DARIO DEL BUFALO

PORPHYRY
Red Imperial Porphyry. Power and Religion

ENGLISH EDITION INCLUDING ITALIAN TEXTS

UMBERTO ALLEMANDI & C.
TURIN ~ LONDON ~ VENICE ~ NEW YORK
DA RIO DEL BUFALO

PORPHYRY
RED IMPERIAL PORPHYRY
POWER AND RELIGION

PORTO ROSSO IMPERIALE
POTERE E RELIGIONE

Entries edited by:
Francesca Licordari
Arianna Pujia
Dario Del Bufalo

Secretary and organisation:
Arianna Pujia

Italian texts edited by:
Antonio Tropiano

Translation from the Greek and Latin and philological analysis:
Professor Alessandro Vatri

English translation of the essay Purple and Porphyry and Passio:
David Graham

English translation of the texts: Damnari ad Metalla, Quaries and Entries by:
Lara Cox

Editorial coordination:
Silvia Fiocco

Copy-editing of English texts:
Harriet Graham

Copy-editing of Italian texts:
Alessandra Ruffino

Iconographic section:
Eugenio Testa

I would like to express my warmest thanks to:

This volume is realised and promoted by the National Committee for the 6th Centenary of the Università dei Marmorari, Rome, set up by the Ministry of Culture
I remember leafing through the pages of the fine catalogue by Delbrueck, *Antike Porphyrunke*, when I was a young man and being struck at times by some omissions of works I was familiar with and that, in my opinion, were noteworthy, and likewise by some imprecisions that showed that the author had not always personally seen the objects described. On page 244, I still remember, he mentioned a *Kleine Schale* (a small bowl) with an ambo in the shape of a lotus (see entry L.36). I then happened to see it on temporary deposit at Villa Giulia, under a kind of pergola (impounded by the State as it was about to leave the country), and was dumbfounded. It was not a small cup at all, but a big porphyry basin about two metres in diameter. But I realise that some inaccuracies are inevitable in a work of that kind and they certainly do not diminish its worth. Dario Del Bufalo’s book corrects some of these oversights and, compared to the more than 150 pieces listed by Delbrueck, contains more than 850.

In the rich introduction, Dario Del Bufalo dwells on the symbolic value of purple, which as a royal colour dates back to the Lagids, then follows its various fortunes through to the last Porphyrogeniti. A surprising theory (and, quite honestly, presented only as a theory) concerns the famous graves of the Ptolemies. Could these not be the big imperial porphyry sarcophagi altered for a new use and now on display in Istanbul? Special attention is focused on the *damnati ad metalla* in the Eastern Egyptian desert and on the subsequent homes of the monks. A whole chapter is then devoted to the Four Crowned Martyrs, whose martyrdom Dario Del Bufalo rightly locates not in Pannonia but in the Thebaid.

Readers will find many other items in this book, which sparked off many memories for me. I have visited the Thebaid quarries three or four times (the last, precisely, with Dario Del Bufalo) and I still have extraordinary images of this desert region firmly in my memory, along with the vibrant, almost draining and all-pervasive perfume of a certain variety of yellow daisy that grows as if by miracle amongst the stones. I collected some of these and planted them at Castel Giuliano. In the rich soil of the garden the perfume faded very quickly and nothing remained but a few insignificant small round flowers.

RANIERO GNOLI
President of the National Committee for the Celebrations
of the 6th Centenary of the Università dei Marmorei, Rome
Foreword

As promised in the presentation to the reprint of *Antike Porphyrwerke* (2007), promoted and produced by the National Committee for the Celebrations of the 60th Centenary of the Università dei Marmorari, Rome, and exactly eighty years after the work by Richard Delbrueck (1932), here now is the monograph on Imperial Red Porphyr published by Umberto Allemandi, with a register of works of art and artefacts updated, as far as possible and up to the last moment, to 2012.

The book is presented in English and it seems almost a paradox that the monographic studies on this magnificent marble have been printed only in languages other than Italian, which has always been the language of art. And although Imperial Porphyr is of Egyptian origin, it has always represented aspects of Italian culture, politics, religion and art.

In 1932 Delbrueck wrote *Antike Porphyrwerke* in German; in 2003 Malgouyres edited the *Porphyre* exhibition catalogue in French, and we now publish *Porphyre* in English. However, we and the publisher very much wanted all the texts to be printed in Italian too, as an appendix.

About 700 “new” artefacts are presented here as compared to the more than 150 listed in Delbrueck’s catalogue and, as far as possible, a date and provenance have been given, obviously together with the location of the works presented.

For some categories, such as Heads and Vases, we show at the end of their respective entries some examples of modern imitations and forgeries that have appeared over the last two centuries, and, applying the best of our knowledge, we have added critical notes and historical analyses.

From pagan Rome to Christian Rome, from Byzantium to Venice, from the Hohenstaufen tombs in Palermo to the altars of Roman churches, the colour Purple and Red Porphyr have been identified with the power and dignity of the Roman empire, and are still the symbol of the Church’s spiritual power and sanctity. I would like to offer special thanks to Rauf Claude Abdalla of Cairo, for the fraternal help he gave me; thanks to Sheikh Abdel Zaher of the Kushmaan tribe who was my guide for more than twenty years with his son Salama, in the Eastern Desert of Egypt; and finally thanks to my friend and President of the National Committee, Professor Raniero Gnoi, who with great generosity has always supported and encouraged these studies and initiatives.

**Dario Del Bufalo**
Honorary President of the Università dei Marmorari, Rome
Contents

11 Purple and Porphyry
   Premise
   "Burning" Affinity
   The Egypt of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies
   Rome and Its Empire
     • From the Julian-Claudian age to that of the Flavians
     • From the emperors by adoption to the Severans
     • Portents of purple
     • Diocletian and the tetrarchy
     • Constantine and the Byzantine empire
   The Christianisation of the *Porphyres Decor*
   The Medieval Period
   The Renaissance
   Appendices

55 The Quarries

65 Pasio S.S. Quattuor Coronatorum Aureae Porphyrio

69 Passion of the Four Crowned Martyrs According to Porphyrius

73 *Damnati ad Metalla*

83 Repertory of Porphyry Works
   Statuary
   Heads
   Busts
   Reliefs
   Vases
   Sarcophagi and Bath Tubs
   Columns, Capitals, Plinths, Bases and *Rota*
   Mortars
   Inscriptions
   Fragments

229 Porphyry Samples

237 Italian Texts

281 Index of Names

287 Bibliography
Imperial Porphyry was the stone used by Roman emperors, Byzantine monarchs, and Catholic popes to celebrate their status and affirm their strength. Almost impossibly rare and extremely hard, it also has a beautiful red-purple hue. Visit our store to buy Imperial Porphyry for your collection, or browse to learn more about this fascinating stone and its rich history. Shopping Cart. Your shopping cart is empty. Visit the shop. Latest Products. Imperial Porphyry Chip Pendant. 1×1 Imperial Porphyry Tile. 2×2 Imperial Porphyry Tile. 4×4 Imperial Porphyry Tile. Imperial Porphyry Slab. This site owned Power and religion-Rosso imperiale potere e religione by Dario Del Bufalo (ISBN: 9788842221463) from Amazon's Book Store. Everyday low prices and free delivery on eligible orders. The best book on porphyry. Read more. Helpful. Imperial Porphyry; its special qualities which influenced its form, function and use in antiquity. Table of Contents 2. Imperial Porphyry . 1 Figure-4.1: Topographic location of Gebel Dokhan. Archaeologists analysed Imperial Porphyry artefacts, primarily in museums, and natural rocks within Egyptian quarries using PXRF in an attempt to answer the question ‘which locations did artefacts made from Imperial Porphyry originated from’ (Potts and West, 2008:v). Figure-1: Imperial Porphyry (New World Encyclopedia, 2007) 2. Imperial Porphyry is an igneous rock formed by columns of magma which, when cooling, embedded largegrained crystals of feldspar into the stone.