consone alla sua classe d’età, che regolamentano il rito di sangue del sacrificio così come la violenza rispettabile della caccia e dell’agone, e istruiscono al bere e alla signoria sull’ebbrezza, si contrappone, in una logica visuale fatta – come spesso accade nella pittura vascolare – di contrasti oltre che di parallelismi, tutta una galleria di exempla negativi, di violazioni rovinose e paradigmatiche.

Al di fuori del campo specifico delle hydriai ceretane, sembrano potersi analizzare più o meno nello stesso modo anche le immagini di un maestro etrusco della tecnica delle figure nere coevo (o appena più recente), il Pittore del Vaticano.

La Bonaudo rileva infatti (pp. 161–163), nel programma dello stamnos di Vienna (fig. 93), un’estensione dell’esperienza della centauromachia a ogni segmento in cui si articola il kōmos della città: in altre parole, una totale condivisione, allargata anche ai più giovani e perfino alle donne, della norma che dà metaforica battaglia a tutti i mostri anomici. Così, aggiungiamo, sulla hydria (appunto) del Museo di Toledo, che è un’opera dello stesso artigiano, i giovani cittadini, identificati da un’acconciatura che ricorda il krobylos, osservano, si può dire, a distanza (cioè dal collo del vaso), la spaventevole e meritata metamorfosi dei pirati (raffigurati sul corpo).


Pavia

Maurizio Harari


In 1995, Annarena Ambrogi (henceforth AA) published a monograph on the ‘Vasche di età romana in marmi bianchi e colorati’). It dealt with Roman stone basins of an oblong shape, whereas in the book under review she examines objects of the same class, but of circular shape. Besides the basins themselves, the labra, she also studies the single central support which carried them. Being the first comprehensive study of this class of monuments, one picks up the book with interest. It should be noted at the outset that the Italian term ‘marmi colorati’ applies not only to ‘marble’ in the usual sense (nonfoliated rock resulting

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1 M. Martelli (ed.), La ceramica degli Etruschi. La pittura vascolare, Novara 1987, n. 132.
from the metamorphism of limestone) but also to other stones such as porphyry, granite and alabaster.

After a Foreword and an Introduction (13–16) defining the basins studied, the main text (17–174) is divided into six chapters on Prototypes and Functions (17–72), Typology of the labra (73–93), Typology of the Supports (95–112), Materials (113–135), Production Systems and Customers (137–166) and Chronology (167–174). There follows a catalogue of the 192 labra (175–344) and the 272 labra supports (345–410) on which the study is based. Two appendices (411–419) catalogue respectively 5 labra fragments and 9 labra now lost but documented by literary and visual sources. The book ends with a list of bibliographic abbreviations, indices by material and by present location of the catalogued labra and supports and finally by plates in b/w respectively of the labra and of the supports. An appendix to the plates has been added with photographs of three of the fragments presented in catalogue appendix I.

From the Forword the reader learns that AA has also set herself the task of tracing as far as possible the post-antique history of the objects. The short Introduction defines the class of objects to be studied and points out what is thereby excluded – mainly sophisticated marble vases of krater or skyphos shape and circular, flat marble tables provided with a slightly raised edge and a central support. Chronologically, the Late Republican Period is given as the upper limit, and for this period AA has chosen to look only at finds from the 'West' to the exclusion of, for example, similar objects from Late Hellenistic Delos. For the imperial Roman period the geographical horizon is that of the empire as a whole.

The 'supports' are given only three lines (13) in the Introduction. The criteria by which AA identifies a support as being for a labrum rather than some other object carried by a single central support are not discussed until one reaches pp. 100, 102 (see below).

The Introduction does not offer the review of earlier research necessary for an understanding of the author’s point of departure and the problems the work is intended to deal with.

The first chapter on Prototypes and Functions (17–72) deals with a range of topics: ancient terminology and ancient sources on function (17–20); a review of the history of Greek prototypes of the shape and its functions (loutéron 22–30; perrithantéron 30–34; summary 35–36). There follow sections on the function of labra in Roman public and private contexts (36–71), sacral and profane, for hygienic, therapeutic, decorative and practical purposes, such as water supply from fountains. AA’s treatment of these matters reflects received opinion, as documented in her often copious notes. The latter are evidence of the author’s commendably wide reading, but there is little independent discussion. In so far, there is little to disagree with.

The chapter has failings which characterize all the chapters in the book. The reader experiences a difficulty of orientation. Despite the variety of topics treated of in this long chapter, there are no titled subdivisions to guide the reader and the table of contents is also restricted to chapter headings. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that there is no proper index apparatus (i.e. of names, subjects, monuments other than those in the catalogue, catalogue numbers as mentioned in the text, catalogue numbers by type and a general index). Reading and using the book is laborious.
The book could have been shorter. Fully 15 pages are for example devoted to ‘prototipi greci’ (loutéria and perirrhantéria) in all media, from Archaic to Late Hellenistic times. AA does not explain why she goes to such lengths, nor does she demonstrate how, where and when the form was received by the Romans.

Digressions are frequent. Thus pp. 41–43 on labra in Roman private baths where AA takes us through a brief history of such baths, touching only summarily on the appearance of labra. Here as in many other places the reader is offered detailed notes that seem out of proportion to the subject of the book (e.g. 42, n. 158).

The organization of the text content is generally confusing, as when p. 41 opens with the information that Roman public baths make their appearance in the late 3rd century BC. The reader would expect this to be the subject of the following text, but it deals instead with private baths and AA then goes on to describe the function of labra in other domestic contexts. Only on pp. 52–57 do we return to labra in public baths.

The documentation offered for statements in the text are often open to criticism. One of many instances: to show the function of labra for ‘igenici lavaggi preliminari e abluzioni rinfrescanti’ (pp. xx–xx) the reader is referred to five labra in the catalogue; of these only two (L. 65 and L.84) may be definitely located, respectively in a frigidarium and an apodyterium. Neither here nor elsewhere in the book is the reader provided with a plan showing the position of labra whose precise location is known.

There follows a chapter on the typology of the labra (73–94), whose «tettonica» AA describes as being in every respect analogous to earlier Greek loutéria and perirrhantéria. She distinguishes between seven types defined by their form (I «a vasca», 74–75; II «a bacile», 75–76; III «a catino», 76–77; IV «a conca», 77; V «a coppa», 77–78; VI «a bacino», 78; VII «a piazzo», 78–80). An eighth type, the «tipo lussuoso» (80–85), is defined not by its form, but rather by its costly material (mainly porphyry), elaborated profiles and decorative elements.

Following Delbrueck, AA outlines the ‘generic dependence’ of this ‘luxury type’ on Late Hellenistic toreutics. Two ‘typological plates’ (79; 81) show a profile drawing of each type, ‘ideal’, rather than of specific pieces in the catalogue.

The choice of «tettonica» (‘form’ or ‘structure’) as the basic criterion for a typology is correct. However, some of the descriptive terms given to the various types lack precision because they are very frequently used as synonyms in AA’s text (e.g. 47, «bacino» about L. 165 of type III «a catino»; 49, «bacini» and 49, «vasche» as synonymous with labra).

The criteria for establishing type VIII seem debatable. Typologically, the labra in question should rather be understood as enriched versions of standard types – e.g. L.130 in Copenhagen as belonging to type IV.

The chapter concludes (86–94) with an interpretation of the various decorative elements found on the labra. These elements fall into two main categories: ‘structural’, in the form of fluting or scalloping of the exterior and/or interior sides of the vessels and elaborate profiles, in some cases enriched with ionic cymata on the lip, and ‘plastic elements’. Of the latter, some are figurative (heads of animals1, bearded heads, gorgoneia), others vegetal. In one case (89, L. 147), AA regards the relief representation of a child on the interior umbilicus of a labrum as being a portrait of a boy dedicated to the service of Isis.

1 On the labrum in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, the animals are not rams, but billy-goats, as stated in the museum catalogue volume cited by AA.
I cannot offer a critical comment on the typology suggested by AA, nor on her interpretation of the decorative elements – because the artefacts under study are not properly documented in the book.

In mobilizing such objects as labra and their supports for study, one must acquire not only relevant photographs of a good quality, but first and foremost measured drawings showing the profile and section of the object; sectional drawings of the central umbilicus should also be included.2

A drawing of this type is found only once in this work (512, L.19). Without such documentation, the reader cannot judge the validity of the author’s written catalogue descriptions nor the typology suggested on that basis in the chapter here under discussion. The book cannot function as a reference source for excavators wishing to identify and date fragments of labra.

Where no drawings are provided, good photographs may be of some help. Such help is not at hand in this book.

The photographic documentation is, for one thing, very incomplete. One may take as an example AA’s presentation of labra of type I «a vasca» (74–75). Of the 31 pieces involved, 5 are not illustrated, 6 are not shown in profile and of 22 no photograph of the interior (inside of rim; central umbilicus) is provided.

In the case of some pieces or details of pieces not illustrated, references to illustrations are provided by the catalogue texts. This requires that the reader assemble a considerable apparatus to consult the work. Is this reasonable, not least in view of the exorbitant price of the volume?

When it comes to a critical assessment of AA’s interpretation of the decorative elements, the situation is the same. The reader is confronted with lengthy descriptions, both in the chapter under consideration (as 90–92, on L.8), and in the catalogue (as 184–185, also on L.8). But the photographs provided do not allow the reader to follow AA’s stylistic appraisal (e.g. the purported portrait on L. 147 as shown on p. 562; the bearded head on L. 149 shown from above on p. 564).

This flaw in AA’s work also makes it impossible to assess the validity of the typology of labra supports suggested in her chapter on the subject (95–112), comprising six main types defined by their shapes, each presented in ‘ideal’ profile drawings (99, 101, 103).

Of the supports of type IV «a rocchetto», comprising 17 pieces, 6 are not illustrated.3

The reader’s difficulty in consulting the photographic documentation of this type of support is increased by the fact that in the case of S. 47 it is shown (591) with S. 137 but we are not told which is which, while S. 33 is found under and together with S. 13 (587), again without indication of which is which. The reader is not informed of these arrangements.

Very many of the photographs are substandard (e.g. 605, showing supports S. 113 – S. 120 and S. 241 – S. 244 among various other objects, but without identifying numbers, and of such small format small size and low quality as to make the photograph of little use anyway).

After having presented her suggested typology of supports, AA deals (100, 102) with the difficult question of distinguishing labrum supports from supports

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2 As for example R. Delbrueck, op. cit., 175, fig. 78 (L.4).

3 S. 52, 88, 130, 203, 204, 263. All are unpublished and illustrations therefore not available elsewhere.
designed to carry other objects, such as table tops, statues and the like. She concludes that unless a support is preserved together with its *labrum*, it is impossible to establish its original function with certainty – and that she has therefore chosen to include in her catalogue all supports for which a function as *labrum* support cannot be excluded (†).

It must also be mentioned that this chapter contains copious summaries (106–112) of the typologies proposed for the supports from Delos and Pompeii by W. Deonna1 and E. Pernice2 respectively, as well as that given by C. F. Moss3 for Roman table supports of columnar shape and by F. Slavazzi4 for Roman supports from Cisalpine Italy. The necessary critical discussion of these typologies, and, not least, their relation to AA’s own typology is not to be found.

The chapter on ‘Materials’ (113–135) opens with three lines on the materials mentioned by ancient authors as having been used for *labra*. This is followed by a presentation of three bronze *labra* from Pompeii with detailed descriptions.

In presenting the materials used, AA starts (115–119) with the most common, white marbles, proceeding to grey marbles and breccias, local stones and then (119–135) to the more rarely used, coloured marbles and related stones as defined by the Italian term «marmi colorati». In each case, the presentation comprises the use of the stone in relation to the types of *labra* suggested by AA and then the distribution of the *labra* made of the material. In some cases, AA adds remarks on the contexts and probable function of the pieces. The picture which develops from this presentation shows that the rarer the stone and the larger the dimensions, the wealthier is the location (Rome, Ostia) and the client (often imperial for porphyry), and the more prestigious is the context (public spaces such as imperial baths and the fora of Rome).

AA notes the relative absence of *labra* of this latter kind in the Vesuvian towns – white marble and small dimensions are dominant and the context generally domestic; whereas they are more frequent at Ostia, also mostly in domestic contexts, indicating a generally more affluent urban society.

As might be expected, local stones of relatively low quality are limited in their distribution to localities in the vicinity of the quarries.

Methodologically, a discussion of ancient literary evidence would have formed a useful point of reference for the analysis of the archaeological material. The lack of an index of the *labra* by type, with information on material, provenance and dimensions, is felt. A map showing the location of quarries and find spots should have been provided.

In the chapter on ‘Systems of Production and Customers’ (‘Sistemi produttivi e committenza’, 137–166), AA first describes the organization of the production of *labra* and supports (137–144), basing herself on the work done on Roman marble *trapezophoroi* by C. F. Moss.5 The picture which emerges is that of an import of marble from various quarries around the Mediterranean, either as raw

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1 W. Deonna, Delos XVIII (1938)
2 E. Pernice, Die hellenistische Kunst aus Pompeji (1932)
3 C. F. Moss, Roman Marble Tables (1988)
5 As note 3 above.
blocks, or in the form of half-finished and completely finished pieces. The majority of workshops were located in Latium and Campania, in the proximity of both the principal ports of entry for marble imports (Pozzuoli, and, increasingly, Ostia/Portus) and the most important markets for marble products. The workshops were not in themselves specialized, but produced rather a range of objects manufactured by specialists within the workshop. AA sees Delian workshops of the 2nd and 1st century BC as providing the model for such organization (143–144) as well as for the objects produced. She finds it probable that craftsmen from Delos moved to Italy after the sack of Delos in 69 BC.

In order ‘better to understand, who produced the labra and who the customers were’, AA then (145–148) examines the sources for and working of some selected coloured stones – porphyry, giallo antico and pavonazzetto.

Being largely a paraphrasing of work done by Delbrueck, Gregarek and Pensabene, this examination contributes disappointingly little.

She proceeds to reconstruct the production process of labra and supports (149–152), involving six stages, from the preliminary working at the quarries to the finished object as produced in workshops. For each stage, pieces in AA’s catalogue are mobilized as evidence. She concludes that the production processes followed ‘fixed parameters, using standard models’ and that the organization of production was ‘quasi industrial’.

A convincing demonstration of the use of such a mode of production, including a definition of the terminology used, would have been of considerable interest.

The section (158–164) on the distribution of labra and their supports and on the location of the main workshops (Rome; Portus/Ostia; Campania), is followed by just two pages (164–166) on the probable customers based on the provenance, material, dimensions and technical quality of the objects. The content echoes what has been said earlier in this chapter, and in the chapter on materials.

The final chapter (167–174) deals with the vital question of the ‘Chronology’ of the labra and their supports. AA does not explain by what method she intends to proceed, and indeed this reviewer is unable to find any evidence of method. The reader is instead confronted with an incoherent review of labra and supports which have, or may have, a contribution to make towards establishing a chronology. To the extent that AA may have formed an idea of a chronology, she does not express it, except to point out (173) that labra made of the most prized marbles belong mainly to the ‘middle empire’ as a result of Hadrian’s efforts to monumentalize the «complessi d’acqua» in Rome.

Fully 244 pages are devoted to the catalogue (labra 175–344; supports 345–410; appendices I and II 411–419). The primary criterion for the organization is the material used, starting with the «marmi colorati». Within each material group, the pieces are presented topographically: First (with places of keeping in alphabetical order), pieces outside Italy, then those in Italy, and finally those of Ostia, the Vatican State and Rome.

There is no introduction to the catalogue with a description of this organization. This is given in the Foreword (9), but there is no cross reference. For the study of the use of marble and other stones, the catalogue structure may be convenient. For most readers, an
alphabetical organization by city of present location would seem preferable, bringing closely associated pieces into immediate contact with each other.

Each catalogue entry is headed by basic information (present location, provenience, material, dimensions and state of preservation). This is followed by the catalogue text and finally a bibliography and, where relevant, references to visual sources for the post antique history of a piece such as prints and paintings. In some cases, illustrations accompany the catalogue texts.

The catalogue texts identify the type according to AA, offer descriptions of the objects and suggest a date where possible. For objects in situ, the archaeological context is discussed.

The author's study of the post antique fate of the *labra* is mainly to be found in the catalogue. Under «Provenience», one finds useful, extensive and mostly well annotated presentation of discussions of the circumstances surrounding questions of where and when pieces were discovered (as L. 12). In the main catalogue text, the subsequent history of the objects is traced wherever possible. Not surprisingly, *labra* and supports in Rome, or of metropolitan Roman origin, figure largely, especially those of monumental dimensions and/or of expensive stones. A detailed review of AA's studies in the individual entries is not possible in this context, but they clearly represent the fruit of extensive reading.

AA’s book represents the accumulated results of many years of study. Its value lies in having brought together for the first time what must surely be the majority of existing *labra* and *labra* supports. Her study of the post antique history of these monuments would also seem to be an important contribution. In both these respects, the book will be of use for future studies. It must however in conclusion be said, with regret, that despite her valiant efforts, AA’s book does not succeed in meeting the standards required of a definitive monograph.

Copenhagen

Jan Stubbe Østergaard
