The Interaction between Pagan and Christian Motifs as Reflected on the Hellenistic Sculpture in the Eastern Mediterranean
Shaza Gamal Ismail
Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Helwan University

Abstract
Around 330 B.C. The armies of Alexander the Great, (356 B.C. - 323 B.C.), overran the Greek city-states around the Aegean and brought the Classical Greek period to an end. Alexander's armies marched on to conquer the Persian Empire (modern Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan), as well as Syria, parts of Arabia, and Egypt. Within a period of about ten years he ended up with an empire that encompassed western Asia all the way to India. This event marked the beginning of a new pan-Greek era called the Hellenistic period. Hellenistic means "Greek-like" (remember the Greeks called themselves Hellenes). It's pan-Greek because Alexander carried Greek language, ideas, and arts to the lands he conquered. With the rise of Christianity in the Hellenistic words many of the themes and motifs continued to be used on sculpture but with new concepts and representations reflecting the new faith. This article will focus on Hellenistic sculpture and the talented artists who succeeded to keep their art in a way that would please.

Keywords: Pergamum, Sfumato, sculpture in the round, historical relief, Antioch, pictorial relief.

Introduction
The Hellenistic period was a cosmopolitan age. It encompassed Greeks, Persians, Jews, Armenians, Egyptians, Arabs, Celts and many other peoples. These culturally and racially diverse peoples adopted Greek realistic figural arts and an appreciation for human achievement, but they didn't have the same attachment to idealization of figures and athletic subjects. Instead of cool rational thought, Hellenistic peoples wanted drama and variety of art.

It is always interested to look into Hellenistic sculpture from an angel that will help to understand better its different characteristics. Lots of scholars worked hard on this but hardly any who was interested to analyze through its relations with a later style of art with a complete different, political and religious circumstances. The article will try to explore this side and to answer the question of then continuation of many of the themes and concepts despite the dramatic changes of the situation. Hellenistic Sculpture can be divided into three main phases, inspite of this division some pieces of art, especially sculpture, are hard to date.

The First Phase (300 BC- 250 BC)
This is considered a transitional phase. The revolutionary attitude of the artists appears side by side with the previous style of sculpture. The statue of Eutychides, the Tyche of Antioch, is to be considered a good example of the sculpture of this period. It was made shortly after the foundation of the city in 300 BC. The Tyche is depicted as a female figure seated on a rock. She is draped wearing a crown. The revolutionary attitude is reflected in the symbols of the statue. The crown stands for the fortifications of the city. She is carrying in her left hand a wheat sheaf as a symbol of fertility of the land. A child is swimming beneath her feet, symbolizing the river Orontes. The new theme in this statue is clearly reflected in the personification of the city. The nature of the whole scene is considered an innovation of the art of the period, (Stewart, 2014).
The second phase (220 BC-10 BC)
Its dramatic scenes characterize this phase. The emotional representations mainly belong to this phase. These scenes are perfectly represented on funerary relief. One of the most dramatic scenes dating back to this phase is marble group statue of Gaul and his wife. It can be dated to the beginning of the third century BC. The defeated Gaul preferred to commit suicide rather than surrender. He is doing this after killing his wife, preventing her from becoming a slave. The main characteristics of this period are reflected in the twisting position and the exaggerated representation of the muscles especially in the torso. In addition, the high drama of the moment can be easily recognized, (Stewart, 2008).

The third phase (100 BC-100 AD)
This phase witnesses a revival of Greek classical sculpture. A good example is the marble statue of the two citizens’ names Cleopatra and Dioskorides on the island Delos.

Figure 1: Statue dated to around 1400 BC. It is considered a standard type of conservative appearance, a classical calm and control, (Pedley, 1998).


However, early scholars questioned the description of the art of this period as neo classical simply characterized by the copying of the many early Greek works of sculpture in the Roman world. They mixed the portraits of the Roman emperors with their realistic style. It was not so common for the Roman emperors to accept the classical Greek style of art with its idealism and on the other hand to represent themselves in the realistic style. It might have happened that the art of this period was affected by that of the classical phase but still with the new conceptions of realism. This can be deduced from some examples dating back to this era comprising both the classical ideal style side by side with the realistic one. There are two examples, which reflect clearly this method of work. The first one is a representation of two freedmen, in relief dating back to the first century AD. In this relief one of them, Demetrius, is depicted in the realistic style of the Republic while Philonicus is in the classical style. Another example is a grave relief of Lucius in Ampudius Philomus with his wife and daughter. While the husband is shown in the
realistic style, the wife and the daughter seem to be in the classical style of art with the Augustan coiffure. In some cases the works of sculptures of this period were called Neo-Attic art. This describes the works of the Athenians in the classical style that had been carried on in Attica during the Hellenistic period. Most of the artists followed this Athenian style even if some of them were from different other places such as Paros, Ephesos, Miletos and Aphrodidias in Caria, (Havelock, 1971).

It can be documented that the art of the period extending from the first century BC to the first century AD is not purely a neo-classical art. Though some elements and motifs were copied from earlier styles of art, which created a new style that might be known as neo Hellenistic art. This style of art does not only refer to sculpture but also to the different media of painting, metal, pottery, terra cotta and statuettes, (Zanker, 2004).

The Styles of Hellenistic Sculpture
There were various styles for sculpture in the round, which were spread all over the Hellenistic world. These can be summarized as follows:

I. Sfumato Style
This style has been associated with Alexandria where a great number of its works exist. The delicate lines, soft transitions and clear and clam expressions characterize it, (O'Donnell, 2011).

II. Pergamum Style
It was called after the name of the kings of Pergamum as being dedicated to them. The kind of sculpture shows more active scenes, lively actions and different expressions. It is marked by the existence of several contradictions within the same work of art, (Evans, 2012).

III. The Traditional Style
It was influenced by the traditions of the Greek style of art whether in subjects, positions of the human body, attitudes and compositions.
These styles were not confined to Alexandria, Pergamum and Greece but also appear in all the Hellenistic places such as Asia Minor, northern Africa and southern Italy. There were not any special schools for artists in certain regions but artists themselves used to travel all around the Hellenistic world carrying on their works.
Earlier Greek statuettes and relief are rather different from the larger works of sculpture, during the different periods of Greek art. In the Hellenistic period this is not the case. The different subjects and the modelling were very similar to the large sculptures of this period. The material used for this kind was mainly bronze. Different real figures of human beings were represented. Examples of these were musicians, a hunchback, an emaciated man, a dancer, a beggar, an old peasant woman and an archer. Besides, there were the mythological scenes. In this period their movements and attitudes characterized them. Besides the bronze there were other materials, which were Alexander the Great frequently used such as wood. This was the case of the statue of Alexander the Great in gilt wood. It dates back to the third century BC and is now exhibited in the Louvre museum. Alexander the Great is represented standing in a restless pose with his head turned to one side. Other materials were used in sculpture as well such as beeswax. Plato and other writers made comments on the use of the wax stating that keroplasts (modellers in wax) were parallel to the koroplasts (makers of terra cotta statuettes). These wax statues were mainly used for votive, children’s toys, figures used for magic, counters for table games and so on. Few remains of these works still exist such as female head measuring about three quarters of an inch from Alexandria. It is now displayed in New York. It was a part of a statuette of
Aphrodite dating back to the Hellenistic age, some remains of the black colour still exist, (Ritcher, 1967).

**The Main Characteristics of Hellenistic Sculpture**

1- **Directness**

This feature enables the Greeks to concentrate on the important points in the works of sculpture rather than looking for unnecessary minor details. This helped the viewer to easily understand the main points of the statue instead of attracting his attention to other subsidiary elements. Through these works several observations could be identified with no inscriptions whatsoever. In some statues the anatomical structure was emphasized. This is to be shown in the statue of Apollo at Melos. All the members of the body are depicted giving the impression of a complete human being who can move and live. This was one of the main characteristics of Greek sculpture during the different phases, (Karoglu, 2016).

2- **Liveliness**

Their love of knowledge and learning was clearly reflected on their works of art. The Greek sculptor tried to solve some problems related to the static representations of the earlier statues. Even for the Egyptian artists with his works of outstanding characteristics, he was not able to solve many of these problems and his idea of anatomy remained primitive. As for the Greek artists, they made experiments in depicting the human body in different attitudes and movements. This was applied to the different media of art and to sculpture whether in round or relief.

3- **Feeling the Beauty**

The feeling of beauty in sculpture was the main reason for one of its most distinctive characteristics, which is idealism. Their high feeling for beauty is clearly identified in the words of Socrates to the artist Parrhasios as follows: “When you want to represent beautiful figures since it is not easy to find everything without a flaw in a single human being, do not then collect from a number what is beautiful in each, so that the whole body may appear beautiful”

The important factor in idealism is its simplification. The artist believed that the representation of a human body as a work of art must overcome the multiform and restless quality in nature and create a unity. The Greek artist inherited from the Egyptian artist the idea of relief as was described by Hildebrand.

The figure and the surrounding space were sculptured with the same block. Another way of expressing beauty in sculpture was “the beauty of the contour”. The first thing, which attracts the viewer, was the well expressed outline of the Greek statue. It was not limited to the whole figure but also to all the minor details of the statue. These details comprise the oval of the face, the eyelids, and the curve of the lips, the muscles and even the folds of drapery.

**Functions of the Hellenistic Sculpture**

**First: Religious Purposes**

One of the main functions of Greek sculpture was the fulfillment of religious purposes. Most of the works of sculpture were placed inside temples. These were used as pediment groups, friezes or arkroteria. It was used also for the cult statues of different deities and for votive. Statues and relief were dedicated in sanctuaries.

**Second: Celebrating Victories**

Erecting statues in the athletic contest to celebrate victories. These statues were placed in public places and in the sacred enclosures where the games used to take place. They were
dedicated to the different gods such as Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, etc…Most of these statues were nude which reflect the ideal representations of human beings, (Steiner, 2002).

Third: Commemorative Sculptures
These statues, which are commonly used nowadays, were popular amongst the Greeks as well. A significant victory can be celebrated by the erection of a statue or a group. Some examples for this is the Nile of Paionios at Olympia, or the bronze Athena of Phidias on the Akropolis. Besides these public uses of sculpture, there were the private ones as well. The most common private use of sculpture among the Greeks was the gravestones. These were used in earlier periods of Greek art. They include both sculptures in the round and relief in sculpture. The representation of the deceased either alone or with relatives is considered one of the most touching works of Greek art, (Ritcher, 1950).

As for Roman sculpture the function was mainly political as much as being an artistic work of art. It started with the statues of Augustus in the first century to ensure the authority and power within the empire. His statues were worshipped during his lifetime and used as cult statues placed in temples after his death. Through the following centuries the Roman emperors had their statues made on the same basis as those of Augustus. There were some modifications due to the change of their responsibilities or the several wars, (Lawrence, 1972).

Hellenistic Sculpture in the works of classical and Modern Scholars
I-Classical Scholars
It seems interesting to go through the works of classical writers and their description of the Hellenistic sculpture as well as their methods of dividing it chronologically. They pointed out the main characteristics of each period and made their own comments.

The Early Hellenistic Period (323 BC-250 BC)
The School of Lysippos
One of the most important artists of this period was Lysippos. He had many pupils and followers of his school of art. His school was characterized by its works of sculpture of commemorative monuments, portraits, historical subjects and colossal figures.
Pliny described this school, as follows 34.66 “Lysippos left behind sons and pupils who were renowned artists’ Daippos. Boedas and above all Euthykrates. Although the last mentioned, having imitated the method of his father’s rather than his elegance, chose to find favor through the austere genre (of sculpture) rather than the pleasant, (Ridgway, 2000).

The Middle Hellenistic Period (250 BC-150 BC)
The School of Pergamum
The Kingdom of Pergamum had its own political and artistic representation from the middle of the third century BC (241 BC-197 BC) under the rule of King Attalos L. There were several battles between 236 BC and 228 BC. These battles ended with the defeat of the Gauls and settlement in Asia Minor as well as the coalition of the Seleucid armies. As a commemoration many works of sculpture were devoted to the subject representing Pergamenes as the leaders of the Greek sculpture. This was mentioned by several scholars such as Pliny, Diodoros, Tatian. As for the Pausanias he gave a detailed description of the representation of this event through the work of art as follows: “By the south wall (of the Athenian Acropolis) Attalos dedicated the legendary war of the giants. Those who lived in the area of Thrace and the isthmus of Pallene, the battle of Athenians against the Amazons and their exploit against the Persians at Marathon and the destruction of the Gauls in Mysia, each figure being about two cubits in height.
The Late Hellenistic Period (150 BC- 100 AD)
According to the classical writers the artists of this period whether Hellenistic or Romans had the desire to imitate the works of the classical period. This was the case for most of the artists of the period. Merely Damphon of Messene, Pausanias and Pasiteles accepted this theory.

II- Modern Scholars
In modern times much work has been done with the main interest focusing on Greek and Hellenistic sculpture. This started in the nineteenth century AD and through the twentieth century a huge number of books and articles focused on the subject from different points.

These points can be summarized as follows
A. Studying a huge number of masterpieces of Greek sculpture whether belonging to museums’ collections or within the various publications
B. A descriptive study of the different literary sources describing the Hellenistic sculptures
C. Having a good idea about the development of Hellenistic art. This was carried on mainly through the archaeological evidence.

The main attempts of modern scholars in studying Hellenistic sculpture can be identified through the works of reference carried on by Becker’s. Besides, some general works were of great use to this field such as the works of Lippold’s. Some of these works were based on literary sources besides giving their own point of view concerning either characteristics or the phases of their art. One of the remarkable examples of this was the work of Winckelman Geschichte Der Kunst des Altertums in 1764 available in the new edition of W. Senff edition, (Werinar, 1964). In his work he was not much interested in the style of the artists or identifying the art itself. He focused mainly on the extent that these artists had reached in idealism. He divided the phases of this art in a different way starting from the older style going to the high or grand style and ending with the beautiful style and the style of the imitators. One of the first major catalogues of ancient sculpture was the one published by Enino Quino Visoonti (1751-1818).

Through studying several works of sculpture he was able to make a wide range of comparison between several works, thus deducing the style and conventions of the Greek art in general and Greek sculpture in particular. The first comprehensive study in modern times of the surviving literary evidence about Greek artists was the work of Brunn in his dissertation Artificum Liberae Graeciae Tempora in 1843. One of the modern handbooks of Greek sculpture is the work of Beck the Geschichte Der Grieschischen Plastik, in the second half of the nineteenth century. His work is different from the others in the sense of giving a great importance to the literary sources describing the monuments. As for the second half of the nineteenth century AD there was a short period of decline in the works of modern scholars related to the Hellenistic sculpture. This was due to the lack of the examples.

The only new available documents were engravings, or wood cuts of drawings. This was never sufficient to carry on a book or a series of books relevant to the subject. In recent years it revived again with the efforts of many scholars. The study of Graeco Roman sculpture us still to be considered a fruitful context.

There are still several questions to be answered as well as several branches and motifs to be explained. This might comprise as well the Graeco Roman sculpture as being influenced by its predecessors as well as artists’ effect on the latest periods of art. The study of Graeco Roman sculpture is still to be considered a fruitful context. This might
The types of Hellenistic sculpture
I Portrait sculpture
These sculptures were either bust or full length statues. At the beginning they were under the late classical and Hellenistic influence until the end of the second century AD. During this period there was still a requirement for sculpturing portraits of the famous Greeks. As for the Romans later on these portraits had their important role in serving as a biography and reflects the man’s career. Thus, it was mostly linked with the funeral rites of the deceased. These busts were sometimes used instead as masks kept at home or used in funerals.
A good example of this is the head of a young man who lived around 155 AD in the Antonine Era of the Roman Empire. The head is carved in the round acting as an example of a very high standard quality of beauty. This beauty is reflected by the unique technique of carving. All the details are perfectly expressed including the wrinkles around the eyes, the lines around the eyebrows and the eyelids, (Bilitz, 1959).

II Sculpture in the round other than portraits
Throughout the Hellenistic period the representation of gods and goddesses were predominant. Ever since the first century BC to the end of the second century AD copying statues in marble from those made out of bronze was popular in various places. These were to be found in Greece, Asia Minor, northern Africa, southern Gaul and Spain. As for Egypt, the non Graeco Roman gods were influenced by the Hellenistic and later on by the Roman style of sculpture. The religious cult of Egypt was spread all over the Roman Empire, thus affected by the sculpture as well.
There were some new inventions such as Serapis being depicted dangling forelocks and the Roman military dress of Horus. With the spread of Christianity this style of sculpture in the round was replaced by only one scene that a shepherd carrying a sheep on his shoulders. Though the main theme was inherited from a pagan origin, it was used in Christianity with a different meaning. In Christianity it stands for Christ, an apostle or any Christian, (Nortjé, 1996). For paganism of Arcahic and classical Greek it stands for figures as the Moschophorus (calf bearer) and Hermes Kriophoros (ram bearer). In Hellenistic and Roman sculpture and painting it stood for the season’s spring or winter and sometimes for paradise.

III Historical Relief in stone and marble
The term historical here refers to the sculpture in stone and marble of official character. Those include representations of public events past or present, legendry or actual from the time of the early Greeks and continued through history marking its influences and characteristics on later works of art throughout the different parts of the world. It includes as well the narrative and symbolic themes. There was always a mixture in this kind of relief between real and ideal, divine and human, natural and supernatural. As for the decoration on sarcophagi there were two main types of composition that were applied generally on monuments dating back to the end of the third century AD. The first is the static, centralized type, in which the imperial figure appears at the center in a frontal position. The second type was that applied in the processional and battle scenes in a lively, naturalistic attitude. The choice between these two types depends on the nature of the subject represented, (Massegglia, 2015). The idea of frontality continued to the end of the
fourth century AD. A good example of this is the relief on the base of an obelisk set up by Theodosuis in 390 AD in Constantinople. The emperor, his family, his officials and soldiers are all depicted in a frontal position. The central position of the emperor as the main point of interest in the scene continued in the Christian ear but in different theme following the new faith. Christ was the predominant figure in the center of the scene within the art of the Christian church.

IV Funerary Relief
This type comprises the following:

A. Pictorial Relief
This had a decorative function in public and private buildings. Examples comprise rectangular marble panels with the scenes from mythology, daily life or nature.

B. Religious Relief
This includes the religious scenes on altars and votive tablets with figures of deities or scenes of sacrifice spread all over the Hellenistic world. As for sculpture in the round, the most distinctive works of relief are those with oriental provincial cult. As for Egypt, there is a good example found in the Vatican on a marble panel. This scene represents two priests and two priestesses of goddess Isis. They are depicted in a religious procession wearing their robes and carrying religious emblems symbol of Egyptian worship.

C. Figured Capitals and Columns
The plastered decorated columns were commonly used throughout the Hellenistic period. These figures included human heads, gods and goddesses, busts, animals and beasts. They were mostly carved in high relief.

D. Relief with floral motifs
The different kinds of floral motifs, fruit, and acanthus and corn ears were main themes of the Pregamum School of art. The artists of this school were greatly impressed by the natural representations of the different forms of plants. The so called “peopled scroll” was popular all over the Roman Empire whether in the East or West. This were the figures represented either vertically or horizontally in the middle of which the lions or the spirals are depicted as well as complete or parts of different kinds of animals. This continued to be used to the late antique Egypt in sculpture, metal, mosaics and paintings, (Cimok, 2004).

E. Funerary Relief
a. Gravestones
The two methods of burial in the Hellenistic period were cremation and inhumation. There is hardly any stela that survived earlier than the second half of the first century BC. Some stelae were carved on one side only with religious, mythological, professional or daily life scenes. On some of the civilian stelae there are business scenes of all kinds, as for the later stelae dating back to the third century AD they took the form of lofty pillars.

b. Sarcophagi
Wealthy people of the Hellenistic period were usually buried in expensive marble sarcophagi. This was confined to those practicing inhumation rather than cremation. The sarcophagi were usually decorated. In the East they originated in Asia Minor. They were carved from the quarries of Proconnesus near the southern entrance to the Sea of Marmara especially for the markets in Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt. They were decorated on four sides with floral motifs and bunches of grapes. As for the Christian Sarcophagi they were very similar to the pagan ones except for the subjects which were replaced by biblical
themes, (Davies, 1999). They can be easily distinguished from the pagan and philosophers sarcophagi by the presence of figures as the Orans and the good shepherd. Besides, there were other works of sculpture which were not commonly used in the East as altars and mausolea.

**Conclusion**

There is no border line between the different phases of art throughout history. Each and every period was influenced by the art of the predecessors as well as it played its role in shaping the characteristics and style of the later periods. Although the Hellenistic style of art flourished in the third and second century AD, yet hundreds of years later it is still there but with minor changes due to the historical, political and religious incidents that influenced the world. Egypt was never isolated and the interaction between the people and the surrounding countries especially the Eastern Mediterranean always had its positive impact. This impact was reflected in social as well as economic life and it created more common interests which were reflected as a distinguished civilization that lived out a lot of major political issues.

The rise of Christianity in this part of the world and the rapid spread of the new faith did not contradict with the existing art and culture. On the contrary it ended up with a new style of art which was considered a distinctive interaction between pagan themes and motifs on one side and Christian interpretation on the other side, making the point clear that culture survive and continue as long as there is a mutual understanding between nations sharing lots of common themes and concepts. The new convertors found their way through some of the features of the pagan art and succeeded to use it in a way that would reflect their thoughts and ideas without making the others think there are any major changes between their hereditary culture and the new changes in the society. There are several examples confirming this concept such as the Greek myth as the myth of Aphrodite, Daphne, Leda and the swan. In addition to their mythical characters such as Orpheus and Hercules beside the decorative themes and motifs. The reshaping of the Greek style of art in later periods was not an innovation in Egypt but the way it was applied was considered a unique style and an innovation in its application suitable to the ideas, thoughts and beliefs of the Egyptian multi-cultural society of the period.

**Bibliography**


