

Roman Copies of Classical and Hellenistic Sculptural Types from  
Macedonia





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# **Roman Copies of Classical and Hellenistic Sculptural Types from Macedonia**

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Cover: Headless statue of Aphrodite Louvre-Naples type, Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, inv. no. 831  
(Despinis 1997: figure 175)

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# Introduction

This study aims to collect and examine Roman copies of classical and Hellenistic statuary types found in the area of the ancient Roman province of Macedonia.

More and more recent studies have remarked the importance of studying copies for understanding the artistic culture of the provinces of the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> The materials explored in these essays give a picture of the tastes and trends of the society of a given territory, also indirectly providing information on the religious, economic and political dynamics of which they are the reflection. This research, however, has never been conducted for Thessaloniki and Macedonia, despite the fact that this important province was the centre of an old and flourishing artistic tradition.

Thus, the purpose of my work is to give a starting point for future studies in this specific field in order to fill the gap in the scientific research of Roman copies. I focus on the material evidence (all-round marble and bronze sculptures, relief sculptures and terracottas) from various areas of the province trying to investigate the phenomenon of copies in all of its manifestations in private, public, sacred and funerary contexts.

## History of the study of Roman copies: short overview

The interest for Roman copies deriving from Greek originals became established throughout the late 17th century: Spanheim<sup>2</sup> was the first to raise the issue of reproductions of famous Greek statues on Roman coins. Then the recognition of the style of Greek masterpieces on Roman statuettes was considered in the *Thesaurus Brandenburgicus* (Berlin 1699-1701), and styles of Greek works of art, described by ancient writers, were individuated on gems by Baron von Stosch.<sup>3</sup> The observations of von Stosch “on statues on gems” date from 1724 onwards. Finally, Jonathan Richardson recognized the style of the Knidian Aphrodite in the

Belvedere Venus in the Vatican, thus pioneering the study of Greek originals through Roman copies.

This study became systematic thanks to Winckelmann<sup>4</sup> and Ennio Quirino Visconti.<sup>5</sup> During this period, the main object of study is not constituted by Roman copies *per se* but only as derivations which allow a certain degree of knowledge of the Greek originals.

Throughout most of the 19th century, this approach dominated the study of Roman copies. A shift toward the study of this matter as an independent branch is a long process which begins with Furtwängler, *Über Statuenkopien im Alterthum*, an article published in 1896. He was the first to outline the problem of differentiating the degrees of faithfulness of copies in their relation to a given original. Casts, variations and general inspirations from a model had to be individuated when studying the problem of copies. However, this scholar in his most famous work<sup>6</sup> still regarded Roman copies just as useful tools in order to discover Greek originals.

The 20th century saw the re-valuation of Roman art, beginning with the seminal works of the school of Vienna (Wickhoff, Riegl,<sup>7</sup> etc.). This new approach had a strong impact also on the study of Roman copies. Slowly the notion of studying Roman statues as evidence for the societies in which they were produced came to a head. This process can be followed from the book of Lippold<sup>8</sup> to that of Bieber.<sup>9</sup> However, in this address of research, the derivation of statues pertaining to the same types from Greek originals is still admitted in most cases.

From the 1970s, we find a growing scepticism about the notion that types known from Roman copies in most cases depend from the Greek originals mentioned by ancient writers. The pioneering study which opened this scholarly discussion was Zanker's *Klassizistische Statuen* in 1974, where this German scholar asserted that many sculptural types which were thought to derive from classical Greek originals should be rather regarded as Roman classicistic creations.

After the 1970s, we find a lot of studies devoted to make catalogues of Roman copies in their own architectural

<sup>1</sup> Selected bibliography (here are some of the most recent studies; other publications are cited in chapter three): Adornato *et al.* 2018; Anguissola 2014a: 117-134; Anguissola 2014b: 133-166; Anguissola 2015: 240-259; Barbanera 2011; Birk and Poulsen 2012; Brilliant 2005: 19-27; De Staebler and Hrychuk Kontokosta 2020; Fejfer 2008; Fittschen 2008: 325-336; Franzoni 2006; Gazda 2002; Gazda 2015: 374-387; Giuliani 2022: 49-68; Hölscher 2006: 237-259; Junker *et al.* 2008; Katakis 2002; Katakis 2019: 620-654; Koch 2006: 7-11; Kokkorou-Alevra 2001: 319-348; Kousser 2015: 374-394; Kristensen 2010: 265-288; Landwehr 2010: 35-46; Machado 2006: 157-192; Pensabene and Gasparini 2018: 101-108; Rebaudo 2016: 63-75; Smith 2007: 203-236; Stefanidou-Tiveriou *et al.* 2012; Stirling 2007: 304-321; Touchette 2000: 344-352.

<sup>2</sup> Spanheim 1671.

<sup>3</sup> Stosch 1724.

<sup>4</sup> Winckelmann 1765 and Winckelmann 1767.

<sup>5</sup> Visconti 1782-1807.

<sup>6</sup> Furtwängler 1893.

<sup>7</sup> See the recent study by Jaś Elsner on Riegl: Elsner 2021: 167-182.

<sup>8</sup> Lippold 1923.

<sup>9</sup> Bieber 1977.

contexts (statues in baths, in villas, etc.).<sup>10</sup> This series of studies was very useful because it provided the data in order to study Roman copies as products of their time and society.

Especially in the United States, the above stated scepticism toward the use of Roman copies as tools toward understanding Greek originals became radicalized throughout the 1980s. Ridgway's *Roman Copies* of 1984 reaches the conclusion that only in few cases Roman copies depend from Greek masterpieces and that in most cases they appear to be classicistic creations. This tendency is coupled with a general disbelief on the testimonies of ancient writers concerning Greek masters. Ridgway had many followers (Mattusch,<sup>11</sup> Bartman<sup>12</sup> etc.) who established this new trend as the dominant one in the American scholarship.

However, this trend is by no means dominant in the last decades. Carlo Gasparri, in his entry "*Copie*" in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica, Supplemento 2*, regards the study of Roman copies as a crucial tool in order to know the visual culture of Roman societies but does not dismiss its utility toward the study of Greek originals and regards the distinctions among casts, variations etc. still important in relation to Greek originals.

This moderate approach characterizes also the latest books on the issue.<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, a reaction against the excessive scepticism concerning the derivation of Roman copies from Greek originals is taking place also in the States, especially among the followers of Andrew Stewart.<sup>14</sup>

### Plan of the work and methodology

This written work consists of five main chapters. The first chapter focuses on the presentation of the examined material. The monuments are grouped into paragraphs according to the subjects they represent. In the chapter, gods, demi-gods, heroes and personifications follow one another in alphabetical order; however, some subjects are grouped according to kinship (Asklepios and Asklepiads) or sphere of influence (Dionysos and his thiasos).

The first necessary step to obtain a clear overview of the number of copies present in Macedonia has been to individually study each monument to identify the statuary type represented. In this phase of the research, history, diffusion and possible variants and subvariants of each identified statuary type have been investigated

in order to understand and identify the degree of fidelity of each Macedonian copy. In order to support the identification and stylistic analysis of the studied monument, examples and parallel cases from other western and eastern provinces of the Roman Empire have been included in the discussion.

The monuments are grouped by sculptural category; each category is marked with an abbreviation; within each class, the works are listed according to their place of origin, from west to east, and, within the same area, from north to south. To be precise, I have divided the field of investigation into four main areas which do not correspond to the historical division of the Roman province into merides. The areas are as follows: North-Western area (Paeonia, Derropios, Pelagonia, Lyncestis, Almopia), Central-South-Western area (Eordaia, Bottiea, Orestis, Elimeia, Pieria), Central area (Crestonia, Mygdonia, Chalkidike) and Eastern area (Sintica, Odomantica, Edonis). Within each of the four areas, the finds have been listed in "descending" order, namely from north to south. Wherever possible, materials from the same sub-region or city have been presented in chronological order.

The chronological limits of this research extend from the Roman conquest, which spanned from the Battle of Pydna in 168 BC, until the Severan age when the production of exact copies of ideal statues left room for new sculptural models, created by the workshops of sarcophagi and reliefs.

Some statuary types are known only from variants. These have been analyzed in chapter two.

The third chapter focuses on the archaeological contexts in which the copies were found. Due to the scarce and confusing excavation data relating to the exact find spots of most of the copies listed in the catalogue, many of these monuments have not been included in the chapter.

The investigation of the function and cultural significance of the statuary types exhibited in the public and private spaces of the various areas of the Roman province of Macedonia is the core of this discussion. All this evidence is analysed as part of the cultural and religious identity of the population that produced them. These artistic productions express at the same time the feeling of belonging to an old and well-established cultural tradition that may be adapted according to local needs and external influences. Therefore, the analysis of the context of copies of Greek artworks in Macedonia enables us to move beyond a limiting focus on the artifacts as objects of art; it provides new insights into broader issues of social and cultural interaction between local populations and the broader Greco-Roman cultural tradition.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Manderscheid 1981 and Neudecker 1988.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Mattusch 1996b; Mattusch 1999: 75-82.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Bartman 1988: 211-225; Bartman 1991: 71-88; Bartman 1992; Bartman 2002: 249-271.

<sup>13</sup> Anguissola 2012; Settis et al. 2015.

<sup>14</sup> See especially Schultz and Seaman 2017.

The fourth chapter takes into consideration the production of the copies in some of the major centres of the province where the greater amount of data available allows us to hypothesize the presence of local workshops that arose in the vicinity of the marble quarries. In this chapter, the question of the various sorts of marble used for the sculptures and of the trade relations and the transport routes between Roman Macedonia to other provinces of the Roman Empire is discussed.

The fifth concluding chapter contains my analytical remarks. The final discussion first presents the topic in relation to the four main geographical areas and then in general focusing on the differences and peculiarities of each area.

Given the complexity and vastness of the subject covered, a series of explanatory tables have been inserted at the end of the volume with the aim of giving a clear and immediate overview of the number of copies, the variety of identified statuary types, their distribution throughout the province, in general, and in specific contexts, in particular, and their production over the centuries of Roman domination of Macedonia.

There are seven tables. Table 1 includes all the monuments examined. They are listed in alphabetical order by subject. In cases where a subject has been depicted in several statuary types, the latter were listed according to the number of copies found, in order to highlight the popularity of a particular model. The copies of the same original are, in turn, listed in chronological order so that the changes in popular preferences over the centuries can be noted. Monuments marked with an asterisk in the column of subjects/category of monument are listed two or more times in the table as they depict two or more subjects/statuary types.

Table 2 lists the monuments of which we know the exact place of discovery. The places of discovery are divided into four categories of contexts listed in the following order: private space, public space, sacred space and funerary space. The monuments found in private, sacred and funerary contexts are listed according to their city of provenance, taking into account the subdivision of the field of investigation into four geographical areas. On the other hand, the finds from public contexts are ordered in two different ways; given the variety of types of public buildings (Baths, Agorà/Forum, Gymnasium, Theatre/Odeion), I thought it necessary to list the monuments first by city of provenance and then by place.

Table 3 is also dedicated to the archaeological contexts from which the findings presented in Table 2 come.

However, this table lists the findings by subject within the four types of contexts.

Table 4 is a further list of findspots. This differs from the previous two as it also includes monuments that have been found in places whose identification is not yet certain. For this reason, some of the objects on this list cannot be linked to a precise field of activity. The monuments are listed, as in Table 1, by subject/statuary type.

Table 5 shows the distribution of the subjects and statuary types in the various micro-regions that constitute the four areas of the province of Macedonia. The arrangement of the micro-regions in the list follows the criterion described above. Within this subdivision, the subjects are listed in alphabetical order and the copies of the same subject are listed based on the dating of their original. In this regard, the letters C and H in the column of statuary types are for Classical and Hellenistic, while C/H indicates an uncertain dating. Where there are more copies of the same original, they are shown in chronological order.

Given the amount of data in table 5, I thought it useful to make another summary table (Table 6) in order to illustrate in a more schematic way the diffusion of statuary types in the four main areas. In the column titles, the four areas are indicated by the names of the regions (the letters in brackets are for: N-W = North-West; C-S-W = Central-South-west; C = central; E = east). The monuments are listed in order of popularity of the subject represented. The number next to the name indicates the total number of copies of each subject. Within the various geographical areas, the finds are listed in chronological order. The continuous line that separates the various sections indicates the transition from one century to the next. The lack of the continuous line, on the other hand, indicates that a monument is dated at the turn of the century. The number in brackets next to the statuary type indicates the number of copies found.

Finally, in Table 7, all the statuary types identified in Roman Macedonia during the research are presented. The list follows a chronological order of the originals. Uncertain or hypothetical dating are written in brackets in the first column. Copies of each statuary type are listed in chronological order. Copies of the same statuary type found in the same region are listed according to the monument category (first, the relief images and, then, the all-round ones).