The Aphrodite of Emesa: miniature marble sculpture and religious life in Roman Syria

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The sculpture of Roman Syria is a mighty tree with roots so deep and branches so far-flung that they have defied all attempts at systematic and comprehensive study. This article deals with one of these branches of artistic traditions, a series of unusual marble Aphrodite statuettes found in Roman Syria, and in particular at Emesa (Ḥoms). In what little attention these statuettes have received, scholars have listed up to 10 extant specimens,[1] but a closer look has uncovered dozens, many of which have surfaced on the art market in recent years. In all likelihood, they reproduce a cult statue of Aphrodite at Emesa. They merit attention on a number of levels. Unlike much of the marble statuary of the Roman Near East, they do not reproduce an *opus nobile* from the Graeco-Roman canon; the Emesa Aphrodites, although based on Graeco-Roman divine iconography, draw on a Roman Venus type, while their style has much in common with local sculpture made of basalt, sandstone and limestone. This study examines, first, the character, origins and development of this statuary type and its links to well-established Graeco-Roman Aphrodite types. Many years ago, M. Bieber identified these statuettes as miniature versions of the statue of Venus Genetrix created by Arkesilaos for the Temple of Venus in the Forum of Julius Caesar.[2] As there is still no consensus on the exact appearance of that famous statue, I will also comment on this question. Second, I look at the statuettes in context. Through their unusual style, format and iconography, they portray an Aphrodite of a distinct and unique character that raises questions about the significance of marble sculpture in the religious life of Roman Syria.

A first step towards systematisation of the large corpus of sculpture in Roman Syria was made by E. Will in a seminal paper that has received little consideration in the English-speaking world.[3] He proposed a distinction, based on iconography and, to a lesser extent, on style, between three different kinds of Roman Near Eastern sculpture:
a) Classical types in marble and bronze, often imports, mostly found in Phoenicia and the Orontes valley. For a region with no marble quarries of its own, marble was an expensive and prestigious resource that had to be imported by sea. If it had to be transported farther inland, away from the Levantine coast, its cost rose to such heights that only the richest cities, such as Palmyra, could afford it;

1 E Künzl, "Römerzeitliche Skulpturen aus Kleinasien und Syrien im Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum," *JbRGZM* 48 (2001) 512, list of replicas. This type does not features in reference works on Greek and Roman sculpture. The first and so far only study is M. Bieber, "Die Venus Genetrix des Arkesilaos," *RömMitt* 48 (1933) 261-76.

2 Bieber ibid.

3 E. Will, "La Syrie entre l'Occident gréco-romain et l'Orient parthe," in P. Demargne (ed.), *Le rayonnement des civilisations grecque et romaine sur les cultures périphériques* (Paris 1965) 511-26 = id., *De l'Euphrate au Rhin* (Paris 1995) 763-81; also id., "La Syrie à l'époque hellénistique et romaine. Mille ans de vie intellectuelle et artistique," in J.-M. Dentzer (ed.), *Archéologie de la Syrie* vol. 2 (Saarbrücken 1989) 573-79; J.-M. Dentzer, "L'impact des modèles 'classiques' sur le cadre de la vie urbaine en Syrie du Sud, entre la fin de l'époque hellénistique et le début de l'époque byzantine," in A. Laronde and J. Léclant (edd.), *La Méditerranée d'une rive à l'autre: culture classique et cultures périphériques* (Paris 2007) 37-38; K. Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (London 2003) 307-8.

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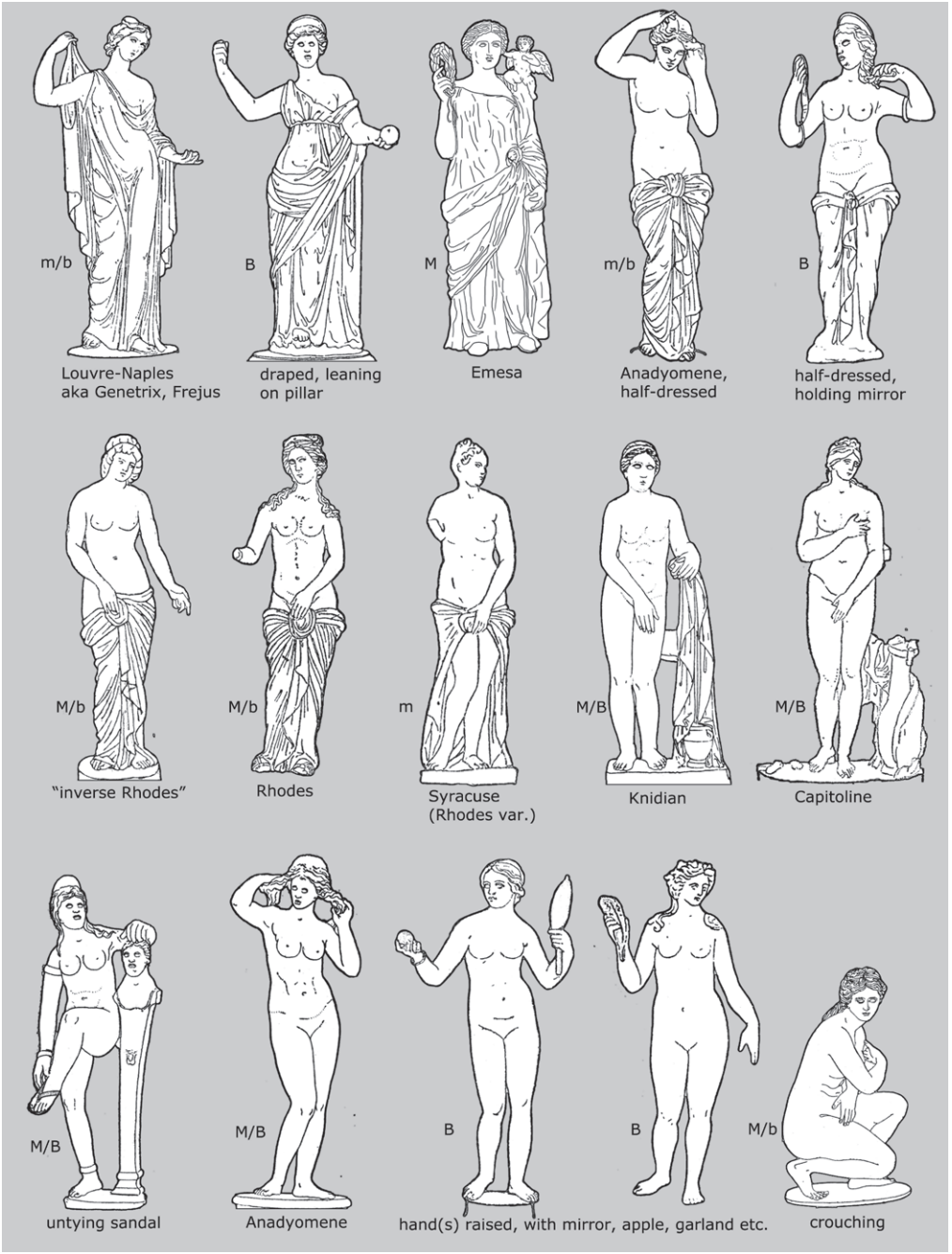

Fig. 1. Diagram of Aphrodite types and variants. The letters M, m, B, b indicate the frequency of each type in marble and bronze in Roman Syria (author after S. Reinach, *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine* (vols 1-6, Paris 1897-1930).

b) Imitations and adaptations of Classical types of variable quality and in local stone in inner Syria (e.g., Hauran basalt sculpture);
c) Works not derived from Classical prototypes; this includes so-called "Parthian" art in the steppe and the desert (e.g., at Palmyra). As an expert in Roman art in both the East and the West, Will's categorisation was intended as a research tool not just for Roman Syria, but, *mutatis mutandis*, for the art of the provinces at large.

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The marble sculpture of Roman Syria is now being studied systematically by an international project led by scholars from the University of Mainz ("Sculpture from Roman Syria: Marble Sculpture).[4] In the framework of this project I have examined sculpture from Emesa, and in particular the images of Aphrodite. While the corpus of the marble sculpture project is designed in catalogue format and allows only the bare bones of information in order to cope with the sheer mass of material, the present article will attempt a fuller discussion of arguments on what is a key statue type in the art of Roman Syria.

There are numerous marble Aphrodite statuettes from Emesa all dating to the Roman Imperial period and covering a variety of types: Emesa type, Knidia, tying sandal, "inverse Rhodes", Rhodes, Capitoline Venus (see fig. 1 for the typology). Across the Roman Levant, Aphrodite enjoyed great popularity, as is shown by a huge number of images and inscriptions.[5] It is often thought, with some justification, that the cults of Aphrodite were continuations of ancient cults of local goddesses due to a whole host of shared characteristics, and because the Greek goddess herself was thought to originate in the Levant.[6] For Emesa too the existence of a cult of Aphrodite has been postulated, but so far without clear evidence. A dedication from Cordoba is sometimes cited, listing Aphrodite together with Elagabal and Allat, but the idea that these are the gods of Emesa is a guess.[7] There is, however, an important literary source that has so far been ignored in this context. Malalas (12.296 f., ed. Bonn) recounts the tumultuous events in Syria in the mid-3rd c.: the Emesan priest L. Julius Aurelius Sulpicius Uranius Antoninus had risen up against Philip the Arab in 248, and ruled from his power base at Emesa, where he minted coins until his demise in 253/254.[8] Malalas reports that a certain Sampsigeramos, "priest of the cult of Aphrodite at Emesa", raised his private army of peasants, halted the Persian advance on Emesa, and defeated and killed the king Shapur I.[9] The narrated course of events is surely fanciful, not least in showing conspicuous similarities with the exploits of Uranius Antoninus, likewise said to have campaigned successfully against the Persians. Whether Sampsigeramos and Uranius Antoninus were in fact one and the same is uncertain;[10] more important for our purposes is the clear evidence for a cult of Aphrodite at Emesa. The fact that the priesthood of Aphrodite was held by a prominent member of the local élite (whose name, perhaps not incidentally, is identical with that of two kings of Emesa of the 1st c. B.C. and 1st c.

4 D. Kreikenbom *et al.*, *Sculpture from Roman Syria* vol. 2: *marble sculpture* (Mainz forthcoming). On marble sculpture in the Roman Near East, see also the preliminary work by E. A. Friedland, "Marble sculpture in the Roman Near East: remarks on import, production and impact," in T. M. Kristensen and B. Poulsen (edd.), *Ateliers and artisans in Roman art and archaeology* (JRA Suppl. 92, 2012) 55-74. On marble in Palestine, see M. Fischer, *Marble studies: Roman Palestine and the marble trade* (Konstanz 1998).

5 *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* "Aphrodite (*in per. or.*)" (M.-O. Jentel) has 246 entries.

6 Hdt. 1.105; Paus. 1.14.7.

7 Contra Künzl (supra n.1) 512. On this inscription, see also H. Seyrig, "Le culte du soleil en Syrie à l'époque romaine (Antiquités syriennes 95)," *Syria* 48 (1971) 370-71 with references.

8 *RE Suppl*. IX (1962) 167-68 *s.v.* "Uranius 29" (R. Hanslik); F. Millar, *The Roman Near East* (Cambridge, MA 1993) 160-61, Butcher (supra n.3) 55. On the coins, see H. R. Baldus, "Uranius Antoninus of Emesa. A Roman emperor from Palmyra's neighbouring-city and his coinage," *AAASyr* 42 (1996) 371-77, with references.

9 *RE* I.A (1920) 2227 *s.v.* "Sampsigeramos 5" (Stähelin); G. Downey, *A history of Antioch in Syria: from Seleucus to the Arab conquest* (Princeton, NJ 1961) 587-97.

10 M. Sartre (*The Middle East under Rome* [London 2005] 349) and D. Potter (*The Roman Empire at bay* [London 2014] 245) are both cautious on the identity of Sampsigeramos and Uranius. Baldus (supra n.8) 374 argues for this connection, based on Uranius' coin images of Emesan gods.

A.D.[11]) shows that the cult of Aphrodite must have been one of Emesa's principal cults. This insight into the importance of Aphrodite in the religious life of the city provides some context for the many Aphrodite statuettes.

Fig. 2. Reconstructed drawing of the Aphrodite of Emesa type (author).

Fig. 3. Statuette M-1, from Antium (from the archive of M. Bieber).

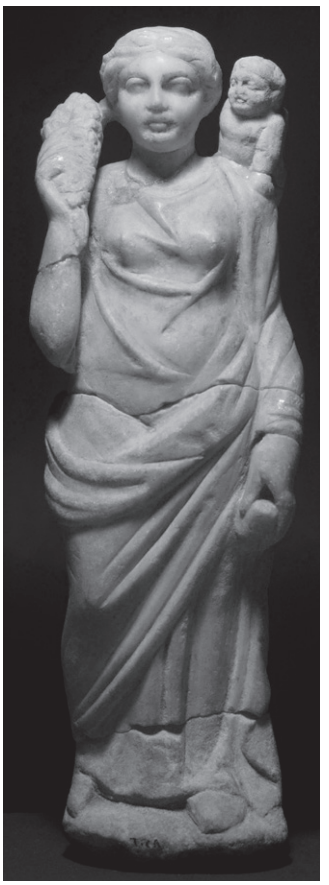

Fig. 4. Statuette S-14, from Syria (© akg-images / Interfoto AKG1379836).

1. Establishing the statue type

The corpus of this type of Aphrodite currently comprises 47 specimens (see the Appendix). They are so consistent in their iconography that it is sufficient to provide an overall description of the statue type (fig. 2) rather than describe each example. I will comment on questions of style, iconography, Roman comparanda and workmanship, before turning to the significance of these statuettes in religious life at Emesa.

Beside the statuettes in medium- to coarse-grained white marble, the corpus includes 3 examples made of ivory and 4 of alabaster (no other materials are so far attested). The provenance of most specimens of known origin is Roman Syria (21 in category S).[12] Others were found in other locations in Mediterranean lands (10 in category M). The remainder

11 The link between this Sampsigeramos and the ancient royal dynasty is accepted by Sartre (ibid. 349) and Baldus (ibid. 372), but rejected by Millar (supra n.8) 160-61.

12 Covering what is today the Syrian Arab Republic and the Republic of Lebanon.

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Fig. 5. Statuette S-1, from Emesa (courtesy of the Directorate-General of Antiquities & Museums, DGAM Syria; K.-U. Mahler).

are of unknown provenance (16 in category U) but may come from the Levant. In particular, Emesa and surrounding towns appear to be the epicentre of the production, which is why this type is here referred to as the "Emesa type". Alongside the 4 Emesan specimens, statuettes of this type were also found at nearby Telbiseh (1), Rastan (4), and Ḥamā (1).

Thanks to the large number of statuettes, one can identify what M. Brinke calls "typusprägende Merkmale",[13] features which recur with such regularity that they must be considered defining features of the type and allow for a plausible reconstruction (fig. 2). One notices immediately that the degree of variation from one specimen to the next is remarkably small. Unlike other popular Aphrodite types, the Emesa goddess is depicted with great consistency in size, material, body shape and pose, costume and attribute (figs. 3-8). This consistency suggests that the sculptors of these statuettes worked from a common model(s). In order to investigate these models, and the relationships between individual statuettes, it will be useful to apply the methods of *Kopienkritik*, a branch of art history that has come a long way since its 19th-c. beginnings and continues to yield important results.[14]

13 M. Brinke, *Kopienkritische und typologische Untersuchungen zur statuarischen Überlieferung des Aphrodite Typus Louvre-Neapel* (Hamburg 1991) 25-29; A. Post, *Römische Hüftmantelstatuen. Studien zur Kopistentätigkeit um die Zeitenwende* (Münster 2004) 12: "typenspezifische Merkmale".

14 On methods and problems of modern *Kopienkritik*, see M. Bieber, *Ancient copies* (New York 1977) 2-9; B. S. Ridgway, *Roman copies: the question of the originals* (Princeton, NJ 1984) 5-14, 31-36 and 81-95; Brinke ibid. 7-21 and passim; Post ibid.; M. Meyer, *Die Personifikation der Stadt Antiocheia* (Berlin 2006) 28-67; R. M. Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman ideal sculpture* (Cambridge 2008) 1-8 and 136-51; M. Marvin, *The language of the muses: the dialogue between Roman and Greek sculpture* (Los Angeles, CA 2008) 121-67 and 218-47; K. Junker and A. Stähli, "Einleitung," in iid. (edd.),

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Fig. 6. Statuette S-5, from Telbiseh (courtesy of the Directorate-General of Antiquities & Museums, DGAM Syria; K.-U. Mahler).

The Emesa statuettes are unusual in that none of the extant specimens of this type is larger than 40 cm. The sizes are also inconsistent (they range between 11.1 and 40 cm); no clear standard or pattern singles out any particular size. This variability suggests that the artists did not copy their models by mechanical means or through precise measurements, but worked freestyle. This is confirmed by the fact that no two specimens are exactly alike (e.g., in the number, shape, size, position and direction of the folds); most of the surface modelling tends towards simplification and reduction. Hence these statuettes should not be considered "copies" as defined by G. Lippold: "Nachbildung eines Werkes (gleich welcher Zeit), die im ganzen und in den Einzelzügen das Vorbild reproduzieren soll".[15] The term that best fits most of our statuettes is what German scholarship calls *Wiederholung*,[16] which I will call "version" or, to coin a more precise art-historical term, "re-make". The "re-make" differs slightly from the prototype, but not so much as to be considered what *Kopienkritik* calls a "variant", which implies *deliberate* modifications in individual details with regard to the original.

Original und Kopie (Wiesbaden 2008) 1-14; A. Anguissola, "'Idealplastik' and the relationship between Greek and Roman sculpture," in E. A. Friedland and M. G. Sobocinski (edd.), *The Oxford handbook of Roman sculpture* (Oxford 2015) 240-59.

15 G. Lippold, *Kopien und Umbildungen griechischer Statuen* (Munich 1923) 3. On terminology, see ibid. 2-4; Ridgway ibid. 81-83; Brinke (supra n.13) 23-25; Post (supra n.13) 8-14; Meyer ibid. 5-8.

16 Lippold ibid. 3; Ridgway ibid. 82; C. Vorster, *Römische Skulpturen des späten Hellenismus und der Kaiserzeit* vol. 2: *Werke nach Vorlagen und Bildformeln hellenistischer Zeit (Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense)* (Mainz 2004) 10-11; Meyer ibid. 7.

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The *typusprägende Merkmale* of this type are as follows: Aphrodite is depicted standing, with a baby Eros on her left shoulder. She is in a slight *contrapposto* pose and has one knee slightly bent, which causes a slight disbalance in the hips and the shoulders. She wears a long tunic (*chiton*) that falls down to the feet. Its fabric is fairly thin and adheres to the body, outlining the shape of the breasts and the belly button. Her cloak (*himation*), of thicker fabric, is wrapped around the lower body and forms a thick bulge around the hips. Its rounded lower hem rises from the right knee to the left hip to join the bulge, thus creating a roughly triangular shape across the abdomen. The *himation* is draped across her back, from the right hip to the left shoulder, then falls over the shoulder onto her left arm. In larger and more detailed examples the cloak is held together with a knot above the left hip (fig. 2; see also M-1 on fig. 3), while the majority (see figs. 4-8) dispense with the knot and show the cloak wrapped over the forearm, as in Julio-Claudian statuary (fig. 17 below).

Fig. 7. (left) Statuette S-15, from Syria (© Musée du Louvre, Distribution RMN-Grand Palais; Thierry Ollivier).
Fig. 8. (right) Statuette U-2, provenance unknown (© Binoche et Giquello, Paris).

Aphrodite's left arm is hanging by her side, her left hand either grasping folds of the *himation* on her left hip or holding an apple. In her raised right hand she holds a small folded-up item. In most specimens the crude rendering of the surface makes its texture hard to discern. This imprecision has led scholars to suggest identifications such as a belt (*ceste*),[17] a folded band (*bandelette repliée*)[18] or a napkin (Latin: *mappa*), but it is most probably a wreath or garland (*Handgirlande*) held upright. Some of the better specimens (e.g., S-14 or M-10) show the typical two loose ends of the garland running down her right wrist, as do numerous nude bronze statuettes of Aphrodite, especially from Syria and, to a lesser extent, Egypt, with this kind of object in their raised right hands (fig. 1, bottom row).[19]

One of the details in which the statuettes are not consistent is posture: Aphrodite is shown leaning on her right leg in 20 examples, and on the left leg in 17 (in 10 the stance cannot be determined), with the hips and shoulders imbalanced accordingly. This matches

17 A. De Ridder, *Catalogue de la Collection de Clercq*, vol. III: *Les bronzes* (Paris 1905) 18 *et passim*.
18 *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in per. Or.*, p. 60.
19 Ibid. nos. 132-53. Not in *LIMC*: de Ridder III (supra n.17) no. 97.

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what is known from small-scale versions of other Aphrodite types. Examples of the Louvre–Naples type (see below) tend to swap the ponderation, or eliminate it altogether.[20]

The figure of Eros on Aphrodite's left shoulder is depicted as a winged baby boy. He is remarkably small compared to other Aphrodite-Eros groups,[21] reduced, according to V. Machaira, to a "caractère plutôt décoratif".[22] He is either sitting on the shoulder with legs dangling (figs. 3, 5 and 8) or hovering on his belly, with the legs and much of the lower body hidden behind her shoulder (figs. 4 and 6-7). The latter is known from vase-paintings,[23] terracottas[24] and, from Hellenistic times, marble sculpture such as the "Slipper slapper" group from Delos (late 2nd c. B.C.).[25] The former, however, is rare: alongside the Emesa type, Machaira cites only one example of another type with Eros sitting on Aphrodite's shoulder, a statuette from the Athenian Agora representing a variation of the Urania type.[26] Moreover, the sitting Eros is also shown in some terracottas of Aphrodite leaning on a pillar.[27] Among the Aphrodite statuettes, the hovering version of Eros is more common: of the 47 statuettes, Eros is sitting in 11 and hovering in 29 (5 have no Eros, 2 are unclear). The sitting Eros is common among the statuettes of larger size and better quality (e.g., M-1 = fig. 3, U-1, U-2 = fig. 8, U-7), whereas in the smaller and cruder ones he is hovering or missing entirely. The transformation of a sitting Eros into a hovering one would make sense from a technical point of view when designing statuettes of smaller size and less detail: the hovering Eros is technically less demanding, since his belly is merged with the shoulder and his legs barely emerge from Aphrodite's back, often being left unfinished. Hence, the prototype and intermediary models, among them the presumed cult image of Aphrodite at Emesa, probably featured an Eros sitting on Aphrodite's shoulder. In terms of the group's narrative, he acts as a subsidiary figure looking on, rather than participating in it, thereby creating a mental connection with the viewer. The use of such a subsidiary watcher is a novelty of late Hellenistic sculpture.[28] By extension, the Emesa type would date to late Hellenistic times at the earliest.

There is one variant (rather than a re-make) of the type that deserves an explanation. Four of the 47 examples (M-1 = fig. 3, M-3, U-2 = fig. 8, and U-11) have one additional

20 Brinke (supra n.13) 127.
21 V. Machaira, *Les groupes statuaires d'Aphrodite et d'Eros* (Athens 1993) 146.
22 Ibid.; also ibid. 180-82.
23 *LIMC* III (1986) *s.v.* Eros nos. 619-33 and 851-905 (A. Delivorrias); Künzl (supra n.1) 511 n.75.
24 Machaira (supra n.21) 147 n.299; K. Schoch, *Die doppelte Aphrodite – Alt und neu bei griechischen Kultbildern* (Göttingen 2009) A47.
25 Athens, NM 3335. *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite no. 514 (A. Delivorrias); B. S. Ridgway, *Hellenistic sculpture* vol. 2 (Madison, WI 2000) 147-49; M. Beard and J. Henderson, *Classical art. From Greece to Rome* (Oxford 2001) 138-39 and 141 fig. 96; C. Kunze, *Zum Greifen nah. Stilphänomene in der hellenistischen Skulptur und ihre inhaltliche Interpretation* (Munich 2002) 202-3 and 206-9, fig. 91; C. Vorster, "Die Plastik des späten Hellenismus — Porträts und rundplastische Gruppen," in P. C. Bol (ed.), *Die Geschichte der antiken Bildhauerkunst*, vol. 3 (Mainz 2007) 300-2, fig. 291; K. B. Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit* (Tübingen 2014) 113-22, figs. 131-33. Further examples: Machaira (supra n.21) 147-51 cat. nos. 1, 5, 12, 30, 44 and 54, pls. 1-3, 10, 16-18a, 33, 44 and 54. See also a long-forgotten limestone statuette from Arados (formerly in the de Clercq collection) of a nude standing Aphrodite with, on her right shoulder, an Eros balancing on his belly: A. De Ridder, *Catalogue de la Collection de Clercq* vol. IV: *les marbres, les vases peints et les ivoires* (Paris 1906) no. 22. None of the many bronze statuettes of Aphrodite from Syria depicts this motif.
26 Machaira (supra n.21) 146-47, cat. no. 4, pls. 8-9 = *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite no. 307.
27 *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite nos. 346-47; Schoch (supra n.24) A35 and A41.
28 Vorster (supra n.25) 301, commenting on the Delian "Slipper Slapper" group.

figure, among them the best-quality piece (M-1). A little boy is shown standing on a rough rocky outcrop next to Aphrodite's left leg and grasping her left hand. He appears to be the same age as the baby Eros on his mother's shoulder (except in M-1 where he is slightly taller and older) but has no wings.

M. Bieber, the first scholar to write about the Emesa Aphrodite type, interpreted the boy as Iulus, grandson of Aeneas and ancestor of the Julian gens, and thus an ideal embodiment of Venus' epithet Genetrix.[29] G. W. Elderkin, however, saw the boy as (another) Eros,[30] citing a good number of vase-paintings where Aphrodite is surrounded by multiple Eros figures, and of statue groups with wingless Eros figures standing next to Aphrodite and on a rock. Citing Hesiod,[31] Elderkin named the standing boy Eros and the one perching on Aphrodite's shoulder Himeros. Both scholars knew of only one example with the additional boy. Of the three more specimens of this kind discovered since, one (M-3) shows the standing boy holding a reversed torch in his left hand. Since this is a common attribute of Eros in all artistic media, it strengthens Elderkin's interpretation. In analogy to the Louvre–Naples type, the extra boy was not part of the original prototype, but rather a direct addition made by the artist in each particular case.[32]

Finally, a word on size: how tall was the prototype, and how tall its re-makes? The Tyche of Antioch is instructive here. As with our statuettes, the size of the original cult statue is not attested and has to be deduced from copies and reproductions. In her exhaustive study, M. Meyer identified a core group of specimens that are especially accurate and consistent,[33] including two series of Syrian bronze statuettes respectively *c*.7 and 12 cm in height.[34] The core group also contains a marble statuette with a reconstructed height of 60 cm.[35] Among the variants one finds the well-known statue in the Vatican of *c*.90 cm height.[36] Since copies do not normally exceed the original in size, Meyer suggests a height of *c*.120 cm (i.e., 10 times the size of the best copies).[37]

The case is different for the Emesan Aphrodite. With a maximum reconstructed height of 40 cm (U-16), none of the statuettes achieves even half-lifesize. Since copies do not generally exceed the originals in size, the prototype might have been in the region of 40 cm (this would include intermediary models such as the presumed cult statue at Emesa). While this would be unusually small for a cult statue, there are other examples of original masterpieces in statuette size from the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods.[38] But the fact that the 47 specimens span a spectrum from 11.1 to 40 cm, with no obvious preference for a particular size, deprives us of clear indications of the size of the artists' models.

In sum, all of the statuettes discussed here, as well as the presumed prototype, represent one and the same type (reconstructed in fig. 2). One can distinguish different groups

29 Bieber (supra n.1) 268-70.
30 G. W. Elderkin, "The Venus Genetrix of Arcesilaus," *AJA* 42 (1938) 371-74.
31 *Theog.* 201.
32 Brinke (supra n.13) 41-42 cat. nos. KM 51, 54 and 58-59; KT 51 and 66
33 Meyer (supra n.14) 50-55.
34 Ibid. B3, B8-9, B11, B13 and B18. It is very unusual for such small statuettes to be accurate copies rather than free variants.
35 Ibid. A3.
36 Ibid. A8.
37 Ibid. 63. On the question of scaling in miniature copies, see E. Bartman, *Ancient sculptural copies in miniature* (Leiden 1992) 54-58.
38 See lists in Meyer ibid. 62 nn. 287-89.

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of statuettes, each with slight variations, but none represents a separate type. Each of these groups depends on an intermediary model that was in itself a re-make of the prototype.[39] The Syrian statuettes which often represent Aphrodite with less detail and render the folds as incisions on the surface (figs. 4-7) are probably modelled after one or more such simplified re-makes of the type; they represent a different *Überlieferungsstrang*.[40]

2. Significance of the attributes: apple and garland

The Emesan Aphrodite is shown carrying attributes (garland and apple) which, in this combination, are not often found in Graeco-Roman statuary. It is worth revisiting an old theory that interprets the statue type as an excerpt or adaptation of a mythological narrative scene, namely Aphrodite celebrating the outcome of the Judgement of Paris.[41] This view has been ignored or dismissed,[42] but there are a number of features our statuettes share with images of Aphrodite in mythological scenes of the Judgement of Paris, especially in Late Classical vase-paintings. The depicted Aphrodites look different from our statuettes in terms of poses and gestures, but the following shared features are worth mentioning, as they are otherwise uncommon in Aphrodite iconography:[43]
1) Aphrodite is entirely clothed with *chiton* and *himation*;
2) Eros is on or at her left shoulder;
3) Aphrodite is holding a garland in her right hand, as a symbol of victory.
These elements do not all appear together on all the vases depicting this myth, but they recur with such regularity that one can assume that these untypical elements tell a similar story. Furthermore, the motif is also depicted in Roman Near Eastern art: a mosaic from the House of the Atrium at Antioch (now in the Louvre), dated to the early 2nd c. A.D., has a large narrative scene of the Judgement of Paris with Aphrodite displaying all three elements: she is fully dressed, has Eros above her shoulder, and holds a garland in her right hand.[44] This mythological scene may be of special local relevance, since Libanius (*Or*. 11.241) tells us that the contest took place at Antioch, not on Mt. Ida. Though a 4th-c. source, it is possible that Libanius was drawing on an older local variant of the myth. And another work of art shows a similar picture: a basalt lintel from an unknown building at Suweida in the Hauran (now in the Louvre) shows all the figures are lined up, sitting one behind the other.[45] Aphrodite is again fully dressed, a fluttering Eros is at her shoulder, and she holds a small attribute in her raised right hand that is either a garland or a mirror (it is now damaged). Finally, unbeknownst to both Elderkin and E. Künzl, the Emesa type statuettes provide yet another clue. A good number of specimens (14 out of 47), especially some of the larger and higher-quality ones, show her with an apple in her left hand (figs.

39 Brinke (supra n.13) 33, 36, 123-24 and 140 operates with the term "Urumbildung", which would roughly translate as "original variant". Meyer (ibid. 63-65) speaks of "Reproduktionsmodell".
40 For this term, see Brinke (supra n.13) 33 and 36.
41 Elderkin (supra n.30).
42 Dismissed by Künzl (supra n.1) 511, but without argument.
43 See examples: *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite nos. 1417-44; *LIMC* VII (1994) *s.v. Paridis Iudicium* (A. Kossatz-Deissmann).
44 Louvre Ma 3443, size 186 x 186 cm. *LIMC* VII (1994) *s.v.* Paridis Iudicium no. 77; Kondoleon 2000, 66-69, cat. no. 58 with ills. on pp. 62 and 168; S. L. Tuck, *A history of Roman art* (Oxford 2015) 328 fig. 11.31.
45 Louvre AO 11077, H 52 cm. *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in per. Or*. no. 243; *LIMC* VII (1994) *s.v. Paridis Iudicium* no. 86; *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Zeus *in per. Or.* no. 168 (C. Augé and P. Linant de Bellefonds).

4-5). Numerous Greek and especially Roman works depict Aphrodite holding an apple, a motif that is invariably (and rightly) interpreted as the golden apple being awarded to her by Paris.[46] Taken together, these are evident references to images of the Judgement of Paris: in the Emesa type, Aphrodite holds the prize apple in her left and proudly presents the garland to the viewer, both being symbols of victory. Narrative scenes of the beauty contest do not show the apple very often, however, and when they do the apple is not resting in Aphrodite's hand but is about to be handed over by Hermes or Paris.[47] This means that, despite these allusions, the Emesa type is unlikely to be an excerpt from a multi-figure narrative scene, as Elderkin would have it.

The garland which Aphrodite is holding in her raised right hand is rendered with so little detail that it is impossible to tell whether it is one of myrtle,[48] Aphrodite's sacred tree, or some other material. The gesture of holding up a garland is vaguely reminiscent of Nikes crowning victorious generals or emperors with wreaths, but the fact that the garland is folded up in her hand makes it clear that Aphrodite is not extending it to a third party but holding it up and presenting it as an item that defines her. Elsewhere, the *Handgirlande* is usually found in funerary contexts, where garlands, both real and artistic, are a ubiquitous feature of the decoration; small garlands are depicted in the hands of the deceased in funerary portraiture or are held by Eros figures on Roman sarcophagi. While these garlands are normally held in a lowered hand, there are also examples (e.g., in Egyptian mummy portraits) where it is raised aloft and presented to the viewer, as Aphrodite does.[49] The gesture and attribute, when transferred to divine iconography, can hardly be meant as funerary symbols. The only parallel for this gesture in the iconography of classical deities, to my knowledge, is a type of nude bronze Aphrodite statuettes (sometimes assimilated to Isis) from Syria and Egypt, holding the same item with the same gesture (fig. 1, bottom row).[50] Perhaps the gesture of the raised right hand was adapted from other Aphrodite types such as the Louvre–Naples type, where she is holding up her cloak (fig. 9), and then supplemented to equip Aphrodite with something that identifies her as victor at the Judgement of Paris. This innovative motif of the folded garland in Aphrodite's raised right hand confirms the idea that the statue type is not based on Classical precedents but was a distinct, self-sufficient creation designed as a free-standing statue type. The apple and the garland are reminiscent of the narrative of the Judgement of Paris, but in the hands of the goddess they have become permanent divine attributes.

3. Roman comparanda

The Emesa Aphrodite type bears a number of features that can be connected with images of Aphrodite/Venus from Rome and Italy and with Julio-Claudian state reliefs. The closest parallels are with one of the two types of Aphrodite often ascribed to Venus

46 E.g., for the Louvre-Naples type: Brinke (supra n.13) 84.

47 *LIMC* VII (1994) *s.v. Paridis Iudicium* nos. 85, 98 and 102.

48 See, e.g., Aphrodite's myrtle garlands, *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite nos. 1237, 1428, 1435 and 1516.

49 See, e.g., S. Walker (ed.), *Ancient faces. Mummy portraits from Roman Egypt* (2nd edn., London 2000) 21 fig. 9, 66-68 nos. 27-28, 84-87 nos. 44-45 and 47. Painted in pink, these garlands appear to be made of rose petals.

50 *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in per. Or.* nos. 132-53. Not in *LIMC*: de Ridder III (supra n.17) no. 97.

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Genetrix. Enough has been written on Venus Genetrix to require not more than the briefest of summaries. In 48 B.C. Caesar vowed a temple to Venus, ancestress of the Julian family, on the battlefield of Pharsalos.[51] Genetrix "was a new epithet, never given to Venus or any other goddess before"[52] and sufficiently ambiguous to refer to both to the Julian family and all her "descendants", the Roman people at large. The temple, the crown jewel of the Forum Iulium, was dedicated on 26 September, 46 B.C.,[53] although neither the Forum nor the cult statue by the renowned sculptor Arkesilaos were finished in time.[54]

The statue of Venus Genetrix is, of course, lost, and no ancient descriptions survive. Based on images on coins and reliefs, scholars have identified two types as candidates. The more popular one is the Louvre–Naples type (see the typology, fig. 1, and the coin type, fig. 9).[55] It shows the goddess wearing a long *chiton*, standing frontally in a slight *contrapposto*, leaning on her left leg while relaxing her right. With her left hand she presents an apple to the viewer. Her right arm is bent and raised above the shoulder, with the right hand lifting her dress. There is some similarity with the pose and costume of the Aphrodite of Emesa, whose *chiton* is likewise shown slipping off her left shoulder. But the Louvre–Naples type is more eroticised: the left breast is bare, and the dress clings very close to her body, leaving the other breast and genitals virtually exposed. The Louvre–Naples type is probably based on a Greek Aphrodite of *c.*410 B.C. with the typical 'clinging drapery' effect of this period. If this was also the type used for Venus Genetrix, Arkesilaos' statue could only be a 'new version' of the Classical masterpiece.

Fig. 9. Rome. Sestertius of Sabina minted in Rome, A.D. 128-136 (32 mm, enlarged). Reverse: Sabina in the guise of Aphrodite in the Louvre-Naples type, VENERI GENETRICI (drawing by author).

The identification of this Aphrodite type as Venus Genetrix hinges on coins, starting from the reign of Hadrian, which show empresses as Aphrodite in the manner of the Louvre–Naples type labelled as Venus Genetrix (fig. 9).[56] Yet, as has long been noted, the labelling "Venus Genetrix" comes with a bewildering variety of Venus types: standing or seated,

51 App., *BC* 2.68; 2.102.

52 S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford 1971) 84.

53 App., *BC* 2.102; 3.28; Dio 43.22.2. On the Forum of Caesar and the Temple of Venus Genetrix, see R. B. Ulrich, "Julius Caesar and the creation of the Forum Iulium," *AJA* 97 (1993) 49-80; I. Nielsen, "Creating imperial architecture," in C. K. Quenemoen and R. Ulrich (edd.), *Blackwell companion to Roman architecture* (London 2013) 47-51 with references.

54 Plin., *NH* 35.155-56. For further sources, see M. Brinke, "Die Aphrodite Louvre-Neapel," in A. Borbein (ed.), *Antike Plastik* 25 (Munich 1996) 8 nn. 17-19.

55 On the type, see the in-depth study by Brinke (supra n.13); ead. (supra n.54). Also *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite nos. 225-40; *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus nos. 1-29 (E. Schmidt); Zimmer (supra n.25) 122-51. Identified as Venus Genetrix: Bieber (supra n.14) 46-47, 93, 110 and 176; Ridgway (supra n.14) 86; A. Stewart, *Greek sculpture: an exploration* (New Haven, CT 1990) 167 and 172; D. E. E. Kleiner, *Roman sculpture.* (New Haven, CT 1992) 30; A. Pasquier and J.-L. Martinez (edd.), *100 chefs-d'oeuvre de la sculpture grecque au Louvre* (Paris 2007) 100-1.

56 *RIC* II, 387 no. 396 pl. 14.287, 477 no. 1035, 478 no. 1045, and 479 nos. 1049-50; see discussion in Brinke (supar n.13) 18-21; *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus nos. 23-28.

with or without a sceptre, with or without an apple, with or without Eros, etc. Furthermore, the same types can be labelled in different ways (e.g., as Venus Victrix). The label Genetrix on coins is thus not a guarantee that what is depicted is a statue type associated with that name,[57] and there is no compelling reason to connect the Louvre–Naples type, which only began to appear on coins almost 200 years after Caesar, with the cult image by Arkeslaos.[58] Arkesilaos' statue is more likely to be represented with some degree of accuracy in coins and relief sculpture that date closer to Caesar's time[59] and show Venus with many of the same features as the Aphrodite of Emesa. Some scholars consider these Venus images (and, by extension, our marble statuettes) to be copies or variants of the Venus Genetrix statue by Arkesilaos.[60] From a purely visual standpoint, this 'matronly' type would indeed seem more suitable to convey the idea of Venus the Mother than the seductive, eroticised Louvre–Naples type.

Roman coinage of the Caesarian period shows a variety of standing full-length, fully draped figures of Aphrodite/Venus (none labelled). This kind of Venus is depicted on the reverse of the coins of Manius Cordius Rufus, dated to the early 40s B.C. (fig. 10).[61] Venus is turned left with her head in profile, wearing a short-sleeved *chiton* and holding a sceptre in her left hand and scales in her right. The cloak is wrapped around her lower body and forms a thick bulge around the waist, which leaves the right hip still visible. The lower hem of the cloak bends from just below the right knee towards the left hip; thus the cloak forms a triangle in front of the abdomen. Cordius's coins were minted in

Fig. 10. *Denarius* of Manius Cordius Rufus in 46 B.C. (20 mm, enlarged). Reverse: Venus standing left, holding scales in right hand and transverse sceptre in left, cupid hovering behind her left shoulder, MN CORDIVS on right (drawing by author).

57 Brinke ibid. 20: "der Venus als 'Genetrix' [war] kein bestimmter Figurentypus obligatorisch zugeordnet". Likewise *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus p. 228.

58 Brinke ibid. It is, however, possible that this type was used for a new statue set up during the Trajanic restoration of the Temple of Venus. The Italian excavators of the fora appear to agree with this proposal, as shown in their reconstruction drawing: L. Ungaro, *Il Museo dei Fori Imperiali nei Mercati di Traiano* (Milan 2007) fig. 114.

59 Overviews with further literature in R. Schilling, *La religion romaine de Vénus* (Paris 1954) 310-13; Weinstock (supra n.52) 85-86 pls. 6.10-14, 8 and 14; V. M. Strocka, "Troja – Karthago – Rom. Ein vorvergilisches Bildprogramm in Terzigno bei Pompeji," *RömMitt* 112 (2005-6) 115-17. I will only comment on full-length representations, not Venus busts and heads on Roman coinage.

60 Bieber (supra n.1), but revoked without explanation in ead. (supra n.14), 46-47, 93, 110 and 176; Schilling ibid. 311-12; Brinke (supra n.13) 18 and 322 n.670; ead. (supra n.54) 8 (with caution); B. Andreae *et al*. (edd.), *Kleopatra und die Caesaren. Ausstellung 2006* (Munich 2006) 86 fig. 53 Kat. 25.

61 In *Roman Republican coinage* (Oxford 1974) 474 no. 463/1, M. Crawford describes Cordius' coinage as "mostly Caesarian" in ideological outlook; see also S. Böhm, *Die Münzen der römischen Republik und ihre Bildquellen* (Mainz 1997) 56-57; B. Woytek, Arma et nummi. *Forschungen zur römischen Finanzgeschichte und Münzprägung der Jahre 49 bis 42 v. Chr.* (Vienna 2003) 254-56 pl. 5 no. 112. The type is often identified as Venus Verticordia (or Chaste Venus), a pun on the family name, but see Crawford ibid. 474: "no reason to regard Venus here as Verticordia".

46, the very year in which Arkesilaos' statue was said to have been set up in the Temple of Venus Genetrix, yet the statue was also said to be unfinished at the time and thus could not have served as a model for the engravers of coin dies.[62] Still, it is significant that a Venus figure with the same peculiar draping of the cloak as the Aphrodite statuettes is already attested at Rome in Caesarian times. Other full-length depictions of Venus are found on the coins of P. Sepullius Macer (44 B.C.)[63] and contemporary moneyers. They represent Venus standing, wearing *chiton* and *himation,* and leaning on a spear while holding a small Victory in her outstretched right hand, but the images show too much variation to be considered a coherent iconographic type.

From the same period also comes a Second-Style wall-painting in the House of Marcus Fabius Rufus at Pompeii, showing Venus with Eros on her right shoulder standing in a doorway.[64] The image has been recently interpreted as a representation of a gilded statue of Cleopatra in the guise of Venus Genetrix allegedly set up by Caesar in his Forum.[65] While there is good reason to consider the figure Venus Genetrix, it has, in my view, no discernible portrait features.[66]

I will comment briefly on four pieces of sculpture:

1) A tufa statue of Zeus from Soluntum (16 km east of Palermo):[67] the legs of Zeus' throne are decorated in relief sculpture; one leg shows a general in full armour being crowned by a Victory; to his left, Aphrodite is depicted wearing *chiton* and *himation* (fig. 11). Her right arm is raised, her right-hand attribute is missing, and her lowered left hand holds the cloak to the left hip. Venus' cloak is draped over the front of the body to form a triangle. On her left shoulder is Eros as a winged baby boy. Costume, gestures and body type mirror the Aphrodite of Emesa.

Fig. 11. Relief decoration on leg of throne of Zeus from Soluntum (Sicily), 1st c. B.C. Palermo, Museo Regionale. Detail showing Aphrodite (from Hauser 1889, 257).

62 But, as Woytek ibid. 256 explains, the coin image could have been designed after an "Entwurf der Statue", in analogy with the imagery of architecture on Roman coins.

63 Crawford (supra n.61) nos. 480.3-5 and 480.8-18; *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus no. 47; R. Westall ("The Forum Iulium as representation of imperator Caesar," *RömMitt* 103 [1996] 109-10) and P. Aparicio Resco ("Los primeros pasos de la propaganda politica de Augusto: Julio César, Venus Genetrix y el Sidus Iulium," in G. Bravo and R. Gonzalez Salinero [edd.], *Propaganda y persuasion en el mundo romano. VIII Coloquio de la AIER* [Madrid 2011] 462-64) both consider this to be Arkesilaos' Venus Genetrix.

64 S. Walker, "Cleopatra in Pompeii?" *PBSR* 76 (2008) 35-46.

65 Walker ibid. The statue is mentioned by Appian, *BC* 2.102 and Dio 51.22.3.

66 Strocka (supra n.59) 115 provides references to the dozen or so wall-paintings at Pompeii depicting Venus; he identifies (87-88, 115-18) the Venus standing in an apse from Terzigno as Venus Genetrix.

67 Museo Archeologico Regionale "Antonio Salinas" di Palermo, inv. 5574. See C. Hauser, "Marmorthron aus Solunt," *JdI* 4 (1889) 255-60; A. Kuttner, *Dynasty and empire in the age of Augustus: the case of the Boscoreale cups* (Berkeley, CA 1995) 30, 60 fig. 10 (wrongly ascribed to Selinus); S. De Vincenzo, *Tra Cartagine e Roma: i centri urbani dell'eparchia punica di Sicilia tra VI e I sec. a.C.* (Berlin 2012) 297-98 fig. 165.

Fig. 12 (left). Round marble altar at Villa Borghese, 1st c. B.C. Detail showing Aphrodite/Venus (DAI-ROM-7698).

Fig. 13 (right). Round marble base prob. from Falerii novi, second half of 1st c. B.C. Cività Castellana, cathedral. Detail showing Aphrodite/Venus (DAI-ROM-8356).

2) A small round altar now in the Villa Borghese is decorated with a figural relief wrapped all around the drum (fig. 12).[68] The scene depicted is centred on an altar. Behind it are two musicians. To the right is a togate figure, *capite velato*, pouring liquid onto the altar, accompanied by two lictors followed by two *victimarii*, a calf and a pig. To the left of the altar, four divinities are lined up side by side: Apollo with a cithara, Hercules, Victory, and Venus.[69] The cloak wrapped around the hips again has a rising lower hem and forms a triangle covering her lap. The constellation of gods could allude to games such as the *Ludi Veneris Genetricis* or *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris*.

3) Often compared to the Borghese altar is a round base from Città Castellana (Falerii Novi) which was perhaps a base for a trophy (fig. 13).[70] It depicts a bearded general (Aeneas?) in armour holding a spear to the right of an altar, pouring a liquid and being

68 H 52 cm. See C. Weickert, "Ein römisches Relief aus der Zeit Caesars," in *Festschrift Paul Arndt* (Munich 1925) 48-61; I. Scott Ryberg, *Rites of the state religion in Roman art* (Rome 1955) 23-27, figs. 15a-b; B. M. Felletti Maj, *La tradizione italica nell'arte romana* (Rome 1977) 170-72, fig. 59; Kuttner ibid. 239 n.100; P. Holliday, *The origins of Roman historical commemoration in the visual arts* (Cambridge 2002) 170-72, figs. 89-91.

69 Weickert ibid. 52 (Venus Genetrix); Ryberg ibid. 25-27 (Juventus, compared with Pompeian painting, ibid. fig. 99); Holliday ibid. 172 (uncertain).

70 Città Castellana, cathedral. H 104 cm. *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite no. 598; *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus no. 332; Ryberg ibid. 27; Weinstock (supra n.52) 86 pl. 14; Felletti Maj (supra n.68) 190-91, fig. 66; Kuttner (supra n.67) 32-34, fig. 28; Holliday ibid. 172-75, figs. 92-95.

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crowned by Victory. His antiquated helmet and bare feet mark him as a mythological figure, as well as his full armour instead of the customary toga worn while sacrificing. To the left of the altar are three gods: Mars; Venus holding a sceptre and a mirror(?), with a cupid on her left shoulder; and Vulcan carrying an axe and a torch. Venus's costume differs slightly in that the cloak is wrapped around her legs like a traditional Greek *himation*. Her upper body is perhaps bare, as far as one can see on the eroded surface.[71] With its elongated, deeply carved figures, this base has been ascribed to a Neo-Attic workshop active in Caesarian times, a date that would fit with its ideological message.[72]

Fig. 14. Marble relief bust of Venus with cupid on her right shoulder from Sperlonga, Julio-Claudian period. Museo Nazionale Sperlonga (© akg-images AKG614730).

4) A relief panel showing a bust of Aphrodite was discovered in the grotto at Sperlonga in 1957 (fig. 14).[73] The cave is famous for the magnificent Trojan-themed statue groups set around a large pool, depicting Odysseus' struggle against Scylla and Polyphemus, the theft of the Palladion, and the 'Pasquino' group, but the smaller sculptural assemblages are less well known. The panel in question shows the upper body of Venus cut off below the chest. Her body, dressed in a tunic slipping off her right shoulder, is depicted frontally, but her head is in sharp profile to the left. Her face is wide and fleshy. Her wavy hair is parted in the middle and tied with a bun at the back of the head. She wears earrings and her head is crowned by a *stephanē*. Peeping up from behind Venus' right shoulder is a chubby cupid, smiling at his mother, holding out a leaf with his right hand and grabbing locks of her hair with his left hand (this is the mirror image of the Eros in our marble statuettes). B. Andreae sees this relief as part of an ideological programme centred on Tiberius, presumed owner of the villa and the grotto. He links the Venus relief, a statue of Ganymede and a portrait herm of an 'oriental' youth with Phrygian cap (which he identifies as Iulus-Ascanius) with the Odyssean monuments to create a sculptural programme celebrating Aeneas, ancestor of the Julian house.[74] In terms of iconography, Venus and Eros match the Emesa type remarkably, other than the headdress which the statuettes lack.

In Augustan and later Julio-Claudian times, Venus figures are shown in state reliefs in similar ways: one relief panel, often ascribed to Claudius's Ara Pietatis, depicts a sacrifice

71 Contra *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus no. 332, describing Venus as wearing a *chiton* and *himation*.

72 Felletti Maj (supra n.68) 191; Holliday (supra n.68) 173.

73 Museo Nazionale Sperlonga, 76 x 65 cm. *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus no. 257; Weinstock (supra n.52) 86 pl. 8.3; B. Andreae, "Aeneas oder Julus in Sperlonga und auf dem großen Kameo von Frankreich?" in D. Rößler und V. Stürmer (edd.), *Modus in rebus. Gedenkschrift für Wolfgang Schindler* (Berlin 1995) 93 pl. 16.2; id. (supra n.60) 56 Kat. 24; A. Weis, "The Pasquino group and Sperlonga: Menelaos and Patroklos or Aeneas and Lausus (Aen. 10.791-832)," in K. J. Hartswick and M. C. Sturgeon (edd.), *Stephanos: studies in honor of B. S. Ridgway* (Philadelphia, PA 1998) 272 fig. 26.23; Beard and Henderson (supra n.25) 80, fig. 55b.

74 Andreae 1995 (supra n.73); see also Weis ibid. 264-73.

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in front of a miniature of the façade of the Temple of Mars Ultor (fig. 15).[75] The pediment shows Mars at the centre, with Venus to the left, holding a sceptre; Eros is shown hovering over her left shoulder, and his gesture, grasping his mother's hair, corresponds to that in the Emesa Aphrodite. Venus is fully dressed with a tunic and *himation* that forms a triangle between both hips and the right knee. The relief in Ravenna depicts 5 members of the Julio-Claudian family (fig. 16) in much larger size and higher quality than the Mars Ultor panel.[76] It shows a Venus figure, generally identified as Livia, standing between two bare-chested members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty dressed in hip-mantles. Venus (i.e., Livia) has Eros on her left shoulder and is fully dressed, but in this case the *himation* is draped in the conventional way.[77] In iconographic details, these Venus figures and our Aphrodite statuettes show too much variation to be considered accurate copies of the same

Fig. 15. Marble relief panel identified as decoration of Claudius' Ara Pietatis, now in Villa Medici. Detail of pediment of Temple of Mars Ultor, showing Venus Genetrix and Mars Ultor (DAI-ROM-77.1743).

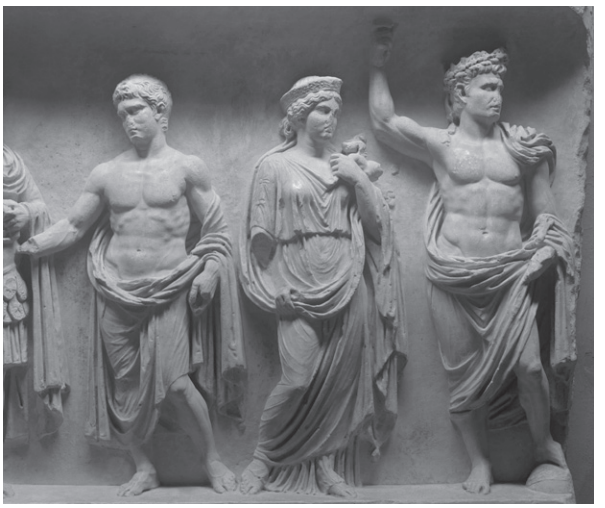

Fig. 16 (right). Marble relief from Ravenna depicting 5 members of the Julio-Claudian family, Claudian period. Ravenna, Museo di San Vitale (DAI-ROM-39.821).

75 Rome, Villa Medici, H 155 cm, h. Venus *c.*12 cm. *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus no. 328; G. M. Koeppel, "Die historischen Reliefs der römischen Kaiserzeit," *BJb* 183 (1983) 98-101 cat. no. 12; E. Simon, *Augustus: Kunst und Leben in Rom um die Zeitenwende* (Munich 1986) 49-50, fig. 51; P. Zanker, *The power of images in the age of Augustus* (Princeton, NJ 1988) 199, fig. 150; D. Kleiner (supra n.55) 142-45, fig. 120; Kuttner (supra n.67) 20, 25, 132 and 157-58, fig. 9; C. B. Rose, *Dynastic commemoration and imperial portraiture in the Julio-Claudian period* (Cambridge 1997) 101-2, 106 and 108, pl. 100; Beard and Henderson (supra n.25) 173, fig. 121; F. Kleiner, *A history of Roman art* (2nd edn., London 2010) 113, fig. 8-16; M. Koortbojian, *The divinization of Caesar and Augustus* (Cambridge 2013) 80, fig. IV.2.

76 Ravenna, Mus. Naz. 229, H. of relief 140 cm. *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus no. 330; Simon ibid. fig. 102; D. Kleiner (supra n.55) 145-46 fig. 121; Kuttner (supra n.67) 24-25, 32, 205 fig. 8; Rose ibid. 100-2, cat. 30, pls. 98-104; D. Boschung, *Gens Augusta* (Mainz 2002) 195 pl. 1.2; A. Alexandridis, *Die Frauen des römischen Kaiserhauses* (Mainz 2004) 128-29, cat. 31, pl. 2.2; F. Kleiner ibid. 111 fig. 8-14; P. Zanker, *Roman art* (Los Angeles, CA 2010) 73-74, fig. 45; Koortbojian ibid. 146 and 219-23, fig. II.12; Tuck (supra n.44) 159-60, fig. 6.13.

77 Further Julio-Claudian examples, which differ in some details, come from Carthage, Cherchel, Boscoreale and Tarentum: see *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus nos. 329, 331 and 333; Kuttner (supra n.67) 24-25, 30, 64 *et passim*, pls. 1 and 13, figs. 5, 6 and 31.

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model or to allow for a confident reconstruction of Arkesilaos' cult image. But what is clear is that they share key features: Aphrodite standing in frontal position in slight *contrapposto*, fully draped in a *chiton* and a *himation* that is wrapped around her lower body with a bulge around her hips, and with Eros perched on her left shoulder. Even if they do not reproduce the cult image down to the last detail, the Emesa type statuettes have recognisable characteristics of a Roman Venus and, depending on the context, potentially of Venus Genetrix. More specifically, the comparisons demonstrate close ties with Julio-Claudian iconography, as will be argued in the next section.

4. The hip-mantle

I have commented on the way in which the cloak is draped around the hips. This is because it is a distinctive feature that one can pin down in time and place. It is indicative of the Roman character of the Aphrodite of Emesa. Both male and female statuary often show the cloak wrapped around the lower body, a costume known as hip-mantle.[78] Scholars apparently use the term hip-mantle only for males, even though the female version is identical.[79] Also, as in male statuary, the female hip-mantle can be combined with a *chiton*.

In Greek art, there are several examples from Classical sculpture and vase-painting.[80] An important difference from our statuettes is that that in most of those examples the lower hem of the cloak is horizontal and covers both lower legs, rather than rising obliquely towards the left hip. The latter becomes more common in Hellenistic sculpture,[81] and especially as a new way of draping women and goddesses (e.g., Hygieia and Tyche).[82]

Further details help pinpoint our Aphrodite statuettes. They show the cloak forming a bulge around the hips, while leaving the right hip visible, and the lower hem rising up obliquely from below the right knee to the left hip, to form a triangle together with this bulge; it is then wrapped around the left forearm. This combination of features of the cloak can be seen in some Hellenistic and late Republican examples,[83] but it starts occurring with

78 See especially C. H. Hallett, *The Roman nude* (Oxford 2005) 120-32; Koortbojian ibid. 91-93, 144-47, 191-203 and 211-26; and, in great depth, Post (supra n.13); but all three discuss only male examples.

79 J. Fejfer(*Roman portraits in context* [Berlin 2008] 335 and 342, fig. 259) calls it the "hip-bundle" type, a translation of the German "Hüftbausch".

80 Post (supra n.13) 329-42 with examples from the Olympia pediments to the Parthenon frieze and into the 4th c. B.C. Further Classical examples include: the male figure on the base of the statue of Nemesis from Rhamnous (see A. Kosmopoulou, *The iconography of sculptured statue bases in the Archaic and Classical periods* [Madison, WI 2002] 130-35 and 244-48, no. 62, figs. 101-4); the statue of Lysikleides from Rhamnous (N. E. Kaltsas, *Sculpture in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens* [Los Angeles, CA 2002] no. 223); one of the Porticello bronzes (C. J. Eiseman and B. S. Ridgway, *The Porticello shipwreck* [Austin, TX 1987] 106 [my thanks go to a *JRA* referee for these references].

81 Hallett (supra n.78) 123-27 cites examples from Melos, Delos, Samos, Kos, Rhodes, Tralles, Kyzikos and others.

82 Ridgway (supra n.25) 43, pl. 22, 143-44, 172, pl. 45, and J. Leventi, "Marble sculpture from Phthiotis in the Lamia Archaeological Museum," *BSA* 108 (2013) 284-87, cite examples from Piraeus, Pella, Smyrna, Rhodes, Kos, Alexandria, Pergamon, Magnesia, Lagina, Halicarnassos and Samothrace. For the reception of these types in Roman times, see, e.g., female portrait statues from Ephesus: E. Atalay, *Weibliche Gewandstatuen des 2. Jhs. aus ephesischen Werkstätten* (Vienna 1989) 32, 88 no. 22, fig. 57; 35-36, 91-94 nos. 26-27, figs. 63-64; 47, 102-3 no. 41, fig. 86.

83 E.g., the Tivoli General: D. Kleiner (supra n.55) 35, fig. 12; Hallett (supra n.78) 1-3 and 120-23;

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Fig. 17. Costume of the Emesa Aphrodite compared with Julio-Claudian cloak types: 1. Aphrodite of Emesa; 2. Livia on the altar from Vicus Sandalarius (fig. 18); 3. Augustus of Prima Porta; 4. Statue of Germanicus from Gabii; 5. Augustus on the Ravenna relief (fig, 16) (drawings by author).

regularity only in the Julio-Claudian period.[84] The first dated example is a *denarius* reverse type minted in 12 B.C. It shows two standing figures in an unusual frontal perspective. To the right, Augustus wearing a toga is placing a star on the adjacent statue dressed in a hip-mantle, which C. H. Hallett convincingly identifies as Divus Julius.[85] This costume is often seen on statues of male members of the Julio-Claudian family (fig. 17), such as the Augustus of Prima Porta,[86] Augustus on the Ravenna relief (fig. 16), Tiberius in Copenhagen,[87] Germanicus in the Louvre[88] and several others.[89] There is some evidence that indicates that this kind of costume was favoured especially for posthumous portrait statues of Julio-Claudians.[90] M. Bieber suggested that the cloak is not the rectangular Greek *himation*, but rather the semicircular cloak of Etrusco-Italic tradition,[91] but new research has shown that from the cloak's contour alone one cannot tell whether the cloth is rectangular or rounded, since the contour's appearance depends on the size of the cloth and the way it is draped.[92]

Vorster (supra n.25) 284-86, fig. 260.

84 Bieber (supra n.1) 266-67; Hallett ibid. 160-63; Post (supra n.13). In Alexandridis' classification (supra n.76), this falls under "Hüftbausch-Typen" (248-56), but this is a vast category that includes all statues with a bulging cloak wrapped around the hips, regardless of the lower hem.

85 *RIC* I, 74 no. 415, pl. 7; Hallett ibid. 127-28 fig. 77; Koortbojian (supra n.75) 144-46, fig. II.13.

86 Vatican, Braccio Nuovo inv. 2290; D. Kleiner (supra n.55) 63-67, fig. 42; F. Kleiner (supra n.75) 68, fig. 5-11; Zanker (supra n.76) 84, 88-91 figs. 92-92; Tuck (supra n.44) 116-17, fig. 5.2.

87 IN 709; F. Johansen, *Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek: Roman imperial portraits,* vol. 1 (Copenhagen 1994) no. 48; Boschung (supra n.76) no. 35.1 pl. 82.1; Koortbojian (supra n.75) fig. VIII.24.

88 Louvre Ma 1238, h 190 cm. Rose (supra n.75) 89-90 cat. 12; Boschung ibid. 45 no. 6.2, pls. 28.2, 30.2 and 4; Post (supra n.13) 115-17, 477-78, cat. X3, figs. 51a-b.

89 See list in Bieber (supra n.1) 266-67 n.3; ead. (supra n.14) 193; Boschung (supra n.76) no. 1.14, pl. 10.1 (Tiberius) nos. 6.1 and 6.3 pls. 30.1 and 30.3 (Claudius, Drusus Germanici); no. 7.7, pl. 34.4 (Germanicus) no. 35.2, pl. 82.2 (headless); J.-C. Balty, "Culte impérial et image du pouvoir: les statues d'empereurs en Hüftmantel et en Jupiter-Kostüm," in T. Nogales and J. González (edd.), *Culto imperial: política y poder* (Merida 2007) 51-56.

90 Post (supra n.13) 347-55; Balty ibid. 55-56. Koortbojian (supra n.75) 196-203 credits the creation of the cult image of Divus Julius as a decisive step which turned the hip-mantle from a conventional feature of private portrait statues (ibid. figs. VIII.3-8 and 11; 220-25, figs. VIII.29-34) into a costume for public political and religious monuments.

91 Bieber (supra n.1) 266; ead. (supra n.14) 42 and 193: "the rounded Roman mantle around the hips, a form which originated in Etruria".

92 Post (supra n.13) 168-69.

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The larger and more detailed examples among our Aphrodite statuettes show a knot at her left elbow where the cloak is gathered (fig. 2; M-1 = fig. 3). The simplified re-makes often eliminate this feature, instead having the cloak tucked in under her left armpit. The motif of the triangular cloak wrapped over the left forearm soon went out of favour, and already in later Julio-Claudian statues the draping is different. The statue of Claudius as Jupiter from Lanuvium now in the Vatican, has the lower hem of the cloak rising in a great arc all the way to the left shoulder.[93]

One can refine the classification further. In addition to the draping of the cloak around the hips, the Emesa Aphrodite type has the cloak crossing her back, re-emerging on her left shoulder and covering the left side of her upper body. These details too have precise parallels in Roman art — for example, the statue of Germanicus from Gabii, now in the Louvre (fig. 17).[94] In A. Post's meticulous classification, the Emesa type belongs to Hüftmantelschema V in conjunction with Kontur 7a.[95] The latter refers to the exact shape described by the lower hem, which covers the right knee and lower leg, then rises sharply leaving the left knee visible. The fact that this combination does not appear in the Roman examples gathered by Post shows that the cloak scheme of the Emesan Aphrodite was not a direct adoption from a male model. Post identifies the ultimate model as a masterpiece by Praxiteles (mid-4th c. B.C.), the Agathodaimon, known in Latin as Bonus Eventus, a statue which Pliny claims stood on the Capitoline in his day.[96] Post's reconstruction of Praxiteles' lost statue is uncertain, but the fact that this particular scheme of draping the cloak (Schema V) became a regular choice for Roman sculpture may indicate that a well-known model lay behind it.[97]

Fig. 18. Front side of marble altar to the Lares from Rome, Vicus Sandalarius, Julio-Claudian period. Florence, Uffizi (DAI-ROM-2007.0679).

More importantly for our discussion, some *female* Julio-Claudians too were depicted with this arrangement. The best comparative example is an altar of the Lares, dated by its inscription to 2 B.C. and found at Rome's Vicus Sandaliarius (it is now in the Uffizi) (fig.

93 Vatican, Sala Rotonda inv. 243; D. Kleiner (supra n.55) 131, fig. 106. Further examples of this "Jupiter-Kostüm" are given in Balty (supra n.89) 67-69.

94 Louvre Ma 1238, H 190 cm. Rose (supra n.75) 89-90, cat. 12; Post (supra n.13) 115-17, 477-78, cat. X3, figs. 51a-b.

95 Post (supra n.13) 161-76, 241-49 *et passim*. Post has further classifications for the shape and size of the folds, of the hip bulge, etc., but in practice these parameters are too variable from one example to the next to have much significance for the draping of the cloak as a whole.

96 Plin., *NH* 36.23; Post (supra n.13) 113-21.

97 From this, Post (ibid. 366) concludes that the cloth in question can only be the rectangular Greek *himation*.

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18).[98] It shows three figures on the front: in the middle is Augustus in a toga, *capite velato*, shown frontally and holding a *lituus* in his right hand as Pontifex Maximus. To the left is Gaius or Lucius Caesar in a toga, again *capite velato*. To the right stands a woman with unindividualised facial features, wearing a cloak and tunic (see also fig. 17). Her attributes, a *patera* in her right and incense box in her left, identify her as a priestess. For this reason, C. B. Rose rejects the common identification as Livia because she held no public priesthood; in fact, depictions of imperial women at sacrifices in state reliefs are extremely rare and not attested before Julia Domna.[99] The unusual jewellery may reveal her identity: she wears a crescent-shaped stephanē on her head, a spiral bracelet with snake-head terminals on her wrist, and a torque around her neck — a feature paralleled in the depictions of the young princes on the Ara Pacis and of priests of Cybele/Magna Mater. Rose thus concludes that the figure is a priestess of Cybele.[100] The cloak covers her left shoulder, is drawn over the back of the head like a veil, then runs across her back to re-emerge just below the right hip; as in previous examples, at the front the cloak is wrapped over the abdomen with a thick bulge to the left hip, where it joins the lower hem. The similarity with the Venus figures cited above has long been noted: P. Zanker identifies it as "a female member of the imperial family, probably Julia as Venus".[101] Likewise, Rose acknowledges:

> The iconography of the priestess links her directly to Venus Genetrix. Her statuary type duplicates that of Venus on the pediment of the nearby and contemporary temple of Mars Ultor.[102]

The shape and texture of the priestess's cloak, more than any other example discussed here, are particularly close to our Aphrodite statuettes. Both have the combination of Post's Hüftmantelschema V with Kontur 7a, a combination not found in male sculpture.

This review of the iconography of Julio-Claudian Venus figures consolidates our understanding of the art-historical significance of the Aphrodite of Emesa. The prototype for the statuettes was probably created under the influence of Julio-Claudian imperial art, drawing on Roman images of Venus or Julio-Claudian empresses. Among the many borrowings from Roman models, the clearest sign is the particular draping of the cloak around her hips. This Venus/Aphrodite figure was accompanied by Eros, but in itself it did not come with divine attributes to signal her status and identity. Hence the apple and the garland were probably added to the prototype as 'ingredients', obvious markers of Aphrodite that reference one of her best-known exploits, the Judgement of Paris, and turn the figure into an image that works as a self-sufficient and self-explanatory statue type.

5. Cultic, funerary or domestic objects?

We need next to investigate the *Lebensraum* which the statuettes inhabited. Divine images in miniature were used for a variety of purposes, though there is a preponderance

98 Uffizi 972, H 150 cm. G. A. Mansuelli, *Galleria degli Uffizi. Le sculture* (Rome 1958) 203-6, no. 205; Zanker (supra n.75) 128-29, fig. 101; Kuttner (supra n.67) 221-22 n.32, 242 n.126; Rose (supra n.75) 104-6, cat. 33, figs. 111-14; id., "The Parthians in Augustan Rome," *AJA* 109 (2005) 47-48, figs. 18-19; E. Bartman, *Portraits of Livia: imaging the imperial woman in Augustan Rome* (Cambridge 1999) 84-86; Boschung (supra n.76) 195 pl. 1.1; Alexandridis (supra n.76) 118-19, cat. 9, pl. 2.1; Koortbojian (supra n.75) 73-77, fig. III.21.

99 Rose 2005 (ibid.) 47-50.

100 Rose ibid. 49; cf. id. (supra n.75) 105-6.

101 Zanker (supra n.75) caption to fig. 101.

102 Rose (supra n.75) 106.

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towards personal piety, and most of them represent gods who offer healing and protection.[103] Our Aphrodite statuettes could have functioned:

a) as dedications and votives in sanctuaries (including sanctuaries of deities other than Aphrodite). Local worshippers could use them to express their devotion and leave a durable personal statement of their piety.[104] In a large and flourishing sanctuary, one would expect pilgrims to be able to purchase such statuettes from local shops specialising in devotional memorabilia made for this purpose.

2) as objects of worship also in domestic contexts. Mothers and brides made regular offerings to Aphrodite statuettes in private homes to seek the blessing of the goddess.[105] An illustration of such domestic cults is found on a sarcophagus from Arezzo.[106] The front shows the deceased matron standing in the centre, with a group of females flocking around her. The matron is depicted again to the left, raising her right hand in a gesture of worship as she is presented with a statuette of a nude Venus by a diminutive young woman (probably a servant). This representation of a domestic morning ritual presents the Aphrodite statuette as a typical devotional object and symbol of domestic piety. Marriage and mortgage contracts from Egypt report that brides from prosperous families cherished such effigies of Aphrodite as companions that guaranteed happiness, prosperity and marital concord.[107] Finally, such statuettes could also be cherished as miniatures of *opera nobilia* and art objects in their own right, ready to be shown to peers as evidence of one's elevated taste.[108]

3) as grave goods. Aphrodite's rôle was not only as patron of domestic life, but also as companion and protector of the journey of the deceased.[109] Aphrodite statuettes made of stone, bronze and terracotta were buried in tombs across the Roman Near East.[110] On the Phoenician coast, excavators found tombs of women that contained, beside jewellery and hand mirrors, statuettes of Aphrodite placed under the heads of the deceased.[111] The goddess's

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103 Vorster (supra n.16) 9-10. On the range of contexts and functions of statuettes, see Bartman (supra n.37) 43-48.

104 F. van Straten, "Votives and votaries in Greek sanctuaries," in A. Schachter *et al.* (edd.), *Le sanctuaire grec* (Geneva 1992) 247-90; D. Boschung, "Kultbilder als Vermittler religiöser Vorstellungen," in C. Frevel and H. von Hesberg (edd.), *Kult und Kommunikation* (Wiesbaden 2007) 63-88; T. Schattner and G. Zuchtriegel, "Miniaturisierte Weihgaben: Probleme der Interpretation," in I. Gerlach and D. Raue (edd.), *Sanktuar und Ritual* (Rahden 2013) 259-65.

105 *LIMC* VIII (1997) *s.v.* Venus nos. 84 and 182-83. See, e.g., the abundant evidence from houses in Delos and Kos (in *Untersuchungen zur figürlichen Ausstattung delischer Privathäuser* [Chicago, IL 1988] M. Kreeb lists 268 examples of domestic sculpture in Delos); Kousser (supra n.14) 34-36.

106 P. Veyne, "Les saluts aux dieux, le voyage de cette vie et la 'réception' en iconographie," *RA* 1985, 50-52, fig. 3.

107 F. Burkhalter, "Les statuettes en bronze d'Aphrodite en Egypte romaine d'après les documents papyrologiques," *RA* 1990, 51-60; S. Descamps in C. Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch. The lost ancient city* (Princeton, NJ 2000) 202 no. 86.

108 Künzl (supra n.1) 512-13.

109 *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in per. Or.*, p.165. For examples from Classical Greece, see P. C. Segal, "The paradox of Aphrodite: a philandering goddess of marriage," in C. Kondoleon and P. C. Segal (edd.), *Aphrodite and the gods of love* (Boston, MA 2011) 79-85. For Hellenistic terracottas, see Kousser (supra n.14) 36-40. From Roman times, many Aphrodite figurines of the Louvre–Naples type were found in tombs at Pergamon, Myrina and Andros: Brinke (supra n.13) 115 and cat. nos. KM 1, KT 29, 32, 34, 37-42, 44-45, 46-47, 64, 81, 98, 99 and 103.

110 *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in per. Or.* nos. 17, 21, 26, 98, 180 and 192. To these one must add a Knidian Aphrodite statuette found inside a sarcophagus in a tomb at Emesa (to be published in Koçak *et al*. [supra n.4]).

111 M. Meurdrac, "Trois statuettes de Vénus syriennes," *Syria* 22 (1941) 51.

effigies were evidently to maintain direct contact with the deceased so as to perpetuate this relationship for eternity.

Although the original contexts of the statuettes are unknown, they present some unusual features that may bring us closer to their original purpose. A remarkable 78% (35 out of 47) have their feet and plinth broken off — and despite the fact that the bottom half of the statuette is by no means its most fragile part (Aphrodite's head, garland and baby Eros would normally be the first to break off, yet these elements are more often preserved than the feet [cf. figs. 5-8]). Further, they are almost always broken off at the same point, in the area between the knees and the ankles. One possible explanation is that the feet and plinths are missing because the statuettes were bolted tight to some stand or other object; thus, in order to remove the statuette, it would have to be broken off violently. To pursue this idea one would need to examine the statuettes from below, a difficult task since often the bottom is hidden under modern plaster and fixed on a stand. Some undersides, however, can be discerned in photographs, and some undersides of specimens which I have seen in person (9 from Syria, 2 from other sites, 2 of unknown provenance) are visible. *All* of these 13 originally had a large iron dowel inserted vertically into the plinth. Sometimes the dowels are still preserved (fig. 19); regularly they are disproportionately large for such small items, measuring some 1 to 1 $^{1}/_{2}$ cm in diameter. Aphrodite statuettes were therefore fixed to some larger object so that would-be looters and attackers could not pry them loose and instead had to break them off. From a practical standpoint, because many statuettes were so flat that they could hardly stand on their own without support, this is not surprising. It is thus unlikely that the statuettes were made to be used as grave goods for the deceased. The purpose of statuettes in a funerary context was to set them in tombs next to the body or under the head of the deceased woman, and this could work only if the statuettes were separate, portable items.

Fig. 19. Statuette S-4 from below, with iron dowel (courtesy of the Directorate-General of Antiquities & Museums, DGAM Syria; K.-U. Mahler).

Both domestic and sanctuary contexts are thus possible. In domestic *lararia*, such statuettes with supports seem less ideal, since the miniature gods of the household had to be mobile, freestanding objects and were often loosely grouped, since their arrangement was likely to change over time.[112] If our statuettes were used in a domestic context, one should imagine them as placed on pedestals, in cupboards or in niches, or fastened to furniture such as ladies' 'toilette' tables.[113] Sanctuaries are equally plausible: for example, one can

112 On the composition of statuettes in Roman *lararia*, see S. A. Muscettola, "Osservazioni sulla composizione dei larari con statuette in bronzo di Pompei ed Ercolano," in U. Gehrig (ed.), *Toreutik und figürliche Bronzen römischer Zeit. Akten der 6. Tagung über antike Bronzen 1980* (Berlin 1984) 9-32.

113 Bartman (supra n.37) 40-42. For statuettes and bases with dowel-holes from Delian houses, see Kreeb (supra n.105) 43-47, pls. 8-9.

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envisage them as votives, raised to eye level by pedestals or altars, thrones or trapezai. Mobility is one of the defining features of a statuette and one of the key advantages it holds over full-sized statues. Sculptures of this kind were made to be carried around and interacted with; they allowed for more personal relationships than full-size statues ever could.[114] Fastening them in such a way as to deny them mobility seems contrary to their intended purpose. In this respect, as in others, these Aphrodites of local production go their own separate ways.

6. Icons of difference

The information gathered must now be used to explore the significance of the statuettes. Images are real-world objects which humans manipulate and interact with in real situations; what people make of them can be divorced from their original character, purpose and intent. To understand the local meanings of the statuettes, we must consider their original contexts, both mental and physical, and try to ascertain how they were used in practice. While the archaeological contexts are almost entirely unknown, a good deal of information can be gleaned from the statuettes themselves. Not only is the image type distinct and recognisable, but its uniqueness is enhanced by other factors, which can be summarised under at least 5 headings:

1. Material

Our Aphrodites are almost exclusively of marble; a few exceptions are of alabaster or ivory. Of the huge numbers of bronze statuettes of Aphrodite from Roman Syria, none shows the Emesan type; nor do we see the type depicted in local material closer to hand, such as limestone, which Syria has in abundance and quality; nor, for that matter, is it depicted among the hundreds of gods on the reverses of contemporary civic coins. This is in contrast to images of (e.g.) Jupiter of Heliopolis (Baalbek): reproductions of his cult image were not restricted to marble, but included bronze, limestone (free-standing and in relief), and the minor arts.[115] In the case of the Artemis of Ephesos,[116] the large majority were made of stone, with only the parts showing naked skin (face, hands, feet) made of bronze or darkly-coloured stone; but other materials are attested too. The insistence on marble for Aphrodite of Emesa might reinforce the idea that the cult image was indeed a marble statue. Although the marble in question is medium- to coarse-grained,[117] it remained a precious material which had to be imported at considerable cost. Possibly the statuettes were made from left-overs of workshops mainly engaged in producing sarcophagi or architectural elements.[118]

2. Size

The reconstructed height of the known specimens is between 11.1 (M-4) and 40 cm (U-16) — not even half-lifesize, and thus consistently small. By contrast, versions of other popular statue types (e.g., the Tyche of Antioch) normally have a range that includes specimens

114 On mobile sculptures and their performative qualities, see B. Madigan, *The ceremonial sculptures of the Roman gods* (Leiden 2013).

115 For an overview, see A. J. M. Kropp, "Jupiter, Venus and Mercury of Heliopolis (Baalbek). The images of the "triad" and its alleged syncretisms," *Syria* 87 (2010) 229-64.

116 R. Fleischer, *Artemis von Ephesos und verwandte Kultstatuen aus Anatolien und Syrien* (Leiden 1973).

117 Its provenance has yet to be confirmed by chemical analysis.

118 On which see Fischer (supra n.4).

that are significantly larger. Images of Jupiter Heliopolitanus too range from miniature to lifesize, though the majority are roughly the size of our statuettes. Those of the Artemis of Ephesus are generally smaller than lifesize, as was the wooden cult image in its temple,[119] but larger versions existed. The diminutive size of our statuettes raises the possibility that their models were statuettes too, rather than lifesize or colossal figures, but since no particular size recurs with conspicuous frequency we lack any means to estimate the size of the original(s).

3. Iconography

The iconography deviates from the Graeco-Roman mainstream. While the latter leans heavily towards copies and variants of well-established types based on Greek masterpieces, our statuettes reproduce a type most indebted to images of Roman Venus and female members of the Julio-Claudian court, combining them in a novel way with attributes evoking the Judgement of Paris.

4. Style

The statuettes are for the most part flat, their movement and *contrapposto* pose much reduced, their limbs exaggerated. The workmanship is cursory, with little detail lent to folds, faces, hair, garlands (in particular at the back). These features are unusual for marble sculpture but are often found in Near Eastern sculpture in local limestone, sandstone and basalt, as well as in terracotta, glass and other cheaper materials. Some different Syrian marble Aphrodites, such as the Qamḥāna and the Mouawad groups,[120] share these features with our statuettes and with sculpture in local stone.

5. Context or function

Most statuettes had a large metal dowel inserted into the plinth to support and fasten them to some larger object or monument. This clashes with how divine images of miniature size are typically used in the classical world, as portable items. The statuettes seem to have been set up in houses or in sanctuaries on pedestals, altars, thrones or tables.

The above summary makes it clear that our Aphrodite statuettes form a distinct, coherent, and in many ways unusual group of sculptures. They do not fit E. Will's classification into 3 groups of Roman Near Eastern sculpture: the statuettes are made in the prestigious material of his group 1, marble, but in terms of style and iconography they should be ascribed to group 2 since they deviate from the style and iconography of mainstream Graeco-Roman types based on Classical models, instead resembling local products. Aphrodite statuettes were probably made and sold near the goddess's Emesa abode as signature local products. This may be a rare case where local workshops produced great numbers of marble sculptures but consistently and self-consciously chose a local style that was only distantly derived from Classical models.

This raises the question of what the statuettes meant to their target audience. They seem to convey conflicting messages. While marble gave them a somewhat 'westernised' tone and association with classical types, their locally-inspired style creates more of a link to local production than one would typically find in marble sculpture. In order to grasp the multi-layered identity of this local Aphrodite, one would need first to investigate the

119 Fleischer (supra n.116) 122 and 387.
120 Both are to be published in Kreikenbom *et al.* (supra n.4).

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semantic value of marble in the Roman Near East, and the extent to which provincial perceptions of this material may have undergone semantic shifts.

Like many other local cult images in the Roman Near East, the Emesa Aphrodite type is what K. Butcher aptly calls an "icon of difference":[121] divine images that stand out for their individuality

> as affirmations of each cult's uniqueness, providing a way for indigenous peoples to assert their differences. While there were generic images of Zeus, Athena, Heracles and so on, these iconic images were defined by their specificity.

Possibly our label "Aphrodite" and the Romanised outward appearance were an *interpretatio graeca* of a local goddess whose character and identity are now lost to us: they may represent an indigenous goddess projected through a Graeco-Roman lens. In neighbouring Phoenicia, Aphrodite was often a new name and guise lent to more ancient local Astartes, while the local forms of cult and worship remained more or less unchanged.[122] Similar scenarios of local goddesses lurking under the Classical guise of Aphrodite have been proposed for other localities: at Baalbek, many scholars interpret Venus Heliopolitana as Astarte or Atargatis,[123] and at Petra they see Aphrodite as al-'Uzza.[124] As for the Emesa Aphrodite, there may have been a similar assimilation, but the evidence for religious life at Emesa is so thin that I gladly abstain from such speculation.

Conclusion

The 47 statuettes depicting a fully draped Aphrodite with a baby Eros on her left shoulder represent a distinct type (reconstructed in fig. 2). They come from various parts of the empire but with a clear concentration at Syrian Emesa, where an important cult of Aphrodite is attested by a literary source. That is why I utilize the term "Emesa type". The cult image of Aphrodite in her temple there was probably a key model for the statuettes. All 47 known statuettes belong to the same type; most show only slight variations in details and can be considered "re-makes", while others can qualify as variants. The fact that no two specimens are exactly alike (e.g., in the number, shape, size and direction of the folds) means that the sculptors did not use precise measurements or mechanical methods but modelled them after a summary depiction, perhaps a drawing or a miniature plaster model which omitted finer details, thereby leaving those up to the sculptors.[125] This also shows that exact replication was not deemed necessary for the images of this goddess.

As a type, this Aphrodite is based on a Roman Venus type. Iconographic elements, chiefly the manner in which the cloak is draped around the hips, thighs, left arm and left shoulder, point towards Julio-Claudian Rome.[126] The attributes (apple and garland) in her hands are additions that draw on the rich repertoire of Greek mythology, in particular on

121 Butcher (supra n.3) 336.

122 C. Bonnet and V. Pirenne-Delforge, "Deux déesses en interaction: Astarté et Aphrodite dans le monde égéen," in C. Bonnet and A. Motte (edd.), *Les syncrétismes religieux dans le monde méditerranéen antique* (Brussels 1999) 249-73; A. J. M. Kropp, "Anatomy of a Phoenician goddess: the Tyche of Berytus (Beirut) and her acolytes," *JRA* 24 (2011) 398-99.

123 But see Kropp (supra n.115) 241-43.

124 *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* al-'Uzza Aphrodite (F. Zayadine) 167-69.

125 On copy techniques, see Bartman (supra n.37) 67-78. For such extremely flat figures as the Aphrodite statuettes, a two-dimensional model could have sufficed.

126 On relations between Emesa and Julio-Claudian emperors, see M. Konrad, *Emesa zwischen Klientelreich and Provinz* (Rahden 2014) 47-62.

narratives of the Judgement of Paris. Yet the combination and gestures with which Aphrodite presents them to the viewer is very unusual, suggesting that they are carefully selected elements from disparate sources that were assembled by the creators of the type.

Having addressed the size, format, material, style, typology and iconography of these marble statuettes, we found that their characteristics are so distinctive that they should be attributed to local marble workshops which went about producing quantities of images of this goddess with a distinctly local flavour. The statuettes were custom-made to suit the requirements of local religious contexts; they bore specific meaning to those who made, saw and used them. Yet much about the significance of these statuettes (their 'interior shape', as it were) has yet to be worked out. Future research will need to address where they were set up and precisely how they were used. This popular local type of Aphrodite, with its unusual genesis and multi-layered character, deserves to feature as a key statue type in future histories of the art of the Roman Near East.

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APPENDIX: CORPUS

The entries are sorted by provenance under S for Syria (starting with Emesa and surroundings), M for other locations, and U for unknown provenance. The material is white marble unless otherwise indicated. Dimensions in cm.

S-1: Damascus, National Museum, inv. no. 5759/13165.
From Emesa/Ḥomṣ
Missing: feet, left hand, right arm of cupid.
H 27.5; w 9.5; d 4.
Ref.: *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in peripheria orientali* no. 154 (labelled wrongly as no. 155 on pl. 165); Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 1.

S-2: Damascus, National Museum, inv. no. 5760/13166.
From Emesa/Ḥomṣ.
Missing: head, right hand, most of cupid, feet.
H 31.5; w 12.5; d 5.
Ref.: Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 3.

S-3: Paris, Louvre, inv. no. MA 3259.
From Emesa/Ḥomṣ.
Missing: feet.
H 18.5; w 7; d 3.
Ref.: *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in peripheria orientali* no. 159; Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 2.

S-4: Damascus, National Museum, inv. no. 16917.
From Emesa/Ḥomṣ, acquired 1965.
Missing: right hand and shoulder, feet.
H 17.5; w 6; d 2.5.
Ref.: *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in peripheria orientali* no. 156; Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 7.

S-5: Damascus, National Museum, inv. no. 5029/11081.
From Telbiseh north of Emesa/Ḥomṣ.
Missing: lower legs.
H 16.
Ref.: *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in peripheria orientali* no. 157; Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 4.

S-6: Present location unknown.
From Qatna/al-Mishrifé (northeast of Ḥomṣ).
Alabaster.
Missing: head, arms, lower legs.
H 26.
Ref.: R. Mesnil du Buisson, *Syria* 9 (1928) 88-89 pl. XXXVI.9.

S-7: Brussels, Musée Royaux, inv. A. 3022.
From Arethusa/Rastan (acquisition report), bought at Ḥomṣ in 1929.
Missing: right forearm, feet.
H 22.3; w *c.*17.3; d *c.*4.
Ref.: H. F. Mussche, *De greco-romeinse plastiek in westelik Syrie en Libanon* (Ph.D. Gent 1957) 471 no. I G 9 figs. 123-24.

S-8: Brussels, Musée Royaux, inv. A. 3023.
From Arethusa/Rastan (acquisition report), bought at Ḥomṣ in 1929.
Missing: right forearm, feet.
H 19; w 7; d 3.5.
Ref.: Mussche (supra S-7) 470 no. I G 7 fig. 121.

S-9: Brussels, Musée Royaux, inv. A. 3024.
From Arethusa/Rastan (acquisition report),

https://doi.org/10.1017/S104775940007210X Published online by Cambridge University Press

bought at Ḥomṣ in 1929.
Missing: right hand, feet, cupid's head.
H *c.*16.
Ref.: Mussche (supra S-7) 470 no. I G 8 fig. 122.

S-10: Beirut, American University, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 3109.
From Arethusa/Rastan.
Missing: right arm, feet.
H 17.5.
Ref.: Mussche (supra S-7) 468 no. I E 6 fig. 110.

S-11: Ḥamā, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 563.
From Epiphaneia/Ḥamā.
Alabaster(?).
Missing: head, right hand, lower legs, cupid.
H 11; w 4.5.
Ref.: G. Ploug, *Hama – Fouilles et recherches 1931-1938*. Vol. 3.2 (Copenhagen 1985) 191 ff. figs. 44 b-c.

S-12: Royal Athena Galleries New York in 1985.
From Arethusa/Rastan.
Ivory.
Missing: garland, left hand.
Variant without cupid; Aphrodite's left hand is raised to grab loose locks hanging down.
H 16.3.
Ref.: Royal Athena Galleries, *Art of the ancient world. A guide for the collector and investor* IV (1985) no. 328.

S-13: Mainz, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, inv. no. O. 37917.
From Syria.
Missing: feet, plinth.
H 16.5; w 5.7; d 2.5.
Ref.: Künzl (supra n.1) 511-12 no. B 2 pls. 44-45.

S-14: Damascus, National Museum, inv. no. 6028/13856.
Probably from Syria, acquired 1950.
Intact.
H 24.
Ref.: *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in peripheria orient*ali no. 155 (labelled wrongly as no. 154 on pl. 165); Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 6.

S-15: Paris, Louvre, inv. no. MND 1388, cat.-no. MA 3558.
Probably from Syria. Acquired by Emiounidis in 1922.
Missing: feet.
H 27; w 8.8; d 5.
Ref.: *LIMC* II (1984) *s.v.* Aphrodite *in peripheria orientali* 161 no. 158; Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 8.

S-16: Beirut, American University, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 5508.
From Syria, acquired by Ford.
Missing: feet.
H 24.5; w 8; d *c.*4.
Unpublished.

S-17: Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, inv. 23.212.
Probably from Syria, acquired 1953.
Missing: right hand, feet, cupid.
H 37.
Ref.: D. K. Hill, "Venus in the Roman East," *JWalt* 31-32 (1968) 7-10 figs. 2-3.

S-18: Royal Athena Galleries New York in 2012.
From Syria.
Missing: feet, cupid.
H 29.
Ref.: Royal Athena Galleries, *Art of the ancient worl*d 23 (2012) no. 21.

S-19: Bonham's New York in 2012.
From Syria.
Missing: right hand, feet.
H 19.8.
Lot: Bonham's London, *Auction 19961* (2012) lot 50.

S-20: Bonham's London in 2002.
From Syria.
Ivory.
Intact.
Variant without cupid; Aphrodite's left hand is raised to grab loose locks hanging down.
H 13.4.
Ref.: Bonham's London, *Antiquities November 2002*, no. 348.

S-21: San Antonio Museum of Art.
Said to have come from near Aleppo.
Missing: right hand, right foot.
H 32.6; w 10.5; d 5.8.
Ref.: unpublished; mentioned by J. Powers in a conference paper given at CAMWS in 2014.

M-1: Present location unknown, formerly in the collection of M. Bieber.
From Antium.
Missing: right forearm, feet.
Variant: little boy standing next to Aphrodite's left leg, grasping her left hand.
H 30.
Ref.: Bieber (supra n.1) 264-68, pl. 46.

M-2: Present location unknown, formerly in the collection of Dr. Brendel (Erlangen).
From Naples.
Missing: head; overall "sehr zerstört".
H unknown.
Unpublished; mentioned by Bieber (supra n.1) 264.

M-3: Spink and Son Ltd. New York
From Rome.
Missing: cupid.
Variant: little boy standing next to Aphrodite's left leg and holding a reversed torch.
H 28
Ref.: C. Vermeule, "Notes on a new edition of Michaelis, Ancient marbles in Great Britain pt. 2," *AJA* 60 (1956) 321-50, 355-56 pl. 105 fig. 7 (no details regarding Spink sale).

M-4: Ancient Artifacts LLC
From unknown site in Italy, excavated in 1962.
Ivory.
Intact.
Variant without cupid.
H 11.1.
Lot: Ancient Artifacts LLC item no. LS200993.

M-5: Pierre Bergé Paris in 2011.
From Egypt.
Alabaster.
Missing: head, right arm, left hand, feet, cupid.
H 20.
Ref.: Pierre Bergé, *Archéologie* (1 Dec. 2011) no. 174.

M-6: Santa Barbara Art Museum, inv. no. unknown.
From Egypt.
Missing: head, right hand, right foot, cupid.
H unknown.
Unpublished.

M-7: Nicosia, Cyprus Archaeological Museum, inv. 1952 X 6.
From Cyprus?
Missing: right hand, feet, head of cupid.
H unknown.
Unpublished.

M-8: Bonham's London in 2008.
Provenance unclear ("Egypt or Transjordan"). "Baalbek" inscribed in pencil on the back.
Missing: feet.
H 19.
Ref.: Bonham's London, *Antiquities, 1 May 2008*, no. 414.

M-9: Aweidah Gallery Jerusalem in 2014.
Samaria.
Missing: right hand, feet, cupid.
H 20.6; w 6.5.
Lot: Aweidah Gallery Ancient Art (Jerusalem), item no. 1037007.

M-10: Leclere Paris in 2013.
From Asia Minor.
Intact.
Variant without cupid; Aphrodite's left hand is raised, holding an apple.
H 21.
Lot: Leclere Maison de ventes, vente 20 Sept 2013 lot 103.

U-1: Bochum, Kunstsammlungen der Ruhr-Universität, Antikenmuseum inv. 106.
Provenance unknown; formerly in Fulda, private collection.
Missing: feet, right arm of cupid.
H 35.6.
Ref.: Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 9 (wrong provenance Antium, confused with M-1); Andreae (supra n.60) 86 fig. 53, Kat. 25.

U-2: Bonham's London in 2014.
Provenance unknown; formerly in French private collection, acquired in Paris in the 1960s.
Missing: feet, right arm of cupid.
Variant: little boy standing on rock next to Aphrodite's left leg, grasping her left hand.
H 30.6.
Lot: Bonham's (London) *Antiquities, 2 Oct 2014*, lot 52.

U-3: Artemission Antiquities London.
Provenance unknown; formerly (1980s) in collection of M. Koli (London).
Missing: head, right hand, lower legs, upper body of cupid.
H 12.3.
Lot: Artemission Antiquities London item 24.24119.

U-4 Pytheas Paris 2002.
Provenance unknown.
Missing: right hand, feet, right hand of cupid.
H 25.
Ref.: Künzl (supra n.1) 512, list of replicas no. 10.

U-5: Pierre Bergé et Associés Paris in 2007.
Provenance: "Orient".
Missing: head, garland, feet; head, right arm and feet of cupid.
H 30.
Ref.: Pierre Bergé et Associés, *Vente publique, Drouot-Richelieu, 1 Dec. 2007*, no. 161.

U-6: Christie's London in 2003.
Provenance unknown.
Missing: feet; upper body of cupid.
H 25.7.
Ref.: Christie's London, *Antiquities, including an English private collection of ancient gems, part I, 13. May 2003*, no. 146.

U-7: Christie's New York in 1997.
Provenance unknown.
Missing: feet; head of cupid.
H 31.
Ref.: Christie's New York, 30 May 1997, no. 150.

U-8: Sotheby's NewYork in 1987.
Provenance unknown.
Missing: garland.
Variant: left arm raised.
H 33.
Ref.: Sotheby's (NewYork), *Antiquities and Islamic Art, 24 and 25 Nov. 1987*, no. 475.

U-9: Christie's London in 1979.
Provenance unknown.
Missing: feet.
H 21.5.
Ref.: Christie's London, *Fine Antiquities, 31 May 1979*, no. 256 pl. 38.

U-10: Christie's London in 1979.
Provenance unknown.
Missing: feet, garland.
H 24.9.
Ref.: Christie's London, *Fine Antiquities, 31 May 1979*, no. 257 pl. 38.

U-11: Sotheby's New York in 1988.
Provenance unknown.
Intact.
Variant: little boy standing next to Aphrodite's left leg.
H 26.
Ref.: Sotheby's New York, *Antiquities and Islamic Art, 2 Dec 1988*, no. 89.

U-12: Bauer Cologne in 1978.
Provenance unknown.
Alabaster.
Missing: garland, lower legs.
Variant without cupid; Aphrodite's left hand is raised to grab loose locks hanging down.
H 20.
Ref.: Künzl (supra n.1) 512 pl. 56.2.

U-13: College of Staten Island A 70.7.37.
Provenance unknown.
Missing: right hand, feet.
H 24.3.
Ref.: College of Staten Island (City University of NY) museum, archaeology study collection for ancient and medieval civilizations A 70.7.37. See www.library.csi.cuny.edu/archives/siias/romanempire.html

U-14: University of South Florida library, inv. 113.
Provenance: "Eastern Mediterranean".
Missing: right hand, feet.
H 18.
Ref.: University of South Florida (Tampa) library, inv. 113. See http://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0004754/00001/1j

U-15: Delorme & Collin du Bocage Paris in 2013.
Provenance: "Orient".
Described as "calcite" but certainly white marble.
Missing: lower body from the hips down; both hands.
H 7.5.
Lot: *Delorme & Collin du Bocage vente Archéologie 15 May 2013*, lot 134.

U-16: Gorny & Mosch Munich in 2015.
Provenance unknown.
Missing: lower body from the hips down; head; right forearm.
H 15.7.
Lot: *Gorny & Mosch Auktion Kunst der Antike 23, Dec 2015, sale 235* lot 370.