

Limestone statue of a female worshipper playing a lyre



Hellenistic Cypriot, about 300-280 BC
From Larnaca, Cyprus

Features based on those of Ptolemaic rulers

The female worshipper wears a chiton girded just below her breast, and a himation draped around her lower body and up over her head. This is the typical female dress of the Ptolemaic period in Cyprus. Her hair is combed into segments and is evidently put up in a bun at the back in the classical 'melon' coiffure. Her features resemble those of Berenice I (about 340 BC to before 275 BC), the wife of Ptolemy II, king (of Greek origin) of Egypt and Cyprus (reigned 284-246 BC).

During the Hellenistic period, portraits became more fashionable and a number of worshippers seem to have their facial features based on those of their Ptolemaic rulers. The Ptolemies introduced the dynastic cult (worship of the ruling Ptolemy and his predecessors) as well as new cults of Egyptian deities like Serapis and Isis, but they scarcely interfered with the Cypriots' religious practices. Dedications continued in many of the open sanctuaries.

V. Tatton-Brown, *Ancient Cyprus*, 2nd ed. (London, The British Museum Press, 1997)