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THE EQUESTRIAN AMAZON STATUETTE FROM THE ATTOUDA

Attouda'dan Atlı Amazon Heykelciği

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Abstract

The equestrian Amazon statuette, which is the subject of this study, was discovered during the archaeological survey conducted the ancient city of Attouda in 2021. It was determined that the artifact unearthed in the wall ruins of a registered residential building was used as spolia. The artifact, made of medium-crystalline white marble, is a statuette of an Amazon figure depicted as riding a horse. The posture of the Amazon woman and the horse indicates that the figure is depicted as attacking/assaulting. Similar depictions are found in the Classical Period, especially in the relief art of the 4th century BCE. The equestrian Amazon statuette, dated to the 1st century AD, was produced by emulating a theme from the *Amazonomachy* scenes,

especially from the Late Classical Period. Whether it is part of a group of works is not clear, as its pedestal is missing. Although the stylistic feature of the statuette indicates that the work in question can be attributed to the Aphrodisias school of sculpture, a close neighbor of Attouda, scientific excavations to be conducted in the city in the coming years are expected to reveal more comprehensive data on the sculpture art of the city of Attouda. The work is significant in terms of processing a three-dimensional sculpture of a theme which is primarily found in relief in architectural structures and sarcophagi. Therefore, it is an important case brought to literature.

Keywords: Attouda, Amazons, Equestrian Amazon, Roman Imperial Period, Aphrodisias.

Özet

Bu çalışmanın konusu olan atlı Amazon heykelciği, Attouda antik kentinde 2021 yılında yapılan yüzey arařtırmaları sırasında tespit edilmiştir. Tescilli bir konut yapısının duvar yıkıntısı içerisinde bulunan eserin devşirme malzeme olarak kullanıldığı belirlenmiştir. Orta kristalli beyaz renkli mermerden yapılan eser, at üstünde binici olarak betimlenen Amazon figüründen oluşan bir heykelcik parçasıdır. Amazon kadınının ve atın duruşu, figürün bir saldırı/atak anında betimlendiğini göstermektedir. Benzer betimlemeler, Klasik Dönem’de özellikle de MÖ 4. yüzyıla ait kabartma sanatında karşımıza çıkmaktadır. MS 1. yüzyıla tarihlendirilen atlı Amazon heykelciği, özellikle Geç Klasik Dönem’e ait *Amazonomachia* sahnelerinden alınan bir kompozisyondan öykünerek üretilmiştir. Kaidesi eksik olduğundan grup eser olup olmadığı bilinmemektedir.

Heykelcikte görülen üslup özellikleri, Attouda’nın yakın komşusu olan Aphrodisias heykel okuluna atfedebileceğimizi göstermektedir. Ancak ilerleyen yıllarda kentte yapılacak bilimsel kazı çalışmalarıyla Attouda kentinin heykeltıraşlık sanatıyla ilgili daha kapsamlı verilere ulaşılacağı öngörülmektedir. Eser, mimari yapılarda ve lahitlerde çoğunlukla kabartma şeklinde karşımıza çıkan bir kompozisyonun üçboyutlu bir heykel formunda işlenmesi yönüyle önem taşımakta olup bu yönüyle literatüre kazandırılan önemli bir örnektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Attouda, Amazonlar, Atlı Amazon, Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi, Aphrodisias.

Introduction

The city of Attouda, located in Denizli province, Sarayköy district, Hisar neighborhood (village), was a prominent city located between Phrygia and Caria regions in ancient times, dividing both areas¹. This settlement, which was established on the Salbakos (Babadağ) mountain, dates back to the 7th-6th century BCE, according to current archaeological finds². The city of Attouda, known to be economically strong³ in the Hellenistic Period, prospered in the Roman Imperial Period and monumental structures with different functions were built⁴. A large part of the city of Attouda remained under the residences of the Hisar neighborhood, which was built on the ancient settlement. As a result, the architectural remains of historic structures may be tracked through the blocks dispersed throughout the present settlement's streets and gardens, or the spolia on the walls of the residences⁵. Hisar settlement's residences exhibit traces of traditional rural architecture, with 143 registered residences⁶ (Fig. 1). Many *spolia* pieces from the old city of Attouda can be found on the walls of the dwellings⁷. The equestrian Amazon statuette studied here is one of the archaeological objects repurposed as a construction material on the wall of a registered residential structure.

The equestrian Amazon statuette fragment, unearthed during surveys in the Attouda in 2021 and recorded with inventory number ATD21.030921.H2.Y, was found in the garden of a registered village house, in the ruins of a stone masonry wall that had been partially destroyed due to natural factors. The statuette was used as *spolia* on the wall of the house in question (Fig. 2). The surface of the artifact, which was found as fractured and incomplete, is deformed. As a result, mortar remains, and degradation is visible in spots.

The Equestrian Amazon statuette is significant because it provides insight into the sculptural art of the Attouda, where scientific excavations have yet to begin, although it is found without context. Another significance of the artifact in question is that scenes of *Amazonomachy* with similar compositions are mostly preferred in relief art. The Attouda artifact is unique in that it was created in the form of a sculpture. This study, which focuses on the equestrian Amazon statuette discovered in Attouda, compares the artifact to similar instances based on mythological narratives and artworks about the Amazons, and the technical style and features of the artifact are studied in depth. The statuette, which dates from the 1st century AD, was created by a sculptor who emulated the relief sculpture of the Late

¹ Şimşek 2002, 229; Söğüt 2017, 242.

² The pottery fragments discovered during the 2021 and 2022 surveys revealed that the city's history dated back to the 7th and 6th centuries BCE.

³ The discovery of epigraphic, numismatic, and pottery artifacts in the site demonstrates that Attouda was a prosperous city throughout the Hellenistic Period. For findings on the subject, see Buckler – Calder 1939, 25-26, no. 68; Malay 1993, 18; Şimşek – Okunak 2002, 84; Türkoğlu 2020, 291.

⁴ Söğüt 2017, 245.

⁵ Şimşek 2016, Fig. 8; Söğüt 2017, 241, Fig. 13-15, Yurtsever – Yılmaz-Kolancı 2022, Fig. 13b.

⁶ Yurtsever – Yılmaz-Kolancı 2022, 192.

⁷ Şimşek 2016, Fig. 8; Söğüt 2017, Fig. 15; Bilgiç-Kavak – Yılmaz-Kolancı 2022, 395-406, Fig. 1-2.

Classical Period. Although the proximity of Attouda and Aphrodisias and the stylistic characteristics of the object imply that the statuette in issue is a product of the Aphrodisias school of sculpture, scientific excavations in the future years will provide further information on this subject.

Description (Figs. 3-5)

The artifact, made of medium-crystalline white marble⁸, belongs to a figurine consisting of an Amazon figure depicted as a rider on a horse. The head of the horse figure is broken from the middle of the neck, as are the front legs from the body, and the hind legs with the horse's croup and they are missing. The right arm of the Amazon woman, represented as a horse rider, is broken from the root of the shoulder, as is the head and neck, as well as the legs from just below the knee and they are missing. The figure depicts an Amazon woman dressed in a short chiton that exposes her right breast and is belted at the waist, holding a half-moon *pelta* shield in her left hand. Although the *pelta* shield's ends have been damaged, its outline is still clear. The Amazon woman wears a quiver or a double axe (*labrys*) on her right hip, associated with combat weapons. However, because the object in issue has been destroyed, a conclusion cannot be reached.

The left arm of the Amazon figure is attached to the body and continues under the *pelta* shield that she carries on her left arm. The horse's reins are securely grasped in the outstretched left hand. The right arm is broken from the root of the shoulder and has no trace of connection to the body. Accordingly, the right arm seems like making an upward and forward move. The chiton is a thick fabric with shallow folds characterized by infrequent finely carved lines. Making a thick fold between the two breasts, the fabric continues to the back of the body, leaving the right shoulder and right breast exposed. The chiton is belted at the waist and has outward folding dress fabric that falls flat on the hips with slightly wavy folds. Even though the head is missing and broken from the base of the neck, it can be seen that the hair tied in a ponytail falls on the nape.

The Amazon woman's body is represented in a horizontal position, leaning forward, and supported by the horse's back. Two deep muscle lines on the right side of the horse's neck, just above the strap, indicate that the horse's head is slightly bent to the right. The positions of the legs on the horse's forebody demonstrate that the right leg descends straight to the ground while the left leg is stretched forward. The posture of the legs indicates that the horse is rearing up. The horse's posture is unknown because its hind legs and the croup were broken. The horse has no caparison, and its body is presented in a muscular shape. The genitals of the horse on the abdomen imply that it is a male. The posture of the figure on horse and the horse indicates that the Amazon woman is represented during an attack in which she is charging forward. The artifact, which was created in three dimensions, was given four faces. The

⁸ The equestrian Amazon figurine numbered ATD21.030921.H2.Y is 27 cm high, 13.7 cm wide and 23.6 cm deep. Pelta shield is 11.7 cm high and 8.6 cm wide.

workmanship and materials are of exceptional quality, and it is assumed that it was sculpted by a skilled craftsman.

Evaluation and Conclusion

In mythology, the Amazons⁹ are a group of warrior women who are descendants of the god of battle, Ares and Harmonia the nymph. It is reported that these women, who are competent horse riders, have been at constant war with men. The Amazons, noted for their masculine character, are said to have cauterized their single breast (right) in infancy in order to be able to shoot and battle better. Amazons, on the other hand, are invariably depicted as double-breasted, leaving only one breast exposed. The Amazons, who are typically represented wearing a short chiton with the right chest exposed, are known to wield weapons such as shield (usually *pelta*), arrow-bow, spear, sword, or *labrys* (double-edged ax)¹⁰. Amazons are depicted in combat with mythological heroes in ancient stories and works of art. The "*Amazonomachy*" scenes, which depict the war between the Amazons and the Hellenes in particular, have taken their place among the most widely depicted compositions. The Amazons, who frequently appear in sculptures, particularly since the Classical Period, have been represented in cult works such as the shield of Athena Parthenos, as well as prominent structures such as the Parthenon, Hephaisteion, and Temple of Athena Nike, for propaganda reasons¹¹. Examples of solitary and static Amazon sculptures are known, as are the Amazon sculptures created for a competition in the Ephesus¹². However, the major composition of choice, particularly for Amazons, is the representation of women launching an attack and fighting which express their warrior character. The fundamental motivation for this is to impart the effects of war on society by making propaganda through art¹³.

The Attouda equestrian Amazon statuette is a notable example of an Amazon woman represented while attacking. Although this composition is fairly widespread, particularly in relief art, the number of specimens in the form of sculpture with four sides as in the Attouda figure, is nearly non-existent. In addition to the horse's body posture and head position, the position of the Amazon woman on the horse indicates that the figure is depicted as attacking/assaulting. Details such as the Amazon woman whose body is supported by the horse's back, holding the horse's reins tightly with her left hand, and depicting the horse's right leg higher, prove that the figure is represented in a combat while moving. The broken right arm should have been making a lateral or upward raise, holding a weapon such as a double-edged

⁹ For the study in which detailed information about the Amazons in ancient sources is discussed together, see. Bağdatlı-Çam 2015, 72-74.

¹⁰ Grimal 1997, 61-62; Sobol 1999; Agizza 2006, 64; Temür 2012, 69-73.

¹¹ Boardman 2005, 171. For example, Pericles and Pheidias are thought to have secretly depicted themselves in the *Amazonomachy* scene on the shield of the Athena Parthenos statue. For detailed information, see Fullerton 2000, 12-13; Bothmer 1957, 210, Pl. 87.1. The war of the Gigants and the gods (*Gigantomachy*), the war of the Amazons and the Greeks (*Amazonomachy*), the war of the Centaurs and the Lapiths (*Centauromachy*) depicted in ceramics, sculptures and reliefs are actually the wars of Greeks themselves. See Spivey 1997, 143; Boardman 2005, 168-174.

¹² Bothmer 1957, 219, Pl. 89; Ridgway 1974, 1-17.

¹³ Wheeler 2004, 166.

ax, sword, or spear. However, the fact that the body of the figure is depicted in a forward-leaning position suggests that this weapon is most likely a sword or a spear.

Important sculptural works depicting Amazon women battling on horseback may be found in reliefs adorning the façade of Classical Period architectural monuments, particularly in Hellenic art¹⁴. In these scenes, known as *Amazonomachy*, the Amazon women, who are depicted at war with Hellenic troops and represent the Persian tribes, are sometimes portrayed as triumphing, and sometimes being defeated. These women, representing the eastern tribes, appeared in the works in question for propagandist objectives, and the message intended to be transmitted to society was communicated via art¹⁵. This composition, infrequently depicted during the Hellenistic Period, was reintroduced in the works of sculptors and workshops, creating works by replicating major Classical and Hellenistic Period masterpieces, particularly in the Roman Imperial Period¹⁶.

The equestrian amazon statuette unearthed at Attouda is a composition based on the *Amazonomachy* scenes common in Classical Period relief painting. The equestrian Amazon figures, in particular, with a similar posture, were often used in Late Classical Period architectural and sculptural art. On the western pediment of the Temple of Asclepius of Epidaurus, dated 380-370 BCE, and in the relief on the short façade of the *Amazonomachy* sarcophagus, dated around 325 BCE, there is a remarkably close resemblance to the equestrian Amazon figure, which has a similar stance to the figurine found at Attouda. Although the relief in the Temple of Asclepius of Epidaurus is damaged and fragmented¹⁷, the posture and movement of the Amazon woman on the horse in the relief on the short façade of the *Amazonomachy* sarcophagus¹⁸ gives an idea of the equestrian statuette unearthed in Attouda. Like to the Amazon of Attouda, the Amazon woman represented on the sarcophagus is resting on the horse's back and attacking the Greek soldier opposite her with a short sword carried in her right hand. The horse carrying the Amazon woman is depicted as rearing up right before the attack. The equestrian Amazon figure found in Attouda has a movement and posture similar to the equestrian Amazon figure represented on the relief in question (Fig. 6). It is also seen that a bronze equestrian Amazon figure, dated to the 4th century AD, was part of a group including Heracles¹⁹. However, because the base of the Attouda artifact was missing, it is unknown whether there is another figure depicted next to the Amazon woman.

¹⁴ Persian attacks, which affected the Greek social structure, became the most important subject of the Classical Period, and works of art were constantly influenced by these battles. However, Alexander, who launched a campaign to the east in 334 BC, put a stop to the Persian threat. As a result of this, the themes and depictions of the Amazons altered following the Hellenistic Period. Because the Persians no longer posed a danger to the Greeks after Alexander. Furthermore, women began to have a voice in the re-established civilized and free Hellenistic world. Relevant to this issue see Sobol 1999, 79.

¹⁵ Fullerton 2000, 12-13.

¹⁶ The Classical and Hellenistic worlds are the primary sources of inspiration for Roman art. Beazley – Ashmole 1966, 67.

¹⁷ Devambez – Kauffmann-Samaras 1981, 492, 613, 614, Fig. 421a; Boardman 2014, 25, Fig. 10.1-2.

¹⁸ Boardman 2014, 118, 130, Fig. 136.1-2.

¹⁹ Devambez – Kauffmann-Samaras 1981, 464, 597, Fig. 167.

The technical style of the equestrian Amazon statuette unearthed at Attouda suggests that it is a Roman replica fashioned under the influence of Late Classical Period (4th century BCE) sculpture²⁰. Technical aspects such as the fine finishing on the figures, the simple and shallow processing of the fabric folds, and the use of a chisel rather than a drill in the processing of the details indicate that the work in question was created during the Early Imperial Period, in the 1st century AD. The artistic elements of the Attouda statues imply that they were created by sculptors from Aphrodisias, the city's nearest neighbor²¹. The sculptors of Aphrodisias were acquainted with the popular works of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, and they skillfully replicated them²². The sculptural works in the Aphrodisias, in particular, reveal that the artisans were fond of the depictions and compositions concerning the Amazons²³. The equestrian Amazon figure with a similar posture discovered on an *Amazonomachy* relief excavated in Aphrodisias is significant in terms of demonstrating the artisans' acquaintance of the composition, although it is dated to a later period²⁴. Aside from Aphrodisias, similar motifs from *Amazonomachy* were employed favorably in reliefs adorning sarcophagi and architectural monuments in Laodicea²⁵ and Hierapolis²⁶, two other prominent cities in the region. In terms of aesthetic traits, the quality and craftsmanship of the equestrian Amazon sculpture discovered in the Attouda imply that the artifact in question was created by an Aphrodisias-based artisan²⁷. Although the close connection between the two cities in terms of trade, politics, and religion²⁸, as well as the two cities' close proximity, suggests that the sculptures discovered in Attouda may be related to the Aphrodisias sculpture school, it is clear that more precise views on this subject will be presented with the excavations to be conducted in the coming years.

²⁰ The fact that compositions concerning the Amazons were also used on oil lamps or cameos in the 1st century CE demonstrates the subject's revival throughout the Roman Period. See Devambez – Kauffmann-Samaras 1981, Fig. 736, 738.

²¹ Squarciapino 1943, 97; Erim 1986, 133-151; Smith 2008a, 9-31; Smith 2008b, 103-119; Voorhis 2008, 120-135.

²² Erim 1978, 1080; Erim 2011, 70-71, 76.

²³ For the Achilles-Penthesilaia sculptural group and reliefs, see Erim 1986, 98, 114.

²⁴ Erim 1986, 125-126.

²⁵ For the Achilles-Penthesileia relief found in Laodikeia, see Şimşek 2007, 350-351, Fig. 150; Şimşek – Sezgin 2014, 145-157.

²⁶ For the Amazon reliefs found in Hierapolis, see Şimşek – Sezgin 2014, 152-153, Res. 11-13.

²⁷ Şimşek 2016, 791-812.

²⁸ Söğüt 2017, 245-246.

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Fig.1. Aerial view of the Attouda (Hisar Neighborhood).

Fig.2. The equestrian Amazon statuette found in the ruined wall.

Fig.3. Right and left profile view of the Equestrian Amazon statuette.

Fig.4. Detail of the equestrian Amazon statuette's clothing (chiton).

Fig.5. Right side view detail of the Equestrian Amazon statuette.

Fig.6. The Amazon equestrian figure in the *Amazonomachy* sarcophagus and the potential posture of the Attouda equestrian statuette.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6