

An Anthropomorphic Candelabrum from Amasra Museum

Ersin ÇELİKBAŞ* – Kasım OYARÇIN**

Although it is unknown when and where candelabrum first appeared, they are thought to have entered the Roman world through close relations with the Greeks in the 3rd century BC¹. In fact, the Corinthian candelabrum was widely used by the Romans². The production of candelabrum made of marble, which was common during the Roman Republic period, lasted approximately three hundred years³.

It is known that in the ancient period, long and legged artifacts having the same ends were used as candelabrum, that is, oil lamp-bearer. There are two types of candelabrum, in which the lamp is placed or hung on the arms, standing and hanging on the wall⁴. It can be said that although most of the artifact examined is deficient, it reflects the standing candelabrum type. There are examples where the core section at the top of the artifact is the seat of the sockets on the oil lamp bases.

The anthropomorphic candelabrum, preserved in the Amasra Museum and whose 24 cm high piece has survived, consists of two parts, the figure and the acanthus bowl rising above the head of the figure⁵ (Fig. 1-2). It is possible to see the leaves that make up the acanthus bowl, similar in form, between the legs of a bronze oil lamp-bearer⁶. Acanthus sprout, three broken and missing square-section scroll patterns (ranke), rise from inside the acanthus bowl, not yet fully mature (Fig. 3). A similar acanthus sprout can be found in an oil lamp-bearer in the British Museum⁷. The statue of Ephebe found in Pompeii is one of the good examples of the use of scroll patterns

* Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ersin Çelikbaş, University of Karabük, Faculty of Letters, Dept. Of Archaeology (ersin.celikbas@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7630-4615>).

** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kasım Oyarçin, 19 Mayıs University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dept. Of Archaeology (kasimoyarcin@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5994-8638>).

¹ Pettinau 1990, 82.

² Pettinau 1990, 82.

³ Cain 1985, 3-5.

⁴ Çokay 2000, 27.

⁵ This bronze artifact was acquired by the Amasra Museum through purchasing. There is no information on where the artifact recorded in the museum inventory with the inventory number 1038-1.107-A-2007 originated or from whom it was purchased. With the article titled "Roman and Byzantine Metal Finds in the Museum of Amasra (Ancient Amastris) in Paphlagonia (Northwestern Turkey)" by Laflı 2021, 42 bronze artifacts and other metal finds registered in the Amasra Museum inventory were introduced (Laflı 2021, Cat. No. 5). There is also brief catalogue information of the artifact that constitutes our study in this article. However, the artifact was briefly described in the publication, which presents a photograph from a single angle that has not been extensively studied. In addition, the function of the artifact was incorrectly expressed as a handle in the aforementioned publication (Laflı 2021, 194).

⁶ Bailey 1996, Q3913.

⁷ Bailey 1996, Q3906.

as oil lamp holders. Two scroll patterns coming out of a root in the hand of the statue formed a volute symmetrically⁸. Some scholars named slave figure or statues used lamp-bearer as lych-nophoroi. A candelabrum in the Borbonico Museum also indicates that the scroll, square-section branches from the acanthus bowl were also used as oil lamp holders. In a similar example, four scroll branches emerge from the main holder body of the candelabrum and the scroll branches function as oil lamp-bearer⁹. Another similar example was unearthed at Pompeii¹⁰. There is a seating bowl at the point where the acanthus sprout ends, and a seating socket on top of it. This socket enters the sockets on the bases of bronze oil lamps and the lamp is fixed in place in this way. The seating socket at the upper end of the artifact is given in the form of a tulip bud or a pinecone (Fig. 4). Similar examples of the mentioned seating socket can be found in the British Museum¹¹. At the end of the socket, there is the bowl part where the oil lamp sits. It is possible to see a similar bowl part in the British Museum¹².

Candelabrum usually consist of a holder that rises on a three or four-legged pedestal and sits on a lamp¹³. The seating sockets of the candelabrum, on which the lamps are placed, turn into a nail form in the Late Roman period and end with pointed ends¹⁴. The candelabrum unearthed in the Perge excavations also have lamp sockets and are dated to the 5th-6th century AD¹⁵. A bronze lamp dated to 6th century has a candelabrum socket hole in Burdur Museum¹⁶. It is also known that human-shaped oil lamp holders were also frequently used in ancient times. As an example, we can give the use of bronze-clad woman¹⁷, Silenos¹⁸, a sitting woman¹⁹, African young man²⁰, Satyr figurines in Pompeii²¹ as oil lamp holders in the British Museum. There are also examples in Etruscans where human figures were used as oil lamp holders. The Etruscan sample in the Spencer-Churchill Collection is dated to the 4th century BC²². As previously stated, bronze is a recyclable alloy, so such artifacts are rarely encountered in excavations. In the light of these data, it is understood that the child figure also has a pedestal and was used as an oil lamp holder part.

When we look at the production technique of the artifact we examined, the wall of the figure was produced with a thickness of 4 mm in order to increase its resistance due to the holder feature of

⁸ Biefeldt 2018, pl. 4-5.

⁹ Pettinau 1990, fig. 39-40.

¹⁰ Spinazzola 1827, fig. 293.

¹¹ Bailey 1996, Q3905.

¹² Bailey 1996, Q3907.

¹³ Stefanelli 1990, fig. 20.

¹⁴ Bailey 1996, Q3927, Q3928.

¹⁵ Demirer 2016, Cat. No. 4-6.

¹⁶ Metin – Polat-Becks 2015, 286.

¹⁷ Bailey 1996, Q3866.

¹⁸ Bailey 1996, Q3905.

¹⁹ Walters 1899, Cat. No. 666.

²⁰ Bailey 1996, Q3908.

²¹ Pettinau 1990, 82, fig. 37.

²² Haynes 1968, 118.

the candelabrum. The child figure part of the artifact is hollow, and the oil lamp-holding plant body is massive. The fact that the figure part is empty indicates that it was produced through the casting technique. The most commonly used method in the production of this type of artifact is the *cire perdue* with core technique²³. If we talk briefly about this production technique, the innermost core is usually made of terracotta, wax is coated on the outside of the core and clay is coated on the outside of the wax. The artifact to be produced is processed into wax. The outermost wet clay is coated on the wax so that the wax artifact is positively exposed to the clay. The mold is heated upside down in the oven and the wax inside is melted and poured. Molten bronze is poured into the space left over from the wax. After the bronze cools, the mold is broken and first of all, the innermost terracotta core is broken out of the bronze artifact. Thus, it is ensured that the inside of the artifact is empty. This process both saves bronze material and makes the artifact lighter. Another data we have about the production and decoration technique is that the pupil is made of inlay (Fig. 5). It is known that the eyes were filled with silver, bone or colored pastes in bronze portraits and sculptures in the Roman period²⁴. In the artefact subject to our study, it is not known how the pupil was filled, but it must have been filled with semi-precious stone, glass or colored paste.

The height of the child figure (it is not a whole) part of the anthropomorphic candelabrum is 8.3 cm (Fig. 6). Whether this figure is a bust or statue, it is not clear because its big part especially from cheek to neck is missing. Child figures as lamp-bearer were created in Hellenistic sculpture and one of the plastic repertoires which many copies were made of it in Roman Empire. Probably child figure of candelabrum from Amasra Museum is one of them. So, this figure has no physiological features to be a portrait. So, it is called figure in this article. The diagonal part of the figure from its right to the mouth, the part from the upper lip to the right part of its chin and the right back of its neck are missing (Fig. 7). From the very top of its head, a vegetative part that acts as an oil lamp holder rises. Its right cheek is partially intact, but the figure's right ear and right cheek are bruised inward. In addition, due to the lack of a large amount of the neck end of the figure, it cannot be determined exactly whether it stands on a pedestal. Although the cause of the destruction is unknown, four deep slits side by side on its right cheek and side-by-side deep slits on the back of the right ear of the headband indicate that a piece of the artifact was deliberately detached with a hard tool (Fig. 8). This situation recalls the thought that the artifact may have been destroyed for recycling, since bronze is a recyclable alloy.

Based on the figure's facial features and limbs, it is clear that it belongs to a boy. His curly hair contrasted nicely with the simple features of his face: small lips, strong nasal bridge, and subtle dimples. A 3 mm wide headband is seen at the top of the figure. The headband is tied at the back of the head, starting just above the two rows of curls in the middle of the forehead, forming an arc towards the ears (Fig. 9). Curls of hair were dropped on the hair band at the level of the temples, avoiding symmetry and trying to give a natural look. At the same point, the deep drill channels in the places where the curls fall, as a characteristic of the period, are intended to show that the headband is a textile product. While the hairband was passed near the left temple part of the artifact, the second curl towards the top of the head was curled over the band, and a part of the curl of the third curl towards the back, in the front part of the head under the band, was slightly

²³ Tekin 2015, 88-90.

²⁴ Oliver 1967, 264.

brought over the band (Fig. 10). The fact that the band is given more deeply than the hair is a practice to emphasize the band by going beyond realism. The headband is tied at the back of the head, close to the nape, with the help of an object similar to a belt buckle (Fig. 11). While the figure's hair is given up only on the lower part of the band at the front, it is given fluffy both above and below the band at the back. The hair is parted in the middle on the open forehead, close to the left part. Take it in two nested clusters and the ends of the curls on the forehead, which create double waves at the ends, are slightly curled inwards. One of the best examples of the separation of more than one small and large curls from the middle near the left part of the forehead, Antoninus Pius²⁵ with inventory number 595 in the Vatican, which is evident in both men and women, is seen in the Plautilla portrait²⁶, similar to our artifact, with clamps, or in these portrait-centered works. Wood states that this hair clip was used quite frequently in portraits of the early Roman period²⁷. Except for the central hair curls, the four curls starting from the temples and coming to the front of the ears are embroidered similarly on both sides of the artifact. The ends of these hair curls closest to the center are curled inwards, the curls just below are curled towards the face, and the following curls, which are above the ears and towards the front, are again curled towards the back. Although similar arrangements in the works of Hadrian's period present differences in the same work, we frequently encounter the quadruple hair curl arrangement²⁸. Similar examples of the curls formed on the forehead and near the temples, although the direction of the curls is reversed, reminds of the fineness of the drill mark on the hair, which can be considered early for Roman male portraits, created in the hair curls of the portraits of Trajan²⁹. The hair is given weak and straight on the upper part of the head. The back of the head is enriched with thick hair, in complete contrast to this situation. At the back of the head, a different arrangement has been made with the ends that are divided into four branches in the form of a wind rose and give a spiral appearance (Fig. 11). One of the early examples with wind vane-shaped hair on the back of the head is a bronze portrait of a boy in the Metropolitan Museum³⁰. This arrangement, which can be seen in some child statues and portraits³¹ from the early Severan dynasty, is very dominant in the artifact.

The figure has a broad and flat forehead. Although the eyebrows of the artifact are very thinly highlighted, the glabella part is not evident. In addition, eyebrows are thinner and more elegant than the fluffy hair. The lashes are not processed. The slightly flattened nose is given as short and gentle. The fact that the artifact is at an early age and the nasolabial sulcus part is not prominent may also be effective in the gentle and small appearance of the nose. The zygomatic bone is prominent on the left side of the face; however, since the right part of the face has been destroyed, nothing can be said about this part clearly. Although most of the mouth part of the artifact is missing, the prominence of the philtrum part and the eros arc on the upper lip draws attention. The eyelids of the artifact are prominent, the sclera and iris part are embroidered, and the pupil

²⁵ Wegner 1939, pl. 4.

²⁶ Özgan 2015, fig. 88b.

²⁷ Wood 1999, pl. 118-119.

²⁸ Fitsschen – Zanker 2014, pl. 28/21.

²⁹ Özgan 2013, fig. 72a-b.

³⁰ Oliver 1967, fig. 12.

³¹ Fitsschen – Zanker 2014, pl. 39/28.

is inlaid. The *caruncula lacrimalis* part, which is a late feature in terms of style, is highlighted with a drill (Fig. 5). In the ear part of the work, the helix part and the antihelix part are processed carelessly and contrary to the anatomy. Tragus part is almost not clear. Lobula part is also processed carelessly. The holes in the ears indicate an earring.

Considering the general features of the artifact, the fluffy and wavy hair, the processing of the iris part of the eye under the upper eyelid, the clarification of the *caruncula lacrimalis* part with a drill, and the deep hair curl channels created with a drill stand out as the features that started in the middle of the 2nd century AD. A beautiful example with deep hair curl channels is seen in a portrait of Hadrian in the Vatican³². Both the prominent drill mark on the *caruncula lacrimalis* of the eye and the splitting of the hair on the forehead can enable us to date the artifact to the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries AD.

When the figure is examined from an iconographic point of view, it is seen that the figure in the candelabrum belongs to a young boy who does not have a very happy expression on his face. The fact that the eyes are wide open and the lips are closed indicates that the child is not very cheerful in his inner world. Hekler states that the children in the Roman plastics are not blooming, fat-cheeked, healthy, snub-nosed, cheerful children, but rather oppressive and gloomy³³. In ancient Rome, figures of children are frequently encountered in funeral representations or cult areas³⁴. So why is a child figure used in a candelabrum? In order to find the answer to this question, it is necessary to look at where the Romans used luxury objects. In the ancient Roman world, banquets and funerals were considered the most important events of life. Banquets were also a sign of social status as a sign of wealth. Accordingly, candlesticks, oil lamps, and candelabrams were key to illuminating the nighttime banquets³⁵. The use of lighting tools working with olive oil is not only related to the cost of fuel, but also requires a separate effort and time as it requires constant maintenance by the slaves. In other words, slaves responsible for lighting tools were also working at Roman banquets. The figure of the little boy on an anthropomorphic candelabrum must have been made to evoke the slaves responsible for lighting fixtures at Roman banquets. Slaves, the living symbols of pomp and status in Rome, were also processed in candelabrams and became the symbolism of luxury. It can be said that the hairband on the head of the child was used as a status indicator. Because in many of the figures carved in anthropomorphic candelabrams in Rome, a similar hairband is seen. Also, lamp-bearer were used widely Hellenistic and Roman world and it is named as *lychnophori*³⁶. A similar band is found in the hair of the figure in an anthropomorphic candelabrum unearthed in Pompeii³⁷. All these data indicate that the artifact we are examining is a slave symbolism. Since candelabrum is the most important symbol of luxury and pomp in Rome, the artifact subject to our study should have been produced as a work of art of such a high level.

³² Hekler 1912, 248b.

³³ Hekler 1912, 33.

³⁴ Coonin 1995, 61.

³⁵ Bielfeldt 2018, 425.

³⁶ Bielfeldt 2018, 432.

³⁷ Bielfeldt 2018, fig. 8.

Bibliography

- Bailey 1996 D. Bailey, *A Catalogue of the Lamps in the British Museum: IV Lamps of Metal and Stone, and Lampstands*, London 1996.
- Bielfeldt 2018 R. Bielfeldt, *Candelabrus and Trimalchio: Embodied Histories of Roman Lampstands and their Slaves*, *Art History* 41/3, 2018, 420-443.
- Cain 1985 H. U. Cain, *Römische Marmorkandelaber [Beiträge zur Erschließung hellenistischer und kaiserzeitlicher Skulptur und Architektur 7]*, Mainz 1985.
- Coonin 1995 A. V. Coonin, *Portrait Busts of Children in Quattrocento Florence*, *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 30, 1995, 61-71.
- Çokay 2000 S. Çokay, *Antikçağda Aydınlatma Araçları*, İstanbul 2000.
- Demirer 2016 Ü. Demirer, *2013 Yılı Perge Kazılarında Bir Metal Buluntu Grubu, Cedrus IV*, 2016, 243-259.
- Fittschen – Zanker 2014 K. Fittschen – P. Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom, Band IV*, Berlin 2014.
- Haynes 1968 S. Haynes, *Etruscan Bronzes from the Spencer-Churchill Collection*, *The British Museum Quarterly* vol. 32, no. 3/4, 1968, 112-122.
- Hekler 1912 D. Hekler, *Greek & Roman Portraits*, New York 1912.
- Lafli 2021 E. Lafli, *Roman and Byzantine Metal Finds in the Museum of Amasra (Ancient Amastris) in Paphlagonia (Northwestern Turkey)*, in: E. Lafli (ed), *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Bronzes from Anatolia and Neighbouring Regions*, Oxford 2021.
- Metin – Polat-Becks 2015 H. Metin – A. Polat-Becks, *Burdur Müzesi Metal Kandilleri, OLBA XXII*, 2015, 273-320.
- Oliver 1967 A. Oliver, *Portrait of a Young Boy*, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* vol. 25, no. 7, 1967, 264-272.
- Özgan 2013 R. Özgan, *Roma Portre Sanatı II*, İstanbul 2013.
- Özgan 2015 R. Özgan, *Roma Portre Sanatı III*, İstanbul 2015.
- Pettinau 1990 B. Pettinau, *L'Illuminazione Della Domus*, in: L. P. B. Stefanelli – M. Cima (eds.), *Il Bronzo Dei Romani: Arredo E Suppellettile*, Roma 1990, 81-102.
- Spinazzola 1827 V. Spinazzola, *Le Arti Decorative in Pompei e Nel Museo Nazionale Di Napoli*, Milano 1827.
- Stefanelli 1990 L. P. B. Stefanelli, *Il Bronzo*, in: L. P. B. Stefanelli – M. Cima (eds.), *Il Bronzo Dei Romani: Arredo E Suppellettile*, Roma 1990, 5-38.
- Tekin 2015 H. Tekin, *Eski Anadolu Madenciligi: Arkeolojik Verilerin Işığında Başlangıcından Demir Çağı'na Kadar*, Ankara 2015.
- Walters 1899 H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Bronzes Greek, Roman and Etruscan in the British Museum*, London 1899.

- Wegner 1939 M. Wegner, Die Herrscherbildnisse in antoninischer Zeit, Berlin 1939.
- Wood 1999 S. Wood, Imperial Woman: A Study in Public Images 40 B.C.-A.D. 68, Leiden 1999.

Amasra Müzesi'nden Antropomorfik Bir Candelabrum

Özet

Çalışmanın konusunu Amasra Müzesi'ne satın alma yoluyla kazandırılmış antropomorfik bronz bir candelabrum oluşturmaktadır. Roma Dönemi'nde kandil taşımaya yarayan çok kollu büyük bir şamdan olan candelabrum, kandilin içine yerleştirildiği bir tabak ve onu zeminden yükselten bir ayakta oluşmaktadır. Amasra Müzesi'nde korunan antropomorfik candelabrumun üzerinde küçük bir çocuk figürü yer almaktadır. Dört yönden de özenle işlenmiş ve vurgulanmış bu çocuk figürü Roma plastik sanatının güzel örneklerinden birini içermesi açısından önemli bir yere sahiptir. Çalışma kapsamında öncelikli olarak figürlü candelabrumun kullanım amacı, mevcut durumu ve genel özellikleri üzerine durulmuş ardından Roma plastik stili ve tipolojisi ile üretim tekniği bakımından ayrıntılı bir şekilde değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışma sonucunda, candelabrumun benzer örneklerle karşılaştırılması yapılmış, figürün özelliği ve üretim tekniği de göz önüne alınarak İS 2. yüzyılın sonları ve İS 3. yüzyılın başlarında üretilmiş olduğuna ve candelabrumun üzerine neden küçük bir çocuk figürünün yapılmasının tercih edilmiş olabileceği konusuna değinilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Amasra Müzesi, candelabrum, antropomorfik, bronz eser, kandil taşıyıcısı.

An Anthropomorphic Candelabrum from Amasra Museum

Abstract

The subject of the study is an anthropomorphic bronze candelabrum that was acquired by the Amasra Museum through purchasing. The candelabrum, a large multi-armed candelabra used to carry oil lamps during the Roman period, is made up of a plate in which the lamp is placed and a leg that raises it off the ground. There is a figure of a small child on the anthropomorphic candelabrum preserved in the Amasra Museum. This elaborated and highlighted in four directions child figure holds an important place in that it contains one of the most beautiful examples of Roman plastic art. The purpose of use, current situation, and general features of the candelabrum were emphasized within the scope of the study, and it was then evaluated in detail in terms of Roman plastic style and typology, as well as production technique. As a result of the study, the comparison of the candelabrum with similar examples was made, considering the figure feature and production technique, it was stated that it was produced at the end of the 2nd century AD and the beginning of the 3rd century AD, and why a figure of a small child might be preferred on the candelabrum.

Keywords: Amasra Museum, candelabrum, anthropomorphic, bronze artifact, oil lamp holder.



Fig. 1

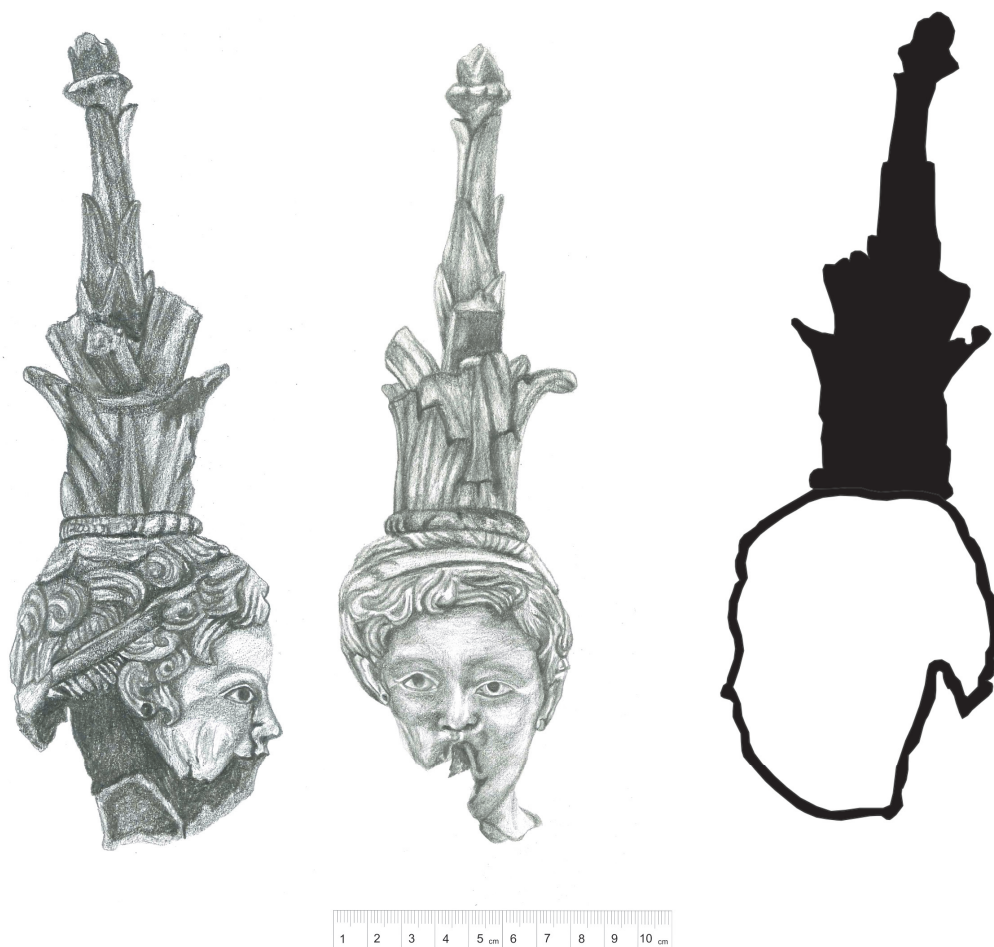


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 9



Fig. 8



Fig. 10



Fig. 11