

## Type of Aphrodite Wearing the "Strophium" in Egypt in Light of Unpublished Material

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**Abstract:** The main aim of this article is to focus on the rare type of Aphrodite wearing the "στρόφιον - Strophium" in the Egyptian artifacts during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods in light of unpublished terracotta figurines. As far as the researcher knows, there is no research concerned with the Greco-Egyptian artifact. The study depends basically on unpublished two terracotta figurines (Figs. 1a-d, 4a-d.), and other material from Greco-Roman Egypt as they were described briefly in a few catalogs.

**Keywords:** Aphrodite – strophium – fascia – breast band – terracotta – Anadyomene

طراز أفروديتي ترتدي "شريط الصدر" في مصر في ضوء تماثيل تراكوتا غير منشورة

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**المخلص:** يتمثل الهدف الرئيس من هذا المقال في التركيز على دراسة طراز نادر للمعبودة اليونانية أفروديتي، فينوس عند الرومان، وهي ترتدي شريط الصدر "strophium-στρόφιον-ستروفيوم" في الفنون المصرية خلال العصرين البطلمي والروماني في ضوء مادة أثرية غير منشورة؛ لا سيما أنه لا توجد أبحاث سابقة متعمقة حول هذا الموضوع في الفنون اليونانية والرومانية بشكل عام، والفنون المصرية خلال العصرين اليوناني والروماني بشكل خاص، مما دفع الباحث لدراسة هذا الطراز في مصر. وتعتمد الدراسة بشكل أساسي على تماثيلين من الطين المحروق غير منشورين، بالإضافة إلى أمثلة قليلة في مواد أخرى عُثِرَ عليها في مصر، وتم وصفها باختصار شديد للغاية في عدد قليل من كتالوجات المتاحف التي تضم فنون مصرية من العصرين اليوناني والروماني.

**الكلمات الدالة:** أفروديتي - ستروفيوم - حزام الصدر - تراكوتا - أفروديتي أناديوميني.

## Catalogue:

### **Category A: Aphrodite tying the "Strophium" with outstretched right arm: Cat. No. 1.**

**Object name:** A terracotta figurine of Aphrodite tying the "strophium".

**Figures:** Figs. 1a-d.

**Inventory number:** Egyptian Museum, Cairo, Inv. No. CG. 27255, SR. 5/4198.

**Dimensions:** H. 12.5 cm.

**Preservation:** Both feet with parts up to above the ankles legs are missed.

**Technique:** Hollow molding. The back is not worked out. There were heavy traces of white washing.

**Bibliographic references:** unpublished.

#### **Description:**

Figurine depicts naked Aphrodite in a standing pose, and the gaze of Aphrodite is directed in the direction of the viewer. Her body rests on her right leg, while the left knee is slightly bushed forward and the left foot is pulled back. She is wearing a cloak that descends from the head and there is a blanket between the legs that falls in abundance to the ground. She has a necklace around her neck.

The figurine depicts Aphrodite tying the "Strophium" with her outstretched right arm that rises from the elbow; she holds the rolled edge of the "strophium" with her right hand, and the other unrolled edge is fastened by her left hand on her breast.

The hair is parted at the middle of the forehead and arranged in wavy strands to the sides and frames the forehead and face, then the curls fall over the shoulders. There is a high diadem on her head.

**Date:** Roman Period.

#### **Cat. No. 2.**

**Object name:** A terracotta figurine of Aphrodite tying the "Strophium".

**Figures:** Fig. 2.

**Inventory number:** Greco - Roman Museum, Alexandria, Inv. No. 25833.

**Dimensions:** H. 0.25 cm.

**Technique:** Fairly dark terracotta; traces of white slip. Briefly modeled back. A circular vent hole.

**Bibliographic references:** Achille Adriani, *Annuaire du Musée Gréco-Romain (1935-1939)*. (Alexandrie: Imprimerie de la Société de Publications Égyptiennes, 1940), 123, pl. LXXII, 3.

#### **Description:**

A figurine of Aphrodite found in Sidi-Gaber, Alexandria. She is standing on high and rectangular base. The goddess fits the girdle around her breast. Her naked body stands out against the background of a rich himation whose ends are held by her bent arms. The body rests on her right leg, while the left one is slightly bent at the knee. There are small holes in the eyes for the representation of the iris. She turns her head slightly to the right.

The goddess has a high hairstyle; her hair is parted at the middle of the forehead and tied at the top of the head and on the nape of the neck. The goddess is tying her "strophium" around her breasts. She pulls the spread end of her belt to tie it around the breasts; the left hand leaning against the chest holds the other end.

**Date:** The holes in the eyes of the iris put the figurine in the imperial age.

**Cat. No. 3.**

**Object name:** A terracotta figurine of Aphrodite tying the "Strophium".

**Figures:** Figs. 3a-b.

**Inventory number:** Louvre Museum, Inv. E 20730. Unknown provenance.

**Dimensions:** H. 16.

**Bibliographic references:** Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine: II. 2, Terrecotte figurate greche e Greco egizie del Museo di Alessandria*, (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1934), 16, no. 4; Françoise Dunand, *Catalogue des terres cuites gréco-romaines d'Égypte*, (Paris: Ministère de la culture, de la communication et des grands travaux, 1990), 30, Cat. No. 2.

**Description:**

Figurine of facing, smiling, and standing Aphrodite on a high, round stepped base decorated with moldings. The weight of the body rests on the left leg, the right is slightly inclined forward. Her body is half-naked and in the process of getting dressed; the goddess is wearing a cloak, descending from the head and behind the shoulders, only to cover the side, the left thigh, and the lower part of the legs from the knees down. Between the knees, the two flaps form a knot. On the diademed head, the hair is knotted in thick curls arranged in slices of melon, which descend curled over the ears and behind the neck until it rests on the shoulders. The goddess is in the act of fitting the breast support "strophium" around her chest. With her left arm, Aphrodite holds the edge of the "strophium" on her breasts, and with her right hand, raised from the elbow.

**Date:** Roman period.

**Category B: Aphrodite "Anadyomene" wearing the "Strophium" accompanied by Eros:**

**Cat. No. 4.**

**Object name:** A terracotta figurine of Aphrodite "Anadyomene" wearing the "strophium" accompanied by Eros.

**Figures:** Figs. 4a-d.

**Inventory number:** Tanta Museum with different register-numbers appearing on the back:

- 1- Tanta Museum, Inv. No. TA 268.
- 2- 2827.
- 3- 2627.

**Preservation:** There is a cut-out in the gap between the raised right hand and the right shoulder. Large parts of the legs are missing up to above the knees.

**Technique:** Terracotta is molded with a darkened surface and not molded in the back. The hole in the back is for attaching to a wall.

**Bibliographic references:** Unpublished.

**Description:**

The figurine was probably uncovered during the excavation of the modern village of Sa el-Hagar, the archaeological site, which covers most of the site of ancient Sais, located on the ancient Canopic branch of the Nile.

The rare figurine shows Aphrodite standing and wearing the "strophium" around her breast. She is half-draped; bare-chested, a "peplos", which is wrapped around her legs.

Although the lower part of the figurine is missing, we can recognize the position of the standing. The weight of the body was resting on the left leg, the right one relaxed and could be slightly swept backward. The upper torso bends slightly to the left, creating a light S-curve through the body.

Her hair is parted in the middle of the forehead and frames the forehead and face in wavy strands. Locks fall towards the left shoulder and reach to up the "strophium" on the left breast. Both arms spread out to the sides and in each her raised hands at shoulder height, she twists a lock of her hair and drains water from them. Her head is surmounted by a high semicircular diadem on the head which has the shape of a circular wreath or stéphane, and a disk decorated the front of the diadem.

This figurine appears clumsier, but it is nevertheless worked with a certain care. Despite the small size, the strands of hair are not fused with the arms but work freely; even her wavy curls on her shoulders and left upper arm have been observed. At the same time, one can see from the details, such as the diadem and the pubic line, how quickly and sketchily the little figure was done.

The head of Eros is presented to the left side of the goddess as support for Aphrodite and he looks down.

**Date:** Roman work, half II or first half III century.

**Category C: Aphrodite holding the "Strophium" with the left hand on her chest:**

**Cat. No. 5.**

**Object name:** A Marble torso of a statue of Aphrodite is wearing the "strophium".

**Figures:** Fig. 5.

**Inventory number:** Graeco-Roman museum, Alexandria, inv. No. 3453.

**Dimensions:** H. 20.5 cm.

**Preservation:** The right arm is broken off below. The lower parts of the legs are missed.

**Bibliographic references:** Achille Adriani, *Repertorio d'arte dell'Egitto greco-romano*. Serie A. Vol. II, numeri. 73-229, Tavole 51-104, (Palermo: Fondazione 'Ignazio Mormino' del Banco di Sicilia, 1961), no. 99, pl. 57, fig. 176.

**Description:**

A torso of naked Aphrodite of Alexandrian origin is wearing the "strophium". The shoulder and left hand support the "strophium" so as not to slip away. The legs are broken below the knees, so their position cannot be determined with certainty, but through the position of the legs and body, one can suggest that the weight of the body bears on the right leg, while the left one is slightly bent at the knee. Ideal for well-balanced and contained proportions in the nude, but note the realistic notations of the folds in the flesh, which form under the pressure of the "strophium".

**Date:** Roman period.

**Cat. No. 6.**

**Object name:** A Marble torso of Aphrodite is holding the "strophium".

**Figures:** Figs. 6a-b.

**Inventory number:** Paris, Louvre Museum, CC 529. Purchase, 1829.

**Dimensions:** H. 27.5 cm.

**Preservation:** Island marble with medium crystals. The head and neck are missing, as are the arms from the biceps to the wrist, and both legs below the knees are missing. There is a shard in the left breast. The marble was partly covered with grayish concretions and traces of a metal rod at the neck break. The back of the statuette is worked.

**Bibliographic references:** Marianne Hamiaux, *Musée du Louvre, département des Antiquités grecques, étrusques et romaines: Les Sculptures grecques, II. La période*

*hellénistique (IIIe-Ier siècles avant J.-C).* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1998), 108-109, no. 113.

**Description:**

Torso of naked Aphrodite is probably found in Egypt. The goddess is wearing the "strophium". Aphrodite stands with her legs almost together, and it seems that the weight of the body bears on the right leg, while the left leg is bent at the knee and slightly forward. Her head had to be tilted to the right side to control the gesture of the left hand, which unrolled a wide "strophium" over the breasts towards the right armpit. The "strophium" is visible at the back.

**Date:** 1st century BC-1st century AD.

**Cat. No. 7.**

**Object name:** A Marble torso of Aphrodite holding the "strophium"

**Figures:** Figs. 7a-b.

**Inventory number:** Dresden, inventory ZV2000/A02. It was formerly the Herold Collection.

**Dimensions:** H. 65 cm.

**Preservation:** White, fine to medium grain marble. The statue is broken irregularly at the waist. The head and neck are missing. The right arm is broken off below the base. The left wrist, the left elbow, and the left shoulder are stolen. On the back up to the left, the surface of the chest band is abraded.

**Technique:** The missing head and neck were inserted in a 0.5 cm wide and 0.7cm deep pinhole. The oval, 25 cm wide base is smoother around the hole and brushed on the right side. The right arm is broken off below the base; there is a large pin plate in the fracture surface, which is preserved c.8 cm deep.

**Bibliographic references:** Ingrid Laube, *Skulptur des Hellenismus und der Kaiserzeit aus Ägypten, Die Sammlungen in Dresden, Stuttgart und Tübingen.* (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2012), 190, Cat. no. 80.

**Description:**

The female torso upright in the front view, naked totally, shows a slight inclination in the back. The head turns slightly to her right. The left hand is placed across the breast and holds a wide "strophium" that is wrapped around the chest and back. The right upper arm was lowered and joined separately like the head.

**Date:** Suggested dating: Roman period.

**Category D: Aphrodite holding the "Strophium" with the right hand raises a curl on her right shoulder:**

**Cat. No. 8.**

**Object name:** Bronze statuette of Aphrodite holding the "strophium".

**Figures:** Figs. 8a-c.

**Inventory number:** Allard Pierson Museum at Amsterdam, Inv. 8026. Formerly von Bissing Collection.

**Dimensions:** H. 24 cm, H. without the base: 19.5 cm. Diam. on top 7.5 cm., underneath 8.5 cm.

**Preservation:** The fingers of the right hand and the toes of the right foot are damaged. The condition is excellent, only the original silver coating, which is less than 1 mm thin, has taken on a whitish, now grey-black color, and comes off in some places: the surface is badly corroded, and the forms have been somewhat blurred due to weathering.

**Bibliographic references:**

- Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Bissing, "Mitteilungen aus meiner Sammlung 2, 1. Eine Aphrodite Statuette". *Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung*, 32 (1907): 71-8, pl. 3.

- Hendrika C. van Gulik, *Catalogue of bronzes in the Allard Pierson Museum at Amsterdam*. (Amsterdam: N.v. Noord-hollandsche uitgevers-mij, 1940), 28-9, no. 47, pl. XI.

**Description:**

The statuette was acquired in the Cairo art trade and is said to have come from the delta. There is no doubt that it came from Egypt. In any case, these forms show somewhat blurred softness which one, with good reason, attributes to Alexandrian artistic style.

Nice bronze statue of Aphrodite resting on her left leg, while her right foot is drawn back, the right knee is close to the left, and the right foot is set slightly to the side. The goddess is shown naked in a pleasing walking position on a circular and profiled base, which has there are concentric circles on the top near the edge. Aphrodite is looking meditatively to the right. There is a pretty life in her. The soft curve of the body, the displacement of the hips, and the position of the arms are felt warmly.

Her slightly wavy hair, gently framing the forehead, is parted in the middle and gathered in a bun at the back. She has a cork-screw curl of hair lying on her left shoulder. She wears a plain diadem on her hair. The goddess is just playfully arranging her curls, as she does in so many depictions of Aphrodite.

The left hand of the youthful goddess lies on the chest and supports the "strophium", whose ligaments on the back become visible again and pass under the shoulders and are not so clear. The movement of the right hand is not quite so clear, the fingers raise a curl on her right shoulder, which splits in two and near the split shows a fracture surface facing the goddess's neck, this corresponds to the nape of the neck, where the shoulder lock would have to solve, another fracture surface, so one can interpret the rest as the shoulder lock, one end of which in the fingers and pull down while the other falls down behind. The hair on the head has not been treated in much more detail than can now be seen.

**Category E: Aphrodite has the "Strophium" below little the breasts:**

**Cat. No. 9.**

**Object name: Figurine of Aphrodite wearing a "strophium" below little the breasts.**

**Figures:** Figs. 9a-c<sup>1</sup>.

**Inventory number:** New York, Metropolitan Museum of Arts, 42.201.9.

**Preservation:** the head and the right arm are missing.

**Bibliographic references:** Robert Fleischer, *LIMC. II, s.v. Aphrodite*, (Artemis Verlag, Zürich & München, 1984), no. 505; Gisela M. A. Richter, *Catalogue of Greek Sculptures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (Cambridge: Published for the Museum by Harvard University Press, 1954), Cat. No. 157, pl. CXIII, a-c.

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<sup>1</sup> Richter, *Catalogue of Greek Sculptures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Cat. No. 157, Pl. CXIII, a-c.

### Description:

A statuette of naked Aphrodite allegedly found in Alexandria. The goddess is represented standing and the weight of her body on the right leg, the left one is bent her body rests on her right leg, while the left knee is slightly pushed forward, and the left foot is pulled aside. The goddess's dress is used as support for the statue against the right leg. She is in the act of wearing her "strophium", one edge is held with the left hand a little bit below the breasts, and the other end is in her right (missing) hand. The "breast band" is carried out in relief from the front and back on the upper part of the body.

**Date:** Late Hellenistic era.

### Discussion:

#### A. Terminology and fabric:

In Greek and Latin literature, several names of women's underwear are mentioned. The Latin term "strophium" derived from the ancient Greek "στρόφιον", and the "strophium" refers to the breast band or the modern women's brassiere, and it was the breast support of women in Greece and Rome, so in the antique arts, the "strophium" was more often depicted variously by the mythological characters and the women. It was chiefly a soft broad ribbon of cloth or (cotton), and also of light or medium weight linen wraps<sup>1</sup>. Smooth leather of the bull's skin was also common material for the breast band<sup>2</sup>, but the linen "strophium" is fairly comfortable in hot weather and provides a reasonable amount of support.

The "strophium" called also "κεστός ἱμάς" by some scholars, so this motif of Aphrodite tying her belt *kestos* around her breast has been designated under the name of "Aphrodite *kestophoros-cestophore*"<sup>3</sup>, but the epithet is inappropriate because the *cestus*, the "κεστόν ἱμάντα" is from *Iliad*, where Homer attributes to Aphrodite an embroidered belt, "κεστός", which added to her charms an irresistible means of seduction". The "*Kestos Himas*" of Aphrodite can probably be understood as a similar garment<sup>4</sup>: She spoke and untied the richly decorated belt from her breast; there is love, desire, and persuasive speech that cunningly steal even the minds of the wise<sup>5</sup>. Everything suggests that for the old poet, this ornament was placed on the goddess's garment, and not below; they were two straps arranged diagonally over her breasts, worn outside her garment<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Rolf Hirschmann, *Der Neue Pauly Enzyklopaedie der Antike, Band II*, (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2001), cols. 1056-7, s.v. "Strophium"; Kelly Olsen, *Dress and the Roman Woman. Self-presentation and Society*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 52; Lillian M. Wilson, *The clothing of the ancient Romans*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), 164; Konrat Ziegler, & al., eds., *Der Kleine Pauly, Lexikon Der Antike*, Vol. 5 (Schaf bis Zythos.Nachträge), (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1975), 399, s.v. "strophium".

<sup>2</sup> Emma Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast": Glimpses of the ancient bra", in: *The Clothed Body in the Ancient World*, edited by: Cleland, L. & al., (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 104.

<sup>3</sup> Gulik, *the Allard Pierson Museum*, 28-9, no. 47, pl. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Homer, *Homeri Ilias*, (Lisipiae: Sumtibus et typis Caroli Tauchnitii, 1828), XIV, 214-217.

<sup>5</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 105.

<sup>6</sup> Edmond Pottier, & al., *La Nécropole de Myrina: recherches archéologiques exécutées au nom et aux frais de l'École française d'Athènes*, (Paris, E. Thorin, 1887), 296, no. 5.

The true designation of the belt that Aphrodite places over her breasts is the Greek "στρόφιον", in Latin "strophium". Also the Latin words "mamillare", and "fascia pectoralis" refer to the breast band<sup>1</sup>. Mamillare is another aspect of the chest-band:

You can wear a bull's skin on your chest:  
Other leather cannot support your breasts<sup>2</sup>.

Fascia, the various meanings of this term are almost all rendered by the general term band or any sort of bandage<sup>3</sup>. There is reason to compare the synonyms Infula, Mitra, Taenia, and Vitta with fascia; what distinguishes fascia is that it applies particularly to a band wrapped around parts of the body or a solid object<sup>4</sup>. But we focus here on fascia which means the band that women wore caroled below and around the breasts to support them<sup>5</sup>. The "strophium" is distinct from the belt, ζώνη, which was worn much lower<sup>6</sup>. The word for breast band was "strophium" in the late Republican period, but the term fascia (or fascea) became more common in the 1st century AD<sup>7</sup>.

Leonidas of Tarentum's presented to Aphrodite a list of things such as, (AP 6.211): a silver figurine of Eros and anklets, a purple hairband, the alabaster-colored melouchos, a bronze mirror, and the wide box-wood hair comb. The term melouchos, which means "apple holder", should again be a chest-band<sup>8</sup>.

The band of fabric that supported the breasts could be colored (green, blue, red, yellow, violet); in a painting from Pompeii we see, for example, a woman who wears a green fascia on another red<sup>9</sup>.

## B. Usage of "Strophium":

The "strophium" here is obviously a band wrapped around the chest or breasts, and has existed, judging from the number of variant artifacts that show goddesses, ordinary girls, or women supporting their breasts with a breast band "strophium"<sup>10</sup>. Pollux presented some identification of the term "téthodesmos" on Aristophanes' Fr. 325;

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<sup>1</sup> Edmond Saglio & Edmond Pottier *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines d'après les textes et les monuments*, (Paris: Hachette, 1873), s. v. "strophium"; Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 104.

<sup>2</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 104.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, Lillian, *The clothing of the ancient Roman*, 164.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Daremberg & Edmond Saglio *Dictionnaire des Antiquités, grecques et romaines*, (Paris: Hachette et cie, 1899), 979, s.v. Fascia.

<sup>5</sup> Daremberg & Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités*, 980. s.v. Fascia.

<sup>6</sup> Pottier & al., *La Nécropole de Myrina*, 296.

<sup>7</sup> Alexandra Croom, *Roman clothing and fashion*, (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), 93.

<sup>8</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 103.

<sup>9</sup> Daremberg & Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités*, 980. s.v. Fascia.

<sup>10</sup> Nacéra Benseddik, "«Laßt die Hände nach Wolle greifen...» Zahlreiche Zeugnisse führen uns die Lebenswelt der Frauen im römischen Nordafrika vor Augen", *Antike Welt*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (2006): 25, fig. 6; Croom, *Roman clothing and fashion*, 93.

mentioned that the "strophium" was a breast girdle and also indicated that it was a necessary part of a transvestite's costume<sup>1</sup>, as we will see with Hermaphroditos later.

The main purpose of "strophium", performing the functions of the modern corset or brassieres, was to contain, support, and raise the breasts, and largely play the role of modern lingerie, adding an extra touch of eroticism to the naked body. It was thus an artifice of the toilet, which could be used to dissimulate certain defects, but of which the use, like that of the modern corset<sup>2</sup>.

The chest band is often found in scenes and figures of mythological women associated with love and lovemaking, such as Aphrodite and the Nymphs, as well as in human couples and prostitutes at work. Literature also shows that breasts were considered erotic; as a woman's greatest beauty asset, and even when in her dress, breasts are obviously still considered desirable. There was actually something very special about clothed breasts<sup>3</sup>.

In antiquity, the "strophium" had been made the special attribute of Aphrodite and it was claimed that it contained the desires, the attractions, the charms, and the seductive sweetness of love<sup>4</sup>. In Hellenistic literature, the 'breast band' is mentioned many times, for example, in the third century Hedylos (AP 5.199) mentioned in an epigram the lists of female garments of Aphrodite, including sandals and yielding mitrai, garments for the breasts (mastonendumata), and still all dripping with perfume<sup>5</sup>. In a short poem by Callimachus (AP 13.24), Bacchante similarly presented her Thyrsus and torch to Aphrodite and the "Mitra which kissed the goddess's breasts"<sup>6</sup>.

Ovid warns the young man trying to fall in love by forbidding his lover from wearing a ribbon across her chest: "Let no fascia hides this defect":

Durius incedit? fac inambulet; omne papillae  
Pectus habent? vitium fascia nulla tegat<sup>7</sup>.

It seems that small breasts were still admired in ancient times. The "strophium" may also be used to slow breast growth<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon*, vol. 2, books VI-X, translated by: Bethe, E. (Lipsiae B.G. Teubner, 1931), 7.66.6-10.

<sup>2</sup> Margarete Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic age*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1961), 138-9, fig. 558; Pottier & al., *La Nécropole de Myrina*, 296; Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 107.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, "A WOMAN'S VIEW? Dress, Eroticism, and the Ideal Female Body in Athenian Art", in: *Women's Dress in the Ancient Greek World*, (ed.), Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, L., (Classical Press of Wales, 2002), 171; Glenys Lloyd-Morgan, "Roman Venus: public worship and private rites", In: *Pagan Gods and Shrines of the Roman Empire*, eds. Henig, M. & King, A., (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1986), 171.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Ludovic Visconti, *Les monuments de sculpture antique du Musée Torlonia reproduits par la phototypie*, (Rome: Imprimerie Tiberina, 1884), 3, no. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 103.

<sup>6</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 103.

<sup>7</sup> Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*, Edidit brevis adnotatione critica instruxit: E. J. Kenney, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1965), 337-8.

<sup>8</sup> Olsen, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 52.

The domestic shrines beside public shrines and temples may contain their own statuettes and dedications of Aphrodite of varied material from devotees, including figurines of Aphrodite holding the "strophium"<sup>1</sup>. The artifacts represented Aphrodite with a belt applied to the skin, around or below the breasts, by analogy with that worn by the women of that time. What characterizes the "strophium" or "fascia" is that it was applied directly to the skin before covering the inner tunic<sup>2</sup>.

The "strophium" is used by women and girls in the varied activities of daily life. It is possible that this band was sometimes used, like the modern corset, to prevent excessive over weight and tighten the girl's chest so that they are slender<sup>3</sup>. Women sometimes slipped under the "fascia", or between the "fascia", and the inner tunic, the objects they wanted to keep out of sight. We see some, in literature, who use this means to conceal the letters or pledges of love they have just received<sup>4</sup>. Medea of Apollonius wore also a good-smelling "mitra" around her "attractive breasts," and in it, she carried the medical drug that would give Jason superhuman power<sup>5</sup>.

There is an emphasis on the tight quality of the bra strap, where the breast band could also flatten very large breasts: Martial asks for a chest ribbon to "compress my lady's swollen breasts, so that there may be something for my hand to grasp and cover"<sup>6</sup>.

Sometimes even the "fascia" was not fixed below the breasts, but above, or it was thrown obliquely, like a scarf which started from one shoulder and passed under the breast on the side opposite. From then on it no longer had anything in common with the modern corset. It was nothing more than an ornament, intended like those chains that one wore crossed over the bare chest to enhance the beauty of the forms and the brilliance of the complexion<sup>7</sup>. Paintings from Pompeii are depicting women wearing the "strophium"(figs. 10<sup>8</sup>, 11<sup>9</sup>).

Artifacts in varied museums and also numerous paintings from private domestic dwellings from Pompeii and Herculaneum show male-female lovemaking in a series of erotic scenes particularly among the fourth style frescoes (AD 62-79). The females frequently preferred to practice sexual relations wearing the "strophium" around her breasts in varied sexual positions; the woman usually above, sometimes on all fours<sup>10</sup>. A

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd-Morgan, "Roman Venus: public worship and private rites", 184, fig. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Daremberg & Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquites*, 980. s.v. Fascia.

<sup>3</sup> Daremberg & Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquites, grecques et romaines*, s.v. Fascia, 980,

<sup>4</sup> Daremberg & Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquites*, 981. s.v. Fascia.

<sup>5</sup> Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*. Ed. & Trans., by: Seaton, R. C., (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1912), 3.867-8.

<sup>6</sup> Olsen, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 52; Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 104.

<sup>7</sup> Daremberg & Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquites*, 981. s.v. Fascia.

<sup>8</sup> Croom, *Roman clothing and fashion*, fig. 44<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Gusman, *Pompeii: La ville, les mœurs, les arts*, (Paris: Émile Caillard, 1906), 333.

<sup>10</sup> John R. Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 315*, (University of California Press, 2003), 135, fig. 75; John R. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C. – A.D. 250*, (Berkeley . Los Angeles . London: University of California Press: University of California Press, 1998), 73, 209-2110, pls. 3, 6-8, 14, figs. 24, 49, 88; Joseph Jay Deiss, *Herculaneum, Italy's burial Treasure*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985), 48; Elaine Gazda, ed., *the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii: Ancient Ritual, Modern Muse*, (Ann

painting of a certain house is accompanied by an inscription that mentions: "Impulse lens", "penetrate gently"<sup>1</sup>.

For example, an erotic scene from Pompeii shows a naked male-female couple in sexual intercourse in bed, in the position so-called "cowgirl position or the woman on top"<sup>2</sup>, and represents the male lies on his back with the receiving the female. The girl is completely naked except for the "strophium" band and she tries to insert the male's penis into her vagina. Another sexual scene from Pompeii, a bath at Baths-Suburban, represents a rear-penetration position; a Threesome of two men and a woman in bed, the receiving female is on all her fours with her torso horizontal. The girl is wearing only the "breast band"<sup>3</sup>.

### C. Typology:

Statuettes of Aphrodite with the "strophium" are one of the types of Aphrodite or Venus naked or half-naked. Aphrodite with raised arms high (Cat. No. 4) represents the goddess in the pose of Aphrodite binding her hair, a sculptural type known as Aphrodite "Anadyomene" type, having just emerged from the sea, she is about to wring out the still wet hair with both hands. The gesture of wringing one's hair and the absence of a robe refer to the idea of the birth of the goddess from the foam of the sea, from which she got her nickname "Anadyomene" (the foam-born)<sup>4</sup>. The coat which wraps only her lowered part (Cat. No. 4) retained at the hips is tied in the middle of the person and forms a part of varied and spontaneous folds.

The motif of Aphrodite/Venus "Anadyomene" must have been very popular throughout the Hellenistic and Roman worlds even in Egypt. The coins which were issued by emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus have depictions of Aphrodite "Anadyomene" type in the second century A.D.<sup>5</sup>. The prototype of the Aphrodite "Anadyomene" type must have been very famous after numerous adaptations, some of which were significantly modified.

The terracotta figurine (Cat. No. 4) was created after the famous Aphrodite of Milos<sup>6</sup>. The standing half-wrapped Aphrodite "Anadyomene" in the Vatican is first recorded for this type in the 18th-century collection of Carlo Albacini in Rome (fig. 12)<sup>7</sup>. Bieber placed the origin at the beginning of the 3rd century, relating it to a cult statue erected in Egypt during the reign of Arsinoe II. She was sure the curtains were tied for

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Arbor: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology and University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2000): 124-5, fig. 11.10.

<sup>1</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 106.

<sup>2</sup> The wall-painting is from the so-called "hidden room, in the house of the centenary, (IX, 8, 6), room 43, south wall, central scene. Joanne Berry, *The Complete Pompeii*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 106; Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking*, pl. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Apodyterium 7, scene VI (a.b. 6279). Berry, *The Complete Pompeii*, 110; Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking*, pl. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Liepe, *Das Ägyptische Museum der Universität Leipzig*, (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag P. von Zabern, 1997), 118, No. 95.

<sup>5</sup> Christine Mitchell Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos and Her Successors: A Historical Review of the Female Nude in Greek Art*, (University of Michigan Press, 2007), 88, fig. 28.

<sup>6</sup> AUKTION II. *Antike Kunstwerke*, (Ars Antiqua Ag Luzern, 1960), 25, no. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos*, 86-93. Figs. 24-32.

safety reasons so hands would be free to grab hair<sup>1</sup>. The weight rests on the left leg. Her arms are raised towards her long hairstyle. Here, as in our terracotta figurine (Cat. No. 4, figs. 4a-d), the right arm is the upper arm and the left one is the lower arm. The head is bowed. The lower part of the body is wrapped with a garment knotted at the center in front of her genitals.

The Alexandrian statuette from Egypt of naked Aphrodite standing here in the well-known "Anadyomene" arranging her hair is similar to our figure (Cat. No. 4, figs. 4a-d) but not wearing the "strophium" (fig. 13)<sup>2</sup>. The similarity between the two statuettes is very clear in the "Anadyomene" pose, the presence of an Eros beside the goddess as a support, and looking up at the goddess asking if she can use the robe. The weight of the goddess rests on her left leg while the head is turned slightly to the right. Around 100 BC.

A figurine of Aphrodite "Anadyomene" inside a small "aedicula" provided with a shell was found in Sidi-Gaber, Alexandria (fig. 14)<sup>3</sup>. The goddess has a bare torso and her legs covered by the himation, which is tied in front of the genitals but without a "strophium". Aphrodite raises her hands in the gesture of straightening her hair. We recognize a "stéphane" at the top of the head. The rear part of the "aedicula" is pierced by a quadrangular opening, which makes it possible to see the back of the goddess. The surface is badly damaged so that the details of the statuette as well as those of the architecture are not well recognizable, but we can recognize two columns with Corinthian capitals flanking the "aedicula".

A bronze figurine of Aphrodite "Anadyomene", the naked goddess, is represented in the position of "Anadyomene" and the weight rests on her left leg (fig. 15)<sup>4</sup>. Between her thighs, she clamps a piece of her robe that falls to the ground in pretty folds. The left hip is gently swung out, and the lowered left shoulder is approaching it in a melodious rhythm. The right upper arm is raised in continuation of the right shoulder, hand scrambled, back down, with a nice soft motion back into a strand of hair, while the strand falling on the left side will flicker over the shoulder from left. This is a depiction of Aphrodite, known from many examples, as she wants to tie her hair into a knot. The work of the figure is not particularly fine and quite uneven, especially on the right foot. The rather thick needle under the figure thickens towards the top to form a corner Knob, around which a fine line had already been scratched in the model.

In the context of Aphrodite "Anadyomene" in Ptolemaic-Roman Egypt, the oriental-Greek goddess Aphrodite has syncretism with the Egyptian goddess Isis-Hathor. The connection with the Egyptian goddess is only indicated, if at all, by the addition of a Hathor crown made of cow horns and a sun disk.

A terracotta figurine represents Aphrodite- Isis, (Anadyomene) type, the goddess here stands on a gently curved pedestal decorated with lattice-patterned, wringing her

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<sup>1</sup> Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic age*, 98.

<sup>2</sup> AUKTION II. *Antike Kunstwerke*, 25, no. 55, pl. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, Inv. No. 24495. H. 19 cm.  
Adriani, *Annuaire*, 169, pl. LXXII, 1.2.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Ippel, *Der Bronzefund von Galjüb: (Modelle eines hellenistischen Goldschmieds)*, (Berlin: K. Curtius, 1922), 28, No. 7, pl. III.

wet hair as a gesture to her birth from the sea (fig. 16)<sup>1</sup>. A belt painted with rosettes, jewelry, and anklets can be seen. A small naked Eros at her side offers further jewelry from the open box. In the headdress, elements are of Egyptian origin, especially that of Isis; the huge cushion-like structure (hairstyle? wreath?) and the cow's horns with a sun disc between lotus buds, which were still attached over the diadem that was stuck into the hair and decorated only with a disc. It might be that the two holes above the shoulders were used to attach plastic ornaments, such as necklaces, to the goddess.

A terracotta figurine of the goddess Isis-Hathor-Aphrodite (Anadyomene) reflects this relation (fig. 17)<sup>2</sup>, and the Greek features predominate in style as usual with this kind of representation. Aphrodite is depicted standing with a slender, youthful body, a nod to her role as the goddess of beauty. The traditional costume and the body haling so here in the typical Greek position of standing with a free leg. The statuette does not have a crown either, and only a thick wreath has been placed around the hair. The boy next to her is her son Eros, identified with Horus, son of Isis-Hathor. In his hands, he carries a box, perhaps a casket, in which he keeps jewelry for the goddess. Ptolemaic period, 2nd -1st century BC.

The terracotta figurine of Aphrodite "Anadyomene" with the "strophium" is very rare in the Greek and Roman arts (Cat. No. 4), but there is a torso from a nude statue of Aphrodite that is probably a parallel to our terra cotta figurine (figs. 18a-c)<sup>3</sup>. The (missing) head and upper part of the body are turned to the left side, and the weight of the body obviously rests on the left leg. The (missing) arms were apparently spread out to the up-sides to drain water from her hair, as we see with the "Anadyomene" type. The "strophium" is clearly sculpted at the back and underarms; the rest must have been simply painted on the front of the body under the breasts that disappeared now.

#### **D. The "strophium" with other mythological and historical characters:**

As we have noticed, the dedicated short poems and the varied artifacts link the breast band "strophium" directly with Aphrodite, but also varied epigrams and minor artifacts mention other mythological and historical characters wearing the inner female clothing, particularly the breast band. Even the female slaves used also "strophium".

The "strophium" was certainly intended for Artemis, specifically in gratitude for a safe birth from the goddess, where Themaes dedicated her "mitra" "tied tightly around her breasts"<sup>4</sup>.

Catullus describes Ariadne stripping herself of her ornaments when Theseus abandons her at Naxos:

Non flavor retinens subtilem vertice mitram,  
Non contecta levi velatum pectus amictu,

<sup>1</sup> Heidelberg University, Inv. no. 961; H: 43 cm; W: 14.5 cm. Brown terracotta.

Erika Feucht, *Vom Nil zum Neckar: Kunstschätze Ägyptens aus pharaonischer und koptischer Zeit an der Universität Heidelberg*, (Springer-Verlag: Berlin. Heidelberg, 1986), 196. Cat. No. 564.

<sup>2</sup> Das Ägyptische Museum der Universität Leipzig, inv. no. 5065. H. 21.0 cm. Unknown place of discovery. Renate Krauspe, *Das Ägyptische Museum der Universität Leipzig*, (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1997), 118, cat. No. 95; Liepe, *Das Ägyptische Museum der Universität Leipzig*, 118, No. 95.

<sup>3</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Acc. no. 25.78.64. Fletcher Fund, 1925. Acquired from a Greek source. Marble. H. 16'5 cm.

Richter, *Catalogue of Greek Sculptures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Cat. No. 158, Pl. CXIII, d-f.

<sup>4</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 103.

Non tereti strophio luctantes vincta papillas.

Neither keeping the fine band (mitram) on her golden head nor with her veiled breast covered by the light garment, some kind of under-tunic, (leviamictu), nor with her milk-white breasts constrained by the tightly-twisted "strophium"<sup>1</sup>.

Another epigram describes Ariadne, in other words, in an eroticism situation; she has magnificent beauty but is a sexually voracious noblewoman who prepares herself by taking off all her garments, even the ribbon that ties her beautiful nipples (taenia quoque, qua dee deuinxerat papillas)<sup>2</sup>.

A wall painting of Hermaphroditos, type of Hermaphroditos alone, half-clothed, seated with a cloak over his legs, probably from Boscoreale. Hermaphroditos is the beautiful son of Hermes and Aphrodite, with whom the loving nymph Salmakis merged as he bathed in her spring. Hermaphroditos has wrapped a scarf around her head, which falls behind her neck (fig. 19)<sup>3</sup>.

The scene depicts Hermaphroditos sitting between a figurine of Priapus standing on a block of stone to the right and a figure of Cupid to the left holding up a round mirror because Hermaphroditos looks at himself while tying a "strophium" on his chest. Priapus, the auspicious demon of fertility, and Eros were regarded as his brothers, albeit from different fathers, namely Dionysus and Ares.

A marble statue belonging to the Late Hellenistic period (fig. 20)<sup>4</sup> of half-clothed and standing Hermaphroditos follows the type of Hermaphroditos alone. The statue represents Hermaphroditos dancing and wearing a thin breast band below the breasts. The arms and head are missing. Found in the Sanctuary of Nemi, Lazio, Italy.

A Roman marble relief shows that a nymph also wore the ("strophium"), depicting Hercules and a nymph in sexual intercourse (fig. 21)<sup>5</sup>. The scene represents the nymph wearing a breast band and squatting on the Hercules's penis.

A bone plate from Egypt represents the upper body of two Nereides and an animal in the background. The Nereide to the left is wearing the "strophium" around her chest. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. A.D (fig. 22)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Catullus, *Epithalamus of Peleus and Thetis*, LXIV, 63; Pottier & al., *La Nécropole de Myrina*, 296-7; Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 106.

<sup>2</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 106.

<sup>3</sup> Stuttgart, Landesmus. Arch 83/1c.

Volker Michael Strocka, *Römische Fresken in der Antikensammlung des Württembergischen Landesmuseums; mit einem Abriss der Sammlungsgeschichte von Margret Honroth*, (Stuttgart: Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1991), 18-19, Cat. 3; Stefanie Oehmke, *LIMC, Supplementum I, s.v. Hermaphroditos*, (Artemis Verlag, Düsseldorf, 2009), add. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Philadelphia, Univ. Mus. MS 3457 + MS 3462.

Oehmke, *LIMC, Supplementum I, s.v. Hermaphroditos*, add. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Johns, *Sex or symbol: Erotic Images of Greece and Rome*, (London: British Museum Publications, 1982), 80, fig. 15.

<sup>6</sup> France, Paris, Louvre Museum, X. 5340.

Anne-Violaine Szabados, *LIMC VI, s.v. Nereides*, (Artemis Verlag, Zürich & München, 1992), No. 237.

A discus of lamp has a scene of Nereides on marine animal type. She is riding Ketos, wearing a "strophium" around her breasts, and her drapery is floating. 1<sup>st</sup>. cent. AD (fig. 23)<sup>1</sup>.

A decorative program of a long side of an early Antonine sarcophagus in Rome shows Nereids and Tritons, Nereids riding over the water, and wearing only cloaks and a breast band (fig. 24)<sup>2</sup>.

A mosaic from Hippo, Algeria, shows a standing naked young woman a symbol of spring, supporting her breast with the "strophium"(fig. 25)<sup>3</sup>.

Attic Hydria from Cyrenaica presents a scene of Aphrodite, a mythological character or ordinary female who takes her garments off; she is illustrated removing the chiton from over her head, revealing only a chest belt (fig. 26)<sup>4</sup>.

A Roman bronze figurine of a nude lady probably represents an empress as Aphrodite or Aphrodite herself in a very fine rare style. She is standing in a relaxed pose, wrapping her breasts with a "strophium". Her hair is styled in the manner of Julia Titi. Ca. 80-90 AD (fig. 27)<sup>5</sup>.

#### **E. Method of tying and wearing the "Strophium":**

The method of wrapping and fitting the "strophium" needs only a layer of fabric over the breasts and provides some support through the twisted ends below the edge of the "strophium". A modern experiment involving a strip of cloth seventy inches long and eight inches wide can be used most efficiently as a support for the breasts if the ends of it are worn around the body at the back, with each long end crossing forward and holding the breasts.

The various figurines of Aphrodite from Egypt and Alexandria show the method of tying and wearing the "strophium" around her chest. The goddess is depicted with the "strophium", in various forms and phases, and these statuettes show a common movement of the outstretched right arm, holding one end of the band and the other in the left hand, which is either placed on the breasts or under them. This is a basic concept and very similar in most statuettes, differing only in some details.

First, the goddess holds the edges of the breast band with her both hands in front of the body (fig. 28)<sup>6</sup>. Next, the right hand holds the rolled edge and the other unrolled end goes to the back and then coming from the back, in front of the body, as we see in a terracotta figurine of Aphrodite ties the "strophium", found in northern Greece and with

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<sup>1</sup> Columbia (Miss.), Univ. 70.111. From Sicily.

Szabados, *LIMC VI, s.v. Nereides*, No. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Rome, Palazzo Conservatori, Museo Nuovo 2269.

Elizabeth J. Milleker, "The Three Graces on a Roman Relief Mirror", *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, Vol. 23, (1988), 74, fig. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Mosaic from Hippo Regis (Annaba, Algeria) with the details of personification of spring.

Benseddik, «Laßt die Hände nach Wolle greifen...», 25, fig. 6.

<sup>4</sup> London Collection E230, 370-50 BC. Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 106, fig. 9.5.

<sup>5</sup> H. 8.6 cm. Royal-Athena Galleries, "Greek, Etruscan, Roman, Egyptian, & Near Eastern Antiquities", *Art of the Ancient World*, Volume XVIII – 2007, Celebrating of 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, (New York . London, 2007), 29, No. 48.

<sup>6</sup> Salomon Reinach, *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine*, Tom. II, Vol. I, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1897), 345, no. 5.

an influence of art from Asia Minor. Hellenistic period (mid. 3rd. century B.C (figs.29a-b)<sup>1</sup>. Then, the goddess puts the folded edge up with the left hand on or under the uncovered left breast, and with her right hand, she wraps the other end.

Some figurines represent this stage; for example, a figurine of Aphrodite tying the "strophium" is found in the necropolis of Aolis, Myrina shows us this action. The goddess is depicted naked, only with the "strophium" which is painted with pink color. The body is bent slightly, with the weight on her right leg, and the left leg slightly bent into the front. The first century BC –the first half of the first century AD (fig. 30)<sup>2</sup>.

A bronze figurine from Yugoslavia represents standing naked Aphrodite (fig. 31)<sup>3</sup>. The weight of the body rests on the right leg. The hair is parted in the middle, then gathered in strands that go to the ears and then turn upwards towards the top of the head, where both strands are tied in such a way as to form an ornament similar to a diadem. Behind each ear, one curl is cut, which descends, each on its own side, on the shoulders. With her left arm, Aphrodite holds an edge of the "strophium" above her chest, and with her right hand, she wraps the other end. The band is depicted on the back.

Another similar terracotta figurine from Myrina shows Aphrodite in the same action with little differences (fig. 32)<sup>4</sup>. The goddess has a high hairstyle composed of a triple row of small buckles in front, which must be a sort of ritual hairstyle analogous to that worn in the 4th century by certain terracotta figures that come from Thebes. There are also two long curls on the shoulders and two pigtailed joined in the back. She has big earrings. The "strophium" was tied around her breasts. She pulls the open edge of her band to tie it on or under her breasts; her left hand rests on her chest and supports the other end. The figurine is supported by an ithyphallic herm; where her left elbow is placed on the head of a horned and bearded Pan. He was wrapped in a short coat, the left hand leaning on the stomach. There are traces of pink color on the belt and white on the flesh. Second half of the first century B.C.

A bronze figure of Aphrodite with the breast band is found in Germany (fig. 33)<sup>5</sup>. Aphrodite is naked totally, just trying to wrap her "strophium" around her breasts. The

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<sup>1</sup> Munich, Antikenslg. 8516. Acquired in Athens in 1904. H. 27.5 cm.

Karl Feuchtmayr, *Bayerischer Verein der Kunstfreunde (Museums-Verein) Erwerbungen 1905-1927*. (München, Wolf & Sohn, 1927), 34, no. 16, pl. 16; Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", fig. 9.6.

<sup>2</sup> Afroditi Mavrogonatou, *Terracotta figurines as grave offerings in Veroia: The funerary dimension of Aphrodite and Eros in female and child burials of the Hellenistic rock-cut chamber tombs*. School of Humanities, A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (MA) in the Classical Archaeology and Ancient History of Macedonia. (Thessaloniki – Greece, 2018), 24, fig. 22; Simone Mollard-Besques, *Catalogue raisonné des figurines et reliefs en terre-cuite grecs et romains. 2, Myrina, Musée du Louvre*, (Paris: Éd. de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1963), 20, Myr. 24, pl. 20d.

<sup>3</sup> National Museum, Belgrade, inv. No. 3246/III. H. 14.7 cm.

Ljubiša B. Popović & al., *Antička bronza u Jugoslaviji: Greek, Roman and Early Christian bronzes in Yugoslavia*. (Narodni muzej – Beograd, Forum, 1969), 90, no. 94.

<sup>4</sup> Paris, Louvre MYR 23. H. 30 cm.

Fleischer, *LIMC. II, s.v. Aphrodite*, no. 513; Mollard-Besques, *Catalogue raisonné des figurines et reliefs en terre-cuite*, 2, Myr. 23, pl. 20f; Edmond Pottier, *Diphilos et les modeleurs de terres cuites grecques; étude critique*, (Paris: H. Laurens, 1909), 100, No. 461, pl. XX; Pottier & al., *La Nécropole de Myrina*, Cat. 23, pl. VI. Inv. No. (111); Franz Winter, *Die antiken Terrakotten (Band II): Die Typen der figürlichen Terrakotten*, (Berlin-Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Spemann, 1903), No. 7.

<sup>5</sup> The Roman cemetery at Krefeld-Gellep, Grave 3316.

Croom, *Roman clothing and fashion*, fig. 43.

goddess is tying her "strophium", one of its edges in her stretched right arm and the left hand on the chest.

The Metropolitan Museum of Arts has a terracotta figurine of a girl tying the "strophium" with the same method. Early second century BC.(fig. 34)<sup>1</sup>.

A headless statue of Aphrodite at the Louvre museum depicts the goddess standing without her outer garments, her legs spurred by a pedestal covered with drapery<sup>2</sup>. She stretches the breast band around her breast. 2nd half of the 1st century BC.

After that, with her left hand, Aphrodite brings the end of the "strophium" towards the right breast at the next roll to place it under her right armpit. Figurine of Aphrodite in the National Bibliotheca, Paris, represents the goddess standing and fixing the "strophium" (Fascia pectoralis); she brings the edge with her left hand towards her right armpit intended to raise her breasts but she is nude completely (fig. 35)<sup>3</sup>.

Roman bronze figurine of nude Aphrodite, wearing a diadem, wrapping the "strophium" around her upper torso; the goddess unrolls with her right hand, while her left hand is flat towards her right armpit to hold the other end. Second century AD (fig. 36)<sup>4</sup>.

Another parallel in the Florence museum clearly represents this movement. Naked woman totally, perhaps Aphrodite, engaged in rolling up a "fascia" below her right underarm; she holds the roll with the right hand, and with the other, she secures under her armpit the extremity which she has just developed(fig. 37)<sup>5</sup>.

Finally, the edges run towards the sides to the back, where they are tucked into the rolls to remain firmly in place<sup>6</sup>, to finish the band ends in a narrow rolled hem.

Detailed representation from a discus of a Roman oil lamp showing two Cupid playing the role of assistants of Aphrodite tying her "strophium"; they seem to help her with the firming of the ends of the strophium from back to front and seem that the band is wrapped several rolls around and under the breasts(fig. 38)<sup>7</sup>.

A rare form of Aphrodite comes from Myrina trying to tie her "strophium". Unusual position for Aphrodite sitting on bed, not standing as usual with the examples of this type, dressed in "peplos" around the lower portion and her feet on a footstool. She pulls both edges, not only one, of the breast band to the front to fasten it. A naked Eros stands in front of her and opens a socket or mirror housing; another comes on the other side and hands the goddess something else (fig. 39)<sup>8</sup>.

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Lloyd-Morgan, "Roman Venus: public worship and private rites", fig. 15.

<sup>1</sup> New York, Metr. Mus. 13.227.13. Fleischer, *LIMC. II, s.v. Aphrodite*, no. 512; Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic age*, fig. 558.

<sup>2</sup> Simone Besques, *Catalogue raisonne des figurines et reliefs en terre-cuite grecs, etrusques et romains, III*, (Paris: Musées Nationaux, 1972), 272, D. 2146, pl. 341.

<sup>3</sup> La Bibliothèque nationale, Paris. Given to the king by Caylus.H. 11.4 cm.

Ernest Babelon, & Adrien Blanchet, *Catalogue des bronzes antiques de la Bibliothèque nationale*, publié sous les auspices de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1895), 106, no. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Museum of archaeology, Madrid, (Unnumbered). H. 14 cm.

Royal-Athena Galleries, *Art of the Ancient World*, 29, No. 47; Raymond Thouvenot, *Catalogue des figurines et objets de bronze du Musée archéologique de Madrid*, (Paris; Bordeaux: Feret & fils, E. de Bocard, 1927), 36, no. 144, pl. X.

<sup>5</sup> Daremberg & Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquites, s.v. Fascia*, 980, fig. 2879.

<sup>6</sup> Judith Lynn Sebesta & Larissa Bonfante, *The world of Roman costume*. Wisconsin studies in classics. (Madison. WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 235.

<sup>7</sup> Sebesta, & Bonfante, *The world of Roman costume*, 235, fig. 13.27.

<sup>8</sup> Athens, (Centralmuseum, Sammlung Misthos 500). Winter, *Die antiken Terrakotten*, No. 8.

As we saw in the previous two examples, Aphrodite could be depicted as wearing the strophium while she is sitting, not standing, and there is another rare form in this concept; it represents Aphrodite kneeling in a large open shell on a cone-shaped rock lapped by waves. The waves are indicated by a scale pattern and blue paint. Her left thigh is covered by a narrow cloak that passes under her right leg and ends at the lower edge of the shell. The goddess tightens the breast band under the chest with both outstretched hands. Late Hellenistic period (fig. 40)<sup>1</sup>.

The goddesses and human women can wear upper clothing and move very freely after they finish tying and fastening the breast band, as a bronze figurine of the goddess of Belginum from Trier, Germany, shows us. She is wearing a "strophium" below the breasts which stand out above the band (figs. 41a-c)<sup>2</sup>. The youthful goddess stands on her right leg and crosses her left; the footsteps down only with the ball of the foot. The left hand is raised to shoulder height and rests on a now-lost support. The right hand hung in front of the body and was probably holding an object, as indicated by the borehole in the hand and the outstretched index finger. The hair is combed back in waves and ends in a four-part tuft after being bound by a spiral-like band. The diadem, probably added later, is simple; the crowning is pearl-like and has traces of silver plating. The head is slightly tilted, the eyes are deeply drilled, and the eyes themselves are inlaid with silver.

The breasts are held by a wide breast band inlaid in silver. The goddess is dressed in a cloak, which leaves the upper part of the body, almost the entire body, and the right hip uncovered. The cloak is thrown over the left upper arm and falls backward to mid-thigh. Below, the mantle reaches to the ground; the tip of the right foot once protrudes from under the hem.

### Conclusion:

Aphrodite is represented in the type of "Aphrodite with "strophium" at a very young age, as indicated by her forms and her still underdeveloped breasts; she was occupied with tying her breast band around her chest or finished wearing it. The material represents the goddess with the "strophium" in different positions: standing, kneeling, and sitting.

Aphrodite holding the "strophium" can be found in marble statuettes, as well as in terracotta and bronze figurines, and may be made of other material that comes exclusively from Egypt. For me, there are no parallels to Aphrodite "Anadyomene" with the "strophium" among the Greek and Roman arts, so the writer suggests that the prototype of this figurine was Alexandrian (Cat. No. 4, Figs. 4a-d).

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<sup>1</sup> Obtained from several matrices, both halves of the shell and the folds of the robe appear to be particularly striking and reworked with the modeling wood. Round firing hole on the back. The head is missed. Parts were added to the lower right shell edge.

Martin-von-Wagner-Museum der Universität Würzburg. H 5779.

Evamaria Schmidt, *Martin-von-Wagner-Museum der Universität Würzburg: Katalog der antiken Terrakotten I. Die figürlichen Terrakotten*, (Mainz: von Zabern, 1994), 150, no. 242, pl. 43 b-c.

<sup>2</sup> Inv. no. 35, 107. Discovery site in the area Auf Siebet" west of the Stumpen Turm" near Hintzerath, on a site recognized as vicus Belginum.-H. 14.1 cm.

Heinz Menzel, *Die römischen Bronzen aus Deutschland, II- Trier*, (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1966), 37, no. 79, pls. 36 – 37.

The motif of Aphrodite with the "strophium" seems to be in the small size of all the replicas, which were treated according to a large sculpture. The original, which has been imitated very freely, probably belongs to the third century BC.

During the first century A.D., the breast band became popular in erotic images. This increased visibility suggests a possible conclusion: that breast binding may have been more widely used during the Hellenistic period, perhaps due to women's greater freedom for activity outside the home.

Both terms "strophium" and "Fascia" were given to the breast band, perhaps of linen, cotton, or leather and the paintings from Pompeii show the "strophium" with varied colors. It was used by women around the breasts; it served the same purpose as modern bras or breast supports with the aim of supporting the breasts and giving them stability.

The "strophium" can also flatten very large breasts and may also be used to restrict breast growth. The "strophium" was also an underwear that could signal of moral stance: a "respectable" married woman kept her girdle on even during intercourse.

Even now, breast bands appear as practical clothing worn by Greek and Roman mythological characters and goddesses, especially Aphrodite, and perhaps more widely by human females. It is commonly mentioned as the main underwear garment for women by classical writers and Hellenistic short poems. Sources from the 5th century indicate that basic breast garters were available and used widely enough for Aristophanes' audience to recognize them.

All evidence refers to the fact that the breast band lifts and separates the breasts, the main function of it, in addition to, as Ovid recommended, wearing a "fascia" around the narrow chest". It is meant to give the impression of full breasts on females with flat chests. Breasts were not meant to be big, but small and shapely.

In this change, male artists are increasingly interested in representing women's garments, as a result of the growing popularity of the female nude. The chest band provides variety in the given theme. You have a flawless physical body and are a powerful compromise with the female body as the focus of sexual attention. The literature mentioned the fact that when a woman undresses, she removes all her clothing, including the ribbon with which she wrapped her breasts.

On a basic level, its erotic potential comes from its association with the female breast, an area that Greek and Roman males found distinctly attractive and wearers have the more obvious erotic appearance. The binding of the breasts in erotic scenes may have represented the erotic charge that lingerie produced even at that time and helped women look their best in front of their lovers", and perhaps hiding the breasts makes them attractive, and the women were playing on their apparent preference for complete nudity<sup>1</sup>. The strongest evidence for the use an eroticism of the chest ribbon in classical times is its development in Hellenistic literature and its appearance in the visual artifacts from the art of the fourth century until the Roman era.

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<sup>1</sup> Stafford, "Viewing and Obscuring the Female Breast", 106.

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Figures



Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b



Fig. 1c



Fig. 1d



Fig. 2



Fig. 3a.



Fig. 3b.



Fig. 4a



Fig. 4b



Fig. 4c



Fig. 4d



Fig. 5



Fig. 6a



Fig. 6b



Fig. 7a



Fig. 7b



Fig. 8a



Fig. 8b



Fig. 8c

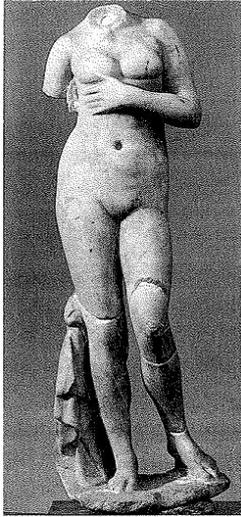


Fig. 9a



Fig. 9b



Fig. 9c



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18a

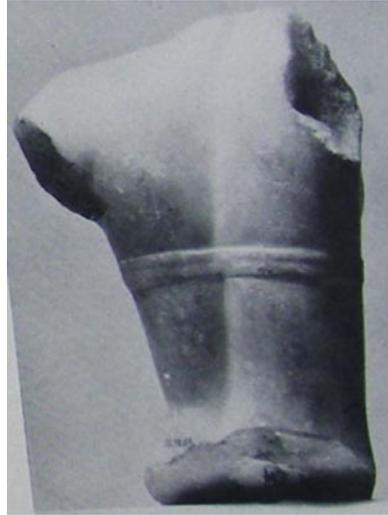


Fig. 18b



Fig. 18c

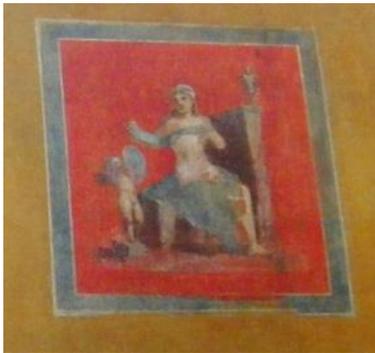


Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27

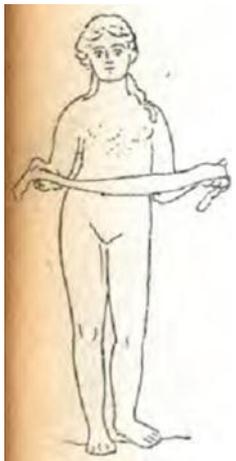


Fig. 28



Fig. 29a



Fig. 29b



Fig. 30



Fig. 31



Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36

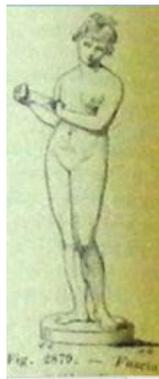


Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41a



Fig. 41b



Fig. 41c