A New Examination of the Arch of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus at Oea

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Disciplines
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Comments
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During the mid-second century, the coastal town of Oea in Tripolitania began to transform its center with monumental Roman-style structures. It was during this time that Oea became a *municipium* and then a *colonia*, and, like other towns with recently acquired Roman status, it created a monumental cityscape that reflected its Roman identity.¹ The arch dedicated to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus was a key piece in the town’s process of forging its Roman identity. The arch must be placed within the archaeological and political contexts of North Africa in the mid-second century to understand fully its iconography and the nature of its dedication. Previous studies of the arch document the extensive recovery projects designed to free the monument from modern structures encroaching on

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A preliminary version of these ideas was first presented at the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in New Orleans, January 2015. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers whose suggestions have improved this paper.

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it, and others have commented on some of its architectural and design features, though no study has thoroughly considered the arch in relation to other roughly contemporary honorary arches or the impetus for its construction. This examination is influenced by the recent studies that emphasize the role of material culture, especially architecture, in constructing and transmitting identity. Identity is addressed in two ways, both on the individual level—the dedicator as benefactor—and also on the large-scale—the town as a part of the Roman Empire. To that end, elements of euergetism and inter-city rivalry are discussed, and a complete iconographical overview of the monument is provided. The importance of the arch in Oea as a component of the town’s building activity in the second half of the second century is demonstrated by its iconography, its location, and its dedication by the proconsul and his legate.

The next section of the paper, after summarizing the ancient evidence at Oea, presents evidence correlating building activity or other munificence with a change in the legal status of towns in the Roman Empire, specifically in North Africa in the second century. Then, several aspects of the arch at Oea are examined in-depth and then compared with other arches built in the same region in the second and early third centuries. While the arch at Oea was the subject of archaeological scrutiny by Italian scholars in the early part of the twentieth century and included in publications of Roman architecture, no comparative architectural, iconographical, or political analysis has ever been done. By combining a close examination of the structure and its design with the socio-political environment in which it was constructed, it is possible to assess multiple factors influencing towns in the Roman Empire at this time, an approach that would be fruitful in future studies.

I Oea and the politics of Roman North Africa

Before making the case for widespread competition among cities in North Africa, let us consider the status and history of Oea. It was one of three important cities in Roman Tripolitania, originally called the Emporia, and had the best natural harbor to accommodate trade. However, the paucity of archaeological and epigraphical remains found at Oea hinder our understanding of the site. Excavations have

2 Boni and Mariani (1915); Aurigemma (1925); Aurigemma (1933); Marelli (1933); Micacchi (1934); Caputo (1940); Aurigemma (1970).
3 Ciotti (1946–48); Carinci (1980); Stucchi (1981); de Maria (1988); Arata (1996).
4 See, e.g., Alcock and Osborne (2012); Hales and Hodos (2010).
5 Mattingly (1994), 50, 122.
uncovered some fragments of private housing and probably a bathing facility under the medieval castle (Assaray al-Hamra) but little else, given that the town has seen near continual habitation since the Roman era. Epigraphic and literary evidence offer more evidence about the nature of the town. One inscription records an early example of euergetism by L. Aemilius Celsianus, who dedicated ten statues to the res publica. Apuleius remarks on the town of Oea and a few of its residents in his Apologia and the Florida. Oea probably was granted municipal status under Antoninus Pius, as it was during his reign that Apuleius mentions a quaestor publicus, and the inscription on the arch includes a Ilivir quinquennalis, indicating that the office of duovir must have been in existence by at least the late 150s. The precise year in which Oea became a colonia, is unknown, but it can be narrowed down to the period when Marcus Aurelius was emperor. The possible dates for the changes in Oea’s status will be discussed further below.

After receiving recognition from Rome through greater legal status, local elites might have desired to reformulate the appearance of their towns with the types of buildings and other structures typical around the empire. In fact, several other cities in North Africa provide evidence for increased building activity after being conferred municipium or colonia status. The dedicatory inscription on the arch set up in honor of Trajan in 109–110 in Lepcis Magna is the first attested mention of that town’s colony status. This arch is broadly seen as a show of gratitude by the people of Lepcis for the upgraded civic status. Edmondson points to the rich building activity even after promotion to the level of a municipium “as the local elites, many now Roman citizens, funded new monumental centers that announced their loyalty to Rome.” Indeed, soon after Diana Veteranorum was granted municipal status, it dedicated an arch in 164–165

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7 IRT 240. Since the town is referred to as neither a municipium nor a colonia, it must have been dedicated before these designations were conferred on Oea.
8 Apul. Apol. 101.7 and IRT 232. There are no earlier examples of municipal officials or practices that can be dated, though there are several inscriptions (IRT 233, 235, 237) that attest to flamines perpetui and pontifices. Gascou (1972), 83 supports an Antonine date for the establishment of Oea’s municipium status. Oea might have become a municipium earlier than the reign of Antoninus Pius, since there is no evidence that provides a terminus post quem. However, as I suggest below, both Oea and Sabratha lagged behind Lepcis Magna quite significantly when it came to imperial honors.
9 IRT 230. The first attestation of the designation is the dedication of the Temples of the Genius Coloniae between 183 and 185.
10 Gascou (1972), 75–76.
to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. Gigitus undertook various projects leading up to its attainment of municipal status, and Q. Servaeus Macer dedicated a bronze sculptural group of the wolf and twins “as an ornament of the municipium.” The flamen perpetuus and his son in Furni not only dedicated a statue of Marsyas but also financed theater games and a banquet for the decurions to celebrate its new municipal status. Thus, there is a pattern of towns in North Africa commemorating their elevated Roman status—and giving thanks for that rank—through arches and other structures as well as events and activities.

Roman citizens in Oea might have felt compelled to enhance the look of their town in the second century as well, though there are earlier signs that the town jockeyed for regional status too. A dispute over land ownership and land use along the border separating the territories of Lepcis Magna and Oea led to the outbreak of war between the two towns in 69 CE. The people of Oea received help from the Garamantes and had marched into Lepcis before Roman troops arrived to defend and bring about victory for the Lepticinians. Since Oea was seen as instigating the conflict, they were held to blame while the city of Lepcis benefitted from Roman favor. After a new land survey in 74, Lepcis came into possession of the best agricultural land in the region. By 77 Lepcis had been made a municipium with Latin rights, thus town magistrates became Roman citizens. Lepcis was granted promotion to the rank of colonia in 109, and Roman citizenship was extended to all its citizens. Meanwhile, Sabratha and Oea were not even municipia before the reign of Antoninus Pius.

Inter-city rivalry played a significant role in endeavors for higher civic status and building activity. Cities competed with one another as regards their political status, religious distinction (i.e. being a place of regional cult), and the structures and activities befitting an urban environment. Competitive emulation happened on both an individual and group level, as members of the local elite

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12 Kovács (2012), 81. It probably became a municipium under Antoninus Pius, though possibly as early as Trajan.
14 Thomas (2007), 148. Mattingly and Hitchner (1995), 185 have found other instances in which honorific or triumphal arches were connected to the elevation of a town’s rank, as an architectural symbol of the town’s loyalty to the Roman emperor. Gros (2011), 78 also points to the inscription of the arch of Trajan at Maktar, a single bay arch build in 116, commemorating the change in the town’s status and the foundation of a new quarter within the city.
vied with one another for honors and respect within a given town and town leaders as a whole jockeyed to represent their town as superior to others in the area. A city’s status can be communicated through physical structures—the layout, buildings, and monuments. In other words, public architecture was a locus of competition.

One example of building competition might be seen in the Capitolia built within years of one another in the towns of Dougga and Numluli. Here local pride and competitive euergetism combined in advertising loyalty to Rome. As several embassies from Gighis went to Rome to petition for municipal status, which it received under Antoninus Pius, important local families financed a string of projects that monumentalized the heart of the town. But the building fervor did not stop when Gighis obtained the status of municipium Latii maioris, for the local elites maintained their interest in benefaction through other contributions that demonstrated pride in their town.

The lack of archaeological remains makes it impossible to determine if Oea was also the site of intense building activity in the second century. Only the arch and the temple, discussed below, remain as evidence. However, as I argue, the nature of the arch alone is sufficient to suggest that the town of Oea engaged in building competition with other nearby towns. Though Aurigemma, in particular among the few scholars who have studied the arch, participated in the excavation and isolation of the monument and recorded his observations in detail, his publications tend towards the documentary, rather than the analytical. He made few comparisons with other monuments, nor did he consider the arch within its ancient context. To understand the iconography and function of this structure, its characteristics must now be examined in detail.

II Materials and iconography of the arch

The materials and design of the arch as well as its placement within the town combine to make the case for its significance. The arch was constructed mostly out of marble—probably Proconnesian—and despite the declaration marmore solido fecit in the inscription, local sandstone was employed for some non-visible
structural elements.\textsuperscript{21} The arch has a rectangular footprint—the east and west sides measuring 12.47 m and the north and south 9.80 m wide—and the parallel sides have the same decorative and architectural organization.

The architrave bears the dedicatory inscription, slightly off-center over the archivolt. (Figs. 1 and 3) The same inscription (\textit{IRT} 232) was carved on all four sides, though, it is best preserved on the north side:

\begin{quote}
Imp(eratori) C[aes(ari) M(arco)] Aurelio Antonino Aug(usto) p(atri) p(atriae) et Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) L(ucio) Aurelio Vero Armeniaco Aug(usto)./ Ser(vius) Co[melius Scipio Salvidien-nus] Orfitus proco(n)s(ul) cum Uttdio Marcello leg(ato) suo dedicavit./ C(aius) Calpurnius Celsus curator muneri publici munerarius Ilvir q(uin)q(uennalis) flamen perpetuus/ arcum pecunia sua [solo publico et fundo] marmore solido fecit.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21} Aurigemma (1970), 10 cites Franchi’s 1912 report published by the Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria, e Commercio. Lezine (1972), 59 calls it Proconnesian on the basis of Aurigemma (1933), 144. Analyses were carried out in 1912 but were not conclusive as to the source of the marble.

\textsuperscript{22} “To Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus, father of his country, and to Imperator Caesar Lucius Aurelius Verus Armeniacus Augustus, Servius Cornelius Scipio Salvidie-
Thus, the four line inscription states that C. Calpurnius Celsus constructed the arch in honor of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus while Ser. Cornelius Scipio Salvidienus Orfitus23 as proconsul dedicated it with his legate Uttedius Marcellus.24 The inscription raises a few questions, not only about some details in the text itself but also in regard to its actual engraving on the monument. The first issue is with the titulature of the emperors. Because Lucius Verus’ name includes the title Armeniacus but Marcus Aurelius’ does not, the inscription can be dated to late 163 or early 164. Marcus Aurelius received the title Armeniacus by mid-164.25 However, the title pater patriae was not bestowed upon Marcus until 166 so it seems that it was included out of error here, a not uncommon one.26 Further issues regarding the inscription are discussed in more detail below.

The decoration, like the inscribed text, is the best preserved on the north side. (Fig. 1) Pilasters with Corinthian capitals frame the corners, extending upward from projecting bases to support the entablature, and the archivolt springs from smaller versions of pilasters. (Fig. 4) All the pilasters are embellished with vibrant and decorative acanthus plants in relief, yet they are not so excessively lavish like the pilasters on the Severan basilica at Lepcis.27 The pilasters on the corner of each face show swirling vines surrounded by a vertical border of acanthus leaves. The vines, stemming from a kantharos at the base of the pilaster, twist in serpentine fashion up to the capital with leaves and bunches of grapes interspersed in the design. The capitals are decorated with large acanthus leaves, some curving in and others curving outward. The pilasters on the inner edge of the piers, from where the archivolt rises, have an oval-form border that surrounds the flourishing vegetal motif. This consists of acanthus leaves curved around buds with four or more leaves, creating a subtly changing design. The capitals of these shorter pilasters are decorated with large acanthus leaves on the corners, overlapping leaves in the center, and an egg pattern at the base above the curved abacus. Neither pilaster type aims to reflect nature accurately, though they do not rise to the elaborate level of some vine-scroll patterns where ornamentation is key.28

23 Thomasson (1996), no. P82.
24 RE Suppl. XIV 973 f., Uttedius 2; PIR V 691; Thomasson (1996), no. L40.
25 Kienast (1996), 139.
26 Kienast (1996), 137. Cf. Hojte (2005), 74–76. Pater patriae was often employed preemptively, especially in the provinces.
28 Mathea-Förtsch (1999) closely examines embellished pilasters in Roman art and architectural decoration from Rome and the West from its origin until the time of Hadrian. While earlier
Figures occupy nearly all of the space on the piers and spandrels. Starting from the lower left side of the north face (northeast pier), there is a group of captured barbarians, sculpted on a protruding ledge, consisting of a standing male with hands bound in front, a seated woman, and a young boy standing in front of her. (Fig. 4) The man wears a large and heavy *tunica manicata* that extends just below the knee and pants. Over them a mantle, buckled on the right shoulder and with an ermine fur border, is worn. Though the facial features are badly abraded, he seems to wear a *pileus* on his head. The woman, seated with her back to the man,
is covered head to toe in her outer garment, which she uses to veil herself. Her head rests in her left hand. With her right hand she holds the hand of a small male child. He wears the same clothing as the older male: long tunic over pants. Standing frontally like the older male and with his right leg crossed over the left, he appears to cry into his mother’s lap. The facial features of the woman and child are completely abraded.

Above the group of captives rises a trophy with shields. The trunk was probably topped by a helmet, but it is not discernible today. Over the trunk are a tunic and military cloak; two shields are supported on each side. On the north side, the whole trophy monument is not well-preserved. Apollo in his chariot being pulled by two griffins occupies the spandrel. (Fig. 2) Some of Apollo’s attributes—laurel branch, quiver, bow, cithara, and raven—fill the space between the chariot and the trophy below. The accoutrements appear on a rocky outcropping.
The right side of the north face conceptually mirrors the left. Again on the lower portion of the pier is a group of barbarians. One adult, who is likely male, though the relief is badly damaged and actually destroyed in places, stands next to another adult and child. His posture seems to mirror the standing captive on the northeast pier: standing frontally with weight on the right foot, left leg slightly bent. The state of the upper body prevents knowing more, but presumably his hands were also bound in front. The seated figure, also male, is turned at a three-quarters angle and the child is in front of him. All three appear to wear the same clothing consisting of trousers, a tunic, and mantle. Even though the faces are badly damaged or missing, the group reflects the same doleful sentiment as the group on the northeast pier. Rising above the group is the trophy, better preserved than on the other pier. The trunk is dressed with typical military costume: tunic, breastplate, and ptteryges. A cloak is draped over the shoulders, and a smooth
helmet rests on the top of the trunk. A pair of shields adorns the branch on either side.

Filling the spandrel on the northwest pier is Minerva, clearly identifiable by her helmet and shield, in a chariot pulled by a pair of sphinxes. (Fig. 3) Below the chariot are represented some of her attributes—a Corinthian helmet, a round shield, and double olive branch. Apollo and Minerva represent the tutelary gods of Oea, and they stand in for images of Victory, which very often occupy the spandrels on triumphal or honorary arches. The south façade, very abraded and missing pieces of the entablature, duplicates the iconography of the north side, as far as can be determined.

The broader east and west sides, facing the port and city center, were the main approaches to the monument, as can be deduced from the decorative scheme and the positioning of the monument. Though the structure on the west side is better preserved, the sculptural details on the east façade, on view when approaching from the port, are in better condition today. (Figs. 5 and 6) Pilasters, embellished with a spiraling acanthus motif and Corinthian capitals, frame the edges of the façade as well as the archivolt. On either side of the archivolt, fluted columns rise on projecting pedestals, providing a greater sense of monumentality to the arch and the statuary decoration on the façade. Statuary niches, measuring 3.45 m high, 1.0 m wide, and about 1.0 m in depth, occupy most of the pier on either side of the archway. Above the cornice of each niche is an imago clipeata, and each spandrel is filled with a figure of Victory. Putti with festoons occupy the small gaps between the imagines clipeatae and the Victories.

The imagines clipeatae are busts in relief inside tondi. They depict draped male busts in deep relief, jutting out from the roundel. All the heads are, unfortunately, completely battered. The drapery consists of a tunic and toga, which, along with traces of beard, indicate males were depicted, though no other signs of portrait features allow for secure identification. The west side mirrors these elements of the architectural and sculptural program. Both columns originally occupying the projecting bases framing the arch opening are missing, and the imagines clipeatae and Victories are more abraded than on the east façade.

29 The tutelary gods of Oea display the same attributes of Apollo and Minerva on early coinage of Oea. Cf. di Vita, di Vita-Evrard and Bacchielli (1999) 32. The depictions of Apollo and Minerva on the relief from the Temple of the Genius Coloniae confirms their continuing importance to the town.

30 Aurigemma (1970), 34.
During excavation in 1917 to explore the zone adjacent to the arch, a portrait statue of white, fine-grained marble was uncovered on the east side, just meters away from the base of the arch.\textsuperscript{31} The statue depicts a standing nude male, weight on the right leg with the left leg slightly bent at the knee, wearing sandals called \textit{crepidae}. (Fig. 7) A \textit{chlamys} is thrown over his shoulder and its folds cascade down the left side of his body. Part of the left arm is missing and the entire right arm below the shoulder is also lacking. The statue shows signs of intentional mutilation, the head is badly damaged, and the face is completely lost. The back of the head preserves a few locks of hair twisted in stylized curls and a fragment of a laurel wreath. Because the topmost part of the head and a section of the legs are missing, it is not possible to know the exact original height of the statue. Currently it stands 2.01 m (2.10 with the plinth), suggesting a possible original height of 2.05–2.10 m.\textsuperscript{32} Thus the statue would have fit well in one of the niches,

\textsuperscript{31} Aurigemma (1970), 32.
\textsuperscript{32} Aurigemma (1970) 32.
making it very probable that it was once displayed there. Remains of an eagle are discernible next to the right foot on the plinth.

Returning to the inscription, there is something quite peculiar about its placement on the monument. The original decorative motif of sprawling acanthus leaves (on frieze) and a ribbon molding (on architrave) was chiseled away mid-pattern on all four sides of the arch to make room for this text, as if it were an afterthought. (Fig. 3) In addition, the text of the inscription is not even centered, another factor suggesting it was inscribed hastily. How did the artists get this essential component—the placement of the dedicatory inscription—so wrong? It is completely incongruous that so much effort and money went into the rest of the monument but that there was a mistake or miscommunication here. Whether there was a mistake in inscribing the text or it was added at a later time, there is no parallel on a large-scale public monument for the inelegant appearance of the

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33 Aurigemma (1970), 34. Aurigemma notes that the back of the statue is roughly worked with marks from a rasp visible. After excavation, the statue was restored by the sculptor Francesco Grossi.
architrave. The outermost blocks of the architrave and frieze still preserve this decoration and traces can even be seen underneath the text. While there are some examples of arches with inscriptions on the entablature, the entablature in those instances is not only taller but also clearly the intended location of the inscription.34 The letters in the inscription at Oea vary from 16.7–17.0 cm on the top row to

34 On the Arch of Trajan at Maktar, a single bay arch set up in 116, the inscription is on the architrave below a small pediment, while the attic rises above. The inscription on the Arch of Marcus Aurelius set up in Lepcis Magna in 173 was also probably on the architrave.
13.2–13.5 cm on the bottom row of the text, which would have made it rather difficult to read the inscription clearly from ground-level. The vexing question is why the inscription was not inscribed into the attic level to make it more visible.

Scholars starting with Aurigemma have hypothesized about what led to the placement of the inscribed text. He suggested that during the course of building the arch, something happened so that the originally projected attic did not get built but was substituted for a different sort of crowning element, making it unsuitable for an inscription. Kähler speculated that the attic must have already been filled with relief or other decoration and therefore could not contain the inscription too. A major obstacle in finding a solution is the very nature of the remains. Unfortunately today so little remains of the attic level that it is impossible to discern why it was not suitable for the dedicatory inscription. Since my hypothesis about the placement of the inscription is linked with the arch’s purpose, it will be discussed further at the end of this article.

The arch required extensive recovery and restoration work. At the time the Italians came into Libya in the early twentieth century, the arch was hidden from view by buildings that leaned on the east and north sides and the archways themselves were closed off by rough walls. Three meters of debris had accumulated inside the arch, which had been used as a warehouse for ship sails and rigging and as a shop for wine and food. In 1911 at the start of Italian occupation in Tripolitania, the arch, which still stood up to the level of its cupola, was being used as a cinema. From 1912–1918 Aurigemma began by removing the adjacent buildings which encroached upon the arch, and studies were conducted to ensure the stability of the ground under and around the

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35 Arata (1996), 26 n. 118. The letters on the second row are 14.2–14.5 cm and 13.2–13.5 cm on the third row.
36 Aurigemma (1970), 53.
37 Kähler (1939), col. 443, no. 50. Arata (1996), 29 also supports this explanation of something else originally occupying the attic space, though his complete hypothesis should receive little support. He believes that the arch was erected originally as a type of funerary monument honoring the deified Antoninus Pius and Faustina the Elder and suggests the attic inscription read DIVO ANTONINO AVG PIO DIVAE FAVISTINAE. Then, perhaps even before the arch was fully complete, it was modified to include the reigning emperors when Lucius Verus was successful in his early military campaign in Armenia. The suggestion that an ornate arch would be set up in honor of the deified Antoninus and Faustina is not convincing nor does it take into account the political culture or architectural preferences of this area of the empire. Arata’s interpretation lies too firmly within the context of Rome itself without considering contemporary politics or architectural forms in North Africa. There would be no reason to erect a funerary monument in a small town in North Africa so far away from the center of the empire.
38 Micacchi (1934), 825.
monument. Subsequent restoration work and the removal of nearby structures were carried out under Caputo in the 1930s.

The remains show that the arch is covered by a cupola, composed of individual stone blocks rising from an octagonal base with three courses placed in successive rings and closed at the top by a central octagonal block. All three rings forming the cupola consist of coffered stones carved with a variety of vegetal designs. (Fig. 8) Acanthus leaves and roses with three to five petals appear in various states of development on the coffers, lending further visual interest to this already elaborate monument. The structure of the arch above the entablature has not survived intact and has been reconstructed through efforts in the 1930s. Aurigemma postulated that the arch was not built with a typical attic, but rather that it was topped with an octagonal drum and hemispherical dome resting on the (extant) octagonal support. Boni and Mariani, who both worked on the arch in the first years after the Italian occupation of Libya, believed that the arch must have had an attic, since most arches do, and that the drum and dome were Arab additions after the Muslim conquest of the city. Kähler and Ciotti also rejected Aurigemma’s view because it was partly based on drawings by travelers from the thirteen through sixteen centuries that show an elaborate two-level crowning and did not take into account the extant architectural forms.

In fact, it is difficult to determine the original crowning of the arch, though some of it has survived even after extensive reuse of the monument from the Middle Ages up to the twentieth century. However, though the evidence is incomplete, it is most reasonable to suggest that there was, in fact, a rectangular attic, and it would have encompassed the cupola, obscuring it from the gaze of an approaching viewer. The cupola was visible only when looking inside the arch within close proximity or standing underneath it. Like the later arch of Septi-
mius Severus at Lepcis Magna, the dome was hidden within the squared off attic. Although few traces of an attic were found in the vicinity of the Oean arch, it is possible that, given they would have been rectangular slabs of marble, they were carried off and re-used in post-antique structures. The most plausible argument is that the attic was destroyed at some time during or after the Muslim conquest of this region, since the earliest recorded travel writer of the modern period—al-Abdari in 1289—described a cupola on top of another sort of elevated cupola.46 This descrip-

arch at Oea as the only confirmed example of a quadrifrons arch topped by a cupola above horizontal corner bridges. He also summarizes the hypotheses of various scholars and travelers who worked on or viewed the arch from the Middle Ages through early twentieth century (221–222). While Kähler (1939) categorized arches into 24 variants based upon the number of bays (one and three) and architectural decoration, he excluded quadrifrons arches from his typology.

46 Aurigemma (1970), 71 provides excerpts of the early (modern) visitors to Tripoli.
tion does not correspond to any example of a Roman honorary arch and shouldn’t be considered original.

III Interpreting the iconographical program

The content and style of sculpture on the arch at Oea is not like any other large public monument in the African provinces built prior to the 160s. The extensive use of marble and similarities to sculpted relief from the eastern Roman provinces might indicate influence from or direct contact with artisans from that area. The pilasters on the Oean arch resemble those on the Arch of Septimius Severus at Lepcis Magna in regards to the flatness of the surfaces and the depth of undercutting, though the leaves on the arch at Oea are a better reflection of nature.47 However, unlike the Severan basilica and arch at Lepcis, the arch at Oea does not make use of the peopled-scroll motif.48

Bartoccini and then Squarciapino suggested that sculptors from Aphrodisias were responsible for the all building projects under the Severans at Lepcis Magna.49 Evidence can be found for sculptors from Aphrodisias working in various locations around the empire, including at Rome.50 It is possible that they also worked at Oea or that artists trained in the eastern Roman Empire were responsible for some of the carving on site.

Walda does not necessarily see the evidence for Aphrodisian sculptors specifically but does recognize the incorporation of Eastern elements into the reliefs on the Oean arch.51 He suggests that the reliefs that fill the spandrels on the east and west sides, those of Apollo and Minerva, should be considered in comparison with the reliefs on the so-called Parthian monument at Ephe-

48 The peopled scroll can be seen in Africa at the beginning of the second century with the Capitolium of Timgad, the Hadriamic Temple of Apollo at Maktar, the baths at Carthage built under Antoninus Pius, and the Temple of Liber and the Capitolium of Maktar. Cf. Picard (1961–1962). Mathea-Förtsch (1999) provides the most comprehensive treatment of the vegetal motifs on pilasters in Roman architectural decoration.
50 Squarciapino (1943), 11–19. The evidence is provided by signatures by sculptors stating their native land.
In particular, two scenes can be compared with the reliefs on the arch. One slab shows a cuirassed male, presumably the emperor, though the head is completely missing, mounting a chariot driven by a pair of horses. A Victory, whose outspread wings occupy most of the space between the imperator and the horses, reaches her hand out to assist the leader into the chariot. On another section of the relief a female, whose head is also missing but whose short tunic suggests Selene or Artemis, is stepping onto a chariot, drawn by a pair of powerful stags who leap forward with their front legs extended. There is a close affinity between this relief from Ephesus and the representation of Minerva in Oea: the stance and clothing of the goddess and the rearing animal are mirror images. A male figure, mostly nude with cloak billowing in the wind, stands between Artemis-Selene and the animals. He has been identified as Hesperos, taking the reins from the goddess.

Certainly there are differences between the reliefs at Oea and Ephesus, but the similarities also stand out. The swirling vine motif on all chariots is very similar, as is the motion of the animals. The wings on the griffins and sphinxes occupy the same space in the composition as the winged figures on the panels at Ephesus. It is unlikely that the same sculptors were involved in both projects, as there are noticeable differences in the skill shown in the reliefs (among other factors), yet the similarities could be explained by a general trend in travel by sculptors from cities like Ephesus and Aphrodisias to North Africa. It cannot be stated for certain that artists from Aphrodisias or any other city in Asia Minor were employed to sculpt the reliefs on the arch at Oea. However, through comparison with contemporary works made in some cities in Asia Minor and in Lepcis Magna, whose production by Aphrodisian sculptors is more strongly supported, it is possible to suggest that the sculptors at work in Oea were very much influenced by contemporary styles in Asia Minor and perhaps even trained.

Here is not the place to debate the date of the erection of the Parthian monument nor the total iconographical program. However, since the monument at Ephesus was set up at some point in the Antonine period, it can be useful to compare the iconography with the arch at Oea. For more on the Parthian monument, see Knibbe (1991), Oberleitner (1999), and Fuchs (2002–2003), and, most recently, Faust (2012).

Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Antikensammlung, Inv. Nr. I 867. Identification of the emperor is uncertain because the head is missing, though scholars have suggested Hadrian (Liverani 1999, 642), Lucius Verus (Oberleitner 2009, 253–254), and Antoninus Pius (Meyer 2006, 136 and Faust 2012, 335).

Some have identified this scene as the apotheosis of Lucius Verus. Cf. Fuchs (2002–2003) who reviews the interpretation.


Faust (2012), 331.
by sculptors from a place like Aphrodisias or Ephesus. Furthermore, since marble was a new building material in North Africa in the mid-second century, local sculptors would have been unaccustomed to working the material and would have required training in the very least. Employing sculptors from Asia Minor—or, perhaps simply, styles current in cities like Ephesus and Aphrodisias—also ties in with the motivation for the construction of the arch. The cost of importing marble and possibly artisans amplifies the nature of the expenditure, calling more attention to the arch and thereby reinforcing Oea’s burgeoning Roman status and the resources of its elite.

Apart from who might have sculpted or designed the reliefs of Apollo and Minerva, the meaning behind the images is also significant. The incorporation of the local deities into a solidly Roman monument type indicates that the pre-Roman culture is still a strong element in Oea. Yet the fact that they occupy the same spaces usually reserved for personifications of Victory suggests that the builder, if not the whole town, foresees a better future as an integrated member of the Roman Empire. The tutelary gods, assimilated to Roman Apollo and Minerva, now support Rome; they are “coautrici della vittoria Caesaris.” The local gods are blended into a monument that proclaims the authority of the Roman imperial court.

Aurigemma identified the captive groups on the north and south faces of the arch, as Parthians since the emperors had campaigned against them, even while describing their clothing and features as consistent with the Dacians and Marcomanni. Arata further suggested that the captives on the Oean arch seemed more “dolente e composto” like the Dacian barbarians of Trajan’s Forum. Aurigemma is partially correct in his interpretation. He recognizes that the barbarians do not

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57 Ward-Perkins (1951), 101 gives support to the idea that Tripolitania, among other places, imported craftsmen along with marbles to work them. Russell (2013), 202–204, 332–334 allows for several models according to which carvers of statues and architectural decoration may have followed marble exported from their hometowns to another area to finish work in situ, migrant carvers may have moved to other cities where their skills were in demand, or local carvers may have finished work roughed out at quarries and shipped. Large building projects probably necessitated both local and foreign workmen.

58 De Maria (1988), 136.

59 One should consult Smith (2013) for his thorough analysis of the reliefs from the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias, including matters such as planning, production, patronage, and reception. He discusses how the reliefs of the imperial family on the Sebasteion were local creations, blending inherited Hellenistic style with some Roman models. The same principle is at work on the arch in Oea.

60 Aurigemma (1970), 29.

have the usual appearance of Parthians but, reflecting a need to simplify, he believes that they were depicted more like Dacians, a long-time enemy earlier in the second century. During the time of Augustus, the various eastern barbarians could be distinguished by their costume: Parthians wear short tunics and wear no head covering, Armenians wear the loose-fitting pants, longer robe and a tiara or round cap. Dacians also wear the loose-fitting pants, but they are shown with a tight-fitting jacket and a Phrygian cap. However, the arch is part of a trend beginning after the time of Trajan in which the features of barbarians on Roman monuments become more generalized. Barbarians become symbolic and are depicted in a more generic manner. Whereas previously the ethnicity of barbarians could be deduced from their clothing, by the mid-second century, Parthians, Armenians, and Dacians all wear loose-fitting pants under tunics. The trend is visible even earlier. For example, on a cuirassed statue from Sabratha celebrating the Flavian conquest of Judaea, two male captives are depicted. One is standing with hands bound behind his back, the other is seated on a pile of shields. Both are wearing pants in addition to a cloak. However, pants were not part of the clothing worn by Jewish men. The image of the captives does not reflect the reality. The clothing has become symbolic, marking them as “yet another Eastern nation which has been humiliated and subdued by Roman might.” With this practice in mind, then, the bound captives on the arch at Oea should be considered as representing the Armenians, against whom Lucius Verus had just secured an early first victory.

In addition to the very elaborate relief on all four sides, a pair of statuary niches also framed the east and west sides of the arch. As for who was represented in the statuary niches, we know little with certainty but can make suggestions based upon other Antonine works from the same time frame. Stucchi postulated that the surviving statue portrayed Antoninus Pius and would have been paired with a statue of Hadrian, while statues of Marcus and Lucius would have been

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62 He does not provide an explanation regarding this need for simplification in the representation of the barbarians.
64 Picard (1957), 439 calls it an “indifference au réalisme historique.”
65 Gergel (2001), 204.
68 Gergel (2001), 197. Coins such as RIC 532–542 illustrate the same iconography.
69 While the captives on the Arch at Oea and on the panels of Marcus Aurelius in Rome (now on the Arch of Constantine and in the Museo del Palazzo dei Conservatori) are portrayed in a sympathetic manner, the same cannot be said for the German and Sarmatian barbarians on the Column of Marcus Aurelius.
placed on top of the attic.\textsuperscript{70} Since the attic does not survive intact—and it was common for statuary to grace the top of arches—this idea cannot be patently discarded. However, it is more probable that this statue portrayed Lucius Verus, given the dedicatory inscription and the beard style gleaned from the remaining traces.\textsuperscript{71} Lucius Verus wore a longer beard than his colleague Marcus Aurelius, more in line with the remains of the Oean statue, which appears to be in the fourth portrait type of Lucius Verus. One can compare the remains of the statue found near the arch with the securely identified portraits of Lucius Verus’ fourth type in the Louvre, in the Bardo Museum, or the portrait statue—in nearly the same pose as the Oean statue—in the Naples Archaeological Museum.\textsuperscript{72} Furthermore, traces of laurel leaf on the sides of the head are indicative of a laurel wreath, an appropriate symbol of this emperor’s martial successes.

The nudity, stance, and accoutrements combine to create heroic imagery, a statue type with numerous examples of the same or similar type dating back to the Classical Period.\textsuperscript{73} Arata claimed that this statue represented Lucius Verus, but, due to the nudity and the remains of an eagle at the figure’s foot, could have only represented a deified emperor. Therefore, according to Arata, this extant statue must have replaced an earlier one of the emperor erected during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{74} The statue, however, does not seem to be a blatant comparison to Jupiter, such as, for example, the portrait statue of Claudius in the guise of Jupiter in the Vatican Museum. The stance and positioning of the body as well as the placement of the cloak are not the same in Oean statue and the Claudius. The inclusion of an eagle does not necessarily indicate a deified emperor. Eagles, in fact, were commonly portrayed on coin reverses, especially in the East, both as a sign of the authority of the emperor during his reign and, after his death, as a

\textsuperscript{70} Stucchi (1981), 139–140.
\textsuperscript{71} Aurigemma (1970), 35. This is the predominant view among scholars. Cf. Wegner (1939), 247 and (1980), 62; Fittschen (1999), 116. Furthermore, I do not know of any statues of Marcus Aurelius from his time as emperor that represent him nude. Most depict him in military gear, while nude statues of Lucius Verus were made during his short reign.
\textsuperscript{72} Louvre MA 1101, Bardo Museum Inv. 1045 (from the theater at Dougga), and the Naples Archaeological Museum Inv. 6095. The portrait statue in Naples is also nude but for the cloak gathered on the left shoulder and falling over the left side of the body. The stance is nearly the same and the head is turned slightly to the left, just as with the statue from Oea. The fourth portrait type was produced during the years in which Lucius Verus was co-emperor and is his most common type. Cf. Fittschen-Zanker (1983), 79, no. 73, Taf. 84–86 for a complete description of this portrait type.
\textsuperscript{73} For a solid discussion of heroic nudity and nude statuary in general in the Roman period, see Hallett (2005).
\textsuperscript{74} Arata (1996), 10 n. 10.
symbol of his consecration. Furthermore, the representation of the living emperor differed in various cities across the empire outside of Rome. For example, on the reliefs from the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias, there is little distinction between living and deceased emperors. Living emperors are also depicted nude as “towering supermen.”

The other niche on the east side must have been occupied by a statue of Marcus Aurelius so that both emperors were represented on this façade, the side facing the port where many foreign visitors to Oea would have entered the city. Arata’s suggestion that statues of the divinized pair Antoninus Pius and Faustina I were placed in niches on the west side should be discarded. Although numerous statuary groups of members of the Antonine family have been found all over the Roman Empire, none of them were part of honorary arches. Only male members of the Antonine family have been found together in this display context, such as the arch dedicated to Antoninus Pius and his two adoptive sons at Sufetula, discussed below. Except for two instances under the Julio-Claudians, not until the Severan period were female members of the imperial family included in the statuary decoration—or even the inscriptions—of honorary arches. For the same reason, statues of Faustina II and Lucilla, the spouses of the co-emperors, can also be discarded.

It seems that there are two reasonable schemas for the statue niches on the west side. The tutelary gods may have been represented again on this façade, which faced the city center. The Severan arch at Tebessa included a statue of

75 Cf. RPC 14576 from Alexandria and RIC 1509 (Divus Verus).
76 Smith (2013), 312.
78 On the Arch of Caracalla at Tebessa, built in 214 and also dedicated to the deified Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, and Geta, the dedication to each family member occupies one face of the tetrapylon. Statues are mentioned in the dedicatory inscription, though only fragments have survived. Cf. Bacchielli (1987). The arch at Volubilis was dedicated to Caracalla and Julia Domna (ILAfr 608). Imperial women appeared on arches in Rome in the Julio-Claudian period, though these seem to be isolated examples. Antonia, Agrippina, and possibly Octavia were named in inscriptions on the Arch of Claudius set up on the Via Lata (cf. Barrett 1991, 7–8), and, according to the Tabula Siarensis the arch of Germanicus set up in the Circus Flaminius was to have statues of his mother, wife, sister, and young children in addition to those of himself and his father (cf. Severy 2000, 324–325). Imperial women do figure into the decoration of other types of monumental facades, such as the gate complex to Perge funded by Plancia Magna. However, this gateway falls into an entirely separate category of monument than the quadrifrons arch under discussion here.
79 Furthermore, Lucilla was not engaged to Lucius Verus until 164, thus it would not make sense to present them together as an imperial couple when the arch was erected.
Minerva and at least one other deity on top of the attic. Representing the gods most important to the town of Oea again in statue form would echo the sentiment that the dedicator respects his town’s origins yet acknowledges the might of the Roman Empire. Another option is that the benefactor himself was portrayed by a statue occupying one of the niches. Benefactors all over the empire erected monuments honoring the imperial family, starting from the time of Augustus. These monuments took many forms, but most of them included a display of a statuary group representing various members of the imperial family, and the groups often included statues of the dedicator himself and even his own family members. Individuals who spend large sums of money for building construction, public works, or other donations desire to be recognized for their beneficence. Having one’s name included in the dedicatory text on the arch drew attention to the dedicator, yet having one’s portrait statue prominently displayed would have provided much more exposure. Perhaps a statue of one of his relatives or of the procurator who dedicated the arch was placed in the other niche on the west side.

Due to their present state of preservation, it is difficult to determine how the *imagines clipeatae* figured into the overall sculptural program of the arch. The clothing is the only indication that all four depict males, but since the heads are almost completely missing and there are no textual references to them, no positive identification can be made. Perhaps they represented men who were significant in the history and development of Oea, local heroes of a sort. Neither the archaeological nor epigraphic record is extensive enough to permit speculation on the identity of those sorts of individuals.

While there are several unknowns due to the state of the monument today, the overall iconographic program can still be recognized. The imagery is a blend

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80 Bacchielli (1987).
81 The nymphaeum at Olympia, set up by Herodes Atticus and his wife Regilla, is an ideal example as 11 members of the Antonine family are portrayed alongside 11 members of their family. Cf. Bol (1984) and Meyers (2009).
82 This is especially true in this situation, as the inscription was only in Latin, and much of the local populace probably did not read Latin at this time.
83 Arata (1996), 13–15 works out an elaborate hypothesis according to which, the *clipeatae* represent the fathers of the individuals represented in the statuary niches. Thus, the biological fathers of Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius would have been represented on the east side, and the fathers of Antoninus Pius and Faustina I would have been portrayed above the conjectured statues of them on the west side. If correct, the arch at Oea would be the first and only example of such an arrangement of members of the Antonine dynasty known. Arata’s identifications are based upon his suggestion that the arch originally had a funerary purpose, which seems very dubious.
of local and Roman. The local tutelary gods Apollo and Minerva blend together with the trophies, captives, and Victories as signs of imperial might. The imported Greek marble demonstrates Oea’s trade connections and the wealth of the benefactor. The style and execution of the reliefs indicate either that locals were familiar with the trends of the time or even that they had the money to hire artists from Asia Minor. The arch at Oea is part of the dialogue between the town and the whole Roman Empire, centered in Rome. The architectural format and the sculptural decoration combine to create a remarkable monument, and its location within the town of Oea only adds to its prominence.

IV  Placement of the arch

The quadrifrons arch straddled the intersection of the cardo maximus and the most northern decumanus of the town. The extensions of these streets led west to Sabratha and east to Lepcis Magna. Being on the northern edge of town, the arch was close to the busy port, whose size surpassed those of Sabratha and Lepcis.84 The topography of the coast provided a natural harbor at Oea, which, along with the large oasis nearby, was one of the town’s best features.85 The arch spans the intersection of the paths ultimately leading to the two other towns that were closest to Oea and made up the Emporia along with it. Travelers coming from either Sabratha or Lepcis Magna would have gazed upon the marble arch as they made their way to Oea’s town center.

In fact, the arch may have served as an entrance to the forum.86 In any case, the forum was probably in the same vicinity as the arch, as it was common in Tripolitania for a town’s forum to be situated in close proximity to the port.87 This is a natural arrangement owing to the region’s role as a commercial hub. Numerous architectural fragments that probably belonged to public buildings were also found in the area near the arch.88 As people were approaching the harbor and then coming into the town, the arch would have been one of the first monuments they saw, and it must have been stunning with its elaborately sculpted white marble surfaces. The broad east side of the quadrifrons arch is the side facing the port, which makes it important in creating a good first impression.

84 Mattingly (1994), 123; Apuleius, Apol. 73 discusses how busy the port of Oea was.
85 Mattingly (1994), 122.
86 The inscription states that the arch was constructed solo publico, which is further support to the suggestion that the forum was in close proximity.
87 Merighi (1940), 121. The older forum at Leptis was established almost on the shore.
It was near a niche on the northeast side that the statue of Lucius Verus was discovered, and, according to my reconstruction, a statue of Marcus Aurelius originally occupied the other niche on this side. Therefore, when considering the directionality of the arch, the images of the ruling emperors would have made that first impression to visitors coming from the port to the city center.

The location of the Temple to the Genius Coloniae, built about twenty years after the arch and in close proximity, provides further support for the idea that the arch was located in the central area of the town. The temple was dedicated between 183 and 185 by a L. Aemilius, who also gave one million sesterces to finance games and sportulae for the citizens. Though the cognomen of the dedicatory is not legible on the inscription (IRT 230), it was probably Frontinus, as a L. Aemilius Frontinus was proconsul of Asia under Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. Very little of the temple remains: four marble blocks inscribed with the dedicatory inscription and a part of the pediment with the figures of the Fortuna (or Tyche) of Oea, Apollo, Minerva, and the Dioscuri in sculpted relief. However, these fragments provide an indication of the original splendor of the temple. It, like the arch, included marble decoration and an arrangement of local and Roman deities. With the discovery of other architectural fragments and remains of a fountain, it is possible to imagine that the arch and temple were but two features in the monumentalization of this sector of Oea.

Thus, the arch must have been in a position to have been viewed by a broad group of people. It was constructed in close proximity to the harbor and at the crossroads of the paths leading out to Oea’s neighboring towns. It may have been an entrance to the forum or adjacent to it. With the construction of the Temple to the Genius Coloniae not long after the arch was built, the arch would have served as a conduit for important visitors, summoning them into the civic center. Consequently, the arch would have been viewed by a maximum number of locals as well as visitors.

V Contemporary arches in North Africa

It has already been established that the arch in Oea was elaborately decorated on all four sides as well as on the interior of the cupola. In fact, this arch has more

89 Tran (2007), 429.
90 For L. Aemilius Frontinus, see PIR² A348.
91 Sabratha also had a Temple to their Genius Coloniae by the late second or early third century. IRT 6 is an inscription that references a dedication in the Temple of the Genius of the Colony.
marble and decoration than any other arch in North Africa up to this time.\textsuperscript{92} The striking features of the arch at Oea can be best appreciated after a brief exploration of other arches in North Africa and some contemporary arches at other locations in the Roman Empire. Statuary niches were not usually included on arches in Italy, but they can be found in North Africa and the East. A triple-bay arch, serving as the monumental entryway to the forum at Sufetula (Sbeitla) in modern Tunisia, was dedicated to Antoninus Pius and his adopted sons between 140 and 143.\textsuperscript{93} (Fig. 9) On approach, one sees the principal opening, framed by engaged Corinthian columns on projecting bases. On either side of the central archway is a smaller arch with a rectangular niche above and extending up to the entablature. Another set of engaged columns on molded bases is positioned on the edges of the façade. The niches are rather shallow, but they might have held statues, given that fragments of two \textit{tituli} survive—designating portrait statues of Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius.\textsuperscript{94} The inscription on the attic is only partially preserved, but it seems to indicate that the arch was dedicated to Antoninus Pius and his adoptive sons \textit{decreto decurionum pecunia publica}.\textsuperscript{95} There is no other decoration on this arch.

The arch at Lambaesis, dedicated to Commodus by C. Pomponius Maximus, a former \textit{cornicularius} turned decurion, also includes statue niches, though no traces of the statuary remain.\textsuperscript{96} No other decoration filled the surfaces of this arch either. The Severan arches at Cuicul (Djemila) and Thugga (Dougga) similarly feature statue niches but no other iconographical decoration.\textsuperscript{97} Sometimes the niches are situated between the pilasters or columns on the lower portion of the piers and sometimes they are higher up, but the similarity these other four arches share is the lack of any other sculpted relief. Thus, the arch at Oea is distinguished by its inclusion of statuary niches while also featuring a full program of relief sculpture.

The depiction of shield bust portraits is not common on honorary or triumphal arches. Winkes lists only eight arches in the Roman Empire, including the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{92} Gros (2011), 80.
\textsuperscript{93} Kähler (1939), col. 440 no. 43a.
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{CIL} VIII 228, 11319. Alternatively, statues of the two heirs may have been placed on top of the attic, as was common. See von Hesberg (1992) for a discussion of the practice of placing statues on top of the attic and the increasing relief decoration on the façades of arches.
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{CIL} VIII 228, 11319.
\textsuperscript{96} Kähler (1939), col. 435 no. 29; Cassibry (2008), 440–445.
\textsuperscript{97} Kähler (1939), col. 429 no. 14b, col. 431 no. 16b. Mühlbrock (2003), 50 n. 344 lists five other arches (not all tetrapyla) that include statuary niches. The tetrapylon at Gerasa, for example, includes statuary niches on two sides (Mühlbrock 2003, cat. JOR2).
\end{footnotesize}
one at Oea, which have them. While there are many different hypotheses regarding the origin of such shield portraits, they clearly symbolized virtue, especially in a military context but also in honoring the dead. Apart from funerary contexts, in most of the examples where the portraits survive in good condition, the figures represented are gods or personifications, though they could also portray learned men. For example, on the Arch of Caracalla at Tebessa, a quadrifrons arch built in 214 and incorporated into a Byzantine wall in 539, can be found busts in high relief inside *tondi* over the keystones on the three visible sides. We can see a lion, a Minerva-Medusa figure (similar to those at the Severan Forum at Lepcis), and Fortuna of Tebessa, identifiable by her turreted crown. Another Severan arch at Volubilis includes (possible) statuary niches on either side of the single archway and, above them, medallions with representations of the Seasons.

The closest arch geographically and temporally is the West Gate at Lepcis Magna, a quadrifrons arch dedicated to Marcus Aurelius in 173 by Avilius Cas-

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98 Winkes (1969). The other arches with *clipeatae imagines* include those at Arles, Corinth, Reims, Rimini, Rome, Tebessa, and Volubilis.
99 Smith (1995) 331. A group of nine shield portraits was discovered in a house north of the Sebasteion, and they portray such figures as Pythagoras and Pindar.
100 Letronne (1847); Curtis (1908), 72; Meunier (1938); Kähler (1939), col. 440 no. 44; Accame (1941); MacKendrick (1980), 273; Bacchielli (1987).
101 Kähler (1939), col. 432 no. 17; MacKendrick (1980), 301. The niches on the arch at Volubilis are too small for life-size statues.
The arch was built at the west end of Lepcis, on the road to Oea and the continuation of the decumanus maximus. Though little of the arch remains, Avilius Castus, as the inscription states, bequeathed 120,000 sesterces for the arch, with the city contributing some funds as well. The inscription, carved onto two monolithic marble blocks, indicates that statuary was part of the decoration—probably on top of the attic—but nothing remains today. The arch, excavated in the 1950s under the direction of Caffarelli, has four equal sides measuring 8.90 m each. Like the arch in Oea, this one was made from Proconnesian marble, at least the architectural details that survive. Four Attic bases supported a set of columns and pilasters on either side of the archway, but there was no other decoration on the faces. Pensabene points out that, like the Antonine temple in Sabratha and the Temple of Roma and Augustus in Lepcis, the Corinthian column capitals on this arch are in a style prevalent in Asia Minor. A final significant detail about the West Gate is the inclusion of the names of the proconsul C. Septimius Severus and his propraetorian legate L. Septimius Severus, the future emperor. They probably were present for the dedication of the arch, or might have at least visited Lepcis Magna that year since these officials were expected to attend a variety of official ceremonies. What we can see so far, then, is that none of the other arches in North Africa in the Antonine or Severan periods comes close in overall design to the Oean monument. To review, the arch at Oea is made mostly of imported marble, while the others were constructed of various local stones. At Sabratha there is no evidence for a monument that uses marble on the same scale prior to the arch at Oea. Sabratha’s theater with a magnificent (now reconstructed) marble scaenae frons was built later in the second century. The earliest use of imported marble in Lepcis Magna might be the restoration to the theater in 156–157, though some scholars now contend that some of the restorations made to the Hadrianic Baths previously dated to the Severan period might have occurred during the Antonine

102 AE (1967), 536; Di Vita-Evrard (1963), 389–414; Birley (1999), 51. C. Avilius Castus is also known from IRT 633, in which he pays for a biga statue for his son, decreed by the town council.
103 Pensabene (2003), 355.
104 Pensabene (2003), 357. The Antonine Temple in Sabratha was constructed in the 160s and the Temple of Roman and Augustus ca. 150. Pensabene supports the idea that itinerant marble workers from the east were employed for at least some of the carving in Lepcis Magna.
105 Birley (1999), 51. The proconsul was either the uncle or cousin of the future emperor. See di Vita-Evrard (1963) for further discussion on the genealogy of the Severan family.
107 Walda (1985), 48; IRT 372.
period instead.\textsuperscript{108} The decorative program at Oea is much more extensive than any of the other arches. The only arch that surpasses it in the amount of decoration is the later arch of Septimius Severus in Lepcis Magna.\textsuperscript{109} This quadrifrons arch, made of a limestone core with imported marble facing, is covered with relief sculpture, too. Since this arch dates about four decades after the arch at Oea, it certainly was not an inspiration for the Oean arch, but, rather, the latter was probably seen by the artists working at Lepcis and may have even influenced them in some way.

The arch at Oea, in fact, has more in common with arches set up in Rome and other cities in the west. One should call to mind the entryway into the Forum of Trajan\textsuperscript{110} and the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum with its façades covered by figural decoration. The Arch of Augustus at Rimini includes shield bust portraits, two on each side in the spandrels, representing Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, and Roma, though it has no other figural decoration.\textsuperscript{111} The Arch of Nero, erected in 62 in the Roman Forum, showcased statues on the projecting entablature and a colossal statue of Mars in a niche on at least one of the narrow sides.\textsuperscript{112}

\section*{VI Euergetism, status and identity}

The fact that, in the early second century Lepcis Magna experienced an elevation in its status relative to Sabratha and Oea must have heightened the tensions in this region, as the cities of the Emporia had been quite independent.\textsuperscript{113} The late

\textsuperscript{108} Fant (1988) demonstrates how a revision in an inscription found at the Hadrianic Baths removes the only evidence for repairs or renovations to the structure under Septimius Severus. Thomas and Witschell (1992), 163 state that, while the building history is quite complicated, the baths probably underwent near constant renovations, repairs, and decorating under Antoninus Pius and Commodus before changes under Septimius Severus.

\textsuperscript{109} For a recent interpretation of the decoration on the arch at Lepcis, see Faust (2011). Cf. also Bartoccini (1931); Townsend (1938); Strocka (1972); La Rocca (1985).

\textsuperscript{110} Gros (2011), 72. The entryway to Trajan’s Forum was depicted on coins from 112 (\textit{RIC} 255), and they show statuary niches flanking the central portal as well as \textit{imagines clipeatae}. Though the Forum of Trajan is not entirely understood by scholars today, Meneghini (2009), 93–94 has proposed a reconstruction of the entryway similar to the image shown on coins but with eight columns, rather than six.

\textsuperscript{111} Foschi and Pasini (1998).

\textsuperscript{112} Kleiner (1985). Since there are no archaeological remains of this monument, Kleiner relies heavily on the depictions of the arch on contemporary coinage, some of which show a three-quarter view of the arch to include the niche on the short end.

\textsuperscript{113} Mattingly (1994), 25–29. The area was not officially called Tripolitania until the time of Septimius Severus, but this area always stood out from the rest of Africa Proconsularis, and the
Antonine period was a very prosperous time here, evident in the overall growth of Sabratha and Lepcis (and one might, through extrapolation, assert also at Oea) and the increased building activity. Gigthis, just west of Sabratha, provides evidence for embassies to Rome, petitioning to become a municipium, while at the same time the wealthy citizens spent money to make improvements in the infrastructure and amenities of their town. There are clear signs in the second century of a reimagining and monumentalizing of the town.\textsuperscript{114}

It is significant that the proconsul and his legate are recorded as dedicating the arch in Oea. The proconsul played a vital role in governing his province and would have had innumerable obligations around the province.\textsuperscript{115} The proconsul did not visit every town and city in his jurisdiction so his presence would have been noteworthy. A proconsul did not dedicate every monument or building constructed, only large architectural structures, such as temples, fountains, theaters, and roads.\textsuperscript{116} Ser. Cornelius Scipio Salvidienus Orfitus, the proconsul who dedicated the arch to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, is also known from references by Apuleius, who calls him praecipuus omnium proconsul, as he lavishes praise on the man.\textsuperscript{117} The inclusion of the proconsul’s name in the dedicatory inscription might suggest that he oversaw the building project, that his permission was sought by the financier to construct the monument, or that he was actually present at the dedication.\textsuperscript{118} While a proconsul’s permission seems to have been required when public funds were being proposed for any new public construction, there are examples when a provincial governor was involved in a project that used private money, as was the case here. In sum, Orfitus was an important figure in Antonine Rome, and the fact that his name was included in the inscription as dedicator helps accentuate the prominence of this monument.

area is more commonly referred to with this name in modern sources. Cf. also Mattingly (1994) 54–55. Mattingly states that there was certainly a rivalry among the three cities

\textsuperscript{114} Mattingly (1994), 129.

\textsuperscript{115} Provincial governors had the authority to levy taxes, audit city finances, and intervene when deemed necessary.

\textsuperscript{116} See, e.g., IRT 230, 269, 273, 300, 330, 338, 533, 534, and 537.

\textsuperscript{117} Apul., Flor. 17

\textsuperscript{118} Ser. Cornelius Scipio Salvidienus Orfitus, proconsul, is listed as dedicating the monument along with his legate. There are other examples in building dedications in North Africa with the formula “proconsul dedicavit ... (individual) fecit.” Cooley (2012), 254–255 lists twelve similar dedications from 4/5 CE to the dedication of the Arch of Trajan at Lepcis in 109/110. Cf. Burton (2004), 327. Burton also includes that Dio Chrysostom (Or. 40.5ff. and 45.13ff) did not seek any central authorization for his plans in Pontus-Bithynia that included both public and private funds as well as his own money.
C. Calpurnius Celsus is the man responsible for financing this arch. His *cursus honorum* includes *curator muneris publici, munerarius, Iīvir quinquennālis*, and *flamen perpetuus*. Thus, he was clearly someone important and wealthy in the city of Oea, though we know nothing else about him.\(^{119}\) Although there are several other inscriptions that name *munerarii*, most of the instances come from funerary monuments and not from public structures, and most *munerarii* did not hold other important civic positions.\(^{120}\) As *munerarius* Celsus probably financed an expensive set of gladiatorial spectacles for the people of Oea.\(^{121}\) In addition to administering the games, he also desired to leave a more permanent mark on the city.\(^{122}\) Many benefactors were motivated not only by the desire to be generous but also by the desire to gain some—often intangible—return. A statue might be set up in honor of the benefactor, and they also earned a place in the collective *memoria*. Spectacles have an ephemeral nature. A large archway made of marble and situated in a prominent location in the city would impress generations of residents and visitors, who would see the donor’s name inscribed along with those of the emperors. A monumental dedication was a vehicle to publicize the donor’s wealth, to stress his position within the community, and to sponsor something useful and beautiful for his town.\(^{123}\) As was stated earlier, towns often constructed typical Roman buildings and monuments even before becoming a *municipium* or *colonia*, and the new construction might have even been used to secure a successful petition. I

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119 A *munerarius* is in charge of providing gladiatorial shows. Cf. the usage of the term in literary evidence (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.34; Suet. *Dom.* 10.2) and inscriptions CIL XI 575=ILS 8206=EAOR II, 27 from Forum Popilii and CIL V 563=ILS 5123=InsIt 10.4.77 from Tergeste). Duncan-Jones (1967), 156 n. 48 shows that some donors of munera were not specifically called *munerarii* in inscriptions.

120 Ceballos Hornero and Ceballos Hornero (2011). *CIL* III.659 from Macedonia names a C. Vibius as both *Iīvir* and *munerarius*, though in North Africa, *munerarii* do not generally have another civic position. A total of 14 inscriptions from Africa name *munerarii*.

121 Judging from the expense of the arch, Celsus must have been quite wealthy and aimed to impress others in his town. Chamberland (2001), cat. 242 and 375 notes other instances in which a person described as *duumvir* and *munerarius* put on the games while in office. L. Aemilius, who dedicated the Temple to the Genius Coloniae in Oea between 183 and 185, also bequeathed one million sesterces to finance games and *sportulae* for the town’s citizens, demonstrating that the dedication of a building was often accompanied by a celebration of games or banquets. Cf. Tran (2007), 429.

122 When games are put on as part of someone’s year in office, they are rarely mentioned because they are a required duty. Yet when an official goes beyond a basic requirement by financing extra days of games or making another donation, then an inscription might be set up to commemorate the donor. Cf. Chamberland (2007), 138.

123 Meyers (2012), 463–465. Cf. Woolf (1996), 29 who observes “the primary function of monuments in the early Empire was as devices with which to assert the place of individuals within society.”
suggest that a local official far surpassed his municipal duties by financing this expensive arch as part of the Oea’s petition to the emperors to be granted *colonia* status.

What it meant to be a Roman colony changed quite a bit from the height of the Republic to the mid-first century CE. By the early second century it was clear that a colony no longer had any connection to a military establishment but, rather, the title was given to existing towns in the Roman Empire as a *beneficium* granted or confirmed by the emperor. Hadrian’s hometown Italica petitioned him to change their status from *municipium* to *colonia*. The *Digest* includes several examples of emperors conferring colony status on towns for a variety of reasons. An inscription from the forum in Sabratha helps establish that that neighboring town became a colony in the last five years of Marcus’ reign, if not earlier. This inscription records a dedication to Marcus Aurelius and is the earliest mention of the word *colonia* discovered in Sabratha. Because the towns of Sabratha and Oea were so close to each other and involved in business with one another and probably both became *municipia* under Antoninus Pius, it is reasonable to assert that later on they both were also given colony status by Marcus Aurelius.

Therefore, we should consider the dedication by Celsus in the timeline when Oea was in the process of being considered for promotion to the status of *colonia*. If Oea had begun petitioning the emperors already or had just begun to discuss the possibility in town council, Celsus would have had a solid reason to make this particular dedication. Furthermore, the fact that Celsus financed the construction of the arch, without any apparent assistance from the town, stands out in relation to other contemporary arches in North Africa, which were more often set

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126 50.15.1.
127 Di Vita (1982), 548–549. *IRT* 23, dated to 175–180, mentions a *duumvir quinquennalis*. There is evidence of grants of varying levels of Roman status in other parts of North Africa during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Dio (72.19.1) writes that during the reign of Marcus, envoys came from various nations to supplicate to be granted *civitas* status, the lowest level of a citizen community in the Roman provinces. For example, Thugga became a *civitas* through the favor of Marcus Aurelius. Cf. Crawley and Wilson (2013), 156 and Beschaouch (1997).
128 Gascou (1972) is in favor of the view that Oea became a *municipium* under Antoninus Pius. Apuleius (*Apol. 101*) mentions a quaestor, typically a municipal official, so it would seem that Oea had *municipium* status by 158.
129 For comparison, the arch set up by Avilius Castus at Lepcis Magna was made possible with additional funds provided by the town (*AE* 1967, 536).
up by the *municipium*\textsuperscript{130} or *colonia*,\textsuperscript{131} by the decurions,\textsuperscript{132} or as a testamentary bequest.\textsuperscript{133}

Returning to the question of the placement of the inscription on the frieze and architrave, the traces of the original decoration under the erased text provoke many questions. It is not common to see large public monuments in this condition. Of course there are numerous examples of inscriptions partly or thoroughly scraped off due to a *damnatio memoriae* and many others that record instances of rebuilding or restoring monuments and buildings affected by fire, earthquake, or simple old age. The inscription on the arch might be evidence for restoration or a rededication. For example, the Severan inscription on the Pantheon, proclaiming the restoration in 201–202 by Septimius Severus and Caracalla, is often overlooked, as the letters in that text are much smaller than the more prominent Agrippan inscription and due to its placement on the upper two fasciae of the architrave.\textsuperscript{134} This inscription, however, differs from the arch at Oea in one significant way: there is no mention of restoring or rebuilding the arch, and in most cases rebuilding inscriptions do not fail to emphasize the contributions of the rebuilder and the rebuilding itself.\textsuperscript{135}

While it has already been suggested that some other text or decoration already occupied the attic of the arch so that the inscription commemorating Celsus’ dedication had to be placed on the frieze and architrave,\textsuperscript{136} another alternative is possible: the inscription might have been moved to the entablature to make way for a more important text on the attic. Consider the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina in the Forum Romanum. The text DIVO ANTONINO ET on the frieze was added only after Antoninus’ death when the temple was rededicated to include the new divus with his wife. The frieze of griffins and acanthus scrolls today visible on the sides of the temple’s frieze may have wrapped around to the front.\textsuperscript{137} In the latest examination of the monuments in the Forum, Gorski

\textsuperscript{130} The Severan arch at Thugga: *CIL* VII 26539, 26540.

\textsuperscript{131} The Arch of Trajan at Lepcis Magna: *IRT* 353.

\textsuperscript{132} The Arch to Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus at Sufetula: *CIL* VIII 228; 11319; the arch erected by C. Pomponius Maximus to Commodus at Lambaesis: *CIL* VIII 2699, 18112; 2700; 18246.

\textsuperscript{133} The Arch to Caracalla, Julia Domna, and Divus Septimius Severus at Tebessa: *CIL* VIII 1855–1858.

\textsuperscript{134} Boatwright (2013), 20.

\textsuperscript{135} Boatwright (2013), 23.

\textsuperscript{136} Kähler (1939) has already recommended this idea, though he offered no suggestions as for the other text or decoration that might have occupied the attic.

\textsuperscript{137} Pensabene (1996), 245 is uncertain whether the frieze over the front of the pronaos was left smooth for the expected addition of Antoninus or whether some original decoration had to be
and Packer state that the frieze did continue around the front over the pronaos and would have framed the original dedication to Faustina on the frieze. However, when the temple was rededicated to include Antoninus Pius, the dedication to Faustina was removed from the frieze and re-inscribed on the architrave so that the emperor’s name could be inscribed on the more prominent space. The new inscription also necessitated the removal of the lateral scenes of the griffin frieze. Additionally, transferring the text with Faustina’s name to the architrave required that surface to be scraped down to match the level of the lowest fascia between the second and fifth columns of the façade.

Perhaps the arch in Oea had been conceived either late in the reign of Antoninus Pius or early in the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. If, as I contend, the arch was a significant part of Oea’s increasing Roman identity and played a part in petitioning the emperors for colony status, then receiving the grant of colonia status might have caused a modification of the original design or text on the arch. If the town received notice about its new status after the arch was dedicated, the builder or town officials might have desired to proclaim Oea as a colony in the more prominent location provided by the attic as a way of showing thanks to the emperor. Thus, a new text, now lost, was inscribed on the attic and the original dedicatory text was transferred to the frieze and architrave. The hastiness with which the original decorative schema on the frieze was removed and the asymmetrical placement of the text might indicate a desire to complete the modification quickly.

We cannot know how Oea might have benefited from the elevated status, but the change signals “an aspiration for recognition of a higher status.” That is, towns raised to colonia status hoped for broader opportunities in the Roman Empire. On one level, the arch demonstrates the resources and influence of Celsus, plus his past civic and religious positions, and perhaps a justification for those (and future) offices within the town. He transmits his own identity to the residents and visitors of Oea. As a benefactor, he leaves a lasting message to all current and future viewers, creating a space for himself in Oea’s history. He has inserted himself into the town’s memory. He has connected himself with the

chiseled off and the surface smoothed to accommodate the new text after the temples rededication.

139 Gorski and Packer (2015), 76.
140 Frothingham (1904), 8 No. 42 suggests that the arch at Avitta Bibba in Africa Proconsularis was planned to commemorate the establishment of the municipium there by Hadrian but was not dedicated until the reign of Antoninus Pius, who is not mentioned in the inscription at all.
141 Laurence, Cleary and Sears (2011), 67.
Roman magistrates in the province and with the military victory of the emperors. At the regional level, the quadrifrons arch acts as an emblem of the town, proclaiming to other nearby towns and to Rome not only the resources of its citizens but also its affiliation with the Roman Empire and their loyalty to the Roman emperors.

In conclusion, consider again the arch on the west end of town at Lepcis Magna, the so-called West Gate dedicated by Avilius Castus. It was built a decade after the arch at Oea for Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus and was, I suggest, purposely situated on the road leading to Oea, as a marker of the continuing rivalry between these cities. It is reasonable to assume that Avilius Castus was thinking of the arch not far down the same road when he bequeathed money for his monument in Lepcis. While certainly not as ornate as the Oean arch, the West Gate consisted of the same imported marble and showed the influence, if not the actual workmanship, of artists from Asia Minor. That both arches also were dedicated by the proconsul at the time suggests that each donor might have taken advantage of the presence of the Roman official to dedicate expensive Roman-style monuments as a way of demonstrating their own individual resources as well as their town’s loyalty to the emperors. When considered within the full socio-political context of North Africa in the second century, the arch at Oea can be seen not only as a product of inter-city rivalry and local euergetism but also an important component in the rise in the town’s position within the Roman Empire. The complex iconographical program on the arch honors the emperors, endorses Roman military might, and asserts Oea’s support for the Roman Empire.

Bibliography


