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The statue of Venus Pudica from Skupi

UDK: 904:730.046.1(497.711),,652”

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During the archaeological excavations of the Roman city of Skupi performed in 2008, a marble statue of Venus was found in the central part of the urban area. The statue was found in the central room of a large thermal facility recently discovered on the site. The bathhouse is the largest public building to have been discovered in the city to date, extending north-south the full length of the city quarter in which it is located. Ongoing research indicates the building also ran the full length of the city quarter in a west-east direction. The architectural organization is characteristic of the Imperial Style.¹ (Fig. 1) The room where the statue was placed is higher in relation to its surroundings and paved with marble slabs, mostly green in colour, but also yellow and red. The statue of Venus stood in a semi-circular niche of the room. (The niche was paved with the same marble slabs on the walls. In the course of the research, fragments of a wall mosaic with golden petals were found in the same room of this luxury facility.) The statue was exceptionally highly polished, even more so at the front, indicating the intention to place it in the niche with its front facing towards the visitors' view. It was found outside the building on its back beside the niche, along with rubble from the collapsed structure (Fig. 2).

The statue of Venus is made of fine-grained white marble, finely polished. It is life-size in height at 1.70 m tall. The marble originated from the island of Paros in the Cyclades, which confirms the high value of the work.² The goddess is naked,

1 Archaeological excavations of the central sector of the Skupi site were carried out under the guidance of the author of this text. For more on the thermal facility, see: M. Ončevska Todorovska, *The Thermal Complex in Skupi*, Proceedings of the Symposium 'Water, Life and Pleasure', Strumica, 2009, 75-84. The photographs in the text are by S. Nedelkovski, Museum of the City of Skopje, and from the documentation of the Art Academy in Split.

2 Conservation and restoration of the sculpture was performed at the Art Academy in Split, Croatia, where the professional team was led by renowned Professor Ivo Donelli. Laboratory analysis of the marble was performed in the natural science laboratory of the Croatian Restoration Institute in Zagreb, where analysis was carried out with optical microscopy under the leadership of Profesor Domagoj Mudronja. The marble of the sculpture has been compared with marble from Paros and Prilep. For marble in Antiquity see: 'Marble and other decorative stones', Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece, Editor Nigel Guy Wilson, Taylor and Francis Group, USA 2006, 448, where there is data on the marble quarries that were exploited in the Aegean area. For historical and geological reasons, these quarries were concentrated in certain areas. The white and grey marble used in Athens came mostly from quarries in Attica, where Mount Pentele yielded particularly good white marble and Mount Hymettus produced fine grey marble, though both mountains contained marble of both colours. The best known white marble was quarried from the island of Paros in the Cyclades. From as early as the 'golden period' of Aegean sculpture, the Archaic period,



Fig. 1. The excavation of the statue of Venus

the weight of her body supported on her left leg in a Praxiteles *contrapposto* pose. Her hands are positioned to cover her breasts and loins. A dolphin diving with its tail raised up is carved by the side of her left leg. Her head is turned slightly downwards to the left. Her facial features show tenderness and humility—her overall expression giving a general impression of mild elation. Her face

is oval with a straight, elongated nose. Her eyes are large, wide open, and without irises. Her mouth is small, her lips slightly open, adding a melancholy aspect. Her neck is large and solid, and her chin is rounded and prominent. Her hair is sculpted in a variety of curls and locks with a parting at the front. The hair is pulled back and tied in a bun at the crown. The volume of hair contrast with the soft features of her face. At the top of her head is a narrow groove in which a diadem was probably placed. Her ears have holes for earrings, perhaps of precious metal to match the excellent workmanship of the sculpture. The whole statue is polished and composed with remarkably harmonious proportions. (Fig. 3)

Our knowledge of the iconography of this goddess comes mainly from the time of the Late Republic and the Imperial Period.³ In the 2nd century BC, copies of Greek statues of Venus began to be produced in great volume and in various sizes. However, no entirely new types of representations of Venus have been discovered amongst these numerous copies. Copies often vary only in the position of the hands or the addition of items of clothing. The best known are of the type Venus de Milo (Louvre), Venus of Capua (Naples), and the Venus Pudica.⁴

The iconography of Venus shows influences from other mythological goddesses and related forms, such as Isis and Tyche (Roman Fortuna) in the 1st century BC and

the schools of sculpture of the islands of Naxos, Samos, Chios and Paros dominated the Greek world, though these schools were not the birthplace or initiators of Greek monumental sculpture. In the early Classical period, the most popular sculpture came from the island of Paros where the best quality white marble was found. In the Hellenistic period, the islands of Rhodes and Delos came to rival Paros. Greek and Roman elements henceforth coexisted in sculpture. Copies began to dominate, leading to a uniformity in presentation. See: Sideris Athanasios, *Aegean Schools of Sculpture in Antiquity*, 2007. Paros marble was also used in making the Medici Venus and the Winged Victory of Samothrace.

3 LIMC (Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae), VIII/1, 192-231.

4 Ibid., Venus type Louvre / Naples photo no. 1-15, Venus type Pudica photo no. 93-132. For the period of classicism, see Antonio Corso, 'The Art of Praxiteles II, The Mature Years' (Rome 2007, 42), in which it is argued that two new forces encouraged *agalmatophilia* in Greek society from late classicism: Platonism, with its need for art to imitate nature, creating conditions for a belief in living statues; and Praxiteles's statues of love and images of young nude subjects that were compelling enough to fall in love with.



Fig. 2. Venus and the semi-circular niche of the bath

Nike (Roman Victoria) in the 1st century AD. The wide range of guises in which Venus was portrayed can make identification problematic, allowing potential confusion with nymphs, muses, even Diana or Magna Mater or Leda. A good example of syncretism in representations of Venus can be seen in the mural in the House of Venus in Pompeii. This Venus lies on a seashell with drapery characteristic of Greek statues from the 4th century BC and the iconography symbolizes Venus as the patron of the sea.⁵ (Fig. 4)

To understand the Roman manner of collecting and displaying statues of various types, styles and iconography, we need to compare it with the Greek manner. Ancient sources such as Cicero, Pliny the Elder, Juvenal, Petronius, and Statius⁶ emphasized the contrast between Greek and Roman methods of portraying figures: the aesthetic, thoughtful and not necessarily muscular Greek style as against the manly and practical Roman style. Greco-Roman contrasts could often be highly complex: what was seen by some Romans as femininity and moral degeneration in sculptural styles on various buildings in Greece under Augustus has been associated with sculpture from the Asian part of the Aegean. The tension between Greek culture and Roman tradition, the Romans' love for Greek art and the clash with their own ethics concerned two opposing systems of thought.⁷ In his analysis of this phenomenon, Stewart suggests that in this mixing of systems we are experiencing something that in Roman religion is called a 'system within a system'. And yet Nero was more notorious for his philhellenism than

5 LIMC, *op. cit.*, 227-228.

6 P. Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society, Representation and Response*, Oxford 2003, 225, 227, cited work: G. Becatti, *Arte e gusto negli scrittori Latini*, Florence 1951.

7 P. Stewart, *op. cit.*, 224-227.

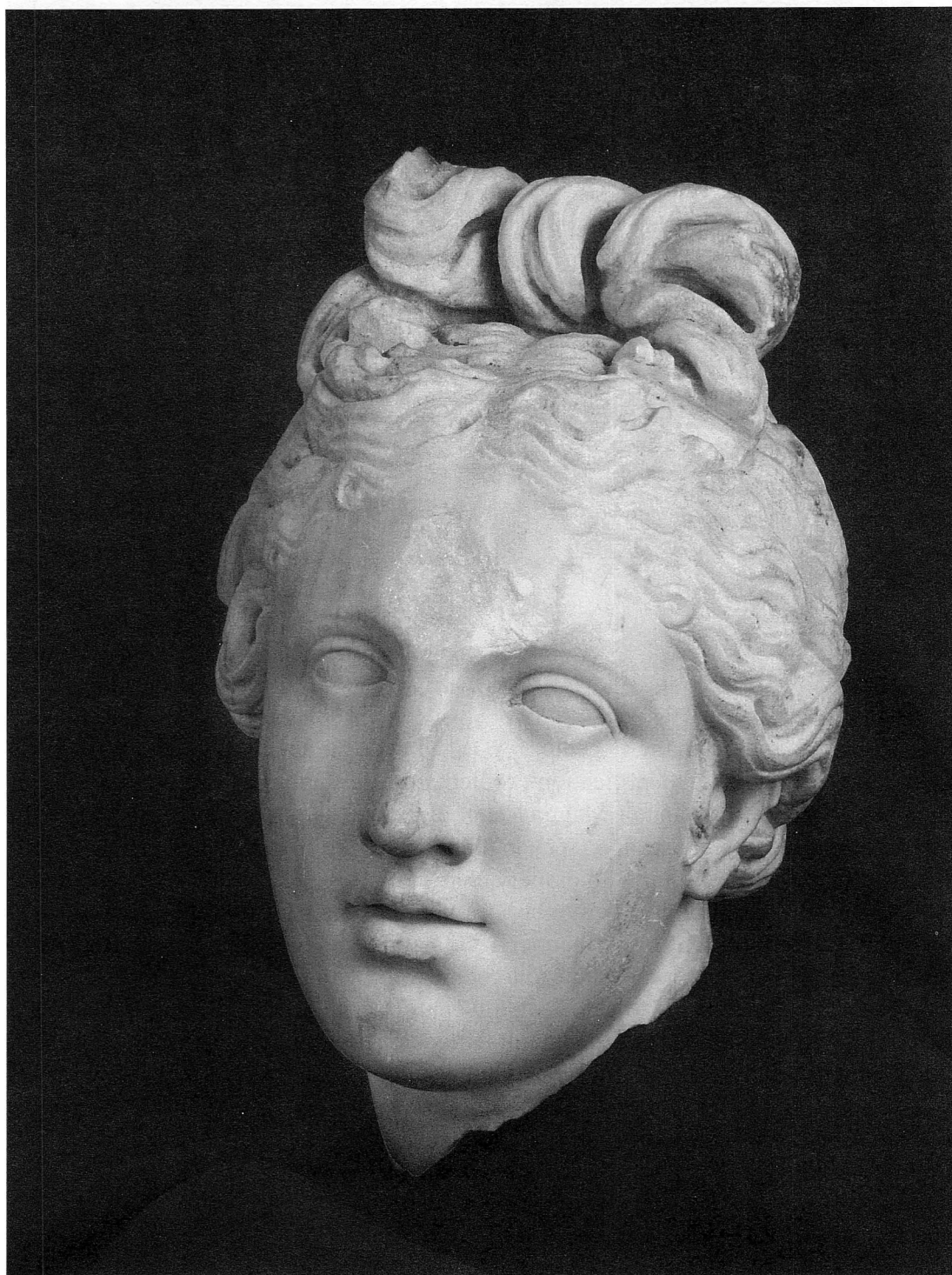


Fig. 3. The head of Venus

appreciated for the unprecedentedly ingenious sculptures he commissioned.

Venus was worshipped as the goddess of the garden in Campania in the 2nd century BC. Numerous statues are found in the houses of this Period, especially in the peristyle in Pompeii.⁸ Pompeii had attained the status of a colony in the 1st century BC under the Roman general Sulla, under the name Colonia Cornelia Veneria Pompeanorum, and a temple of Venus was built by the Porta Marina.

Venus (Aphrodite in the Greek pantheon), the goddess of love, beauty and reproduction, was considered in Roman mythology to be the mother of the Trojan hero Aeneas whose descendant, Romulus, founded Rome and was thus the proto-mother of the Roman people. The goddess attained high status in Caesar's time as he claimed her as the ancestress of the *gens Julia*.⁹ Caesar introduced the Venus Genetrix in 68 BC in the context of a funerary eulogy (*laudatio funebris*). A coin, denarius, was then minted with the head of Venus. In 48 BC, at the Battle of Pharsalus, Caesar dedicated the construction of a temple to Venus Victrix.¹⁰ Caesar's Temple of Venus Genetrix was erected in the Forum Julius in Rome in 46 BC. After Caesar's death, Octavian continued to worship the goddess. Following the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, Octavian approved the minting of coins bearing a portrait of Venus Victrix. Poets, especially Virgil, celebrated Venus as a protector of Julian principles. In 136/137 AD, Emperor Hadrian erected the *Templum Veneris et Romae*, the largest temple in ancient Rome, in the *Forum Romanum*. The temple was devoted to Venus Felix and Roma Aeterna and sculptures of the two goddesses were set on either side of the temple.

In the Late Republic, Venus enjoyed great popularity in festivals and other branches of art. Numerous copies were produced in the form of statues and terracotta throughout the empire. The goddess last appears represented in colourful North African mosaics in the Early Christian Period.¹¹

Augustus presented himself as a virtuous Roman leader, returning temple decorations which Mark Antony had declared his private property to the Asian cities from which they came. Philhellenism was expressed differently by different Roman rulers, as is indicated by the variety of sculptures in the Roman Period. Cicero's statement *religione moventur omnes* ('all are touched by religious feelings') describes a public function and appeal of art at this time.¹² The production of copies for Roman patrons is evidence of their great appreciation of Greek statues.¹³ Many Greek statues had been appropriated throughout the Republican Period of sculptural works from the Hellenistic epoch. Copies and replicas were made of these sculptures. Replicas were made and arranged by memory and according to literary description in an effort to preserve the original style.

Roman patrons sought the unattainable creations of the great Greek sculptors. A great number of copies were created, thus making series of replicas. Very often the creators of copies adjusted their work according to literary descriptions of the original sculptures, keeping the original features to a great extent. Some of these copies are agreed to be sculptural masterpieces in the history of art from the Late

8 LIMC, op.cit., 193.

9 Ibid., 193-194; *Roman Myth, Religion and the Afterlife*, Catalogue, Metropolitan Museum, New York 93-95.

10 The Battle of Pharsalus took place in central Greece in 48 BC during the Civil War.

11 LIMC, 194-195.

12 P. Stewart, *op cit.* 228.

13 S. Hemingway, *Roman Erotic Art*, *Sculpture Review* 53, No.4, 2004. While contemporary portraiture follows a naturalist style, idealized bodies were replicated to represent the immortal goddess.

Hellenistic Era to the Republican Era. Modern archaeologists and art historians have subjected these reproductions to intensive criticism and analysis of the extent to which these reproductions were faithful to the sources of lost statues from famous artists.¹⁴ (Fig.5)

For example, the Venus of Knidos (or Aphrodite of Cnidus) was first successfully identified as a Roman copy through comparison with the appearance of the goddess on the coins of Knidos during the rule of the Severan dynasty.¹⁵ The Venus of Knidos was carved in Paros marble after the model of Praxiteles, who sculpted the first life-size naked female figure in three dimensions and thereby introduced a new subject into art.¹⁶ It is believed that Roman art patrons coordinated the creation of copies, while replicas were made to suit distinctive Roman tastes. The process of reproduction was highly creative. The letters of Cicero show that decoration, which includes both appropriateness and elegance, was the chief incentive for patrons to furnish their estates with sculptures of Greek style. The aim was not so much to recreate famous masterpieces as to create an appropriate cultural atmosphere.

In the Imperial Period, sculpture workshops produced torsos with a range of portraits. There was a desire among woman to be portrayed as Venus. The eastern Hellenic dynasties were the first to present themselves as goddesses. In the Period of Augustus, the ruling family in the Empire was portrayed in the same way. Cleopatra and her son Caesarion were honoured, for example, by the installation of statues of Venus and Cupid in the Temple of Venus Genetrix. By the time of Claudius and Nero, individual free citizens were deified for the first time. Sculptures of Venus

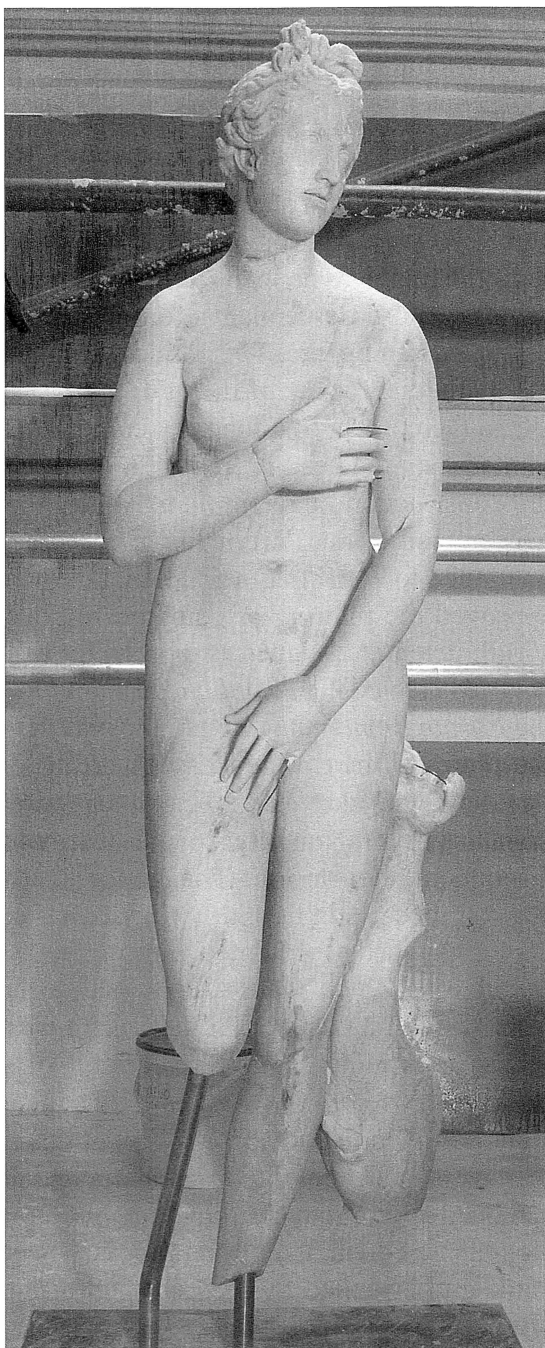


Fig. 4. The conservation and restoration of the sculpture

¹⁴ P. Stewart, *op. cit.*, 231-236.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 231-232, cited work: F. Hasked and N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900*, New Haven 1981, 330-1.

¹⁶ C. M. Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Cnidus and her successors: A Historical Review of the Female Nude in Greek Art*, Univ. of Michigan, USA 1995, 9-50. The sculpture was last seen in the Palace of Lausus in Constantinople in the early Christian period and was destroyed by fire in 476 AD.

were used as burial statues and in reliefs of the Anadyomene (Louvre) and Pudica (Naples) type. Identifying the deceased with Venus in this way was related to her function as a protector of the the dead. In the Late Republic and Early Imperial Period, Venus became associated with the same meaning as Victoria, merged in the portrayal of Venus Victrix. Venus Pronuba, the goddess of marriage, is used to present marriages on sarcophagi of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Venus and Bacchus are rarely shown together in fine art, though both are gods of vegetation.¹⁷

From the Late Republican Period, Venus appears on reliefs depicting the twelve deities, though not always in the same form. The goddess remained popular in the 3rd century AD, when high reliefs were produced. Smaller bronze and terracotta statues of Venus Pudica and Venus Anadyomene statues were particularly numerous in the provinces at this time. As in previous centuries, smaller figures were typically made as ornaments for private houses, while others were made as religious statues for altars (*larariums*). There are many depictions of Venus in relief art, too, with the goddess represented in a variety of positions and different types of clothing. Often these statues and images in relief art were of the Anadyomene type. Depictions of Venus removing her sandal were also very popular, where the erotic aspect contributing to their wide distribution. The birth of Venus from the sea became a popular topic in the second half of the 3rd century AD and this form appears frequently in mosaics and wall frescoes in Pompeii. Venus sits or lays in a seashell in a *locus amoenus* ('pleasant place'). The focus in these depictions is on Venus as a bringer of happiness, beauty and luxury.¹⁸

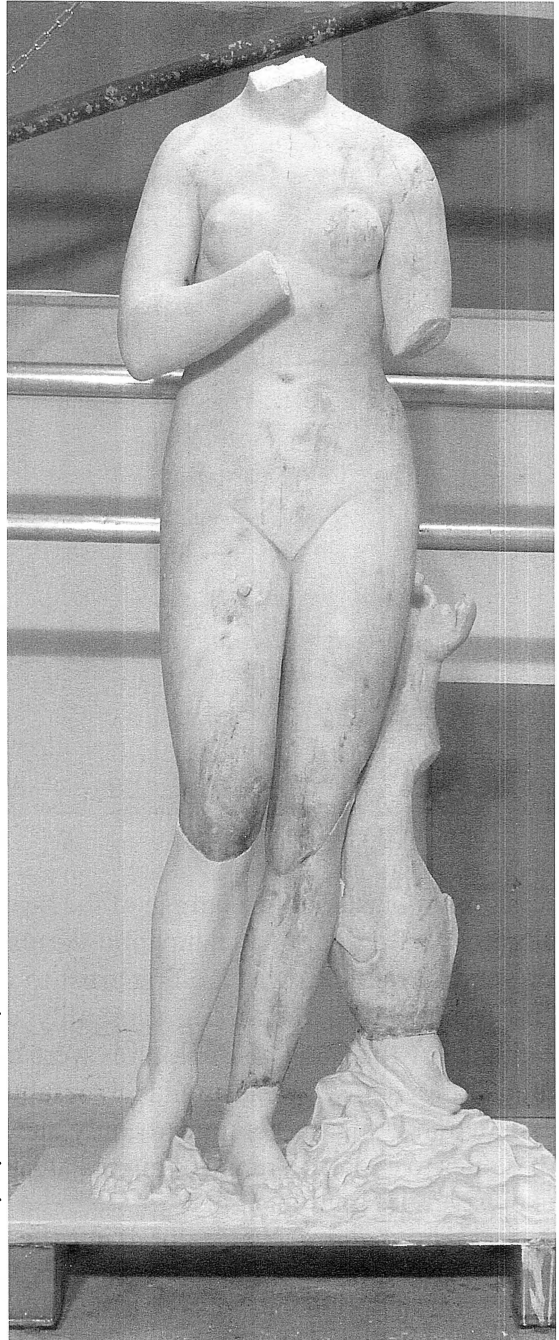


Fig. 4-a

17 LIMC, op. cit., 228-230. The deification of individuals seems to have been confined to Rome, with a few exceptions in Macedonia that require further research.

18 Ibid., 229.



Fig. 5. The head of Venus

The marble statue of Venus found in the large thermal facility in Skupi is closest in type to the Capitoline Venus, a copy made by a Roman workshop following the style of Praxiteles.¹⁹ This workshop included great sculptors whose artistic quality is evidenced during the Early Imperial Period. Their inspiration was drawn from early Hellenic sculptures of Aphrodite. In the Hellenistic Period, the idealism of Classical art gave way to greater naturalism, a logical development from the attempts of sculptors of the 4th century BC like Praxiteles, Scopas and Lysippos to represent figures more realistically. These artists sought to capture not only the physical characteristics but also the figure's internal feelings and thoughts.

The Venus de Milo in the famous Praxiteles *contrapposto* pose remains an outstanding example of the beauty of ideal proportions.²⁰ The bowed head, slightly parted lips and melancholic expression are characteristic of the representation of Venus. Praxiteles was the first artist to make a life-size statue of Aphrodite, naked and imbued with the strong sensuality of the goddess of love. Praxiteles valued elegance of form and his sculptures were carved with soft shadows and arched limbs, thus achieving suppleness and gracefulness, their faces often in semi-profile. He excelled in depicting feminine beauty and purity and clearly aimed for his sculptures of deities to express a range of human attributes. Praxiteles made his sculptures almost exclusively of marble.

The *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder, from the 1st century AD, is a rich source of information about Greek artists and their works, including an account of Praxiteles sculpting the Aphrodite of Cnidus. According to Ridgway, Praxiteles greatly influenced Alexandrian art. Sculptures of *sfumato* technique and gracious presentation were highly valued in the school of Alexandria.²¹

According to the typology of representations of Venus in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, the Venus of Skupi belongs to Type IV: a standing nude Venus, Variant A: Venus Pudica: type Cnidian, Capitol, Medici.²²

19 Beside the similarities that originate from the iconographical characteristics, the Venus from Skupi supports her body weight on the left leg, in the same fashion as the Capitoline's Venus

20 Venus de Milo, c. 150 AD (Louvre)

21 Brunilde Simondo Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture II* (200-100 B.C.), University of Wisconsin Press, 2008, 13.

22 LIMC, op.cit., 204, classification of this type. Found in : Salomon Reinach, *Repertoire de la Statuaire Greque et Romaine*, Tome VI, Paris 1930, 79-83, 352-355, are exhaustively given a number of sculptures and statues found in museums and collections in the early 20th century, the work represents a pioneering effort, which fails to state

This type and its variants is the first monumental representation of a naked Aphrodite of Cnidus by Praxiteles. Statues from the Hellenistic Period were copied in the Imperial Period in the Capitoline Venus and the Medici Venus. It is not always easy to distinguish between these types. They vary chiefly in the positions of the head, arms and legs, as well as in their decorative details. It is believed that the faces on statues of Venus Pudica were often private or royal portraits. Venus Pudica is often found in the form of figurines in the provinces of the Roman Empire.

There are sculptures of the Venus of Cnidus type in museums throughout the world. They can be found in the National Museum in Rome. There is a torso of this type in the Maison du Roi in Brussels and another in the Hadrian's Villa,



Fig. 5-a

Tivoli.²³ A statue of the Capitoline Venus type in which the goddess is represented with a dolphin can be found in the Prado in Madrid.²⁴ A late Hellenistic torso of the Medici Venus type can be found in the Woburn Abbey Collection of Classical Antiquities; The Venus Tauride in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg is thought to date from the Imperial Period, as is the torso in Dresden.²⁵ The Venus de Milo in the Louvre is made of marble from Paros. The Sculpture of Venus Pudica with a dolphin at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York²⁶ is very similar to the Medici Venus, which is a Roman copy of the lost Greek original. The representation of the goddess with the dolphin is very similar to the Venus of Skupi.

The statue of Venus from Skupi was produced in the 2nd century AD by a leading sculptor of the Praxiteles school, following Hellenistic traditions of artistic expression. The fact that it was made of marble from Paros, as well as the overall manner of the display suggest that it was one of the supreme artistic achievements of a sculptural workshop from the Roman Imperial Period. (Fig.6)

Typical of art from the Early Empire, the Venus of Skupi is shown with her mouth slightly ajar, which—together with the absence of iris and pupils—gives a sensual and melancholy impression. Compared with published findings from neighbouring areas, the statue most closely resembles a marble head of Venus found in the royal palace at

the classification of the findings.

23 LIMC, op.cit., 139, fig. 109, fig.110, p.. 204.

24 Ibid., 139, Fig. 113, p.. 205.

25 Ibid., 140, Fig. 118, Fig. 119, Fig. 121, p.. 205.

26 *Roman Myth, Religion and the Afterlife*, catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 93-95, Fig. 17.



Fig. 6. The head of Venus prior to conservation

Sirmium.²⁷ The hair is of the same style and shares some very similar elements, though the Venus from Sirmium has more volume and is more schematic while the Venus from Skupi shows the personal expression of the artist in the way each lock of hair has been separately sculpted. Also worth mentioning is the head of a figurine of Venus in the Kazanluk Museum in Bulgaria, made of fine-grained, white marble, of unknown origin.²⁸ Another torso of the Venus of Cnidus type made of Paros marble was found in the Athens Agora.²⁹ A. Jovanović writes about the findings of two statues of Venus of the Cnidian Aphrodite Pudica type in Ravna, ancient Timacium, proposing that these were replicas for a temple dedicated to the goddess.³⁰ The finding of a sculpture of the 'Aphrodite of Aphrodisias' type in Salona indicates, as Cambi suggests, the expansion of this rare cult from Aphrodisias in Asia Minor to Dalmatia.³¹

The dolphin sculpted beside the left leg of the Venus from Skupi is a common representation and related to the Greek tradition of her birth from the foam of the sea. Roman copyists often made small changes in the compositions they copied and that

27 I. Popović, *Marble Sculpture from the Imperial Palace in Sirmium*, Starinar, Books LVI/2006, Beograd 2008, 153-166, Fig. 2a-d.

28 G. Tabakova-Cankova, *Monuments of ancient sculpture in Kazanluk Museum*, IAI XXXIII (1972), 165-170, fig. 3.

29 L. Shear, *Sculpture, American Excavations in the Athenian Agora, First report*, Hesperia 2-2 (1933), Amsterdam 1969, 170-175, fig. 3, 4.

30 A. Jovanović, *Ogledi iz antčkog kulta i ikonografije*, Belgrade 2007, 186.187, Fig. 25.10 and 25.11.

31 N. Cambi, *Kip Afrodizijske Afrodite iz Dalmacije*, *Opuscula Archaeologica* 23-24, 1999, 127-132. The city of Aphrodisias first acquired cult status in the worship of Aphrodite under Caesar the other rulers of Julio-Claudian dynasty. Augustus honoured this city in Asia Minor a central role of the imperial cult of Aphrodite / Venus as the proto-mother of the Julian clan.

is the reason for the differences that occur in the manner of representing the dolphin.

In many cities, sculptures were commissioned to emulate the public spaces in the city of Rome. There were similarities in the shape, context, honorary inscriptions, and statues were awarded or approved by the senate and the people of the community.³²

Skupi's Venus was placed in the Large Thermal facility built in the centre of the city. Located in a half-dome niche dominating of the main room, it became a recognizable symbol of the city bath in Skupi. A stone altar has also been found in the bathroom inscribed with a dedication to the 'lofty goddess Venus' by Julius Antonius Lupus, quinquennial duumvir of the city and his wife.³³ This is another indication that the bathhouse was of great importance for the city of Skupi, in terms of its size, its contents and decoration, and especially the statue of Venus Pudica.

Statues of Venus were a common decoration in public baths and private gardens. The display of the statue in buildings of a private character does not necessarily indicate the religious connotations of individual observers. The copying of so many Greek works of art was an expression of Roman interest in antiquity. The style and iconography of Roman sculpture repeatedly replicates the Greek. Stuart sees the practice of copying Greek statues as a symptom of Roman sensitivity in art-history and criticism that was, however, subject to evolution in many workshops.³⁴ Starting from the reign of Augustus, sculptures become more frequent. The art of Rome was Hellenistic, but it was Hellenistic art under new conditions that led to new developments, not decadence. Therefore it is rightly called Roman art. In the eastern parts of the empire, interest in representing human forms grew less by comparison with landforms, while in Rome and the western regions the human form continued to be the focus of attention for sculptors.³⁵

Romans wrote much about Greek artists, but showed little interest in artists of their own period. It is very difficult to interpret Roman sculptures (and Hellenistic before them) in a Period of intense development. Their styles and genres had already been established in the Greek world. Current studies of sculpture are greatly influenced by other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, feminism, and gender studies.³⁶

Sculptures were an integral part of life and Romans installed sculptures and reliefs in basilicas, temples and public baths, and in their houses, villas, gardens and tombs.³⁷ The installation of sculptures in public buildings was common during the Roman Period, especially in baths³⁸. The display of Venus Pudica in Skupi indicates that the citizens of Skupi were affected by the institution of the Roman culture of the baths. Sculptures in provincial baths demonstrate the influential role of sculptures in urbanization and the Romanization of their land.

Over the centuries, Roman statues have become the most commonly shared images of the western art tradition. These statues have retained their importance in

32 Stewart, *op.cit.*, 157.

33 For more details on the altar see M. Basotova, A new votive altar dedicated to Venus from the colonia Flavia Supi, *Folia Archaeologica Balcanica*.

34 P. Stewart, *op. cit.*, 224.

35 H.N. Fowler, *A History of Sculpture*, Kessinger Publishing, USA 2005, 148-149.

36 P. Stewart, *Ancient Greece and Rome*, Edited by E. Bispham, T. Harrison and B. Parkes, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, 183-192.

37 E. A. Friedland, *The Roman Marble Sculptures from the North Hall of the East Baths at Gerasa*, *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 107, No.3, pp. 413-448. These 16 sculptures were placed in imperial style baths in the second half of the 2nd century AD and rebuilt in the early 3rd century.

38 Harold North Fowler, *A History of Sculpture*, Kessinger Publishing, USA 2005, 129-157.

modern culture, regardless of the corrections made to the historical speculations of their original excavators or current aesthetic ideals. Understanding the role of these statues in their original contexts can lead us to a greater appreciation of the significance of these statues and the role they played in expressing status, wealth, prestige, cultivation and artistic taste.

Marina Ončevska Todorovska

Резиме:

Срамежливата Венера од Скупи

За време на ископувањата на римскиот град Скупи од 2008 г., во централниот дел на урбаното јадро беше пронајдена мермерна скулптура на Венера. Скулптурата била поставена во главната, централна просторија на голема терма. Самата бања е со прилично големи димензии, досега најголемата јавна градба на Скупи. Подовите биле покриени со мермерни плочи. Самата скулптура е изработена од бел, ситнозрнест мермер. Најдена е и камена, вотивна плоча која открива кој ја дарувал оваа убава статуа. Полирањето било подетално на фронталната страна, што укажува дека стоела во полукалотеста ниша. Зачувана е во голема мера, недостасуваат само десното стопало и левата потколеница.

Во текстот, направена е детална анализа на скулптурите со претстави на Венера, преку анализа со вакви пронајдоци од Балканот и пошироко, како и анализана истовремените пишани извори. Се потенцира значењето на поставувањето на скулптури во сите сфери на јавното и приватното живеење во римскиот свет. Прифаќањето на т.н *култура на бањите* од страна на Скупјаните и градењето на голема бања со луксузна декорација, меѓу која доминира статуата на Венера, зборува повеќе од јасно колку многу културните влијанија од престолнината продреле и се прифатиле во провинциската колонија Скупи.

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