



## Assessments on an Unpublished Tarsus Coin and the Marsyas Statue of Tarsus Origin

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### ABSTRACT

The tragic story of Marsyas has inspired many artifacts over many periods. This story is depicted in vase paintings, statues, sculpture groups, reliefs, sarcophagi, gems and coins. The inspiration for these descriptions is the Athena and Marsyas sculpture group of Myron, one of the Classical Period artists. After this group of sculptures, the artists dealt with and depicted the most tragic part of the Marsyas story, the music competition with the God Apollo and the punishment of Marsyas. Within the scope of the study, first of all, the story of Marsyas and its reflection on artifacts are discussed. Then, the main subject of the study, a coin belonging to Maximinus Thrax I, which was recovered from Tarsus, is unpublished scientifically and dated back to the 3rd century AD, depicting the musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas, is examined in detail. Later, a comparative evaluation is made of the coin and the Marsyas statue, which has the same subject, recovered from Tarsus and is currently exhibited in the İstanbul Archaeological Museums, and a new composition proposal is made for the statue.

**Keywords:** Cilicia, Tarsus, Apollo, Roman Coin, Marsyas Statue



## Introduction

Over the centuries, Marsyas and his tragic story have inspired countless artifacts. Thus, the story of Marsyas is frequently depicted in vase paintings, reliefs, sarcophagi, gems, coins and paintings, primarily in sculpture groups and single sculptures. Within the scope of this study, focusing on the story of Marsyas, a scientifically unpublished coin from Tarsus and a statue originating from Tarsus are examined.

The coin that is the subject of the study was minted in the city of Tarsus during the reign of Maximinus Thrax I (235-238 AD). The coin was first offered for sale on an auction site<sup>1</sup> in 2005. Later, it was included in many web pages related to numismatics and in the catalog of a doctoral thesis completed in 2014 (Erhan, 2014), only in catalog form with incomplete and incorrect information. Therefore, the coin, which has a bust portrait of the emperor on the obverse and a depiction of the musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas on the reverse of the coin, has not yet been scientifically published.

Another artifact examined in the study, the Marsyas statue, was found in the city of Tarsus and is currently exhibited in the Collection of Stone Artifacts<sup>2</sup> in Istanbul Archaeological Museums<sup>3</sup> (Collignon, 1897; Mendel 1914). Many publications have been made about this statue from the late 19th century to the present day. Accordingly, it is thought that the statue exhibited alone may be part of a group of statues originating from the Hellenistic Period.

Considering the fact the depictions on ancient coins have been influenced or copied by statues and statue groups since the Hellenistic Period, in the study a section on the re-evaluation of the Marsyas statue in IAM in the terms of composition is also added in addition to the scientific publication of the coin for the first time.

## The Story of Marsyas and Its Reflection in Artifacts

Although it varies according to sources, Marsyas of Phrygia is considered to be the son of Hyganis and the flute player Olympos (sometimes River God Oiagros) (Grimal, 1997). While he is an ordinary satyr or silenos, his story becomes widely known as a result of his competition with the God Apollo. In the texts, Herodotus (1991), Diodorus of Sicily (1814), Strabo (1928), Pausanias (1918) and Ovid (1987) tell us the story of Marsyas, one of the most striking examples of arrogance (hybris) and punishment as a result of competing with

1 CNG 69, Lot: 1163, June 2005. (Online, 23.07.2023: [https://www.cngcoins.com/Coins\\_archive.aspx?CONTAINER\\_ID=176&ITEM\\_IS\\_SOLD=1](https://www.cngcoins.com/Coins_archive.aspx?CONTAINER_ID=176&ITEM_IS_SOLD=1))

2 Istanbul Archaeology Museums, Stone Artifacts Collection, In. Nu. 400. The work permit of the Marsyas statue was received from IAM in 2016, but the publication process was prolonged.

3 In the following sections, the institution will be referred to with the abbreviation IAM.

the gods. The starting point of the story is the invention of the aulos (double flute).<sup>4</sup> The story continues with Athena, angry at Hera and Aphrodite, cursing the flute and throwing it into a river in the Phyrria.<sup>5</sup> The development and main point of the story is the events that occur after Marsyas finds the aulos in the waters of the river and challenges the God Apollo. There is no difference in tradition or the version here. A similar story is told in every source.<sup>6</sup> The difference is only in the identities of the referees in the competition held.<sup>7</sup> But the main story and tragic outcome do not change.<sup>8</sup>

This unfortunate and sad story has been told for centuries. In this way, what will happen as a result of competing with the gods and being arrogant is engraved in memory. This subject is so loved that the story of Marsyas is constantly depicted in many artifacts from ancient times to the present day.

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- 4 According to some sources, Marsyas invents the aulos. Strabo (1928) considers Silenos, Marsyas and Olympos as the inventors of the flute. However, in other sources Goddess Athena is mentioned as the inventor of aulos. Athena invents the aulos from deer bone during a feast before the gods (Grimal, 1997; Ausoni, 2005).
  - 5 Although the discovery of aulos is told in two different versions or traditions, the transition point that allows us to step from the beginning of the story to its development is the same. In both versions, while Goddess Athena is very happy to play the aulos, producing divine melodies, Goddess Hera and Aphrodite see her; they make fun of Athena by looking at her face as her cheeks swell when she blows the aulos. Athena, resentful and upset by this situation, sits on the bank of a river in the Phrygia; while playing the aulos, she also looks at the shape of her face. She finds her face while playing the musical instrument really ugly and agrees with Goddess Hera and Aphrodite. In her anger, Athena throws the aulos into the waters of the river, and while doing this, she curses anyone who finds and plays this musical instrument, saying that it will bring bad luck and bad luck to him (Keer, 2004; Ausoni, 2005).
  - 6 To continue the story; Marsyas begins to play the aulos he finds with pleasure, playing it so much that he becomes a master of this musical instrument. At this point, it is not known whether it is due to the curse of the Goddess Athena or whether he says that he masters something, that he is now the best, and that he falls into arrogance (hybris) like everyone else. Marsyas claims that he can compete with God Apollo's lyra. Arrogance (hybris), a trait that the gods do not like, can not go unpunished. Here too, God Apollo comes into play. Responding to Marsyas' challenge, Apollo demands that a music contest be held in which the winner offers the loser to do whatever he wants. According to ancient sources, the competition is held on Mountain of Tmolos (Bozdağ) in Lydia (Keer, 2004; Cömert, 2010).
  - 7 According to some, Phrygian King Midas and nymphs are the referees; according to some, Phrygian King Midas and the mouses act as referees.
  - 8 In the competition, God Apollo plays his lyra and Marsyas plays his aulos. Then God Apollo suggests playing musical instruments by turning them upside down. Apollo manages to play his lyra by turning it upside down, whereas Marsyas cannot play it, considering that it is not possible to play a flute upside down. While the Muses declared God Apollo as the winner; King Midas says Marsyas wins. Angered by this, Apollo turns King Midas' ears into donkey ears. Ultimately, Apollo wins the contest. He gets angry and has Marsyas tied to the tree by his arms. He hires a Scythian slave and skins Marsyas alive. But later he becomes very upset about what he does, breaks his lyra with regret, turns Marsyas into a river and leaves music for a while (Tuchelt, 1970; Köktan, 2014; Cömert, 2010).

There are two types of Marsyas depiction in art. The first type is the group in which the unfortunate, tragic story of Marsyas is depicted.<sup>9</sup> The inspiration for this group is the Athena-Marsyas group, made by Myron, dated around 450 BC and reflecting the moment when Marsyas discovered the flute. (Carpenter, 2002; Junker, 2002; Keer, 2004) (Fig. 1). After this date, both this moment with and the moment of the competition of Apollo and Marsyas, and the punishment of Marsyas are depicted frequently in vase paintings, sculptures and reliefs.<sup>10</sup> Numerous stone and bronze Hellenistic and Roman copies, derived from the original of this group, exist (Fig. 1). The intensity, increased with the Hellenistic Period, reaches its peak, especially in the artifacts of the Roman Period and this story is also depicted in the sculpture groups, sarcophagi in open areas<sup>11</sup>(Sande, 1982).

This story is often not conveyed holistically in stone artifacts. The story is shown in different versions in artifacts such as Marsyas alone, the Marsyas-Scythian slave group and the Marsyas-Scythian slave-God Apollo group. Especially while the number of examples showing Marsyas alone or with a Scythian slave is high; examples of multiple group sculptures are less common.

This subject is depicted very fondly, especially in the paintings and small artifacts of the Renaissance Period.<sup>12</sup> In the Type 2 depiction in ancient art, Marsyas is depicted alone, carrying a wineskin on his back. Here, Marsyas is shown slightly different from the physiological characteristics of the 1st type (short, pot-bellied, more in Silenos iconography). The first example of this type is a statue found in the Roman Forum, dated to 300 BC, according to sources. This type of Marsyas, of central Roman origin, is the source of inspiration for the Marsyas depictions on coins of the Republic and Imperial Periods (Schretz, 2005). This type has been a political symbol of the independence of Roman citizens since the 1st century BC. Especially during the Imperial Period, Marsyas carrying wineskins can be seen quite often

9 Marsyas statues and sculpture groups within the scope of the first type can be divided into 2 subheadings in terms of their materials: red type and white type. The red type takes its name from the red veined marble. There are 3 examples made in red type. The white type gets its name because it is made of white marble. The number of examples of this type is 10 or more (Mendel, 1914; Üreten, 2013).

10 To give examples; in a red-figure Attic krater painted by the Pothos Painter and dated around 410 BC can be seen the moment of the musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas (Keer, 2004). On the relief of Mantinea, dated to 330 BC, the moment of competition between Marsyas-Apollo and a Scythian slave symbolizing the resulting punishment are depicted (Keer, 2004).

11 The story is told developmentally on the front of the vessel of a Roman sarcophagus in the Louvre Museum, dated to the 3rd century AD (The story flows from left to right. Goddess Athena at the starting point of the story, the contest between Marsyas and Apollo, accompanied by King Midas, the Muses at main center of the story and the moment that Marsyas is tied to a tree, skinned at the tragic ending of the story are all compressed into a single scene. Marsyas and the Scythian slave group, dated to the first half of the 3rd century AD, unearthed in Manisa, a location close to Mountain of Tmolos, where the competition of Marsyas and Apollo is held, is an example of Roman Period artifacts. (Feuser, 2013; Üreten, 2013; Durugönül, 2015).

12 A group of Marsyas and Scythian slaves are engraved on a dark red gemma belonging to Lorenzo Medici and currently exhibited in the Naples National Museum (Clark, 2018). Similarly, the story of Marsyas came to life again in a pencil drawing of the painter Pietro Novelli between 1632-33 (Ausoni, 2005).

on the reverse of coins minted in provinces outside the center of Rome. The best examples of this can be seen in the coins of Ninica-Claudipolis and Mallos, two colonial cities of the province of Cilicia where Tarsus is the capital. (Erhan, 2014) (Fig.2).

### **Tarsus Coin from the Period of Maximinus I**

The coin, minted from bronze and preserved in medium condition, was first offered for sale on an auction site in 2005, was later included in some web pages related to numismatics and most recently in the catalog of a doctoral thesis completed in 2014 (Erhan, 2014) (Fig. 3). The coin has been included in these sources only in catalog form, with incomplete and incorrect information, since its first appearance in 2005.

Catalog:

Period of Maximinus I (Thrax, 235-38 AD)

Obverse: Radiate, clothed and armored bust of the emperor, to the right AYT K Γ IOY OYH MAΞIMΕΙΝOC II Π.

Reverse: Apollo sitting on the rock on the left, Midas sitting on the rock in the middle, Scythian slave sharpening his knife and Marsyas being hanged on the right, TAPCOY MHTPOΠOΛEΩ A M K Γ B.

AE 35 mm., 24.36 gr., ky. 1, CNG 69, Lot: 1163, June 2005 (Fig.3).

The physical characteristics of bust portrait and the legend on the obverse show that the coin belongs to the period of Roman Emperor Maximinus I. The obverse legend of the coin is the same except for one of the 14 different coins minted in Tarsus during the emperor's reign (Fig. 3).

Maximinus I, the first emperor of the period called Soldier Emperors during the Roman Empire, is depicted with a long, wide, bearded face with a radiate representing the Sun God Helios/Sol on his head. His forehead is steep, high and has a flat profile. He has a long, arched nose in middle and sunken nose tip that droops downwards. He has a strong chin tip and weak, sunken cheeks (Fig.3).

Researchers have identified three different types in all coin portraits of the emperor. In these, the emperor is depicted as having a straight forehead, a two-lined forehead and a three-lined forehead. However, the differences between the descriptions are vague and it is not possible to see them in the marble portraits (Özgan 2015). On the other hand, these details can be seen in the aureus, denarius, bronze sestertius and dupondius coins from the Roman state edition (RIC, pp. 129-135; RIC Plate X, XI). Among these, the closest similarity to the Tarsus coin is the radiate portrait depicted on a dupondius dated to 236 AD (OCRE 56; OCRE 57).

City mints of the region of Cilicia, portrait depictions of the emperor are seen in 11 cities except Tarsus.<sup>13</sup> Among these, the coins belonging to the city of Ninica – Claudiopolis have the most diversity, with similar obverse portraits and 24 different reverse types. In Tarsus, 15 coins, including this coin, have both radiate portraits on the obverse and different types of reverse. Radiate portraits (two pieces in Anemurion and Philadelphia) are rarely seen in other cities. In Tarsus, the majority consists of radiate portraits (8 pieces). All of the obverses of these coins are produced from the same mold. The subjects on the reverses of these coins are Apollo Lykeios?, (BMC 215-6; Ziegler Kilikien 743; SNG Cop. 379; SNG France II, 1591), Emperor or Perseus (associated with the myth of the founding of the city) (BMC 218), judgement of Paris (SNG France II, 1587-1687.1), head of the City Goddess Tyche (Ziegler Kilikien, 744), City Goddess Tyche in temple (SNG Levante 1095; SNG France 1602), three graces (SNG Levante 1096; Ziegler Kilikien 741; BMC 233-235; SNG France II 1605-6; SNG Cop. 378; SNG Pfalz. 1382; SNG Righetti 1669; SNG Hunterian 34), Herakles and the golden apples of the Hesperides (SNG Levante 1097; SNG France II 1588; SNG Levante Suppl. 277). The sight of the emperor's radiate portrait on the obverses of this series, called "Maximinus' Mythological Series", should also indicate the existence of a cult related to the sun (Helios/Sol Invictus) in the city.

With the help of these coin depictions, four marble portrait replicas of the emperor have been identified so far, the most qualified of which are in the Roman Capitol Museum today. Other replicas are preserved in the Glyptothek in Copenhagen, the Louvre Museum in Paris and the National Museum in Rome (Özgan, 2015). The skull shape seen in the marble portraits repeats the portraits on the coins minted in 235-6 AD. This type, called the "Germanicus" type by researchers, must be the first original portrait type made on the occasion of Maximinus I becoming emperor (Özgan, 2015). It is possible to think that the type on the Tarsus coin should be evaluated in this group and called "Germanicus Type". Therefore, the year 235-6 AD can be suggested as the minting date for the coin without a date.

On the reverse of the coin, there is a mythological scene depicting the music competition between Apollo and Marsyas (Fig. 3). The Phrygian King Midas, in the middle of the scene, looks at the god Apollo playing the lyra on the left with "admiration". However, when we look at what is reported from ancient sources about this myth, it is understood that Midas declares Marsyas the winner as a result of the competition, and Apollo, who is angry at this, turns his ears into donkey ears. The fact that donkey ears are not seen in the depiction and, moreover, that the clothing is not in Phrygian style, raises questions about the identity of the figure (Fig. 3). Since there are no similar depictions on the coins, other artifacts are examined to solve this identification problem. Upon detailed examination, it is determined

13 These are Adana, Anazarbos, Flaviopolis, Epiphaneia, Eirenopolis- Neronias in Lowland Cilicia. These are Anemurion, Philadelphia, Karallia, Kolybrassos, Koropissos and Ninica Claudiopolis in Rough Cilicia.

that the artifact that most closely resembles the scene on the coin is the Roman sarcophagus, exhibited in the Louvre Museum, where the Apollo-Marsyas music competition is depicted. A scene consisting of 10 figures is depicted on one of the long sides of the sarcophagus. The story begins with Athena from left to right on the scene and ends with Marsyas being hanged. The sarcophagus is dated to the 3rd century AD (290-300 AD in some publications) (Fig.4). Although their numbers are different, the engraving of the figures on the sarcophagus is very similar to the scene on the coin. Moreover, the coin and the sarcophagus are produced in close proximity to each other. The figure in the middle of the coin is depicted as broader-shouldered and more masculine than both Apollo and Marsyas. If this is not an incompetence of the coin molder, as in other details, it is certain that the figure in the middle is male (Fig.5). In the sarcophagus, the figure in the middle (the third figure from left to right) is almost completely similar to the figure on the coin, except for the movement of the head back (which is to look at Apollo). However, the prominent depiction of breasts in this figure suggests that it may be one of the muses (possibly Euterpe) (Fig.5). However, in the continuation of the story in the sarcophagus, towards the end of the scene, there is another male figure at the top (seventh figure from left to right), which is similar to the male figure in the coin in terms of sitting and clothing (Fig. 6). Studies on the sarcophagus suggest that this figure is Midas. In light of this information, it turns out that identifying the figure on the coin as Midas is the most accurate option for now.

In the scene on the coin, the figure between Midas and Marsyas is referred to as “animal”, “?”, “lion” in all previous sources. However, it is clear that this figure, which is often seen next to Marsyas in artifacts, is a Scythian slave sharpening his knife. It can be thought that this error is caused partly by the incompetence of the coin molder and partly by the poor condition of the coin. As a matter of fact, the figure located right next to Marsyas in the Roman sarcophagus is depicted very similarly, although his head is facing the opposite direction compared to the coin (Fig. 6).

In the scene, from left to right, there is Apollo sitting on a rock and holding a lyra in his hand, Midas sitting on a rock to his right, a Scythian slave sharpening his knife, and Marsyas hanging on a tree on the far right (Fig.3). This scene with four figures is not seen in any other artifact with this arrangement and number. Therefore the description is unique not only in coins but in all artifacts.

There is no definitive evidence as to why this scene is chosen on the coin. However, it is clear that this group, called the “Maximinus’ Mythological Series”, is related to the crisis of Rome in the 3rd century AD. In this crisis environment which emerges due to reasons such as the Sasanian threat in the East, the rise of Christianity and economic difficulties, it is not a coincidence that myths, which have an important place in the belief system of the local people, are featured on the coins in this density. Here, Tarsus’ effort to regain the regional

leadership it lost to Anazarbos during the Severus Dynasty and to obtain some privileges must play in an important role. For Rome, the perception that “Emperor cares and protects the people of Tarsus” may be created in order to increase the loyalty of the local people.

The main reason why this scene is chosen on the coin must be related to the cult of Apollo in the city, rather than Marsyas. The settlement history of Tarsus dates back the Neolithic Period. Despite this, the city’s colonization by the Argives, probably starting from the 7th century BC, also affects the belief system of Tarsus in the Archaic and Classical Period. During this period, the Greek tradition of attributing a city-founder hero to each city led to Perseus taking place of Sandan, who is accepted as the local founder of the city in Tarsus, especially from the Hellenistic Period onwards. Because Perseus, from Argos, is considered the ancestor of many Greek heroes and cities especially Heracles. As a matter of fact, when it comes to the Roman Imperial Period (2nd and 3rd centuries AD), an iconography similar to Perseus and Apollo Lyceios (even though they are not actually related) is frequently seen on Tarsus city coins, related to the cult and city foundation. Although it has been attempted to connect the god sometimes with the Lycian Region and therefore the light and sometimes with the wolf, due to the iconographic similarity, these claims have not been definitively proven. However, since Apollo is the god or ancestor of the Argives and all the city founder Greek heroes, he must also be accepted as the ancestor of Perseus. So, the cult of Apollo must have settled in Tarsus and found its place on the Maximinus coin.

### **Evaluations on the Composition of the Marsyas Statue in IAM**

Many publications have been made about the Marsyas statue in IAM.<sup>14</sup> The statue, found around the second Roman bath in Tarsus and brought to IAM, is within the scope of the first type depicting the story of Marsyas (Collignon, 1897; Mendel, 1914). A detailed description

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14 The first publication about this statue is made by Collignon (1897). Later, when Mendel (1914) publishes the catalogs of the artifacts in the museum, he also includes the Marsyas statue. Among the current publications, the Marsyas statue is discussed in Özgan’s (2018) publication.

of the statue is made by Mendel (1914)<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 7). In modern researches, it is suggested that the tension observed in all details on Marsyas's body is caused by a cut on his back that is apparently made with a cutting tool<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 8). The statue is dated by almost all researchers to the High Hellenistic (Baroque Style) Period, mainly to the end of the 3rd century BC<sup>17</sup>.

Although the Marsyas statue is produced as a single statue, it is certain that it is

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- 15 The current height of the statue made of crystallized white marble is 130.5 cm. The statue above the bicep and below the knee is broken and missing. The right and left legs below the kneecap, the tail and the genitals are missing and broken. The nose, the arch of the right eyebrow, the left eyelid, the tips of the ears, the right curls of the hair are damaged. There is wear on the forehead, left brow arch, and right ear. There are slits on the right side of its back, where it is attached to the tree trunk. There is calcification and blackening in the back area between the hips and the chest. The antique shine on the front has been preserved. The figure is hung on a tree branch by its arms. Marsyas' head is turned slightly to the left, with his chest bent forward. Due to the hanging movement, the arms and upper chest are pulled vertically and tensely to the sides. The skin is stretched on the ribcage and protrudes downwards from the ribs. The abdominal cavity has collapsed inward and the hips, which are stretched in front and behind, have become narrow. The artist does his best to reflect the tense and angry inner world of Marsyas. All anatomical details have been carefully crafted on the weak, dry and tense-looking body. The curly hair on the forehead and temples is tangled and fluffy. Their mustaches and beards, which also have the same curl characteristics, are combined. His forehead protrudes forward. The arch of the eyebrow is highly emphasized above the bridge of the nose. The nose, which has wide holes, is very prominent because it is sunken inwards. His eyes are rendered as if they were popping out of their sockets. Slightly parted lips, as if screaming. There is a very strong expression of anger on the face along with pain (Mendel, 1914)
- 16 The artist has reflected Marsyas's situation and his mood in a very subtle way. The pain on the face and the suffering during torture are perfectly rendered. Anatomical details such as tense muscles and bone structure are compatible with the movement of the figure. According to the story, Marsyas is skinned. The artist emphasizes this detail very well in the artifact. There is a knife-shaped slit on the figure's back. This slit made with cutting tools is 6 cm wide and 15 cm long. The artist even reflects muscle tissue through this slit (Karagöz, 2008).
- 17 Stylistic features such as the structure of the body and muscles, the embodiment of tension and pain in the details, dynamism and mobility are evident. On the face, opposites are given together. On the one hand, the wrinkled forehead and sagging skin, but on the other hand, the tension caused by anger and the suffering of torture can be seen on the face. If we look at examples of analogies in the context of style criticism and dating; The Galatian head from the Great Galatian Group (Özgan, 2018), dedicated to Attalos I (King of Pergamon) and dated to around 230 BC, bears similarities with the facial details of the Marsyas figure. In both figures, the head turned to the left, forehead wrinkles caused by pain, flared nostrils, half-open mouth slightly open due to pain, thick bangs, active and messy hair are similar. As another analogical example in terms of dating, it is possible to give the giants on the Gigantomakhia Frieze in the Zeus Altar of Pergamon, dating back to around 180 BC, from the period of Eumenes II. The tension and detailed rendering in the body muscles of the Alcyoneus figure, the expression of pain, dramatization, wildness on the face, the depiction of the hair in thick, messy tufts, the wrinkled forehead, thick eyelids, protruding eyes, and the mouth slightly open due to pain show similarities with the Marsyas statue. Qualities such as dynamism, pathos and exaggerated reflection of emotions, which are the most basic of baroque features, are present in both sculptures. For the dating of the statue, the style features, the statements of the researchers and the analogy point to the High Hellenistic Period. It is possible to date the Marsyas statue towards the end of the 3rd century BC. In addition to all these, Fleischer (1991) states in his publication that the Marsyas statue group is more than a mythological story and can also be associated with a historical event. Around 250 BC, many important historical events take place in Western Anatolia. One of the most important of these events concerns the Seleucid King Antiochus III (223-187 BC). Since the king will make an eastern expedition, he assigns his commander Akhaïos to protect the west (214-213 BC). But Achaëus, who gains power, declares himself the king of Sardis and mints coins in his name. But Antiochus, who receives this news, immediately comes to Sardis and punishes Akhaïos. This punishment is similar to Apollo's method of punishing Marsyas. For this reason, Fleischer (1991) emphasizes that a historical event is immortalized with a mythological story.

iconographically part of a group statue. There are various composition suggestions regarding the figures next to the statue. According these suggestions, Marsyas is depicted as one. It is depicted as the Marsyas–Scythian slave group or Marsyas-Scythian slave-Apollo group. According to the suggestion of Karagöz (2008) who has recently worked on the statue, it can be thought that on the right of Marsyas hanging from the tree, there is a Scythian slave crouching down, sharpening his knife to start the skinning process, and on the left of Marsyas, there is the God Apollo watching this event. Karagöz (2008) states that the composition should be like this, citing examples on the subject from both Anatolia and Rome.

According to Özgan (2018), as can be understood from the Marsyas copies of the Roman Period, it is possible that the Marsyas statue in the IAM and the Scythian slave in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence are a group together. According to the suggestion, Marsyas is shown in the group with his hands tied to a tree. Directly opposite him, a Scythian slave with a himation on his back is crouching on the ground. He sharpens his knife with both hands. The Scythian slave raises his head slightly and looks at Marsyas in front of him (Özgan, 2018) (Fig. 9). This suggestion reinforces the identification of the third figure in the depiction on the Tarsus coin as a Scythian slave. However, according to the coin, it should be facing Apollo and Midas, not Marsyas.

In addition to these suggestions made by sculpture experts, it is possible to propose a new composition for the Marsyas statue in the IAM in relation to the scene on the reverse side of coin, which is examined in detail for the first time in this study. As a matter of fact, the depiction of the statue groups, especially cult statues, from the Archaic and Classical Periods on coins is very common in ancient numismatics since the Hellenistic Period. This tradition continues during the Roman Imperial Period. It is possible to see this situation frequently in city coins in the region of Cilicia. Especially as a reflection of the crisis of the 3rd century AD in Rome, mythological scenes, which have an important place in the belief system of the local people, begin to appear frequently on coins from the second quarter of the century. It is possible to say that the reason for this is that the Cilicia Region is behind the front lines of the struggle with Parth/Sassanid in the East, the empire wants to increase the loyalty of the cities, and the cities of the region try to obtain some privileges from Rome. During this period, especially from the second quarter of the 3rd century AD, mythological depictions begin to appear on the coins of the city of Tarsus in a way that have never been seen before. In this context, it is possible to say that the scene on the reverse of the coin, which is one of the best examples of the group we call “Maximinus’ Mythological Series”, may be influenced by the Marsyas sculpture group. This view is supported by the fact that no political events occur in the city that lead to the destruction of the Marsyas group statue, from the end of the 3rd century BC, when the statue belongs, until the second half of the 3rd century AD, when the coin belongs. Based on this situation, it is possible to say that the Marsyas statue group is well preserved in the region until the end of the Roman Imperial Period.

In light of all this information, it is highly likely that the figures in this group of statues are God Apollo, King Midas and the Scythian slave. Moreover, considering the cut mark on Marsyas' back, which highlights the moment of his skinning, the statue group must be standing in a place visible from both the front and back. Therefore, it is possible to think that the Marsyas group statue is positioned freely in a monumental building or square. Based on Roman Period copies, it is possible to say that the Marsyas group statue is located in front of or on a bath, nymphaeum, theater or similar monumental structure in the city.

## Conclusions

In the study, the reflections of a legendary and striking example of arrogance, which is considered one of the greatest evils in all faiths in the world, with Anatolian- Ancient Greek motifs, on the ancient art, are discussed through an unpublished coin and a group of statues and have made new suggestions with the informations obtained.

According to this, it is determined that the bust portrait depiction on the obverse of Tarsus coin from the period of Maximinus I belongs to the "Germanicus" type of the emperor and that the coin was minted in 235-236 AD. It is determined that from left to right in the mythological scene about the Apollo-Marsyas music competition, which is found to be unique on the reverse of the coin, the second figure is Midas and the third figure is a Scythian slave. In this way, the coin is introduced to the scientific world in detail for the first time.

In addition, thanks to the findings on the coin, a new one has been added to the composition suggestions published since the discovery of the Marsyas statue in the study. Accordingly, it is possible that the coin molder is influenced by the Marsyas group statue in Tarsus or copies the artifacts. If this possibility, which is very common in the ancient time, is accepted as true, it will be appropriate to suggest Apollo, Midas, a Scythian slave and Marsyas for the sculpture composition.

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## Figures



**Figure 1:** Roman replica of Myron's Athena-Marsyas group, Vatican Museums (Author's photo archive)



**Figure 2:** Mallos coin from the period of Gordianus III (Erhan, 2014) ([http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/gordian\\_III/\\_mallus\\_SNGRighetti\\_1592.jpg](http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/gordian_III/_mallus_SNGRighetti_1592.jpg))



**Figure 3:** Tarsus coin from the period of Maximinus I ([https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/maximinus\\_I/\\_tarsos\\_CNG\\_69-1163.Jpg](https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/maximinus_I/_tarsos_CNG_69-1163.Jpg)18.07.2023)



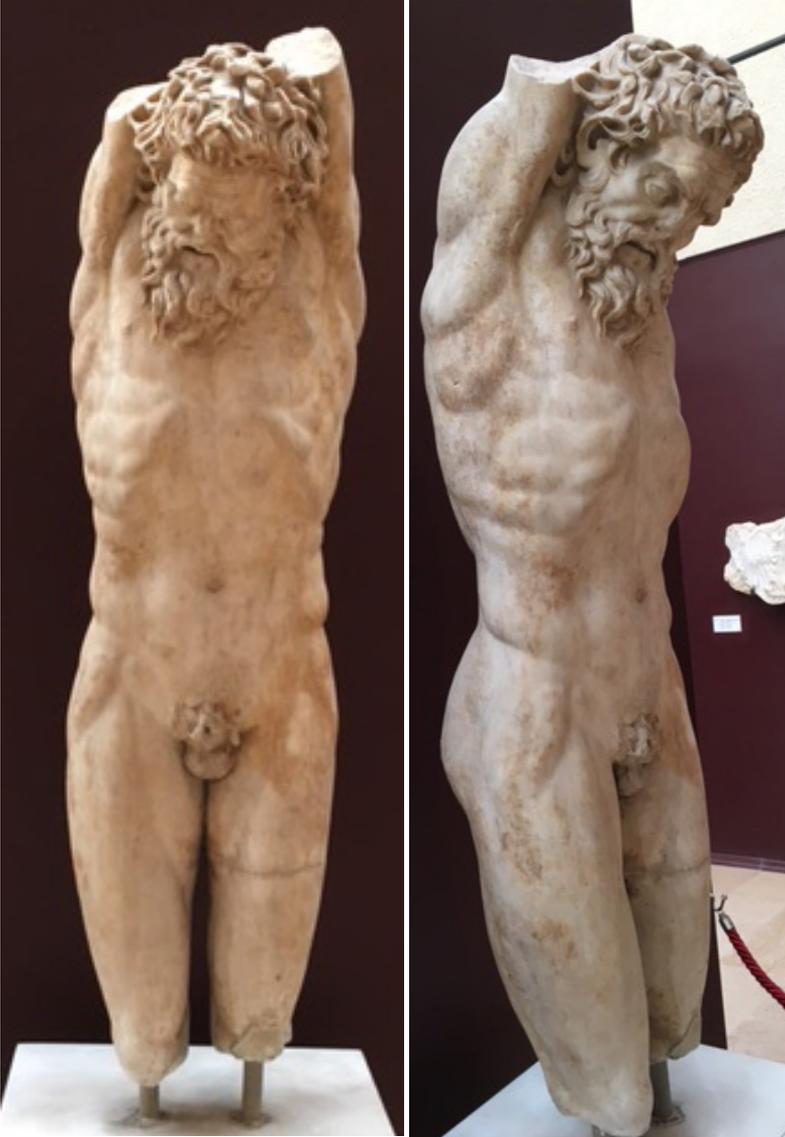
**Figure 4:** Roman sarcophagus, Louvre Museum  
(08.08.2023: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010276255>)



**Figure 5:** Tarsus coin, detail (Apollo, Midas, Marsyas) (Figure 3) and Roman sarcophagus (Euterpe?) (Figure 4)



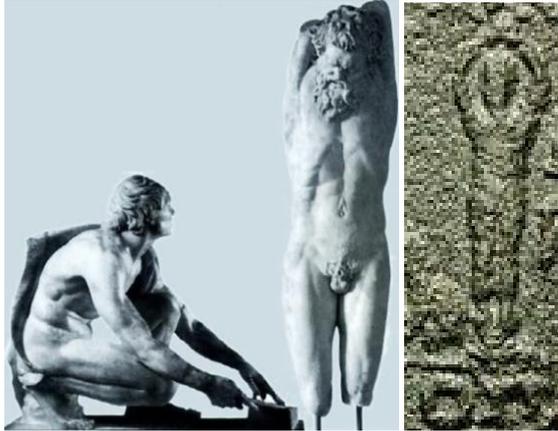
**Figure 6:** Roman sarcophagus (Scythian slave crouching on the ground, Midas on top) (Figure 4) and Tarsus coin, detail (Midas, Scythian slave crouching next to Midas' feet) (Figure 3)



**Figure 7:** Marsyas statue, IAM (Author's photo archive)



**Figure 8:** Knife-shaped lift of the Marsyas statue's back, IAM (Author's photo archive)



**Figure 9:** Photomontage: Scythian slave (Florence, Uffizi Gallery) and Marsyas (IAM) (Özgan, 2018); Tarsus coin, detail (Scythian slave and Marsyas) (Figure 3)