



Summary :

The statue of Artemis of Ephesus was the most brilliant devotional statue in the eastern Mediterranean in the Hellenistic and Roman period. About 100 full-relief or half-relief replicas as well as numerous representations on coins and plentiful references in ancient sources have survived. However, little is known about the shape of the original archaic statue created by the famous sculptor Endius, according to tradition, in the mid-6th century.

Date

Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman period

Geographical Location

Ephesus

1. Introduction

In 550-540 BC, on the occasion of the erection of the [Artemisium](#) in Ephesus by the Lydian king [Croesus](#), the sculptor [Endius](#) must have been asked to make the first wooden devotional statue of Artemis of Ephesus. There is little information about this non-existing statue. Almost all of the 69 full-relief replicas of the Artemis of Ephesus, also known as ‘Multimammia’ and preserved until today, are subsequent to the reign of Hadrian (117-138 AD) and must refer to a Hellenistic original work.¹ The coins indicate that this work must have been earlier than the 3rd century BC.² As a result, it is crucial to know to what extent that Hellenistic original work maintained the shape of the archaic statue.

2. Material and Technique

As for the construction material, although the archaic sources disagree over the exact type of wood used, they agree that the archaic devotional statue of Artemis of Ephesus was made of wood. Pliny³ reports that already in his time there was disagreement over the type of wood used for the statue. Some believed it was made of ebony, while Mucianus, consul of Ephesus for three times, said it was made of vinewood and had not been altered during the seven restorations of the Artemisium. Pliny cites Mucianus again as his source when he states that Endius was the creator of the statue and when he mentions the habit of pouring oil to the joints of the statue so that the wood could remain dry and the joints would not disconnect. Finally, Pliny is surprised by the existence of joints in such a small statue, which should normally have been carved in a single piece of wood. The confusion about the material of the archaic statue of Artemis of Ephesus becomes greater due to other archaic sources. Xenophon⁴ says that he made a replica of the Artemisium for his private sanctuary at Scillus near Olympia, while inside the temple he put a replica of the goddess’ statue made of cypress wood, although, he continues, the original was golden. Xenophon must have meant that the statue was gilded rather than made of solid gold. Vitruvius⁵, finally, reports that the statue of Artemis of Ephesus had been made of cedar wood, an incorruptible material.

3. Creator and Chronology

Apart from Pliny,⁶ the sole ancient source mentioning Endius as the creator of the devotional statue of Artemis of Ephesus is the 2nd c. AD Apologist philosopher [Athenagoras](#).⁷ Because Athenagoras reports the statue of Ephesus along with a sitting statue of Athena in Athens, also made by Endius, some researchers conclude that perhaps the statue of Artemis was in a sitting position.⁸

The date the original statue of Artemis of Ephesus was created has not been accurately defined. The literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence dates the statue from both the late 7th and the mid-6th century BC. Pliny and Athenagoras support that it was Endius who created the statue, which is helpful information about the date of creation. It is known that the above sculptor started



his career in Ionia towards the mid-6th century BC and remained active until the last quarter of the century, when he worked in Attiki. Besides, the alleged date of the mid-6th century BC coincides with the date the Artemisium was built by Croesus.⁹ Furthermore, during the British excavations of the early 19th century in Ephesus, a structure called 'central basis' by the excavators was found inside the temple's cella and on the same axis with it. The famous treasure including the 93 early [Lydian coins](#) and the numerous golden, ivory, clay and bronze offerings was found inside and around this structure, which was in a simple rectangular shape (4.34x2.86 m) consisting of five layers of green schist on a foundation of yellow limestone slabs, with a solid core. The structure dates from around 560 BC and must have been the pedestal of the devotional statue of Artemis inside the goddess' temple.¹⁰ However, there is evidence indicating a much earlier date. According to the Hymn to Artemis by the poet Callimachus,¹¹ it seems that a devotional statue of Artemis had existed in Ephesus in earlier times. The poet reports that the Amazons erected this statue under an oak in Ephesus and used to perform a war dance around the tree. A sanctuary enclosing the statue was also built later. In the Acts of the Apostles¹², the devotional statue of Artemis of Ephesus is said to have been sent by Zeus, which was a common explanation for the origin of old statues. Strabo¹³ says that, when the Phokeans were ready to set sail from Ionia in order to found the colony of Marseilles, an oracle urged them to take a replica of the statue of Artemis of Ephesus with them.¹⁴ Then, Strabo¹⁵ continues saying that the statue of Artemis on the hill of Aventinus in Rome was a replica of the statue of Marseilles.

According to tradition, the colony of Marseilles was founded by the Phokeans in 600 BC. However, a second group of colonists from Phokea is also known to have arrived circa 540 BC. The contemporary Austrian excavations in the area of the subsequent altar of Artemis, to the west of the Hellenistic temple, revealed a small mid-7th c. BC temple, in the place where an earlier devotional statue of Artemis of Ephesus or a respective Eastern deity of nature must have stood.¹⁶ The existence of 7th c. BC anthropomorphic statues is also evidenced by ivory human limbs found during recent excavations,¹⁷ while there is evidence about the existence of another earlier statue of the Geometric period (8th c. BC).¹⁸ The morphological and decorative elements of the type of Artemis of Ephesus that may be dated to the Archaic period, that is, the posture, the small size, wood as construction material, the polos on the head, the overcoat and the cloak suggest that the original statue should be dated to the late 7th c. BC. The clothes, the jewellery and the posture of Artemis of Ephesus were similar to those of the wooden statue of Zeus at [Labraunda](#) of Caria dating from the 7th c. BC.¹⁹ It has been proposed that Endius made only one exact replica of an already existing devotional statue of the 7th c. BC and that the subsequent replicas reflect elements of both the original 7th c. BC statue and Endius' replica.²⁰

As a matter of fact, the agreement of ancient sources on the existence of only one devotional statue of Artemis of Ephesus eliminates the simultaneous existence of two statues, one of the 7th and another of the mid-6th c. BC.

4. Shape and Rituals

It has been supported that the archaic devotional statue of Artemis of Ephesus was sitting, given the specialisation of its creator in this type of statue. As a result, the standing Hellenistic statue reflected in the Roman replicas of Artemis of Ephesus must have been completely different.²¹ However, Pliny²² states that the wooden statue of Artemis of Ephesus remained intact after seven reconstructions of the temple. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the statue, which was repeatedly copied in the Roman years, remained the same as the archaic one: a very simple, standing wooden anthropomorphic statue smaller than the natural size. It has also been suggested that the Roman replicas of Artemis of Ephesus were based on an archaic original work, which was richly decorated in the Hellenistic years before this decoration became permanent in the Roman years. The Roman replicas of the type of Artemis of Ephesus, consequently, reflect elements from the archaic period until the 2nd c. AD.²³

Another indication that the Roman replicas of Artemis of Ephesus represent a wooden original work is the fact that the face and the limbs of several of these marble replicas are carved in a material darker than the clothes, thus imitating the face and the limbs of the wooden original. In addition, the vast majority of the Roman replicas of Artemis of Ephesus are statues smaller than the natural size, as it happened with the archaic wooden statue, according to Pliny. Although the particular decorative details of the Roman replicas of Artemis of Ephesus cannot all be dated to the archaic period, some of the basic characteristics of the posture and the decoration must have been slightly different from the archaic wooden statue. The absence of a characteristic symbol, the position of the arms, which are stretched frontwards on a level with the elbows, and the rigid lower part of the body with the legs in contact with each other are



reminiscent of the archaic sculpture. The polos and the overcoat covering the rear part of the head are also indicative of the archaic sculpture, although the polos of the archaic statue of Artemis of Ephesus must have been higher, with decorated metopes, like the polos worn by a 7th c. BC statuette of Hera from the Heraeum (Heraion) of Samos. The cloak of an archaic wooden statue, that is, the tight garment surrounding the legs of the statue and decorated with imaginary relief animals in rectangular frames in the Roman replicas, must have been like beaten gold lining decorated with imprinted mythical beasts on metopes. The renowned 'breasts' of the Roman replicas of Artemis of Ephesus may have been a wrong interpretation of a garment or a pectoral cover. As quite conclusively suggested lately, they could be bull testicles hanged from the statue, symbolising fertility and revival.²⁴ Similar 'breasts' appeared already from the 4th c. BC in a representation of Zeus Carius of Labranda on a relief from Tegea of Arcadia dating from 351-344 BC.²⁵ Although the archaic origin of this motif cannot be proved, it should not be excluded. The variety of clothes and jewellery of the Roman replicas of Artemis of Ephesus shows that those replicas were based on a statue wearing real and alternating clothes and jewellery, that is, a wooden statue.²⁶

According to a 1st c. BC inscription, there was a procession in Ephesus in honour of [Artemis of Ephesus](#). People carrying various things, such as salt (αλοφόρος), celery (σελινοφόρος), textile (σπειροφόρος) and jewellery (κοσμοφόρος), as well as a singer (μόλπος) participated in the procession.²⁷ Those items, mainly salt and wild celery, relate this procession to a celebration called Δαιτίς in honour of the goddess.²⁸ The ritual had started as a game between Clymene, the daughter of a mythical king of Ephesus, and her female friends, who had prepared for the goddess a bed of celery and herbs and a meal of salt. The meal was offered to the statue of the goddess, which had already been taken to the coast. The goddess asked that the celebration should be repeated once a year. Some researchers believe that before the sacred meal, the statue of Artemis had been washed or purified in the sea. This must have happened following bull sacrifices, when bleeding testicles were hanged from the devotional statue.²⁹

1. The main study on the devotional statue of Artemis of Ephesus, with a complete list of the replicas, has been carried out by Fleischer, R., *Artemis von Ephesos und verwandte Kultstatuen aus Anatolien und Syrien* (Leiden 1973), pp. 1-137. See also Romano, I.B., *Early Greek Cult Images* (Diss. Pennsylvania 1980, Ann Arbor 1982), pp. 236-249. Fleischer, R., 'Artemis Ephesia', *LIMC* 2.1 (Zürich-München 1984), pp. 755-763.
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4. Xen., *An.* 5.3.12.
5. Vitruv., 2.9.13.
6. Plin., *HN* 16.79.
7. Athenag., 17.4.
8. Hogarth, D.G., *Excavations at Ephesus. The Archaic Artemisia* (London 1908), p. 336.
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11. Callimachus, *Hymne to Artemis*, 240-241.
12. Acts of Apostles, 19.35.
13. Strabo, 4.1.4.
14. Seltman, C., 'The Wardrobe of Artemis', *NC* 12 (1952), pp. 33-51, suggested that it was Endius who made the wooden replica taken by the Phokeans to Marseilles.
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18. Muss, U., 'Zur Dialektik von Kultstatuen und Statuetten im Artemision von Ephesos', in Friesinger, H. – Krinzinger, F. (ed.), *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos, Akten des Symposions, Wien 1995* (Wien 1999), pp. 597-603.
19. Fleischer, R., *Artemis von Ephesos und verwandte Kultstatuen aus Anatolien und Syrien* (Leiden 1973), pp. 310-324.
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26. See Fleischer, R., 'Neues zum Kultbild der Artemis von Ephesos', in Friesinger, H. – Krinzinger, F. (ed.), *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos, Akten des Symposions, Wien 1995* (Wien 1999), pp. 605-609.
27. Heberdey, R., 'Vorläufiger Bericht über die Grabungen in Ephesos 1902/3', *JÖAI* 7 (1904), Beiblatt, column 44. Other references to the 'world' of the goddess are included in a Roman inscription (*CIG* II 2963 c, lines 7-8) and in Dio Chr. 31.54.
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