

TORSO OF A PHILOSOPHER

ROMAN, 2ND CENTURY AD
MARBLE

HANDS RESTORED IN MARBLE IN THE 18TH CENTURY,
LEFT ANKLE AND BOTTOM OF THE MANTLE FOLDS RESTORED IN PLASTER.

HEIGHT: 80 CM.

WIDTH: 31 CM.

DEPTH: 27 CM.

PROVENANCE:
FORMER EUROPEAN PRIVATE
COLLECTION SINCE THE 18TH CENTURY
(BASED ON RESTORATION TECHNIQUES).
FORMER COLLECTION OF
EDOUARD GELADAKIS, PARIS, 1912
(WITH A RESTORED HEAD).
THEN BELGIAN PRIVATE COLLECTION.



This sculpture depicts a masculine figure who is standing stable and balanced in a slight contrapposto, left leg forward. He is

wearing a toga, the draped wool garment worn by Roman citizens. Its folds accentuate the movement of his hips. The sculptor was skillfully able to represent the thickness of the drapery while still showing the body below. The toga falls in smooth folds, V shaped over the figure's chest, and is completed by a thick mantle that crosses over his left shoulder and girds his waist, the hem falling over his left arm. The figure is shod in sandals laced at the ankle.

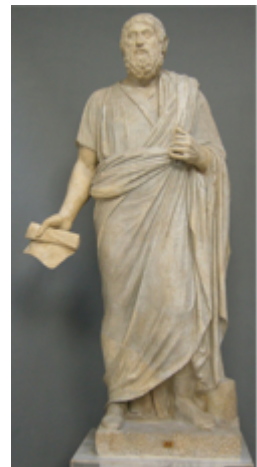


By his calm demeanour and garb, the subject of this sculpture is recognisable as a philosopher or man of letters. The hands holding a roll of parchment are the results of later restorations, from the 18th or 19th century, but further add to this iconography. The standing portraits of men of letters were common in Ancient Rome. Often representing Greek orators or philosophers who had lived a few centuries before, they were particularly valued by the Roman elite who decorated their homes with them to contribute to their own intellectual influence and social status. Placed in their libraries, gardens or corridors, they provided the family and their guests with a topic of conversation, inviting them to discuss historical, political and especially philosophical subjects. One example of such a sculpture is now in Naples (ill. 1), while another, representing Sophocles (ill. 2), is in Rome.



This torso was restored after its discovery, in the 18th or 19th century. Initial restoration work completed the hands and head using marble, then, undoubtedly at a later stage, the right ankle and the lower part of the mantle were repaired with plaster. The restored lower folds of the mantle are now missing, as is the head, but they can be seen in the photograph of the sculpture taken by Emile Espérandieu in 1912 (ill. 3). It shows that the head used, that of a bearded god, was certainly also antique. Salomon Reinach reproduced the sculpture in his *Inventory of Greek and Roman Statuary*, specifying that, at that time, it was in Paris at the house of the trader Elie Geladakis. Later, the sculpture was part of a Belgian private collection.

Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Torso, Roman, found in Naples Via Pendino, marble, H.: 185 cm. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.

Ill. 2. Sophocles, Roman copy of Greek original, head restored. Museo Chiaramonti, Vatican, il Braccio Nuovo.

Provenance:



Ill. 3. Photographed by Emile Espérandieu in 1912 at Geladakis gallery, archives Espérandieu, Media library of architecture and heritage, negative n°ESP008030, cote 0080/375.

Publications:

- S. Reinach « Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine », Tome V, Paris, 1924, p. 352, ill. 4.

