

Two Severan Cities: Leptis Magna and Rome
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In Rome major building projects of the Severan era included the Septizodium, the Porticus Octaviae, and the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Forum. While such projects were being carried out in Rome, Severus' home city of Leptis Magna also underwent a significant rebuilding phase. Unlike other townships and colonies in foreign territories, which often mimicked the layout of Rome in their urban topographies, much of the inspiration for the architecture and urban organization of the new Leptis was drawn from Africa and the eastern provinces and focused on the city's Punic roots. That Punic imagery and themes would be present in the architecture of an African city is not necessarily a surprising development. This architectural agenda, however, traversed the borders of Leptis and made its way to Severan Rome. A consideration of the Septizodium, the Porticus Octaviae, and the triumphal arch in the Forum in tandem with the concurrent building projects in Leptis Magna reveals a spatial policy centered on the display of Severus' African and Roman identities.

Septizodia, in general, were monuments particular to Africa and the *Historiae Augustae* chapter on Severus states that the emperor thought chiefly of visitors from Africa when he built the Roman Septizodium (*cum Septizodium faceret, nihil aliud cogitavit quam ut ex Africa venientibus suum opus occurreret, HA.Sev.24.3*). Despite the African architectural form of the Septizodium and its special significance for tourists from the province, the monument's dedicatory inscription (*CIL.6.1032*) describes Severus as the genealogical heir to the "Five Good Emperors." An inscription proclaiming Severus' *Roman* lineage on a monument designed to highlight the emperor's *African* origins suggests an attempt to merge the two identities, but with neither yielding to the other.

The Porticus Octaviae, too, expresses this dual identity through its architectural form and dedicatory inscription. The building itself, originally constructed in 146 B.C, was very ancient. In 192 A.D. it had been damaged by fire. Severus and Caracalla restored and rededicated the building in 203 A.D. Much of the Severan structure resembled the previous form, but certain architectural nuances suggest an African, or at least Leptian, influence on the restoration. The Severan inscription on the Porticus Octaviae (*CIL.6.1034*), unlike inscriptions on other buildings restored by the Severans, does not identify the building or name its original dedicator. On the new, recognizably African, Septizodium it was necessary for Severus to announce his incorporation into the imperial family tree, but on the Porticus Octaviae, a structure whose basic form could be traced back to the Republic, Severus asserted his independence from tradition with an inscription that named only himself and his son and referred to the building in terms relating to its earlier destruction (*incendio corruptam, CIL.6.1034*).

The monuments that best demonstrate the architectural dialogue between Leptis Magna and Rome are the triumphal arches constructed in each city in honor of Severus' Parthian victories. While a precise date for the arch in Leptis is unknown, it is likely that the two arches were erected within a few months of each other in 202/203 A.D. There is evidence that the Leptis arch was erected in a hasty fashion. The hurried building suggests that the citizens of Leptis were anticipating the construction of triumphal monuments in other parts of the empire, namely Rome, and wished their monument to have precedence among them. The relief programs of both arches present Severus' Parthian campaigns, which may be attributable to an imperial demand for artistic depictions of the wars (*Her.3.9.12*). Some of the Rome arch's iconography, however, shows an African influence with the depiction of Hercules and Liber Pater, the patron deities of Leptis, on the lateral keystones.

The purpose of the Severan building plan in Rome was twofold: on the one hand the new dynasty desired to express its connection to positive emblems of Rome's past, on the other the Severans took measures to ensure that their provincial African roots were on display in the imperial capital. Influence for some of the building at Rome came from architectural forms and techniques found in Africa and Leptis Magna, Severus' home province and city. By simultaneously promoting both a Roman and African identity Severus' monumental building programs provide an interesting framework through which to view the expanding political and cultural boundaries of the Roman Empire in the third century.