

Aphrodite's

CULTURAL ROUTE



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Aphrodite, the Cypriot Goddess

Cyprus has always been considered as the Island of Aphrodite and no other place in the world can boast of being the birthplace of the goddess of love. In the 8th century b.C. Homer mentions Aphrodite as Kypris and Golden Aphrodite.

Myths connected with Aphrodite, such as those concerning Aphrodite and Hephaistos, Aphrodite and Ares, and Aphrodite and Adonis, possibly originated in Cyprus.

The Cyprus Tourism Organisation felt an obligation to honour this glorious past through a serious, historically accurate programme of cultural tourism centred on the search for the traces that Aphrodite has left throughout the island.

Aphrodite's Cultural Route

Follow the footsteps of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty and patron of Cyprus. The route focuses on the archaeological sites dedicated to the ancient cult of Aphrodite and includes the World Heritage Site at Palaipafos (Kouklia), Amathous and Kition.

These are linked to other sites and museums with artefacts related to the goddess.

Wander through layers of history, culture and mythology as you learn all about her birth, mythology, character, the rituals connected with her cult, as well as plants and seashells associated with her.



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In this leaflet all place names have been converted into Latin characters according to the official System of Transliteration of the Greek alphabet, i.e. Lefkosia = Nicosia, Lemesos = Limassol
Notes on pronunciation: **'ai'** as in English egg i.e. **Palaipafos, Palaichori**
'oi', **'ei'**, **'y'**: as in English India i.e. **Choirokoitia**, **'ou'**: as in English tour: i.e. **Amathous**



Naked bird-faced female figurine
with perforated ears. Holds a child



map

An invitation by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation to wander through layers of history and culture in the footsteps of the Great Cypriot Goddess.



REFERENCE



Primary sites



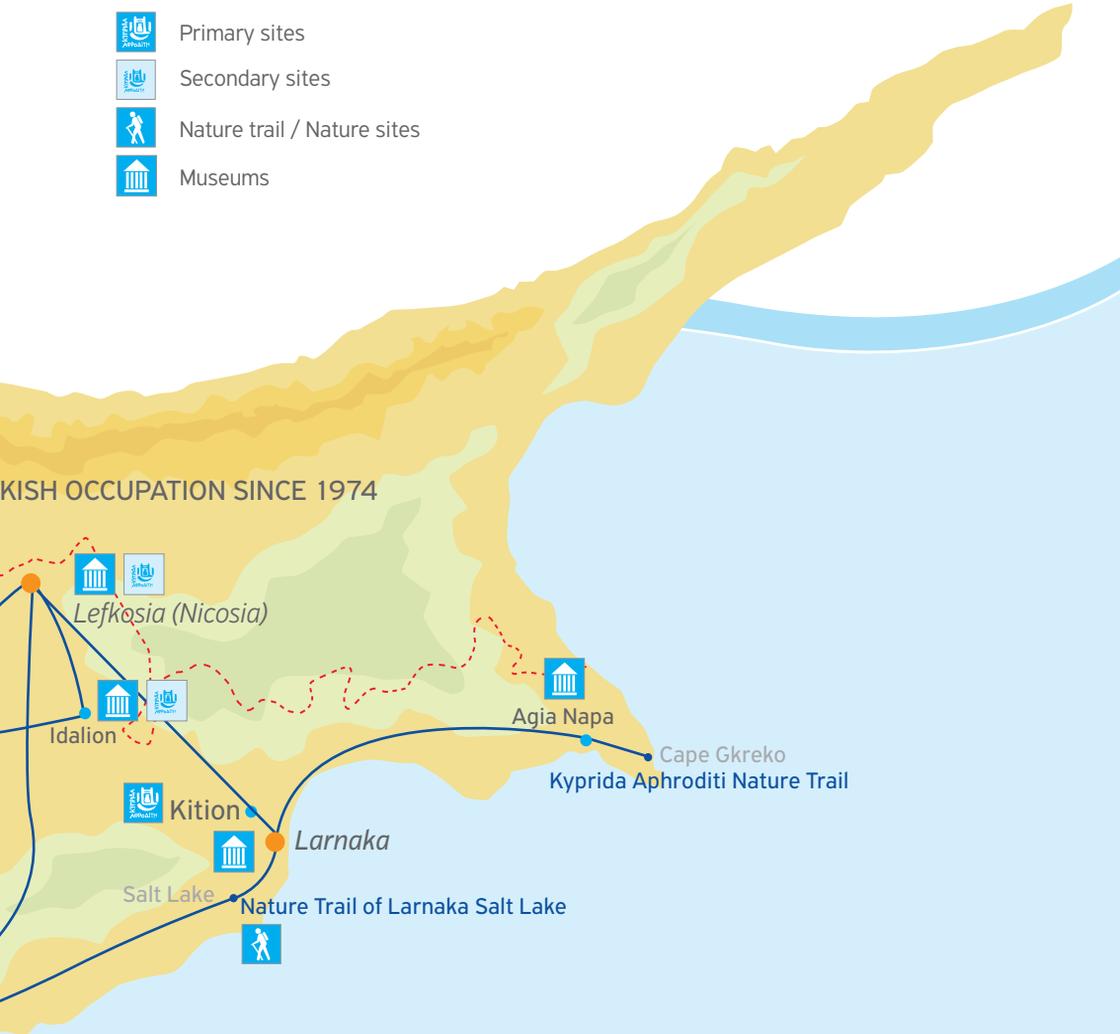
Secondary sites



Nature trail / Nature sites



Museums





Aphrodite's Cultural Route

Three primary sacred sites constitute the core of Aphrodite's Cultural Route:

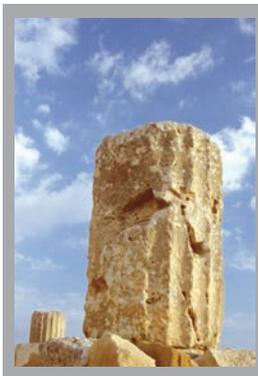
- Palaipafos (Kouklia) - World Heritage Site
- Amathous (near Lemesos)
- Kition (Larnaka)



Following a recognizable logo, Kyprida Aphroditis, the Route follows the Goddess footsteps through information panels which interpret Kyprida Aphroditis in many aspects.

1. Aphrodite's relation to the Sacred Sites of Palaepafos, Amathous and Kition
2. Genesis of Aphrodite: From the Cypriot Great Goddess to Aphrodite
3. Mythology of Aphrodite and Cyprus
4. The Character of the Cypriot Goddess
5. The Name "Aphrodite" and the names of the Cypriot Goddess
6. Rituals connected with the Cult of Aphrodite in each Sacred Site
7. Plants living on Cyprus associated with Aphrodite
8. Seashells associated with Aphrodite

Aphrodite's Cultural Route is also linked to nature sites and museums where artefacts relating to Aphrodite are displayed.



1. Kouklia - Palaipafos



2. Amathous



3. Kition - Kathari

Information

The Cyprus Tourism Organisation provides a series of linked visits to Primary Archaeological Sites, Museums and Nature Sites to allow visitors to make the best use of time available, visiting by foot, by car or by tour operator's organized tours accompanied by a licensed guide. Visitors may go to only one or two sites close to where they are staying; others may choose to follow one or more specific routes or travel more extensively and visit them all.

- Larnaka area and Agia Napa: one / two days
- Lemesos area: half a day
- Pafos area: two / three days

Distances (approximately):

Kition Kathari - Amathous (Near Lemesos) - Palaipafos (Kouklia) World Heritage Site 135 km

Larnaka - Cape Gkreko 43 km

Larnaka - Agia Napa 40 km

Larnaka - Lefkosia 45 km

Lemesos - Lefkosia 83 km

Lemesos - Pafos 68 km

Lemesos - Larnaka 70 km

Pafos - Lefkosia 150 km





Kouklia

The World Heritage Site of Palaipafos (Kouklia) is the most important of the three sites of the Cultural Route of Aphrodite.

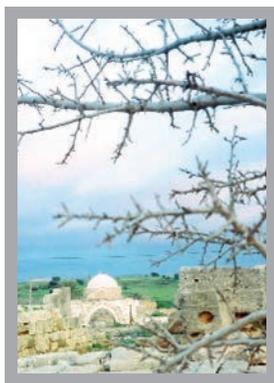
It was believed that Aphrodite was born from the sea, near the shore of Pafos.

Her temple was said to have been founded by Kinyras, a famous king of the Cypriots, or by Agapenor, a Greek hero of the Trojan War. Already famous in the time of Homer it remained the renowned cult place of Aphrodite until the 4th cent. A.D.

We can see now the remains of the first sanctuary of the 12th cent. b.C. where the goddess was worshipped as an aniconic symbol - a conical stone - till the Roman times. The ruins of the Roman temple erected in 1st - 2nd cent. A.D. are next to the sanctuary. There was also another smaller sanctuary probably dedicated to Aphrodite/Astarte and Melkart, situated near the North-eastern entrance of the city.

Unfortunately few scanty ruins survive of such a famous sanctuary.

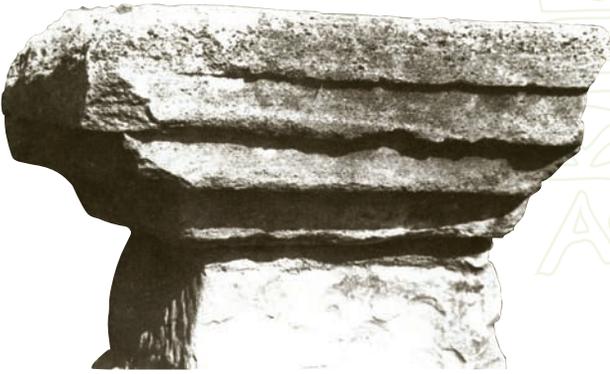
The reason is that it has been destroyed many times by earthquakes, plundered and used as building material.



1. General view of the excavated area of the sanctuary of Aphrodite. In the background a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary Galaktotrofousa (milkgiving).



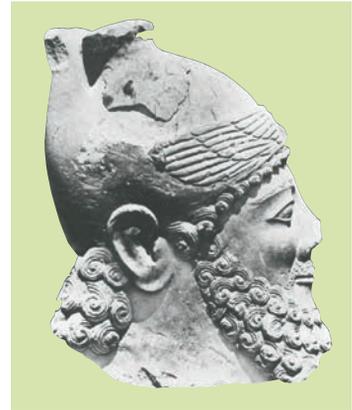
2. Architectural remains of Palaipafos.



3. Mycenaean limestone capital from the sanctuary of Aphrodite (ca.1200 b.C.).



4. Horns of consecration, a symbol of Creto-Mycenaean religion, found on the site of the sanctuary of Aphrodite (12th cent. b.C.).



5. Limestone head representing a priest king of Pafos. Liverpool Museum (end of 6th cent. b.C.).



Aphrodite in Pafos

The myth of the birth of Aphrodite from the sea was very famous in antiquity.

According to Hesiod, at the time of the creation of the world, there existed only Ge, the Earth, and Ouranos, the Sky who procreated together monstrous creatures. Ge asked one of her sons, Cronos, to mutilate his father. Cronos cut his father's genitals which fell into the sea. From the foam that was formed, a maiden was born, first taken by the waves to Kythera, then brought to Cyprus. This maiden was the goddess Aphrodite and accompanied by Love and Desire, she went from Cyprus to the assembly of the gods directly.

Aphrodite was closely associated with Kinyras, a mythical king of Pafos, a musician and inventor of metallurgy, famous for his beauty and his wealth. He was her beloved priest. But one of his daughters, Smyrna, offended Aphrodite who punished her by making her fall in love with her own father. Threatened by him, she was saved by Aphrodite, who turned her into a myrtle tree. From the trunk of the tree Adonis was born, whom Aphrodite loved dearly and mourned deeply when he died.

Pygmalion, a king of Pafos, fell in love with an ivory statue of Aphrodite he had himself carved. Compassionate, Aphrodite gave life to the statue.

In the Akamas, Aphrodite was said to bathe in the spring called today Baths of Aphrodite after making love with Hephaistos or with Adonis.



1. Petra tou Romiou. The nature site of the legendary place of the birth of Aphrodite.



2. The Ludovisi Throne with the birth of Aphrodite in relief. Museo Nazionale Romano and Baths of Diocletian in Rome (5th cent. b.C.).



3. *Myrtus communis* (Myrtle).
A shrub sacred to Aphrodite.
It was behind a myrtle that
she hid her nakedness when
she rose from the sea at Pafos.



4. Limestone bathtub found
in a tomb at Kouklia.
The Local Museum of
Palaipafos (11th cent. b.C.).



5. Limestone head of a
youth from Palaipafos
Cyprus Museum, Lefkosia
(6th cent. b.C.).

Connected with the cult of Aphrodite in Pafos

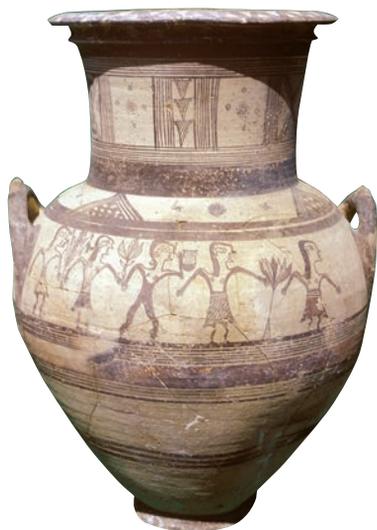
In the sanctuary of Palaipafos, which was just an enclosure with an altar where incense was burning, the goddess was worshipped under the shape of an aniconic symbol, a conical stone, until the Roman times. According to tradition her altar was never wet with rain nor ever wet with blood, because she resented bloody sacrifices.

She was offered painted figurines of animals, rich perfumes, balms, libations of honey, pancakes "ψαιστιά" (psestia), foliage and fruit .

A high priest (perhaps the king of the city) together with priestesses and sacred servants served Aphrodite. The art of divination was practiced from the entrails of lambs by the dynasties of high priests until Roman times. Sacred marriage, a ritual usual in the Near East, was perhaps practised between the king and a priestess in order to transmit to the king the divine power. The adornment of Aphrodite by sacred servants for some special ceremony is described several times in the Homeric poems.

Sacred prostitution may have taken place in the sacred gardens of the sanctuary.

There were perhaps also initiation ceremonies during which the initiates were given a lump of salt and a model of a penis.



1-2. An archaic amphora decorated with scenes of worship in honour of a goddess/priestess (?) seated on a throne.
Cyprus Museum, Lefkosia (8th cent. b.C.).



3-4. Scenes of worship of the goddess (worshippers offering flowers around the tree of life in the sacred gardens, with a couple making love) on archaic vases (6th cent. b.C.).



5. Roman bronze coins representing the Sanctuary of Aphrodite with the conical cult stone.

Amathous

Amathous is one of the two great sites dedicated to Aphrodite where remains of sanctuaries and temples of the goddess can still be seen.

The Cypriot Goddess was perhaps worshipped on the acropolis of the city as early as the 11th cent. b.C., as evidenced by a tomb of that period, which could be the tomb of Ariadne - Aphrodite, known from ancient sources as a cult place. Traces of a sanctuary dating to the 8th cent. b.C. have been found, as well as two colossal stone vases of the 6th - 5th cent. b.C., and a cave used for religious practices. What we see now are the remains of the temple to Aphrodite built in the 1st cent. A.D. on the site of previous temples dating to the Hellenistic period. Next to the ruins of the temple are the remains of a Christian basilica which was erected in the 7th cent. A.D.

The remains of a Royal Palace with a storeroom and a sacred place have been discovered on the side of the Acropolis.

Ancient necropolises excavated in the vicinity have yielded numerous female figurines buried with the dead in their tombs. They evidence the cult of the goddess worshipped in Amathous.

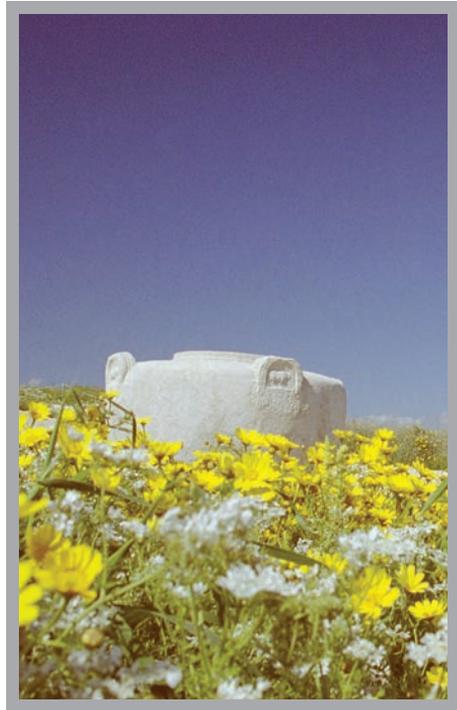
The lower city was also inhabited in Hellenistic and Roman times. An agora, public baths, a fountain complex have been uncovered.



1. Fragment of an archaic crater showing two facing bulls with an inscription in the Cypriot script and the Eteocypriot language. Lemesos District Museum (6th cent. b.C.).



2. Stele in the shape of the head of an Egyptian goddess Hathor with curly hair supporting a model of a sanctuary. Found on the Acropolis of Amathous. Lemesos District Museum (6th cent. b.C.).



3. General view of the acropolis of Amathous with architectural features of the temple of Aphrodite.

Aphrodite in Amathous

The temple of Aphrodite in Amathous was said to have been founded by Amathous, son of the king Aerias, who was said, amongst others, to have founded the temple of Aphrodite in Pafos. This would indicate that the cult of Aphrodite in Amathous derives from the cult of Aphrodite in Pafos.

Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, was abandoned pregnant at Amathous by her lover Theseus on their way back from Crete to Athens after having helped him kill the Minotaur. Ariadne died during labour in Amathous. Amathousians showed her tomb in the grove of Ariadne - Aphrodite. Ariadne had the features of a fertility goddess and could have been identified with the Cypriot goddess.

The power of Aphrodite was immense: she punished those who did not respect her, as is shown in the following myths. Aphrodite punished the Propoetids, women from Amathous who denied her divinity, by forcing them into prostitution and changing them into stone figures. The goddess also turned into furious bulls the Kerastes, horned men who sacrificed strangers at the entrance of the city.



1. Cretan goddess with uplifted hands. Heraklio Museum (13th cent. b.C.).



2. Terracotta handmade painted protome of a bull's head. Lemesos District Museum (6th cent. b.C.).



3. Gold plaque in repoussé which represents a goddess with uplifted arms. Berlin Museum (8th cent. b.C.).



4. Cypriot terracotta figurine of the goddess with uplifted arms, touching her head with both hands. Lemesos District Museum (7th-6th cent. b.C.).



5. Adonis annua (Red-flowered pheasant eye).

related to the cult of Aphrodite in Amathous

Rituals relevant to the cult of Aphrodite in Amathous seem to be of very ancient, and mainly oriental, origin.

Various ancient fertility rituals were performed at the annual celebration of Ariadne who was said to have died in childbirth. They included a sacrifice and a couvade rite during which a young man performed the part of a woman in labour.

Aphrodite in Amathous had probably a bisexual character.

Water played an important part in the cult. The two huge stone vases in the sacred area of the sanctuary contained water for purification or other rituals.

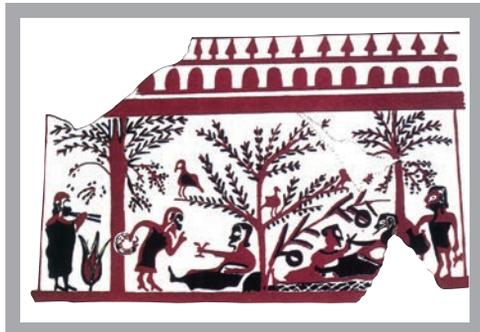
Some rituals took place in a cave. Sacred stones were worshipped on the acropolis, as well as steles in the shape of Hathor heads.

The bull was a symbol of fertility. Men wearing bull masks performed during the rituals. Funerary lamentations took place in the annual celebrations in honour of Aphrodite and Adonis.

Other rituals were preserved until later periods, rituals such as sacrifices for the fertility of the fields, perhaps sacred marriage and possibly, sacred prostitution.



1. Fragment of a painted archaic vase in the Amathous style depicting a Hathor capital. Louvre Museum (6th cent. b.C.).



2. Scene of a country banquet on a cypro-archaic amphora. British Museum (5th cent. b.C.).



3. Votive handmade anthropomorphic masks. Lemesos District Museum (7th-6th cent. b.C.).



4-5. Female figurines standing in a frontal position with arms bent to play a disc-shaped tambourine. Lemesos District Museum (7th-6th cent. b.C.).



6. Limestone statue of a High Priest wearing a bull's mask from Amathous. Lemesos District Museum (5th cent. b.C.).



7. Fragmentary model of a naiskos with a crescent and disc motif above the entrance. Lemesos District Museum (7th-6th cent. b.C.).

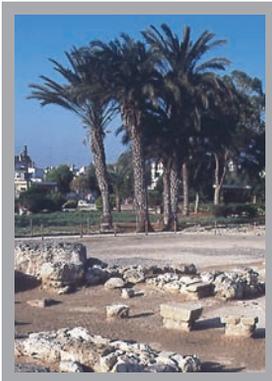


8. Pendant in the form of a pomegranate. Symbol of fertility. Lemesos District Museum (9th cent. b.C.).



Kition - Kathari

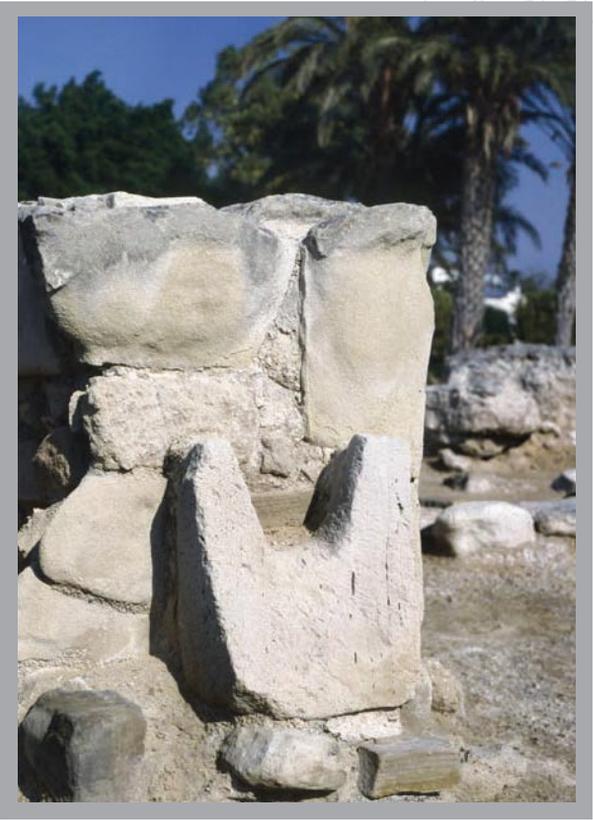
Larnaka lies on top of a very ancient city founded in about 1300 b.C. Excavations have brought to light at the site, called Kition-Kathari, the sacred quarter where a Great Goddess was worshipped in sanctuaries and later in temples associated with workshops for the melting of copper. It seems that the Cypriot Goddess was the patron of copper, which constituted at the time the wealth of Cyprus. The site was abandoned about 1000 b.C. At the end of the 9th cent. b.C., Phoenicians came to Cyprus and founded on the same site a new city called Kition. They rebuilt the old temple and dedicated it to their goddess Astarte, the oriental equivalent to Aphrodite, who was worshipped there until the 4th cent. b.C. During the same period there were also other sanctuaries dedicated to the Phoenician divinities Astarte and Melkart in another sacred area, called Kition - Bamboula, above the harbour.



1. Overview of Kition - Kathari.



2. Architectural features of Temenos B, Kition - Kathari. (13th cent. b.C.).



3. Horns of consecration, the symbol of Creto-Mycenaean religion, found at temple (3) Kition - Kathari.



The Great Goddess and Copper – Aphrodite and Hephaistos

The Great Goddess who was worshipped in the most ancient sanctuaries of Kition was certainly a fertility goddess protecting all products of the land, vegetation as well as copper. That is why workshops for the smelting of copper were found next to her sanctuaries. A 12th cent. b.C. bronze statuette represents her as a naked goddess with her hands on her breasts. She is standing on an ingot, as does an associate figure of a god, also protector of metallurgy.

Aphrodite was said to have been the lover of the King of Pafos, Kinyras, her beloved priest. Kinyras, famous for his wealth, was known as the inventor of tools and metallurgy.

According to Greek mythology, Aphrodite was married to Hephaistus, the smith of the gods. This myth may have originated from the connection the Cypriot Goddess had with metallurgy. Hephaistus was said to have built for her a palace made of gold and jewels in idyllic seclusion, somewhere in the island, most probably in the Akamas area.

Aphrodite was called by Homer Kypris, which probably means the Goddess of Cyprus. The name of the island Kypros, of uncertain etymology, has given the word for copper to several European languages: cupro in Italian, cobre in Spanish, copper in English, cuivre in French, kupfer in German.

Therefore, Cyprus, the island rich in copper, which the Cypriot Goddess protected, has given her name to this metal throughout Europe.



1. Copper slag from the industrial complex next to temple (1) of the Great Goddess at Kition - Kathari.



2. Three bronze tools used as foundation deposit in temple (4) from Kition - Kathari.



3. Bronze ingot from Enkomi (12th cent. b.C.).



4. Bronze statuette in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, representing a nude "Astarte" figure, standing on a base in the form of an oxhide ingot (12th cent. b.C.).



5. Bronze statue of the Ingot God from Enkomi, standing on an oxhide ingot (12th cent. b.C.).

in the temples of Kition

Evidence of the rituals that took place in the temples of Kition-Kathari is given by the rich archaeological finds discovered during excavations.

In the open courtyards of the temples, there were sacrificial altars and tables for offerings.

On the floor of temples (1) and (5), skulls of oxen and other animals were found. These bucrania may have been worn as masks during ceremonies as part of the fertility rites.

Anthropomorphic masks were also worn.

Cult objects were kept in the enclosed holy-of-holies of the temples, as, for instance, an ivory pipe for smoking opium as well as a perforated vase in which opium was burnt to be inhaled. Opium was used for religious purposes. An inscribed bronze votive kidney indicates that divination was practiced from the entrails of animals.

We know more about the organization of the sanctuary of Astarte at Kition-Bamboula from an inscription of the 4th cent. b.C., listing its expenses. In addition to the Holy Queen's singers and bakers, there were magistrates, architects, a scribe, craftsmen, sacrificers, a master-of-the-water, barbers, servants, young boys and girls, all employed by the sanctuary.

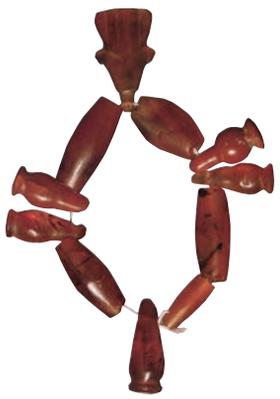


1. Clay votive mask found at Kition - Kathari (11th cent. b.C.).



2. Bronze votive kidney with engraved signs in the Cypro-Minoan syllabary on one side. Priests who taught apprentices the practice of divination used it.

ΚΥΠΡΙΑ
 ΑΦΡΟΔΙΤΗ



3. Necklace beads of cornelian, some of them in the shape of a bottle or poppy



4. Ivory pipe which was used in rituals (13th cent. b.C.).



5. Numerous figurines of offerers in the "snowman" technique.

Her relation to Pafos

In the absence of relevant texts, especially for very ancient periods, information about the Great Goddess of Cyprus is mainly based on the study of clay or picrolite and limestone figurines and, for the later periods, of limestone statues and statuettes, which show the development of the image and identity of the goddess through the millennia.

Figurines placed in tombs, sanctuaries and private houses played an important role in ancient religions. Many interpretations have been suggested: they may have been images of the goddess or her priestesses or of her sacred servants, or companions of the deceased, or talismans used for the protection of the dead, the stimulation of fertility or simply for good luck. Later they were images of donors, musicians or simply worshippers. They certainly were cult objects used as intermediaries between deity and human.

10000 - 2500

NEOLITHIC - CHALCOLITHIC 10000 - 2500 b.C.

Fertility began to be worshipped mainly in the southern part of the island.

In the Chalcolithic period a fertility cult develops mainly in the South-western part of the island (Erimi-Souskiou-Lempa-Kissonerga)

Settlements at Lempa and Kissonerga and the necropolis at Souskiou (near Kouklia). Traces of occupation on the site of the future sanctuary at Palaipafos. A fertility cult centred on a Great Goddess with special emphasis on childbirth is evidenced by numerous stone and clay idols.



1. Lady of Lempa.
Big cruciform
stone statuette.



2. Clay figurine of a
woman giving birth.



3. Phallus in stone.

2500 - 1600

EARLY AND MIDDLE BRONZE AGE 2500 - 1600 b.C.

A zoomorphic fertility cult develops in the Northern and Central part of the island and gradually crystallizes around the cult of a fertility goddess. Strong influences from the Syro-Palestinian coast. The fertility goddess is orientalized.

The Chalcolithic culture declines: scarce traces of occupation in the Pafos area. Palaipafos - Kouklia 1600 b.C.

Evidence of the existence of a settlement in the Palaipafos area.



4. Flat clay figurine.

5-6. Plank-shaped clay figurines of women goddesses or priestesses wearing ceremonial dress, necklaces, earrings (perforated ears). One figurine holds a child.

Her relation to Pafos

1600 - 1050

LATE BRONZE AGE I - II 1600 - 1200 b.C.

Commercial relations with the Near East and the Aegean. Presence of Mycenaean Greek traders. 1300 b.C. Oriental sanctuary dedicated to the Great Goddess built in Kition.

Palaipafos - Kouklia

From the numerous tombs it is obvious that the settlement is growing in importance. It becomes prosperous in the end of the 13th - 12th century b.C., as is evidenced by rich tombs.

1600 - 1050

LATE BRONZE AGE III 1200-1050 b.C.

Sea people raid the coasts of Cyprus. Achaean Greeks settle along the coasts of Cyprus, especially at Salamis, Kourion and Pafos.

Palaipafos - Kouklia

Time of the mythical King and priest of Aphrodite Kinyras.

Worship of the Great Goddess of oriental character.

Building of the sanctuary of "Aphrodite" in Palaipafos.

The Greek Agapenor with a group of Arcadians settle in Pafos.

The Greeks worship the Pafian Great Goddess.



1. Naked bird-faced female figurine with perforated ears and strongly emphasized sexual features (breasts, pubis). Holds a child.



2. A female figurine standing with the hands under the breasts. The hair of the pubis is shown in black paint.

1600 - 1050

1100 b.C.

New waves of Achaean (Greek) settlers reach Cyprus.

Cretan settlers bring their cult. The Cypriot Goddess is associated with the Cretan Goddess with upraised arms.

Palaipafos - Kouklia

According to tradition some Pafians, companions of Kinyras, flee from Pafos which was ruled by the Greeks and settle in Amathous, probably taking with them the cult of the Pafian Great Goddess.



3. Fragmentary terracotta of a naked goddess with hands under her breasts.



4. Cretan terracotta figurine of the "goddess with uplifted arms".



5. Terracotta figurine of a goddess with uplifted arms from the temple of Aphrodite.

Her relation to Pafos

1050 - 450

GEOMETRIC AND ARCHAIC PERIOD 1050 - 475 b.C.

Relations with the Aegean and the Near East. 750 b.C.

The Phoenicians settle at Kition and dedicate a temple to Astarte.

The image of the Great Goddess is again orientalized.

Palaipafos - Kouklia

Period of prosperity as is evidenced by rich tombs of the 11th-10th cent.

b.C. The settlement at Palaipafos is very important and prosperous.

The sanctuary of Aphrodite is known to Homer and must have been already a renowned place of worship.

The worship of the Goddess is obvious from the thousands of fragments of votive terracottas found in the area of the sanctuary.

A small sanctuary consecrated to Aphrodite-Astarte and Melkart-Baal is found near the northern gate of the walls.



1. Figurine with upraised arms dressed in the Cypriot costume of the Goddess or priestess.



2. Cult scene on Cypro - Geometric vase.

480 - 30

CLASSICAL AND HELLENISTIC TIMES 480 - 30 b.C.

Strong Greek influences on religion. The Cypriot Goddess is hellenized and identified with the Greek Aphrodite. 312 b.C. Pafos and all the other cities are ruled by the Ptolemies. Greek and Egyptian influences on religion.

Palaipafos - Kouklia - Nea Pafos

Nicocles, last King of Pafos, founds (around 320 b.C.) a new city, Nea Pafos, builds a new temple consecrated to Aphrodite and introduces in Nea Pafos the cult of the Greek deities, Hera and Artemis. The Goddess is still called Anassa "the Sovereign", as well as Aphrodite Pafia and occasionally Astarte.

The sanctuary of Aphrodite in Palaipafos is still the main cult place of Aphrodite under the Ptolemies who rule the island and who introduce their own cult also.

So the cult of Arsinoe was associated with the cult of Aphrodite.

The Confederation of the Cypriots (Koinon Kyprion) is founded for the promotion of the cult of the Ptolemies in Pafos. There are no traces of a temple of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, neither of the annexes to the old sanctuary.



3. Marble head found at the Sanctuary of Aphrodite.



4. Scenes of worship of the Goddess on vase.

Her relation to Pafos

30 - 330

ROMAN PERIOD 30 b.C. - 330 A.D.

Cyprus is annexed to the Roman Empire. Cult of the Emperors.
15 b.C. Earthquake

Palaipafos - Kouklia - Nea Pafos

Pafos is the “sacred metropolis of the cities throughout Cyprus” (Ιερά Μετρόπολις των κατά Κύπρον πόλεων).

The cult of the Pafian Aphrodite is flourishing. It is administered by a collegiate priesthood and the Koinon Kyprion which organizes the Aphrodite Festival and promotes the imperial cult.

The Emperor Augustus gave a large sum of money to repair the sanctuary. Reconstruction of the previous buildings?

30 - 330

22 - 77 A.D.

Palaipafos - Kouklia - Nea Pafos

The sanctuary is granted the right of asylum by Emperor Tiberius. Emperor Titus visits the temple and consults the oracle of the Goddess. Reconstruction of the sanctuary. The ancient sanctuary is maintained within a yard paved with large slabs. Next to it a sacred complex comprises an open yard with two long halls on each side and an east wing which must have served as a cultic banquet hall.



1. Conical stone serving as the cult idol in the Sanctuary of Aphrodite. Found in a field in the vicinity of the Sanctuary.



2. Statue of Aphrodite.

330 - 391

330 - 391 A.D.

332, 342, 391 A.D.

Earthquakes

Palaipafos - Kouklia - Nea Pafos

The cult of the Pafian goddess is much criticized by the Fathers of the Church but still exists. The Emperor Theodosios outlaws all pagan religions and closes the temples.

Pafos (New Pafos) was founded ca. 320 b.C. by Nicokles the last King of Palaipafos, in order to serve as its political and commercial capital.

Under the Ptolemies and Romans it was the capital of Cyprus.



3. Statue of Aphrodite from Soli.



4. Mosaic floor representing Aphrodite at the Archaeological Park of Pafos (world Heritage site).



of Aphrodite

The Goddess of Cyprus is mentioned for the first time in the 8th cent. b.C. by Homer who referred to her as Aphrodite or Kypris and by Hesiod who called her Aphrodite, the Cyprus born. The name Aphrodite may be the Greek adaptation of a semitic name of the family of Ishtar, Ashtart, Astarte, later explained as coming from αφρός, foam, since she was said to have been born from the sea.

In Cyprus the Goddess was not called Aphrodite until the 4th cent. b.C.

From inscriptions we know that she was called Anassa, the Sovereign, the Pafian, the Golgian (from her sanctuaries at Pafos and Golgoi) or simply the divinity η Θεός (theos).

She had many epithets referring to her many aspects. She was called:

Kyprogenea, the Cyprus born goddess

Potnia Kyprou, the mistress of Cyprus

Akraia, the goddess of promontories

Pontia, Einalia, the marine goddess

Ourania, the heavenly goddess

Pandemos, the goddess of all

Egcheios, the goddess with the spear

Aphroditos, the male Aphrodite

Adoneia, the funereal Aphrodite

Eleemon, the compassionate goddess

Chrysostephanos, the goddess with the golden crown



1. Petra tou Romiou
the legendary place of
the birth of Aphrodite.



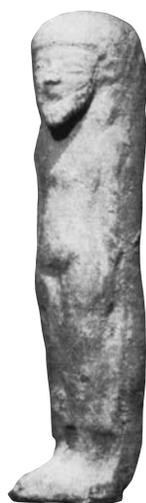
2. Kouritrophos, the goddess patron of infants.



3. Egcheios, the goddess with the spear.



4. Potnia Kyprou, the mistress of Cyprus.



5. Aphroditos, the male Aphrodite.



Of the Cypriot Aphrodite

Probably originating from an earlier fertility goddess and having absorbed the characteristics of Near Eastern deities, the Cypriot Aphrodite was seen as having universal power.

The Goddess promoted fertility by inspiring desire and love. Notorious orgies, sacred marriage and prostitution probably were part of her cult. She was also the patron of good marriages and young infants. As a fertility goddess, she protected agriculture and metallurgy, as the products of nature. She had sacred gardens in her sanctuaries.

Called Aphroditos, she could be represented as a male figure, her sexual ambivalence warranting fertility.

The power of the Goddess was immense. If she was not shown due respect, she took terrible revenge, but she was also merciful. She was warlike and called the Goddess with the spear.

She protected royal dynasties and cities. She was the patron of the sea from which she was born. She protected sailors and seafarers from her sanctuaries on promontories.

An image of beauty and magnificence, she was called the Beautiful, the Golden Aphrodite, the Goddess with the golden crown and the golden necklaces.

For more than 2000 years, she remained in Cyprus the Goddess, the Sovereign, until she was completely identified in the 4th cent. b.C. with the Greek Aphrodite. She was also closely associated with Astarte, the Phoenician equivalent of Aphrodite.

Remembrance of her, blended with the memory of medieval Lusignan queens, still lingers in the figure of the Regina, associated with medieval places and still present in Cypriot folk tales.



1. Figurine with cylindrical body and upraised arms from the Pierides Museum in Larnaka (Geometric Period 800 b.C.).



2. Statuettes found at the Phoenician temple (last phase) at Kition betraying Greek influence (4th cent. b.C.).



3. Terracotta figurine of the Astarte type with the hands under the breasts found at temple (4) at Kition.



4. Female limestone statue from Arsos (6th cent. b.C.).



5. Statue of Aphrodite.



6. Marble statue of nude Aphrodite from Soloi (1st cent. b.C.).



associated with Aphrodite

PAFOS AREA

The Chalcolithic Village of Lempa (loc. Lakkous)

This is a rare settlement of the Chalcolithic culture, characteristic of the Pafos region that lasted from about 3500 to 2500 b.C. The village consisted of clusters of round, stone and mud houses with no defensive walls around it. Its inhabitants lived by hunting, fishing, herding, and the gathering and growing of various plants. They made tools from stone, bone and deer antler, were familiar with pottery, stone and wood-carving, weaving and basketry techniques and also used a few small copper objects. They probably worshipped a powerful fertility goddess who protected childbirth and infants which is particularly evidenced by numerous clay female figurines of, stone and especially picrolite found in houses and in tombs. They represent women in the position of giving birth.

One of the largest and most important Chalcolithic statuettes is the so-called Lady of Lempa, on display in the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia that was found in a round house (Building 1) of the settlement. The floor of this house was divided into two parts: one made of earth, the other, which looked like the official part of the building, paved with cement. The statuette was found at the point of division between these two parts.

The Lady of Lempa (3000 b.C.), (see page 28) made of limestone, is 36 cm high. She is a naked, pregnant woman with short, outstretched arms and a high phallic neck supporting her raised head. The fertility character of this statue is emphasized by the schematic rendering of her breasts, large hips and swollen belly. She is possibly a remote ancestor of the Pafian Aphrodite, since the cult of a powerful fertility goddess in the region may have survived through the centuries, to be revived in the shape of the Pafian Goddess, later Aphrodite and worshipped at Palaipafos.

Geroskipou (The Sacred Gardens)

Kato Vrysi

The present village of Geroskipou is referred to as Hierokepis by the geographer Strabo (1st cent. b.C. - 1st cent. A.D.). Its name is derived from the ancient “Ἱερός Κήνος”, the Sacred Garden dedicated to Aphrodite, thus local tradition links Geroskipou to Aphrodite.

Kato Vrysi was an ancient aqueduct that cooled and quenched the thirst of the people and animals of the area. The water appears to have been distributed through underground galleries from the northern rocky hills of Geroskipou and the inhabitants of the community washed their clothes in the tubs of the fountain.

According to tradition and evidence from travellers, the Bath of Aphrodite was in Kato

Vrysi, whereas the water of the fountain watered the Sacred Gardens of the Goddess. During the annual festival of Aphrodite the solemn procession of worshippers from Nea Pafos to Palaipafos passed through the Sacred Gardens; a route known as η “ιερά οδός” (sacred street). In recent years the water of Kato Vrysi is used solely as holy consecrated water.

Aphrodite in Nea Pafos

Nea Pafos was founded in 320 b.C. by Nicocles who was the last king of Pafos, and the High Priest of Aphrodite. Nicocles built a temple dedicated to the goddess in the new city, which has not yet been located, as well as other temples dedicated to Greek deities such as Hera and Artemis whose worship he introduced to Pafos. Two Hellenistic inscriptions mentioning statues dedicated to Aphrodite have been found in the Fabrika district, an indication perhaps that her temple once stood on top of the hill there. In the Roman Villa of Theseus two statues of the goddess, dating to the late

2nd - early 3rd cent. A.D. were found, one of which depicts the Armed Aphrodite. Aphrodite is also depicted in two mosaics from the Roman period found in nearby houses.



1. Aphrodite Anassa
Painting of Mary Plant



2. Armed Aphrodite - Enchios
Painting of Mary Plant



associated with Aphrodite

LEFKOSIA (NICOSIA) AREA

Ledra (ancient Lefkosia - Nicosia)

It is known that in historical times a kingdom named Ledra existed on the site of present-day Lefkosia (Nicosia), an area that was inhabited from the Chalcolithic period (3rd mill. b.C.) to the end of the Bronze Age. It was probably an important settlement at the end of the Bronze Age, situated on the route of the copper which was extracted from the slopes of the Troodos Mountain range and carried through several settlements to the eastern coast from where it was exported. A fragmented bronze figurine dating to the 12th cent. b.C., now in the Cyprus Museum, was found by chance near the Venetian walls. in an area with remains of the Late Bronze Age occupation (14th-12th cent. b.C.). This figurine represents a naked woman with emphasized pubis, hands on hips, long plaits and a heavy necklace. It was probably standing on an ingot like another similar bronze figurine now at the Ashmolean Museum of Unknown Provenance) standing on an ingot and It has been interpreted as the Cypriot goddess and represented as the patron of copper because as a fertility goddess, she protected all the products of the earth. A sanctuary of this goddess may have existed in Ledra in the Late Bronze Age. The cult of the Cypriot goddess must have survived in Ledra until at least the 4th cent. b.C., because an inscription of the 4th cent. B.C, mentioning the Ledrian sanctuary of the Pafian Goddess was found in Lefkosia (Nicosia). Ledra was therefore known as a cult-place of the Pafian Aphrodite. Remains of the Archaic and Hellenistic periods have been recently brought to light. The discovery of female figurines evidences the persistency of the Cypriot goddess cult in Ledra.

Tamassos (modern Politiko)

Homer knew of a city in Cyprus called Temessis, “Τεμέσος” (rich in copper), which was probably the ancient city of Tamassos. According to Ovidius there was a garden consecrated to Aphrodite in Tamassos where a tree with golden leaves and apples which played a role in the famous race between Hipponenes and Atalanti. grew from which Aphrodite took three gold apples and gave them to Hippomenes.

It is known that Aphrodite was still worshipped in Tamassos in the 1st cent. A.D., at the time of Saint Herakleidios, first bishop of Tamassos.

Excavations by a German Expedition between 1970-1980 brought to light the remains of a sanctuary of the Cypriot Aphrodite next to copper smelting workshops. It was used from the 7th cent. b.C. to the Hellenistic period and was rebuilt several times.

Idalion (modern Dali)

The present village of Idalion was one of the ancient kingdoms of Cyprus and was mentioned by Latin poets as a famous cult place of Aphrodite:

Venus regit Idalium frondosum...

Venus rules over wooded Idalium (Catullus)

Archaeological evidence bears witness to the fact that Aphrodite or her predecessor, the Cypriot Goddess, was worshipped in Idalion. A great temple situated at the top of the eastern acropolis was found as well as several sanctuaries dating to the Archaic period.

Many clay and limestone statuettes representing the goddess of Cyprus or her worshippers were found on the sites of the sanctuaries.

Also many mother and child figurines, dedicated to a kourotrophos goddess (a goddess protecting infants) were found in sanctuaries there.



1. Reconstructed view of the Sanctuary with the offerings (after Ohnefalsch Richter).



museums

Government and private museums throughout Cyprus have a rich collection of clay figurines, limestone statues and statuettes that show the development of the image and identity of the goddess through the millennia.

Figurines placed in tombs, sanctuaries and private houses played an important role in ancient religions and many interpretations have been suggested such as the images of the goddess or her priestesses or of her sacred servants, or companions of the deceased, or talismans used for the protection of the dead, for the stimulation of fertility, or simply for good luck. Later they were images of donors, musicians or simple worshippers but they certainly were all cult objects used as intermediaries between the deity and humans.

Following the logo in / on the showcases of the museums next to artefacts relating to Aphrodite, and with the help of a laminated leaflet available from the custodian at each of the following museums, visitors may obtain a fuller picture of the many aspects of the Great Goddess.

Below are some of the most important finds in each of the museums:

Cyprus Museum, Lefkosia (Nicosia)

1, Museum Str., 1097 Lefkosia, Tel.: 22865888

This is the main and largest museum in Cyprus and houses the richest and most representative collection of Cypriot antiquities in Cyprus including a number of important pieces related to the Cypriot Goddess from all parts of the island.

From the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Period (8000-3500 & 3500-2500 b.C.) of great importance are the finds that show the origins of a fertility cult such as the stone phallus from Choirokoitia, the picrolite cruciform idols from the Pafos area with special interest in the woman giving birth with the painted head and arms and the child emerging between her legs which comes from the hoard from Kissonerga and the Lady of Lempa (see page 28).

From the Geometric Archaic pottery (8th - 6th cent. b.C.) are representations which relate to Aphrodite on vases including the Hubbard amphora depicting a priestess seated on a throne drinking a substance from a jug through a pipe with the help of a sacred servant.

There are votive statues from the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods (6th - 1st cent b.C.) of which the most important are the Head and Torso of a woman (priestess or worshipper) with necklaces and a disc-pendant, the Head of Aphrodite from Salamis (early 4th cent. b.C.) and the marble statue of Aphrodite with her hair looped up above her forehead from Soli (1st cent. b.C.).

Leventis Municipal Museum of Lefkosia (Nicosia)

17, Ippocratous Str., Laiki Geitonia, Lefkosia, Tel.: 2266 1475

This is the historical museum of Lefkosia (Nicosia) and has been included in the Cultural Route of Aphrodite because it compares the birth of Aphrodite, emerging through the foam in the sea to the geological birth of the island of Cyprus that rose from the ocean. The Mesaoria plain and, by extension, Lefkosia emerged from the sea 1, 8.000.000 years ago through the sea floor spreading and plate tectonics.

Museum of the George and Nefeli Giabra Pierides Collection,

Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation

86-88-90, Phaneromeni Str., 1011 Lefkosia, Tel.: 22677 134

This collection covers a wide range of the history and archaeology of Cyprus, from the Early Bronze Age (2500 b.C.) to the end of the Medieval Period (16th cent). The collection, numbering more than 600 items, has a significant number of figurines and artefacts indicative of the cult of the Cypriot Goddess, Aphrodite.

Of importance is the anthropomorphic vase showing what appears to be a pregnant female about to give birth, a representation associated with fertility or a fertility goddess (ca. 2000 b.C.). The cylinder seals in chlorite show contest scenes of a naked goddess with hands clasped above her waist (ca. 2000 b.C.) and a jug decorated with seven richly dressed and veiled female figures holding huge flowers and walking among birds, a goat and lotus flowers which may be a representation of sacred servants of the Cypriot goddess in the sacred gardens of a sanctuary (6th-5th cent. b.C.).

Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation

86-88-90, Phaneromeni Str., 1011 Lefkosia, Tel.: 22677 134 (Open in May 2009)

A collection of coins of Ancient Cyprus, some of which are of importance in relation to Aphrodite such as the silver coin (stater) with Aphrodite - Nemesis on the reverse standing to the front wearing a wreath and long chiton, under the rule of King Timocharis (ca. 385 b.C.) and from the Kingdom of Salamis, a gold coin (1/10 stater) with a head of Aphrodite wearing a decorated crown on the reverse. Also the Hellenistic and Roman coins of King Nicocles (ca. 373-361 b.C.) under Vespasian (76/77 A.D.) with the Temple of Aphrodite at Pafos on the reverse, and the bronze coin which depicts the Temple of Aphrodite at Pafos with the conical stone in the centre under Septimius Severus (193 - 211 A.D.).



museums

The Local Museum of Idalion

30, Gianni Grouta Str., 2540, Dali, Tel.: 22444818

Located next to the Ancient City Kingdom of Idalion, this museum makes reference to the presence of the Goddess. Archaeological evidence witnesses that Aphrodite and her predecessor, the Cypriot Goddess, were worshipped at Idalion.

Larnaka District Museum

Kalograion Sq., Larnaka, Tel.: 24304169

In this Museum there is an important collection of objects and figurines which are indicative of the cult of the Cypriot Goddess Aphrodite. They come from Kition and other sites in the Larnaka region, such as Choirokoitia, Kalavastos, Arsos and Achna. Apart from the idols from the Neolithic period (4900-3900 b.C.) which show evidence of a fertility cult, there are cult objects found in the temples at Kition such as an ivory God Bes, an ivory feminine figurine, an ivory pipe for opium and ivory objects for cosmetics.

There are many Archaic limestone statues and clay figurines of the 6th century b.C., however of great importance are the three small size Hathoric steles from the acropolis of Kition, a moulded female figurine of a musician, three deae gravidae and several small size limestone female heads from the sanctuary of Artemis Paralia, which was at Larnaka Salt Lake.

The Pierides Museum - Laiki Cultural Centre

4, Zinonos Kitieos Str., 6023 Larnaka, Tel.: 24814555

Here there are objects from different sites of Cyprus and more particularly an important collection of moulded figurines from the site of Achna.

There is a variety of Chalcolithic (3500-2500 b.C.) steatite idols with a seated clay figurine with her hands under her breasts, and Late Bronze Age (1450-1200 b.C.) clay figurines with breasts and pubis marked as well as two bottle-shaped clay female figurines holding their hands under their breasts (1200-1050) b.C.). Of importance is the clay female figurine wearing a polos with hands raised (8th cent. b.C.) and the five tambourine-players with heads moulded from the 6th cent. b.C.

In the Roman Glass Room there is a small glass fragment with a standing Aphrodite.

Agia Napa Municipal Museum, “Thalassa” (sea) in association with the Pierides Foundation..

14, Leoforos Kryou Nerou, Agia Napa Tel.: 23816366

The theme of the Museum is Thalassa - the sea and the marine heritage of Cyprus from the prehistoric times to the present. Aphrodite's route is linked to the museum because of Aphrodite's association with the sea. The most important exhibit is the replica of the 4th cent. b.C. trading vessel, the original of which was found off the coast of Keryneia. The Museum has an important collection of embalmed and preserved sea creatures as well as sea shells associated with Aphrodite.

Lemesos District Museum

5, Anastasi Sioukri and Vyronos, Lemesos, Tel.: 25305157

This museum exhibits late Neolithic and early Chalcolithic stone and clay figurines from sites in districts such as Sotira, and material from the acropolis and necropolis of Amathous. At the entrance there is a mosaic pavement from Alassa, representing a bathing Aphrodite and a winged Eros holding a mirror. (5th cent. b.C.). Of importance is a huge votive limestone capital in the shape of a Hathoric head supporting a small sanctuary from the acropolis of Amathous (end of 6th cent. b.C.).

Pafos District Museum

43, Griva Digeni, Pafos, Tel.: 26306215

This museum shelters material mainly from Chalcolithic sites like Kouklia, Souskiou, Lempa and Kissonerga, Archaic sites like Kouklia, Geroskipou and Hellenistic and Roman sites like Kouklia and Kato Pafos.

The Chalcolithic period (3000-2500 b.C.) is represented by stone idols and steatite idols, with bent knees.

From the Archaic and Classical period (750-325 b.C.) there is a head and torso from a large size clay figurine with its right hand raised, a red clay female head from a sanctuary in Pomos and four jugs with moulded kore holding jugs on the neck from Marion and Pafos (6th-5th cent b.C.). There is also a collection of Classical and Roman coins with a female crowned head of Aphrodite and with representations of the tripartite sanctuary of Aphrodite in Palaipafos.

From the Roman period there are marble statues such as the one of Armed Aphrodite wearing a shoulder-belt (sword missing) and a marble torso of Aphrodite. There are also statuettes of Demeter, Artemis, Hygeia, Demeter and Persephone or Aphrodite Ourania (2nd -3rd cent A.D.) as well as golden ear rings representing Eros from the 3rd cent A.D.

museums

Local Archaeological Museum of Palaepafos - Kouklia

Kouklia village, (within the Archaeological site of Palaipafos) Tel.: 26432180

This museum exhibits most of the material found in the Sanctuary of Aphrodite and the Chalcolithic material from sites of the region, illustrating the development of the cult of a fertility goddess into Aphrodite from the 3rd cent. b.C. to the Roman period. The most important exhibits are the Black Stone found in the vicinity of the Sanctuary thought to be the aniconic symbol of the deity in the sanctuary from very ancient times, a female figurine with arms raised (9th- 8th cent b.C.) and the large clay bathtub found in the Sanctuary (13th - 11th cent. b.C.).

Marion Arsinoe Museum of Polis

26, Leoforos Makariou III, Polis, Tel.: 26322955

Finds of the ancient city of Marion and in particular of the site of the archaic sanctuary dedicated to a female deity at Peristeries which were discovered by an American archaeological expedition from Princeton University are displayed here.



1. Cyprus Archaeological Museum



related to Aphrodite

Petra tou Romiou

25 km east of Pafos (30')

The nature site of the legendary place of the birth of Aphrodite is of unique natural beauty, which excites one's imagination to visualize the narration of Hesiod's Theogony that Aphrodite was born from the foam of the sea. A restaurant in a discreet location offers a magnificent view of the bay.



Baths of Aphrodite

Akamas Peninsula, near Polis, 46 km north of Pafos. (15')

The legendary natural grotto where Aphrodite used to bathe. The location of the site is mythologically associated with Adonis her lover as this is where they met for the first time.



Cape Gkreko

45 km north-east of Larnaka

The nature site at Cape Gkreko, along the north-east side of the promontory of ancient Pidalion where her sanctuary was situated. A cult place known only from literary sources highly recommended for visits due to its natural beauty.

(no visible ruins)



Aphrodite, Adonis & Fontana Amoroza Nature Trails

Akamas Peninsula, near Polis, 46 km north of Pafos.

Starting Point: Baths of Aphrodite, Aphrodite and Adonis: Length 7.5km (3 hrs)

Fontana Amoroza: (Length 6km (2hrs)

Three nature trails starting and ending at the Baths of Aphrodite, of unique natural beauty, linking the mythology on Aphrodite and her romance with Adonis. One finds plants associated with the Goddess Aphrodite, especially in spring.



Larnaka Salt Lake

3 km south of the city centre. Starting point: on the way to Larnaka airport or from the airport roundabout towards Larnaka 200 meters on the left. Optional starting point: Kamares aqueduct (old Larnaka-Lemesos road). Length: 4 km (1hr)

It is the site where the Cypriot Goddess was worshipped in a sanctuary (which does not survive), perhaps as the patron of exploitation of salt, from the 1st millennium to the Roman Period, finally under the name of Artemis Paralia. The Salt Lake has water from October to May and is a resting place for migrating flamingoes. In summer it dries out, leaving a salt crust.



native to Cyprus associated with Aphrodite

Tamarix (Tamarind sp.)

A plant symbolizing beauty and youth and thus sacred to Aphrodite. Hesychios (6th cent. A.D.) preserves another tradition, according to which the Greek name of the tree, μυρίκη, took its name from the daughter of the king of Cyprus Kinyras, and sister of Adonis, who “εμυρέτο”, that is “was shedding tears”, because she was transformed into the said tree. Both interpretations relate to the elegance of this shrub.



Punica granatum (Pomegranate)

The fruit of the tree was venerated in the cult of Hera (protectress of marriage and childbirth) and was sacred to both Athena and Aphrodite. Already in early times, the Greeks considered its fruit, containing numerous small fleshy seeds, a symbol of fertility. Its association with fecundity is further stressed by the myth of the Rape of Persephone, itself associated with fertility. Persephone was condemned to stay beneath the earth for half the year because, by eating a pomegranate in the Under-world, she had involuntarily married Hades. Her annual return to earth symbolizes, of course, the coming of Spring and fertility.

Both these aspects of the pomegranate passed into the Christian world and survived into modern times. The fleshy seeds are one of the main ingredients of kollyva (a preparation based on wheat grains offered to the congregation at memorial services), the use of which still associates the fruit with the underworld; while in a traditional wedding, on coming home from the church the bride had to crush a pomegranate at the entrance of the house - the spreading of the numerous little seeds symbolizing a rich offspring. For Persephone, see also Adonis annua (Red-flowered pheasant eye).



Myrtus communis (Myrtle)

A shrub sacred to Aphrodite. It was behind a myrtle that she hid her nakedness when she rose from the sea at Pafos. See also Adonis annua.

The myrtle symbolizes beauty and youth because of its evergreen leaves, beautiful and elegant flowers and pleasant perfume. Myrtle branches were commonly used to decorate temples and sanctuaries. It is, perhaps, because of its beauty and association with Aphrodite that, in traditional weddings, the myrtle is used for making wedding wreaths. Its use in temples also survives today in the custom of decorating churches and strewing their floors with myrtle branches during special celebrations or for the welcoming of personalities. Held against the light, the myrtle leaf appears pierced with numerous little holes (glands of volatile myrtle-oil). These the ancients believed to have been needle holes made by the unhappy Phaedra, wife of Theseus, at Troizen in Attica, before hanging herself, after having her love repulsed by her stepson Hippolytos (Pausanias).

Another version says that Phaedra made the little holes in Aphrodite's sanctuary at Troizen to avenge herself because the goddess had not helped her to win over Hippolytos.



Rosmarinus officinalis (Rosemary)

A gift of Aphrodite to mankind. One of the herbs burnt at the altar, to thank or appease the gods, often as a substitute for true incense that came from Arabia. One of the plants whose branches were used for garlanding statues of gods.



Adonis annua (Red-flowered pheasant eye)

Many plants are associated with the name Adonis, a Greek and Latin version of the Semitic “Adon” (Lord). The cult of Adonis is believed to have originated in the Near East and travelled to Greece via Cyprus in the 5th century b.C.. One of the myths recounts that Adonis at his birth was hidden in a bush of myrtle and sent to Persephone. By order of Zeus, he was to pass two thirds of the year on earth with Aphrodite and the remaining one third in the Underworld with Persephone. When he was killed by a wild boar, Aphrodite wept incessantly.

According to the 2nd cent. A.D. pastoral poet Bion, Adonis’ blood and Aphrodite’s tears turned to flowers. Other authors are more specific: from each of Adonis’ blood drops sprang a red-flowered pheasant eye or an anemone (*Anemone coronaria*), while from each of Aphrodite’s tears, which were as many as Adonis’ blood drops, sprang a white rose. See also *Anemone*.



Narcissus tazetta (Narcissus)

Narcissus was so beautiful that nymphs fell in love with him, but he rejected their love and adored only himself. For this reason he was punished by Aphrodite, who made him fall in love with his own reflection in one of the springs of Helicon. One version of the myth says that he slipped into the spring and drowned, another that he pined away and died. A flower, crowned with gold, appeared in his place which, even today, leans over the mirror provided by a stream.



Anemone coronaria (Anemone)

The name “Anemone”, derived from the lament for “Na’man” (“darling”: designation of Semitic “Adon” (Lord), is connected with the Adonis cult, as demonstrated, independently, by P. Lagarde (1878) and C.M. Toy (1899).

The red-flowered *Anemone coronaria* occurs more frequently in Greece than *Adonis annua* and represented the drops of blood of Adonis.

This anemone can also be blue, pink or white and each year proclaims spring and symbolizes the premature death of Adonis. *Anemone blanda* is another Greek species, usually with blue or white flowers.

The association of the name with the Greek word for wind has led to the coining of the erroneous English name “windflower”.

See also *Adonis annua* (Red-flowered pheasant eye).



Asparagus acutifolius (Asparagus)

A plant with sharply pointed leaves (which are really modified shoots) sacred to Aphrodite.



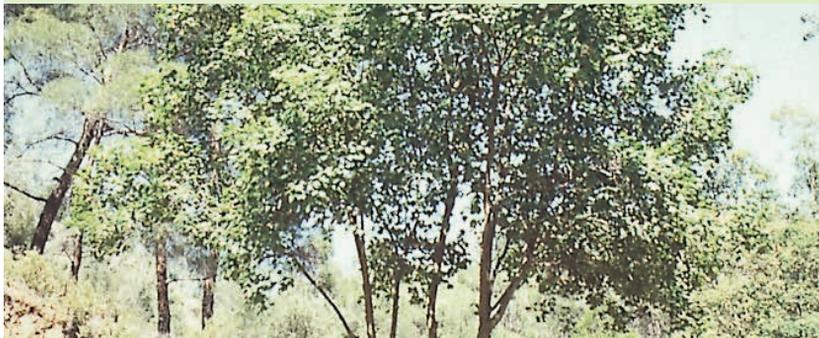
Rosa....(Rose)

For the white rose, associated with the Adonis myth, see *Adonis annua*. The roses of this and other myths must be the dog rose or common wild rose (*Rosa canina*), since the garden rose in Greece is first mentioned in the 5th cent. b.C.. Anacreon (lyric poet, born c. 570 b.C.) praised the rose as “the perfume of the gods, the joy of men ... the favoured flower of Aphrodite” and says that, when Aphrodite was born of the white sea foam, “then the earth produced the lovely plant which clothes the earth with its various forms” - indicating the existence of various garden forms. Anacreon associates the rose with Aphrodite, as well as with the Graces, the Muses, the Nymphs and Dionysos, whose feast it adorned. According to Ovid (43 b.C. - 18 A.D.), the rose grew from a drop of Adonis’ blood. According to other authors, it arose from a drop of Aphrodite’s blood. According to yet others, the rose appeared on the spot where Aphrodite had watered the earth with a drop of nectar.



Acer (Maple)

A tree sacred to Phobos, a fear-inspiring daemon, companion to Aphrodite’s husband Ares, god of war. It is said that this association may be due to the fear the tree inspires in men when its leaves take on a red colour in the autumn.



Origanum

One of the most important healing plants of antiquity, its properties extolled by at least 24 writers by the 4th cent. A.D. Also called Artemidium after Artemis who would, when she wished, cure the wounds she inflicted with her poisoned arrows.

It was widely exported from Crete. Hippocrates (5th cent. b.C.) used it on Cos for gall bladder complaints, tuberculosis and in poultices for wounds. Dioscurides (1st cent. A.D.) attributed many virtues to it. Aphrodite showed her lavish care of the Trojan hero Aeneas by using Cretan dictamnus to heal his wounds (Virgil, Aeneid).



Cydonia oblonga, syn. C. vulgaris (Quince)

The quince was dedicated to Aphrodite and symbolized love. In his laws, the 6th cent. b.C. Athenian statesman Solon introduced quince into the ritual of marriage. The young newlyweds had to eat some before their wedding night, a rule probably inspired by the pronounced aroma of the fruit.



associated with Aphrodite

The general association of seashells and Aphrodite, both coming out of the sea, is obvious and is translated into a pictorial association of the goddess rising from the sea standing on a seashell. In ancient times, seashells also seem to have had an association with fertility, similar to that of eggs, and were thus also associated with Aphrodite. One must not forget that oysters are still imbued with such connotations. Perhaps because of this but surely because of their intrinsic beauty, seashells were commonly used as containers for cosmetics. Apart from these general associations, some species of seashells have been associated with Aphrodite because of their shape. The shells listed below are those found in Cypriot waters.

Family: Astartidae = Astartes / Astarte Clams

The pronounced umbo of this bivalve is reminiscent of female genitalia, thus their association with Astarte/Aphrodite. Two species live in deep waters around Cyprus:

Astarte fusca (Poli 1795), *Astarte sulcata* (Da Costa 1778).



Astarte fusca (Poli 1795).

Family: Carditidae = False cockles

The pronounced umbo of this small, heart-shaped (thus the family name) bivalve is reminiscent of female genitalia. Hence the prefix Veneri, of some of the species. Two species live near Cape Gkreco:

Venericardia antiquata (L. 1758),
Venericardia corbis (Philippi 1836)



Venericardia antiquata (L. 1758).

Family: Cypraeidae = Cowries / Cowrie Shells

According to George Perry (Conchology, or the Natural History of Shells, London 1811) the cowrie's scientific name originates from the circumstances of a shell of this genus having been presented to the Temple of Aphrodite in Cyprus. Indeed, he adds, "the beauty and splendour of these shells render them worthy of being offered at the shrine of the Goddess of Beauty (Kypris/Aphrodite)".

Cowries have always been the most sought after family amongst shell collectors. According to some psychologists, at the root of this attraction lies a sexual symbolism evoked by the shell. In fact, the whole shape and in particular the aperture of this gastropod is reminiscent of female genitalia.

Cowries, both local and imported, are often found amongst grave goods in ancient Cypriot tombs.

There are about two hundred species of which two live in Cypriot waters:

Cyprae lurida (L. 1758), *Cypraea spurca* (L. 1758)



1. *Cyprae lurida* (L. 1758).



2. *Cypraea spurca* (L. 1758).

Family: Veneridae = Carpet or Venus Shells

The pronounced umbo of this bivalve is reminiscent of female genitalia, hence the family was named after the goddess Venus. There are numerous genera and hundreds of species, sixteen of which are found in shallow waters around Cyprus.

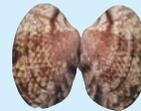
1. *Callista chione* (L. 1758)
2. *Chamelea gallina* (L. 1758)
3. *Clausinella fasciata* (Da Costa 1778)
4. *Dosinia exoleta* (L. 1758)
5. *Dosinia lupinus* (L. 1758)
6. *Gouldia minima* (Montagu 1803)
7. *Irus irus* (L. 1758)
8. *Pitar rudis* (Poli 1785)
9. *Timoclea ovata* (Pennant 1777)
10. *Venerupis aurea* (Gmelin 1791)
11. *Venerupis decussata* (L. 1758)
12. *Venerupis geographica* (Gmelin 1791)
13. *Venerupis pullastra* (Montagu 1808)
14. *Venerupis rhomboides* (Pennant 1758)
15. *Venus casina* (L. 1758)
16. *Venus verrucosa* (L. 1758)



7. *Irus irus*
(L. 1758)



10. *Venerupis aurea*
(Gmelin 1791)



11. *Venerupis decussata*
(L. 1758)



16. *Venus verrucosa*
(L. 1758).



1. *Callista chione*
(L. 1758)



2. *Chamelea gallina*
(L. 1758)



5. *Dosinia lupinus*
(L. 1758)

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CYPRUS
in your heart

I will sing of stately Aphrodite, gold-crowned and beautiful, whose
dominion is the walled cities of all sea-set Cyprus.
There the moist breath of the western wind wafted her over the waves of
the loud-moaning sea in soft foam, and there the gold-filleted Hours
welcomed her joyously.
They clothed her with heavenly garments... and brought her to the gods
who welcomed her when they saw her, giving her their hands.....

Homeric Hymn,
Hymn 6. 1-21



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