

Busts of Zeno; Elea, Citium, or Sidon?

Post by “Joshua” of June 5, 2024 at 11:53 PM

Introduction

In a [thread](#) started by [Cassius](#) in December of 2021, it was noted that David Sedley makes reference to a bust of Zeno of Sidon. Sedley relates the story of the discovery of the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum, and on page 96 he writes;

Quote

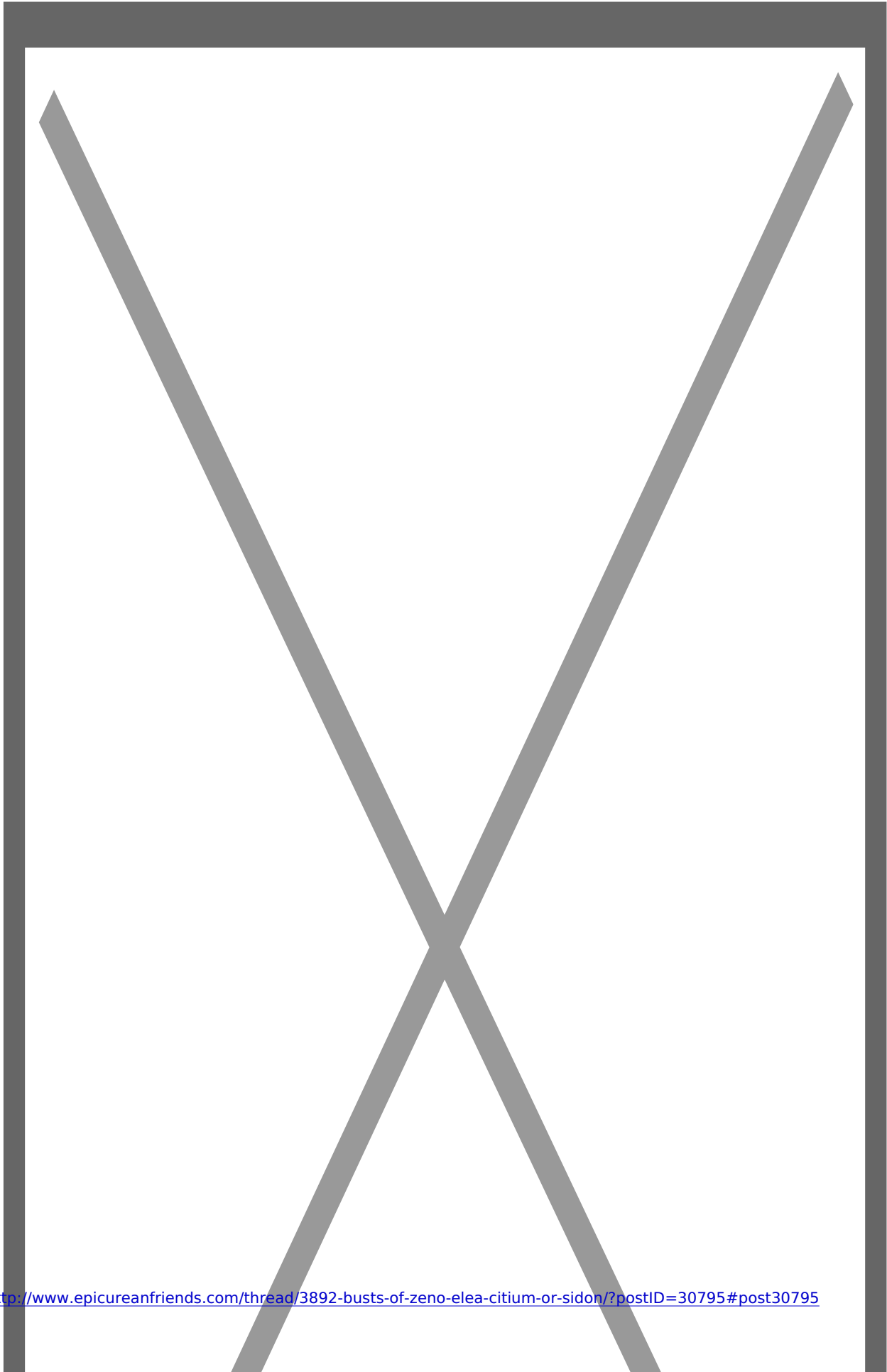
"As Piaggio's work proceeded with agonising slowness, excitement mounted in the learned circles of Europe. There were expectations of a second Renaissance. Surely the lost poetry of Sappho, or some exquisite play by Menander, was about to come to light. These expectations turned to bafflement and disappointment when rumours started to emerge from Piaggio's workshop at Portici that the first columns deciphered contained a Greek prose text in which harmful effects of music were criticised. A flattering mention of 'Zeno' led to reports that the author was a Stoic. But when after nearly two years the unrolling was completed, the title given at the end turned out to be 'Philodemus, *On music*', and this Philodemus was soon identified as the Epicurean philosopher of that name, already known as the author of some attractive epigrams. The Zeno whom he praised was not the Stoic Zeno of Citium, but the Epicurean Zeno of Sidon, whose bust was among those found in the villa's library. It has since come to be generally accepted that the library was that of Philodemus' school."

--page 96, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom*, by David Sedley

The Bronze Bust

The bust in question is in bronze, and the name ΖΗΝΩΝ is inscribed on a round base.

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[File:Zeno - portrait for a library, Colosseum.jpg - Wikimedia Commons](#)

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This photograph of the bust, released by the photographer into the public domain, is accompanied by a citation directing the reader to *The Sculpted Word*, Bernard Frischer's seminal text on Epicurean iconography. In footnote 100 on page 123 Frischer writes;

Quote

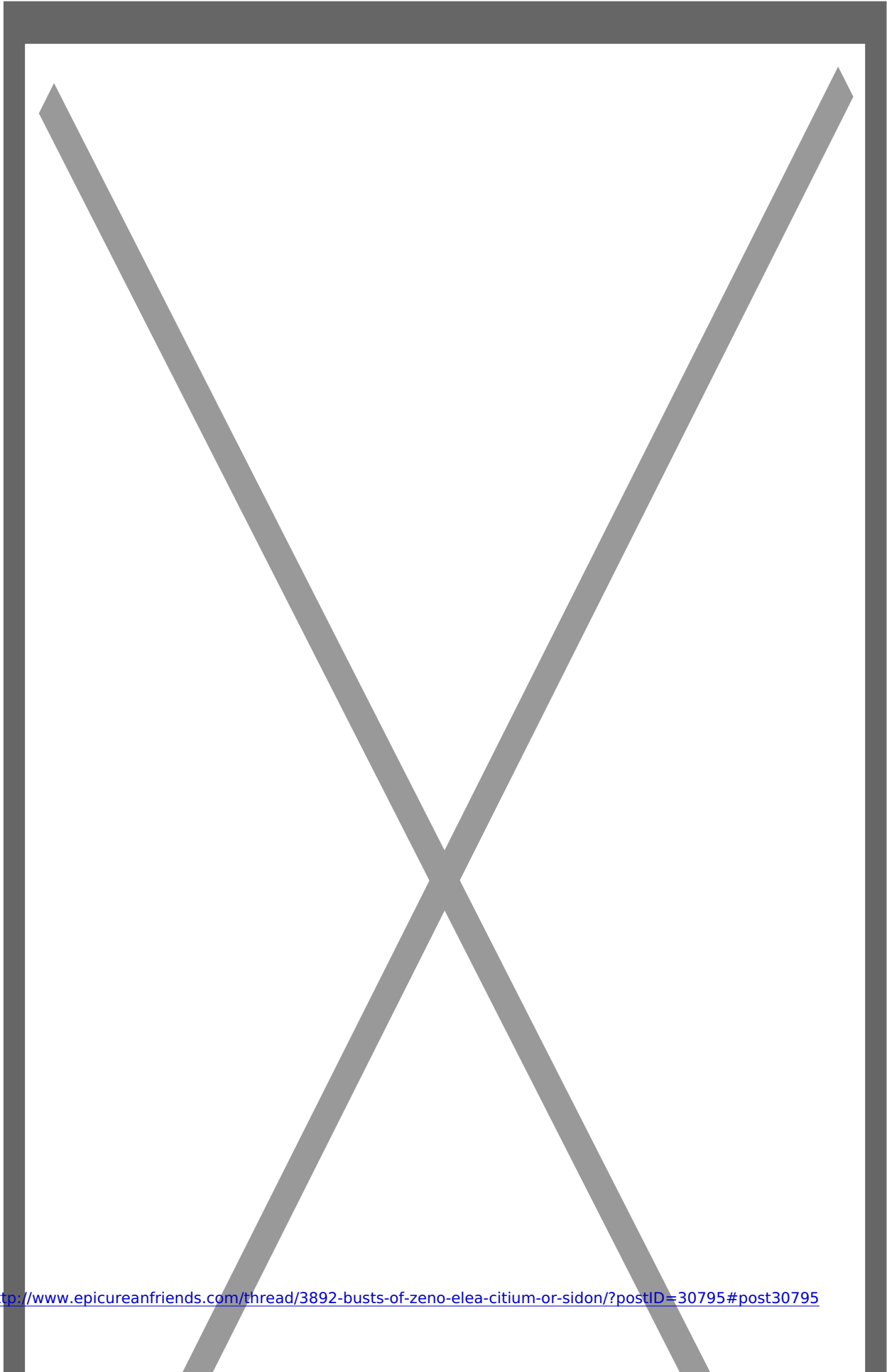
"The same method [of identifying Epicurean busts by their marked resemblance to Epicurus himself] applied, e.g., to the problem of whether the bust of Zeno found in the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum represents the famous Stoic philosopher or his later Epicurean namesake confirms the *communis opinio* that it is the former, not the later, since this Zeno does not look at all like an Epicurean."

Frischer offers several citations to follow up on this line of inquiry (Richter; Schefold; F. Poulsen; Pandermalis). I shall try to examine these sources in time, and keep this post up to date.

The Marble Bust

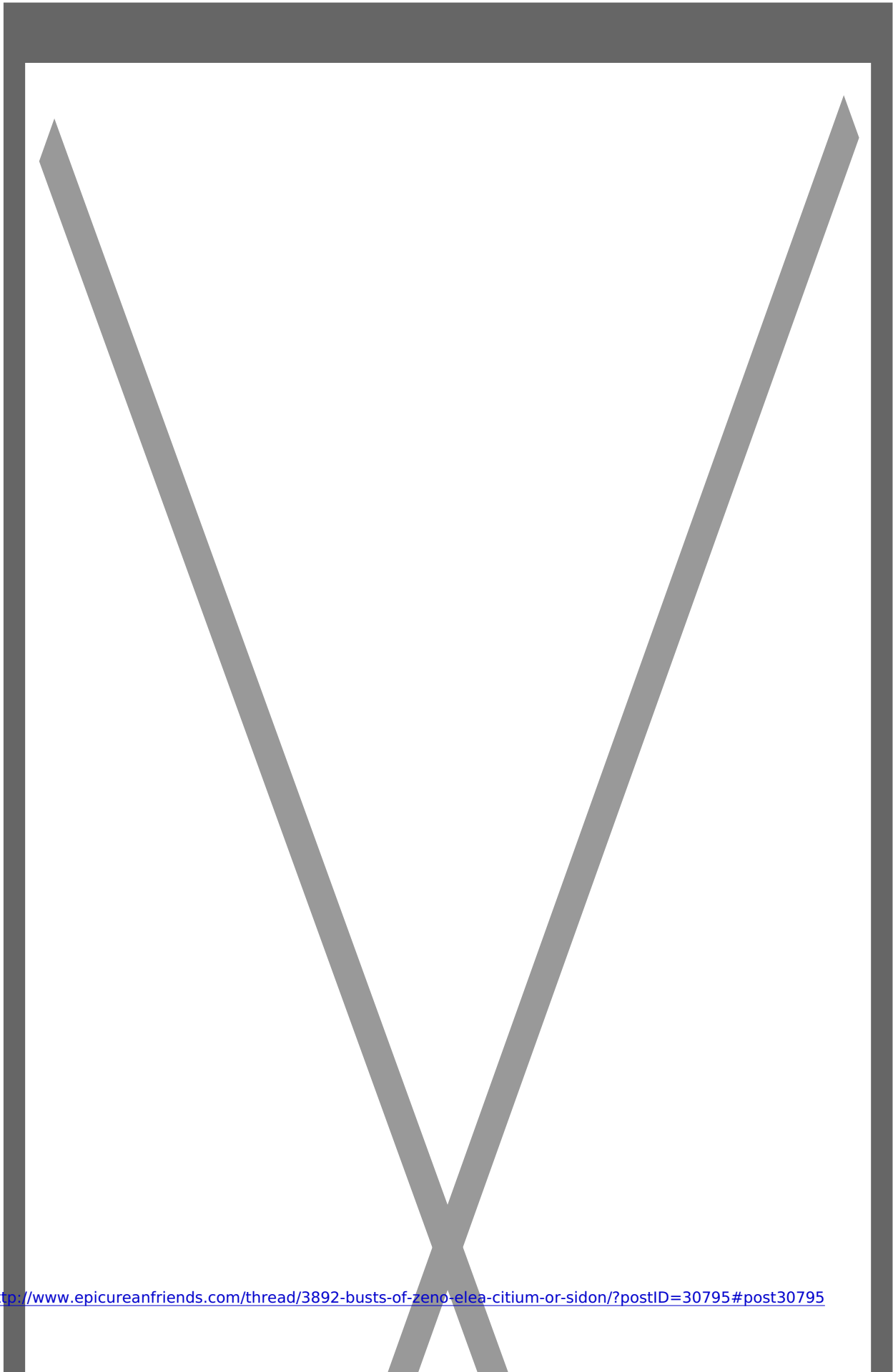
The bust found in Herculaneum does bear an unmistakable resemblance to another bust, this one discovered in Italy and thought to be a Roman copy of a Greek original.

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[File:Paolo Monti - Servizio fotografico \(Napoli, 1969\) - BEIC 6353768.jpg - Wikimedia Commons commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paolo_Monti_-_Servizio_fotografico_(Napoli,_1969)_-BEIC_6353768.jpg)

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[File:Zeno of Citium - Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli.jpg - Wikimedia Commons](#)
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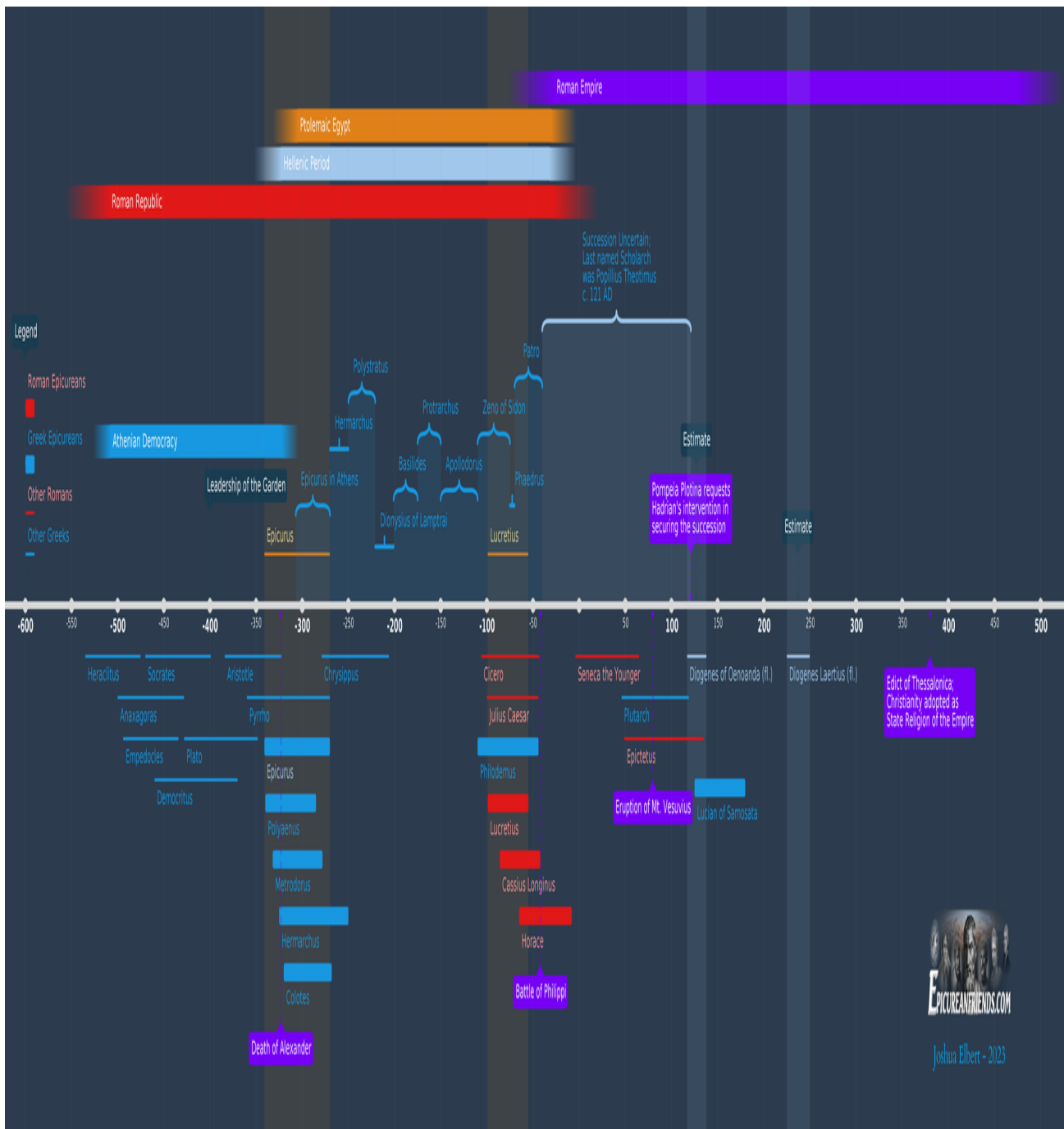
[Category:Zeno of Citium bust, Farnese collection \(Naples\) - Wikimedia Commons](#)

This bust, certainly the most famous bust alleged to be of Zeno of Citium, likewise bears the inscription ZHNΩN. The second link includes a note that runs as follows;

Quote

Marble bust of Zeno of Citium. Farnese Collection, National Archaeological Museum of Naples (cat. no. 6128). By comparison with the bronze bust from the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum, it was established that this portrait is that of the Stoic philosopher Zeno of Citium, and not Zeno of Elea or Zeno of Sidon.

Timeline



You can view the more detailed timeline compiled by @Twentier [here](#).

[Zeno of Elea](#) (c.490-c.430 BC) was a pre-Socratic philosopher of the 5th century in the Eleatic school, and was a student of Parmenides. He is notable for his work on paradoxes.

[Zeno of Citium](#) (c.334-c.262 BC), the founder of Stoicism, was an approximate contemporary of Epicurus, younger than him by perhaps seven years and outliving him by perhaps 8 years.

[Zeno of Sidon](#) (c. 150-c.75 BC) was the seventh Scholarch of the Epicurean Garden just outside Athens, excluding both Epicurus and Metrodorus (who predeceased the founder). When

Philodemus was a young man, it was the scholar Zeno who trained him in philosophy, and Cicero himself heard Zeno lecture when the future statesman was in his twenties.

Wikipedia has a [disambiguation page](#) listing other notable figures from the ancient world sharing the name Zeno.

Future Research

Given my historically lax approach to completing research tasks, [Cassius](#) has wisely suggested that I start a thread to get the basic facts on record and invite assistance and commentary. I am not on the point of suggesting that the two busts in question *are* portraits of Zeno of Sidon, and not Zeno of Citium as has been alleged. But I am suggesting that the opinion of Bernard Frischer and those he cites should not necessarily be taken as the last word on the subject. Neither bust can be positively identified with either philosopher; it is a question of weighing the circumstantial evidence, and remaining open to any fresh evidence that should come to light. The praxis of identifying hitherto unknown Epicurean busts and icons by studying them in comparison with *known* Epicurean busts and icons offers one such line of circumstantial evidence.

Another line of inquiry may place more emphasis on the circumstances surrounding the *discovery* of the bronze bust; 1.) in a villa owned by an Epicurean, 2.) in a specialized library in that villa, devoted to housing the scrolls of Philodemus, and to the philosophy of Epicurus, and 3.) bearing an inscription of a name held in high esteem by the author of those scrolls and the students of that philosophy.

There remain several gaps in my knowledge, which I list here in no particular order.

- How do we account for the 122 years between the death of [Lucius Calpurnius Piso](#), owner of the villa and patron of Philodemus, and the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 AD that led to the preservation of the library and busts? Who owned the villa after he died, and why did they preserve the library?
- Are there any busts known to depict Zeno of Elea?
- Do the sources cited by Frischer go deeper in their analysis than he does in the footnote quoted above?