

# The Forum Marsyas on 1st-c. CE lamps

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**Abstract:** A 1st-c. CE lamp from Cyprus, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, features a discus design of a satyr on a base before an enclosure. Formerly identified as a nude silenus, the design on this lamp and others with the same decoration in fact illustrates a motif after the Forum Marsyas statue from the Forum Romanum. The statue is typically understood as a symbol of civic *libertas*, and copies were erected in provincial fora and depicted on civic coinage in the 2nd and 3rd c. CE. This note argues that the lamps enhance our understanding of the Forum Marsyas in two respects. First, the lamps demonstrate that the motif was in provincial circulation ahead of the sculptural and numismatic trend. Second, it is now clear that the Forum Marsyas was used in private contexts, and potentially with a non-civic meaning, more extensively than previously understood. The lamps are therefore significant for understanding the provincial spread and legibility of this important but still enigmatic motif.

**Keywords:** Marsyas, lamp, provinces, numismatics, satyr, imagery

A red-slipped discus lamp in the Cesnola Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (accession number 74.51.2115; hereafter, the “Cesnola lamp”) is decorated with the image of a satyr holding a wine skin over his left shoulder and raising his right hand above his head. He stands on a base in front of an enclosure. The lamp was likely found in Cyprus and can be dated to the 1st c. CE by its nozzle and shoulder forms.<sup>1</sup> The design is not unparalleled; the same satyr appears on one complete lamp and fragments of six others, all from provincial findspots and dating to the 1st c. CE, although the Cesnola lamp remains the most complete and best-published example. The Cesnola figure is typically described as a generic silenus or satyr, but this note proposes that a more specific identification is possible: the satyr is Marsyas, shown here after the famous Marsyas of the Forum statue set up on the Forum Romanum. The statue itself is not preserved, but its likeness appears on Republican denarii and on the Anaglypha Traiani. Copies of the statue, or satyrs based on the Forum Marsyas, were also set up in provincial fora and appear on local coinages of the Eastern Mediterranean in the 2nd and 3rd c. CE. This phenomenon is explicable by the Forum statue’s fame in Rome and connection to *libertas* (freedom) and the civic rights and privileges of *municipia*, colonies, and other “free” communities. As such, modern scholars treat the Forum Marsyas as a civic symbol operating primarily in public contexts, even if recent work questions the stability of the motif’s meaning and still cannot account for when and how the motif arrived in the provinces. This note argues that the iconography of these lamps, their date, and their wide geographic spread enrich our understanding of the motif’s diffusion through the provinces in the period before it was widely employed in public provincial contexts. Furthermore, the lamps reinforce the emerging sense of potential flexibility in the use and interpretation of the motif and raise questions about its legibility in civic contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot 2021, 288, no. 376.

## The lamps

As it is the most complete of the eight examples discussed here, we will rely on the Cesnola lamp to establish the major features of the discus design, before turning to the others to consider the motif's geographic and chronological extent. The Cesnola lamp arrived at the Met as part of a group of artifacts purchased between 1874 and 1876 from Luigi Palma di Cesnola, who had served as the American consul in Cyprus before becoming the Met's first director.<sup>2</sup> Part of Cesnola's time on Cyprus was spent on treasure-hunting projects (which he referred to as excavations), activity which was criticized during his lifetime and which rightfully continues to draw scrutiny today.<sup>3</sup> Roman lamps seem to have held little interest for Cesnola; few are mentioned in any meaningful way in his letters or reports, although he amassed 2,380 by the end of his tenure in Cyprus.<sup>4</sup> Four hundred and fifty-four lamps were transferred to the Met, but once in New York their rather unremarkable decoration, material, mass-produced character, and context as objects of daily life came into conflict with the early drive to create a universal museum anchored by major "canonical" pieces of a certain aesthetic appeal.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the perceived failure of the Cesnola collection to contribute to "a vision of antiquity that was highly selected, curated, and filtered through the sensibilities" of early museum curators allowed the collection as a whole to languish until recently.<sup>6</sup>

The lamp in question (Fig. 1) is a red-slipped, mold-made discus lamp with volutes around the nozzle and a discus image of a satyr. The original fabric of the clay is a light orange or buff. Burn marks around the nozzle suggest ancient use. The lamp sits on a flat base with an incised ring, and there is no maker's mark. By form, the lamp is a Loeschcke Type IV; in Christopher Lightfoot's recent catalog of the Cesnola lamps, he dates this type to ca. 40–100 CE.<sup>7</sup> The discus design features a bearded satyr standing left on a base in front of an enclosure. His head is tilted upward, and his right hand is raised and bent at the elbow, with palm open, while his left hand grasps an *askos*. He has a slight paunch and a short goat's tail and wears low boots. The satyr stands on a squared base or pedestal. Behind the figure is an empty semicircular enclosure with a lattice pattern on the exterior, open at one end.

The lamp's original context is unknown, although it is presumably from Cyprus. Given the ubiquity of lamps in the ca. 61,000 tombs that Cesnola opened, this lamp likely came from a funerary context.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, lamps are frequently found in Roman tombs in modern Cypriot excavations.<sup>9</sup> That the Cesnola lamp is complete, while demonstrating signs of

<sup>2</sup> Cesnola number (CP) 3551.

<sup>3</sup> Cesnola 1873; Cesnola 1878, vii–ix; Cesnola 1894–1904; Myres 1899, 6; Marangou 2000, 304–29, 337–44, 358–65; Barker and Merrilees 2017, 51–53.

<sup>4</sup> Cesnola (1878, 75–76, 179, 190–92) does describe lamps as grave goods and illustrates several.

<sup>5</sup> Bartman 2018, 66–73; Lightfoot 2021; Macaulay-Lewis 2021, 322–23.

<sup>6</sup> Karageorghis et al. 2000; Bartman 2018, 64; Lightfoot 2021. For the limiting aspects of connoisseurship: Marlowe 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Loeschcke 1919, 37–40; Lightfoot 2021, 288. Although imperfect, typological dating remains the standard for scholars of Roman lamps in the absence of (and sometimes in addition to) archaeological context.

<sup>8</sup> Cesnola 1878, 75, 179, 192, 254, 297; Johnston 1878, 452–54.

<sup>9</sup> Colonna Ceccaldi 1870, 26, 30, 34; Murray et. al. 1900, 59, 62, 71; Bailey 1965, 5–11; Şöforoğlu and Summerer 2020; Lightfoot 2021, 18–19.

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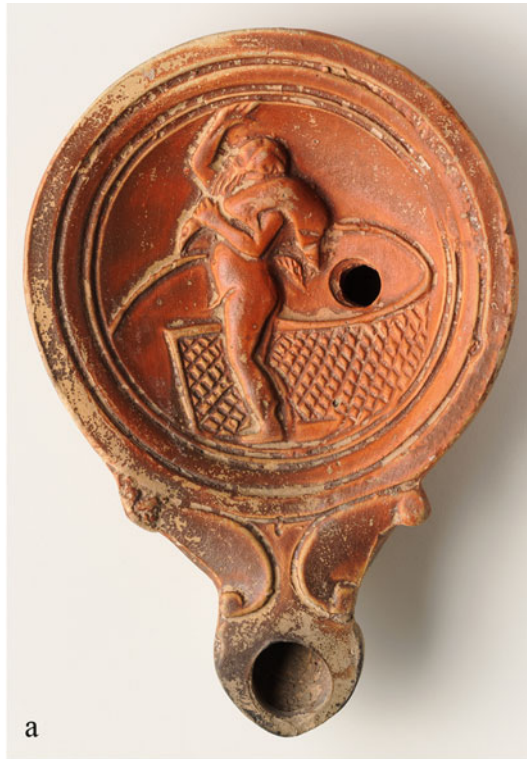


Fig. 1. Terracotta oil lamp, Cyprus, ca. 40–100 CE. 2.7 x 10.6 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Cesnola Collection, purchased by subscription, 1874–76, inv. no. 74.51.2115 ([b] courtesy of Alexis Belis).

wear and use, is also suggestive of recovery from a funerary context.<sup>10</sup> We cannot know the size or precise date of such a tomb, nor the other objects placed within it (if any). Also

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Cesnola's reference (1878, 300) to "broken lamps" discovered among the surface finds around Curium.



Fig. 2. Terracotta oil lamp of unknown origin, 1st c. CE. 76 mm across. Formerly in the Jules Sambon Collection. (Image after Sambon 1911.)

unknown is whether the lamp was manufactured in Cyprus or imported; while most ex-Cesnola lamps are presumed to be locally made Cypriot products, making such an assessment in the absence of a maker's mark or compositional analysis is problematic.<sup>11</sup>

We know even less about a second complete lamp with the same discus design, formerly in the collection of Jules Sambon, origin and current location unknown, but dated by form (Loeschcke Type I) to the mid-to-late 1st c. CE (Fig. 2).<sup>12</sup> The lack of latticed decoration and the clear rendering of the edges and opening of the enclosure indicate that the Sambon lamp was produced from a different mold than the Cesnola example.

Other fragmentary discuses (Fig. 3) with the same decoration confirm the basic repetition of the elements described above. Fragments of two lamps, one depicting the satyr and the other just the enclosure, were published as part of the

collection of the Museo arqueológico de Sevilla and attributed to Italica in southern Spain.<sup>13</sup> The satyr also appears at the Roman military settlement at Vindonissa in Switzerland, where discus fragments of two locally produced lamps made from the same mold were unearthed in storage pits dated to the time of Augustus or Tiberius.<sup>14</sup> A fragment of the satyr and *askos* from Magdalensberg in Austria was found in an Augustan-period context.<sup>15</sup> Finally, a locally made discus fragment featuring the satyr's body and an enclosure with a very thick edge but no latticing was found in a channel near a bathhouse at Pergamum, and dated to the 1st c. CE.<sup>16</sup>

The motif on these eight lamps is usually described in passing as a generic satyr with a wine skin. This is unsurprising; given the ubiquity of Dionysiac imagery in Roman art and

<sup>11</sup> Bailey 1965, 65, no. 221; Cova and Gordon 2010; Lightfoot 2021, 19–22. See also Kajzer et al. 2021; my thanks to Peter J. M. Schertz for drawing my attention to this article.

<sup>12</sup> Sambon 1911, 20, no. 163, pl. V; Loeschcke 1919, 24–32; Bussi ere and Lindros Wohl 2018, 63–64, 90.

<sup>13</sup> Fernandez-Chicarro 1956, 114 nos. 300, 302, fig. 61.5, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Leibundgut 1977, 150, no. 104 (nr. 105–6), pl. 31, no. 104. Based on the use of the local clay and the discus image quality, Leibundgut considers these poorly executed copies of another lamp.

<sup>15</sup> Farka 1977, 112, no. 22, catalog no. 1294, pl. 29, 62.

<sup>16</sup> Heimerl 2001, 163, no. 823, pl. 18. Heimerl (2001, 35) argues for a local product based on visual inspection of the clay.



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Fig. 3. Terracotta oil lamps (not to scale): (a) Discus fragment, Pergamum, Türkiye, 1st c. CE. Heimerl 2001, pl 18, n. 823; (b) Discus fragment, Magdalensberg, Austria, first quarter of the 1st c. CE. Farka 1977, pl. 62, n. 1294: *kärnten.museum*, photo: C. Farka; (c) Discus fragment, Vindonissa, Switzerland, 1st c. CE. *Leibundgut* 1977, pl. 31, n. 104.

on lamps, the subject matter excites little comment.<sup>17</sup> For example, in a pamphlet published in 1885 by the Met as a guide to the collection, the Cesnola lamp is described as simply: “Satyr with a wine-skin on his back.”<sup>18</sup> The follow-up handbook published by John Myres in 1914 includes this lamp in a group of “lamps with Dionysiac Subjects, such as Satyrs, Maenads, and Silenos-masks.”<sup>19</sup> The Magdalensberg and Pergamene lamps are placed in a similar group. The sales catalog for the Sambon lamp alone offered a more specific interpretation, asserting a connection to a statue of the satyr Marsyas from the Forum in Rome.<sup>20</sup> Christa Farka’s publication of the Magdalensberg fragment acknowledged this interpretation briefly, but remained skeptical because of differences between the lamp motif and other depictions of the Roman statue.<sup>21</sup> However, as we shall see, the Sambon catalog’s identification should be preferred to the more general understanding of the motif. Key to this identification are the satyr’s boots, pose, and statuesque treatment, all unusual iconographic elements for a simple satyr.

### The Forum Marsyas

Satyrs were popular figures in Greco-Roman art and associated with merriment, the wilderness, and fertility. Satyrs in Roman art are often shown dancing, playing music, frolicking, parading in a *thiasos*, engaged in wine production, and acting as attendants of Dionysus.<sup>22</sup> The tone, attitude, and attributes of these satyrs, however, are quite different

<sup>17</sup> A search of the Met’s online database for lamp and satyr, silenus, Pan, Marsyas, Faunus, maenad, Dionysus, or Bacchus yielded 10 Roman lamps from the Cesnola collection (Lightfoot 2021, nos. 368–70, 374, 376, 383–86, 393) and one other (accession number 41.160.740). Seven additional Cesnola lamps are decorated with grapes or vines (Lightfoot 2021, nos. 122, 161, 170, 177–78, 188–89).

<sup>18</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art 1885, 35, no. 93.

<sup>19</sup> Myres 1914, 367, no. 2655; Lightfoot (2021, 288, no. 376) simply describes the decoration as a “nude Silenus.”

<sup>20</sup> Sambon 1911, 20, no. 163.

<sup>21</sup> Farka 1977, 112, no. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Gaspari 1986; Simon 1997; Schertz 2005, 21–80; Wiseman 2008, 84–139.

from the motif under study here. For one, the lamp satyrs wear boots, an uncommon feature of other silenoi, whose primary clothing (when it exists) consists of a *nebris* tied around the neck, and sometimes a loincloth.<sup>23</sup> The raised right hand is reminiscent of several gestures, although not exactly: a hand raised while dancing, the *apokopein* gesture of shielding one's eyes, and an indication of augury.<sup>24</sup> None of these interpretations is suitable for the raised hand on the lamps, either because of context (e.g., the satyr is not dancing) or because the height or position of the hand is incorrect.<sup>25</sup> Also unusual is the base or pedestal, a clear indication that the design intends a statue.<sup>26</sup> As we will see, only the details of the famous Forum Marsyas statue are in accord with all of these unusual elements.

The Forum Marsyas statue was a well-known landmark from the Republican period.<sup>27</sup> Located in the Forum Romanum near the rostrum, the statue featured a very different Marsyas when compared to the more popular "Hanging" type, which portrayed the satyr's punishment after his musical contest with Apollo.<sup>28</sup> Instead, the Forum statue perhaps reflected an alternate tradition, in which Marsyas escaped and traveled to Italy, where he established viticulture and became the ancestor of the Marsi.<sup>29</sup> Although the statue is not preserved, its likeness is known from Roman writers and representations in other media, particularly denarii of L. Marcius Censorinus in 82 BCE (Fig. 4) and the 2nd-c. CE Anaglypha Traiani (Fig. 5), on which the statue is illustrated twice.<sup>30</sup> In these depictions, the Forum Marsyas is portrayed as a satyr on a squared base, with his face tilted to the sky and his right hand raised up, palm out.<sup>31</sup> An *askos* is thrown over his left shoulder, and he wears boots. The raised hand was particularly characteristic of the Forum statue, as the gesture is mentioned as an identifying feature by Roman writers, while the use of a base in these depictions emphasizes the satyr as a statue and not an imagined mythological figure.<sup>32</sup> Minor differences in the treatment of the figure across these examples – for instance, the space between the raised hand and head, the spacing and arrangement between his bent legs, and the treatment of the wine skin – can be attributed to the design process and the angle from which the figure is illustrated.<sup>33</sup> So far, the iconography of the Forum Marsyas is in line with the satyr on our lamps.

<sup>23</sup> Capitoline Museum, Rome, inv. no. 739; Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, acc. no. 71.557; Getty, Los Angeles, no. 56.AA.10; *RPC* I, no. 3126. The Thracian-style boots resemble those sometimes worn by Dionysus (e.g., Gaspari 1986, nos. 109, 128b, 621, 657; Schertz 2005, 49–62; Guzzo 2015) rather than the *compedes* identified by Coarelli (1992, 91–119) and others.

<sup>24</sup> Jucker 1956; Small 1982, 72 n. 15; Gaspari 1986, nos. 436, 444; Wiseman 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Small 1982, 75 n. 27; Schertz 2005, 62–76.

<sup>26</sup> Stewart 2003, 201–2; Moormann 2007, 218.

<sup>27</sup> The exact date and circumstances under which the statue was put up remain unclear; Horace (*Sat.* 1.6.120–21) places it on the Forum in the 30s BCE. For further discussion, see: Jordan 1883; Reinach 1915; Paoli 1945; Tibiletti 1962; Denti 1991; Coarelli 1992, 104–19; Basso and Buonopane 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Diod. Sic. 3.59.2–5; Rawson 1987; Weis 1992a; Weis 1992b, 368–75; Schertz 2005, 205–29.

<sup>29</sup> Sil. *Pun.* 8.502–4; Plin. *HN* 3.108.

<sup>30</sup> *RRC* 363/1a–d; Mart. *Spect.* 2.64.7–8; Torelli 1982, 96–106.

<sup>31</sup> Although the base is not clearly indicated on the denarii, it may be implied by the groundline beneath Marsyas's feet. An onyx intaglio copied from the Censorinus denarius (London, British Museum, 1814,0704.1357) does include the top of a base, suggesting an understanding of its presence on the coins as well.

<sup>32</sup> Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.120–21; Ps.-Acron, *ad* Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.120–21; Serv. *Ad. Aen.* 3.20.

<sup>33</sup> See also comments by Habetzeder 2010, 171–73.

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Fig. 4. Silver denarius of L. Marcius Censorinus, Rome, 82 BCE. 3.93 g/4h. Head of Apollo/Marsyas of the Forum and column, L CENSOR. (American Numismatic Society, New York, 1950.103.34.)



Fig. 5. Anaglypha Fori, alimenta panel, Curia Julia in the Forum Romanum, 2nd c. CE. The Marsyas statue is the first figure on the right. (© DAI Rome, D-DAI-ROM-68.2783. Photograph by J. Felbermeyer.)

The enclosure behind the lamp satyrs deserves some comment, especially as it is absent from other depictions of the Forum Marsyas. Latticed fencing of this kind (*cancelli*) was common in both civic and domestic contexts in the Roman world.<sup>34</sup> For example, the

<sup>34</sup> Cic. *De or.* 1.52; Cic. *Phil.* 5.4.9; Strab. 5.3.8.

Shrine of Venus Cloacina and the imperial rostrum (both in the Forum) are depicted with latticed balustrades.<sup>35</sup> There is also archaeological or pictorial evidence for similar garden and peristyle fencing in elite homes, including the House of the Marine Venus (II.3.3) and the House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6–7) at Pompeii, as well as on the garden fresco from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, the Censorinus coins place the satyr next to an honorary column, while on the Anaglypha reliefs he stands beside a *ficus*. We must conclude that the surrounding constructions were not a necessary part of the statue's iconography, since the messaging of both the coins and the panels relied on the viewer to identify the satyr with the Forum statue.<sup>37</sup>

Given the ongoing debate over the location of the statue, it is tempting to use the enclosure, column, and *ficus* to place Marsyas more precisely on the Forum.<sup>38</sup> Such an attempt faces significant hurdles, as it is not clear whether these pairings faithfully reproduce the topography of the Forum Romanum, or whether they were ideologically motivated; in fact, it is not altogether clear which monuments are being illustrated in the first place.<sup>39</sup> A number of candidates might be put forth for the latticed fence on the lamps, assuming we are viewing an open-air enclosure rather than the balustrades of a building. These include the Lacus Curtius, the tribunal of the foreign praetor (*praeter inter cives et peregrinos*), the fences around the *Ficus Navia* and the trio of trees near the center of the Forum, and potentially an enclosure around the statue itself.<sup>40</sup> Little effort is made by the lamp designers to set the scene more specifically, and one wonders at the absence of details within the enclosure that might aid in identification.<sup>41</sup> In fact, this may have been an intentional decision, allowing the viewer to fill in appropriate context according to their own understanding, their needs, and the use-context of the lamps themselves, a point to which we shall return.

Despite differences in surrounding imagery, it remains that the core features of the Forum Marsyas's iconography – base, pose, and general aspect – are consistent with the satyrs on the provincial lamps. It is unlikely that the Forum statue and the lamps simply draw from the same general archetypes or trends; it is hard to imagine the need for the statue base on the lamps in that case. Therefore, we now have strong evidence for reproductions of the Forum

<sup>35</sup> RRC 494; Stewart 2003, 115.

<sup>36</sup> Bergmann 2017, 279–312; Morvillez 2017, 33–36. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out the use of latticed fencing in Roman gardens.

<sup>37</sup> The intended messaging around both monuments is debated; see Torelli 1982, Santangelo 2016, and Brown 2020 for discussion and bibliography.

<sup>38</sup> A scholiast of Horace (Ps.-Acron, *ad Hor. Sat.* 1.6.120–21) places it *in rostris* but which rostrum – the old Republican or imperial rostrum – is unclear. For the major arguments, see: Paoli 1945; Coarelli 1992, 37, 104–19; Torelli 1982, 102 (Republican); Hülsen 1910, 16–20; Small 1982, 70–73, 77–83; Giuliani and Verduchi 1987, 95–103; Carandini and Carafa 2017, 169, pl. 26 (imperial).

<sup>39</sup> Although the column on the Censorinus coin is usually identified as the Column Maenia (Coarelli 1992, 104–19; Conese 2012), this is not certain. The Anaglypha *ficus* has been alternately associated with the *Ficus Navia*, part of the trio of grapevine, fig, and olive trees in the Forum center, or an artificial bronze tree (see Brown 2020 for discussion).

<sup>40</sup> Plin. *HN* 15.77–78; Conon, *Narr.* 48; Hülsen 1910, 104, 144–51; Torelli 1982, 108; Giuliani and Verduchi 1987, 93–103; Kondratieff 2010.

<sup>41</sup> I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for making this observation.



Marsyas on lamps outside of Rome in the 1st c. CE. This is surprising because the statue is typically understood to have a political meaning more at home in civic and public contexts.

### The Forum Marsyas as a civic symbol

The Forum Marsyas is often associated with civic *libertas*. The key source is Servius, a 4th-c. CE scholiast of Vergil, who claimed that free cities (*liberis civitatibus*) in the provinces set up copies of the Forum Marsyas on their fora as a symbol of liberty (*libertatis indicium*).<sup>42</sup> Charax of Pergamon, writing in the 2nd c. CE, also described statues of silenoi in Roman colonies, which he said represented the community's freedom from political or legal subjugation.<sup>43</sup> The epigraphic evidence for such statues and the satyr's appearance on provincial coins seem to confirm the trend identified by Charax and Servius, although the origin of the connection between civic *libertas* and the Forum Marsyas remains unclear. Modern scholars situate the Forum statue's original significance in the context of Republican politics, suggesting that it initially symbolized plebian enfranchisement, freedom from debt slavery, or the rights of Italian communities.<sup>44</sup> The statue likely stood adjacent to the tribunal of the foreign praetor, who dealt in legal issues concerning non-Roman citizens.<sup>45</sup> If the statue did not originally represent the rights and freedoms of communities outside Rome, a casual association between the tribunal and the statue, reinforced by the orator-like pose adopted by Marsyas, may have given rise to this connection.<sup>46</sup>

Beyond the statue's connection to *libertas*, it was a well-known public landmark associated with Rome. Indeed, Horace and Martial play with the statue's location and raised arm when they make passing reference to it as part of the Forum's landscape, suggesting that their readers would easily identify the statue and understand the joke.<sup>47</sup> The Forum Marsyas was also involved in the nighttime revels of Augustus's daughter, Julia; her act of crowning the statue angered the *princeps* for reasons we still do not fully understand.<sup>48</sup> Marsyas was selected from among many other Forum statues for inclusion (twice!) on the Anaglypha, where it stood alongside other ideologically significant monuments and buildings. This is a further sign of a collective awareness about the statue, where it stood, and what it meant.

Copies or likenesses of the Forum Marsyas outside Rome are overwhelmingly found in civic and public spaces, leading to a general acceptance of the Servian interpretation of *libertas*. The earliest statues of the type are found in Italy at Paestum, Alba Fucens, and Vibinum before the mid-1st c. BCE; the Paestan example was set up on or near the city's forum and may predate the Roman statue, perhaps representing a broader Italian tradition for the type.<sup>49</sup> A similar sculptural trend can be found in North Africa, now represented

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<sup>42</sup> Serv. *Ad. Aen.* 3.20, 4.58.

<sup>43</sup> Charax of Pergamon, *Etymologicon Magnum*, s.v. *koloneia*.

<sup>44</sup> Isid. *Etym.* 87; Reinach 1915; Paoli 1945; Tibiletti 1962; Kapossy 1965; Small 1982, 68–92; Torelli 1982, 102–6; Coarelli 1992, 104–19; Schertz 2005, 80–186; Santangelo 2015; Arena 2020.

<sup>45</sup> *CIL* 6.3166; *CIL* 6.37068; Ps.-Acron, *ad Hor. Sat.* 1.6.120–21; Hülsen 1910, 16–20; Giuliani and Verduchi 1987, 95–103.

<sup>46</sup> Small 1982, 80–82.

<sup>47</sup> *Hor. Sat.* 1.6.111–12; *Mart. Spect.* 2.64.8.

<sup>48</sup> *Plin. HN* 21.6.8–9; *Sen. Ben.* 6.31.2; see discussion in Sanderson and Keegan 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Torelli 1982, 105; Denti 1991; Liberatore 1995; Basso and Buonopane 2008, 141–43 (with bibliography); Wiseman 2008, 99.

entirely by epigraphic evidence. These inscriptions detail statues of Marsyas set up in public spaces at seven cities, mostly *municipia*, between the first quarter of the 2nd and the mid-3rd c. CE.<sup>50</sup> Three of these were set up in a forum, and the others also suggest a civic, rather than cultic, context.<sup>51</sup> We accept these as copies of the Forum Marsyas following Servius. Outside North Africa, the Forum Marsyas appears on civic coins from Greece, Asia Minor, and the Levant. Altogether, some 23 cities struck coins (Fig. 6) using the Forum Marsyas motif, beginning with Sinope in Bithynia in 92/3 CE, and continuing through the reign of Aurelian at Cremna in Pisidia.<sup>52</sup> There is great diversity in style and setting employed by the provincial die cutters, although the raised right hand, *askos* over the left shoulder, and short boots are always retained. Types from Coela, Alexandria Troas, and Berytus depict the satyr on a base, while 3rd-c. Phoenician examples from Berytus and Sidon place a Forum Marsyas statue against a cityscape.<sup>53</sup> More common is the depiction of the satyr alone or alongside the city goddess Tyche.<sup>54</sup> With one exception (Coela in Thrace, a *municipium*), all cities were of colonial status when Forum Marsyas coins were struck. Particularly in the 3rd c., the Forum Marsyas appears only with the introduction of a colonial grant, suggesting a connection between the achievement of certain civic rights and the satyr.<sup>55</sup>

To recap: the Forum Marsyas statue was a landmark on the Roman Forum, coming at some point by the 1st c. BCE to represent *libertas*, and eventually, the collective *libertas* enjoyed by provincial cities. This Marsyas appears in public art and contexts, serving an ideological purpose. Yet many questions remain concerning the provincial phenomenon, particularly about the chronology and mechanisms behind the diffusion of Forum Marsyas imagery, and the legibility of the motif to provincial audiences. The date, geographic spread, and design of the Forum Marsyas lamps are uniquely positioned to address these issues.

### The Forum Marsyas motif and the evidence of the lamps

The lamps fill a meaningful chronological lacuna and expand the geographic penetration of the Marsyas in the corpus of provincial evidence for the motif. The lamps are dated by form and/or archaeological context to the 1st c. CE and are therefore our earliest secure examples of the motif on media produced outside Italy. The lamps have a wider distribution than the provincial coins or sculptures, and there is no geographic overlap between these categories of evidence (Fig. 7). The Marsyas lamps also expand the radius of the motif's dissemination, particularly in Roman Europe, for which there was no prior evidence. Furthermore, the strong correlation, demonstrated by the epigraphic and

<sup>50</sup> Small 1982, 140–42; Basso and Buonopane 2008, 153–57; Arena 2020, 444–46.

<sup>51</sup> These are at Althiburos, Mustis, and Verecunda (Basso and Buonopane 2008, 153–55).

<sup>52</sup> *RPC* II, no. 723A; *RPC* X, ID 63448; Basso and Buonopane 2008, 148–52.

<sup>53</sup> *RPC* IV.1, temp. no. 9608 (Coela); *RPC* IX.2, temp. no. 198 (Alexandria Troas); *RPC* III, no. 3858 and *RPC* VI, temp. nos. 8322, 8388 (Berytus); *RPC* VI, temp. no. 8386 (Sidon).

<sup>54</sup> E.g., *RPC* III, nos. 290, 203 (Corinth); *RPC* VI, temp. nos. 731, 829 (Deultum); *RPC* IV.3, temp. nos. 11761–62 (Ninica); *RPC* VII.2, no. 2757A (Antioch); *RPC* VI, temp. nos. 8674, 8690 (Tyre); *RPC* IX, no. 2215 (Bostra). For the numismatic iconography, see: Klimowsky 1982–83; Palistrant Shaick 2021; Le Blanc forthcoming.

<sup>55</sup> Paoli 1938; Veyne 1961; Klimowsky 1982–83; Small 1982; Basso and Buonopane 2008; Filges 2015; Palistrant Shaick 2021; Le Blanc forthcoming.

## The Forum Marsyas on 1st-c. CE lamps



Fig. 6. Note: images not to scale. From left: Reverse of bronze coin of Gordian III, Deultum, 241–42 CE. 7.32 g/23 mm/7h. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, 18248913. Reverse of bronze coin of Caracalla, Tyre, 209–17 CE. 13.67 g/26 mm/6h. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, 18257514. Reverse of bronze coin of Elagablaus, Berytus, 218–22 CE. 19.15 g/29 mm/1h. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, 18202840.

numismatic evidence, between the Forum Marsyas and municipal or colonial status does not hold for the provenienced lamps, none of which are found at such sites.<sup>56</sup> We will return momentarily to the implications this has for interpreting the satyr as an object of political art.

The Marsyas lamps also provide insight into some practical considerations behind the motif's spread. The lamps all depict Marsyas from the same perspective and in the same pose, standing in front of an enclosure of similar shape and location, suggesting a common source for the motif. However, differences in the details between the lamps – especially the inconsistent lattice detailing and rendering of the enclosure's opening – make it impossible that the provincial lamps were productions of a single mold or copies of one prototype lamp. Local production of the lamps at Vindonissa and Pergamon indicates that we are not dealing with imports from a single source. The Censorinus coin, which circulated widely in the provinces, is also not a likely common prototype, as this would require lamp workshops to make surprisingly similar and specific choices about how to adapt the coin type for use in other media. Instead, we should consider the role of model or figure books in the background of the design process.<sup>57</sup> The nature of the differences in the discus designs hints at the use of such tools to provide a general schema. While Amy Russell rightly notes that “it is hard to track the exact process by which any given image moved across time, space, and media,” the geographic distribution of the lamps point to a widely available archetype or pattern in simultaneous use by artisans in the 1st c.<sup>58</sup>

The potential widespread availability of the Forum Marsyas in model books has implications for our understanding of the other extant provincial material. It has been suggested that the Forum Marsyas numismatic types were based on local statues; that is, there would be a sculptural prototype for the coin design.<sup>59</sup> The lamps provide an alternate model or

<sup>56</sup> For example, Magdalensberg was abandoned in favor of newly founded Virunum (a *municipium*) under Claudius (Alföldy 1974, 78–87), and Vindonissa was a legionary camp.

<sup>57</sup> Dunbabin 1999, 300–3; Clarke 2010; Elsner 2020; Rowan 2022, 37.

<sup>58</sup> Russell 2020, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Basso and Buonopane 2008, 150; Filges 2015, 241–42; Palistrant Shaick 2021, 184.

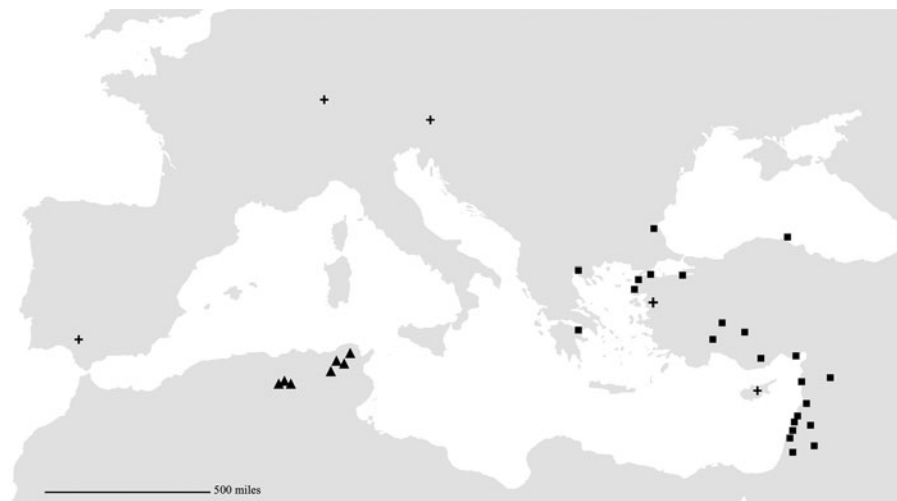


Fig. 7. Map of findspots of Forum Marsyas lamps (+), sculptural dedications (▲), civic coinage (■). (Base map public domain; map by the author.)

design process. This may have involved the lamps themselves, although die cutters employed a greater range of experimentation and creative implementation of the motif. Some changes are explicable as byproducts of the transition from one medium to another, for example, omitting the enclosure on provincial coinage given the small size of the coin flans.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, most of the Marsyas coins feature a satyr with a more pronounced bend to their knees, and their weight shifted forward; in fact, none of the provincial coin designs hew closely enough to the lamp or Censorinus imagery to suggest that the die cutters were replicating those images specifically. We seem to have multiple prototypes in circulation; the lamps simply make an argument for such a prototype in the form of lynchnological models or pattern books, and not necessarily a local statue. Taken together, the lamps and coins imply greater fluidity in the design process and implementation of the Forum Marsyas motif than currently supposed.

The lamps likewise expand our understanding of the social and spatial contexts in which the Forum Marsyas appeared; it was not a motif confined solely to civic art. Evidence continues to mount for its use on personal effects and in domestic spaces. Among the Italian evidence are two undated intaglios, a decorated platter described in Petronius's *Satyricon*, and a series of domestic fountain or garden figures from the late 2nd or 3rd c. CE.<sup>61</sup> Aside from the lamps, private use of the Forum Marsyas in the provinces consists of four amulets from the 3rd or 4th c. CE.<sup>62</sup> The gems were evidently inspired by coin designs from Neapolis in Samaria, reinterpreted as an aid in overcoming digestive issues or colic, and with the satyr recast as Aeolus and his bag of winds (Fig. 8).<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Moormann 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Petron. *Sat.* 36; London, British Museum, 1814,0704.1357; Jordan 1883, 8, pl. III, C; Fürtwängler 1896, 167–68, no. 3963; Habetzeder 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Michel 2004, 1.2.1–4.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., *RPC* VIII, IDs 2310, 2342, 2368; *RPC* IX, no. 2172; Eitrem 1939; Bonner 1942. The hematite amulet from the National Museum in Copenhagen (NM\_7034) explicitly contains a Greek inscription referring to flatulence.



The lamps add a new medium for the motif and expand the corpus of provincial use in non-civic contexts in the 1st c. CE. In fact, before the use of the Forum Marsyas on civic coins, the satyr's appearance on lamps was perhaps the primary way that provincial peoples encountered the motif.

This leads us to issues of audience and interpretation. While it is unfortunate that none of the provincial lamps have been found in primary use contexts, the portability of lamps and their appearance in a range of social spaces make it difficult to construct static "viewing scenarios" in any case.<sup>64</sup> We can imagine that some of these contexts – feasts, funerals, ritual – would have placed significantly different parameters around interpreting the image.<sup>65</sup> For example, we can easily see how a lamp decorated with a satyr and *askos* might be well-suited for an atmosphere of conviviality and merriment, any political aspect to the design subsumed by the context. It remains unclear whether provincial viewers of the lamps in the 1st c. CE would easily have identified the satyr with the Forum Marsyas, and whether the design conveyed an immutable political meaning. While it is often thought that domestic decoration was ill-suited to communicating political messaging in the same manner as civic coinage or other public media, there is ample evidence for the diffusion of political imagery into domestic contexts.<sup>66</sup> Imperial imagery, however, does not necessitate political interpretation or intent and might derive from a shared visual *koine* rather than an immutable meaning. This includes adapting and reimagining images bound up in political contexts.

We cannot know how familiar provincial peoples were with the Forum Marsyas statue, its meaning, and its iconography before the 2nd c. Certainly, Roman writers treat it as a famous landmark in Rome, but the discus design itself is vague in what it conveys beyond a statue of a satyr.<sup>67</sup> The latticed enclosure is a generic fencing of the type we see in both fora and gardens, and may have suggested either space. Satyrs were also common garden and fountain sculptures, even if this particular type was unusual.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, the discus imagery has little connection to the typical poses and attitudes that characterized other satyr lamps.<sup>69</sup> The raised right hand may have indicated a public or civic context, given its associations with similar oratorical and imperial gestures, such as the *adlocutio*.<sup>70</sup> The knowledge of the viewer and the context in which the lamps were used surely affected interpretation of the motif. In practical terms, such malleability makes good economic sense, allowing viewers to interpret the image in a myriad of ways and thereby appealing to a broader variety of tastes. Nevertheless, the political aspect of the Forum Marsyas still falls within the "zone of possible meanings" for viewers of the lamp with knowledge of the statue in Rome and its meaning.<sup>71</sup>

I also propose that a more expansive interpretation of the *libertas* symbolism is potentially valid. While the *libertas* associated with the Forum Marsyas is usually understood

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<sup>64</sup> Clarke 2007, 227.

<sup>65</sup> Rowan 2022, 31–37.

<sup>66</sup> Moormann 2013; Županek et. al. 2019; Clarke 2007, 146–57, 173–75.

<sup>67</sup> Moormann 2015; Anguissola 2022.

<sup>68</sup> Habetzeder 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Bailey 1988, 8–10.

<sup>70</sup> Small 1982, 73–74; Le Blanc forthcoming.

<sup>71</sup> Clarke 2007, 120.



Fig. 8. (a) Hematite amulet, 27.5 x 25 x 3.8 mm, Paris, Cabinet des Médailles N.3500; (b) Reverse of bronze coin of Philip I, Neapolis, 244–49 CE. 14.61 g/28 mm/6h. New York, American Numismatic Society, 1944.100.69135.

as one related to civic and collective concerns, the concept also applies to personal and individual legal freedoms. The Marsyas decoration on the platter used in Trimalchio's feast from the *Satyricon*, for example, appears directly before an emancipation scene focused on a young man dressed as Bacchus.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps, as Pedro López Barja de Quiroga suggests, the inclusion of Marsyas (who is named specifically) is a nod to the *libertas* now enjoyed by Trimalchio's servant.<sup>73</sup> The bucolic and Bacchic aspects of fountain and garden sculptures could likewise mine the resonances between *libertas* and freedom from the constraints of society. The colic amulets, meanwhile, are perhaps a playful twist on *libertas*, here communicating freedom from digestive upset. Depending on the context and viewer, the Forum Marsyas lamps could have likewise engaged in this more expansive mining of the statue's more usual political meaning.

The political or symbolic meaning of the statue was not necessarily part of the viewer's response to the Forum Marsyas at all, even if they identified the motif with the Roman statue. Instead, its significance as a landmark of the imperial capital may have motivated a workshop to employ the design, and a consumer to purchase it. The landmarks of Rome and other famous monuments across the ancient Mediterranean were of considerable interest to visitors and those living abroad, either as curiosities, points of interest, or representations of privileges or ideological belief. Reproductions of such monuments, including statues, served as memorabilia, souvenirs, and symbols of connection to other places. As Maggie Popkin argues, "souvenirs had the potential to transcend time and space, making places, events, and experiences possessable, portable, and shareable," and they "enabled people across the Roman Empire from different backgrounds to possess their represented subjects and simultaneously constructed those subjects as shared cultural markers."<sup>74</sup> The Forum Marsyas lamps may have worked as a kind of "vicarious souvenir" to call the imperial city to mind even if viewers hadn't experienced the statue firsthand, an

<sup>72</sup> Petron. *Sat.* 41.

<sup>73</sup> Barja de Quiroga 2018, 154.

<sup>74</sup> Popkin 2022, 4.

idea which would hold appeal across social class and means.<sup>75</sup> Similar images referring to sculptures and monuments in Rome were popular on lamps in this same period, particularly those based on the statue of Aeneas from the Forum of Augustus, and a relief depicting the sacrifice of Marcus Curtius from the Lacus Curtius in the Forum.<sup>76</sup> In such a case, the statue's symbolic power as an emblem for Rome moves to the front.

### Conclusions

This note has argued that the lamp motif featuring a statue of a satyr with a raised hand, *askos*, and enclosure was inspired by the Forum Marsyas statue from Rome. This interpretation – which fits with the iconographic evidence nicely – leads us to reconsider our understanding of how, where, and when the motif spread, and the way it was received by provincial peoples. The iconography of the Forum Marsyas was obviously part of the provincial *koine* long before it was used by sculptors and civic mints. The lamps highlight aspects of the diffusion and design process that we have only previously guessed at; that is, the use of pattern books, multiple prototypes, and a more expansive legibility to the motif. The Marsyas lamps also demonstrate that the design was circulating in private and domestic contexts alongside its civic use. These objects provide additional evidence for flexibility in the use and reception of the motif. Although a civic context may have made a political interpretation of the motif a *fait accompli*, the lynchnological evidence ought to expand the possible intended uses and reception of the Forum Marsyas. While there is clear literary, numismatic, and sculptural evidence that the statue, for some, served as a reminder of the civic *libertas* that provincial cities of a certain status enjoyed, we should be careful not to dismiss the obvious fluidity at work in the use of the Forum Marsyas in other media.

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<sup>75</sup> Künzl and Koeppel 2002, 25–26, 32–33, 63–65; Popkin 2022, 9, 244–48.

<sup>76</sup> Leibundgut 1977, 172, 245, pl. 44; Bailey 1980, nos. Q795, Q1394; Bussièrè and Lindros Wohl 2018, 81–82, no. 105 = Malibu 83.AQ.438.38, with additional parallels.

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