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## ***Kyrenaika Semata:*** **‘iconographic topoi’ between classical *schemata* and local tradition**

*This paper has been planned remembering the long and enthusiastic conversations with Sara during our evenings in a desert university; both lost in our discussions, in front of a raki, talking of her articles about the gestures of the silence for Tacita Muta and of my researches concerning the uses of these mysterious silent semata and their schemata. She was strongly fascinated by the rock-cut Dionysus from a remote sanctuary of the chora, and particularly by the Cyrenean funerary goddesses, by the meaning of their anakalypsis, by their development and by how they then became iconographic topoi. May the ‘funerary goddesses’ continue to be silent witnesses of our discussions about strange semata and fascinating schemata!*

**Abstract:** The use of lithic ‘wooden *agalmata*’ of anthropomorphized *baetyles*, *xoana* and of *hermae* dressed up for specific cultsthe and funerary purposes seems to be well known in Cyrenaica, attesting a combination between classical *schemata* and local religious uses and artistic traditions. The hybridization between classical architecture and local tradition has been often investigated by the Archaeological Mission of Chieti University in Cyrenaica, through different markers, as urbanization of Libyan villages, cohabitation of Greco-Roman and Libyan features in the rupestrian extramural sanctuaries or in funerary architecture. However, the most interesting re-elaboration of classical *schemata* with Libyan meanings, of hybridization among different cultures, can certainly be investigated looking at the numerous sculptures with stratified meanings, which come from Cyrene. Some of them have been realized as ‘silent’ and faceless *semata* for the archaic burials and tombs in the necropolis, such as the so called ‘funerary goddesses’, becoming soon recurrent and standardized *schemata* for the immense necropolis, with specific chthonic meanings and symbolic messages, and then transformed into recurrent ‘iconographic topoi’ as part of the funerary monuments, without proper limits between sculpture and architecture of the tombs. Lithic versions of dressed up poles have often been used in this region as *agalmata* of gods of a Greco-Libyan/Romano-Libyan pantheon, which often has syncretized meanings, attributes and iconography.



### **XOANA AND HERMAE IN THE SANCTUARIES OF THE CHORA**

The use of limestone *hermae* and statues evoking poles dressed up with masks, attributes and even wigs, as lithic versions of *xoana*, is quite well attested in Cyrenaica in extra-urban sanctuaries (Figure 1) and funerary contexts, but not widely published yet or just mentioned and labeled as ‘Libyan feature’.

One of the most monumental of these sculptures is the herm of Dionisus (Figure 2), monumental *agalma* of this god, which has been found within a small open air rock-cut sanctuary in a remote secondary valley (*alek Ain Bueda*) of *Wady Belgadir* at Cyrene<sup>1</sup>. It is a standing male figure in high relief, of about 1.70 cm, located within a rectangular niche: the upper part presents more details, while the lower part is just roughly sketched as if to represent the base of a herm, coming directly out from the bedrock. The figure is wearing a long *himation*, completely enveloping the body and the arms, showing, just for the lower part, a smooth and tight *chiton*. A short and small mantle, possibly a sort of

*pardalis*, is covering the shoulders and the upper part of the bust. The head is represented in a frontal position, but slightly inclined downwards, suggesting that the eyes were turned towards those who were watching from below. The god is presented bearded with thick and curly hair, just roughly sketched on the front, while more detailed hair strands fall over the shoulders for framing the face, while a crown of leaves keeps the hair on the head. The left arm is bent and is holding something in the hand, an attribute which is now too worn and difficult to be interpreted: from the shape and the size it could have been a cup or a *kantharos*. The right arm, kept down along his side, holds what could be interpreted as a branch, a sort of natural version of a thyrsus. The iconography of the statue is quite well known for the Archaic period<sup>2</sup>, both on Attic black figure vases and on statues or herms; but it must not be confused with the later versions of bearded statues of Dionysus, quite well known in archaistic neo-Attic style, known as ‘Dionysus Sardanapalus’, whose prototype has been variously attributed to Alkamenes<sup>3</sup>, Kephisodotos I<sup>4</sup>, Kephisodotos II and Timarchos<sup>5</sup> or in a more general way to ‘Praxitelis workshops’<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Menozzi 2015 and 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Frontisi-Ducroux 1991.

<sup>3</sup> McDowell 1904, pp. 258-259.

<sup>4</sup> Corso 2004, pp. 76-77; Martinez 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Todisco 1993, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> Pochmarski 1984, pp. 63-75; Ridgway 2001, pp. 90-91.

For the herm found at Cyrene, the style and the attributes seem to suggest the Archaic iconographic version attesting, within the development of the iconographic *schema* of the original wooden *xoanon* or 'mask-god' of Dionysus *prosopon*<sup>7</sup>, a step which already had a preliminary 'lithization' of the wooden pole, and then the transformation of the support from pole to herm<sup>8</sup>. The original cult of Dionysus *prosopon*/'mask-god'<sup>9</sup>, with a strong emphasis on the mask which is always frontal and is representing the god as appearing to his devotees in attitude to be admired and looked at, is then transformed into Dionysus *Orthos*, which is attested in Attica on the occasion of the Lenean celebrations<sup>10</sup>, or Dionisos *Perikionios* of Thebe<sup>11</sup>, that is, generally a herm or a pole specially dressed up with a mask of Dionysus<sup>12</sup> (see Figure 3). It can be considered one of the most ancient form of cult of this god in the Greek world and is widely attested by the oldest representations on the '*Lenäenvasen*'<sup>13</sup>, which are preserved in the museums of Villa Giulia, Naples and Boston (see Figure 3), iconography which is generally attributed to the Painter of Villa Giulia<sup>14</sup> and other Attic vases dating between the sixth and the fifth cent. BC.<sup>15</sup>

The statue was probably the object of processions and rites, which included the crowning of the statue with ritual vegetal crowns; in fact, the only part of the statue not in relief, but complete, was the neck, at the back of which was a hole for hanging up the crowns. The ritual of crowning the statue is clearly represented in the '*Lenean vase*' from Naples<sup>16</sup> (see Figure 3), where also the kind of dress of the god is very similar, presenting both the tight *chiton*, the *himation* and the *pardalis*; moreover, the small *trapeza* for votive offerings, which is represented on the *stamnos*, finds also parallels with the rock-cut bench which has been realized just close to the statue and within the same niche including the Dionysius.

The realization and the style of the statue, directly cut into the bedrock, closely included within the niche, standing within it, but as coming out directly from the limestone, are probably emphasizing the 'rupestrian nature' of the herm, as part of the landscape, complementary to the natural contexts as also to the rock-cut architecture of the sanctuary and

of the funerary context and directly coming from the underworld, due to his chthonic and kata-chthonic nature.

Among the possible rupestrian parallels, as also for the style of the *himation* and the realization as herm, could be mentioned the so-called Statue of Dionisos Apolonas or 'Dionysus from Naxos' (Figure 4), a colossal unfinished marble statue, which is still in one of the quarries of the island<sup>17</sup>.

Moreover, the sanctuary is surrounded by funerary monuments, framing the sacred spaces but respecting the limits. Therefore, Dionysus in this context has a strong 'kata-chthonic' and eschatological meaning, emphasising the Archaic aspect of this god as promoter of the life/death/rebirth cycle of nature, as well as of *psychopompos*, all aspects which went lost for this god between the fifth and the fourth centuries BC.

Another interesting representation of a 'lithic version of *xoanon*' or pole wearing a mask of a ram, probably representing a Libyan version of Ammon (Figure 5), has been found in low relief at Ain Hofra<sup>18</sup>, just outside the secondary cult rocky chamber of this sanctuary (see Figure 8), which is also presenting inside the cult area, a dedication to Ammon. The head could be a sort of head/mask which represents the profile, roughly realized, of a ram or a bearded horned man, and in the second case is the representation of the syncretized version Zeus Ammon.

It represents a very local and stylized interpretation of this god, roughly realized, and the representation of this Ammon as a ram in Cyrenaica is quite well known from votive statuettes<sup>19</sup> (Figure 6) and coins, as, for instance, the coins issued at Barce<sup>20</sup>, which are quite rare at Cyrene (where the version of Zeus Ammon is more used), but popular at Barce, which was more influenced by the local cultural bases. In the case of this relief, the representation is quite evidently evoking a wooden pole, bearing a suggestive head/mask of a ram and probably also a sort of stylized garland around the neck. The quite rough style and the bad preserved conditions do not allow to understand if the pole is also

<sup>7</sup> Casevitz and Frontisi-Ducroux 1989; Frontisi-Ducroux 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Casevitz and Frontisi-Ducroux 1989, pp.123.

<sup>9</sup> Which is also attested by the sources: Pausanias, X, 19, 3 and in Eusèbe, *Prép. Ev.*, 5, 36.

<sup>10</sup> Valdés Guía 2013, pp.100-118.

<sup>11</sup> Paus., *Perieg.*, IX, 12.4.

<sup>12</sup> Casevitz and Frontisi-Ducroux 1989.

<sup>13</sup> Deubner 1962, pp.123-134; De Cesare 1997, pp. 160-161 ; Frontisi-Ducroux 1991, pp.17-62.

<sup>14</sup> CVA, Villa Giulia (1), III, Ie, tav.13, 1-3; Beazley 1956, pp.590-91.

<sup>15</sup> Frontisi-Ducroux 1991.

<sup>16</sup> Beazley 1956, pp.590-91.

<sup>17</sup> Morris 2007, pp.96-108, in part. p.97, figs.3° and 3b.

<sup>18</sup> Menozzi 2015 and 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Paribeni 1959, p.144, n.416, pl.181; Bacchielli 1987, pp.459-488, in part. pp. 477-478, figs. 22-24.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson 1927, pp.91-93, pl. XXXIII, 5,6,7.

dressed up with a vest or himation, but the trapezoidal shape of the pole seems to suggest something similar.

The close cult chamber seems to have been cut originally for an early funerary use, or probably just suggesting a funerary architecture of a rock 'façade chamber'<sup>21</sup>, with seven *klinai* regularly arranged on the three inner rocky walls of the tomb (see Figure 7). It soon became one of the centres of the cult of the ancestors (the Heroes), together with Zeus Melichios and the Eumenides, as attested by the inscription still preserved on the northern wall (see Figure 8): ΗΡΩΝ, ΚΑΙ ΜΕΛΙΚΙ(-), ΚΑΙ ΕΥΜΕΝΑ(-).<sup>22</sup> The earlier triple dedication had later been erased and substituted with Ammon, directly mentioned as Ammon and not Zeus Ammon, suggesting that the earlier elitist worship for the heroes and the ancestors, has been then replaced by the more popular cult of Ammon, in its original formula as ram-god<sup>23</sup>; probably in the Hellenistic period, according to the stratigraphic data. Moreover, from the iconographic point of view, the presence both of Zeus Ammon and Zeus, associated with a ram, or even seated on it, which is very frequent at Cyrene in the Hellenistic reliefs with Greco-Libyan Pantheon<sup>24</sup>, is attesting both the close relationship between Ammon and its 'totemic' and 'zoomorphic' representation, as well as the 'double-syncretism' in Cyrenaica Ammon/Ram and Zeus/Ammon, which is clearly attested also in coins issued by Cyrene in the late fifth century BC, where Zeus Ammon is represented in combination with a standing ram<sup>25</sup>.

This hybridized cult, as well as the interesting stratification of iconographies and attributes for Ammon and Zeus Ammon in Cyrenaica is testifying the complexity of transposition and transmission of rituals, schemata and religious meanings, in this regional context which is strongly influenced by the local uses, as well as by the classical tradition, always in different degrees. Moreover, for the Hellenistic period the more Greek Ptolemaic Egypt and the more 'traditionally Egyptian' context of Thebes and upper Egypt, have interacted with Cyrene through the oases, which have transmitted with continuity new hybrid versions of one of the most ancient cults in eastern north Africa.

Moreover, some more interesting examples of *xoana* transformed into lithic translations/transpositions of wooden poles can be the two small statues<sup>26</sup> of the

god Isis (see Figures 9 and 10) from the sanctuary of Martuba<sup>27</sup>, which attest a deep-rooted Libyan tradition, reinterpreting in a local version the typical iconography of Isis and her cult in Roman times.

The goddess is represented as standing, in a quite rigid attitude, again more as a limestone version of a wooden pole dressed up as Isis, rather than as a proper free-standing sculpture. The two statuettes are wearing heavy dresses, rigidly realized, characterized by thick folds, which are quite roughly represented as deep parallel waved lines, without any naturalistic interpretation. In both cases the body do not present any differentiation, apart from the breasts, which are symbolically represented as small and inaccurate, and even decentered on the bust, but emphasized. The arms are both bent but very stylized, and in one case<sup>28</sup> the right arm seems not complete and with a central hole suggesting the possibility of a forearm worked separately and then inserted with a joint system. A snake is represented as climbing the statues in both cases, starting from the right side, passing on the back and arriving on the left shoulder. The evocative use of snakes in relationship with Isis, is also attested here by two *urei* represented in one of the statues, just in front of the lower part of the legs, with the two heads rigidly standing and parallel<sup>29</sup>. The back of both sculptures are unfinished, just roughly sketched, with the evident and deep tool marks of a *gradina* left unpolished.

The neck is presented as a parallelepiped block, quite elongated, without any intent of smoothing the surfaces to represent a proper neck, but directly evoking a pole or a stone block.

The faces are extremely flat, quite large, standardized and stylized, with identical realization of the small mouths, thick noses and the large eyes are strongly emphasized by a double incision creating the suggestion of a thick eyelid, but probably just marking the empty and fixed gaze: it is clearly a direct reference to a standardized mask. The hair or wig is, again, rigid and is arranged in thick ringlets with very short fringes, marked by parallel incisions for evoking the hair strands. The iconographic schema of the wig/hairdressing finds parallels in the typical 'Libyan' hairstyle attested for Isis-Demeter or Demeter *Libyssa*, which is quite well known in Cyrenaican context<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Cassel 1955, 18-19; Thorn 2005, 335-42.

<sup>22</sup> For detailed information see Menozzi 2015 and 2016.

<sup>23</sup> For the cult of the ram in northern Africa: Germain 1948; in particular in Cyrenaica and the sincretization with Ammon and then with Zeus, see. Fabricotti 1987, pp.221-244, in part.231-233.

<sup>24</sup> Fabricotti 1987, pp.221-244.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson 1927, pp.25-26, nn.3-9, pl.XIII.

<sup>26</sup> They are just 70 cm tall.

<sup>27</sup> Bacchielli 1987.

<sup>28</sup> Inv. 410: Bacchielli 1987, figs.31 and 33.

<sup>29</sup> Inv.408: Bacchielli 1987, figure 34.

<sup>30</sup> White 1987, pp.67-84, in part. pp.81-82; Bacchielli 1987, pp. pp.459-488, in part..482-487; Ensoli 1991; Fabricotti 2007, pp.267-301; cfr the

Moreover, a recent find from Cyrene (see Figure 11) is extremely interesting in this context: it consists of a small decorative element, which was sculpted on an earlier small half-marble column, representing, in a low but accurate relief, a frontal view of the head or mask of Isis, together with cobra, *ureus* and a votive cist, which are widely attested in the numerous 'arulette isiache' coming from Cyrene, Martuba itself and other contexts in Cyrenaica<sup>31</sup>. The mask in this relief is presented with a frontal perspective, on a quadrangular base with the hair framing the face with regular strands. The iconographic schema seems to be arranged within a sort of *naiskos*, which is not represented directly from the architectonic point of view, but just alluded at by the composition. The face/mask of Isis, in this small relief, is clearly evoking Isis, through her attributes, but specific types of Isis, the *Thermoutis*, and Demeter *Libyssa* through the features and the iconography. The *Libyssa* represents an iconographic syncretism and local compromise between Isis and Demeter, but probably also typical of a previous local deity, with attributes and probably rites which have then been associated to features of Isis and Demeter, probably because of their common chthonic value, as well as protection for the fertility of soils and animals, which is common attitude both for Demeter as Isis, as also attested by common epithets<sup>32</sup>. A quite close parallel of the representation of this head or mask in a low relief on our marble element, is attested for instance at Ptolemais in the so called head of Isis or *Libya*<sup>33</sup> (but not in sense of personification of Libya, but as *Libyssa Thea*), which is realized in a more rigid and rough style, closer to the two statuettes from Martuba, than not to the representation in the marble relief. Moreover, heads/faces of Libya, or Demeter *Libyssa*, are attested also as decoration of the bases with double front of the statuettes of rams (see figure 6) from Cyrene<sup>34</sup>, Martuba<sup>35</sup> and Ptolemais<sup>36</sup>, in combination and in association with the other front representing the head of Zeus Ammon. It is a quite suggestive association in this cases: the Ram God as supported by the *Libyssa Thea*/Demeter *Libyssa* and Zeus Ammon.

These representations seem to attest a local aspect of Isis, which is a reinterpreted version of the Egyptian Isis *Renenoutet* (known in the classical world as *Thermoutis*) which was strongly related to the fertility of the soil

as of the animals and associated with the snakes, as totemic animals, with strong apotropaic meanings<sup>37</sup>. Herodotus is attesting a devotion of the ancient Libyan tribes, in general (...from Egypt to the Tritonidis Lake...) for a similar deity which is strongly reminding the Egyptian Isis<sup>38</sup>. The local cult for a female deity, a *Libyssa Thea*, with these features, was soon associated to the Egyptian Isis and syncretized, with an effect, again, of multiple syncretism, with Isis-Demeter, which is quite well known in the Egyptian context especially from the Hellenistic period, and then interacting with the *schemata* related to Demeter *Libyssa* and creating hybrid results.

Therefore, the iconography of Isis in Cyrenaica is very interesting for attesting the multiple aspects of the representation of this goddess, which can presents very Libyan interpretations, as the examples from Martuba, but coexisting with iconographies that are strongly evoking in some cases the 'Egyptian' style<sup>39</sup>, as well as more classical representations of Isis mainly dating to Roman times<sup>40</sup>, but probably also some local deity: different ritual aspects and iconographic *schemata* which have coexisted at Cyrene.

#### FROM SEMATA TO SCHEMATA AND EVEN TO 'ICONOGRAPHIC TOPOI': THE FUNERARY GODDESSES

The presence of standardized funerary goddesses as *semata* of the tombs in the monumental and huge rock-cut necropolis of Cyrene is attested since early periods and was originally the direct representation of a lithic or marble version of a wooden *xoanon*, representing the *agalma* of a female indefinite and unnamed local goddess, with a strong chthonic vocation, represented initially as a pole dressed up and with a wig<sup>41</sup> (Figure 12). In the case of the funerary goddesses, the use of the marble seems to be more attested than not the limestone. The type was in origin a local chthonic deity, which saw originally possible wooden versions, then monumentalised through their transposition/translation in marble and stone statues, but keeping for long the memory of the original *xoana*. Between the mid and the late Archaic period these original *semata* became female funerary busts, originally cut just below

statue from the *Isaeum* or Sanctuary of the Alexandrine deities: Bonacasa and Ensoli 2000, p. 202.

<sup>31</sup> Ensoli 1991; Fabbriotti 2007, pp.267-301.

<sup>32</sup> Very interesting in this sense is a paper edited online by the University of Bologna: D. Verenya and L. Tripani, 'Iside e Demetra: epiteti connessi conlaterra, l'agricoltura e il nutrimento', in <https://www.studocu.com/it/document/universita-di-bologna/antropologia-religioni-civiltà-orientali/saggi/iside-e-demetra-epiteti-connessi-con-l/3990264/view>

<sup>33</sup> Bacchielli 1987, in part. p.485, figure 35.

<sup>34</sup> Paribeni 1959, p.144, n.416, pl. 181; Bacchielli 1987, p.478, figure 24.

<sup>35</sup> Bacchielli 1987, p.77, figs. 22-23.

<sup>36</sup> Kraeling 1962, pp. 180 and 202, nn. 59-60, pl.XXXIX.

<sup>37</sup> Bacchielli 1987, pp.485-86; Ensoli 1991; Fabbriotti 2007, p.274.

<sup>38</sup> Her., *Hist.*, IV, 186.

<sup>39</sup> Such as the mummified version of Isis from the *Isaeum* or Sanctuary of the Alexandrine deities: Bonacasa and Ensoli 2000, p.57.

<sup>40</sup> As, for instance, the iconography of the statue of Isis from the Shrine of Isis in the Sanctuary of Apollo: Bonacasa and Ensoli 2000, p.131.

<sup>41</sup> Beschi 1969-70; Frontisi Ducroux 2008 and 2016.

the shoulders and then slowly under the armpits and later under the hips. The role and iconography of the local female goddess or goddesses was then syncretized, with a gradual Hellenization, with Persephone/Kore, assuming the iconographic *schema* of Kore and for some aspect also Demeter, evoking in some way both of them. The original goddess or goddesses could be interpreted as the local 'chthonic nymphs' or 'theai', without a specific name, mentioned in a generic way for instance in an inscription in the sanctuary of Budrag<sup>42</sup>, and even written on the *polos* of a very small statuette coming from the Northern Necropolis (N81/N81KK) and dating to the fifth century BC.<sup>43</sup> Persephone was indeed associated often with Nymphs, and some of the sources are mentioning that she was accompanied by 'Libyan Nymphs which were chthonic goddesses'<sup>44</sup>. It seems to be conceivable that the unnamed *Theai* mentioned in the chthonic sanctuary of Budrag, as well as these deities of the underworld, may be chthonic nymphs, then associated to Persephone, both in iconography and as companions of the goddess.

The earliest types (Figure 12) date back to the Archaic period and represent 'lithic versions' of poles, dressed up with a simple *chiton* or *peplum*, without any *himation* (mantle) and wearing a wavy curly wig, to shoulder level. For a long period, a quite common feature<sup>45</sup> for these statues was the 'aprosopy': in fact, their faces are presented plain and without any indication of a mouth, nose and eyes deliberately realized in this way for an indefinite characterization. This specific feature is supporting the identification, or the syncretistic combination, with Persephone, the '*afanés Thea*'<sup>46</sup> par excellence in archaic and early classical periods, the invisible goddess or 'she who does not appear', and even her name is not often pronounced and she is mainly generically named as Kore. It could be objected that the features concerning the faces may have been added, in antiquity, by painting the eyes, mouth and nose, which could be now disappeared; however, even when the painting is not visible, the colors are always leaving on the marble and limestone surfaces traces due to their chemical interaction with the patina, which are then visible with remote sensing analysis, filtering the images with infra-red and UV spectrum<sup>47</sup>, and for the earliest faceless statues at Cyrene there is no evidence for any kind of colored feature on the faces.

These earliest known examples date to the period between the sixth and the fifth century BC, and have

been typologically grouped by Beschi as types A, B and C (Figure 12). They are quite similar, without any substantial difference<sup>48</sup>: Type A is characterized by busts without any veil, cut at the shoulders, with no arms; according to the hair style, they can be dated between mid and late Archaic period and present a strong frontal emphasis and a wig with regular and parallel strands, showing a quite Doric style and deliberate 'Dedalic' view, quite recurrent in Doric sculptures. Type B busts are a bit taller, cut below the armpits and arms, and the hands are, for the first time, represented, although still in a rough way. The type C statue goes from head to belt level and sometimes further, with similar iconographic schema, and wears, above a more pleated *chiton*, a short and plain *himation*. This type, according to the dressing, and the hair style and iconographic schema, seems to date to the end of the sixth/beginning of the fifth century B.C. Type D represents a transitional step to the second group, though remaining in the first: the mantle is realized as a large *himation*, wrapping the body and presenting rich folds.

The second group of statues, includes types Beschi E, F, G and H, and presents statues veiled with the *himation*, covering head, face, shoulders, and the lower part of the body, but leaving uncovered the upper part of the bust. The iconographic schema is very well known, because it is the typical attitude of the weeping figures<sup>49</sup>: one arm bent at the height of the belt and the second either raised to the cheek in a gesture of sadness (H), or holding a piece of the veil (E, F, G) as if to reveal the face, in an unimpaired gesture of unveiling: the *anakalypsis*. This second group seem to belong mainly to the end of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, as attested by the rendering of the folds of dress and mantle and by the treatment of the hair. Obviously, this change from total faceless goddesses to veiled figures (Figure 13), is also marking a strong iconographic passage, from the original *semata*, to more proper statues with more and more standardized *schemata*, which are variations of a main schema, so recurrent and so popular in the tombs in Cyrene, to become 'iconographic *topoi*'.

The third group (types I, L, M, N, O, P) dates to the fourth century and to the mature Hellenistic period, presenting a proliferation of new sub-types and variations. The figures are represented up to the hips, the head is veiled, the *himation* completely wraps the upper part of the figure with rich and soft folds and part of the face is visible. The statues also show features

<sup>42</sup> Menozzi 2015 and 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Thorn 2005, figure 6; Morgan et alii 2019, figure 24.

<sup>44</sup> Ap. Rhod. IV, 891-899; Hyg., *Fab.*, 141; Ov, *Met.*, V, 551-563.

<sup>45</sup> But not exclusively faceless, because there are few exemplars, especially small statuettes, attesting the features of the faces.

<sup>46</sup> Soph. *Oed. Col.*, 1556; Aesch, *Sept.*, 8 5 9 -6 0.

<sup>47</sup> Adinolfi et alii 2020.

<sup>48</sup> Beschi 1969-70.

<sup>49</sup> Lullies and Hirmer 1957, 84-86, pls 207-209.

of the face, such as the mouth, nose and eyes, but without any specific physiognomic characterization or meaning.

However, the groups as organised by Beschi are certainly variations of specific *schemata*, more than types, and new variations are still coming out in recent times from Cyrene. Therefore, the scholar Morgan Belzic<sup>50</sup> is at the moment re-organising more properly the new finds and the old groups, simplifying the categories into *schemata*: the publication of his work will be also of great support for reconsidering the study of the tombs including the sculptures of the 'faceless silent goddesses' as part of the architectural arrangement and of the funerary rituals, as they were, and not simply as 'mere decorative sculptures'.

It must be emphasized, moreover, that these statues must not be considered simply in the perspective of an evolution of types, but also as a matter of taste and fashion. In fact, most of the variations, especially between late Classical period and Hellenistic times, were used contemporaneously and every new iconographic schema, or variation, which was introduced was never completely replacing earlier types.

These statues are quite specifically typical of Cyrene, although influencing other centres in the region, such as *Barka/Ptolemais* and *Euhesperides-Berenike* for instance, with quite local revisited iconographies. For examples the statues coming from the *chora* of *Barka* (*El Merj*)<sup>51</sup>, and dating to the archaic period, are more direct representations of wooden poles in a limestone translation, life size *agalмата*, not limited to busts, but almost complete (Figure 14). They are wearing long dresses, which can be a plain *peplum*<sup>52</sup> or *chiton*<sup>53</sup> with rigid and parallel folds, without any sinuosity or chiaroscuro effects; these dresses are completed with a rich *kolpos* and short folded *himation*, for the statue wearing the *chiton*, while the statues with the *peplum* present short plain mantles which are used on the place of the *kolpos* or of the *apoptigma*, which are generally the natural covering vests in Greek dressing. They present the typical plain aniconic appearance and long and rigid waved wigs or hair strands arranged in long ringlets, which find parallels in the hairstyles of the earliest examples from Cyrene. The shape of the body, especially for the lower part, seems to suggest both

the form of a pole, without any characterization in the shape of the body, but at the same time, the formal render reminds the 'columnar shape' of the Samian *korai*. The complete lack of arms and hands is certainly suggesting the direct allusion to the lithized 'wooden pole', but the formal influence of the Ionic sculpture is equally evident, showing the coexistence of different cultural environments.

A particular feature can be a necklace of one of these statues<sup>54</sup>, which is characterized by a thin lace and three small pendants, one formed by two thin and long leaves, and the other two in shape of crescent associated with the solar disk, quite oriental in style and with strong religious meanings<sup>55</sup>. The combined dichotomy of day/light-moon/night as life/death, life/afterlife is generally associated to several gods, such as Zeus and Hades, as well as Demeter and Persephone in female version of this duality, and just looking at the Greek world. In Egyptian context this dichotomy between sun and moon is attested within the Egyptian Pantheon by Ra and Osiris, and in a female version by Hator and Isis, whose close association is often creating a syncretism between them<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, the elements of the pendants, can also find Cypriot parallels<sup>57</sup>.

These statues from the *chora* of *Barka*, are just few examples of a quite interesting series<sup>58</sup>, which can attest the existence of local workshops and products quite expressive and evolved from the artistic point of view, capable of interpreting local ideas and external influences: as for instance the decorative zigzag motifs of the overcoat of two statues<sup>59</sup> from this site, seem to find parallels in Cyprus and Thera. Therefore, *Barka* is expressing, in autonomy from Cyrene, similar intents in different forms; this is quite evident also when comparing, for the archaic period, the choices made by Cyrene for the use of the marble and for the adoption of the schema of the short busts, while *Barka* was using the limestone and was preferring almost complete figures as *semata*, with their own specific features. *Barka*, indeed, was very open both to external influences as to aspects of the local traditions, thanks to the close coexistence of Libyan and Greeks within the sub-colony, since its foundation<sup>60</sup>, integrating and adapting the Greek culture with the local traditions, while Cyrene was following more closely the Greek models from the iconographic point of view. Therefore,

<sup>50</sup> Belzic 2015 and 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Fabbriotti 1992, pp.117-26.

<sup>52</sup> as in the cases of the statues both probably from Wadi Etzia and now in the Museum of Ptolemais: Fabbriotti 1992, in part.p. 122, figs. 5 and 6.

<sup>53</sup> Cfr the statue now in Cyrene, but certainly coming from Barce: Beschi 1969-70, n.10; Fabbriotti 1992, in part.pp.118-119, figure 1.

<sup>54</sup> Cfr: Fabbriotti 1992, in part.p. 122, figure 5.

<sup>55</sup> Giannakis 2001.

<sup>56</sup> Menozzi 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Fabbriotti 1987.

<sup>58</sup> Fabbriotti 1992.

<sup>59</sup> Cfr Fabbriotti 1987, figs. 1 and 8.

<sup>60</sup> Her., Hist., IV, 160, 162.

the evolution of the funerary goddesses at Cyrene became more and more related to the typical classical *schemata*, for dressing, gestures, position and attributes, while Barka kept different inspirations.

Moreover, an example of 'local translation' of the Cyrenean schemata, is coming from the area of Benghazi<sup>61</sup> (ancient *Euhesperides-Berenike*): it is a quite small limestone statue (Figure 15a), about 40 cm tall, and is wearing a long and heavy *chiton* with thick and rigid parallel folds, but with a misunderstanding or a fusion of the features of the *kolpos* and the *himation*, represented as a single short and pleated overcoat; similarly, the head is covered by a strange plain hairstyle or veil leaving totally unveiled the face, which is very stylized but defined. The representation is quite rough, the surfaces are not accurately polished, as in the examples from Cyrene, the folds are thick, the *ponderatio* and the position of the arms is unnatural and rigid. It dates to the fifth century B.C. and, together with another statuette<sup>62</sup> from the same area, but slightly later in date, may attest also for *Euhesperides* the existence of local workshops, which were working on quite simplified *schemata*. This second statuette (Figure 15b), again in limestone, is even more stylized, without *himation*, the folds of the *chiton* are represented as simple incisions, and the figure is wearing a plain and very simple overcoat, evoking a very simplified version of *kolpos* or *apoptygma*, or the so called 'Libyan mantle' but without any opening on the frontal part of the bust. The neck is elongated and the head is too small comparing with the rest of the figure, with rough representation for eyes, mouth and nose and very poor indications for the hairstyle (or there was a separate wig which is now lost?), but presenting a small crown with pearls on the front.

### THE ANICONIC ANTHROPOMORPHIC TOMBSTONES

Moreover, the tradition in funerary contexts of aniconic anthropomorphized *semata* is quite well known also for later periods, such as for the case of the anthropomorphic steles from Lamluda (Figure 16) and other sites of the *chora*, as Mgernes, Tocra and an example also from Ain Hofra at Cyrene. For instance at Lamluda, they consist of more than 40 examples, without any physiognomic characterization<sup>63</sup>, and three new finds are coming from the recent surveys of the Archaeological Mission of Chieti University in the area surrounding Lamluda (Figure 17)<sup>64</sup>. Their

dates range from the early Roman to the Mid-Imperial times. These anthropomorphic tombstones belong to two main types: completely aniconic and very crudely iconic, but always without any physiognomic intent. They are attested in such abundance mainly at Lamluda, representing for this area one of the best testimonies of the impact of Roman culture and customs on an indigenous Libyan *substratus*, still strongly linked to the local Libyan culture, while manifesting a basic level of 'Hellenisation', at least in the use of the Greek in the brief inscriptions, but otherwise very far from the strongly Graeco-Roman cultural and 'artistic' contemporary funerary finds from Cyrene. Probably in this territory, just at the limits of the Roman *limes*, Libyan tribes and Graeco-Roman settlers shared more easily and for a long time, not only the fertile lands, but also some aspects of the local tribal culture, attesting a local cultural hybridization<sup>65</sup>. It is conceivable that for long time the two groups mingled with each other, through mixed matrimones, slave manumissions and/or adoptions, alliances, common economic exploitation of the area and reciprocal trade. Libyan names, in a Greek transliteration, are attested on the anthropomorphic tombstones (albeit only for the 7% out them), testifying to a long survival of Libyan names despite a lengthy exposure to Greek and Roman customs. Most of the tombstones display Greek names (62%) contemporarily in use at Cyrene, probably widely employed throughout the *chora* because they were fashionable and not necessarily held ethnic connotations. The Roman names feature on 24% of the tombstones, in the form of *tria* or *duo nomina*, both for males and for females; most of the Roman names are attested in a Greek transliteration, but in one case also Latin is attested, on the tombstone of *Caius Iulius Epafroditus*<sup>66</sup>. J. Reynolds has suggested that the individuals with Roman *tria* and *duo nomina* could have been veterans, or their direct descendants<sup>67</sup>. It is certainly conceivable that soldiers coming from Lamluda area had served in the *III Legio Cyrenaica*, and therefore participated in the land distributions probably during the earlier campaigns of this legion, between 36 B.C. and the Julio-Claudian period, as suggested by the dates of these tombstones between the end of the first century BC. and first century AD. Some of the inscriptions have a very definite date, as they mention the time around the Battle of Actium, again with strong military implications and involvement of the *Legio III*. Other names and words in these inscriptions are of difficult interpretation, but among them two cases seem to be attributable to a Greek-speaking Jewish

<sup>61</sup> Inv. 11019; Beschi 1969-70, n. 14; p.220; figure 64; Bacchielli 1987, pp. 475-476, figure 19.

<sup>62</sup> Inv. 11020; Beschi 1969-70, n. 14bis; p.222; figure 65; Bacchielli 1987, p. 476, figure 20.

<sup>63</sup> Bacchielli 1987; Bacchielli and Reynolds 1987.

<sup>64</sup> Antonelli and Menozzi 2014; Menozzi and Antonelli 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Menozzi 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Reynolds and Bacchielli 1987, 506 n. 22.

<sup>67</sup> Reynolds and Bacchielli 1987, 494-495, 501, 506.

community<sup>68</sup>. It could certainly be possible that a Jewish group was settled in Lamluda, as well as in Cyrene and other sites of the region; as the Jewish rebellion of AD 115–117 was particularly fierce in Cyrene, this could be seen as an indication of a large local Jewish community at that period. Prior to that date it probably coexisted peacefully with the pagan Graeco-Roman population, and even co-existing in mixed Judaeo-Christian communities, as attested elsewhere<sup>69</sup>. An epigraphic source of the mid-first century BC from *Berenike* (Benghazi) attests an important and well-integrated Jewish community in the region, even mentioning the reconstruction of a synagogue in *Berenike*<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, the considerable number of aniconic versions of these anthropomorphic tombstones could also have been favoured by the common use of plain stones and *baetyles* used by the Jews as simple markers for their tombs<sup>71</sup>. The possibility of a Hellenised/Romanised Jewish community at Lamluda will be investigated more thoroughly in subsequent studies.

## CONCLUSIONS

Therefore the transposition in limestone or marble of ‘wooden *agalmeta*’, of anthropomorphized *baetyles*, *xoana* or *hermae* dressed up for specific cult or for funerary purposes seems to be largely attested in Cyrenaica. They represent, in general, a combination and a compromise between classical *schemata* and local religious and artistic traditions, but with differentiated degrees of hybridization in the main *polis* and in the rest of the region. They represent the most interesting re-elaboration of classical *schemata* in Libyan contexts, with strongly stratified ritual, anthropological and iconographic meanings. Some of them have been realized as ‘silent’ and faceless *semata* for the archaic burials and tombs in the necropolis, and became then recurrent and standardized *schemata* for the immense necropolis of Cyrene, with specific chthonic meanings and symbolic messages. Their standardization transformed them into ‘iconographic *topoi*’ as integrated part of the funerary monuments, without proper limits between sculpture and architecture of the tombs, as well attested by the tomb N17, whose façade is completed with the reliefs of a funerary goddess, a tombstone and a herm (Figure 17) which are elements completely integrated within the ‘architectonic frame’ of the tomb.

The use of aniconic anthropomorphic *semata*, seems to show a long continuity in funerary contexts, as attested by the numerous tombstones from Lamluda, dating

between the first century BC and the mid-Imperial period, which are contemporaneous with the earliest Romano-Libyan portraits, attesting the coexistence of the tradition of the faceless *semata* in combination with the portraiture.

Moreover, lithic versions of *xoana* have often been used in this region as *agalmeta* of gods belonging to a Greco-Libyan/Romano-Libyan pantheon, which often has syncretized meanings, attributes and iconography not only belonging to the Greco-Roman and Libyan world, but also interacting with Egyptian influences mediated and transmitted by sanctuaries located in the oases along the caravan routes in the desert between Egypt and Libya.

Certainly, the study of these particular sculptures must be aware that they are expressions of multi/*pluri*-stratified cultures, so they have to be approached as systems strongly characterized by complexity and differentiation.

Some questions must conclude this paper: was there also a wooden version of these *semata*? and for how long they could have been used? in combination with the lithic and marble versions? Too often the passage from wood to stone/marble has been seen as a mark of an artistic ‘evolution’; although it represents just an *argumentum ex silentio*, probably due to their deterioration. It could be instead plausible that wooden statues and tombstones have been used at Cyrene for long time as less expensive versions of the same *schemata*. It seems to be conceivable that in Cyrene, as in many other sites of the Mediterranean basin, the preservation of wooden (as other perishable) supports has not been possible for climatic conditions, while for instance in Egypt are quite well attested.

Moreover, what do we intend for aniconic<sup>72</sup>? Are the examples from Cyrene aniconic?

Obviously, it is a matter of perception. What do we intend for aniconism? where is finishing the aniconism and starting the ‘iconism’? Can a pole, or a herm, dressed up be defined aniconic, if already the act of dressing is showing a deliberate intent of characterization of the *agalma*? We must clearly separate the idea of aniconism and aprosopy, which are often used as synonymous, but for the Cyrenaican statue we must talk mainly about aprosopy. In Cyrene the only really aniconic representation of a god, is certainly the Column of Apollo (Figure 18) in the Sanctuary of Apollo, later to become the Pratomedes’ column, which has largely

<sup>68</sup> for a discussion about a *γεπουσία* in Greek-speaking Jewish communities see Barlett 2002, 16–18.

<sup>69</sup> Stern 2008, 255–257.

<sup>70</sup> Barlett 2002, 33–57.

<sup>71</sup> Stern 2008, 295–296.

<sup>72</sup> For an interesting discussion and review, see: Gaifman 2012.



be discussed in specific papers<sup>73</sup>. In this case it was certainly an original columnar *baetyl*, which was totally aniconic, often associated to Apollo, especially in Doric colonial contexts, as the case of Cyrene, but also Apollonia in Albania (Figure 19) may attest.

...and Apollo, with these two columns, is linking the fields of research of Sara, working in Albania, and me, working in Cyrene; so it is the best way to conclude a paper as well as this section about 'Semata, Schemata and Topoi' dedicated to her memory!

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<sup>73</sup> Balestrazzi, Di Filippo Balestrazzi, Gasperini 1976; Di Filippo Balestrazzi 2010.

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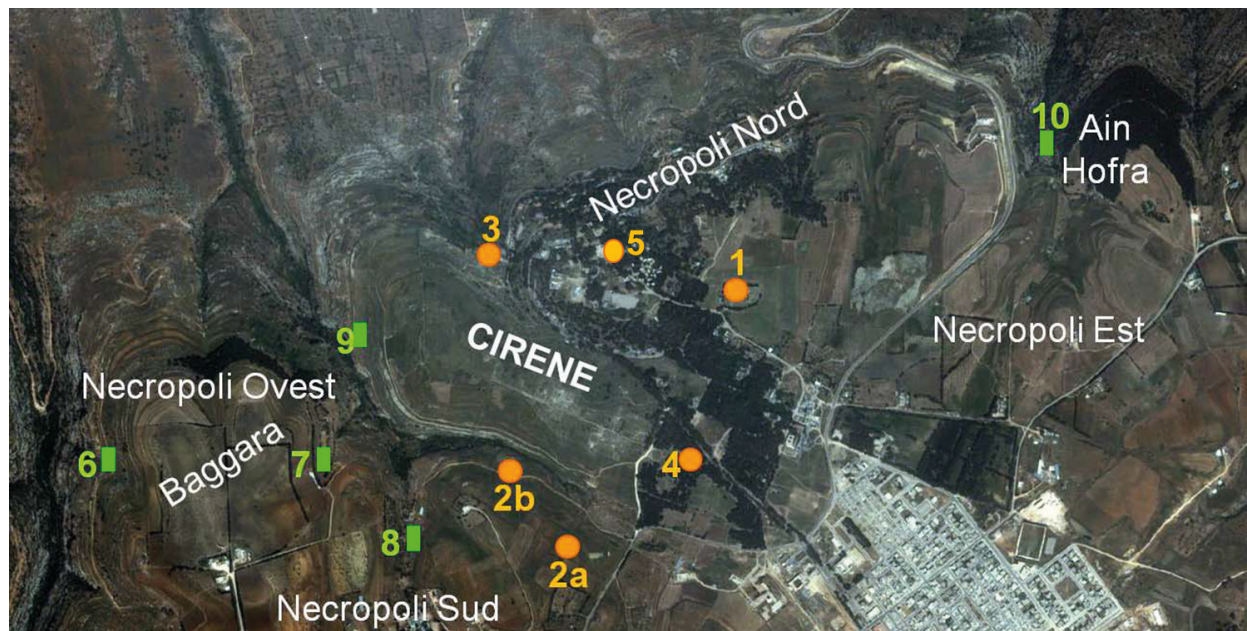


Figure 1. Cyrene: location of the main extra-urban sanctuaries and interaction with the necropoleis. In orange the ‘peri-urban’ sanctuaries with more Greek architecture; 1-sanctuary of Zeus; 2- sanctuary of Demeter; 3-sanctuary of Apollo; 4-Archaic sanctuary of the Sphinx; 5-the so called Temple of the northern hill. In green the ‘rupestrian sanctuaries’: 6- sanctuary of Budrag; sanctuary of Baggara; sanctuary of Dionysus; sanctuary of Chthonic Nymphs; sanctuary of Ain Hofra.

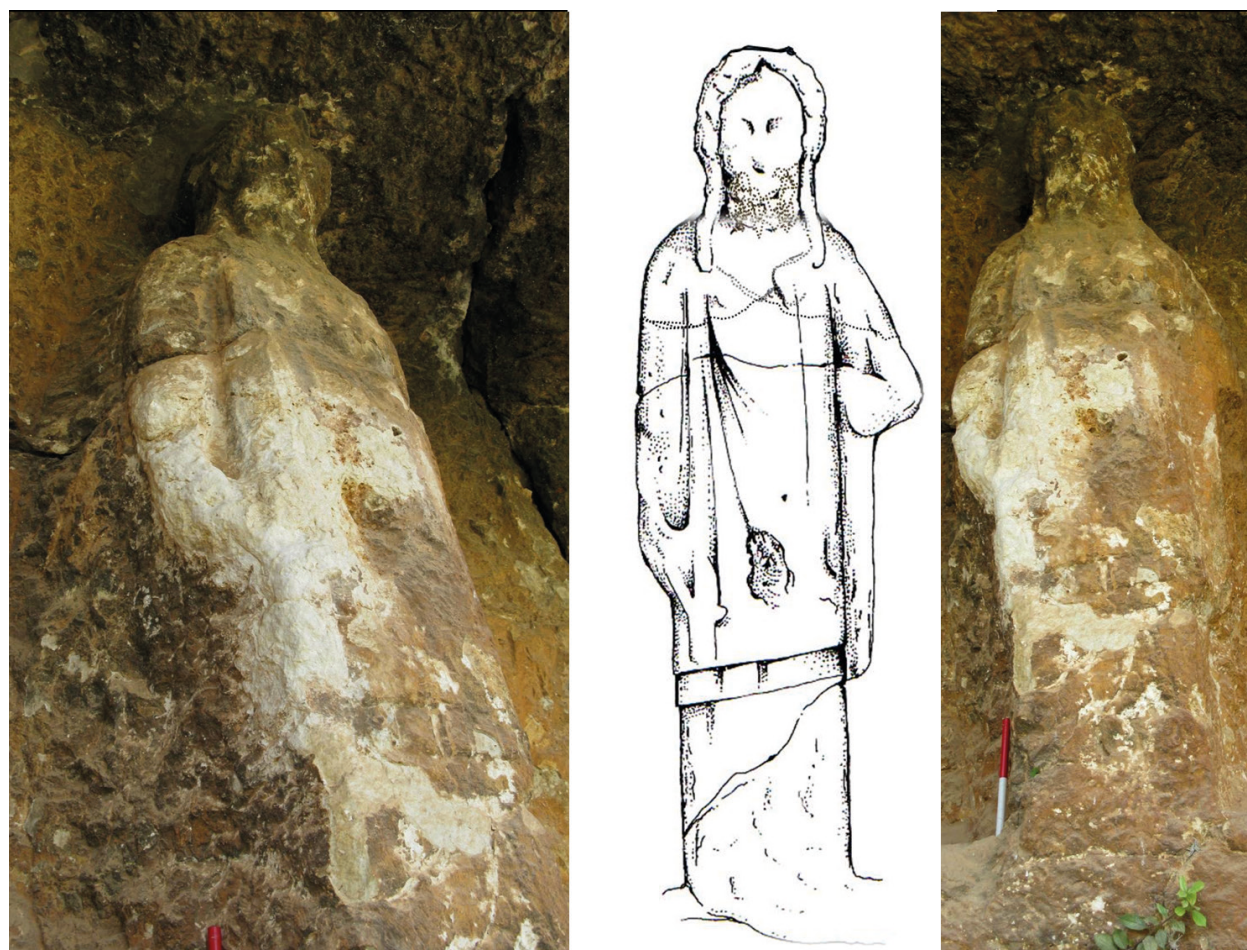


Figure 2. Cyrene, Baggara, Alek Ain Bueda: the rock-cut Herm of Dionysus, which has been found by the Archaeological Mission of Chieti University.



Figure 3. Examples of *Lenäenvasen* for iconographic parallels. The first on the left from Vulci, is attributed to the painter of Eupolis (now in Paris); then the samples from Villa Giulia, Naples and below the development of the representation of the example from Boston, which have been attributed to the Painter of Villa Giulia.



Figure 4. Naxos: the colossal statue of Dionysus in the Apolonas Quarry.



Figure 5. Cyrene, Ain Hofra: the relief representing Ammon.



Figure 6. Cyrene, Arhaeological Museum: one of the small marble statuettes representing a ram.



Figure 7. Cyrene, Ain Hofra: view of the so called 'Ammon cult chamber'.

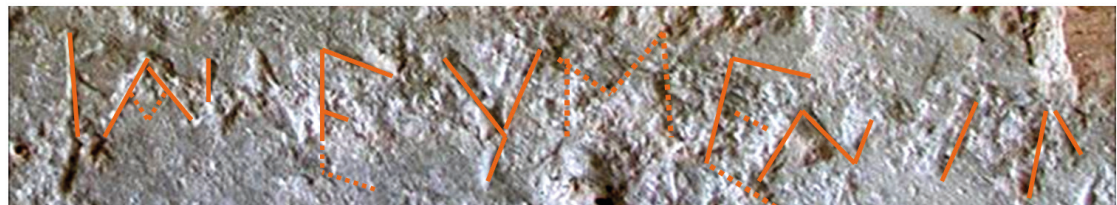
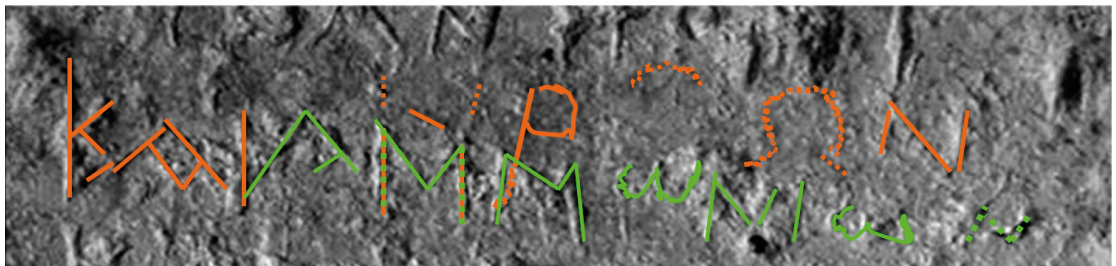


Figure 8. Cyrene, Ain Hofra: the inscription with the original triple dedication then erased with the introduction of the indication of Ammon. View of the filtered images with the reconstruction of the lines.



Figures 9 and 10. Cyrene, Archaeological Museum: the two statuettes of Isis from Martuba.



Figure 11. Cyrene, storerooms of the Archaeological Museum, Italian Pavilion: the relief with Isiac attributes, which has been found at Cyrene.





Figure 12. Cyrene, Archaeological Museum: the aniconic versions of the Funerary Goddesses.



Figure 13. Cyrene, Archaeological Museum: later evolutions of the schemata of the Funerary Goddesses.



Figure 14. Ptolemais/Tolmeita, Archaeological Museum: the Funerary statues from the chora of Barka.



Figure 15. Cyrene, Archaeological Museum: examples of funerary sculptures from Benghazi.



Figure 16. Cyrene, Archaeological Museum: aniconic anthropomorphic tombstones from Lamluda.



Figure 17. Cyrene, North Necropolis: Tomb N17 showing in relief the location of a funerary statue, a tombstone and a herm over the façade of a rupestrian tomb.



Figure 18. The Column of Pratomedes in the Sanctuary of Apollo at Cyrene



Figure 19. The parallel Column dedicated to Apollo at Apollonia (in Albania)