

**DE APHRODISIENSI RESTITUTO:
AN EARLY BYZANTIENE HEAD FROM APHRODISIAS**

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Although they present definite characteristics that distinguish them from those of Rome and other parts of the Empire, Anatolian portraits are not usually regarded as a fully homogeneous group. On the other hand, several important centres such as Aphrodisias, Ephesus, Side and Pergamon must be recognised as they produced at various times groups of remarkable portraits that can justifiably take their place among the best that Roman and, above all, early Byzantine portrait art created (1). Indeed, there can be little doubt that the best late portraits from the fourth and fifth centuries come from one of these centres, and particularly from Aphrodisias. Although our present **honorandus** has not devoted much attention to the field of portrait sculpture among his numerous accomplishments, it is still appropriate to present a new recently "returned" addition to the gallery of early Byzantine portraiture, since the present volume is a celebration of Ekrem Akurgal, as well as of Anatolian archaeology to which he has contributed so much.

Head of a Man Towards the middle of the fifth century A.D. (Pl. 1-3)
Geyre (Aphrodisias). Museum Depot
Excavation Inv. 67-697 and 84-50.

Fragment of the left cheek, eye, forehead and adjacent hair found by Paul Gaudin in 1904, presumably in his excavations of the Baths of Hadrian (2). The rest of the head was discovered in the central west colonnade of the Portico of Tiberius of the Agora of Aphrodisias leading to the Baths in 1984, among architectural débris.

Medium to coarse-grained Aphrodisias marble.

H.: 0.25m. W.: 0.21m. Depth: 0.14m.

Two|joining fragments. Left side piece broken at middle of forehead and diagonally below left eye and cheek-bone.

Broken below front beard in a line slanting up towards the back of the neck. Greater part of nose (which was probably aquiline in shape) broken. Portion of beard below left side fragment missing. Edges of left ear as well as a number of locks also broken off. Surface encrusted with lime. Flesh parts hard polished.

This lifesize portrait head belongs to an elderly bearded man, who is quite bald on the top of his head. His hair is brushed down his sides and temples in thick, abundant locks which are deeply drilled and curled. Crossridges have been left between some of the drill-channels of the curls. The moustache is brushed in smooth wavy lines over the upper lip, revealing a small thin-lipped mouth. A tuft of beard is indicated below the lower lip and there is a small vacant area between this and the rest of the beard. The face is extremely well-modelled, almost gaunt, with high cheek-bones plastically connected with lines under the eyes. The forehead is marked by at least four horizontal wrinkles or grooves. There is also a ridge above the nose. The bushy eyebrows are roughly indicated by separate and incised tufts of hair. The eyes are slightly sunken in their sockets and partly shadowed by projecting brows. They have a heavier upper lid and a slight bulge over the lower lid. The pupils are crescent-shaped and the irises incised as three-quarters of a circle. The gaze of the right eye is directed upwards, but the left one is fitted tightly into the left corner, near the tear-duct. The gentleman, therefore, was obviously squint-eyed (3). The beard begins in short wavy strands over the cheeks and grows fuller and curlier towards the extremities, featuring drill-channels and crossridges.

As already mentioned above, the fragment of the left side was found in 1904 by Paul Gaudin and subsequently taken to France. M. and Mme. Albert Gaudin (son and daughter-in-law of Paul Gaudin) of Versailles graciously returned it in 1967 to this writer, who expressed interest in having it back and brought it then back to Aphrodisias. Needless to say, it was with great jubilation that the discovery (4) of the remainder of the head was greeted in mid-August 1984!

Despite some of its mutilations this portrait undoubtedly ranks high among the early Byzantine portraits of Asia Minor and Aphrodisias. The quality of its workmanship is indeed superior. It betrays great affinities with the head in the Musée du Cinquantenaire in Brussels (5), also found in 1904 by Gaudin in the Baths of Hadrian of Aphrodisias, as well as a handsome head from Sardis (6). The drillwork of the hair, the lines on the forehead and the strong plastic modelling of the flesh parts are quite

similar. There are also echoes of the younger and older magistrates in Istanbul (also discovered by Gaudin in the same area as the present head, near the Baths) in the treatment of the hair and beard (7).

The Brussels head was first dated by L'Orange to the middle of the fifth century, but he later changed his mind in favour of the earlier years of the century (8). The mid-fifth century, in our opinion, is the most suitable date for both of these Aphrodisias heads. The present one is perhaps a little earlier since it shows little, if any, elongated proportions particular to the "Eutropius" and its group from Ephesus, generally dated to the third quarter of the fifth century (9).

In any event, it is satisfying to have this Aphrodisian, probably a high official of the city, back on its home ground. Its complete restoration eighty years after the discovery of its first fragment is indeed a joyous experience!

FOOTNOTES

- (1) The remarkable volumes of J. Inan and E. Rosenbaum-Alföldi (*Roman and Early Byzantine Portrait Sculpture in Asia Minor*, London, 1966 and *Römische und frühbyzantinische Porträtplastik aus der Türkei, Neue Funde*, Mainz, 1979) have now become "classics" in the study of portrait sculpture in the Roman and early Byzantine period in the Eastern Mediterranean. Henceforth referred to as Inan/Alföldi-Rosenbaum I and II.
- (2) This writer published this fragment in Inan/Alföldi-Rosenbaum II, no. 203, 232, pl. 258, 5.
- (3) The only well-known ancient cross-eyed portrait that comes to mind is that of Menander, but its "squint" is not as pronounced perhaps as the one of the present head.
- (4) A number of other fourth or fifth century portrait heads were found in this same area (e.g., Inan/Alföldi-Rosenbaum II, no. 196, 225, pl. 147, 3,4; no. 199, 228-9, pl. 253, 1-3. The statues of Valentinian II and the older and younger magistrates were also discovered in this west colonnade of the Portico of Tiberius close to the Hadrianic Baths. The head now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (cf. Inan/Alföldi-Rosenbaum II, no. 207, 235 ff., pl. 263, 1-3) as well as at least two more missing heads, known only through the photographs of Gaudin (K. T. Erim, *AJA* 71, 1967, 233-243) may also have come from this same area.
- (5) F. Cumont, *Bull. des Musées*, 2e ser., 3, 1908, 25ff. For fuller bibliography, see Inan/Alföldi-Rosenbaum I, 233-4.
- (6) Inan/Alföldi-Rosenbaum, I., no. 220, 166-7, pl. 160-3-4 G.M. Hanfmann, *Roman Art*, London, 1964 p. 100, no. 90, fig. 90 on p. 83 dated it to ca. A.D. 280. Also, G.M. Hanfmann and N.H. Ramage, *Sculpture from Sardis. The Finds Through 1975* (Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, Reports, II) Cambridge, 1978, no. 92, 100, figs. 206-207.
- (7) See footnote 4.
- (8) H.P. L'Orange, *Studien zur Geschichte des Spätantiken Porträts*, Oslo, 1933, p.84; also *Acta Congressus Madvigiani, Hafniae*, 1954, III, 1947, 67.
- (9) Inan/Alföldi-Rosenbaum, I (no. 194, 151 ff., pl. 181, 3-4) includes a select bibliography of the so-called Eutropius.