

## A BRONZE STATUETTE PLAYING TRUMPET FROM MYLAS

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### Abstract

A bronze statuette in the British Museum (B.M. 130.909) represents a male figure playing a trumpet. The figure is 6 cm high and nude. It is not canonical, with disproportionately large head and thin legs. The nose is big and unusually turned up, so it gives a grotesque impression.

The hair and eyes are marked by fine incisions and the enlarged chin indicates the presence of a beard. The figure wears a strange peaked cap with the end falling backwards and a *phorbeia*, a leather band which covers the mouth and is tied at the back, passing over the top of the head of the trumpet player.

In this paper, the statuette and its *phorbeia*<sup>1</sup> are analysed from the artistic point of view and in the context of Phrygian Music in accordance with the Pierce semiology. The present study is based on Pierce's triadic process -three concepts; 'firstness', 'secondness', and 'thirdness'. 'Firstness' the ambiguity of the statuette; because the statuette is not from the context of a legal excavation. The reason why our knowledge of it is real or not. The 'secondness' is, by comparing similar statuettes, what is its point during the Phrygian Period in the art of statuettes; and 'thirdness', in other words, the secondness (the figuration of the feasible) sets up the outcome of the study based on the rules, the methods, the technical and cultural extent, and the historical process.

### Introduction (The Firstness)

A bronze statuette in the British Museum (B.M. 130.909) represents a male figure playing a trumpet (Fig.1-Left). The figure, 6 cm. high, is nude, with a disproportionately large head. The legs are thin, the feet pressed together, and there is a certain instability in the posture.

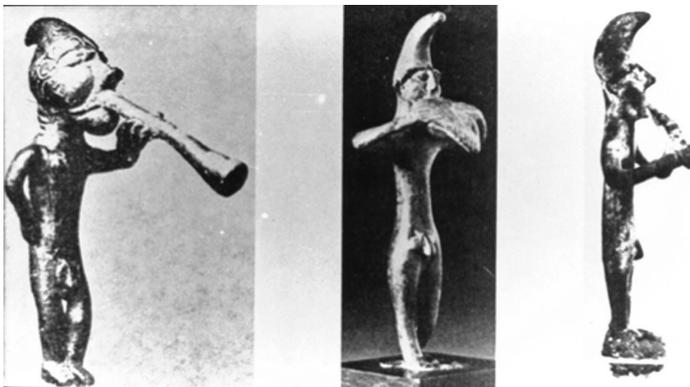


Figure 1

1- A mouth-band of leather, put like a halter round the lips of pipers to assist them in regulating the sound.

The right hand is placed on the hip, while with the left the musician grasps the trumpet, as if blowing it with all his might. The nose is big and unusually turned up, possibly in the exertion of the musical performance. The protruding eyes have the shape of a rather long line. The hair and eyes are marked by fine incisions and there are traces of whiskers. The enlarged chin indicates the presence of a beard. The figure wears a strange peaked cap with the end falling backwards. Even more interesting is the *aulos*<sup>2</sup> player's phorbeia, a leather band (normally with two holes) which covers the mouth and is tied at the back, passing over the top of the head. The function of the phorbeia is to direct the flow of breath, through the holes, solely into the instrument.

Although a number of scholars mention the statuette, they give no information about its date. H.S. Cowper, the first to write about the statuette, states that it is from Mylasa, but does not date it. He defines the figure as a barbarous and grotesque work, with a cap unlike those of Phrygian or Cypriot examples (Cowper 1909: 197).

### **Analogies (The Secondness)**

As far as the second (analogies) concept is concerned, relating to the statuette from Mylasa, V. Müller mentions a group of statuettes from Asia Minor (Müller 1929: 127), amongst which we do not come across any samples definitely identified as coming from Phrygia or Central Anatolia of the post-Hittite period, but there is one from Sardis. This bronze statuette, now in the Louvre, represents a figure with his arms stuck close to the body. G.M.A. Hanfmann, who studied a group of statuettes from Ephesus, has also commented on the Mylasa statuette, drawing attention to its rounded form similar to the Ephesian ones. He dates the piece to 1000-900 B.C. (Hanfmann 1962: 3 fig.7)

F. Prayon, who has worked on a group of statuettes including the one from Mylasa, dates it to the Late Archaic and Greek Period (Prayon 1997: 110). Phrygian art does not present any bronze statuettes (Fig.1) from such Central Anatolian centres as Gordion, Boğazköy or Alişar.

Therefore, the writer concludes that the one in question is very important from the artistic point of view. The high quality of execution may be due to the fact that, like the ones in the Gordion Tumuli, these bronze statuettes were gifts to the dead. In accordance with Müller's conclusion, there are three statuettes commonly attributed to Phrygian Anatolian art of the early first millennium, namely the Mylasa statuette, and those of Bloomington and Worcester, which also represent a figure playing the flute, with a similar cap. From the point of view of style, Prayon places the Mylasa trumpet player closer to the aulos player of the Boğazköy cult group, mainly because of the disproportionately large head and the pigmy-like body. But it should not be forgotten that in the geometrical period much more importance was given to the proportions of a musician figure, which is usually even a little bit taller. The physiognomy of the Boğazköy and the Mylasa musicians is very rough; the common characteristic is that the facial proportions are not taken much into consideration. With the clumsy, unstable appearance and the disproportionality in hips and legs, the Mylasa bronze statuette resembles the kithara player from the Boğazköy cult group (Fig. 2).

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2- A pipe, flute, or clarinet.



**Figure 2**

Prayon cannot definitely assign this statuette to Phrygian art. As there are no other specimens for comparison and the Worcester statuette is photographed from the profile view, it is not reasonable to make judgments based on the posture of the figure. Another statuette (B.M. 134.975), of a flute player, and similar except for its clothes, has been attributed to Anatolia. Prayon does not see any similarity between the Mylasa trumpet player statuette and those of Worcester and Bloomington, apart from the mutual standing position and cap. However, in my opinion, the nudity of these three statuettes is of crucial importance. The Bloomington and Worcester bronze statuettes gain special importance with their proportional body structure, when compared with those from Anatolia. We do not know where the standing musician motif and the Phrygian cap originated. The standing position has replaced the sitting position in Greek musician figures during the post-geometrical period. The geometrical Greek musicians wear a cap different from those of the Mylasa and the Worcester statuettes. The end of the Phrygian headwear falls either forwards or backwards as can be attested in a number of Phrygian monuments. Prayon states that the Phrygian cap has a wide spectrum of shape and use, and can serve as a criterion for ethnical and regional classification. Because of the lack of other criteria, he is not able to localise the Bloomington and Worcester statuettes with certainty. If the bronze statuette in the British Museum (B.M. 134.975) is of Asia Minor origin then it follows that the Bloomington, Worcester, and Mylasa statuettes most probably are of Asia Minor origin too (Fig.1). But we have to remember that the historical and stylistic data present certain discrepancies resulting in conflicting interpretations relevant to localisation.

### **Aulos With Phorbeia As A Feature Of The Statuette (The Thirdness)**

In studies of musical archaeology, researchers give different names to the instrument of the bronze statuette from Mylasa. This inconsistency suggests that it is of a type not easy to define. B. Aign calls it a trumpet (Aign1963: 78), since the instrument widens towards the end; and judging from the way it is held, we may conclude that there are no holes in it. The form, then, resembles the Egyptian

trumpet and the Greek war-trumpet (salpinx). In conclusion, Aign dates the piece as far back as the 8th and 7th centuries B.C.

J. Rimmer assigns the Mylasa statuette to the Early Iron Age (800 B.C.), and like Aign, calls it a trumpet. On the other hand, the instrument of the Mylasa statuette resembles the instrument of another (B.M. 134.975), identified by Rimmer as a horn-pipe (Rimmer 1969: 29). Here, the figure holds the instrument with both hands. An aulos with a curled end is attested in Phrygia, as a number of reliefs on *stela*<sup>3</sup> i also verify (Scott 1957: plate XIa). Then, the instrument of our figure may be called an aulos, although at any rate the holes are not visible. The dramatic approach, also reflected by the facial expression of the figure, may easily have caused the omission of the holes.

As we have already stated, various dates have been suggested for the statuette. However, the use of a phorbeia can play a decisive role in determining its period.

The phorbeia is a leather band which encircles the cheeks and the mouth in order to aid the player's performance. The narrow ends of the band are fastened at the back of the musician's head, while a strap around the top of the head is attached to the band at the sides. The mouth part has two holes. The aulos player of the Boğazköy cult group in the Ankara Anatolian Civilization Museum (inventory 122) introduces an exception (Belis 1984: 205), where the musical instrument is played not through the holes of the phorbeia but from below the leather band tightly fastened across the cheeks. Thus the band presses against the chin as it is stuck on it. The figurines playing the *kithara*<sup>4</sup> and aulos on both sides of *Cybele*<sup>5</sup> are *curete* and *Corybants*<sup>6</sup> who are said to have created Phrygian music. E. Akurgal dates the group to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Fig. 2).

The phorbeia of an aulos musician is not a typical Greek phorbeia; it is a different kind. We can say that a phorbeia was used in the Mediterranean region from the Archaic period until Roman times. According to A. Belis the oldest representation of a phorbeia can be seen on a *pitchos*<sup>7</sup> in the Tinos Museum, dated to 700 B.C. Another representation on a volute crater<sup>8</sup> in Tarent Museum, where a musician at a procession holds a phorbeia in his right hand, gives us a good idea about this element. A musician with phorbeia is also depicted on a basalt relief from Karatepe dating from the late Hittite period. Here we see that the phorbeia is fastened at the top of the head and that it has two holes in the mouth part, one for each instrument. D. Paquette, in his book called 'L'instrument de musique dans la Grece Antique' claims that there must be two, not one, holes in the phorbeia for coordination between the mouth and the lips (Belis 1986: 214). Ancient sources describe that not only the aulos musicians, but those playing the trumpet too, wore the phorbeia with a single hole.

We gather from relevant sources that the phorbeia was very important for music. Plutarch's quotations from the Simonides poem which is told of Marsyas are to the same effect: "He put the leather belt to the mouth which was thirsty for music and fastened the ends at the back of his head". The phorbeia was adorned with various figures to minimise its unseemly appearance. In Aristophanes' 'Birds', Pistoterios says to the musician: "For the sake of Zeus, I have seen too many things in my life, but I have never seen such a thing as a haltered crow before" (Belis 1986: 207).

3-A stele is a gravestone.

4-A lyre.

5-A mountain in Phrygia.

6-A Corybant is a priest of Cybele in Phrygia.

7-A large wine jar.

8-A crater is a mixing vessel or bowl, in which wine was mixed with water.

The musicians, wherever they went, put it on, be it in the theatre or at a musical contest, at sporting competitions, at the departure of a soldier going to war, or even during court proceedings. Only at banquets did they not use the phorbeia because musical notes were not really important then (Belis 1986: 208). Ancient writers propose different solutions about the function of this tool, which was unseemly and difficult to wear. Some writers claim that it is useful because it restrains the cheeks from getting deformed. According to Plutarch, the phorbeia enabled Marsyas to control his breath and prevented the deformation of his face (Belis 1986: 209). Aristophanes states that it prevented the lips from opening and the cheeks from getting blown out, while it also regulated the musician's breath, so that the aulos gave a better sonority. Plutarch states that Athena threw away the aulos because she got ugly while playing. This, of course, is important from the aesthetic point of view, but is not decisively so.

For the scholastics the phorbeia has two uses. First of all, it prevents the lips from opening, and regulates breathing. Secondly, the musician who played for a long time may not be able to hold his cheeks in and may wish to open his mouth, but the phorbeia hinders this impulse. The same is true for trumpet players, too. Undeniably, the phorbeia provides some comfort for the musician (Belis 1986: 210).

Two modern musicologists, Howard and Curtis, have developed a thesis which others do not support. According to Curtis, the phorbeia keeps the aulos steady. Howard accepts this view of the phorbeia, adding that with its help, the hands get free to work on the holes of the instrument (Belis 1986: 211). In contrast, the Greek trumpet, without holes, does not have a complex mechanism. Similarly, the hand trumpet, which is not very long, can be handled by holding it two-thirds of the way down its length. Thus, these two instruments do not require the phorbeia. We can deduce that Plutarch's words on the regulation of breath may have validity for the aulos players, but not for the trumpet players.

As Pollux mentions, a good player must be able to breathe continuously with the same pressure. At this point, two important roles for the phorbeia arise: to prevent the deformation of the cheek muscles and to obtain a high note (Belis 1986: 211-12).

A. Belis puts forward the view that a person using a phorbeia cannot breathe through the mouth, since he blows through the holes. The lips are tightly closed so that the aulos will not move, and extra sounds will not interfere. In other words, the phorbeia controls the volume of the air in the mouth. The player breathes through the nose, and the air that comes into the mouth goes out through the instrument. This provides a continuous stream of air. For the trumpet, the stretching of the muscles is important, but for the aulos continuity of good music is even more important. Again Pollux cites that the trumpet was created by Etruscans and was made of different materials in different shapes; it can be of bronze or iron, straight or curved. The reed is carved out of bone (Belis 1986: 214). The Pigmy playing trumpet depicted without phorbeia on the Kelebe (Volute Crater) dates to the end of the 4th century from Volterra (Fig. 3). It is represented as an example of ugliness by U. Eco. (Eco 2009: 41). For a trumpet player the most important criterion was to be heard from a distance, so he used to blow loudly. The trumpet-with-reed, an instrument somewhat between the ordinary trumpet and the aulos, was always played with a phorbeia and its sound had a special quality. After 480 B.C., the trumpet was used without a phorbeia, because the fragile reed made it risky to use during battles (Belis 1986: 217).

The reason why they made the block instrument was for easy playing. The statuette coming from Mylas must have played this kind of trumpet-aulos having a 'phorbeia'.



**Figure 3**

### Epilogue

As seen in analogies regarding the musical instrument and the artistic style, the Mylasa statuette is defined as a barbarous and grotesque work that can be dated to the 2nd half of the 6th century B.C., the date given by E. Akurgal to the Cybele cult group from Boğazköy. It is well known that many works reflect the influence of Phrygian art for centuries in Anatolia. The group statuette from the İstanbul Archaeological Museum (inventory 7085) is a new interpretation of the Cybele cult group from Boğazköy by an anachronistic way (Fig. 4). On the other hand, nudity, a distinctive characteristic of Greek art, is noticed in the Mylas statuette as well. So we can treat this statuette as one that reflects both the influence of Phrygian and Greek arts.

We can describe this statuette not only as grotesque but as ugly as well. We should also try to understand the role of the phorbeia in musical creativity. The trumpet-with-reed, an instrument somewhat between the ordinary trumpet and the aulos, was always played with a phorbeia and its sound had a special quality. The statuette coming from Mylas must have played this kind of trumpet-aulos having a 'phorbeia'. Wind instruments remind us of Marsyas thought and music. It is called Phrygian music and canon in accordance with this region called Phrygian valley.



**Figure 4**

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