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A MONUMENTAL MARBLE CRATER FROM SMINTHEION

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ABSTRACT

For the Hellenistic and Roman societies, marble and miscellaneous materials made of marble have always been considered among the most valuable, although their types and purposes have changed. On the other hand, marble vases are used a lot in daily life because they are attractive in appearance and convenient in terms of use, and they are quite diverse. Marble is in demand both in the geography where it is mined and in the region where it is used. It is also cumbersome to use, extract, transport and manufacture. It is favorite and common to repair the broken ones and produce smaller artifacts from the broken piece. It is possible to see these marble vases in all areas of daily life, especially in the kitchen, as decoration in rich palaces and villas, burial and even in religious ceremonies, and as offerings to God. Although common in all areas of life, they remain in the shadow of metal vases. They even imitate bronze in terms of form and decoration. The most magnificent examples of imitations made of marble are the monumental craters. Another exceptional example of marble craters, preferred by the Roman elite in terms of visuality, comes from the Smintheion excavations. A few fragments of marble vases preserved in the Smintheion excavation warehouse today belong to a monumental (calyx) crater made during the Roman Imperial Period. They are understood to be one of the brightest artifacts presented to Apollon Smintheus in the sanctuary. The assignment of date is made with a critical typological comparison to earlier (classical, Hellenistic) grand marble craters.

KEYWORDS: Smintheion, Apollo Smintheus, sacred offering, marble production, Hellenistic

1. INTRODUCTION

During the excavations carried out in Smintheion (Gülpınar) (Fig. 1) between 2006 and 2017, many lime wells belonging to the Late Antiquity were discovered around the Hellenistic Temple dedicated to Apollon Smintheus, Roman Baths, and reservoirs. Marble blocks belonging to temple architecture were unearthed in some lime wells near the temple. It was determined that the fragments obtained from the breaking of the temple marble blocks were burned to make lime in these wells near the temple (Özgünel and Kaplan, 2009). However, many architectural building fragments and pieces belonging to different material groups unearthed in the lime well around the Small Baths attract attention (Figs. 2-3). These fire-

exposed fragments show the existence of serious efforts to extract lime from marble in Late Antiquity. Among these fragments, interior decoration, marble architrave, marble fragments with inscriptions, Corinthian column capitals, marble covering slabs, and fragments of marble vases that are the subject of this study are the most striking examples of the Small Baths (Figs. 4-5). It was understood that almost all marbles, including crater fragments, were burned-melted for lime production. The fragments listed among the finds and the last ones thrown into the lime pit were found half-burned and affected by the fire. Since the bottom layer of the lime well consists of completely melted marble sediment and layer, it was impossible to determine what kind of fragments the marbles were or what structure they belonged to.

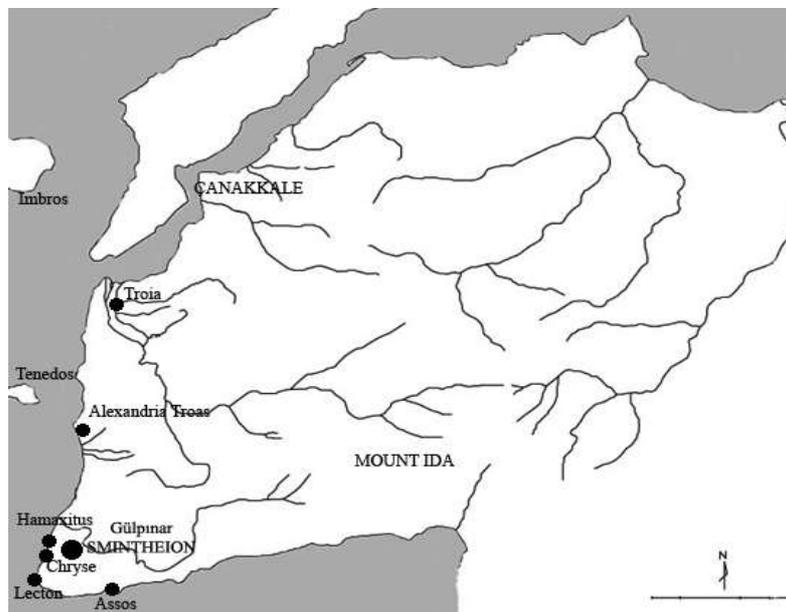


Figure 1. Map of the Troad; Smintheion with neighboring sites.

The lime well in which the crater fragments were found was discovered during the cleaning and excavation works of Small Baths in 2012-2013, to the west of the building and close to the *apodyterium* (Figs. 2-3). A large part of it was fragmented, and among the burnt-melted marbles (Figs. 4-5), a small number of fragments belonging to a large marble vase were also unearthed in the upper layer of the well. Luckily, very few of the vase fragments were preserved, as some fragments of the marble crater were the last to be thrown into the lime well. Based on their counterparts, information on the identification of marble fragments and the function of the vase could be obtained.

Since the crater fragments are white and fine-grained marble, they must have been seen as an ideal material for lime making, like other marbles. This

white marble material, originating from Prokonnessos, was used in many sanctuary buildings and sections. It is a valuable material group for the surrounding of the sanctuary and later periods, as it is used in a limited number and areas. The reuse (*spolien*) of material taken from Hellenistic and Roman buildings in Late Antiquity caused great destruction in Smintheion. Even so, different and scattered material groups, such as the lime well finds, as they contribute to the definition and completion of the architecture of the sanctuary, are welcomed. Unfortunately, using such marbles for smelting-lime making and building stones in Gülpınar modern settlement houses and tombstones for the deceased has caused the destruction of many artifacts. However, despite the few marble vase fragments unearthed, it has been preserved sufficiently to give information about the form and function of the crater.

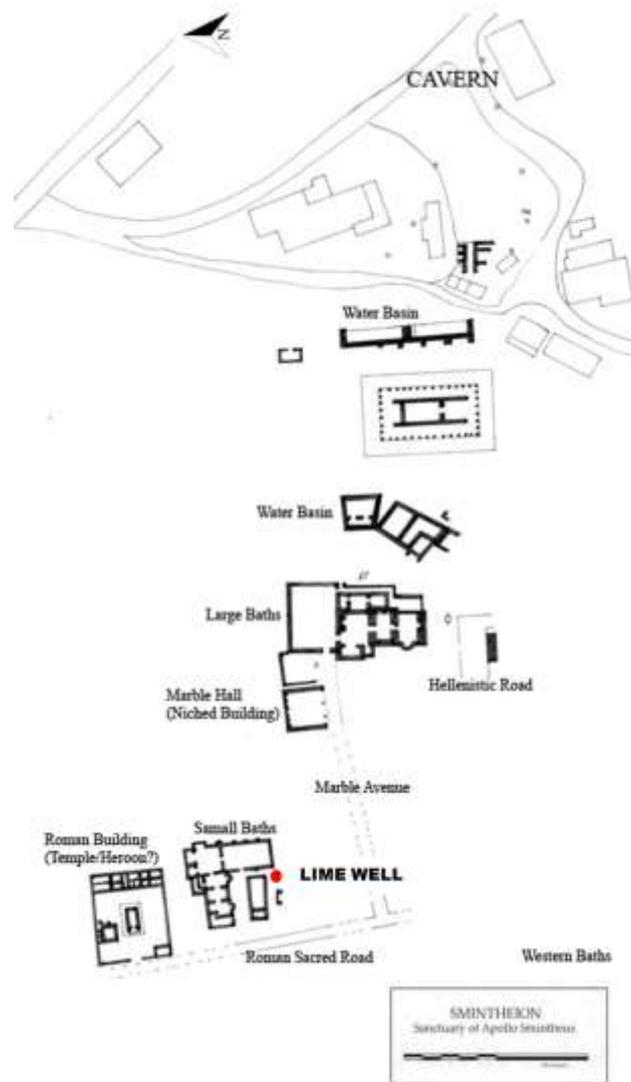


Figure 2. Plan of the Sanctuary of Apollo Smintheus (Smintheion) and the location of the lime well.



Figure 3. Aerial view of the lime well next to the Small Baths.

2. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The generally accepted view today is that calyx-craters were inspired by clay and metal vases from the 4th century BC. It also appeared widely in the Hellenistic period, for example, on burial reliefs or *necrodeipna*. Both for their use and for their artistic purpose, craters have been produced with increasing interest starting from the Classical period. Their symbolic importance increases in the Hellenistic period and they attract more attention. Many examples have been found in Pompeii and other Roman cities active in the Roman Republic Period. Especially similar marble “Neo-Attic” craters show that this classical influence also influenced Roman culture in terms of form. These craters, both continuing the classical forms and copying the classical models (Züchner 1938; Barr-Sharrar 2008), constitute a transitional stage in the end of the Classical period (4th century BC) and the Hellenistic period. During this transition period, there were great changes that occurred in the Greek region due to economic, political and religious turmoil.

The production of impressive red-figure clay vases (Kerch vases) are examples of multi-colored decoration and are not suitable for everyday use. These vases were produced to compete against similar metal vessels with elaborate decorations, widely spread outside Athens, and are just one example of the changes that took place in the 4th century BC. Relief decorations of later craters are based on Classical

examples. This interaction has been detected and confirmed in other relief metal vessels from the 4th century BC, such as the Berlin crater or the famous artifact known as the Derveni volute crater (Agapaki 2005; Barr-Sharrar 2008). The restoration of large and expensive vases such as the Derveni crater shows that they were preserved or stored for a long time, which explains their symbolic meaning. This work is not an isolated example and the existence of classical elements dating back to Hellenistic and miniature art is understood. In the Hellenistic era, at least, vase shape and related iconographic issues were intertwined. This association is a widely accepted fact, especially in those dating to the 4th century BC.

The return to Classical models and their widespread use in the production of clay and metal vessels is due to the impressiveness of calyx and volute craters. These luxurious and large, ornately rich craters, symbols, depictions and other iconographic motifs during the Hellenistic period are often associated with cult and other social issues. In this way, precious metal vases and vessels belonging to the 4th century BC passed into the Hellenistic period, and this especially in the 2nd century BC. They were either used or copied in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. At this point, it is aimed to evaluate the Smintheion crater in terms of form and decoration and to contribute to the use and interpretation of the sanctuary, especially the votives, in the Roman period.

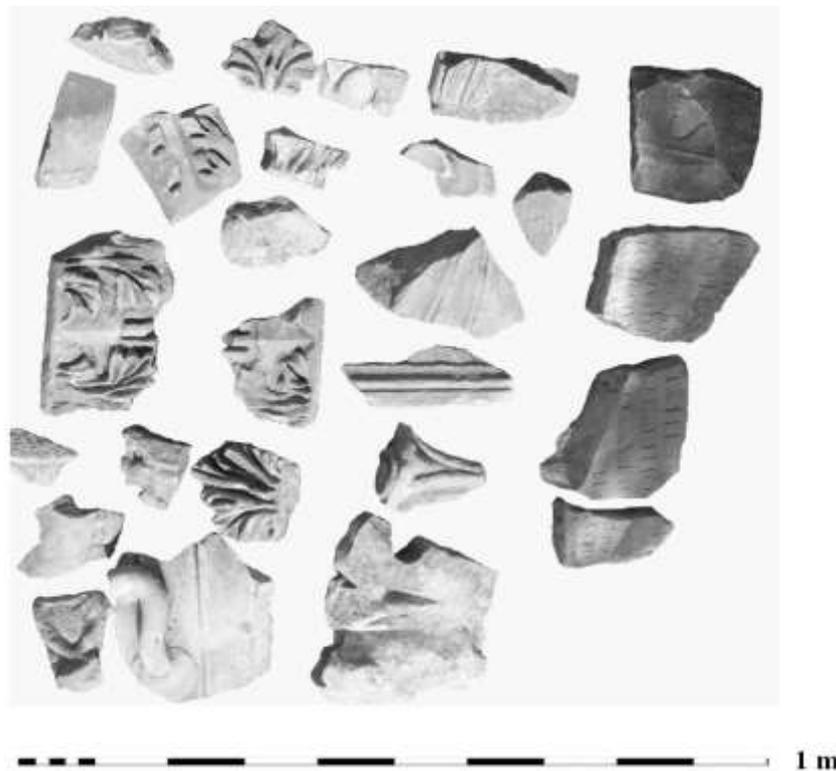


Figure 4. Various marble fragments recovered from the lime well.



Figure 5. Ion and Corinthian capital fragments from the lime well.

3. FORM OF THE VASE FROM FRAGMENTS

The best-preserved parts of the marble vase belong to the mouth, handle, pedestal, or carrier foot. When the vase's decorated, undecorated and inscribed parts are brought together, a monumental marble calyx crater with an original height of approximately 1.70 m emerges (Fig. 6).

The foot and body of the crater consist of two separate parts made of the same marble. Only one fragment of the pedestal, which was worked as a single part and separately from the main body, was recovered. In Late Antiquity, the upper leaf row and edges,

including the plinth, were severely damaged. The upper part of the pedestal was cut from under the leaf row from thin nodular profiles and used as a mortar. Although the upper profiles are missing, the lower part of the plinth with a corrugated concave tongue decorated (gadroom) opening like a fan from top to bottom could be identified on the surface. The plinth of the pedestal also has a concave profile. It is given its final shape with small strokes one by one with a fine tooth comb suitable for the plinth profile. The tongue decorations starting from both the base and the bottom of the crater prove that another example of monumental marble vases from the Late Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods, including classical craters, still exists in Smintheion.

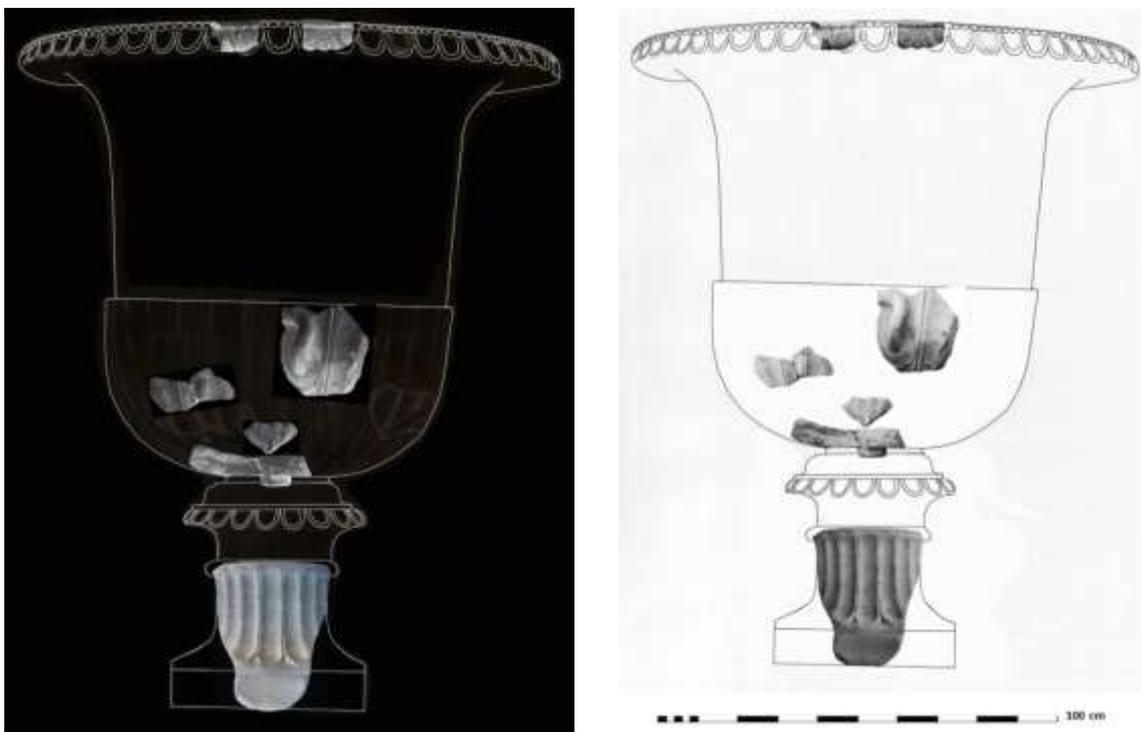


Figure 6. The form of the Smintheion marble crater according to the marble fragments.

There is no decoration on the inner surface of the crater, and it is polished with quality workmanship

that can be said to be smooth. Considering similar craters, the tongue decorations with a concave profile on

the outer surface of the body and the tongue decorations on the base must have been compatible in terms of decoration or decoration preference. Since the tools used in the final shaping of the crater and the impact marks were sanded with high quality, the plinth was partially preserved as they were not visible inside.

The round bottom of the crater acts as a dowel and fits into the slot on the pedestal (Figs. 6-7). The body of the crater both rises from the bottom and reaches the handles by expanding with concave low relief tongue decorations as opposed to the pedestal decoration. Small fragments of this lower body consisting

of shallow concave grooves have been preserved (Figure 8). After this section, the main body of the vase should be covered with decorations or floral motifs. Considering that some specimens do not have thematic or vegetal decoration, it can be assumed that the marble crater of Smintheion also had an empty smooth body. However, when considering the figural or floral decorated craters, the fragments in the Smintheion suggest that the surface may have been completely filled with decorations as a continuation of the monumental marble crater tradition. However, no fragments belonging to the figured part of the body were found.



Figure 7. Fragments of marble crater recovered from the well.

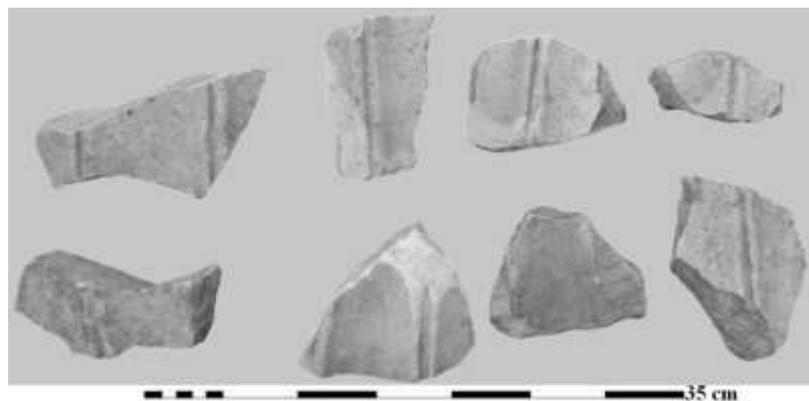


Figure 8. Top view of the partially burned bottom fragments of marble crater.

There are two marble handles on both sides of the crater. These handles are located at or near the junction of the lower body with the figured upper body of the metal crater, which has superficial grooved tongue decorations imitating metal specimens (Fig. 6). Only one fragment of an adjacent handle was preserved in the body fragment. The handle protruding from the round, curved bottom ring is ring-shaped and imitates metal examples. The curved, plain tubular handle rises to the right and left, then outwards

and towards the vase, and ends at a certain height in the middle of the vase. While this handle ends at a certain point, it can be clearly seen that the tongue decorations forming the body continue upwards. These handles attached to and towards the bulging point of the crater's body can be considered rare types. Therefore, the leaf-decorated lower stem and the destroyed figured upper stem are estimated to have been completed. At this stage, the height of the

crater could be determined approximately by comparing it with similar sample forms. In similar early examples, the handles generally protrude from the vase body in plastic, and most are figurative or plant-decorated. Especially when it comes to large crater surfaces, there are examples of curled branch coming out of these handles and a stem decorated by leaves. An example from the Claudian period in Naples (Grassinger 1991), shows that the crater had a tubular but raised shape with a distinctive handle shape.

Only a few small fragments of the wide protruding rim of the crater have been preserved. The crater has a spectacular and tastefully decorated rim-lip rim with strings of beads and eggs. While there is a string of eggs at the bottom of the protruding lip and a string of beads at the top, the part of the same lip comes from the vase's outer surface and under the lip is decorated with leaf decoration (Fig. 9). These grooved leaves are bas-relief and do not create much visual appearance under the lip at first glance. However, considering the monumentality of the crater, it is understood that they are at human eye level. Two letters (OM.) were preserved on one of these protruding rim fragments. Possibly, this inscription surrounded the rim of the crater in a circle. Perhaps there should have been an inscription about the maker-devoted or the offeror of the crater. Only two letters can be seen clearly and distinctly on the not completely preserved rim. The existence of the third letter is also understood, but deriving a noun or verb is not well understood due to the marble being a production and being exposed to fire.

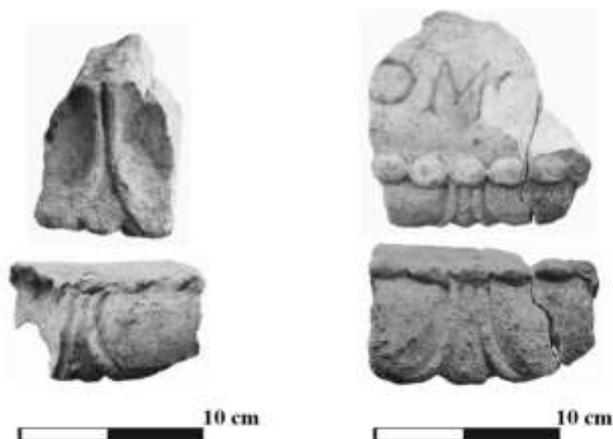


Figure 9. Partially burned fragments of marble crater recovered from the well.

In similar craters, scenes depicting the world of Dionysus (*thiasos*) in low relief on the outer surface and other floral (vine branch) motifs could not be preserved in the Smintheion crater. However, the body, handle, and decorated rim fragments complement

each other and reveal the original design of the crater (Fig. 6).

4. MONUMENTAL MARBLE CRATERS FROM THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN PERIODS

Almost all examples of monumental marble craters from the Late Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods have been studied. More than sixty craters and more than twenty marble crater fragments are listed in Grassinger's only detailed study of '*Römische Marmorkratere*' (Fig. 10). According to Grassinger, monumental marble craters are products of the Late Hellenistic Period (Grassinger, 1991). Mahdia finds, on the other hand, are the earliest known (100 BC) craters with a height of approximately 1.68 m, equal to a human height.

Other well preserved examples date from the middle of the 1st century BC. Together with these examples, marble craters peaked in production at the end of the Roman Republic period under the rule of Augustus. Later, although some marble crater fragments were seen until the Flavian period, there was a decrease in number. Cohon (1993), on the other hand, found these marble craters in a wider time period, even an example of 3rd or the 2nd century BC. Both main types are derived from metal and terracotta-clay prototypes of the late 4th century BC, the classical period. For this reason, they are presented as the decorations of the earlier examples and as excellent examples of volute craters from Dervani Crater. But the Apulian and Attic models are always in the foreground. A smaller and simpler bronze calyx crater recovered from the Mahdia shipwreck is similar to the same stone vases with the same proportions. Formally, the changes in marble examples are primarily related to the shape of the base or pedestal. This pedestal is with legs and is one part. Because it is not easy to move such big and heavy vases once they are put in place (Grassinger, 1994). Although their functions change, the types of marble calyx craters do not change and are quite similar. In other words, they are more similar than dissimilar.

The most popular monumental marble craters are Borghese and Pisa craters. At least similar ones of both craters were found in the Mahdia shipwreck. At the same time, scenes with old and young Dionysus are common in these craters. Grassinger believes that both marble vases should be displayed alone. Apart from the scenes with Dionysos, the subjects such as Paris-Helena, Hermes, and the sacrifice ceremony (*Opferszenen*) are among the subjects depicted in the calyx craters, although they are very rare.



Figure 10. Marble kraters. Left (Roma; Grassinger 1991, 209), right (Florence-Medici; Grassinger 1991, 38)

Monumental marble kraters were produced and used for different purposes. According to the evidence obtained from ancient writers and Roman wall paintings, these monumental marble kraters, considered luxury living materials, were exhibited in the interiors of the palaces. However, real examples of kraters have also been found in Roman villas (Carroll-Spillecke, 1994) and private gardens (Grassinger, 1991). Literary sources also support that some examples were used as fountains. Undoubtedly the preferred vase form is for mixing and drinking wine. Therefore, it explains this functional connection using figures or decorations related to Dionysus. It is conceivable that the water pouring over the outward-facing lip of the vessels in the open air formed a curtain of shimmering water behind which the *thiasos* depicted on the body of the marble krater could have come to life. Such a use not only gives the viewer pleasure but also explains its function. Because almost all of the depicted marble kraters, most of which are in Rome, are *thiasos*, especially figures such as the maenad, satyr, and Dionysos. However, the large scale of the kraters complements this image by providing unity with the columns and trees of the peristyle gardens of the villas. Therefore, as Grassinger stated, the return from an ordinary house to a villa and palace is proven by the presence of marble kraters and symbolizes a luxurious life. More importantly, they contributed to the desired atmosphere of free nature inhabited by wild creatures in the Herculaneum-Papyri Villa. Fullerton (Fullerton, 2000), on the other

hand, defines marble vases as 'environmental sculpture' that brings movement to their environment.

5. SMINTHEION MARBLE CRATER

The Smintheion marble krater was found close to the Small Baths in the middle of the street leading to the Sacred Way and the Large Baths (Figure 2-3). Considering the usage areas of similar examples, it is thought that the Smintheion marble krater was specially designed and used for the dressing room of the Small Baths. A similar example is decoratively placed by the swimming pool of Villa Poppaea in Italy. During the 1983 excavations at Aizanoi, fragments of a large marble krater were found scattered among the hypocausts formed from the remains in one room (Room B). The vase dated back to the Roman period and was probably later used in the church room. A tubular hole at the bottom indicates that the krater was used as a fountain (Naumann, 1985). There is no clue as to whether the Smintheion krater was used in the bath or how it was used. Because there is no evidence of pipes or water passing through the existing marble kraters, including the Smintheion krater. The main rooms of the Small Baths, which were turned into blacksmith shops in Late Antiquity, reveal that the krater was destroyed during this period. Pagan structures in the sanctuary, which turned into a small town where the people engaged in agriculture lived, were also used in this period apart from their main

functions. Small Baths are also included in this application. In the bath, which was converted into a metal production workshop, all the tubs, sinks, and decorative pagan elements were completely rendered unusable and used in late antique dwellings.

Another use of the Smintheion marble crater is also hidden in its relationship with the surrounding structures. The Smintheion crater, discovered between the Small Baths and the Sacred Way, may also be a votive offering to the god Apollo Smintheus. In pagan structures such as temples, baths and streets, bronze and marble artifacts erected as votive offerings, especially on sacred roads, and streets, are numerous. Monumental craters must also have been used on the sacred roads and streets, evident with statues and votive columns. The fact that they are exhibited in the gardens also explains their large size. In Smintheion, on the other hand, it was exhibited with bronze and marble statues and columns on a pedestal by the side of the sacred road or street. In this respect, it had to be proportional to the works exhibited together in terms of proportion. While its large dimensions reflected the power of the devotee, it also emphasized the reverence for Apollo Smintheus and the greatness of the god. Thus, it was necessary to produce a work that would leave an impression on the inner world of the visitors or young children who came to the sanctuary for the first time.

The sacrificial scene depicting Artemis and Apollo on the calyx crater, preserved at the Museo Nazionale in Rome (Grassinger, 1991), shows that the main subjects of the craters are not only taken from the world of Dionysus. Similarly, a cultic subject must have been addressed in the main body of the Smintheion crater. In this case, the crater can be considered as another artifact dedicated to Apollon Smintheus because no other depiction other than the symbols of Apollo has been found on the altar, votive monument, and marble artifacts in Smintheion.

Large decorated marble vases were very popular in the Roman period, and there are many surviving examples of vases from this period (Reinach, 1858-1932; Grassinger, 1991; Cohon, 1993). Even in Etruscan cultural regions, the admiration for Greek metal artifacts in the Roman Republic Period was produced as imitations of red-figure calyx craters and metal imitations (Turfa, 2013). The closest examples to the Smintheion crater are also found in European museums and archaeological sites such as Pompeii and Herculaneum (Gusman, 1912). Craters like those in Smintheion are called "neo-attic" because they combine the fashionable characters of 150-130 BC. Inspired forms and decorations are motifs older than these two centuries, i.e., earlier, respectively (Barr-Sharrar, 2008; Barr-Sharrar, 2015). For example, the bronze crater found at Derveni in Macedonia is one of

the masterpieces dated around 320 BC. This bronze crater also pioneers the origin of marble vases produced during the Roman imperial period. Vases recovered from the Mahdia shipwreck on the Tunisian coast can be added to the Derveni example. Because they are the cargoes of the cargo ship that was produced in Athens and carrying materials to Roman customers who love Greek art. In addition, both the Etruscan aristocracy and the Romans ordered large numbers of metal and marble works from Hellenic geography to decorate the adjoining gardens of their ornate villas (Jolivet, 2013). From the beginning of the Hellenistic period, the Etruscan aristocracies lost their economic power with the Roman conquest, which led them to use high quality ceramics in their tombs. In fact, '*ceramica argentata*' (silvered ceramic) from Bolsena (Torelli, 2000; Jolivet, 2013) belonging to the first half of the 3rd century BC were unused copies of previously existing bronze vases, as in the case of the calyx crater. It is too early to claim that the Smintheion marble crater was produced in the sanctuary. Still, it adopted the plain style of the Roman Imperial period and had a different decoration from other early examples.

6. DATING

Artistically and aesthetically the Smintheion crater is undoubtedly one of the best context examples. Because, in terms of decoration, it shows the high level and success of marble vase production obtained during the Roman Imperial Period. With the prohibition of pagan religion and temples, these artifacts were removed or destroyed, so the crater also lost its function in this period. The lime requirement for new constructions was met from the marble materials of the Hellenistic Temple, Large and Small Baths. These materials, which are burned for lime production, include column capitals, marble furniture parts, and sculptures, as previously stated.

The Smintheion crater, which imitates the early examples from the base to the rim, exhibits late features in decoration. The metallic decoration of the crater, designed differently from the previous examples, is unusual. As mentioned, the closest calyx craters to Smintheion are early examples such as Borghese, Pisa, Sosibios, Pontios, etc. Smintheion crater is certainly not one of the examples of 5th or 4th century BC Greek production in terms of style and manufacture. But it is similar in form to these known monumental marble craters. Smintheion marble crater, one of the rare examples discovered from Anatolia, consists of four belts with a foot, tongue decorated lower body, a figured (unpreserved) main body, and a string of beads on an egg-arrow string. Due to this form, it is a complement to classic marble vases. Of

course, many sculptors or artists continued to produce, especially with the influence of Attic art and Athenian artists. Using the same technique and decorations in similar calyx craters, from the pedestal to the rim decoration, shows a common fashion among the sculptors of the period. It is natural for this type of crater to be named Neo-attic because of this tradition. Smintheion crater, unique in dating, can be dated approximately when evaluated together with the context material (Figure 4-5). Along with marble crater fragments, the best style examples are inscription fragments and column capitals. The inscriptions belong to the beginning of the 2nd century AD. Fragments of column capitals show stylistic features of the Late Hellenistic-Early Roman Imperial period (Fischer, 1990). Probably the Smintheion crater belongs to the 1st-2nd century AD. There is no specimen similar to the Smintheion crater before or after it. It is not an artifact used in daily life or in Villa gardens as the Romans preferred. Rather, it is a monumental vase produced in the sanctuary of Apollo Smintheus, like similar votive artifacts, that will leave an impression on the visitors and serve the cult purpose befitting the glory of the god. In terms of dating, according to the context material, it seems most likely that it was produced at the end of the 2nd century AD at the latest.

7. CONCLUSION

The development of the calyx crater forms, which can be traced starting from the 4th century BC, is the same form in the Roman Imperial period, but differs in terms of figures and styles in decoration. It is clearly acceptable that the form of the marble crater at Smintheion follows the fashion of the 4th century BC. Because Grassinger's work proves that he was a part of this development. The Smintheion specimen, however, is unique as a marble copy of these classical forms. Decorative elements, on the other hand, are the details that exist in metal samples rather than descriptive decoration. In terms of decoration, there are no details except the grooves on the base, the handle on the fluted body, and the astragal and egg-arrow row on the uppermost pendulous lip.

The Smintheion crater contained a scene related to the cult of Apollo, its myths, or perhaps the Trojan war, as in the Hellenistic Temple. Apart from the lime pit materials it was found with, depictions and symbols on the Roman Imperial period coins of the city of Alexandria Troas may also be present.

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In common examples, satyr and maenad heads are found at the junction of the handles to the body. These types are derived from the iconography of Dionysus. However, the handles are plain in the Smintheion crater. For this reason, there are no examples to help us determine the handle typology and stylistic features. Therefore, it becomes difficult to identify the artist and the production workshop. There is no close analogy between marble craters in terms of their chronological and geographical locations. However, it is Late Hellenistic in form, and some details such as channel grooves and plain handles indicate a stronger Roman connection. The marble crater with figures on the body and devoid of vegetal ornamentation can be defined as simple and more stylized elements on the body and handle. However, the crater is simple, austere and devoid of detail as if there is freedom, but it is monumental. In the crater, its connection point and plain ring, which evokes cast metal handles, three concave pedestals and body grooves, the egg-arrow and astragal sequence on the lip, which have the same form as in the metallic examples, show that the monumental vase is a perfect metal imitation work. Since calyx craters are impressive in terms of shape, they have been taken into account in terms of form rather than figural decoration, and they have preserved this traditional integrity with their monumentality. In fact, the Roman Imperial period placed special emphasis on form and monumentality rather than different perceptions of ornaments. This includes the aesthetics in the marble crater.

As a result, the style in the Smintheion crater shows close historical similarity to the Roman imperial architectural fragments and vases from the 2nd-3rd century AD. Nevertheless, the crater, which does not have Satyrs and Maenads dancing wildly around Dionysus-Ariadne, continues the neo-classical style and reflects Late Hellenistic thought in form. Therefore, decorated marble vases, especially the monumental marble calyx craters, were very popular in the Roman period, and most surviving ones belonged to the Early Imperial period. Artistically, the Smintheion crater is undoubtedly one of the finest samples. At the same time, it shows that a high level of creativity in decoration was achieved in marble craters during the Roman Imperial Period. Smintheion crater must be one of the votive works such as columns, altars, and statues on the side of the street leading to the sacred road and Hellenistic temple.

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