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Romana
na Hispânia

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Escultura
Romana
en Hispania

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Sculpture
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A Land of Antique Collectors? Some Methodological Remarks on Late Antique Sculpture on the Iberian Peninsula

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Abstract: There is a large number of villas on the Iberian Peninsula that were either newly constructed during Late Antiquity or thoroughly renovated and furnished with high-quality mosaics. In contrast, the sculptural ensembles found in these buildings are primarily regarded as belonging to older collections taken over from earlier villas or acquired through trade. There exists reasonable doubt regarding this view. Starting with the octagonal villa of Valdetorres de Jarama and the villa of Quinta das Longas, a series of sculptures from other villas will be examined here, substantiating the suspicion that there are numerous late antique works among the sculptures that have so far mostly been dated to the Imperial period.

¿Una tierra de coleccionistas de la antigüedad? Algunas observaciones metodológicas sobre la escultura tardoantigua de la Península Ibérica.

Resumen: Hay un gran número de villas en la Península Ibérica que fueron construidas durante la Antigüedad tardía o fueron completamente renovadas y decoradas con mosaicos de alta calidad. Por el contrario, los conjuntos escultóricos que se encuentran en estos edificios se consideran principalmente como pertenecientes a colecciones más antiguas procedentes de villas anteriores o adquiridas a través del comercio. Existe una duda razonable con respecto a este punto de vista. Comenzando por la villa octogonal de Valdetorres de Jarama y la villa de Quinta das Longas, se examinarán aquí una serie de esculturas de otras villas, lo que corrobora la sospecha de que entre las esculturas que hasta el momento se han fechado en su mayoría en el periodo imperial, hay una serie de esculturas tardías.

It is obvious that a remarkable boom of “Hispanic villas took place in the fourth and fifth centuries, in both newly built villas and on existing ones extended or rebuilt: it involved architecture as well as innovative decoration.”¹ Mosaics feature as the most prominent component of the décor through which late antique elites expressed their aristocratic status, their sense of art, and their cultural participation in the Greco-Roman *paid-eia*,² and are unreservedly regarded as an integral part of the late antique renovation phases.³ The assessment of the second decorative element of villas on the Iberian Peninsula during this period, sculpture, is markedly different. Here, the conviction prevails that villas contained sculpture collections that had been amassed over longer periods of time and that the self-image of the ruling elites was strikingly reflected in this conscious “re-use and rearrangement of older artifacts in new settings.”⁴ Undoubtedly,

* This article is only intended to outline some methodological problems of late antique sculpture on the Iberian Peninsula while a more extensive study of this subject is under preparation. The centerpiece of our project is the reevaluation of sculptures from Valdetorres de Jarama; a full documentation has been made possible by the late Paloma Cabrera Bonet, chief curator of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid; Dirce Marzoli; Thomas Schattner (DAI Madrid); and Enrique Baquedano Perez (Museo Arqueológico Regional de Alcalá de Henares). Both the author and Hans R. Goette extend their gratitude to Antonio Carvalho, director of the Museu Nacional de Arqueologia in Lisbon, and Trinidad Nogales-Basarrate, director of the Museo Nacional de Arte Romano in Merida, whose collegial courtesy made it possible to record the sculpture finds from Quinta das Longas in their entirety. My thanks go to Hans R. Goette, Maria Luisa Loza Azuaga, Isabel Rodà de Llanza, Sasha Agins and not least to Lara F. Escobedo.

¹ Ripoll 2018, 426.

² Ripoll 2018, 438–441 (with further literature).

³ In a postscript to an important article, Hannestad (2014, 249) emphasized: “Among the obstacles mentioned in this survey is that sculpture has often been removed from its context while mosaics were part of the architecture. For this reason mosaics represent a vast material compared to the limited amount of sculpture preserved. However different these two groups of material may be, they will mostly have been part of the scheme of decoration and should consequently be studied together.”

⁴ Stirling 2007, 307–308; Ripoll 2018, 441 (“Besides mosaics and paintings, the villas of the imperial period and late antiquity contained sculpture amassed as collections or chosen in iconographic programs by owners over a long time; this was a Mediterranean-wide phenomenon.”)

prestigious older collections and the acquisition of earlier pieces were important features of late antique villa culture that helped to “ennoble recently built villas.”⁵ Yet it is more than surprising that residences newly built or extensively renovated during Late Antiquity would contain little or no contemporary sculpture at all.⁶ The explanation that “new statuary was not available” in the fourth and fifth centuries is not very likely in light of the last decades of research on late antique sculpture. Nor is there any reason to believe that the Iberian elites had markedly different attitudes towards sculpture than, say, in neighboring Aquitania, where the association of Imperial-era and late antique sculpture is prominently represented.⁷ Under these circumstances, one wonders whether the villa owners of this period were truly pure collectors of antiquities where sculpture is concerned.⁸

The so-called villa of Valdetorres de Jarama⁹ is a good starting point to describe the phenomenon that influences – and, more importantly, often impairs – our view of late antique sculpture on the Iberian Peninsula. Valdetorres is one of several examples of how the sculptural decoration of late antique villas is unjustifiably disconnected from the building history and excavation findings.

The octagonal building at Valdetorres is, on the basis of its architectural form, typically late antique and has only one building phase. The stratigraphic findings, especially pottery and coins, unequivocally point to its construction during the late fourth century; yet the sculptures found within the villa have all been assigned to the second century.¹⁰

⁵ This and the following quotation can be found in Ripoll (2018, 441).

⁶ As recently asserted by Beckmann 2023, 176.

⁷ Balmelle 2001.

⁸ Stirling 2007, 308–309.

⁹ Arce – Caballero – Miguel Ángel, 1986; Arce – Caballero – Elvira 1997. While the excavation reports initially referred to a villa “o más bien uno de los edificios de su sector residencial”, Arce convincingly interpreted the structure as an isolated market building of an agricultural estate (Arce 1993).

¹⁰ Puerta – Elvira – Artigas 1994; Koppel 2000, 380–394, here in particular 393 (second century). On the other hand, a few of the ivory pieces found together with the sculptures

Such a dating of these sculptures to the High Empire is not evident.¹¹ A first clue is provided by the uniform dimensions of the statuettes, which should be seen as typical for late antique ideal sculpture. Their material – Aphrodisian marble, as determined by archaeometric analyses – points in the same direction.¹² Leaving aside such antiquarian arguments, the style of the objects also speaks to a creation date in the period of the villa’s construction.

Let us briefly consider three examples. Among the finds is a statuette of Asclepius, which stands 59 cm tall in its current condition (Fig. 1).¹³ The unfortunately headless figure possesses, like many other late antique statuettes, a notable two-dimensionality; the back side is only roughly executed while the front demonstrates a more classical treatment.¹⁴ The rendering of the himation, which is characterized by flat folds, connects the piece with the late antique Asclepius figures in Athens and on Rhodes. The Rhodes Hygieia can also be seamlessly linked to these through its schematic arrangement of the garment folds and the deep gouges in the more voluminous sections.¹⁵ No less characteristic is the stylized, omega-shaped fold (named “*trompetenartige Saumfalten*” by Bergmann) at the hem of the draped portion that hangs down from the left arm of the Asclepius from Valdetorres. It finds close parallels in figures such as the Selene of Silaharağa in Istanbul, the Artemis of Saint-Georges-de-Montagne,

– some of which probably served as furniture fittings – are dated to the late fourth and early fifth centuries (Carrasco – Elvira 1994).

¹¹ Arce (1993) has already suggested a creation date for the sculptures.

¹² For the analysis of three samples, we are indebted to Walter Prochaska (Montanuniversität Leoben/Austria). Cf. tentatively Attanasio – Bruno – Prochaska – Bahadır Yavuz 2021, 90–92, figs. 3.14, 3.15; 167 n. 68; 180 n. 131; 195 n. 65; Attanasio – Prochaska 2023, 12 nos. 47–48. 51.

¹³ Puerta – Elvira – Artigas 1994, 191–193, figs. 12–13.

¹⁴ Numerous examples in Gazda 1981, fig. 2, fig. 4; Hannestad 1994; Bergmann 1999; Brands 2018; Brands 2020.

¹⁵ Bergmann 1999, 51 pl. 46.2 (Asclepius, Rhodes); pl. 47.1; pl. 48,1–3 (Asclepius, Athens); pl. 46.1; 48.4 (Hygieia, Rhodes).

and on the Heracles relief of Chiragan.¹⁶ As it exhibits most of the characteristic traits of late antique sculpture, one would not be mistaken in also placing the statuette from Valdetorres in the Theodosian period.

The torso of a serpent-footed giant made of black marble belongs in the same temporal context (Fig. 2). His muscular upper body displays the same exaggerated rendering¹⁷ that is typical of late antique sculpture. Comparanda include the Heracles and Hydra relief of Chiragan as well as the giant and a torso from the sculpture finds of Silaharağa.¹⁸

Similar observations can be made about a further statuette carved from black Göktepe marble, which at the same time supports a connection with the Aphrodisian artistic milieu. The collapsing rider from Valdetorres (Fig. 3) demonstrates – especially clearly on his left thigh – one of the leitmotifs present in late antique Aphrodisian workshops. “Most characteristic ... is the exaggerated rendering of anatomical details of legs and feet.”¹⁹ In particular, the rider of Valdetorres clearly features “gegeneinander abgesetzte, rhombische Muskelbündel und die durch harte Inzisionen abgegrenzten Muskelwülste über dem Knie,”²⁰ which tie into the Hellenistic design vocabulary and at the same time exaggerate it in a formal way. As such, the figure echoes the Esquiline sculptures.²¹ Incidentally, this motif also returns in one of the so-called archers of Valdetorres.²²

¹⁶ Silaharağa, Selene: Bergmann 1999, pl. 22; Chaisemartin - Örgen 1984, pl. 12 no. 4 (Cf. the Artemis: Chaisemartin - Örgen 1984, pl. 9 no. 3). – St. Georges de Montagne, Artemis: Bergmann 1999, pls. 26; 71, 1–3. – Chiragan: Bergmann 1999, pl. 71.2. Cf. the Dresden Demeter: Vorster 2011: 604–609 no. 138 and the Dresden Artemis: Vorster 2011, 610–613 no. 139.

¹⁷ Bergmann 1999, 35–36. 71 (“übertriebene Ausführung”). Cf. already Hannestad, 1994, 194–195.

¹⁸ Chiragan: Bergmann 1999, pl. 17.3. – Silaharağa: Chaisemartin - Örgen pl. 31 (giant). See also Chaisemartin - Örgen 1984, pl. 7.8 (male torso).

¹⁹ Hannestad 1994, 140–141, figs. 95–96.

²⁰ Bergmann 1999, 35 pl. 1; 16, 2–4.

²¹ Moltesen 2000, pl. 70.71 (satyr), 74.75 (Zeus), 80 (Poseidon).

²² In the context of the publication in preparation, numerous new photographs are presented (MAD_3078 - 3081), replacing the insufficient photographs in the article of Puerta

The association of Valdetorres with another significant sculpture find on the Iberian Peninsula was first established by A. Carvalho, T. Nogales Basarrate, and M.J. Almeida, when they worked on that of Quinta das Longas. In a landmark publication,²³ they also suggested for the first time a connection to other late antique sculpture groups – namely Chiragan, Saint-Georges-de-Montagne, and Silahtarağa²⁴ – and, in some cases, observed an “innegable paralelismo”²⁵ with Theodosian statuary art in the second half of the fourth century.

The archaeological findings support an unambiguous chronology for the villa of Quinta das Longas. In the second half of the third century, a new building was erected on top of a presumably Early Imperial predecessor. This was subsequently expanded several times, probably in the fourth century judging by both the building types and the mosaics with Christian motifs. Its constituent parts “representan una ruptura con la estructura de la Villa I, en una completa remodelación del espacio y su implementación en el terreno”²⁶ and doubtlessly entailed a new decorative agenda.²⁷ The small-format sculptures were found in an apsidal room that adjoined the peristyle in the northeast and may have been used as a summer triclinium; these may have belonged to the room’s furnishings.

– Elvira – Artigas 1994 (185, fig. 5).

²³ Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004.

²⁴ On the dating of the sculptures of Chiragan and St. Georges de Montagne, see in detail Hannestad 1994; Bergmann 1999; Stirling 2005. On Silahtarağa cf. Fleischer 1988; Kiilerich-Torp 1994.

²⁵ Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004, 128.

²⁶ Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004, 104–116, esp. 109. The new construction probably commenced in the second half of the third century, but there were other phases of expansion during the fourth century, including one in the Valentinian-Theodosian period.

²⁷ These include marble wall coverings, several rooms with *opus sectile* decorations, and the remains of wall paintings (Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004, 117). The architecture, its mosaic decoration with Christian thematic elements, and the excavation findings also speak to an extensive remodeling in the second half of the fourth century. On the chronology, see most recently Conejo-Delgado – Carvalho 2016/17.

It is conceivable that they were placed in the column-flanked shrine opposite the apse. The dimensions of the statuettes, the delicate lattice-work of leaves and branches that frames some of them, the thematic spectrum of the figures, and not least their material and style already fulfill the essential prerequisites for dating the entire ensemble to Late Antiquity.

A few examples for the dating may suffice at this point. Among the most significant sculptures is that of Aphrodite removing her sandal (Fig. 4, center).²⁸ The closest to the figure from Quinta das Longas are two statuettes that correspond almost perfectly in size – and probably also in material.²⁹ First and foremost is the Aphrodite from Sidon in Istanbul (Fig. 4, left).³⁰ Also very similar is the sandal-loosening statuette from the Barracks House in Antioch on the Orontes, today in the Baltimore Museum of Art (Fig. 4, right); it corresponds so closely to the piece from Quinta das Longas that they may have even originated from the same workshop.³¹ In a way, the two statuettes seem serial, not least because of their proportions. They are – excluding the head – of the same size (Baltimore: 44 cm; Quinta das Longas: 39.5 cm).

Despite its poor condition, the head of the Aphrodite from Quinta das Longas unmistakably echoes those of the Rhodes Hygieia, a statuette in Dijon, and in particular a female head in the Museo Palatino.³² The oval face, with its full cheeks and jawline, a strikingly narrow mouth with slightly downturned corners, and rough strands of hair is closely related to that of the early Theodosian draped statue in the Villa Medici.³³ Not dissimilar to this is the head of the Aphrodite from Sidon; both wear

²⁸ Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004, 125–128, fig. 10; Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2002, 498 cat. no. 184.

²⁹ Cf. Brands 2023, 108–111, figs. 62–69.

³⁰ Dresken-Weiland 1991, 10–11 pl. 99.

³¹ The position of the left arm—lowered in Baltimore and raised in the figure from Quinta—differs, which can be explained as different variations of the supporting motif (cf. Brands 2023, 108–111, figs. 62–69).

³² Rhodes: Bergmann 1999, pl. 54.4. – Dijon: Bergmann 1999, pl. 55.2. – Rome, Museo Palatino: Bergmann 1999, pl. 87.3–4. In summary Brands 2023, 108–111, figs. 62–69.

³³ Vorster 2012/2013, 434–436, fig. 34.

a similar headband. The general style of the Aphrodite of Quinta das Longas, and in particular the treatment of the head, make a date in the second half of the fourth century and its affiliation to the Aphrodisian artistic circle very likely.

A small female head from Quinta das Longas is on the same stylistic level as the Aphrodite (Fig. 5).³⁴ The uniform oval of the face – with a pronounced chin, full cheeks, and a slightly open mouth with a full lower lip – as well as the shape of the eyes and the ridged, arched eyebrows, find their closest parallels in a group of heads in Toulouse (from Chiragan), Dijon, Rhodes, and Antequera.³⁵ Additionally, it can be linked to a number of examples from Rome compiled by C. Vorster, such as the draped statue in the Villa Medici³⁶ and several other large-scale sculptures.³⁷ Some of these also feature the tuft of hair on the forehead³⁸ that is characteristic of late antique female heads and also appears on the miniature head from Quinta. A clear indication of its affiliation with the Theodosian sculptural milieu discussed by Vorster is the concave band wrapped around the back of the head that ends at the nape of the neck.

With the figurine of the serpent-footed giant (Fig. 6), which is one of the best-preserved objects from Quinta das Longas, we can build on what we have already observed in connection with the torso from Valdetorres, which is very similar in its overblown “Hellenizing” body structure.³⁹

³⁴ Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2002, 499 no. 185; Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004, 134–135, fig. 16.

³⁵ Toulouse, from Chiragan (Bergmann 1999, pl. 56, 3; 55, 3–4); Dijon (Bergmann 1999, pl. 56, 2; 55, 2); the Rhodes Hygieia (Bergmann 1999, pl. 56, 1; 54, 4); Antequera (Rodríguez Oliva 2004, 35–57, esp. 56–57, fig. 14; Romero – Mañas – Vargas 2006, 239–258, esp. 252–253, fig. 9).

³⁶ Vorster 2012/13, 434–436, fig. 34b.

³⁷ Vorster 2012/13, 425, figs. 25. 28.

³⁸ Vorster 2012/13, 420, referred to as a “*Stirnzöpfchen*.”

³⁹ Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004, 118–123, fig. 5. – Cf. Fig. 6 with Bergmann 1999, pl. 17.3 (Chiragan); 17.4 (Silahtarağa, Heracles relief; Chaisemartin – Örgen 1984, pl. 7 (Silahtarağa, torso. Cf. also the fragment of a left leg (Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004, 136, fig. 17c), which we have already discussed in connection with

A typical feature of the figure, as in late antique sculpture more generally, is the unelaborated back side, including the head.⁴⁰ The tautness of the facial skin, the drilled eyes and their sharply defined, drooping eyelids and the hairstyle are unambiguous characteristics that make the argument for its affiliation with the Theodosian sculptural tradition.

Valdetorres de Jarama and Quinta das Longas, with their firmly datable architectural features and stratigraphic data, are of decisive importance for the evaluation of late antique sculpture,⁴¹ so long as they are understood as part of the contemporary furnishing of the villas rather than as High Imperial antiquities brought over (or purchased) from previous structures to the new, late antique buildings. Moreover, the small, the small size and mythological themes of the sculptures at Quinta das Longas – revolving around Aphrodite, Artemis, the Muses, nymphs, Bacchus, and other mythological subjects⁴² that played a special role in the *paideia* of Late Antiquity – suggest a dating of the sculptures to the second half of the fourth century.

As mentioned above, there is undisputedly a number of villas on the Iberian Peninsula whose inherited sculptural inventories were wholly or partially incorporated into new construction or renovation in Late Antiquity. It is difficult to imagine that such new structures, renovations, and alterations would have given rise to extensive construction measures and the laying of large and exuberant mosaic floors, often with mythological subjects, but not to the addition of sculptural furnishings. Against this background – and once made aware of the peculiarities of the late antique sculptural form – it is worthwhile taking a closer look at some findings from other Hispanic villas.

Valdetorres de Jarama (see above).

⁴⁰ Brands 2020, 416–417.

⁴¹ The villa of Noheda (Cuenca), whose publication is still pending, also belongs to the context of late antique villas with sculptural decoration dating to the construction period. The few finds made known so far show the themes also observed in Valdetorres and Quinta das Longas (Aphrodite, Asclepius, giant) and, according to J.M. Noguera Celdrán (Universidad de Murcia), were made of Göktepe marble.

⁴² Nogales Basarrate – Carvalho – Almeida 2004, 139–142.

Let us begin with the Villa de la Estación in Antequera. Although there are a few finds that date back to the first century BC and speak to an end of this first (presumed) villa in the late second century AD, there are overall only a few indications that a new settlement was to be expected before the late third century AD, when a villa complex was built that remained in use until the sixth century.⁴³ Its excavators have dated the complex and its mosaic decoration to the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, while the sculptures are purported to date to the Imperial period.⁴⁴ The high-quality pieces that were uncovered during the excavations, all “de pequeño y mediano formato, datadas entre los siglos I y III,”⁴⁵ have to this date only been summarily published. In a first brief discussion, only a 13-cm female head made from very fine white marble was presented (Fig.7); it has been assigned to the Antonine period without further substantiation.⁴⁶ However, a glance at the abovementioned female head from Quinta das Longas (Fig. 5) raises considerable doubts about this dating in view of its workmanship. Rather, the head much more closely follows the pattern of many late antique pieces.⁴⁷ Its oval face once more has the characteristically full cheeks and heavy jawline. The noticeably small, slightly open mouth with the full lower lip and the eyes with flatly raised lower lids also correspond to the known template, as does the careful stranding of the hair framing the face at the forehead. Even the chignon is treated in a similar manner; the small tuft of hair at

⁴³ Romero – Mañas – Vargas, 2006, 239–258.

⁴⁴ Romero – Mañas – Vargas 2006, 256 (“Esta colección contó con piezas de diferentes calidades y estuvo formada además por esculturas realizadas en varias épocas.”).

⁴⁵ Romero – Mañas – Vargas 2006, 251–254.

⁴⁶ Rodríguez Oliva 2004, 35–57, esp. 52–57; Romero – Mañas – Vargas 2006, 252–253, fig. 9 (second century?).

⁴⁷ Cf. Vorster 2012/2013, 421, Fig. 21 (Munich, female head); 425, Fig. 25 (Rome, female head); 435, fig. 34 (Rome, draped statue at the Villa Medici); 450, fig. 40 (Dresden, Dionysus/maenad?). – Vorster 2011, 604–609 no. 138, fig. 138.6 (Demeter). – Bergmann 1999, pl. 28; 41.2 (Bordeaux, Artemis Saint Georges de Montagne); 52.3 (Silahtarağa, Artemis); 54.3 (Silahtarağa, Selene); 54.4; 56.3 (Rhodes, Hygieia); 55.3–4; 56.3 (Chiragan, statuette); 56.2 (Dijon, statuette); 52.2; 58.1 (Chiragan, Dionysus); 60 (Chiragan, shepherd?). – Brands 2020, pl. 59a (Ganymede, Munich).

the forehead, characteristic of many late antique female heads, is less pronounced on the head in Antequera, but it is still rudimentarily preserved.

Similar reservations regarding a dating to the late second century must also apply to the small satyr head from Antequera (Fig. 8).⁴⁸ It is carved from the same material as the female head and demonstrates close similarities in its facial features, eye sockets, and hair styling. Given its similar level of refinement, it can be attributed to the same workshop circle. This is also supported by the face's porcelain-like polish, which stands out from the rougher surface of the stringy hair. The small head finds its closest analogues in the Ganymede in Venice, the Christ statuette in the Museo Nazionale in Rome, and – despite the different format – the giant from Quinta das Longas, which all suggests a date in the second half of the fourth century AD.⁴⁹

The Villa de la Estación in Antequera has recently been linked to another villa complex, the Villa de Salar (Granada), which is located about 50 km to its east. It is a large peristyle villa whose building typology strongly correlates to the Iberian villa architecture of the fourth century.⁵⁰ The complex includes a triclinium with a nymphaeum, which, just like the elaborate mosaic furnishings and *opus sectile* walls, the excavators have dated to the fourth century.

Several statuettes were found in the nymphaeum, including two “nymphs,” which “most certainly adorned the nymphaeum in the fourth century, although their exact arrangement is unknown.”⁵¹ The larger of the two, possibly a Venus rather than a “Pudica nymph,”⁵² measures 52 cm

⁴⁸ Von Romero – Mañas – Vargas 2006, 254 fn. 57, dated without justification to the end of the second century. Cf. also 67–69, figs. 2.1–2.

⁴⁹ Ganymede, Venice: Vorster 2012/13, 419, fig. 20b. – Christ, Rome: Bergmann 1999, pl. 40.2. – Giant, Quinta das Longas (Fig. 6). – Cf. also Bergmann 1999, pl. 28 (Artemis, Saint Georges de Montagne), pl. 31.1 (Mithras relief, Paris); pl. 60 (shepherd?, Chiragan); Brands 2020, pl. 59a (Ganymede, Munich).

⁵⁰ Loza Azuaga 2020; Loza Azuaga 2021.

⁵¹ Loza Azuaga 2021, 9.

⁵² On this type in detail, see Loza Azuaga 2021, 6–7. A brief mention and good photographs of this statuette can be found in Rodríguez Oliva (2014, 1296–1297, fig. 2).

high (width 18 cm) and has a strikingly shallow depth of 11 cm; according to a petrographic analysis, it is “probablemente” made of Pentelic marble (Fig. 9). Despite its clear archaeological context, the statuette has been – without further explanation or the naming of any parallels – dated to the middle or the third quarter of the second century.⁵³ The notably slender and almost boyish shape of the figure, a feature which belongs to the canon of late antique art,⁵⁴ points in a different direction. Additionally, the contrast between the simplified but ultimately classically treated front and the crudely executed back side⁵⁵ of the figure, which in its original state stood over 60 cm tall, can also be found often in late antique statuettes.⁵⁶ A noteworthy parallel is provided by the fourth-century statuette of a diademed Aphrodite from Chiragan (Fig. 10).⁵⁷ It shows a striking feature of many late antique sculptures: “a heavy, squared block of stone behind the neck.”⁵⁸

These doubts about an Early Imperial dating of the “*Pudica nymph*” statuette are reinforced by another, significantly larger sculpture found in the western part of the ambulacrum of the villa.⁵⁹ This piece follows the type of the Capitoline Venus, which was widespread during the Imperial period (Fig. 11 e 12). The statue, which is 74 cm in its current condition but was likely around one meter high originally, is also made of Pentelic marble,⁶⁰

⁵³ Loza Azuaga 2021, 6. Rodríguez Oliva 2016, 470–471, fig. 16, dated only broadly in the first/second century.

⁵⁴ On the “übertrieben jung, knabenhaft, fast kindlich” figure types of late antique ideal sculpture, cf. Bergmann (1999, 70).

⁵⁵ Loza Azuaga 2021, 7, fig. 6 (front and back).

⁵⁶ Cf. the Dresden Demeter: Vorster 2012/13, 407, fig. 8.

⁵⁷ Capus 2019, <https://villachiragan.saintraymond.toulouse.fr/partie-03-l-art-grec-revisite/ra-151-ra-114-venus> (access date 3 May 2023)

⁵⁸ Stirling 2007, 108.

⁵⁹ Loza Azuaga 2020, 428–437; Loza Azuaga 2021, 9–11 (mid-second century/post-Hadrianic).

⁶⁰ Loza Azuaga 2021, 10 fn. 7. Loza Azuaga (2020, 430–431) states it more cautiously: “Probablemente se trata de mármol tipo Pentélico.”

which suggests a connection to the “nymph”; they could belong to the same decoration phase of the villa. It was found in a layer of bricks and tegulae that can be dated to sometime between the second half of the fifth and the first half of the sixth century.

Regardless of the architectural context of the late antique villa of Salar, this figure is also considered to be a work from the mid-2nd century AD.⁶¹ This view is countered by some pieces that clearly show the stylistic properties inherent in Theodosian sculpture. The similarities with the previously discussed female head from Quinta das Longas (Fig. 5) are easily palpable, even if its hairstyle lags behind that of the Venus statuette on account of its miniature format. In their facial shape and structure, eye cuts (without boreholes), and the characteristic mouth shape with the full lower lip,⁶² the heads bear striking similarity to one another, even if the little tuft of forehead hair is missing in this case.⁶³ The straggly hairstyle resembles that of a life-size draped statue in the Villa Medici, but it also finds parallels in the Artemis of Saint-Georges-de-Montagne in Bordeaux and both the Artemis and Selene of Silaharağa – though especially the latter.⁶⁴

As an example of the “reuse of old sculptural works of art to ennoble recently built villas,” Gisela Ripoll refers to the seaside villa of Els Munts/Altafulla (Tarraco).⁶⁵ In the middle of the second century, a spacious new structure was erected on top of a possibly Augustan predecessor, which is epigraphically associated with Caius Valerius Avitus, duumvir in

⁶¹ Loza Azuaga 2020, 428–437, figs. 4–7; Loza Azuaga 2021, 11.

⁶² Vorster 2012/2013, 425, fig. 25 (head: Rome, Museo Palatino); 435, fig. 34 (draped statue, Villa Medici).

⁶³ The head and hairstyle bear similarities with the Ganymede in Munich dated to the Theodosian period (Brands 2020, pls. 58–59).

⁶⁴ Chaisemartin – Örgen 1984, pl. 11 (Artemis). 13 (Selene; cf. also the detailed photographs in Bergmann 1999, pl. 41.1; 54.3).

⁶⁵ Ripoll 2018, 441. – About the villa, which has not yet received a dedicated monograph: Chavarria Arnau 2007, 183–186 no. 16; Tarrats Bou – Macias i Solé – Ramon Sariñena – Remolà Vallverdú – Koppel 1998; Tarrats Bou – Macias I Solé – Ramon Sariñena – Remolà Vallverdú 2000; Tarrats Bou – Remolà Vallverdú 2008.

Tarraco during the late Antonine period.⁶⁶ After the complex was partially destroyed by a fire in the middle of the third century, the living quarters and thermal baths were extensively rebuilt and generously furnished from the fourth century onwards. A portion of the allegedly salvaged High-Imperial sculptural decoration is thought to have been reused in the villa of the fourth and fifth centuries.⁶⁷

According to E.M. Koppel, one of the High Imperial sculptures reused in the late antique period includes a statuette group of Asclepius and Hygieia (93 cm and 81 cm without the heads, respectively). Both are supposedly made of Parian marble.⁶⁸ These deities, as has been noted repeatedly,⁶⁹ were among the most popular subjects in late antique art. In fact, statues that may have been created during Late Antiquity can quickly be found of both gods, but their chronology must be verified in any event, as Bergmann has cautiously noted.⁷⁰ We shall attempt to do so in the present case for the sake of methodology.

The Asclepius of Els Munts (Fig. 13),⁷¹ is somewhat reminiscent of the youthful Asclepius in Athens (h. 70 cm, incl. head), which Bergmann has associated with the late antique art of Constantinople.⁷² The schematic, angular folds of the garment can similarly be observed in the Asclepius on Rhodes (h. 65 cm, incl. head), as can the smooth hem of the robe at

⁶⁶ Ruiz de Arbulo 2014.

⁶⁷ The majority of the sculptures — and all those discussed here — were found in the piscina of the frigidarium of the so-called Southern Baths. A preliminary publication of the sculptures was authored by Koppel (2000), according to whom almost all pieces can be dated to the second century (“entre la época de Adriano y la de los Severos”).

⁶⁸ Koppel 2000, 385–387 pls. 73–74. Among the types of stone examined from the villa’s flooring and wall coverings without using petrographic analysis, neither Parian nor Carrara, Aphrodisian, Pentelic, nor Proconnesian marble were found (Otiña Hermoso 2002).

⁶⁹ Hannestad 1994, 115, esp. 123 fn. 207; 156; Bergmann 1999, 69; Stirling 2005.

⁷⁰ Bergmann 1999, 51 (“Tatsächlich lassen sich sehr schnell Statuen beider Gottheiten finden, die in der Spätantike entstanden sein könnten, aber ihre Datierung muss in jedem Fall geprüft werden.”).

⁷¹ Koppel 2000, 385–386 pl. 73b; 74c–d. (unfortunately no rear-view).

⁷² Bergmann 1999, 51 no. 19, pl. 47; 48.1–3; 49.1–2.

knee height.⁷³ However, these isolated motifs hardly justify a late dating of the stylistically more elaborate Asclepius from Els Munts.

In the same way, the creasing in the himation worn by the Hygieia from Els Munts above a rich buttoned tunic (Fig. 14) at first sight recurs in the Athenian Asclepius and in the elongated folds of the undergarment worn by the Rhodes Hygieia.⁷⁴ However, a comparison to the fourth century Demeter of the Poggio Imperiale type in Dresden casts serious doubts on a late dating for the Els Munts deity⁷⁵, as much as the style of the undergarment and the voluminous himation, as well as the roughly-executed back side of the statue resemble each other. It is worth briefly mentioning here that the Dresden Demeter bears stylistic similarities to the Urania from the Villa de Churriana, now in Madrid, particularly evident in the side-view of the smooth, two-dimensional folds in the himation;⁷⁶ this sculpture has previously been unanimously dated to the late first or early second century, though this conclusion should be further evaluated.⁷⁷

Evidence of a late antique furnishing phase for the sculptural décor in the Villa of Els Munts can only be surmised from the small head of a Tyche with a turreted crown (h. 15 cm; Fig. 15).⁷⁸ Its funnel-shaped and recessed pupils, the strongly incised corners of the mouth, and its polished surface link it to heads from Chiragan and Si-lahtarağa, as well as others in Dresden, Copenhagen, and Orvieto;⁷⁹ all of

⁷³ Bergmann 1999, pl. 46.2.

⁷⁴ Bergmann 1999, pl. 46.1. The Hygieia from Rhodes finds a counterpart in a group of statuettes (LIMC V 2, 384 no. 45), which Bergmann (1999, 51 fn. 331) considers possibly late antique (also Vorster 2012/13, 415–416, fig. 15). Cf. similarly LIMC V 2, 387 no. 83.

⁷⁵ Vorster 2011, 604–609 (late fourth century AD after an original from the second century BC).

⁷⁶ Cf. Koppel 2000, pl. 73a. 74a–b with Rodríguez Oliva 2008, 384, figs. 5–8.

⁷⁷ Rodríguez Oliva (2008) dates the Urania to the end of the first or beginning of the second century. Two other heads pictured there from the villa of Churriana (Rodríguez Oliva 2008, figs. 9–12; today in Málaga, Museo Arqueológico) could be late antique and made from Aphrodisian marble. Cf. also Rodríguez Oliva 2009, 49–53.

⁷⁸ Koppel 2000, 389–390 pl. 77c–d.

⁷⁹ Cf. Bergmann 1999, 54 pl. 56.3 (Head of a statuette from Chiragan in Toulouse);

these share the characteristics of Theodosian sculpture as outlined above.

The villa of Els Ametllers (Tossa del Mar)⁸⁰ can be traced back to a late Republican predecessor, which was first expanded during the early Imperial period and was again extensively rebuilt at the turn of the third century.⁸¹ At the end of the third century, all parts currently known through excavation – the *pars urbana* and the *pars fructuaria* – were destroyed, though a cause has yet to be determined archaeologically. The complex was subsequently plundered, emptied of all usable furnishings, and left abandoned for about a century. The repossession of the derelict villa complex occurred “in the Late Roman Period,” probably in the second half of the fourth century. The phase of new use was facilitated by the repurposing of older structures, but it lagged behind the High Imperial complex in both character and scale. The excavators describe the new *pars urbana* as “of modest size and a moderate or even scant level of luxury,” including two mosaic floors. The villa was abandoned for good in the second half of the fifth century.

Of the twenty sculpture finds in the villa, most are only small fragments that do not allow for a thematic identification or chronology.⁸² The only piece preserved well enough to be evaluated is the 62 cm high and 19 cm wide⁸³ headless statuette of a youthful god (Hermes/Mercury).

closely related to the Artemis of Saint Georges de Montagne in Bordeaux); Bergmann pl. 58.1 (Chiragan, Dionysus); Bergmann pl. 52.3 (Istanbul, from Silahtarağa, Artemis); Vorster 2011, 608, fig. 138.6 (Dresden, Demeter); Vorster 2012/2013, 428, fig. 27 (Copenhagen); 440–443, fig. 36c (Orvieto).

⁸⁰ Chavarria Arnau 2007, 172–174 no. 5, without knowledge of the monograph by Palahí Grimal – Nolla i Brufau (2010).

⁸¹ Palahí Grimal – Nolla i Brufau 2010, 111–115; 351–352 (“...the alterations carried out during the Severian period could be understood as a logical evolution of the embellishment process of the villa that continued throughout the Late Roman period.”). The rest of the sculptural furnishings do not, according to the opinion of the editors, belong to the “extra comforts and amenities” of this period, and are rather dated to the first and second centuries AD.

⁸² Koppel – Rodà 2008, 99–131; Lamuà Estañol 2010, 229–244.

⁸³ Koppel – Rodà (2008) give the preserved height as 74 cm, while the excavation report (Lamuà Estañol 2010, 229) says 62 cm, which may suggest an original height of about 70 cm.

It is carved out of a fine white marble (Fig. 16), which Koppel and Rodà consider to be “mármol griego, pentélico probablemente.” The figure, like most of the other sculptures, was found “en el farciment de terra adjacent a la piscina del jardí nord”⁸⁴ and was possibly part of the villa’s garden *nymphaeum*.⁸⁵

In spite of the Early- and High-Imperial villa’s complete destruction, abandonment, and looting, Koppel und Rodà suggest that the statue was created around the middle of the first century AD; Lamuà Estañol instead considers the late first or the second century more probable, citing the reconstruction of the villa during this period as evidence.⁸⁶

Leaving aside the preconceptions of the villa’s early development, one might possibly gain a new perspective on the chronology of the “Mercury-Hermes” sculpture. It is not only the statuette format as such, but its stunning flatness (ca. 13 cm deep) that are characteristic of late antique sculpture. This connection is further amplified by the crude rendering of the back side;⁸⁷ the extent to which the figure is meant to be viewed from the front becomes increasingly obvious when considering the grotesquely large hand resting on the god’s back.⁸⁸ In addition, there is the statuette’s conspicuously unstable, oddly twisted stance.⁸⁹ Even though its feet and the base of the plinth have been preserved – thus fixing the intended frontal view – the piece twists strangely to the right, which is especially apparent when viewed in its current museum display. The youthfully slender, yet

⁸⁴ Lamuà Estañol 2010, 229.

⁸⁵ Koppel – Rodà 2008, 118.

⁸⁶ Koppel – Rodà 2008, 119–120; Lamuà Estañol 2010, 229–231.

⁸⁷ Cf. for example the Asclepius in Athens: Bergmann 1999, pl. 47. 48.3 and the Ganymede in Munich: Brands 2020, pl. 58.

⁸⁸ Cf. the Meleager statuette in Milan, which shares the greatly enlarged hand supported on the back (Bergmann 1999, 49; Brands 2023, 98–99, figs. 43–44).

⁸⁹ Cf. the images in Lamuà Estañol 2010, 229, figs. 192–193. On this aspect of late antique sculpture, see Vorster 2012/2013, 435–436 (“Dieser auffallend instabile Stand ist bei Statuen des späteren 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. ein verbreitetes Phänomen.”).

not unmuscular, torso is reminiscent of the Asclepius statue in Athens.⁹⁰ The cloak is bunched at the left shoulder and is wrapped around the bent forearm from the inside. Particularly noteworthy are the undercut omega folds⁹¹ and the schematic treatment of the sections where the himation is draped over his shoulder. Based on these observations, a late antique dating for the “Hermes-Mercury” of Els Ametllers should not be dismissed from the outset; if our assumption is correct, it would have to be assigned to the latest expansion phase of the villa in the fourth century.

One final example to cite here is the Villa of El Ruedo (Almedinilla/Córdoba). The first complex, which dates to around the middle of the first century AD, “debió de ser un establecimiento agrícola *sensu strictu*.”⁹² A peristyle villa was erected in the second century. A third construction phase, which the excavators have placed at the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century and which lasted until the fifth century, comprises a series of substantial changes to the older structure, “que darán a la villa su momento de mayor esplendor.” Over the course of the comprehensive remodeling phase, the peristyle was altered, a nymphaeum was added, the baths were expanded, and the rooms adjacent to the courtyard were outfitted with large-scale mosaics and wall paintings.⁹³ Vaquerizo Gil and Noguera Celdrán have posited that the sculptural furnishings – comprising about 40 pieces – belong entirely to the first and second centuries, and were thus later reused.⁹⁴ This is certainly true of the majority of the sculptures, but the question arises as to whether the extensive reconstruction phase of the fourth century did not also leave its mark on the villa’s sculptural decoration, for example in connection

⁹⁰ Bergmann 1999, pl. 47.

⁹¹ Cf. Bergmann 1999, pl. 71.

⁹² On the development of the complex cf. Vaquerizo Gil – Noguera Celdrán 1997, 33–95. Summarized in Chavarría Arnau 2007, 243–244 no. 69.

⁹³ Hidalgo Prieto 1994; Cánovas Ubera 2002.

⁹⁴ Vaquerizo Gil – Noguera Celdrán 1997, 105–210 (Cf. the review by Stirling 1999). According to Vaquerizo Gil – Noguera Celdrán, it is conceivable that the sculptures were either partially or completely purchased during the late antique renovation period (Vaquerizo Gil – Noguera Celdrán 1997, 102–103).

with the triclinium, which received a nymphaeum in the form of a column-flanked exedra.⁹⁵

For instance, the Perseus-Andromeda group would also fit into this context (Fig. 17). It has – on the basis of iconographic and typological comparisons to Pompeiian wall paintings and late Hellenistic and early Imperial sculpture – been dated to the second half of the first century or the first half of the second century.⁹⁶ Apart from its small format, there are stylistic factors that might suggest a later date of origin. To start, it is obvious that the group from El Ruedo modifies the Hellenistic composition in a distinctive way. Andromeda has lost her original corporeality and appears altogether clumsy and compressed, which is made particularly apparent by the side view. Her garment is also flatly rendered, and the section of fabric at her right hand is only indicated by a few deep drilled folds. A hallmark of late antique sculpture is, as previously discussed, the flat omega folds that appear along the hem of the himation hanging down from her left shoulder at the center of her body. Herein lies a similarity to the Aphrodite statue in Princeton and the Selene of Silahtarağa.⁹⁷ If we also consider the contrast between the classicizing front of the statue and the less finished back, a dating to the fourth century, is, if not probable, then at least debatable – even when the subject matter of the group is marginal in late antique iconography and unique in late mythological sculpture.⁹⁸ It should be noted here in passing that this theme – a mythological pair of lovers whose “love with complications” is overcome through the *virtus* of the male protagonist – fits in well with the late antique mythography.

In summary, we have attempted to demonstrate that there is a noteworthy discrepancy between the boom of late antique villas on the Iberian Peninsula and the evaluation of their furnishings. Despite stratigraphic

⁹⁵ Statuary in Spanish villas is particularly associated with aquatic features (cf. Stirling 2007).

⁹⁶ Vaquerizo Gil – Noguera Celdrán 1997, 118–123 no. 4.

⁹⁷ Princeton: Knoblauch 1994 (“probably late second century A.C.”); Brands 2023, 102 fn. 207 (late antique, possibly fourth century). – Silahtarağa: Chaisemartin – Örgen 1984, pls. 9.10.12.

⁹⁸ LIMC VII 1 (Zürich/Munich 1994) 347 and 344 no. 206a.

evidence, building histories confirmed by numismatic and ceramic finds, and furnishings such as mosaics, the sculptures are primarily regarded as belonging to collections of antiquities. The purpose of the considerations outlined here was to provide stylistic indications for a reevaluation of sculptures that had previously been dated to the first and second centuries, even though the villas in which the finds originate were constructed in or thoroughly renovated during Late Antiquity. The almost reflexive dating of mythological small sculpture to the second century AD could prove to be methodologically fatal, not the least because it results in disconnecting the Iberian Peninsula from the rest of the late antique Mediterranean world.

Our cursory remarks should be understood as a plea for a thorough and systematic reassessment of sculpture from late antique villas on the Iberian Peninsula that were built or rebuilt in Late Antiquity, and this includes older and out-of-context sculpture holdings in museums. In this regard, Valdetorres de Jarama and Quinta das Longas are of particular methodological importance.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9









Fig. 15



Fig. 14

Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Illustrations

Fig. 1 Statuette of Asclepius found in Valdetorres de Jarama (Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional), front, side, and back. D-DAI-MAD-MLA-DG-005-2018-222; 224; 225
Photo: Maria Latova

Fig. 2 Giant (black marble) found in Valdetorres de Jarama (Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional), front. D-DAI-MAD-MLA-DG-005-2018-239
Photo: Maria Latova

Fig. 3 Plunging horseman (black marble) found in Valdetorres de Jarama (Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional), front.
Photo: Hans R. Goette

Fig. 4 Statuettes of Aphrodite removing her sandal, from Sidon (Istanbul, Archaeological Museum), Quinta das Longas (Lisboa, Museu Nacional de Arqueologia), and Antioch on the Orontes (Baltimore, Museum of Art).
Photos: Archival photograph (Istanbul), Hans R. Goette (Lisbon) and Mitro Hood (Baltimore)

Fig. 5 Female head found in Quinta das Longas (Lisboa, Museu Nacional de Arqueologia), front and side.
Photos: Hans R. Goette

Fig. 6 Giant (white marble) found in Quinta das Longas (Lisboa, Museu Nacional de Arqueologia), side and head.
Photo: Hans R. Goette

Fig. 7 Female head found in the Villa de la Estación in Antequera (Museo de la Ciudad de Antequera).

Photo: Hans R. Goette

Fig. 8 Head of a satyr statuette found in the Villa de la Estación in Antequera (Museo de la Ciudad de Antequera).
Photo: Gunnar Brands

Fig. 9 Statuette of a “Pudica Nymph” found in the Villa de Salar (Museo Arqueológico de Granada), front and back.
Courtesy Maria Luisa Loza Azuaga, Junta de Andalucía, Sevilla

Fig. 10 Statuette of Aphrodite from Chiragan (Toulouse, Musée Saint-Raymond), front, side and back.
Capus 2019:
<https://villachiragan.saintraymond.toulouse.fr/ark:/87276/a_ra_151_ra_114>

Fig. 11 Statuette of Aphrodite found in the Villa de Salar (Museo Arqueológico de Granada), front and back.
Courtesy Maria Luisa Loza Azuaga, Junta de Andalucía, Sevilla

Fig. 12 Statuette of Aphrodite found in the Villa de Salar (Museo Arqueológico de Granada), head.
Courtesy Maria Luisa Loza Azuaga, Junta de Andalucía, Sevilla

Fig. 13 Statuette of Asclepius found in the villa of Els Munts (Tarragona, *Museu Nacional Arqueològic*), front, side.
D-DAI-MAD-WIT-R-23-78-2

Fig. 14 Statuette of Hygieia found in the villa of Els Munts (Tarragona, *Museu Nacional Arqueològic*), front and back.

D-DAI-MAD-WIT-R-21-78-10; D-DAI-MAD-WIT-R-21-78-12

Fig. 15 Head of a Tyche found in the villa of Els Munts (Tarragona, *Museu Nacional Arqueològic*), front.

D-DAI-MAD-WIT-R-151-82-01

Fig. 16 Statuette of Hermes from the villa of Els Ametllers (Tossa de Mar, *Museu Municipal*), front and back after Koppel-Rodà 2008, p. 119 fig. 13.14

Fig. 17 Statuette of Perseus and Andromeda found in the Villa El Ruedo (Almedinilla, *Museo Histórico-Arqueológico*), front and side.

Photos: Hans R. Goette; Gunnar Brands

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