



The Mobility of Greek Culture



Cyrene

British Museum Collection
(Museum Number 2012,5033.4)

Greeks established settlements (*apoikia*) all around the Mediterranean, especially between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE. They are clustered along the coasts of northern Greece and Türkiye, all around the Black Sea, in southern Italy and the Adriatic, Spain and Cyrene (modern Libya). Cyrene, the most important Hellenic colony in Africa, was founded in BCE 631, by a group of colonists from Thera (Santorini), an island in the Aegean Sea.

The ancient Greeks had an indelible influence on Roman culture and Western civilization. The Romans were keen to adopt Greek styles of art, literature, and architecture, as well as philosophy, religion, and military tactics. Moreover, the Romans identified their own gods with those of the ancient Greeks.

This enormous sculpture was discovered in the mid-nineteenth century at the Temple of Apollo at Cyrene in Libya. It was excavated by the villagers of Shahat directed by the British explorers and amateur archaeologists Captain Robert Murdoch Smith and Commander Edwin A. Porcher in 1861. The statue with the height of 2.28 metres was found broken into 123 pieces, lying near the large plinth where it originally stood. The fragments were later reassembled in the British Museum to create a relatively intact statue with only the right arm and left hand missing.

Apollo, in ancient Greek mythology, is one of the most important and influential gods. He is the son of Zeus and Leto and the twin brother of Artemis. Apollo is referred to as the god of music, poetry, art, prophecy, archery, medicine, and the sun. Apollo is also concerned with the education of children.

Musical contests were organised to honour Apollo during religious festivals at his shrines, including Cyrene. Contestants had to sing the hymn to Apollo accompanied by a lyre or a kithara which they had to play themselves. They were the rock stars of their time.

A city there which is sacred to this god, and the majority of its inhabitants are players on the cithara; and these continually play on this instrument in the temple and sing hymns of praise to the god, glorifying his deeds.

(Diodorus Siculus, 1st century BCE Greek historian)



We live round a sea like frogs round a pond (Plato, Phaedo, 4th century BCE Greek writer/philosopher)

Plato meant that Greeks developed and maintained their common culture all around the Mediterranean Sea

Apollo: The God of Almost Everything

Apollo holds a kithara, a complex stringed musical instrument. The relaxed pose, his weight supported on one leg, captures the moment when the musical competition is over. He is very proud of himself after his great performance.

Apollo was admired and emulated by mortal musicians, but he protected human many aspects of human life. The quiver of arrows hanging by his side represents his hunting skills, including the defeat of the great snake showing wrapped around the base of the kithara.

Apollo is partially clothed with his himation and wearing a wreath and sandals. He stands in a relaxed pose with the weight supported on one leg, his head turned down to one side, and like capturing the moment when the musical competition is over, he is very proud of himself after his great performance. His physical details and even muscles are shown very realistically.

Marble, Temple of Apollo, Cyrene (Shahhat), Libya.

H: 2.28 m

Roman copy of AD of a Greek original of about 200-150 BC.

Excavated by the villagers of Shahat directed by the British explorers and amateur archaeologists Captain Robert Murdoch Smith and Commander Edwin A. Porcher in 1861.

British Museum GR 1861,0725.1



الاله أبولون
• القرن الثاني قبل الميلاد •
LE DIEU APOLLON

The Apollo Cithared of Bulla Regia

Marble, Bulla Regia, Tunisia

2nd century CE.

Bardo National Museum, Tunisia.



 **Aphrodite**
Marble, 1st century AD
National Museum, Athens
Greece

Statue of Apollo Playing Kithara

Marble, Miletus (Aydın), Türkiye

2nd century CE.

Istanbul Archeological Museums

