs, even if some changes occurred during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, and if some few

²⁹-Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 2689, fig. 232.

³⁰-Wegner, *Die Herrscherbildnisse in antoninischer Zeit*, pp. 24,143, taf.6 b.

³¹-Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 269, fig. 233.

³²-Thompson, (Nancy), *Roman Art, A Resource for Educators, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 2007, p.125.

³³-Thompson, (Dorothy), *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, Princeton University Press, 1988, p.125.

independent works that use the Greek language, but the depicted scenes include Egyptian scenes³⁴.

7. Conclusion and results

A comparison of the elements of the study reveals that the most common element within Egypt is religious relief. In addition to standalone wall-reliefs, many of the walls of Egyptian temples derive from religious relief, followed by formal sculpture in terms of quantity. This arrangement resulted from the roles each of these elements were primarily made to perform.

The purpose of the formal sculpture was to inform the people of the reigning emperor, as it was placed in public places for the Egyptian and Greek general public to identify with the image of the emperor seated on the throne of the Roman Empire. so, there weren't many of these sculptures.

Due to the fact that religious reliefs were prevalent in places of worship and that people were constantly drawn to them due to their strong religious tendencies and connections to all facets of their lives, the purpose of religious reliefs is to reach out to priests and the general public. As a result, the emperor wanted to use religious reliefs to emphasize the idea of accepting and respecting Egyptian religion and culture. As a result, he carved his image on the temple walls while worshipping the various Egyptian deities. This interest stemmed from Egypt's importance to the Roman emperors, as well as its distinction from other states due to its economic wealth and their desire to control it for the benefit of the Roman people.

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³⁴- Robins, (Gay), *Egyptian painting and relief*, California, 1986, pp.12:14.

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9.List of figures



Figure (1.A,B) Marble portrait-head of Antoninus Pius, found in Kom Ombo, kept now in the Sohag Museum Inv. 2097, height: 0.45 m/ width: 0.33m, Masoud, *A new portrait-head* pp. 46-48, fig.1-7



Figure (2.A,B) Marble portrait-head of Antoninus Pius, found in Ashmounin, kept now in Cairo Museum Inv. JE. 41650, height: 0.38 m., De Water, *The imperial statues*, p.29, nr.33.



Figure (3) sandstone stela, found in Koptos, kept now in Cairo Museum Inv. JE.27084, Dimensions: 0.47*0.30*0.6m, Bernard, *Les portes du desert*, pp. 217, 218, pl.48, no. 73.



Figure (4) wall-relief, Horus Gate in the Dendera Temple, the northern exterior facade- the western post- first row, Cauville, *Dendara*, p.37.