

ASCLEPIUS WITH EGG “TYPE NEA PAPHOS-ALEXANDRIA-TRIER”: NEW DATA AND SOME NEW REFLECTIONS

BY

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Abstract

G. Grimm first identified a new iconography of Asclepius, the so-called Nea Paphos-Alexandria-Trier, in 1989. He recognized the small city of Abonoteichus in Paphlagonia as the place from which, during second half of the 2nd century A.D., this type had spread. In the mid '90s, F. Sirano examined this little-known iconography, making an important contribution by updating the catalogue of these sculptures, suggesting that the archetype was the cult statue that stood in the Asklepieion of Cos during the 2nd century A.D. Now, after many years, we need to update the catalogue of copies representing the type Nea Paphos: seven new sculptures can now be added to those compiled by Grimm and Sirano, and consequently this topic requires new consideration.

Keywords: Asclepius, Nea Paphos-Alexandria-Trier type, egg, Glycon, Danubian provinces, Galen, Second Sophistic.

In 1989, G. Grimm published his article “Alexander the false prophet and his god Asclepius – Glycon: remarks concerning the representation of Asclepius with an egg (‘type Nea Paphos – Alexandria – Trier’)”, an analysis of three statuettes depicting the standing Asclepius holding an egg in his right hand. Here, he first identified a new iconography of the god, the so-called Nea Paphos-Alexandria-Trier, named after the cities where the museums housing the three copies stand¹.

Despite the great success that the figure of Asclepius has had in the studies of the last twenty years, it was not until the mid '90s that F. Sirano² turned his attention to this little-known iconography. He produced an important update of the catalogue of Nea Paphos type sculptures known from several provinces of the Roman Empire.

Through a stylistic analysis of this iconography, both scholars attempted to find an answer to the main problem that still today regards this image of Asclepius: where and when was it conceived for the first time and why was it deemed necessary to place the egg in the hand of Asclepius?

Grimm³ identified the small city of Abonoteichus in Paphlagonia, on the southern coast of the Black Sea, as the place from which, during the second half of the 2nd century A.D., the Nea Paphos type spread. This city became famous sometime around 165 A.D., when Alexander the False Prophet, who lived during the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, created a new and particular manifestation of Asclepius: the oracle of the snake-god Glycon⁴. The popularity of this new cult was so great that during the war against the

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¹ G. Grimm, *Alexander the false prophet and his god Asclepius-Glycon. Remarks concerning the representation of Asclepius with an egg (type Nea Paphos-Alexandria-Trier)*, in *Cyprus and the East Mediterranean in the Iron Age: proceedings of the Seventh British Museum Classical Colloquium, April 1988* (ed. Veronica Tatton-Brown), British Museum Publications, London, 1989, pp. 168–173.

² F. Sirano, *Considerazioni sull'Asclepio tipo Nea Paphos. Ipotesi su un gruppo di sculture di età imperiale*, in *Archeologia Classica (ArchCl)*, 46, 1994, pp. 199–232.

³ G. Grimm, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 169.

⁴ The particular story of the creation of this cult is told in detail by Lucian of Samosata in his essay entitled “Alexander the false prophet”, in which the author uses his rhetorical skills to show that Alexander was an imposter. Maybe Lucian met Alexander in person, probably about 162 A.D.: L. Robert, *A travers l'Asie mineure: Poètes et prosateurs, monnaies grecques, voyageurs et géographie*, in *Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome (BEFAR)*, De Boccard, Athènes-Paris, 1980, pp. 393–436; G. Bordenache Battaglia, *Glykon*, in *Lexikon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC) IV, 1*, Zürich-München, 1988, pp. 279–283; J. J. Flinterman, *The Date of Lucian's Visit to Abonoteichos*, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik (ZPE)*, 119, 1997, p. 282.

Quadi and Marcomanni, the Romans believed one of his oracles: Alexander proclaimed an oracle saying that a great victory would be won if two lions were thrown into the Danube. The Romans did so, but the battle resulted in a disaster for them with 20.000 men lost. Alexander fell back on the excuse that the oracle had not actually said which side would win (LUCIAN., *Alex.*, 48.5).

Grimm thought the snake and the egg directly linked to Glycon: all the statuettes depicting this new iconography would therefore be copies of the cult statue of Asclepius, as it was made for the temple of Glycon in Abonoteichus.

The later study by Sirano proposed a different reconstruction. The scholar, through the analysis of the sculptures of the Nea Paphos type, suggested in particular that the archetype was the cult statue placed in the *Asklepieion* of Cos, during the 2nd century A.D. after the rebuilding of temple C.

In the light of the two previous studies, many years on it is now possible to update the catalogue of copies representing the Nea Paphos type, consequently some new considerations can be made on the subject. Seven new sculptures, already published, can now be added to the catalogues of Grimm and Sirano:

1. Nea Paphos, Museum (PE/ 1/67), 2nd century A.D. (h. 48 cm)⁵;
2. Trier, Archäologische Sammlung Universität (OL 1985.158), from Alexandria, 2nd century A.D. (h 39,5 cm)⁶;
3. Alexandria, Graeco-Roman Museum (No. 29454), 2nd century A.D. (h. 118,5 cm)⁷;
4. Cos, Museum (No. 101), second half of 2nd century A.D. (h. 118 cm)⁸;
5. Athens, Agora (S 875), 2nd century A.D. (h. 19,5 cm)⁹;
6. Stobi, unknown, 2nd century A.D. (h. 43 cm)¹⁰;
7. Batkoun, Sofia Archaeological Museum, 2nd century A.D. (h. 43 cm)¹¹;
8. Glava Panega, Sofia Archaeological Museum (No. 3436). 2nd c. A.D.¹²;
9. Tomis, Bucharest Muzeul Național de Antichități (L 664), 2nd century A.D. (h. 14 cm)¹³;
10. Dresden, Hygienisches Museum, 2nd century A.D. (h. 52 cm)¹⁴;
11. Rome, Musei Vaticani, 2nd century A.D. (h. 50 cm)¹⁵;

According to the Greek author (*Alex.*, 10.21) Alexander, a magician's assistant, buried some bronze tablets in the area of the temple of Apollo in Chalcedon on which the prophecy forecasting the coming of Asclepius and his father Apollo in Abonoteichus was written. The inhabitants of the small town were informed of the prophecy, and they were so impressed that they decided to construct a temple dedicated to the god. After the temple's foundation, Alexander moved to the town of Abonoteichus and there he buried the egg of a goose with a new-born snake inside it: the next day he publicly unburied the egg showing the truthfulness of the prophecy concerning the coming of Asclepius in the guise of the snake named Glycon. Lucian (*Alex.*, 12; 16; 18; 26) also describes how Alexander the prophet – as he liked to be called – deceived people while making the oracles: to represent the head of the snake, he used an animal face (dog or sheep) made of cloth, human ears, and hairpieces. The god appeared in a dark and hidden place, from which the voice of an assistant gave the oracular responses. (*Alex.*, 35.17) In order to obtain more credit for the cult, Alexander also said that Glycon ordered to him to give the daughter born of his union with the goddess Selene in marriage to the governor of the province of Upper Moesia Publius Mummius Sisenna Rutilianus.

⁵ W. Daszewsky, *A preliminary report on the excavations of the Polish Archaeological Mission at Kato (Nea) Paphos in 1966 and 1967*, in *Report of the Department of Antiquities Cyprus, 1968 (1968)*, Government Printing Office, Nicosia, 1968, pp. 52–53, pl. XIV, 1; G. Grimm, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 168; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 206; M. Donderer, *Namen von Kunsthandwerken bzw. Ateliereignern in Form von Abkürzungen und Monogrammen*, in *Boreas. Münstersche Beiträge zur Archäologie (Boreas)*, 23/24, 2000/2001, p. 79.

⁶ G. Grimm, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 168; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 206.

⁷ G. Grimm, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 169; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 207.

⁸ L. Morricone, *Scavi e ricerche a Coa (1935–1943)*, in *Bollettino d'Arte (BdA)*, 1950, pp. 238–239; V. Uhlmann, *Wandel einer Göttergestalt. Zu einer Asklepiosstatuette der Bernischen Abguss-Sammlung*, in *Hefte Akademie Berne (HASB)*, 8, 1982, p. 36, no. 17; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 207; idem, *Immagini di divinità da contesto domestico a Cos: la documentazione dagli scavi italiani*, in *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Antiquité (MEFRA)*, 116, 2004, pp. 961–964.

⁹ A. Frantz, *The Athenian Agora. 24. Late Antiquity: A.D. 267–700*, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1988, p. 36, pl. XXIII a; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 207.

¹⁰ F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 208.

¹¹ D. Tsontchev, *Le Sanctuaire Thrace près du village de Batkoun*, Imprimerie de l'Etat, Sofia, 1941, p. 41, no. 7; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 208.

¹² Z. Goceva, *Asklepios (in Thracia)*, in *LIMC II*, 1, Zürich-München, 1984, p. 898, no. 14; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 208.

¹³ G. Bordenache, *Sculture Greche e Romane del Museo Nazionale di Antichità di Bucarest, I. Statue e rilievi di culto elementi architettonici e decorativi*, Istituto di Archeologia dell'Accademia, Bucarest, 1969, p. 16, no. 6; B. Holtzmann, *Asklepios*, in *LIMC II*, 1, Zürich-München, 1984, p. 880, no. 191; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 209.

¹⁴ M. Bieber, *A bronze statuette in Cincinnati and its place in the history of the Asklepios type*, in *Proceedings of American Philosophical Society (PAPhS)*, 10, 1957, p. 90; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 209.

12. Rome, Museo Barracco (No. 145), 2nd century A.D. (h. 28 cm)¹⁶ (Pl. I/1);
13. Pergamon, Museum. Imperial age¹⁷ (Pl. I/2);
14. Private collection, 2nd century A.D. (h. 50 cm)¹⁸ (Pl. I/3);
15. Private collection, 2nd–3rd century A.D. (h. 26 cm)¹⁹ (Pl. I/4);
16. Antalya, Museum, from Yelten. 2nd century A.D.²⁰;
17. London, Kensington Science Museum (A 105412), bought in Istanbul in 1931²¹;
18. Corinth, Archaeological Museum of Ancient Corinth, 3rd–4th century A.D. (h. 20 cm)²² (Pl. I/5–6–7).

The sculptures in this group are uniform not only for the attribute of the egg in his right hand, but also for the general structure of the figure. As noted in previous works, these copies of the Nea Paphos type show a close relationship with representations of Asclepius Amelung. After a complex history of studies, its archetype has been identified and recognized in the figure present on some coins dating from the 2nd century B.C.²³

All specimens are smaller than life size, ranging from a minimum of 14 cm for the statuette of Tomis (no. 9) to the 119 cm of the sculptures from Alexandria and Cos (nos. 3–4).

Thirteen copies have a long staff held in the armpit whose length has a purely static function (nos. 1–2–3–6–7–8–9–10–11–12–13–14–15–18). However, the copies from Cos, Athens, London and Antalya show a figure supported by a short staff without any static function (nos. 4–5–16–17): in fact, in the copies from Cos and Antalya the sculptor needed to add a prop between the figure of Asclepius and Telesphorus.

Like the statuettes from Cos and Antalya, those from Glava Panega and Corinth belong to a group which include Telesphorus, a member of the family of Asclepius, portrayed as a small boy standing frontally and completely enveloped by a cloak²⁴ (nos. 4–8–16–18). Furthermore, only one sculpture from a private collection shows Asclepius with his daughter or sister Hygieia and Telesphorus (no. 15).

¹⁵ G. Kaschnitz von Weinberg, *Sculture del magazzino del Museo Vaticano*, Città del Vaticano, 1937, p. 113, no. 247; B. Holtzmann, op. cit. (n. 13), p. 880, no. 188; F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 209.

¹⁶ G. Barracco, *Catalogo del Museo di scultura antica Fondazione Barracco*, Forzani e c. tipografi, Bergamo, 1910, p. 31, no. 145; C. Pietrangeli, *Museo Barracco di scultura antica*, Roma, 1960, p. 98, no. 145; M. Nota Santi, M. Cimino, *Museo Barracco Roma*, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, Roma, 1991, p. 90, no. 145.

¹⁷ P. Kranz, *Pergameus Deus: archäologische und numismatische Studien zu den Darstellungen des Asklepios in Pergamon während Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit; mit einem Exkurs zur Überlieferung statuarischer Bildwerke in der Antike*, Möhnesee, Bibliopolis, 2004, p. 82.

¹⁸ *Classical antiquities from private collections in Great Britain. A loan exhibition in aid of the Ashmole Archive, London 15th – 31st January, 1986*, London 1986, p. 41, no. 44, pl. VIII.

¹⁹ *Sotheby's New York, Classical, Egyptian, and Western Asiatic Antiquities*, 29–11–1989, no. 111; *Sotheby's New York, Classical, Egyptian, and Western Asiatic Antiquities*, 1–6–1995, no. 126; A. Filgis, *Marmorstatuetten aus Kleinasien. Zu ikonographie, Funktion und Produktion antoninischer, severischer und späterer Idealplastik*, in *Istanbuler Mitteilungen (IstMitt)*, 49, 1999, p. 430, no. 40, pl. 39,4; P. Kranz, op. cit. (n. 17), p. 124.

²⁰ <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/73783511> (Last accessed **16–3–2014**).

²¹ <http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/images/1028/10289149.aspx> (Last accessed **16–3–2014**).

²² L. M. Stirling, *Pagan statuettes in Late Antique Corinth: Sculpture from the Panayia domus*, in *Hesperia. Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (Hesperia)*, 77, 2008, pp. 122–125, figs. 23–25.

²³ The type was identified with the cult statue of the *Asklepieion* of Pergamon and attributed to the sculptor *Phyromachos*. It was subsequently demonstrated, however, that those coins depicted a different type and there was therefore no link between this iconography and the artist: G. Heiderich, *Asklepios*, Freiburg, 1966; H. von Fritze, *Asklepiosstatuen in Pergamon*, in *Nomisma: Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiete der antiken Münzkunde (Nomisma)*, 2, 1908, pp. 19–35. Later studies identified the sculpture by Phyromachos with the sitting figure on Pergamon coins. However, since Prusia of Bitinia stole this statue from Pergamon, it would not have been shown on coinage (POLYB., 32.21; DIOD., 31.35).

The study conducted by L. Beschi on the Attic reliefs of the monument of Telemachos, the founder of the *Asklepieion* of Athens, led to the solution of the problem: this research has allowed us to identify the Amelung type, relating it back to the cult statue of the sanctuary of Epidauros. This new type would then be reproduced in the sanctuary of Athens at the time of the sanctuary's foundation around 420 B.C.: L. Beschi, *Rilievi votivi attici ricomposti*, in *Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene e delle missioni italiane in Oriente (AsAtene)*, 47–48, 1970, pp. 85–132.

The practice of replicating the cult statue, part of the cult foundation ritual, is commonly attested in the main sanctuaries derived from that in Epidauros erected in Athens, Cos, Pergamon and Rome. This practice also explains the uniformity of the copies, which only differ in a few details.

Furthermore, the Amelung type only appeared later on coinage from the age of Hadrian: H. von Fritze, op. cit. (n. 23), p. 22, pl. III/5.

²⁴ The figure of the small Telesphorus enjoyed great consideration at the shrines of Pergamon, Epidauros and Cos but he is also frequently found in the sanctuary of Batkoun: D. Tsontchev, op. cit. (n. 11).

Thanks to nine well-preserved copies, we can note that the god is always characterized by a thick beard (nos. 1–3–5–10–11–14–15–16–17–18). As already said by Berger²⁵, we can divide the copies into two main groups according to the hair style: the first variant has long hair (nos. 3–5–10–11–16–17), and the second variant has hair parted in the center with two large curls hanging down on either side of the face (nos. 1–14–15).

In the light of the study of the new examples, some new observations can be made regarding their relationship with the above-mentioned Amelung type. Sirano²⁶ observed that the iconography of the Nea Paphos has a direct relationship with this famous sculptural type, according to the position of the body and cloak. Five copies seem to confirm this and certainly fit into the series of copies with a direct relationship to the Amelung type: one example from Rome (no. 12), the one from the sanctuary of Pergamon (no. 13), the two statuettes from private collections (nos. 14–15) and that from Corinth (no. 18). However, the discovery of two other statuettes makes it possible to propose a completely new comparison with another type. The first statuette is housed in the Archaeological Museum of Antalya (no. 16) and the other in the London Science Museum, purchased from an antique market in Istanbul (no. 17). These two sculptures represent Asclepius in a version known as the Asclepius Eleusis²⁷, an iconography derived from the two most famous and popular types: the Amelung and the related Giustini²⁸, this last type conceived by Attic sculptors to decorate the sanctuary of Athens a few years after the Amelung.

The position of the cloak is the main difference between the Amelung type and the Eleusis one. In fact, in the latter it leaves a larger portion of the torso of the god uncovered. This kind of dress, folded downward on the pubis, forms a triangular-shaped drape; the rest of the cloak covers his legs. This version of the dress shows more drapery, with more neatly arranged pleats.

The original provenance of nine statuettes is unknown (nos. 2–3–10–11–12–14–15–16–17); on the other hand, we know that four sculptures come from domestic settings (nos. 1–4–5–18) and five from religious contexts (nos. 6–7–8–9–13).

The image of the god holding the egg in his right hand is also depicted in several votive reliefs, dating to the 2nd century A.D., dedicated in Greek to Asclepius Zimidrenus/Sindrinus²⁹: fourteen found in the Thracian sanctuaries of Glava Panega (fourteen reliefs)³⁰ and six from Batkoun³¹. Like the statuettes, the figure of the god - alone or with Hygieia and Telesphorus - also appears on reliefs in the iconographies of both the Amelung and Eleusis types. The same image of the healing god holding the egg can probably be seen on a coin minted in Thrace during the rule of Gordian III in Hadrianopolis (today Edirne, Turkey)³².

Moreover, it is very interesting and important to remember a group of inscriptions found in Rome, dedicated by Praetorians to several deities, two of which dedicated to the above-mentioned Asclepius Zimidrenus/Sindrinus. They were dedicated by Thracian soldiers originating from Philippopolis (today Plovdiv, Bulgaria) at the time of Alexander Severus and Gordian III³³. They constitute further evidence of the cult practiced in the sanctuary of Asclepius in Batkoun.

²⁵ E. Berger, *Zwei Köpfe und ein Torso von Asklepios-Statuen*, in *Antike Kunstwerke aus der Sammlung Ludwig. III. Skulpturen. Peter Ludwig zum 65. Geburtstag am 9. Juli 1990* (Hg. E. Berger), Mainz, von Zabern, 1990, pp. 183–205.

²⁶ F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 205.

²⁷ B. Holtzmann, op. cit. (n. 13), pp. 882–883, nos. 234–244.

²⁸ M. Meyer, *Erfindung und Wirkung. Zum Asklepios Giustini*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung (AM)*, 103, 1988, pp. 119–159; E. Berger, *Zwei neue Skulpturenfragmente im Basler Ludwig-Museum. Zum Problem des Asklepios Giustini*, in *Praestant interna: Festschrift für Ulrich Hausmann* (Hgs. B. von Freytag gen. Löringhoff, D. Mannsperger, F. Prayon), Wasmuth, Tübingen, 1982, pp. 63–71.

²⁹ Z. Goceva, op. cit. (n. 12), p. 897, nos. 11–20; G. Mihailov, *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae (IGB)*, II, 1956–1966, in *aedibus typographicis Academiae Litterarum Bulgaricae, Serdicae*, 1956–1966, III, 1, pp. 134–137, pls. 104–107.

³⁰ G. Mihailov, op. cit. (n. 29), pp. 37–43.

³¹ Other fragments of reliefs depicting Asclepius come from this site, but they are badly preserved and cannot be identified as the figure holding the egg that is discussed in this article. See some examples in: G. Mihailov, op. cit. (n. 29), pp. 125–139, pls. 90–109.

³² I. Varbanov, *Greek imperial coins and their values (The Local Coinage of the Roman Empire)*, II. *Thrace (from Abdera to Pautalia)*, Adicom, Bourgas, 2005, no. 3731.

³³ W. Henzen, *Di un gruppo di lapidi e latercoli militari scoperti sull'Esquilino*, in *Bullettino della Commissione archeologica comunale di Roma (BCom)*, 3, 1875, pp. 83–85; G. H. Renberg, *Public and private places of worship in the cult of Asclepius at Rome*, in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome (MAAR)*, 51/52, 2006/2007, pp. 150–152; M.G. Granino Cecere, C. Ricci, *Culti indigeni e lealismo dinastico nelle dediche dei pretoriani rinvenute presso piazza Manfredo Fanti a Roma*, in *L'armée romaine et la religion sous le Haut-Empire romain: Actes du quatrième congrès de Lyon (26–28 octobre 2006)* (éds. C. Wolff; Y. Le Bohec), De Boccard, Paris, 2009, pp. 185–201; D. Dana, C. Ricci, *Tradurre il divino: le dediche dei militari traci nella Roma imperiale*, in *Riscritture. La traduzione nelle arti e nelle lettere* (cur. G. Marconi), Bruno Mondadori, Milano-Torino, 2013, pp. 20–35.

As already said, this group of statuettes and reliefs has a symbol in common, the egg. Although this attribute with its different symbolic values was greatly favoured in the Greek-Roman world, it was only in the mid imperial age that it occurred in association with images of Asclepius. Indeed, it was not used in the prototype of the Amelung type or in any other iconography of the healing god.

In order to understand the meaning of the egg it is necessary to analyze the historical period in which this specific image of Asclepius was born. By the 2nd century A.D., the syncretic tendency of Greek-Roman religion of the imperial age was widely established. Literary and archaeological evidence of the time documents the presence of the symbol of the egg within the oriental cults.

A small shrine with seven eggshells placed around a bronze statuette depicting a divinity entwined by a snake was found at the center of a sanctuary dedicated to Syrian deities on the Janiculum Hill in Rome³⁴. This archaeological evidence documents the relationship between the egg and the snake and its cosmological significance, also recalling what Arnobius (*ad. Nat.*, 1.36.5) wrote: *Ovorum progenies dii Syri*.

A few years earlier, in the 2nd century A.D., Artemidorus (*Onirocriticon*, 2.13) recalled the multiple meanings of the *drakon* (= snake) linking it to Asclepius, Sabazius and other gods. These links seem to outline a point of contact between the cult of Asclepius and some oriental cults of a mystical and soteriological nature, a phenomenon that was already widespread at the end of the 1st century B.C. in the eastern Mediterranean where we find Asclepius associated with Hadad and Atargatis³⁵.

Finally, a document belonging to the Second Sophistic movement provides evidence of a reflection on how Asclepius should be represented. It is an Arabic version of the text³⁶ of the Hippocratic Oath attributed to Galen that was only analyzed in detail in the 1970s. A passage in the text outlines the salient features of the image of Asclepius: a bearded man leaning on a staff of mallow wood around which a *drakon* is wound, in his right hand an egg – symbol of the Universe. In this way, the iconography states that the entire Universe, represented by the egg, needs the medicine of Asclepius.

As stated above, Grimm saw a close connection between the Nea Paphos type and the cult of Glycon. However, as Sirano³⁷ observes, the connection between the snake of Asclepius Nea Paphos-Alexandria-Trier and the iconography of Glycon seems uncertain. The image of Glycon, documented by the famous well-preserved statue found in the city of Tomis,³⁸ on the western shore of the Black Sea and by some small bronze amulets conserved in Ankara and Athens³⁹, is completely different from that of all the snakes associated with Asclepius. In fact, Glycon is depicted as a snake with massive coils, the head with flowing hair covering human ears.

In conclusion, the iconographic type of Asclepius holding an egg in his right hand is attested by a large group of statuettes of imperial date, particularly the second half of the 2nd century A.D., except the Asclepius from Corinth which dates to the 3rd–4th century A.D.

The copies analyzed come from mainland Greece (nos. 5–18), Asia Minor (nos. 13–16–17), the Greek islands (nos. 1–4), Alexandria (nos. 2–3), the Danubian provinces (nos. 6–7–8–9), and Rome (nos. 11–12). The image of the healing god seems to be completely absent in the Western provinces and even in the many places of worship in Italy, the two copies found in Rome being an exception. Thus, the image seems to be present in the Eastern Mediterranean provinces and in those lands directly bordering Greece – Thrace in particular – where Hellenized culture was well established (Pl. II).

This new examination of the sculptures shows sixteen examples of Asclepius's pose in the version of the type derived from the Amelung, while only two statuettes show him in the Eleusis type. An alternative

³⁴ U. Bianchi, *Culti orientali a Roma. Il santuario degli dei sirii sul Gianicolo*, in *Studi romani (StRom)*, 30, 1982, pp. 89–97; M. Mele, *L'area del santuario siriano del Gianicolo. Problemi archeologici e storico-religiosi*, Quasar, Roma, 1982; R. Meneghini, *Il santuario siriano del Gianicolo*, in *Romana Gens. Bollettino dell'Associazione archeologica romana (RomGens)*, 1, 1984, pp. 6–10.

³⁵ P. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale*, in *Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome (BEFAR)*, De Boccard, Paris, 1970, pp. 375, 470–471.

³⁶ F. Rosenthal, *An ancient Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath*, in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine (BHM)*, 30, 1956, pp. 52–87; G. Strohmaier, *Asklepios und das Ei*, in *Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben. Festschrift für Franz Altheim zum 6.10.1968* (Hgs. R. Stiehl, F. Altheim), 2, de Gruyter, Berlin, 1970, pp. 143–153; Ibn Abi Usaibia, *History of physicians*, 1971, p. 38.

³⁷ F. Sirano, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 218–219.

³⁸ V. Canarache et alli., *Tezaurul de sculpturi de la Tomis*, Editura Științifică, București, 1963, no. 24, pls. 55–57; G. Bordenache, *Contributi per una storia dei culti e dell'arte nella Tomi di età romana*, in *Studii Clasice (StCl)*, 6, 1964, pp. 157–160, pls. 6–7; Z. Rusu, *Der Kult der Schlange von Tomis*, in *Dacoromania. Jahrbuch für östliche Latinität (Dacoromania)*, 6, 1981–1982, pp. 133–160.

³⁹ D. Burr Thompson, *Miniature sculpture from the Athenian Agora*, II, American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Princeton, 1962, no. 79; L. Robert, *Le serpent Glycon d'Abônousteichos à Athènes et Artémis d'Ephèse à Rome*, in *Comptes rendus des séances – Académie des inscriptions (CRAI)*, 1981, pp. 513–535; G. Bordenache Battaglia, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 280, no. 3.

hypothesis can be proposed based on this new data: perhaps a single statue from a sanctuary of Asclepius was never used as a prototype for the Nea Paphos-Alexandria-Trier type. If there had been a famous statue from an important sanctuary, this image would have been widely replicated in many copies; on the contrary, we have very few statuettes depicting Asclepius with the egg.

Moreover, no life-size statues of the Nea Paphos type have been found to date: all known examples, belong to small marble figures no taller than 119 cm, the maximum size reached by the statuettes of Cos and Alexandria.

It may be suggested that, at some point, the new attribute of the egg was added to the different iconographic models of Asclepius. The fact that almost all of the Nea Paphos sculptures are derived from the Amelung type could be due to the fact that this iconography of Asclepius is the most common in the territories of the Roman Empire. That is why it is easier to find Asclepius with the egg represented as the Amelung type.

The rarity of this kind of representation of the healing god and the type of contexts in which our statuettes have been found seem to suggest a different interpretation of this phenomenon: both elements seem to indicate a restricted and very cultured environment, as the world of the medical profession would have been.

It is useful to return Galen's words regarding the Hippocratic Oath, clearly directed to physicians. In one passage, Galen describes how Asclepius should be represented: a bearded man leaning on a staff around which is wound a *drakon*, holding an egg in his right hand. In this way, the iconography makes the statement that the entire Universe, represented by the egg, needs the medicine of Asclepius⁴⁰.

This image of the healing god, therefore, could be related to physicians and the places in which they usually worked, that are the sanctuaries of Asclepius. In the Roman world, the small statuettes depicting deities were usually placed within the home in spaces specifically dedicated to housing images of the gods, such as *lararia*. Small statues were even placed in sanctuaries as votive offerings, as attested by the presence of inscriptions written on the bases. A Greek inscription on a statue base found in Rome, dating to the Antonine period, dedicated by a physician named Nicomedes from Smyrna is evidence that doctors themselves dedicated statues to Asclepius⁴¹.

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- Pl. II. Nea Paphos type, map of distribution (drawing by author).

⁴⁰ G. Strohmaier, op. cit. (n. 36), pp. 143–153; Ibn Abi Usaibia, op. cit. (n. 36), p. 38.

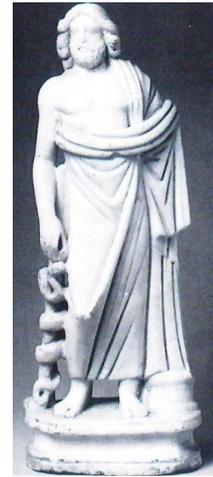
⁴¹ A. Maiuri, *Il donario del medico Nicomede in un santuario di Asclepio sull'Esquilino*, in *Rendiconti dell'Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche (RendLinc)*, 21, 1912, pp. 236–251; L. Moretti, *Inscriptiones Graecae urbis Romae, I–IV*, Istituto italiano per la storia antica, Roma, 1968–1990, p. 84.



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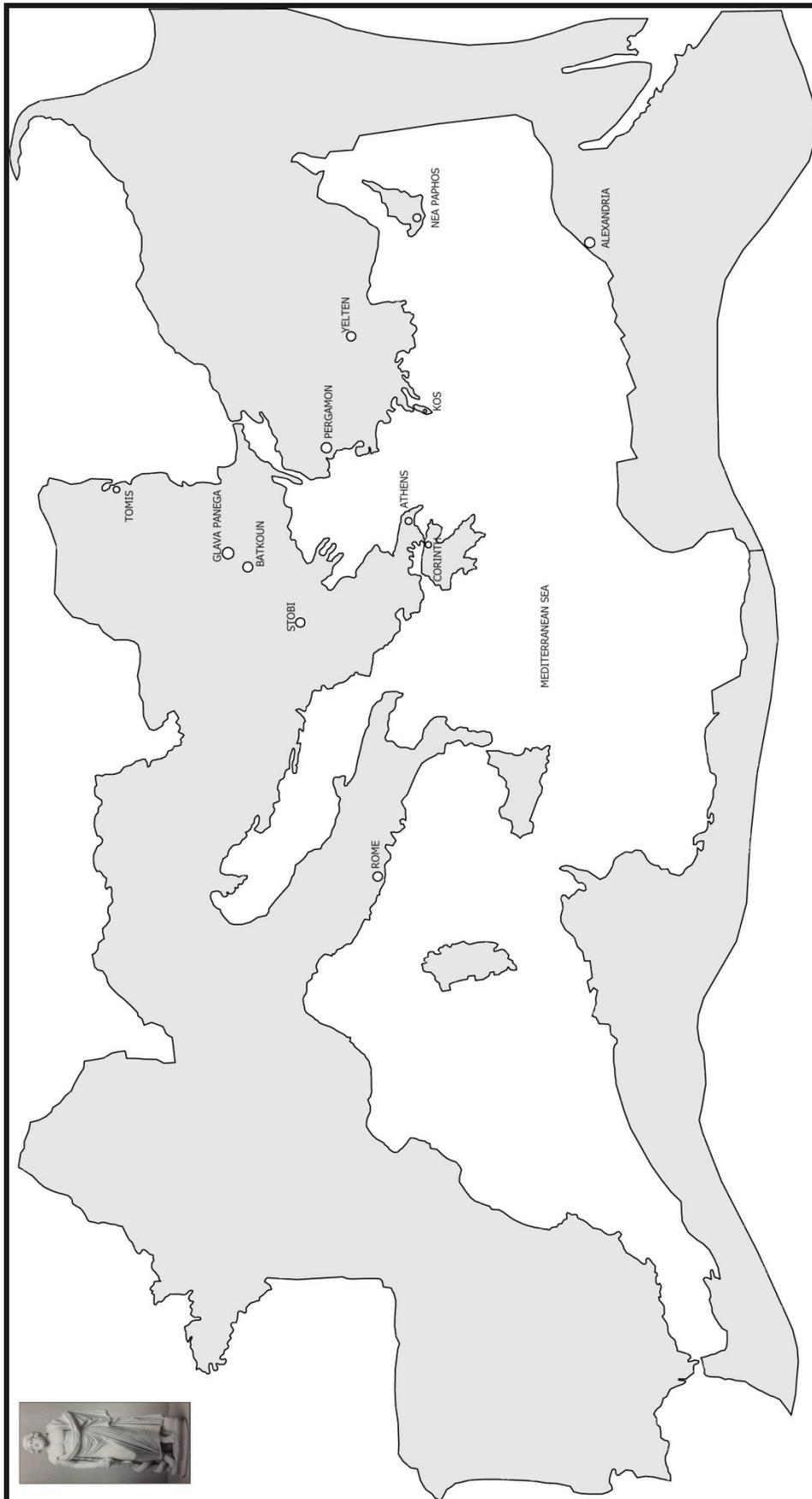


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Pl. II. Nea Paphos type, map of distribution (drawing by author).