Portraits of the Classical Period in Cyprus

Koiner, Gabriele

Research Assistant
Institute of Archaeology
Graz University

How to cite this paper: Koiner, Gabriele, “Portraits of the Classical Period in Cyprus”, in the website: Kyprios Character. History, Archaeology & Numismatics of Ancient Cyprus kyprioscharacter.eie.gr/en/t/AM (Accessed: 10/04/2020).

Published: June 7, 2015 Updated: June 7, 2015 Submitted in: English
Edited by: Bourogiannis, Giorgos. Panagiotopoulou, Chryssa
Final editing: Markou, Evangeline

This paper is also available in: Greek

Your use of the scientific texts on Kyprios Character website, indicates your acceptance of Kyprios Character’s Terms and Conditions of use. The content is for personal, non-commercial use. For more information about the Kyprios Character website please contact us. If you would like to cite this paper, please follow the citation indication above.
Portraits of the Classical Period in Cyprus

Koiner, Gabriele

Introduction

Human images were prominent features in the Cypriote society. Portraits, depictions of real human beings, of both sexes and of different ages, whether known to us or not, formed an important part of the huge corpus of anthropomorphic images in Cyprus. We encounter them in limestone and marble votive statues, on bases for lost bronze honorific statues of the Hellenistic and Roman times, in marble, limestone and terracotta grave statues and reliefs, as well as on coins. The portraits were displayed in sanctuaries within the cities or their territories and, during the time of the kingdoms, in the palaces’ sanctuaries as well. Funerary portraits were displayed on top of tomb monuments or were deposited in the tomb. Until the Hellenistic times, portrait statues were not set up in public spaces outside the sanctuaries, like on the agorae of Greek cities, at least as far as we can tell at the moment.

The Classical period adopted Greek models in portraits, and at the same time it yielded portraits of high-ranking persons never to be found in Greece, due to its political structure and its connection to the Levantine culture. Furthermore, it featured human portraits in funerary sculpture.

Royal portraits from Archaic to Classical times

The political organisation of Cyprus in the Classical times with its division in more or less ten kingdoms, produced portraits of kings, the aristocracy, and high officials, adorned with signs of their power, both in votive and funerary portraiture.

Statues with Egyptianising double crown and dress belong to the most distinguished representations of members of the elite throughout the Archaic period. It is generally believed that Cypriote double crowns do not adorn Egyptian pharaohs but Cypriote kings. Probably, this type of crown was developed for Phoenician kings and spread via Phoenician Kition to Cyprus where it was enthusiastically adopted by non-Phoenician kings. A late representative of the series, a head from Malloura,\(^1\) dates to the late 5th century BC, when Cyprus had long been part of the Achaemenid kingdom. As Malloura is located near Idalion, which came under the control of the king of Kition at about 450 BC, the head in the Louvre
may be a portrait of a king of Kition.

Princely portraits on sarcophagi

Tombs are a most valuable source of portraits. During the Archaic period, royal tombs were adorned with precious items and horses. From the beginning of the 5th century onwards, the portrait of the king or the prince is displayed on sarcophagi, either in a narrative scene or as an idealized portrait on the lid of an anthropoid sarcophagus.

The Amathous and Golgoi sarcophagi in New York, dating to the 2nd quarter of the 5th century BC, feature bearded men in Greek dress. The Amathous sarcophagus shows a man in a chariot, shaded by a parasol. He wears a turban, a headdress typical for men in socially high positions. The Golgoi sarcophagus depicts a bearded man in Greek dress standing in a chariot and, on a second frieze, banqueting. These occupations are well known in Assyrian and Achaemenid art and belong to typical scenes of princely lives in Lycia and Caria as well. The prince on the Amathous sarcophagus can be easily identified with the king of this city. The man on the Golgoi sarcophagus is probably not the king but may be an aristocrat or high official of Golgoi, which was not capital of a kingdom.

Anthropoid male and female sarcophagi were found in the cities of Kition and Amathous on the south coast of Cyprus. This type is Phoenician in its origin combining an Egyptian anthropoid or anthropomorphic sarcophagus with a Greek-style ideal portrait on the lid, sometimes with the whole figure depicted on it. Chronologically, they range from the early 5th century to the middle of the 4th century BC.

A marble sarcophagus recently discovered at the necropolis of Kition features vivid colouring. The head’s hair is dressed in button-like curls, arranged in several rows above the forehead, and long strands falling onto the shoulder. A moustache identifies the person as male, which is corroborated by the skeleton of a man older than 25-30 years in the sarcophagus. Hair, moustache and eyes are painted in yellow, probably denoting blond hair colour. This is rather surprising given the fact that the dead probably was of Phoenician origin or at least a member of the princely house of Kition. Further, the portrait confirms that heads with strands of hair falling onto the shoulder indicate male gender. There are several examples with this hairstyle in the first half of the 5th century BC, some of them having been regarded as female.

Most of the Cypriote anthropoid sarcophagi were imported from Phoenicia or were produced in Cyprus by artists trained in Phoenicia. Two of the sarcophagi are of local
design. One of them, a sarcophagus made in local gypsum depicts a female, veiled portrait. Its veil, the triangular shape of its face, the pointed eyes and the expanded ears with rosette-shaped earrings resemble very much the faces on Hathor capitals of the first half of the 5th century BC. Thus, maybe the sarcophagus was created in a workshop familiar with these capitals and is to be dated to the second quarter or to the middle of the 5th century, or it was produced in the early 4th century BC after early Hathor capitals. Hathor heads, equally, were featured in prominent places on grave steles in the Archaic and Classical periods. The female was buried with Egyptian scarabs, which possibly demonstrate a certain preference for Egyptian cult.

Male portraits

The Golgoi sarcophagus depicts a man typical of the 5th century BC, wearing a floral crown with different kinds of plants (laurel, oak, daffodil, ivy), a long beard, short hair and Greek dress with long mantle and short sleeves, a finely pleated himation. Equally, young men, without beard, were depicted in the same dress. The zig zag hair and beard of statues of the third quarter of the 5th century BC has often been explained as imitation of bronze sculpture.

The end of the 5th century marks the end of smiling faces, several decades after Greek faces had lost their smile. This does not reflect a backward character of Cypriote art, but a most deliberate choice, and the way in which the Cypriote society wanted to be portrayed and perceived.

This -apparently archaistic- character is found in hairstyles as well. Snail curls were standard coiffures in the Late Archaic times, but they were worn until the late 4th century, maybe even in the early 3rd century BC. The men who wore them surely had a special status, that is a priest, a prince or a king. This may also be the reason for the disappearance of this hairstyle after such special functions had vanished with the end of the kingdoms.

Male limestone and terracotta votive heads of the 4th century BC show a gradually developing realism in faces, although terracotta bodies could be minimally structured, such as the ones excavated in Marion.

Beards were a fashionable feature for adult men of a certain age throughout the 5th century BC. In votive sculpture, they became shorter and less voluminous in the 4th century. Some votive statues, showing snail curls above the forehead, display a very finely-carved beard, hardly perceptible to us today, but probably painted in antiquity [Fig. 1]. Beards
seem to disappear in Hellenistic votive sculpture, when sideburns were fashionable until Roman times. There are rare exceptions, such as a bearded head from Golgoi for which a date to the Early Hellenistic or even the Late Classical times has been proposed.\(^8\)

In funerary sculpture full beards and signs of age, such as nasolabial furrows and wrinkles on the forehead belong to the standard repertoire\(^9\) [Fig. 2]. Imports of tomb stones from Attica and other places in Greece, and familiarity with Greek customs and art - Cypriots lived in Athens and other Greek cities- produced funerary portraits very close to the Attic models,\(^10\) although the dress code, including chiton and mantle, was the East Greek one.

In the second half of the 4th century BC the mantle draping type of Kos, as on the "Hippocrates of Kos" or the "Philosopher of Delphi", is adopted. This draping is worn throughout the Hellenistic period. The "Sophocles" or arm-sling format, though it made its appearance on imported funerary reliefs already in the 4th century, it became fashionable only in the (Late) Hellenistic and Roman periods. Statues in the East Greek manner display a chiton underneath the mantle. Corpulent bodies, as shown by the Lateran Sophocles, were also a feature of Cypriote portraiture from the late 4th century onwards.

Female portraits

Women of Archaic and Classical Cyprus did not wear double crowns, but, in archaic times, they were sometimes adorned with turbans. They also wore seals suspended on necklaces, indicating that these women had a certain economic or even political power. There is no epigraphic evidence on priestly functions of women until the Hellenistic period, but literary sources mention self-conscious Phoenician women such as Jezebel, the daughter of Ittobaal of Tyre and wife of Ahab of Israel, or Amastart of Sidon, or Cypriote queens of the late 4th century BC, Axiothea of Paphos and Biothea of Salamis, not to mention the 11th century princess Hatiba of Alashiya. Female anthropoid sarcophagi corroborate the privileged status of Phoenician women.

Portraits of females clearly render their social status and age by dress, hairstyle, headgears and jewellery. The Late Archaic period introduces Greek dress and the portrait habit. The youthful Vouni kore\(^11\) closely follows Greek models draped in Cypriote dress, wearing no headgear, except a crown of flowers, in contrast to probably married women whose hair was covered with the veil or the kekryphalos. This headgear consisted of stripes of cloth wrung around the head with a small part of hair peeping through at the top.

Some female representations display a much elaborated calathos adorned with flowers or
even figural scenes. Until recently, these females have been interpreted as goddesses, but, given the fact that calathoi were worn as bridal crowns in Greece, it was proposed for good reason that they depict mortal women. Big heads with elaborately decorated calathoi may represent queens, princesses, or high-ranking females. Again, we lack information about the reason for the dedication; it could be because the dedicatee was a priestess, a patroness of a festival, or it is as a dedication for a marriage or as memorial after her death. A 4th-century head with floral crown and snail curls from Idalion [Fig. 3] is a late representative, with Idalion belonging to the territory of Kition at the time, maybe the portrait of a princess of Kition. Her archaistic snail curls are equally to be found at female portraits of 4th century Caria.

Female dress and jewellery

Female dress was gradually adapted to Greek fashion; the chiton and the himation in Greek pattern became the standard dress. In some cases, though, three layers of garments were draped.

The late 5th century BC introduces patterns closely related to Attic models of the Rich style with limestone votive sculpture, and with terracotta grave statues from Western Cyprus. The 4th century goes a step further towards visibility of the female body with breasts and belly being clearly perceptible underneath the cloth. Buttons linked the densely pleated parts of the chiton at the upper arms. Crossed girdles, such as the maschalister or the periamma were worn over these thin garments [Fig. 4]. Some local garments persisted, though. Females wore a short shoulder mantle draped over the breast in a half circle. A similar mantle was part of male clothing in the Archaic and Early Classical times.

Rich jewellery was typical in the Archaic times, but in the Classical period jewellery was reduced; heavy pectorals and ear caps were not worn any more, and necklaces consisting of round or elongated, fruit-like elements were put on instead. The disappearance of seals on pectorals does not mean that the sealing power of women came to an end, but instead, seals were probably worn attached on finger rings.

Ethnic portraits

Are the different ethnics discernible in portraits? Inscriptions on statue bases or grave steles inform us about the ethnic origin of the honoured or deceased. There were
differences, as Phoenician genealogies were much more expanded than the Greek ones. On the other hand, Phoenician-Greek bilingual inscriptions show that Phoenicians translated their names into Greek for the Greek part of the inscription as a kind of assimilation to the Greek culture. When looking at portraits, at first sight, neither votive nor funerary sculpture do reflect any ethnic differences. They all seem to imitate patterns which were accepted throughout the island. Only at a closer sight, there appears ethnic Phoenician dress like the garment on the newly discovered anthropoid sarcophagus from Kition,\(^ {14}\) or a hair fillet on a male head on a grave stone from Pergamos,\(^ {15}\) or a characteristic high headgear for a priest.\(^ {16}\)

Royal portraits in the 4th century BC

Royal houses continued to dedicate votive statues with less pompous attributes than in Archaic times. A headless male statue from Golgoi is holding the mask of a bull.\(^ {17}\) The inscription on the statue names a "Pnytagoras", thus probably being a member of the royal family of Salamis or maybe even King Pnytagoras (361-331 BC) himself, as Antoine Herrary has suggested. Accepting this interpretation, the statue, with its distinctive draping of *chiton* and *himation* and its "lingula" type sandals, is also an anchor for dating Cypriote sculpture of the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic periods.

A bearded over-life-size head in Istanbul wears a headgear, resembling a Phrygian cap.\(^ {18}\) His hair and beard are in snail curls, his ears, partly covered by the cap, are adorned with disk-shaped earrings. The headgear alludes to the Achaemenid tiara, which was worn by males in Cyprus possibly to underline their loyalty to Achaemenid royalty. The Istanbul head, probably sculpted about 350 BC, may be the portrait of a king, possibly also from the royal house of Salamis, perhaps Pnytagoras (361-331 BC) or Evagoras II (361-351 BC). The latter was satrap of Sidon and, in this role, minted coins with his portrait wearing a *kyrbasia*. His portrait appears in profile or frontally on his coins of this series, featuring a head which was initially interpreted as Aphrodite; however according to the research of Evangeline Markou,\(^ {19}\) it is now seen as a male head, maybe Teukros, the *heros ktistes* of Salamis, or the king himself. Evagoras II alludes, thus, to both parts of his reign: Salamis and Sidon. These heads were adorned with a crown of leaves, disc-shaped earrings, torques and probably artificial parts of coiffure. They were minted by Evagoras II on to Menelaos, Nikokreon’s successor, brother of Ptolemy I, who was king of Salamis and *strategos* of Cyprus. The head does not alter throughout these years, thus being an ideal portrait, possibly depicting the king as priest, in a specific function or at a specific festival connected to Aphrodite or her
male counterpart.

Tumulus 77 at Salamis, the "kenotaph of Nikokreon" yielded no human remains but clay heads burnt in the pyre, maybe representing a family. The five juvenile and aged male and female ideal heads follow Greek models of the late 4th century, for example ivory heads from klinai in Macedonian tombs at Vergina and Lefkadia. The multiple connections to Macedonia, such as the type of the burial, alabastra, crowns or parts of sarissae, Macedonian long lances, attest to a memorial for a man of royal status in times of Macedonian supremacy. The owner of the tomb could be, according to Vassos Karageorghis' brilliant idea, King Nikokreon, driven into suicide and burnt in his palace. However, possible candidates would also be his brother Nitaphon, maybe having found his end and burial far from home in the service of Alexander, or even Menelaos, Ptolemy's I brother, successor of Nikokreon and last king of Salamis.

Marble and bronze portraits

Marble and bronze statues were produced in the 4th century, but marble sculptures and statue bases for the bronze sculptures have been preserved only in small numbers. However, bronze statues were imitated by sculptors in limestone already in the second half of the 5th century, as indicated by the style of the hair and beards. Thus, bronze statues must have existed in a wider range.

Marble was still restricted to coastal cities. Amathous can boast several of them such as a late 4th century female head with melon coiffure, possibly the portrait of a high-ranking female, and a head of a boy. A statue base and a treasury in the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Amathous displayed the sons of King Androkles in bronze and in marble, an identification of the marble head with the king’s son Orestheus has been brought up for discussion by Antoine Hermary.

Late Classical children’s portraits are also known from Kourion and Paphos [Fig. 5]. They closely follow Greek -specifically Attic- models or were even sculpted by Greek or Athenian artists. They certainly had an impact on local workshops which copied these models in limestone.
List of illustrations

The images that follow are available in the digital version of the present article in the website *Kyprios Character*. You can view the images by following the link: kyprioscharacter.eie.gr/en/t/AM

Fig. 1: Male head, limestone, from Potamia, Nicosia, Cyprus Museum Potamia 55, by permission of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus (© photo G. Koiner).

Fig. 2: Male head, terracotta, unknown provenance, Nicosia, Cyprus Museum Terracotta D 236, by permission of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus (© photo G. Koiner).

Fig. 3: Female head, limestone, from Idalion (?), Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum 25212, Universalmuseum Joanneum, Archäologie & Münzkabinett (© photo G. Koiner).

Fig. 4: Female torso, limestone, from Arsos, Nicosia, Cyprus Museum D 296, Larnaca District Museum, by permission of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus (© photo G. Koiner).

Fig. 5: Statuette of a child, marble, from Paphos, Nicosia, Cyprus Museum E 509, by permission of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus (© photo G. Koiner).
Endnotes

4 Georgiou 2009, 118-123, figs 3-7.
5 Larnaca Museum 467 and 468, from Kition: Frede 2000, 138-139, cat. X. 5, pl. 121b., 122; Lembke 2001, 148, cat. 103, fig. 21, pl. 50d.
6 Childs 1988, 124-126 , pl. 40.
8 Koiner 2013; Hermary, Mertens 2014, 97-98, cat. 91. Cf. the Late Classical male bearded head with nasolabial furrows, Nicosia, Cyprus Museum D 294: Hermary 1989, 189, fig. 22.12.
9 Male head, terracotta, unknown provenance, Nicosia, Cyprus Museum, terracotta D236, unpublished.
12 Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum 25212: Koiner 2006.
13 Female torso, limestone, from Arsos, Nicosia, Cyprus Museum, D296 / Larnaca District Museum 654: Connelly 1988, 22, pl. 10, figs 34-35.
14 Georgiou 2009, 118-123, figs 3-7.
15 Nicosia, Cyprus Museum 1969/XII-9/1: Pogiatzi 2003, 195, cat. 112 pl. 64.
19 Markou 2006, 136-146; Markou 2007, 288-290, pl. 1, 8-11; 3, 8.
20 Karageorghis 1973, 128-202, no. 870, pls. CCV-CCVI, L; no. 951, pls. CCVII-CCVIII, M; no. 347, pls. CCIX-CCX, O., no. 815, pls. CCXI-CCXII, N; no. 952, pls. CCXIII-CCXV, P.
Bibliography


Raptou, E. 1999: *Athènes et Chypre à l’époque perse (VIe-IVe s. av. J.-C.*)*, Lyon.


Stylianou, A. 2007: Der Sarkophag aus Amathus, Dynastensarkophage mit szenischen Reliefs aus Byblos und Zypern, 2, Mainz, 3-188.