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Clusters of re-use: the late Roman wall and the Unfinished Baths of Lepcis Magna

Abstract

Lepcis Magna is a privileged site for investigating re-use in all its forms, and this paper focuses on the materials which are to be found recycled in two late-antique contexts: the late Roman defensive circuit and the so-called Unfinished Baths. In both contexts, the architects made use of a multitude of older elements, mostly architectural and epigraphic, many of which are still unpublished. These are discussed here for the first time in an attempt to investigate their character, their original provenance, and how they were employed within these new settings.

Introduction

Lepcis Magna, a wealthy city of North Africa, is surely one of those privileged sites for investigating re-use in all its forms. The city suffered only limited post-antique disturbances, and it therefore offers first-hand evidence of how its monumental patrimony was handled, exploited, and recycled in the course of the whole of its life, but especially in the period spanning from the post-Severan age to Late Antiquity and beyond, during the Byzantine reconquest. Much has been said in recent years, but the subject is far from exhausted, and many an issue or a building still wait to be thoroughly treated. This is the case with both the late Roman defensive circuit and the so-called Unfinished Baths, where the re-use of older materials of all sorts appears to be the standard building practice.

Analysing what kinds of materials were re-used, how they were treated, and where they were employed can yield, as this paper attempts to show, a large quantity of data. This, in turn, can provide insight into how a late-antique building was designed, the state of other edifices in the city, or even the existence of structures otherwise unknown. Given the vastness of the topic, needless to say, in this paper I can address these issues only in a brief manner, in the hope that the future will bring the resumption of on-site investigations and a new fruitful season of studies.
The late Roman wall

Lepcis had three defensive systems, concentrically laid out on the ground and comprising a decreasingly smaller portion of urban area (FIG. 1). The earliest and largest circuit, the so-called Monticelli, was presumably built in the first century AD and consisted of an earthen bank sided by a water canal along the western sector. The last and smallest circuit was the Byzantine fortification, which enclosed only the small area near the sea corresponding to the Old Forum and the harbour.¹ In between stood the late Roman wall, and it is on this structure that we will focus our attention. Partially unearthed along its western portion by G. Guidi and G. Caputo who, sadly, both left their work virtually unpublished,² the late Roman wall was more thoroughly investigated in the years between 1947 and 1950 by the British scholars R.G. Goodchild and J.B. Ward-Perkins. These latter scholars carried out preliminary ground surveys and opened several trial trenches at specific key-points, and the paper that they produced shortly after still stands today as the main reference work on the subject.³ In more recent years, research has been carried out on specific sectors of the circuit, the results of which are only partially published.⁴

The wall comprised an area of roughly 130 hectares, running for a length of approximately 3 km, and enclosing the city on three if not all four sides. The works carried out during the British occupation allowed, for the most part, the wall’s course to be established. The wall starts at a watch tower located on the coast to the north-west of the city (A.1). From here, it runs landward until it meets the great coastal road, where a gate – the so-called Porta Oea (A.3) – was built over the earlier arch of Antoninus Pius. Shortly after, the wall makes a sharp bend (A.4) and continues south-east, roughly parallel to the decumanus maximus; it then disappears under the high sand deposits only to surface again after the Wadi Lebdah (A.6), where it curves progressively to embrace the eastern suburbium and meet the shore once again to the south-east of the port (A.10). It is still unclear whether, at the time of its initial construction, the wall protected the city also along the whole line of the coast. Recent work shows that, on the eastern side, the rampart continued north towards the port with a sea wall bonded to the land wall and thus contemporary to it.⁵ For the stretch of coast north-west of the harbour, the question still stands where it was left by Goodchild and Ward-Perkins, who recorded a couple of undated scanty remains north of the Forum Vetus and a stretch of

¹ I wish to thank Letizia Caldelli, Ersilia D’Ambrosio, and Ignazio Tantillo who helped me significantly in dealing with the unpublished inscriptions.
² Initially, the later fortification was to have had a larger perimeter enclosing also the Severan nymphaeum, the Forum and the colonnaded street, but for some reason the project was abandoned and most parts of it were left unfinished or were dismantled: Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953, 55-68, fig. 4.
³ Only a brief mention of the western sector is found in Guidi 1935, 240-241, with pl. XVI (here FIG. 8): “Le mura occidentali di Leptis che, nascoste sotto un’altissima duna, in direzione nord-sud chiudevano l’antica città verso Homs e che si pensava potessero essere romane del II sec. d.C., sono state di recente esplorate; si è constatato che sono mura tarde, costruite con materiale raccogliticcio; vi abbondano pietre tolte da monumenti funerari romani.”
⁴ Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953.
⁵ Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953 did not account for the rampart, which was first seen by Bartoccini 1958, 128 during the clearing of the port and was published in full by Masturzo 1996.
wall which abuts against tower A.1 and which was deemed a subsequent addition.\textsuperscript{6} Also in terms of dating, our knowledge of the fortification has not progressed much, and without further archaeological investigations focused on yielding new secure chronological data, we must still retain the traditional chronology between AD 250 and 360, with a date in the tetrarchic period being preferred.\textsuperscript{7}

The eastern sector

As already noted by both the Italian and British archaeologists, the wall is “built throughout of re-used materials,”\textsuperscript{8} but this stands as no surprise. Very little can be said about the materials of the ramparts which crossed the eastern suburbium, where no extensive archaeological excavation has ever been carried out. This area, a vast plain stretching from the modern coastal road to the sea, was appointed during the Italian-Turkish war as one of the strategic bases of the Italian troops with several forts and redoubts being built entirely with ancient materials (F\textsuperscript{ig}. 2).\textsuperscript{9} Salvatore Aurigemma tells us that alongside scattered blocks, the Italian troops extensively plundered buildings still standing in the area, and although he only mentions the circus and the Byzantine wall as the structures that suffered most, we may reasonably suppose that the late Roman wall was also quarried for building material.\textsuperscript{10} In addition, if we compare the Grupelli and Giua map of 1912\textsuperscript{11} and the 1941-1943 R.A.F. aerial photographs\textsuperscript{12} with present day satellite images, we see that the remains of the wall are much less visible now than they were at those times, with segments previously marked by high dunes now barely distinguishable from the rest of the ground. Flooding of Wadi Lebdah, which brought along considerable amounts of debris, agricultural activities, and the planting of electrical utility poles, changed the landscape so considerably that it is now difficult to distinguish which of the scattered and half buried blocks surfacing here and there formed part of the rampart, which were part of the other late structures littering the area, and ultimately, what the relationship is – if there is any – between the two.

This is the case of the immediate surroundings of the mausoleum of Gasr Shaddad, where small, shallow stretches of walls composed of several architectural members emerge from the

\textsuperscript{6} Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953, 68-69, pl. XVla; Pentiricci 2010, 167 suggests that this stretch of sea-wall might be connected to IRT 470=Tantillo, Bigi, n. 74, 461-465, an inscription dated AD 340-350, which seems to refer to restoration works carried out on a defensive apparatus of some sort.

\textsuperscript{7} No sooner had the wall been exposed than Guidi recognised it to be of late Roman date (cfr. supra, footnote 2) and ascribed it provisionally to the late fourth century, in connection with the raids of the Austurians of AD 365; yet, as shown by Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953, 71, such a date is rather to be considered a terminus ante quem, and the construction is thus to be placed between the years AD 250 and 360, with a preference for the earlier date. A. Di Vita proposed to date it between AD 306 and 310, but on purely speculative grounds, while the tetrarchic date was first suggested by R. Rebuffat 1989. For the dating, see also Tantillo, Bigi, 464 and Pentiricci 2010, 164-167.

\textsuperscript{8} Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953, 48. See also Bartocchini 1958, 128.

\textsuperscript{9} For the distribution of the Italian military forts built around Lepcis, see Munzi \textit{et al.} 2010, 25-28. Of the two main forts built in the area only one, forte Settimio Severo, is still preserved, and in the whole of its lower courses one can detect plain rectangular blocks taken from ancient monuments. For a description of the area, see also Romanelli 1925, 162-164.

\textsuperscript{10} Aurigemma 1930, 84; Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953, 48 suppose it was quarried also in ancient times for the construction of the Byzantine wall and under the Vandals.

\textsuperscript{11} Appendix to Aurigemma 1915 and Romanelli 1925.

\textsuperscript{12} Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953, pl. XV.
ground and are surrounded by other scattered, half buried decorative elements (Figs. 3-5). Aside from those pertaining to the mausoleum itself, other decorative pieces visible in the area surely belong to other medium-sized mausolea and tombs, such as a Doric frieze devoid of triglyphs and decorated with large palmettes (Fig. 3), the tip of a scaled roof similar to that covering the Trajanic mausoleum of Gasr Duirat (Fig. 4d), and the crowning block of a small aedicula-like monument carved with a pair of simple Tuscan capitals (Fig. 5d). The other elements, namely pilaster capitals and bases (Figs. 4b-c, 5c), might equally have belonged to secular or funerary buildings, although their measurements suggest a provenance from the latter. Noteworthy are three Corinthian pilaster capitals: one, almost completely sunken in the ground, with its thick and ribbed volutes, fleshy leaves and S-shaped helices, appears to be a mid-first-century AD copy of the models imported from Alexandria and used in Lepcis before the Roman Corinthian became the standard (Fig. 5a). The other two are instead a second-century translation into local stones of the Asiatic Corinthian, which was first introduced here in the Hadrianic baths and soon copied in other less imposing buildings (Figs. 4a and 5b).

Alongside architectural members, several inscriptions were also found in the plain east of the wadi. Recorded by nineteenth-century travellers and again, in the years between 1912 and 1914, by Aurigemma, most of these inscriptions were subsequently moved to the Museum, while the rest went missing and have not been seen since. Information regarding their find-spots varies in accuracy, and in many cases we possess only vague indications, yet a distributional map – necessarily involving a certain degree of approximation – can still prove useful in trying to assess in which structures these stones had been re-used (Fig. 6).

The most conspicuous cluster of re-used materials – both epigraphic and decorative – comes from a watch-tower built along the line of the late Roman wall, very close to the eastern bank of the wadi (A.6). The tower was seen while still standing in 1806 by Delaporte before it was later dismantled, presumably during the Italian occupation, with the materials left lying around and only partially salvaged in the following decades. Traces of the tower are still detectable on the ground, but they do not appear to be the “massive constructions” seen by the British archaeologists.

Delaporte copied two inscriptions which had been re-used in the tower as building material: one is a reshaped limestone block bearing four lines of a rather late Greek text (IRT 825) of uncertain nature but perhaps funerary, while the other (IRT 819), now lost, was presumably carved on a block. It consisted of the letters ANIF/CII engraved with “grands caractères latins,” surely a monumental inscription and possibly a dedicatory one. A third, more significant inscription was rescued at a later date from the same site (IRT 633). The inscription celebrates C. Avilius Marsus who was appointed with the special honos bigae and was carved on a large tripartite limestone base, of which only the body furnished with a moulded frame survives. In this case, there can be no doubt as to the inscription’s ‘public’ character. It is there-

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13 Bigi 2006, 2364-2366 and fig. 10.
14 For example, in the façade of the so-called Schola on the Decumanus Maximus; de Chaisemartin 2017, figs. 8a-c. On the reception of the model, see Bianchi 2005, 217-218, figs. 33-34.
15 See the find circumstances of IRT 633, discovered “together with a large number of architectural and other fragments, apparently collected there for use in a tower of the IV cent. wall.”
17 CIL VIII, 10966 suggested the reading [Hadri]ani f(ilius).
fore certain that the base originally stood in some prominent spot of the city and was transported here only at the time of its re-use in the fortification.

Further along the line of the wall, the mausoleum of Gasr Shaddad – the only one still surviving in the area – marks another cluster. At the foot of the mausoleum, Bartoccini saw a fragment of a tripartite base carved in limestone with the remains of an inscription (*IRT* 639) set up by a mother in honour of her son, with the permission of the city council. In Lepcis, the formula *ex permissu ordinis* is very frequently found on second- and third-century bases set up by private citizens in honour of members of their family, and this type of honorific monument has been found in all of the major public buildings of the city. Thus, we can be sure again that the findspot does not correspond to the original location of the monument, and in addition, we may reasonably assume that it likewise was moved here for re-use in the curtain of the rampart, as the line of the wall runs here very close to the mausoleum, so much so that Goodchild and Ward-Perkins suggested that the tomb might have been turned into a watch tower.

A provenance from a public display context and a subsequent re-use for the rampart curtain can be supposed also in the case of three other bases similarly found in the immediate surroundings of the mausoleum. The first is a limestone base of the tripartite type, furnished with a moulded frame, bearing a dedication to C. Fulvius Plautianus which was subsequently erased after his *damnatio memoriae* (*IRT* 524). The awarders of the monument, M. Cornelius Bassus Servianus and Cornelia Servianilla, appear also as awarders of another base set up for Geta and subsequently re-used in the North Temple of the Forum Vetus (*IRT* 443). The dimensions of the two bases are almost identical, and we may imagine that both were originally part of a larger group of dedications set up in honour of the whole of the imperial family, as frequently happened in Lepcis and elsewhere. The other two bases were found by Aurigemma some 30 metres away from the mausoleum of Gasr Shaddad and have subsequently gone missing (*IRT* 460a and b). One bore a dedication to Valerianus *iunior* son of Gallienus and was set up by the people of Lepcis in the years AD 253-255. From the brief description given by Aurigemma, we may infer that it was of the tripartite type, with the epigraphic field oddly devoid of a moulded frame. No mention is made of the moulded crowning and socle originally accompanying the rectangular base. The other, fragmentary, was presumably of the moulded monolithic type with only the letters *P CO* carved on the upper corner of a moulded panel. The surviving letters were interpreted by the editors of the *IRT* as *P(ublio) Co[melio]*, thus implicitly also assigning the second base to a member of the same imperial family.

Aurigemma also records another honorific base (*IRT* 675 for Caecina Apollinaris), again of the tripartite type but with a moulded frame carved on all sides, some 200 metres further to the north-east in the Settimio Severo fort, where it had surely been transferred by Italian soldiers. In addition, there was a limestone funerary altar (*IRT* 714), which was lying together with many other elements carved in stone, on a small hill where a temporary redoubt had

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18 This was often a requirement to receive an inheritance; cfr. Tantillo 2010, 192 with note 152.

19 Aurigemma 1930, 82: “a 30 m circa dal mausoleo di Gasr esc-Sciaddad, sulla riva destra del Uàdi Lébda, a 750 m circa a Sud-Ovest dal Circo di Leptis Magna, si trovava rovesciato, nel febbraio 1914, un parallelepipedo di pietra chiara locale che […] stava per essere trasportato […] nel forte Settimio Severo, ove gli ufficiali venivano raccogliendo iscrizioni e frammenti architettonici sparsi per la campagna.”
been built during the Italian-Turkish war. A limestone block (IRT 751), patently reshaped to be fit into a wall and bearing the initial part of a funerary inscription, was seen in 1913 “in una specie di allineamento di massi,” located some 300 metres north-west of Gasr Ribaia, a small mausoleum that once stood not far from the modern road; although the location is in theory compatible with the late Roman wall, it seems preferable to refer the line of stones to one of the several dwellings and basins scattered throughout the area.

Lastly, a second base for Plautianus, again with his name erased, was found re-used as building material in a wall whose nature remains uncertain, but whose location makes it likely to have been part of the late Roman defensive circuit. As in the case discussed above, the base was originally part of a larger group of statues dedicated to the whole of the imperial family in the Forum Vetus. While other inscriptions were seen in the area, they have not been taken into account here because the text is too incomplete to furnish any idea of their nature, the information regarding their findspot was too vague, or on the contrary, they were found in situ and did not suffer re-use.

Even in the absence of direct on-site investigation, taken all together the inscriptions documented in the eastern suburban area still yield fruitful data. Out of the 11 taken into account here, only two are funerary in nature, while nine are to be ascribed to the public sphere, being either blocks of monumental inscriptions or honorific statue bases. These numbers cannot be wholly coincidental. Although we have little or no archaeological evidence, it seems most likely that secular monuments were quarried alongside tombs and mausolea for the construction of the city wall and that a good deal – if not all – of the non-funerary inscriptions were brought here for this purpose. Evidence is provided in the first instance by the two inscriptions honouring Plautianus which must have been removed from public view after his damnum memoriae and stored, together with those of the same cycles for Geta, in some depot from where they were later taken when needed. Secondly, plundering public areas and taking the pain of transporting large stones from buildings which did not stand in the immediate area is an undertaking that fits definitely better within the frame of a large scale operation conducted by the local authorities, rather than that resulting from activities of episodic dwellers. Surely the displacement of stones from the monumental city centre cannot be ascribed to the Italian soldiers who presumably only used what they had at hand.

Set within this context, together with at least five other honorific bases, the importance initially attached to the inscription honouring Valerianus for dating the wall must now be...
lessened. As the only securely dated document found in or near the late Roman wall, scholars have attempted to determine the nature of the relationship between the two. In particular, Goodchild and Ward-Perkins cited the base as possible confirmatory evidence for the construction of the walls in Gallienic times, supposing that the honorific monument could have been set up beside it. Although they did not neglect the possibility that the base was brought here on the occasion of a subsequent repair which had taken place long after the reign of Gallienus, they deemed it unlikely that it had been re-used in the ramparts from the start, believing that “the re-used material in the wall fabric is taken almost entirely from tombs, not from public monuments.”

As we have seen, Valerianus’ base is far from being the only honorific monument found in the area, thus there is no need to imagine that only this one had been set up beside the wall while the others had been re-used in it as mere building material. Moreover, the text makes no allusion to buildings or accomplishments, and it appears to be much more in keeping with generic dedications set up by the people of Lepcis to the reigning emperor than with those to emperors who had favoured the city with some special enterprise. In addition, we now know that in third- and fourth-century Lepcis, statue bases did not stand untouched for long periods. It is therefore not necessary to imagine that a long interval had passed between its dedication and its removal for re-use.

In conclusion, I believe that the imperial base was simply treated as mere building material, just like the other stones, and that its value for dating lies only in furnishing a terminus post quem for its displacement.

The western sector

In the western sector, the wall is preserved in a much better state – with the curtain reaching in some places to a height of six metres. Nonetheless it cannot be better examined since most of it has been covered again by high sand dunes to the point that no traces of the trial trenches and cuttings opened by Guidi and the British scholars remain (FIG. 7). Judging from what is visible today, the stretch that runs landward from the sea is well coursed and quite plain, being made of simple rectangular re-used blocks carved in the various qualities of local stones.

Further to the south-west, in 1933 Guidi cleared a portion of the wall, revealing courses of large re-used blocks, one of which was furnished with a tabula ansata and bore a funerary inscription for Q. Domitius Camillus Nysim datable to the second or third century AD (IRT 692).

At the junction with the decumanus maximus, where the wall opens into the monumental west gate, the so-called Porta Oea, lies the most interesting cluster of materials unearthed so far, a cluster which is much more consistent than previously understood. In the rampart immediately south-west of the gate, a stretch – approximately 10 metres long – appears to be made entirely of large architectural elements. This stretch is less evenly coursed than the rest

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28 Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953, 70.
29 Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 289-293; Tantillo 2017, 230. See also the exemplary case of IRT 562=Tantillo, Bigi. n. 40, 391, dedicated ad sempiternam memoriam but re-used only twenty years later for another honorand. On the ‘life expectancy’ of statue bases in Rome and Italy, see Machado 2017, 333.
30 What is visible may be misleading; when systematic dismantling of the city walls takes place (the case of Thessalonica is exemplary), the number of re-used decorated elements not previously visible because they were built into the wall with the decorated side facing inward is always surprisingly high.
31 A detailed stylistic study of the architectural elements is in preparation by F. Bianchi.
of the rampart (Figs. 8-9), and it has been suggested that such unevenness may be the sign of a later repair; however, it may very well be due to the irregularity of the blocks employed here, which vary in size and shape much more than those used in the rest of the curtain wall. A similar conjecture has been made for the walls of Hierapolis. 32 The first lower course of this stretch of wall is fairly regular in its layout and is made of sandstone and limestone blocks that are typically 48-50 cm high. The only notable feature is a block furnished with a large rectangular socket for the insertion of a wooden pole, possibly belonging to a roofing of some sort. Above it, on the second course, rest four Doric friezes carved with plain metopes and simply rendered triglyphs, two of which are corner blocks. Though very similar, they are not identical, and the slight differences might indicate that they originally belonged to two or three different tombs. On the same course, but to the left, there are two blocks carrying a portion of the shaft of a plain corner pilaster; four similar blocks appear also in the third and fourth courses, and one of these blocks was walled with the decorated side facing upward. Plain corner pilasters are a distinctive feature of first- and second-century mausolea of all types found in the region. They were employed either in the canonical association with capitals and bases, or in a more local version, only with an equally projecting socle and crowning which together created a simple yet effective means of granting movement to an otherwise flat elevation. 33 In addition, on the uppermost course of this stretch of wall, there are three more Doric friezes, again belonging to three different monumental tombs. One of these friezes has four metopes decorated with Gorgon masks alternated with large rosettes (Fig. 10).

The curtain wall of the south tower was also built using a very large number of architectural elements carved in local grey limestone, and a number of loose smaller pieces have also been gathered in its inner court. 34 A few examples can be cited here: a large rectangular block with a portion of a draped figure; a large block with a pair of highly projecting volutes (Fig. 11a); a block with a series of uraei (Fig. 11b); and five or more blocks with corner pilasters decorated with peopled scrolls which seemingly belonged to the same mausoleum (Figs. 12-13). Only a detailed study of all the elements will clarify the relationships between them and, ultimately, how many funerary monuments were plundered in total; however, from this brief excursion we are able to assess that at least six medium-sized mausolea were dismantled for this section of the rampart alone. There can be no doubt that they originally stood in the western necropolis, where monumental tombs were seen still standing by nineteenth-century travellers and where the remains of plundered funerary structures have been found in the past decades. 35

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32 See Ismaelli et al., this volume.
33 To cite only a few: Gasr Legbeba, cube-shaped near Lepcis, Matoug 1997; Wadi N’fed and Wadi umm el-Agerem, obelisk type, Mattingly 1994, 162, pl. 44; Wadi Migdal, tower tomb, Mattingly 1994, 162, pl. 44 and Gasr Shaddad in the eastern necropolis, Romanelli 1925, 163, fig. 90; Gasr al-Mekzmat, al-Kadduri 1997; Gasr al-Ajbar, Zenati 1997, 224-225, pl. CIX. See also the monumental tomb of Gasr Doga in the hinterland, Bigi et al. 2009.
34 On the side of a limestone block walled in the uppermost preserved course of the same south tower, one can detect an inscription, scratched with a pointed instrument, which reads Marius Apylonarys. The text is most probably modern, though not contemporary, as indicated by palaeography, onomastics, and the fact that it was surely carved when the tower was already in a ruined state, since in some points it cuts the remains of the mortar originally filling the space between this block and the adjacent one. Though difficult to prove, it may be tempting to relate it to one of the Italian soldiers loitering around the ruins.
35 Romanelli 1925, 163-164; Musso et al. 1997.
Lastly, lying at the side of the west gate are seven loose blocks with portions of monumental dedicatory inscriptions (*IRT* 343, 351, and 482). Two were seen while still embedded in the vault of the gate, but we can be fairly sure that all of the blocks had been brought here for re-use in the fortification. By their publication in the *Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania (IRT)*, their interpretation, distribution, and dating has changed sensibly. We are now able to assert that five blocks were part of a monumental building – possibly an arch – dedicated under the reign of Vespasian (AD 69-79), while the remaining two can be ascribed to another public building erected under Claudius in AD 42-43 and patronised by the proconsul Q. Marcius Barea, the same individual who dedicated the Temple of Augustan Gods. These new interpretations are very significant not only because they shed new light on the building activity of first-century Lepcis but also because, in the case of the latter, the generic dating previously furnished by the *IRT* to the first to third centuries can now be narrowed down *ad annum*. This in turn brings us back to the question of the date for the city walls and of the supposed connection with the so-called Unfinished Baths. A. Di Vita states that the Unfinished Baths and the western gate ought to be contemporary because blocks of the same inscription datable to the Tiberian period are re-used in both buildings, although he furnishes no detail as to what text he is referring. If Di Vita was alluding to the blocks just discussed, then evidently none of them fits into such a chronological span, and his assumption must therefore be rejected. Besides, as recently stressed, even if there were blocks of the same inscription re-used in both buildings, this would not at all imply contemporaneity, as we now know fairly well that parts of older buildings pulled down for various reasons were warehoused and stocked for future re-use. As for the dating, Di Vita believed that an earthquake struck the city in the years AD 306-310 and that the abundance of building material deriving from it triggered the construction of the defensive circuit. Yet, city walls are built because an external threat of some sort renders them necessary, not because the city experienced a surplus of building material. Moreover, as the many studies conducted on the subject have shown, the erection of a defensive system is a centralised operation involving different levels of public administration, and it is often carried out within the frame of a wider scheme aimed at the strengthening of the whole region.

Recent studies, both empire-wide and local, have focused on the relationship between defensive circuits and the urban fabric. Unfortunately, as far as Lepcis is concerned, not much can be said in this respect, not only because as we have seen the *ratio* between uncovered and

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36 Recorded by Romanelli 1925, 84. For a discussion, see Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 285 n. 126-127; Marmouri 2016, n. 21.
37 *IRT* 343, 351 and 482b; new edition in Silvestrini 1984-1985, 283-287, fig. 1; *AE* 1987, 990. A slightly different reconstruction and dating are proposed in Marmouri 2016, 282-285, figs. 6-7; *AE* 2016, 1841. A sixth block, containing only a moulded frame, is also thought to be part of it.
38 *IRT* 482a; amended reading in Silvestrini 1984-1985, 279-283, fig. 1; *AE* 1987, 989: [Ti(berio) Claudio Caesari A]lug(usto) pont(ifici) [max(imo) tribunicia potestatis e II co(n)s(ulis) ul]i des(ignato) III imp(eratori) III patri patriae] / [Q(uintus) Marcus C(ai) f(ilius) B]area co(n)s(ul) XVvir sacris faciundis f[etialis proco(n)s(uli) II dedicavit].
39 Di Vita 1990a, 445-446, who only records that the blocks were “in opera nell’alzato delle mura.”
40 Pentiricci 2010, 163-164 and 167; Tantillo, Bigi 2015, 464.
41 For this argument applied to late-third-century walls in Spain, see Fernández-Ochoa, Morillo 2005. For similar arguments in Italy, see Christie 2001. On the central planning of walls in general, see Butler 1961, 47; Johnson 1983, 114. However, a centralised strategy is not always clear, and walls may well have been constructed on more of an *ad hoc* basis; see, for example, Esmonde Cleary 2013, 89; Witschel 2013.
covered sectors is highly in favour of the latter but also because nearly all the urban and suburban areas adjacent to the circuit are equally unexcavated. We are, for example, unable to assess any better than the earlier British scholars as to whether the rampart blocked all but main arteries or whether it was pierced with gates at the junction of at least some of the secondary roads. In the western sector, we still do not know how far the inhabited areas of the city extended, if the wall’s route crossed a scarcely or densely built quadrant, and ultimately therefore, what the impact of its construction was on the existing urban fabric.

We may provisionally connect the concentration of funerary elements embedded in and around the western gate with the fact that the main road running westward from it connected the city to the necropolis, and therefore blocks plundered from the latter could have been more conveniently re-used in this sector than in others. In contrast, for the eastern sector there are less uncertainties, and we may conjecture that the landscape was mainly – if not entirely – funerary, so that very few structures interfered with the circuit. Therefore, a smaller number of buildings were available to be quarried. Several public inscriptions – namely statue bases – surely not in their primary context, were found in this area, seeming to indicate that the tombs and mausolea of the surrounding area did not supply enough building material. Therefore, it became necessary to draw on other buildings and depots. Of one thing we can now be sure, that the defensive circuit was not made entirely of materials taken from funerary contexts. In this respect, therefore, Lepcis’s defensive circuit appears to fit within the general recycling pattern which more often than not used a combination of funerary and public material.

*The Unfinished Baths*

Seen from a late-antique perspective, the so-called Unfinished Baths surely represent the most interesting building unearthed in Lepcis so far, as it is the only public, non-defensive structure entirely designed in a later period and thus boasting, in both plan and elevation, features typical of the time. The Baths are even more interesting when thinking in terms of re-use. The whole structure is in fact made of a multitude of second-hand materials – blocks, columns, decorative members – and only very few newly hewn stones. Some elements were treated as mere raw building material, some on the contrary were chosen for their decorative and structural value, which was maintained in the new architecture, while others underwent different levels of recarving, reshaping, or more invasive adjustments to fit in the new setting. It would take a dedicated, in-depth study to do justice to their number and nature as well as to understand the structural reasons underlying their re-use within the new elevations and, ultimately, their relationship with the buildings for which they were originally crafted. In this paper, I can obviously address these questions only in a limited fashion.

The Baths were erected over a previous bath house, in the western sector of the city close to the shoreline and were excavated in the years 1955-1956 by E. Vergara Caffarelli, whose premature death prevented a detailed publication. Statues and inscriptions were found in a conspicuous number, yet their publication – which was considered imminent – never came to

43 A trial trench, opened by Guidi and discussed in Goodchild and Ward-Perkins 1953, 49, revealed that the circuit blocked the side street going westward from the Villa of Orpheus.
44 As previously thought by Caputo 1951, 244, followed by Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953, 70.
light. Our sole primary source of information is a paper written by Goodchild in 1965. In it, the British scholar not only clarified the nature of the building and its relation with the previous one, but also attempted to answer the questions regarding its dating and the reasons for it being left unfinished. He suggested a date in the fourth century, possibly around AD 360, a chronology that still remains the most convincing hypothesis, as does his idea that work came to a halt because of troubles created by the tribes of barbarians that raided Lepcis and its territory after AD 363.

In its late articulation, the Baths consisted of a hexagon-shaped calidarium built in ashlar masonry (room A), a tepidarium (room B), a small yet lavishly decorated frigidarium with five pools (room D), and on the north side, a rectangular colonnaded area of uncertain function, possibly an assembly room of some sort (Room C) (Fig. 14). As already noted, the building was constructed throughout with second-hand elements, the majority of which were either architectural pieces or inscribed stones. We will start by discussing the latter.

The inscriptions

A high number of public inscriptions, 30, carved on blocks, on statue bases, or on panels, are to be seen in the fabric of the Baths. In room C, the columns had corresponding wall pilasters, the footings of which were made out of 15 yellowish limestone honorific statue bases of tripartite type, deprived of their moulded socles and crowning. Three are covered again in sand and thus unreadable, four of them bear a dedication to local individuals, and two are to members of the Severan family: Caracalla and the deified Septimius Severus (Fig. 15). They are all unpublished, yet on grounds of their shape and palaeographical characteristics we may suppose that none of them dates after the middle of the third century. Just outside the hall, there is also the body of another base dedicated to the Genius Coloniae which had surely been brought here to be re-used even if we do not know precisely for what purpose.

Another considerable cluster of inscribed stones is found in the wall of the hexagon-shaped room (A). Only one is a statue base, again carved in limestone and of tripartite type, while the rest are all blocks originally belonging to monumental dedicatory inscriptions. One is a large limestone block walled in the north-east corner that bears two lines of a neo-Punic text (IPT 32) that most probably represents the translation of a Latin one, as was customary in first-century Lepcis. Unfortunately, the text does not yield detailed information as to either the original building or its date, and it has been assigned solely on palaeographical grounds to the middle of the first century, possibly not much later than AD 30.

45 Goodchild 1965, 24 n. 17. This is most regrettable, as several of the statue bases uncovered at the time are now mostly unreadable due to the joint erosive action of sand and wind.
46 Goodchild 1965. It was previously and erroneously thought to be the governor’s palace to which was later annexed a Byzantine church; Bianchi Bandinelli et al. 1964, 107-110.
47 Goodchild 1965, 26-27.
48 For a discussion, see Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 283-285.
49 Tripartite limestone bases virtually ceased to be produced in Lepcis at the beginning of the third century; cf. Bigi 2010, 224.
50 IRT 298, originally dedicated to the Genius Coloniae and subsequently walled in the outer eastern curtain; Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 283, fig. 8.21. It was seen in 1934 but not afterwards by the editors of the IRT.
51 IPT: “Metà del I secolo d.C. sulla base della forma delle lettere (non molto più recenti di quelle presenti sulla n. 22, anteriore al 31 d.C.).”
In the upper courses of the inner wall there are two limestone blocks that seem to belong to the same inscription (Fig. 16). They both have an upper border carved with a moulded frame, now almost completely chiselled away, and bear two lines of very similar capital letters, carved with a square module and small elegant serifs, which read:

\[\text{a): }\]
\[\text{[---?] (vacat) PAC[---]}\]
\[\text{[---]RMANICO [---]}\]
\[\text{------}\]

\[\text{b): }\]
\[\text{[---]VGVEST[---]}\]
\[\text{[---]PONT[---]}\]
\[\text{------}\]

Without venturing into a proper critical editing, we might note that in both blocks the second line seems to contain parts of an imperial titulature, since the surviving portions could easily be restored with the word \[\text{Ge}\text{rm}\text{anico}\] and the \textit{pontifex maxiumus} title. If true, line 1 of both blocks should contain the initial part of the emperor’s name; however, in this case the letters \textit{PAC} could be integrated only with great difficulty. It therefore seems much preferable that the letters refer to the name of a god and specifically the name of the god to whom the building was dedicated. A divinity whose name begins with \textit{Pac} and bears the title of \textit{Augustus/a} could hardly be anything else than the \textit{Pax Augusta}. Thus we can conjecture that the inscription read either \textit{Templum Pacis Augustae} or \textit{Paci Augustae sacrum}, like in the dedication of the Temple of Ceres in the theatre (\textit{IRT} 269), or simply \textit{Paci Augustae}, like in the Temple of the Augustan Gods (\textit{IRT} 273), to cite only the local examples.

Tentatively, to these we may connect a third block (c), which is carved in the same quality of limestone. It likewise bears traces of a chiselled away moulded frame on the lower margin and is inscribed with two lines of capital letters, the first slightly larger than the second (Fig. 17).

\[\text{c): }\]
\[\text{[---?] (vacat) COSPA[---]}\]
\[\text{[---]RASIVS ME[---]}\]
\[\text{------}\]

The first line could refer to the imperial titulature and can easily be read as \textit{co(n)s(ul-)} \textit{pa[J-patriae]}, while the second seems to bear parts of a name in the nominative case \[\text{[---]}\text{rasius Me[---]}\]. Considering that amongst the proconsuls of Africa known so far no one seems to have a name that would match the remains, it would seem more fitting to ascribe the onoma-
tic element to the local benefactor who saw to the construction of the building, and perhaps to have it followed by the formula de sua pecunia fecit or similar. If the conjectured reconstruction is not too far from the truth, we would then be dealing with a monumental dedication set within a moulded frame, possibly also belonging to a tabula ansata. On the first line, it would contain the name of the god and/or of the building, on the second and third lines, it would contain the name and extended titulature of the emperor under whose reign the dedication took place, and on the fourth and last line, it would contain the name of the other individuals involved, that is the proconsul, perhaps the legatus, and the local euergetes.

Two other blocks, one walled in the curtain of the calidarium (d) and the other near the south-east pool of the frigidarium (e), might belong to a second monumental dedicatory inscription. Both carry two lines of text, the first being of larger format, and carry numerals furnished with superscript bars; in both, the ductus is slightly irregular and the letters are not so carefully carved, though they are provided with small, gently undulated serifs (Fig. 18).

d):
[---]V IMP[---]
[---]RONVSD+[---]
e):
[---]IIX (vacat) [---]
[---]ICAVIT (vacat) [---]

If they were part of the same text, we could also postulate that they originally adjoined one another and that only a minor portion, corresponding to one letter, got lost when the second block was recut so that it fit within the fabric of the wall. In addition, given the large vacat at the end of both lines of block (e), it seems reasonable to imagine that this element contained the right end of the text. A possible reading could thus be [---]V imperator- IIX / [---] patronus de[d]icavit. The name and titulature of the emperor under whom the building was erected would appear in the first line, while in the second the name of the person entitled to dedicate it. Restricting the search to the first century, possible emperors to whom the inscription could be connected are Tiberius, Claudius, Titus, and Domitian. If it were Tiberius, the first numeral should refer to the consulate, thus the reading could be [co(n)s(ul-)] V imperator- IIX which would give a date between AD 16 and 31. This would bear strong similarities with the dedication of the Market’s porticoes, the blocks of which were also reused at a later date in the paving of the same building. This similarity might be pure coincidence, but it might also stand as confirmatory evidence of a Tiberian dating for our inscription and serve as a clue in identifying the building in which it originally stood. Repeating the dedicatory inscription in different parts of the same edifice, whether with an identical text or with minor variations, is in fact a common feature of first-century architecture in Lepcis, as shown by the dedications of the theatre, the Arch of Tiberius, and the Market itself in the

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54 On block (d), the bar above the numeral V is broken to the left, so we do not know whether it is complete or not, whilst on block (e), the bar above the numeral IIIX is complete, thus its reading poses no question.

55 Tiberius was COS V between AD 8 and 31 and acclaimed emperor for the eighth time in the late summer of AD 16. In the absence of tribuniciae potestates, the dating cannot be further narrowed down.

56 IRT 332, for the re-use of which, see Pentiricci 2010, 120 with bibliography.
Augustan phase. Should the blocks be instead connected to one of the other three emperors, the possible dating should be AD 44-45 if Claudius, AD 74 if Titus, or AD 84-85 if Domitian. All of the emperors are known for building activity in Leptis, albeit to a lesser extent for Titus, and therefore it may be safer to leave the question open and put it in the hands of future researchers.

The wall fabric of the hexagon-shaped room yields yet another pair of blocks carved in grey limestone, one of whose lower margin was furnished with a moulded frame that was later removed (FIG. 19).

\[\text{f)}\]

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{[---]} \text{OM ASPRENA[---]} \\
\text{[---]} \text{RIVM VIR AA[---]} \\
\text{[---]} \text{EQUITVM RO[---]} \\
\text{[---]} \text{DVABVS AVR+[---]} \\
\hline
\text{---}
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{g)}\]

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{[---]} + \text{CIAE GALATI[---]} \\
\text{[---]} \text{COS PRO[---]} \\
\text{[---]} \text{(vacat) PRO [---]} \\
\hline
\text{---}
\end{array}
\]

In this case, not only is the relationship of the two remnants to the same inscription beyond doubt but it is also possible to reconstruct the latter in its entirety. The cognomen Asprena[---] together with the surviving portions of his *cursus honorum* prove in fact to be the exact copy of *IRT* 346, a dedication by the proconsul L. Nonius Asprenas of a building in AD 83, during the reign of Domitian. Thus, on such grounds, our inscription can be restored as follows (FIG. 20):

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{[Imp(erator) Caesare divi Vespasiani f(ilio) Domitiano Aug(usto) pont(if(ice)) max(imo) trib(unicia) pot(estate) II imp(erator) IIII p(atre) p(atriae) co(n)s(ule) VIII. L(ucius) Nonius L(uci) f(ilius) P]om(ptina tribu) Asprena[s L(uci) Noni Asprenatis VIIuir(i) epulonum proco(n)s(ulis) provinciae Africae III nepos t]rium vir a(uro) a(rgento) [a(ere) f(lando) f(eriundo) seuir salius Palatinus quaestor Caesaris Aug(usti) centurio] equitum Ro[manorum hastis honoratus octo vexillis IIII coronis muralibus duabus vallaribus] duabus aure[a una pr(aetor) inter cives et peregrinos legatus pro praetore provin]ciae Galatiae Paphlagoniae Pamphyliae Pisidiae co(n)s(ul) VII vir epulonum pro] ((hedera)) co(n)s(ul) pro[vinciae Africae patronus municipii ((hedera)) dedicavit legato] pro [pr(aetore) M(arco) Cornelio Firmo].}
\end{array}
\]

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57 In the titulature of these emperors, the imperial acclamations are preceded by the *tribunicia potestas*, thus the numeral ending with *V* should be referred to the latter. Claudius: trib. pot. IV in AD 44-45 and V in AD 45-46; imp. VIII in AD 43-45. Titus: trib. pot. IV in AD 74-75 and V in AD 75-76; imp. VIII in AD 74. Domitian: trib. pot. IV in AD 84-85 and V in AD 85-86; imp. VIII between the end of AD 84 and the beginning of 85.
If the texts of the two versions are identical, the arrangement within the epigraphic field is on the contrary wholly different. *IRT* 346 is carved on a 5.30 metre-long architrave with the text disposed only on three lines: the first contains the name and titulature of Domitian, while the second and third contain the long *cursus* of Asprenas and the name of his legate. In the re-used version, the list of Asprenas’ posts takes up six lines, thus showing that the inscribed surface was in this case smaller in width but larger in height.\(^{58}\) What is similar is the non-symmetrical arrangement and the highly uneven word spacing which, in the re-used dedication, increases towards the end of the text with the last two lines being progressively looser. In this case, the large gaps between words appear to have been partially filled with two or more large *hederae distinguentes*, the remains of which can be detected on the left margin of block (g). There are further, strong similarities between the two inscriptions in terms of palaeography, so much so that we may even suppose that they were both crafted by the same stonemason or at least in the same workshop. In any case, what seems beyond doubt is that they belonged to the same building.

As noted above, duplicating dedicatory inscriptions within the same context was quite customary in Lepcis, and in this case we can be fairly sure that the text inscribed on the long architrave surmounted a portico and was therefore located above the main entrance, while the other was inserted in a wall built in ashlar masonry related to a secondary entrance. Unfortunately, the building to which *IRT* 346, and thus its companion, supposedly belonged is still completely covered by sand. As neither its plan nor its extent are known, it is impossible to determine in which specific part of the building the two inscriptions appeared and what their spatial relationship was.\(^{59}\) Considering that one seems to have been left on display – but with the name of Domitian effaced – while the other was certainly dismantled at a later date, we can only speculate that at least part of this building underwent some sort of refurbishment in the course of which the second inscription was deemed superfluous and the blocks composing it were discarded but warehoused for future use. As for the nature of the building, the absence in the dedicatory inscriptions of any reference to divine entities and its location, opposite the Market and within a trading district, seem to indicate a secular function, and possibly also a commercial one.

As already stressed elsewhere, because of their simple rectangular shape, the inscribed elements discussed so far had all been re-used as raw building material.\(^{60}\) Within the various sectors of the Baths’ fabric, they had been treated essentially as mere blocks which necessitated only minor adjustments in size. However, the builders of the Baths were also imagina-

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\(^{58}\) The layout in the reconstructive drawing is to be taken only as a mere suggestion. In it, the titulature of Domitian is restored as being of larger format and spread over two lines, but it might have been smaller and condensed into only one. As for Asprenas’ *cursus*, whatever possible arrangement of the wording one may choose, it would still retain a certain level of irregularity with lines that would suit neither the centred alignment nor the left one. Lastly, we have no proof that the projecting moulding belonged to a *tabula ansata*, but this has been postulated on grounds of the comparison with the twin dedication and extant first-century building inscriptions, where this element is very frequently employed.

\(^{59}\) The editors of the *IRT* thought that it was “probably from a building to the NW of the Market,” without specifying any further, but it seems far more plausible to assign the inscription to the building occupying the *insula* north-east of the Market that has a long facade with Ionic pilaster capitals and that can surely be dated to the reign of the emperor Domitian. In addition, we must remark that the blocks are now reassembled along the *decumanus* siding such *insula*, and we can reasonably suppose that this location somehow mirrors their findspot.

\(^{60}\) Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 253-254, 278, 285. In the fabric of the wall in room D, there is also a block carved with the upper right corner of a *tabula ansata*, surely belonging to a monumental inscription of the first century: photo CAS 2950.
tive, and they managed to turn other types of elements originally conceived as writing supports into something completely new. This is the case for the long, shallow limestone base initially dedicated to C. and L. Caesar,\textsuperscript{61} possibly one of the dedications displayed in the Forum Vetus comprising the whole Julio-Claudian family. Its width, which was double the average because the base was intended to hold a pair of statues, was exploited by transforming the base into a column pedestal supporting a pair of juxtaposed columns, according to a design typical of the late Roman forms of architecture. In contexts where re-use is a common practice, statue bases and column pedestals are often treated alike with their functions exchanged, and thus we often find architectonical elements converted into epigraphic supports and vice versa.\textsuperscript{62} In Lepcis, pedestals used as bases are attested by a number of examples – one of which will be discussed shortly – while the transformation of a statue base into a column pedestal appears to be quite exceptional and is paralleled only by the re-use of moulded crowning and socles originally accompanying tripartite bases and not of complete bases.

Even more ingenious is the transformation undergone by an equestrian base of the tripartite type carved in Proconnesian marble (Figs. 21-22). Just like many other stones, this base lived a long life. It was originally crafted in the Severan period, possibly for a high ranking official or a member of the imperial family itself. Not long after, it was re-used for another equestrian statuary group, and later it was defunctionalised and taken from where it stood to be re-employed in the Baths.\textsuperscript{63} The monument was dismembered, and the two moulded elements were turned into the cornice of a projecting entablature surmounting the western pools of the frigidarium (room D). While technically the base was treated as building material, there is a great difference between simply inserting material into a wall regardless of its features and instead giving it a prominent location, an architectural function, and a decorative value. In this case, the shape, size, and especially the material and decorative features represented key factors that the builders of the Baths took into account and which led them to conceive an adequate way of exploiting the stone. In other words, the fact that the moulded elements were carved in a precious material and were already furnished with some sort of ornament represented a value that was acknowledged and retained despite being used within a totally different context than that for which they were originally created. Judging from what is visible, the body of the base – supposedly consisting of a plain rectangular block – was not deemed necessary in the new refurbishment and was therefore stored in a depot or left in the building where the monument had been originally displayed. Since the body of the base is missing, the majority of the inscription is absent. Of the inscription, only the portion carved – over a previously erased text – on the upper crowning block, which consisted of the name of the honorand, survives (Fig. 22):

\textit{Q(uinto) Aradio Roscio}
\textit{Rufino Optato}

\textend{quote}

\textsuperscript{61}Images can be found in the digital archives of the “Centro di documentazione e ricerca sull’archeologia dell’Africa Settentrionale” (CAS, photos 2944-2946), where it is labelled only as “basamento modanato in calcare locale.”

\textsuperscript{62}On this specific form of re-use, see Bigi 2010, 246-250; Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 258-263; Bigi 2020, 22-28, figs. 21-32, pl. III.

\textsuperscript{63}For the dating criteria of the first use, see Bigi 2010, 228, 236-7, fig. 7.14; for its later re-uses, see Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 285, pl. XXVII.
According to a forthcoming prosopographical study, the honorand can be identified with Q. Aradius Roscius Rufinus Aelianus, who was *proconsul Africae* between the Severan period and the reign of Gallienus. Such a chronology does not contribute any more to the dating of the building than the two bases of Gallienus which were already known. However, some considerations will be discussed shortly. As for the two bases honouring Gallienus, both can be dated to AD 267-268; the first is a moulded monolithic limestone base now lying loose just outside room C. It was found near the second, which was carved in Proconnesian marble and left abandoned in one of the eastern pools of room D (Fig. 23). The marble base is yet another of those stones with a long history: it was originally created to serve as a column pedestal in one of the Severan projects but ended up as surplus, was thus warehoused, and shortly afterwards was turned into a statue base with an inscription carved on the front; it was then re-used as a base for Gallienus with this second text inscribed over the erased previous one. Lastly, it was brought into the Baths to be converted into something else. At present, we are unable to determine precisely what it was meant to become – perhaps some form of architectural element? – yet what seems quite certain is that it was not going to be sawn into slabs and panels. Wall veneering and flooring could be more easily obtained with already existing marble slabs – whether inscribed or not – of which Lepcis was very well furnished and whose remnants are in fact still to be seen in the rubble. Amongst these, we can mention a fragment of a second- or early third-century marble panel with clear signs of recutting, as well as three other fragments pertaining to the same inscription, which on palaeographical grounds, seem to belong to a later period (Fig. 24). Both are too fragmentary to furnish any significant data, but in the case of the latter we should remark that on the inscribed face it bears traces of mortar, showing that it had surely been reversed and re-used as revetment.

Lastly, we should briefly mention a series of elements that although technically devoid of writing were nevertheless surely parts of inscribed monuments. Long limestone blocks carved with a moulded arch were originally part of tetrapylon-shaped honorific monuments and were ingeniously exploited to be re-used as arcuated lintels above the doors opening onto the *calidarium*. Similarly, the niches above the pools of the *frigidarium* were topped with the

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64 Tantillo, forthcoming, whom I thank for allowing me to anticipate the results of his research.
65 *AE* 1959, 271 and *AE* 2014, 1481.
66 See Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 258-263.
67 The re-use of inscribed panels for later repairs of floors and veneer was very common and is attested, for example, in the Hadrianic Baths. See *IRT* 286 and 315=Tantillo, Bigi 2010, n. 70.
68 The fragment bears the portions of two lines: [---]MA[---]/[---]PLAV[---]. There are many plausible reconstructions of the text, as the surviving letters of l. 2 could be easily connected not only to Plautianus or Plautilla but also to the family of the Plautii, who are very well attested in Lepcis.
69 Fragment a: [---]CV+/---; fragment b: [---]MF+/---; fragment c: [---]+GL+/---.
70 One might suggest that the slab had already been employed as a revetment panel before this last use and that the visible traces are instead the remnants of this previous re-use. Yet, mortar of the same type is to be seen also on the inscribed face of the base of Aradius Rufinus, a fact that clearly indicates that the base had been already set in position when works were interrupted and that only subsequently did it collapse in the pool where it lies today. If revetment panels were at least partially in place and so were the highest architectural elements, it then seems that work in the Baths was in a more advanced state than that envisaged by Goodchild; alternatively, we should postulate some subsequent and extensive plundering which left the building in a more ruinous state than that in which it was found.
71 See Bigi, Tantillo 2010, 284-285, figs. 8.22-23, pl. XXVII; Goodchild 1965, pl. IV and VII.
bodies of equestrian bases; however in this instance, the blocks needed recarving since they were not furnished from the start with a curved surface.

As was the case for the city walls, the surviving inscriptions do not help much in assessing the chronology of the Unfinished Baths any better than previously done by Goodchild. The texts speak of Augustus’ grandsons, of Domitian, possibly of Tiberius, and of another emperor in whose titulature appeared the word *Germanicus*, all of which belong to an early empire horizon. The unpublished statue bases of the rectangular hall do not exceed the first decades of the third century, and the only seemingly later text – the one carved on a marble panel – is too fragmentary to furnish any fruitful data, while the equestrian base of Aradius Rufinus can only be broadly assigned to the central decades of the third century. Thus, the two Gallienic bases erected in AD 267-268 still stand as the only secure *terminus post quem*. We could perhaps push the chronological limit some 20-30 years, imagining – as we did in the case of Valerianus’ dedication – that both the imperial bases and that of Aradius Rufinus remained on display for some time before being displaced and re-used. However, this would take us only to the end of the third century, whilst the architectural features – namely the hexagonal plan – speak of a later date. As noted therefore, Goodchild’s proposal of a fourth-century date, possibly around AD 360, remains the most convincing hypothesis. As for Di Vita’s idea, mentioned above, that parts of the same Tiberian inscription were re-used here and in the western gate, we must note that such a connection appears highly dubious. It is possible that there were other inscribed blocks walled in the lower courses and now covered again by sand; however, judging from what is visible today, the only inscription that could refer to Tiberius cannot be paired with any of those found in or near the Porta Oea, as these are surely to be ascribed to other emperors.

*The architectural elements*

Even more extensive and striking is the re-use of architectural elements. Walls are consistently made of second-hand block-shaped elements carved in a variety of local stones, while prominent decorative features, particularly columns, are re-used because they are prized elements carved in a variety of polychrome marbles. In the new frigidarium hall, for example, the roof was to be supported by four lofty columns composed of Carystian marble shafts set on matching Attic bases and topped by equally matching Corinthian capitals carved in Proconnesian marble. The passages leading onto the pools and the adjacent rooms were decorated with 32 smaller columns, often paired. Of these, most of the Attic bases were found in position, but only a few of the corresponding shafts and Corinthian capitals remain. In the simpler fitting of room C, the refurbishment consisted of a central rectangular portico made of 12 marble columns, ten of which are still standing. The shafts are carved in Carystian and *breccia corallina* marbles, and like those of the frigidarium, the capitals, shafts, and bases have matching measurements and thus perfectly fit with each other (Fig. 25). This is no secondary aspect, because it shows that the columns were not pieced together with elements from disparate buildings but were on the contrary sourced from a single context, dismantled

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72 This is especially the case in room D, where one can detect blocks originally taken from inner walls or façades, blocks treated with anathyrosis or carved with corner pilasters and semicolumns (cfr. CAS 2891), blocks with sockets for roof jambs, etc.
in their entirety, and directly reinstalled. Luckily, in this instance we are also able to identify the original context from which the material was taken: the capitals of the rectangular hall and those topping the four lofty columns of the frigidarium boast theatre masks instead of flowers on the abacus (Fig. 26). This specific feature stands as a clear indication of their original provenance from the theatre, a provenance which is further confirmed by stylistic comparison with exemplars still visible on the scaenae frons. But establishing the theatre as the source for the Baths’ building materials leads us onto a series of further questions: which specific sectors of the scaenae frons were plundered, and was this the only context quarried or were some of the smaller columns decorating the frigidarium taken from somewhere else? Moreover, was the decoration re-used because the theatre was in a state of ruin, or on the contrary, was it this spoliation that rendered it unusable, and if so to what extent? As for the first question, we can only make preliminary observations as it would take a thorough investigation – in which a metrological study is paired with a computation of the missing and restored theatre elements – to provide an exhaustive answer. It has been suggested that the larger capitals might have belonged to the central stage door, the valva regia of the lower storey. Surely they belonged to the lower tier, but considering that four and not only two of the six columns missing from the original setting are re-used in the late Baths, it seems clear that more than one gate was dismantled to supply the materials. Additionally, and on the basis of the arrangement of the various marbles within the whole elevation of the scaenae, we should imagine that the dismantled gates were the two lateral ones. We should envisage that the smaller breccia corallina and Carystian marble columns displayed in room C came from the upper storeys, possibly from the second one since very few elements belonging to this tier are still to be seen within the theatre, whilst ten or more columns from the uppermost storey were found and are now assembled on the stage.

As for the second question, namely the relationship between the state of the theatre before and after the re-use of its architectural elements, we are faced with the same, if not more complex, problems since it involves considering wider issues concerning, amongst other things, the continuity or rupture of civic life, which should be tackled by taking into account the largest possible quantity of evidence (archaeological, historical, epigraphic, etc). What seems fairly certain at this stage is that the architectural decoration found in the Baths was not salvaged from a ruined context. This is especially evident for the four large capitals of the frigidarium, where the abacus corners, tip of leaves, and other projecting fragile parts show no sign of ancient breakage, repair, or wear, as also is the case for the columns shafts. Therefore, we can rule out any assumption of natural catastrophes making material from collapsed...
buildings available. Similarly, it seems highly unlikely that the marble elements were part of surplus stock that was never installed and thus warehoused for future employment. While this certainly happened for the Severan complexes where the building programme was drastically reduced after large quantities of marble had already reached Lepcis, it cannot be postulated for the refurbishments of the Antonine period, as these were carried out with very careful planning of the materials required and consequently produced only an extremely limited amount of redundant material. In other words, even if the reconstruction of the scaenae frons had left behind some unused pieces, there would not have been enough of them to allow a whole new set of decoration. Thus, judging from the extant evidence, it seems that the arrangement of theatre elements within the Baths was the result of a careful selection which was operated first-hand when most, if not all, of the materials were available on site and in good condition. The later state of the theatre is hard to say.

Forms of recycling practices

In rebuilding or refurbishing contexts where re-use was the standard practice, one usually recycled what was at hand, exploiting the shape of the available materials or adjusting them to meet the needs of the new fabric. As we have seen, this was also the case in the late Baths where all forms of inscribed supports were turned into a multitude of new objects, such as column bases, projecting architraves, and door lintels, or were simply used as mere masonry blocks. But the Baths also yield evidence for the opposite kind recycling practice, that of creating architecture ex novo based on the materials which were intended to be re-used in it. In this scenario, the recycled elements do not fit the design, they determine it, both in plan and elevation. The height of the frigidarium’s roof must have been established on the basis of the four Carystian columns as were the depth and width of the room which could not exceed certain measures for obvious static reasons. Similarly, shallow walls were built under the paired columns of smaller size siding the pools, so that the resulting height would match the desired one. The architect must have had a clear notion of what was going to be re-used and where, and the careful selection of the theatre’s architectural decoration went side by side with an equally carefully conceived design.78

If the majority of marble decorative elements seemingly points to a source from a single context, the opposite is true for the inscribed stones, which yield a stratified, radiated, and widespread picture, not only in the typological sense but also topographically and chronologically. Inscriptions date to the first, second, and third centuries; some of them were dedications of public buildings, of possibly both commercial and sacred nature; some were parts of honorific monuments; some were carved on simple limestone blocks, while others were in precious marbles. Basically, the late Baths offer a compendium of what the city boasted. But how could such a vast repertory be put together in one single building? We can hardly imagine that the builders of the Baths went rummaging here and there, picking up stones from

78 Cf. the now well-cited fourth-century papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy. I.71), which seems to represent an inventory containing a list of columns from various buildings in an unknown city prior to salvage operations. The inventory gives the number of columns and their location, if they were standing, lying on the ground, or broken, if they had their associated bases or capitals, as well as measurements – e.g., all the important information when deciding about re-use, etc; see, for example, Barker 2020, 132 f. for this and discussion of the initial steps in organising re-use and recycling. For discussion of the papyrus, see Papaconstantinou 2012.
piles of discarded elements, or even that they pulled down an astonishing number of different buildings and monuments only to use one or two of their blocks. Instead, what appears as a background to such a variety of re-used pieces is the existence of one or more well-furnished city depots. It is in such depots that one could find stones, both inscribed and decorated, belonging to older public buildings and discarded in the course of subsequent restorations, statue bases of all forms set up for all sorts of honorands, removed from their original locations for various reasons, and unused leftovers as well as all sorts of other lapidary elements no longer needed. Such warehouses have not been found yet in Lepcis, but their presence here— as in all major cities of the empire— appears to be most probable. Warehousing was an effective means of ridding the city of all forms of surplus elements as well as stocking future construction sites with already carved pieces, thus saving the costs of new quarrying, transporting, and shaping. In this respect, re-use was a virtuous practice, not a sign of decadence.

Conclusions

As this brief excursus attempted to show, re-use in Lepcis as elsewhere is a multifaceted phenomenon that can take many different forms and was tightly connected to the local building history. There was not just one way of recycling what the city had to offer, and however much we strive to categorise re-use, every instance still needs to be analysed and set within the larger picture. As the case of the Unfinished Baths has shown, within the same context one can find elements purposely drawn from extant buildings alongside the use of much older pieces which had been removed from sight decades or even centuries before. In studies on Lepcis, too often and too lightly re-used elements have been taken solely as proof of natural disasters, following the idea that objects were recycled only because a catastrophic event rendered them available. However, we now know that in Lepcis, as elsewhere in the Roman world, older pieces were re-used for a multitude of other reasons: because they had been substituted in the course of refurbishments, were surplus from other project, or showed signs of wear, etc. Even more varied are the reasons underlying the re-use of inscribed stones, especially statue bases, which were redeployed, moved from one building to another, rededicated, or removed from view for reasons that in most cases had very little or nothing at all to do with calamities.

Detecting, analysing, and contextualising re-use are effective means of understanding how building and refurbishing practices developed through late antiquity, in what ways the city’s vast monumental patrimony was handled, and ultimately, when this well integrated system collapsed and devolved into brutal squatting. There are in fact still many questions related to urban life in late-antique Lepcis that need to be answered, and it is no longer acceptable to rely on the a priori assumption that all the building activity of the city was triggered or halted by a number of supposed earthquakes.

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Fig. 1 – Lepcis Magna, plan of the three defensive systems. After Goodchild, Ward-Perkins 1953.

Fig. 2 – View of Settimo Severo fort built with re-used ancient materials. Photo F. Bigi.
FIG. 3 – Eastern suburban area, block with Doric frieze. Photo F. Bigi.

FIG. 4 – Eastern suburban area, limestone architectural elements; a: block with Asiatic Corinthian pilaster capital; b: block with pilaster base; c: block with fluted pilaster; d: tip of a scaled roof. Photo F. Bigi.
Fig. 5 – Eastern suburban area, limestone architectural elements; a: block with a first-century Corinthian pilaster capital; b: block with Asiatic Corinthian pilaster capital; c: block with pilaster base; d: crowning block of a small aedicula-shaped tomb. Photo F. Bigi.
Fig. 6 – Grupelli and Giua plan of the eastern suburban area with layout of the late Roman defensive wall and approximate findspots of inscriptions. F. Bigi, after Romanelli 1925.
Fig. 7 – Late Roman wall, north-western stretch covered by high sand dunes. Photo F. Bigi.
Fig. 8 – Late Roman wall, the portion immediately south of the West Gate (Porta Oea) while being excavated. After Guidi 1935.

Fig. 9 – Late Roman wall, the portion immediately south of the West Gate (Porta Oea) with re-used blocks from first-century mausolea. Drawing F. Bigi.
Fig. 10 – Late Roman wall, detail of block with Doric frieze. Photo F. Bigi.

Fig. 11 – West Gate (Porta Oea), architectural elements taken from mausolea and re-used in the south tower; a) block with volutes; b) block with uraei. Photo F. Bigi.
Fig. 12 – West Gate (Porta Oea), south tower, block with corner pilaster carved with peopled scrolls. Drawing F. Bigi.

Fig. 13 – West Gate (Porta Oea), south tower, blocks with corner pilaster carved with peopled scrolls. Photo F. Bigi.
Fig. 14 – Plan of the Unfinished Baths. After Goodchild 1965.
Fig. 15 – Unfinished Baths, body of a tripartite statue base carved in yellowish limestone and dedicated to the Divus Severus, subsequently re-used in room C. Photo F. Bigi.
Fig. 16 – Unfinished Baths, wall curtain of room A, limestone blocks (a) and (b) bearing portions of a monumental building inscription. Photo F. Bigi.

Fig. 17 – Unfinished Baths, wall curtain of room A, limestone block (c) bearing a portion of a monumental building inscription. Photo F. Bigi.

Fig. 18 – Unfinished Baths, limestone blocks (d), walled in the calidarium, and (e), walled in the frigidarium, bearing portions of a monumental building inscription. Photo F. Bigi.
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Fig. 19 – Unfinished Baths, wall fabric of room A, pair of limestone blocks (f) and (g) belonging to a building dedication by the proconsul L. Nonius Asprenas. Photo F. Bigi.

Fig. 20 – Hypothetical reconstruction of the dedication by L. Nonius Asprenas. Drawing F. Bigi.

Fig. 21 – Unfinished Baths, moulded socle block of the equestrian base of Q. Aradius Roscius Rufinus intended to be re-used as a projecting entablature above the western pools of the frigidarium. Photo F. Bigi.
Fig. 22 – Unfinished Baths, remains of the inscription in honour of Q. Aradius Roscius Rufinus carved over the erasure of a previous text. Photo F. Bigi.

Fig. 23 – Unfinished Baths, Severan column pedestal turned into a statue base for Gallienus. Photo F. Bigi.
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Fig. 24 – Unfinished Baths, fragments of re-used inscribed marble panels. Photo F. Bigi.

Fig. 25 – Unfinished Baths, room C, rectangular portico made of re-used columns taken from the theatre. Photo F. Bigi.

Fig. 26 – Unfinished Baths, room C, detail of a Corinthian capital with theatre masks. Photo F. Bigi.