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HERO OR GOD COMES TO NEA PAPHOS

Abstract: *In September 2008, over the course of excavations at the Early Roman House, the bust of a young man was discovered in Room 24. He is depicted with curly hair and is wearing a conical cap. The author of this paper discusses the possible identification of the sculpture. There are two differing ideas. According to the first, the young man could be identified as one of the Dioskouroi, while the other theory considers him to be Attis. The author does not determine conclusively which of the concepts is appropriate, because both are supported by strong evidence.*

Keywords: *Cyprus; Nea Paphos; the Hellenistic House; hero-god; bust; sculpture; Dioskouroi*

In September of 2008, I excavated for the last time on Cyprus. While investigating parts of a huge Hellenistic House of the late 2nd century BC that was destroyed during an earthquake in 15 BC, I came across further parts of a small, private house (Pl. 1). It was uncovered south of the Villa of Theseus, upon which the eastern part of the Hellenistic House was previously located. This Early Roman House was built immediately after the abovementioned earthquake. It had several rooms set around a large open courtyard – a sort of atrium – with a plain mosaic floor (Pl. 2) (Daszewski, forthcoming).

The fill in these rooms yielded different sorts of objects, such as terracotta oil lamps of the 1st century AD. There were also figurines of Harpocrates, an elderly man and a philosopher (Daszewski 2010, 132-133), as well as an inscription concerning an unknown man, Fabios, the Tamias of Nea Paphos (Daszewski *et al.* 2008, 517). In addition, there was the marble

head of a herm (Daszewski *et al.* 2010, 509-511, fig. 7), which was once part of a larger sculpture (of Dionysos?). Plenty of Cypriot sigillata pottery was also uncovered, as well as some Early Roman Red Slip pieces dating to the 1st century AD, fragment of a metal ring and a fragment of a beautiful, bronze *candelabrum* (Daszewski *et al.* 2008, 516-517). Just southwest of the toilet of the house to the west of the wall, the lower part of a limestone statuette of a seated goddess, Kybele, accompanied by two seated lions (much destroyed) were discovered (Daszewski 1992, 66). Finally, the bust of a young man was also found (Meyza *et al.* 2011, 291-293, fig. 8).

This last sculpture, made of limestone, was lying on the floor in Room 24 (east of the courtyard) under huge stones from the walls destroyed by the earthquake of AD 127. The head, on top of a long neck, had been broken off from the lower part of the bust (Pl. 3: 1). His face was oval, full, with fleshy, prominent lips and a straight nose. The eyes had well marked eyelids and protuberant globes with pupils. The high forehead was partly covered with brown curls. A conical hat set on his head completed the typical oriental look (Pl. 3: 2). The sculpture must have been worked with different kinds of chisels. No traces of boring have been noted. The figure of the man, not carved (!) on its back side (Pl. 3: 5), had once been either attached to a shaft of the wall or set inside a niche in front of the wall. But who was this fine looking young man? A god or a hero! Was he one of the Dioskouroi, the divine twins, brothers of Helene and the children of Leda, Queen of Sparta? In both Hellenistic and Roman times, Cypriot Greeks knew and liked both of the twins, named Kastor and Polydeukes (Hermay *et al.* 1985, 567-635; cf. Queyrel 1985, 320-324; Barnard 2003, 71-75). Even earlier, in the Iron Age, Cypriots were aware of these horse-riders, although they never used their names clearly. Later on, 'the brothers' became known in the towns of Kourion and Nea Paphos, as well as Soloi (found on the floor of Temple E) (Westholm 1936, 102, 144, 150) and Amathus. Apart from their horses, they also wore conical hats (*piloi*), bore spears and swords and were often accompanied by stars. Sometimes they wore military dress and instead of *piloi* had laurel wreaths around their heads (Daszewski and Michaelides 1988, 24, fig. 7; Kondoleon 1995, 222-223, figs 141-142). All in all, the cult of the Dioskouroi, the young hero-gods of Cyprus, shows them as saviours and guardians of the Cypriot people on both the island itself and in Egypt. Many Cypriots dwelt here in the Nile area, some even previous to the Ptolemaic period.

The Dioskouroi were Greek protectors as they possessed all (or nearly all) of the requisite attributes.

The young man from the Early Roman House in Paphos is slightly different. He is alone and possesses no defining attributes apart from his fine, brown curls (including forelocks), which emerge from under his conical hat and whose sides fall down his neck (Pl. 3: 2-3). At first glance, we thought we had found a young hero-god. He is dressed with a sort of *chlamys* (or tunic?) and its green-blue folds cover his clavicles and the upper part of his chest. However, the shoulders and back of his bust are not sculpturally elaborated.

This bust was undoubtedly made in Cyprus. In the report of the excavation of 2008, we therefore mentioned the newly-found object as ‘probably of the Dioskouros’ (Meyza *et al.* 2011, 291). But was he one of these famous brothers? Alone, he might have represented the idea of both of them, but not on Cyprus! It could have been possible elsewhere, especially in Rome or many of the western countries of the Mediterranean Sea. Here, he was seen as Kastor, but when both of them were represented together, they became Kastores and not Dioskouroi. ‘*Ils sont concus comme les deux parties egales d’un tout.*’ ‘*L’image des Castores exprime avant tout leur union fraternelle au detriment de leur differences individuelles*’ (Hermay *et al.* 1985, 629).

This is why we have to look once again at the bust found in the Early Roman House. It seems that the sculpture may be of a different man, not one of the Dioskouroi but of someone else entirely. So who is this young man? Is he Attis? He has no attributes, plays no *syrinx* and has no torch, *pedum* or knife. As a matter of fact, he has no hands at all, because the bust is relatively small and narrow. Yet on his head is a Phrygian cap (!) and not a *pilos* (cf. Pl. 3: 3). Therefore, this young man seems indeed to be the famous shepherd, Attis (Vermaseren 1977, Nr. 693 marble statue from Curion (Kourion), New York MMA 74.51.2477, Metr.M., H. 0.787; Nr. 719, terracotta statuette, Istanbul Arch. Mus. 3515, inv. no. 3590; Nr. 725, frg. 210, H. 0.07, terracotta, Paris, Louvre, inv. no. 198=MNB 1066; Nr. 727, terracotta statuette, Paris, Louvre, H. 0.1; Maarten *et al.* 1985, 22-44).

But can we really believe it? Four different representations of Attis have been found on Cyprus. They could be regarded as the sons of Kybele or the lovers of Kybele/Agdistis. Several small Attis boys (sons) have also been found alongside the goddess on the island, which is only about 67km from Asia Minor. Kybele, the ‘Great Mother of the Gods’, comes from

the town of Pessinus, not far away from modern Ankara, the Turkish capital. Already by the end of the 3rd century BC, Kybele's cult statue had been brought to Rome and installed in a new temple (Akurgal 1973, 277-278). In Cyprus, the goddess alone (without Attis) has also been found in different villages and towns of the island: Tamassos, Idalion, Kition, Achna, Sinda, Syngراسis, Kythrea, Akanthou, Soloi, Kourion and several other unknown Cypriot places.

So who is this young man from the Early Roman House in Nea Paphos? If he is one of the Dioskouroi brothers, he must be Kastor in the Roman style, as he appears alone. A few Roman merchants lived in Hellenistic and Roman times in Nea Paphos, which later became known as Augusta (Sebaste) Paphos in 15 BC (this change in name happened after the earthquake of the same year and the relief help that Emperor Augustus provided). On the other hand, if he is Attis, we are the first archaeologists to find him in this ancient capital of Cyprus. In some ways, he looks like another Attis, made of marble, which can be found in the National Museum of Rome, once located in the Palazzo Giustiniani (Pl. 3: 6). We can thus claim to have discovered either Kastor (for the Romans of Paphos) or Attis, the son or lover of Kybele, likenesses of whom have been uncovered by nearby excavations.

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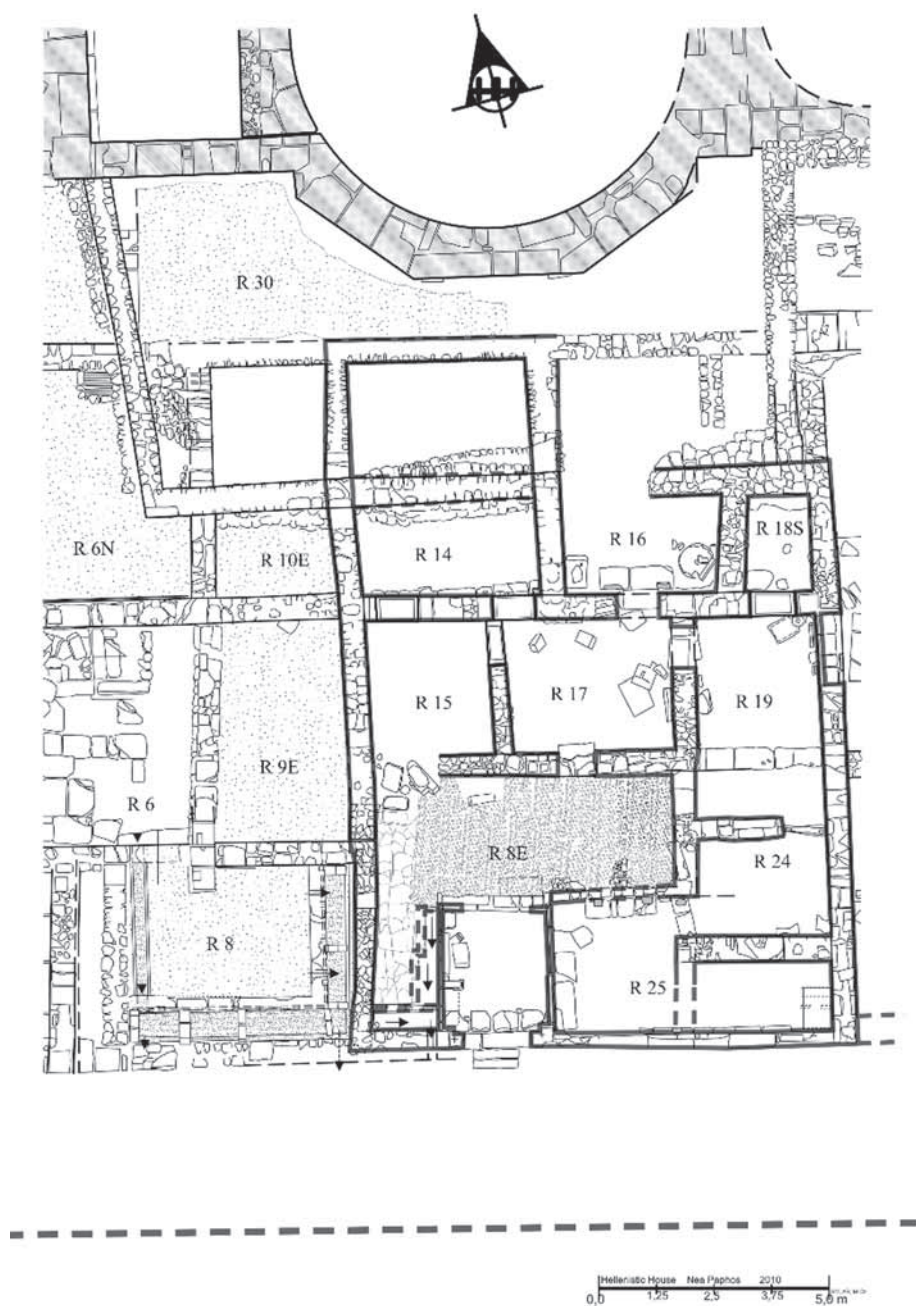
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Pl. 1. Plan of the peninsula where the town of Nea Pahos was once situated.
Courtesy of the Polish Mission in Nea Paphos archive



Pl. 2. Plan of the Early Roman House, south of the Villa of Theseus.
Courtesy of the Polish Mission in Nea Paphos archive



Pl. 3. 1 – Broken limestone bust of a young man found in Room 24 of the Early Roman House. Photo from the author's archive
 2 – Bust cleaned. Photo from the author's archive
 3 – Head and cap seen from one side. Photo from the author's archive
 4 – Bust before final cleaning. Photo from the author's archive
 5 – Back of head (uncarved). Photo from the author's archive
 6 – Head of Attis from Rome, the National Museum (inv. no. 8585). Photo from the author's archive