


<h2 style="margin: 0;">Architectonic Fragments from Apollonia of Illyria (Albania)</h2>		<h3 style="margin: 0;">Archaeology</h3> <p style="margin: 0;">Keywords: Architecture, Apollonia, Albania.</p>
<p>Blerina Toçi</p>	<p>Centre for the Albanological Studies, Tirana, Albania.</p>	
<p>Abstract</p>		
<p>The article is preliminary report of a PhD study about the architectonic decoration in Apollonia of Illyria. In this work are presented the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders employees in Apollonia and their plastic decoration during Hellenisms and Roman period, focusing principally the octagonal Doric order. Between the decor draws attention the flower in the centre of the canalis in the ionic capitals extended geographically from the Southern Illyria to Southern Italy. Quite interesting are some finds belonging to the Agonothetes Monument which can further help to better reflection for the facade of this building.</p>		

Short history⁹⁸

Apollonia is a Greek city founded in the 7th century BC on the southern Albanian coast, close to the modern city of Fier (fig. 1). The city dominated a large territory, primarily in the lowlands. Apollonia’s surrounding environment favours the development of agriculture, livestock, handcraft, trade etc., which have played an important role in the economy of the city. Seman and Vjosa valleys, enable easy connections with the Apollonia hinterland and further with southern Illyria, while through the Adriatic the city connected with the Adriatic – Mediterranean world.

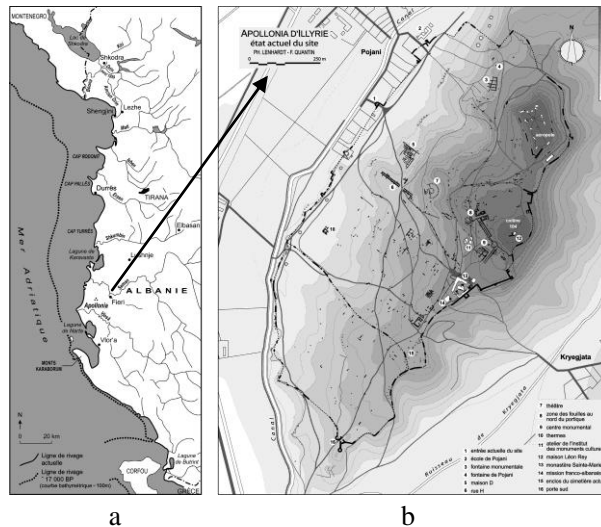


Fig. 1 (a, b) Apollonia.

The most interesting moments of the city are the Hellenistic period and the roman period. This development is well reflected too in several monuments of this periods. For the Hellenistic period have to be mentioned the stoa, the nymfeum and the theatre.

During the Illyrian-Roman wars, Apollonia served as a base for the roman army in its offensives against Illyria and later against Macedonia.

⁹⁸ This short historical description based on: Dimo et Alii 2007 and the literature cited therein.

The diary of Julius Caesar about the civil war gives us notice about Apollonia during the years 50-40 BC.

The article aims to present some new elements from the plastic decoration, problematic and possibilities that offer this territory still less studied in the archaeological view. Source of this study are a group of monuments from the city – most of them published –, architectonic elements exposed on the courtyard of the St. Mary monastery (fig. 2) as well some architectonic fragments stored on the museum of Apollonia with which I was recently put in contact⁹⁹.



Fig. 2. St. Mary monastery

The biography of Octavian Augustus written by Nicola from Damask, informs us about some privileges and autonomy that was given to Apollonia from the emperor Octavian Augustus who studied in this city. Apollonia earned the status of *civitas libera et immunis* that, among other things, gives to the city the opportunity to preserved Greek language and culture, as well as the autonomous political institutions developed during its independence and is named. *Pax romana* favoured the development of the city that during the Antoninus life saw a new phase of monumental constructions, like the odeon and the bouleterion etc. Rome also showed special care for arranging the old roads and laying new ones that served for military and commercial purposes as is the case of Via Egnatia.

In 234 AD Apollonia suffered the effects of an earthquake. The worst consequence of such natural damage was the deviation of Vjosa riverbed. This resulted in the isolation of Apollonia from the rest of the costal roman Illyrian word.

The archaeological researches in Apollonia started at the beginning of the XIX century and are still going on. During the I faze, before the WWII, the excavation was leaded by foreign missions. After WWII for a short time they were continued by Albanian archaeologists in collaboration with Russian archaeologists, while from 60s to the 90s the excavations were lead only by Albanian archaeologists.

The political changes of the 90s brought new possibilities for collaborations, in Apollonia's case with French, American and German scientific research bodies.

⁹⁹In the 2009, during the physical arrangement of Apollonia magazines were found a considerable quantity of strongly fragmented architectonic elements, which came from archaeological excavation in the city and surroundings, during the years, but unfortunately wasn't registered with the necessary data about the circumstances of their finding. The co directors of the Albanian-German project, Henner Von Hesberg and Bashkim Lahi, against whom I feel grateful, offer me the possibility for the scientific elaboration of this material.

Material taken under study and problematic

Major part of the material taken under study is fragmented and came from not clear stratigraphical contexts. Even in the case of the fragments from the architectonic decoration stored in the Apollonia museum (fig. 3), unfortunately, encounter many fragments with limited data or complete absence for the circumstances of their finding. In this situation, emergency remains the preparation of a detailed catalogue, who will serve as support for typological differences, stylistic and metrological evaluation, architectonic and chronological collocation of the finds. Clarify the construction contexts will serve as a starting point for the evaluation, possibly general, of the architectonic decoration in Apollonia. During this study an attempt will be made in trying to distinguish any possible local stylistic elements different from the Greek and Roman decorative technique, as well the as the historical interpretation of the proximity and differences between them.



Fig 3. Fragments from the architectonic decoration stored in the Apollonia museum

Major part of the plastic decoration evidenced in Apollonia belong to Hellenistic period and roman imperial period. Hellenistic period is represented more from Doric and Ionic order, where the Doric order is predominant. We find the Doric order at the south porch, situated on the western slopes of the top 104¹⁰⁰, at the theatre of the city¹⁰¹ and at the nymfeum¹⁰². Meanwhile, at the 17 inches porch (fig. 4), even this situated on the western slopes of the top 104, are encountered octagonal columns and capitals, that differ from the normal Doric order, engraved with grooves, of the aforementioned monuments.



Fig 4. Octagonal columns

¹⁰⁰ Ceka, Baçe 1981, 2, 5-41, date at the IV century BC.

¹⁰¹ Mano 2006, 566; Von Hesberg-Eck 2008, 31-97. Both authors, with small difference, date the theatre at the III century BC.

¹⁰² Ceka 1968, 49-58, Tab. 11-13, date at the IV century BC.

This octagonal “order”¹⁰³ was published first by their discoverer L. Rey, who give us pictures, drawing and the general dimensions of one of the capitals¹⁰⁴, while more detailed information we find in the article of Baçe – Ceka¹⁰⁵. This particular order is widely encountered in Southern Illyria and Epirus. At Bylis, ancient city not far from Apollonia, octagonal columns are employed, in two rows, in the terrene floor of the stoa A¹⁰⁶. Other examples, from the same city, are documented at the terrene floor of a narrow room (18, 20 x 6, 20 m) interpreted like the arsenal, next to the prytaneum¹⁰⁷. Similar columns have been documented in Niakia (ancient city, approximately 1 Km far from Bylis), followed by two octagonal capitals that well converge with the columns fragment¹⁰⁸. At Phoinike, in Epirus, the inner porch of the small peristyle was decorated with octagonal columns¹⁰⁹. The octagonal Doric “order” is documented in other cities of Epirus, like Butrint¹¹⁰, Katagogion of Kasope¹¹¹, and the *porticus post scaenam* at the theatre of Dodona¹¹².

Comparing the octagonal columns of Apollonia, Bylis and Nikaia, we note that the octagonal columns from Apollonia has equal sides and equal angles, while the octagonal columns from Bylis and Nikaia have a prolonged section and as consequence sides two by two in equal dimensions. To our knowledge until now, can say that the rise and the development of the octagonal Doric “order” in Apollonia, is done in a particular geographic context that includes Southern Illyria and Epirus. Remains to be followed in the feature the initial originating centre of this “particular” order.

The ionic order in Apollonia is documented by columns carved with 20 grooves, half columns united with pilasters¹¹³, ionic four faced capitals (fig.5)¹¹⁴ and capitals with calyx pulvinus (fig.6)¹¹⁵. By all these elements, I will stop at the capitals, whose typology, seems inspired by the ionic capitals originated from the Peloponnesus and Northern Greece¹¹⁶.



Fig 5. Ionic four faced capitals

¹⁰³ The parentheses are necessary because the octagonal columns and capitals haven't yet taken a genuine study that help to use an established terminology.

¹⁰⁴ Rey 1928, 13, fig. 4-5.

¹⁰⁵ Baçe, Ceka, 1981, 5-41 have attempted the graphic reconstruction of the Apollonia's stoa.

¹⁰⁶ Ceka, Baçe 1981, 2, 5-41

¹⁰⁷ Ceka, Muçaj 2005, 38-60.

¹⁰⁸ Baçe, Ceka 1981, 5-41.

¹⁰⁹ Podini 2002, 63-92; idem 2006, 287-292; idem 2008, 591-605.

¹¹⁰ Ugolini 1942, 181, fig. 183.

¹¹¹ Schwander 1986, p. 88-91;

¹¹² Dakaris 1971, p. 69.

¹¹³ Baçe-Ceka, 1981, Rey 1927, 11-23.

¹¹⁴ Found in the magazine of the Archeological Museum of Tirana. Inv. Nr. 117.

¹¹⁵ Exposed at the National Historical Museum, Tirana. Inv. Nr. 504.

¹¹⁶ Roux 1961, 332-357.

The echinus of capitals from Apollonia is composed from a cavetto and an ovolo, usually separated from a thick carved line. The volutes are connected through a ribbon. Generally, the echinus is smoothed but there are several models when the ovolo is embellished with a ionic cymatium and under it an astragal with bead and reel (fig.3)¹¹⁷.



Fig 6. Capitals with calyx pulvinus

Characteristic for the major part of the ionic capitals of Apollonia, is a flower with four or six petals, that embellished the centre of the volutes canal. Datable from Apollonia are the capitals of the ionic order used on the second floor of the 17 niches stoa, chronologically collocated at the IV-III century BC¹¹⁸. The flower motive is presented too in the ionic capitals of the monumental grave of Selca e Poshtme, in Illyrian hinterland, dated to the IV-III century BC¹¹⁹. Two other examples have been documented in Bylis¹²⁰ and Nikaia¹²¹. By delving further, a similar flower motive is evidenced on the facades of some monumental graves from Southern Italy, dated at the III century BC¹²². The situation described above shows that, the typology of the Apollonia's ionic capitals can be inspired from the capitals of Peloponnesus and Northern Greece, meanwhile the flower motive could be a local phenomenon with regional geographic distribution. Remains to be clarified in the feature the origin of this kind of embellishment that can be Apollonia itself, any of the above – mentioned centre or the Southern Italy. Meanwhile, in Apollonia are known ionic capitals without embellished volutes canal's (fig.7)¹²³, similar to those found in Phoinike¹²⁴ and Butrint¹²⁵.



Fig 7. Ionic capitals without embellished volutes canal's

¹¹⁷ Baçe-Ceka 1981, 32, fig. 59. Can be seen here an example of this typology from Klos (Nikaia).

¹¹⁸ Baçe-Ceka 1981, 5-41

¹¹⁹ Ceka 1985, 51, Tab. XX-XXI, XXV-XXVII.

¹²⁰ Podini 2008, 597, fig. 6.

¹²¹ Baçe-Ceka 1981, 32, fig. 59.

¹²² De Julis 1972, 389-394, Tav. XXXVIII; Lambolej 1982, 91-148; Mazzei 1987, 323-325, Tav. XCV; Von Hesberg 2011, 459.

¹²³ Till now we know just three similar capitals from Apollonia. The one reflected in this presentation is reused on the walls of the St. Mary church, while the other two are published by Rey 1925, 17, fig. 11, and by Hezey – Daumet 1876, 398, Pl. 34, 2.

¹²⁴ Podini 2004, 66-67, fig. 3.10.

¹²⁵ Ugolini 1942, 180, fig. 181.

The period of II-I century BC is presented in Apollonia with a few figures capitals of Corinthian order¹²⁶, interpreted as part of funerary architecture¹²⁷. In the city have not been found yet public buildings which belong to this period. Two sofa capitals¹²⁸ are conserved in the exterior walls of the St. Mary monastery and another one was published by Rey¹²⁹.

Imperial Roman period is represented with several well known building/institutions like the bouleterion, the odeon, the library, the prytaneum and the ionic temple, all dated to the II century AC¹³⁰ and concentrated at the agora of the city. The building considerate symbol of this period is the bouleterion from which except the plan conserved a good part of facade architectonic decoration worked in Corinthian order. The capitals are Corinthian – Asiatic with spiny acanthus. This capitals are dated to the II century AC¹³¹. In addition to them, in the courtyard of the St. Mary monastery, are exposed other four Corinthian – Asiatic capitals, also dated at the II century BC¹³². From the roman imperial period remain us too, two fragments of capitals with lanceolate leaves, also exposed in the courtyard of the St. Mary monastery. The ionic order of the roman imperial period is represented in Apollonia at the ionic temple, situated next to the agora, in front of which are found ionic cornices from the entablature¹³³. Recently we are informed also about a group of ionic capitals of white marble, not yet published. Will be joined to this presentation a group of strongly fragmented elements¹³⁴ that apparently belong to the Agonothetes monument¹³⁵. The objects are worked in white marble and limestone and have similar characteristics to each other. In marble there are fragments that belong to bases (7 fragments), columns (8 fragments) and capitals (around 45 fragments) (fig. 8 a, b, c). Some of the basis fragment are conserved enough to show that they are part of attic basis with a skotia between two torus. The column fragments are from the sommoscapo and conserve the beginning of the grooves. The capitals fragments are mostly leafs, volutes and abacus. It is clear that they belong to Corinthian-Asiatic type with spiny acanthus. Also present is a group of leafs of spiny acanthus worked in a white and compact limestone (8 fragments) (fig. 8d).

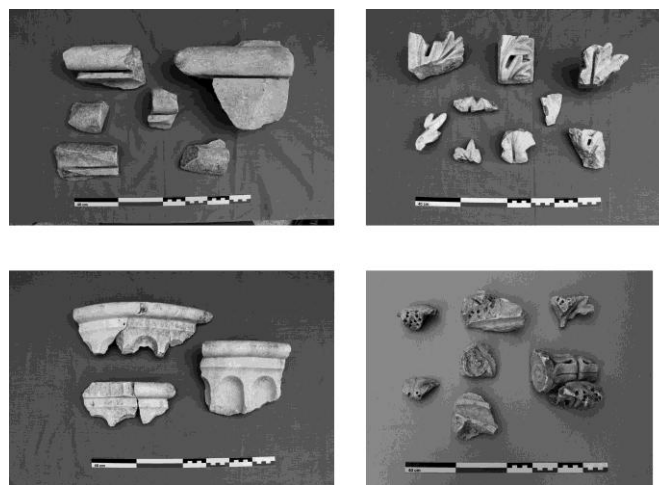


Fig 8. Leafs of spiny acanthus

¹²⁶ The capitals are exposed in the courtyard of the St. Mary monastery.

¹²⁷ Von Hersberg 2011, 452-466.

¹²⁸ Von Hersberg 2011, 458, Abb. 11.

¹²⁹ Rey 1925, 16-17, fig. 12.

¹³⁰ Dimo et Alii 2007, 186-217.

¹³¹ Von Hersberg – Eck 2010, 258-262, Abb. 5-8.

¹³² Von Hersberg – Eck W. 2010, 266-271, Abb. 9-12

¹³³ Dimo et Alii 2007, 207-208.

¹³⁴ See note 1 on page 1.

¹³⁵ Rey 1935, 7-13; Zheku 1972, 7-28. Hesberg 2010, 257-286; Follain 2011, 36-49. The building was called as the Monument of Agonothetes from L. Rey because of the inscription on the architrave. The inscription, incised on the architrave, tell us that the monument was build from Quintous Villius Crispinus Furius Proculus in honour and memory of his dead brother. For the inscription: Bruhl 1935, 43-46, Taf. 14.

The way of work does not change from that of the capitals but they are smaller than the leaves of the capitals. In some of these fragments can be seen volutes worked on the sides. This shows that these fragments belong to consoles. Other fragments such as a series of broken ionic kymatia that might be part of the cornice that run around the coffer could also be affiliated with the monument. Considering the material used – white marble and limestone - and the working style of the decoration, I believe that the above – mentioned finds belong to the bouleterion of the city, also called Monument of Agonothetes (fig. 9).



Fig 9. Monument of Agonothetes

The monument is a symbol of the roman period in the city. Based on his structure and his architectonic decoration, generally the building is dated at the II century AC¹³⁶, and based mostly in the inscription, engraved on the architrave, the dating is closed to the first decades of this century¹³⁷. The building has the appearance of a temple with two columns supported in antis and four free columns of Corinthian order. The columns are smoothed for $\frac{1}{3}$ and covered with grooves for the rest. The building has a quadrangular plan (19 m x 15 m) and is composed from tow principal ambient, the porch on the front that is extended for all the width of the building and a big room inside of which are settled stairs with a horseshoe shape. In the plastic decoration of the facade of the building are used two materials: marble for the holding elements and limestone for the architrave and the tympanum. Also in limestone are the antis.

The marble as a first impression gives the idea that is pentelicum, but anyway because of the variety of the white marbles it is difficult to recognise the origin. In this case it is better to have a confirmation by laboratory analyses. The limestone is of a good quality strong and fine-grained which came from the quarries of the peninsula of Karaburuni, not far from Apollonia¹³⁸.

The tympanum of the Monument has a cornice decorated with console in S shape with two volutes and coffers. Very characteristic are the Corinthian Asiatic capitals (fig. 10), with two rows of acanthus leafs separated from each - other, volutes and helixes with wide an concave ribbon, classical abacus with ovolo and cavetto, a typology common for the first half of the II century BC. This capitals, for the style of their work, can be well compared with the capitals of the Traianeum of Pergam¹³⁹.

¹³⁶ Rey 1935, 11-13.

¹³⁷ Bruhl 1935, 43-46, Taf. 14; Hesberg 2010, 258-262;

¹³⁸ Koço-Sillo, 2007, 107-111. Here can be found an analyses of the stone used in Apollonia.

¹³⁹ Rohmann 1998, Taf. 1-12.

The way in which the acanthus leaves are engraved can find a good comparison with the capital of the frigidarium at the forum baths at Ostia¹⁴⁰.



Fig 10. Corinthian Asiatic capitals

The new findings from the Monument of Agonothetes, fill some gaps on the façade's architectonic decoration. All these objects with the right measurements can be used for a better graphic reconstruction of the plastic decoration of the facade.

The material here introduced provides the opportunity for a diachronic analyse about the construction activity of the city in different periods, which will help us to understand better the interregional cultural character of Apollonia.

The biggest challenge of this work will be identifying the buildings which may belong the majority of the elements from the architectonic decoration take under study. This would help to understand how the Apollonia citizen has conceived their public and private building. Such an effort can be re-evaluated if we consider the destruction and the spoliation made to the city in centuries.

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