

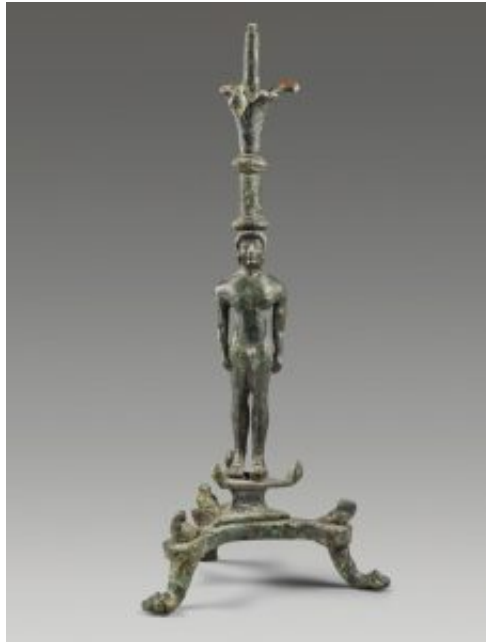
THYMIATERION WITH A KOUROS STATUETTE

Etruscan, late 6th century B.C

Bronze

Height: 27 cm

Reference: 171



This elegant candelabrum was intended to hold a small cup, now lost, in which the wealthy Etruscans burned incense or perfume essences during religious celebrations, funeral ceremonies and private banquets.

The artifact is composed of a triangular-shaped base, supported by three feet in the form of feline paws, above which appears an element in relief, in the shape of an elaborate wave. The smooth sides of the base are adorned with an inscription in the Etruscan alphabet. In the center, a triangular pedestal, in the shape of a cornice altar, each of whose corners is surmounted by a pine cone in relief, supports a kouros, a nude young man, standing with his arms descending along his body. The anatomical details of the feet, legs, genitals and head (chin, lips, nose, curly hair) are rendered in relief and with great detail, while the eyes and the brows are delicately incised. The base of the central shaft emerges from a fluted disk resting on top of the young man's head. Above, there is a second incised disk, from which radiate three stems alternating with three leaves in relief. These three stems, as well as the central shaft, supported the perfume-holder cup, now lost.

The closest parallel for our candelabrum, as regards its form and most of its details, is a thymiaterion from Vulci (north-west of Rome), now housed in the Museo Gregoriano Etrusco. It differs most in the rendering of the kouros, whose forearms are outstretched, as if to present offerings that are now lost. It can be dated to the late 6th century B.C. (Beazley and Magi 1941, pp. 165-171, pl. 47), a date that can also be suggested for our example, to be classified in the category of the late Archaic caryatid thymiateria (Testa 1989, pp. 138-139). In this class of objects, there is a thymiaterion in all respects similar to ours, but with a more simplified rendering, now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. 97.22.22).

It should be noted that both the kouros itself and the tripod shape were

very popular in the art of Etruscan thymiateria. One can indeed see a similar figure on a piece from Falerii Veteres (north of Rome) dated to the last quarter of the 4th to the first half of the 3rd century B.C. (Ambrosini 2002, no. 269, p. 263, pl. LXX), while another very similar base adorns a candelabrum from Vulci, dated to the middle of 4th century B.C., now housed in the National Library of France (Ambrosini 2002, no. 77, pl. XXVII)

CONDITION

Complete, except for the lost and fragmentary upper part; one of the feet of the base broken. Dark-colored surface with traces of green patina.

Inscription damaged on one of the rear sides of the base.

PROVENANCE

Ex-E. Borowski Collection, Basel and Toronto; acquired from E. Borowski, November, 1991.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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