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Citation

Tamsü Polat, R., Polat, Y., & Lubotsky, A. (2020). An Idol-Shaped stele with an Old Phrygian Inscription in the Territory of Nakoleia. *Gephyra*, 19, 45-67.
doi:10.37095/gephyra.700983

Version: Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

An Idol-Shaped Stele with an Old Phrygian Inscription in the Territory of Nakoleia

Rahşan TAMSÜ POLAT* – Yusuf POLAT** – Alexander LUBOTSKY***

Introduction

Coming to Anatolia in waves of immigration beginning at the end of the 2nd millennium BC¹, the Phrygians have adopted the thousands-of-years-old, deeply-rooted Anatolian belief in the Mother Goddess, whom they simply called Matar ‘mother’². They have created cult monuments for this goddess consisting of rock-carved façades, altars, and niches in their new homeland in Central Anatolia. Reliefs depicting the Mother Goddess are seen on the steles found in the capital of Gordion and within the borders of Ankara in the center of niches and on some façades of these monuments. In addition to these depictions, a small number of statues of the Goddess are found at the Yazılıkaya / Midas Fortress in the Highlands of Phrygia³, in the capital of Gordion⁴ and in Ankara and its surroundings⁵ in Central Phrygia, and to the east of the Kızılırmak (Halys) River in the strata of the Phrygian settlement of Boğazköy⁶. Apart from small details, Matar is shown with the same iconographic characteristics in all of her anthropomorphic depictions. In most of the steles, the Goddess is shown in a framed pediment. This architectural frame is a linear-style depiction of the schema seen on the façades of the Mother Goddess’s sanctuary or temple⁷. Using schematic imagery synthesizing Anatolian culture, the Goddess is pictured as a mature woman, reflecting an Anatolian mother-figure, in both reliefs and free-standing statues. She is pictured straight on and standing with a high polos on her head, a dress stretching to her feet, and a wrap hanging down from her shoulders. Her arms are connected to her body and usually bent at the elbow. In most cases the goddess is portrayed holding a bird of prey and a bowl, and sometimes depicted next to lions. Of all of Matar’s anthropomorphic depictions, only in one group found in situ inside

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¹ For immigration movement see Barnett 1967, 3; Carrington 1977, 117- 118; Olshausen 1996, 965-967.

² Roller 1999, 66.

³ Haspels 1951, 10.111, 114, pl. 47 b; Prayon 1987, no. 1, pl.1 a-f.

⁴ Young 1969, 270ff; Naumann 1983, 151; Prayon 1987, 20, I, cat. no. 6, pl. 2c-e.

⁵ Bittel 1963, pl. II.c-d; Prayon 1987, 201, cat. no. 5, pl. 2a-b; Roller 1999, 73.

⁶ Bittel 1958, 57ff., Bittel 1963, 7-21, lev. II c-d; Prayon 1987, 201, cat. no. 5, pl. 2 a-b; Roller 1999, 72, fig. 10.

⁷ Işık 2012, 277.

the niche on the eastern wall of Boğazköy's Büyükkale do we see two small male figures found on either side of her. One of them is playing a lyre or kithara, the other a double flute⁸.

A type of representation of idol-like depictions dating back to the Prehistoric Period⁹ which shows gods and goddesses with their heads and bodies and sometimes their necks, arms, faces, and genitals, interpreted as schematized, abstract representations, are also found within the borders of the Phrygian Region. While it has been accepted by many scholars¹⁰ that these representations depict the Mother Goddess, there is no indication of gender in these idols. The idols were found southwest of the Highlands Phrygia in Beyköy¹¹, in Gordion¹², in Boğazköy¹³, at Kerkenes¹⁴, and at Ovaören / Yassihöyük¹⁵. Rock-carved reliefs of monadic idols are seen in the Highlands of Phrygia, the Keskaya Settlement¹⁶, at the Yazılıkaya Midas Fortress¹⁷ and at the end of the Yazılıkaya / Midas Valley¹⁸, in Köhnüş Valley¹⁹, Karababa Valley²⁰, Fındık Asarkale²¹, and again in the Highlands of Phrygia on the back of the steps of some stepped altars²². Idol-shaped depictions were located on the stele-like blocks around Ankara (the steles found on Beli Köprü Road and the Fahared Çeşme²³, and near Sincan Tatlar Village²⁴) and on the miniature limestone altar found in situ in the front room of a Phrygian house in Boğazköy²⁵.

New Stele with an Old Phrygian Inscription

In years of 2017 and 2018, several surveys have been carried out in the Yazılıkaya / Midas Valley, which is located within the borders of Seyitgazi and the Han district of Eskişehir. These surveys aimed at researching and recording cultural materials of various periods and at taking action to

⁸ Bittel 1958, 57ff.; Bittel 1963, 7ff, pl. 1-8; Prayon 1987, 201, cat. no.5, pl. 2a-b; Roller 1999, 72, fig. 10.

⁹ Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 121.

¹⁰ Naumann 1983, 92-95; Roller 1999, 77ff.

¹¹ Börker-Klähn 2000, 37ff., fig. 3.

¹² Young 1951, 2ff., pl. VII, fig. 2; DeVries 1990, 398, fig. 36; Roller 1999, 78, fig. 15.

¹³ Bittel 1963, fig. 2; Boehmer 1972, nos. 2144 A, 2147, 2148, 2160.

¹⁴ Summers – Summers 2005, 104, fig. 8; Summers 2008, 481, draw. 4; Summers – Summers 2011, 386, fig. 7a-b; Summers – Summers 2012, 170-171, fig. 10; Osborne – Summers 2014, 294; Summers 2018, 104, fig. 7.

¹⁵ Akçay 2015, fig. 5.

¹⁶ Haspels 1971, 98; Naumann 1983, pl. 10 c.

¹⁷ Haspels 1971, 94ff., fig. 25-26, 36; Tüfekçi-Sivas 1999, no. A 17.

¹⁸ Polat 2019, fig. 3-4.

¹⁹ Tüfekçi-Sivas 1999, 170; Berndt-Ersöz 2006, cat. no. 49, fig. 8, 65.

²⁰ Haspels, 1971, 59, 98; Naumann, 1983, 97.

²¹ Sivas 2003, 288; Tüfekçi-Sivas – Sivas 2003, 9, pl. 11, fig. 1-2.

²² Tamsü 2008, 439-440, fig. 2-6; Tamsü-Polat 2010, 207-208, fig. 3-7.

²³ von der Osten 1929, 59, fig. 90, pl. V; Naumann 1983, 94, pl. 9 f; Prayon 1987, pl. 15 c.

²⁴ Metin – Akalın 2001, 183f., pl. 4.

²⁵ Neve 1970, 156, fig. 9a-d; Naumann 1983, 94f.; Prayon 1987, 169ff.

preserve the monuments of the valley. In addition to new Phrygian cult monuments, new settlements and necropolises dating to the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Periods were discovered in the region. Besides many archaeological findings in the valley, these surveys have demonstrated that, in contrast to what was previously believed, the valley has remained inhabited without interruption since the Lower Paleolithic Period²⁶. The completion of a mapping project in which ruins are identified and used to locate ancient road networks and important findings recovered during past surveys revealed that the valley should be regarded together with its nearby surroundings. Consequently, the surveyed area was expanded and starting in 2019, the Eskişehir districts of Seyitgazi and Han in their entirety were incorporated into the study²⁷. During the surveys carried out in 2019, a visit was made to Eski Camii Mound located one km southeast of Gümüşbel Village (previously called Hüsnüabad, Ma Başı) in Eskişehir's Seyitgazi district (Fig. 1). Surrounded by wetlands and featuring an Islamic Period tomb built on top of it, the mound today -- to the extent it has been preserved -- measures 180 m in diameter and 3.5 m in height. In the 1980s, the DSI (State Hydraulic Works) built a canal around the mound (Fig. 2). At the mound, which was studied for the first time in 1994 during surveys carried out under supervision of T. Efe²⁸, we have identified ceramics dated to the Late Chalcolithic Period, Early Bronze Age 2-3, and the Classic Period.

On a visit to this mound during surveys in 2019, we have discovered Chalcolithic Period, Early Bronze Age 2-3 ceramics and Iron Age ceramics dated to the 8th century BC as well as an idol-shaped stele with an Old Phrygian inscription on the southeastern side of the mound (Fig. 3). Not in situ, the stele measures 1.03 m high, 56 cm wide, and 21-31 cm deep (Fig. 4-5). It is shaped with a rounded, idol-like head and detailed, narrow shoulders; the lower podium section placed on the base is roughly smoothed. From the podium and from similar objects, we may conclude that it was probably placed on a platform, as this is the case in Kerkenes. The word *atas* is legible in the first line on the stele. Three heads and a long body (?) engraved in a linear style with no visible shoulder detail are found under this inscription. Two of the heads were made right next to each other and are bordered by a double engraved line. The third head was placed in the center of the other two, made at the point where the double engraved lines that border the two heads meet in the middle. This engraved line, which borders the heads, is similarly seen bordering some of the double idols on the altars²⁹ and double heads on the steles³⁰ of the Highlands of Phrygia. In addition, these lines appear on the entrance to Kerkenes's Palace complex and its Cappadocia Gate³¹ between the valleys of Yazılıkaya / Midas and Kümbet³², and around the heads of the single idols

²⁶ Tamsü-Polat – Polat 2018, 49-56; Tamsü-Polat et al. 2019, 261-278, Erikan 2019, 23-34.

²⁷ We would like to extend our thanks to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, and to the Management of the Scientific Research Projects of Anadolu University for supporting our research.

²⁸ Efe 1996, 141.

²⁹ Tüfekçi-Sivas 1999, pl. 135b; 115 a-b, 121 a-b, 125a-b, 126; Tamsü 2008, 443, fig. 3.

³⁰ Prayon 1987, pl. 15c; Metin – Akalın 2001, fig. 1.

³¹ Summers – Summers 2012, 171, 174, fig. 9, fig. 15.

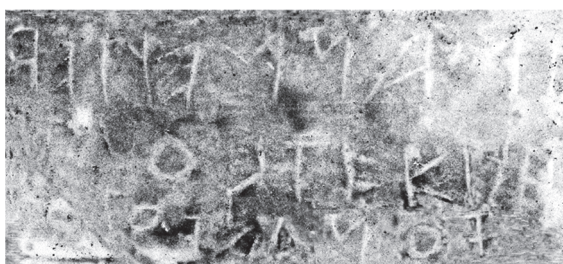
³² Polat 2019, fig. 3-4.

found on Boğazköy's miniature altar. While these lines appear above the heads on the newly discovered stele, the sides connect to the shoulders, in unity with the shape of the block. The lines bordering the idols on the two heads in particular curve towards the sides of the head on some cases. For this reason, they were also interpreted as curls of hair³³. However, Vassileva, correlating them with the Hittite winged sun disc, interpreted these details as royal headpieces probably associated with the images of kings and gods that were borrowed and adapted³⁴. In our opinion, this bordering may reflect a symbolic unity of the heads. Under the heads we find three lines of an Old Phrygian inscription (Fig. 4-5).

Linguistic analysis of the inscription

The inscription consists of two parts: above (A) and under (B) the image.

- A. ATAS
B. 1. IMANMEUTER
2. [?]MOSTEKISE
3. TONDAGOY



Paleographic commentary

The inscription is complete (with a possible exception of the beginning of the second line), and all letters are quite clear, although the writing is rather inaccurate.

Part A:

The part above the image seems to be written from right to left, although the opposite direction cannot be excluded (cf. especially the form of the sigma). We opt for the sinistroverse direction primarily because the name Atas is known from the other sources (see below).

Part B: The part under the image consists of three lines and is written in boustrophedon, starting from right to left.

Part B, line 1.

- The fifth letter (after IMAN) is likely to be an M, although the vertical stroke, which distinguishes M from N, is rather shallow. Importantly, the angle of the strokes matches that of M of IMAN, rather than of the preceding N.

Part B, line 2.

- At the beginning of line 2, the stone is broken, so that, theoretically speaking, there might have been a (narrow) letter, although there is no trace of it left. However, considering the large distance between M and O (see further below), this seems improbable. It is conceivable that this part was already broken when the inscription was carved.
- The first letter of line 2 can hardly be anything else than M, although one of the diagonal lines is not well visible.

³³ Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 58; Vassileva 2009, 111.

³⁴ Vassileva 2009, 116-117.

- It seems probable that the inscription originally ended after MOS or MO of the second line. The first letters of the second line are bigger and placed with a large distance between them. It was only later that somebody added the remaining part. Since the available space was limited, the letters are smaller already in line 2 and are written closer to each other. In line 3, the letters become even smaller. The difference in the shape of the two sigmas of line 2 may further indicate that the second part was written by a different hand.
- The last letter is an epsilon, as is clear from the impression.

Part B, line 3.

- On the photographs, the first letter looks like an epsilon, but the upper horizontal line is perpendicular to the vertical line and crosses it, which makes it likely that this is a T and that the other lines are accidental.
- The third letter from the end might be a sloppy executed T, but a gamma is most probable.
- The last letter is a Y, which means that the inscription (at least its final part) belongs to the period after the orthographical reform³⁵.

Interpretation

We arrive thus at the following text: *Atas* [IMAGE] *Imanmeutermos tekisetondagoy*. Since there are no word dividers and since only the first two words of this inscription have been attested elsewhere, while the rest is new, the analysis must necessarily remain tentative.

Taking into account the differences in the size of the letters and their condensed placement at the end of the inscription (see above), we can divide the text into three parts / sentences:

1. *Atas*
2. *imanmeutermos*
3. *tekisetondagoy*

Sentence 1: *Atas*

Atas must be a personal name in the nominative singular. In Old Phrygian inscriptions, it is found either with the final -s, or without. Most attestations are on the graffiti from Gordion (*ata* G-107, G-118, G-224a, G-234; *atas* G-128;]*aṭaṣ* G-119, G-221), which only consist of the name.

A dat. sg. of this name is once found in a dedicatory rock inscription W-10, which reads: *ḡtai edae lelavo viṭe atevo atoios...* This might be an indication that *Atas* had an important position (a king or a deity?), cf. the famous inscription from Midas-city (M-01a) *ates : arkievavis : akenanogavos : midai : lavagtaei : vanaktei : edaes*, where we encounter dat.sg. *midai* 'to Midas'. For an alternative interpretation of *Atas* as 'father' referring to Zeus, see below.

In Greek inscriptions from Phrygia, the name Ατ(τ)ας is found several times³⁶.

Sentence 2: *imanmeutermos*

iman

³⁵ Brixhe – Lejeune 1984, 279ff.

³⁶ Zgusta 1964, 105-106.

Old Phrygian *iman* is inflected as an *n*-stem: nom.sg. *iman*, acc.sg. *imenan* (for the inflection, cf. NPhr. nom.sg. *opovav* ‘father, warden’, acc.sg. *opovevav*, gen.sg. *opovevoç*). The clearest occurrences of this word are the opening sentence of the Vezirhan inscription (B-05.1) *sin-t imenān kaḷiya tit-edat*[...] ‘Kaliya has established this *iman*’ and the imprecation in line 8 of the same inscription, starting with *yos niy art sin-t imenan* ‘whoever [will harm] this *iman*’. From these occurrences we can infer that *iman* may refer to a stone, stele, monument, relief, or something similar³⁷.

It is usually assumed that in line 11 of the Vezirhan inscription, we find a dat.sg. of *iman*, spelled *inmeney*³⁸, but in reality, the analysis of this passage is doubtful³⁹. The text given by the editors⁴⁰ reads: *ivimun inmeney aṣ enān daket*, and we can only identify *daket* 3sg. ‘to place, make’ with some certainty.

The nominative *iman* occurs in several Old Phrygian inscriptions (G-210; *iman*- G-136; *-iman*- P-03, M-03(?), *iman*[P-04c, *-iman* M-06, P-01), but most of these occurrences are likely to reflect a personal name, which is also attested in Greek inscriptions from Phrygia and Pisidia as *Ιμαν*, *Ιμενος*⁴¹.

meu

It is attractive to see in this word the enclitic gen.sg. of the personal pronoun ‘I’, identical to Greek (Ionic, Homer) *μευ*, which reflects **meho* with the development *-eho* > *-eo* > *-eu*. If the identification of *meu* is correct, it would mean that intervocalic *-h-* was already lost in Old Phrygian.

From a syntactic point of view, the enclitic *meu* is likely to belong to the preceding word⁴², so that *iman meu* would mean ‘my monument’.

termos

This Phrygian word can hardly be separated from Greek *τέρμα* n. ‘finish (of a race-course), end’, *τέρμων*, -ονος m. ‘end, boundary, edge’, and we can hypothesize that *termos* refers to a boundary stone. Presumably, *termos* represents a thematic enlargement, going back to **termn-o-*, cf. also the Greek compounds like *τερμο-δρομέω* ‘to run to the goal, finish’.

The Greek word is related to the Latin *n*-stem *termen*, *-inis* n. ‘boundary stone, frontier’, *termō*, *-ōnis* m. ‘finishing-post in a race’, but also in Italic do we find thematic forms like Lat. *terminus* ‘boundary post’ and Umbrian *termnom-e* ‘ad terminum’.

³⁷ For a discussion of the meaning of this word, cf. further Vine 2010, 344.

³⁸ E.g., Neumann 1997, 24; Brixhe 2004, 62; Hämmig 2013, 149, etc.

³⁹ Both Neumann and Brixhe explained the *-nm-* spelling as a scribal “mistake”, pointing to New Phrygian spellings like *κνουμναι* (101, 105) for the normal *κνουμναι* ‘to the grave’. Vine (2010), however, took *inmen-* as the original form of the oblique cases (< **inmn-os*, **inmn-ei*) and proposed an etymology, relating Gr. *ἐμμενές* “unceasing” (in the formula *ἐμμενές αἰεὶ* ‘continually ever’) and OIr. *ainmne* “patience” < **h₁n-men-*.

⁴⁰ Neumann 1997, 18; Brixhe 2004, 65.

⁴¹ Zgusta 1964, 195-196.

⁴² Cf. Ligorio – Lubotsky 2018, 1829.

We may thus render the first sentence as ‘My monument is a boundary stone’. If our analysis is correct, this is the first inscribed boundary stone found in Phrygia.⁴³

Sentence 3: *tekisetondagoy*

It is not evident how to divide this sentence into words, as we hardly have any clues. What follows is just a preliminary attempt.

We can try to start with *tekiset*, because it is reminiscent of OPhr. *umnišet* (B-05.7 [Vezirhan]) and ομνισιτους (W-11 [Dokimeion]), the last line of which reads: πεννιτι ιος κοροαν δετουν σουν ομαστα ομνισιτους⁴⁴. These forms are taken by Hämmig⁴⁵ as verbal and containing a thematic suffix *-ise-* (~ Gr. *-ίσκω?*), but, unfortunately, they appear in contexts which we are still unable to understand. The root of *tekiset* might be the same as the one of W-01b *eve-tek-s-etiy* and go back to PIE **dek-*, Greek δέχομαι, δέκομαι ‘to accept’.

The sequence *onC* is rare in Old Phrygian. Normally, **-on#* in a final position develops into *-un*. Nevertheless, in a few cases we do find *-on* in a final position (e.g., W-01c *kuryaneyon*, W-05a *natimeyon*, T-02b *aḷion*), which is usually explained as reflecting **-ōn*. The regular reflex of **-onC-* in a non-final position is not known.

If *-on-* in our inscription is word final, we may analyze *tekiseton* as a verbal form, ending in **-tōn*, possibly corresponding to Greek 3pl. impv. ending *-των* (e.g., ἔστων ‘let them be’). This ending must have been in competition with the Phrygian 3pl. impv. ending *-vvou* < PIE **-ntō(t)*, cf. Greek *-ντω*⁴⁶.

We are then left with *dagoy*, which may contain the same root as the second member of the compound *basti-dages*, found on a Çamönü whorl (HP-101) *p^{er} bastidages*:⁴⁷. Phonologically, OPhr. *dag-* may correspond to Greek *ταχ-* (*ταχύς* ‘swift, quick’), but this is not very helpful for the interpretation. Also a comparison with the Phrygian name *daguvās* (G-293) does not lead us anywhere. If our analysis of *tekiseton* as a verbal form is correct, *dagoy* is likely to be a noun, while the ending *-oy* can stand for dat.sg. or for nom.pl. of an *o*-stem. The nom.pl. would better suit the verb in 3pl. impv., so that a possible syntactic analysis of the last sentence would be: ‘let the *dagoy* [nom.pl.] *tekiseton* [3pl.impv.]’.

Evidence for Matar’s Paredros

The depiction of three stylized heads and bodies on our newly found stele presents an important clue regarding the paredros of Mother Goddess in Phrygian religious iconography.

⁴³ It is conspicuous, however, that many Old Phrygian inscriptions are found at the outskirts of the Phrygian territory, e.g., in Pteria (as far North-East as Pazarlı) or in Tyana (as far South-East as Porsuk). It is probable that some of them also were boundary stones.

⁴⁴ For the reading, cf. Lubotsky 2017.

⁴⁵ Hämmig (forthcoming).

⁴⁶ For which see Ligorio – Lubotsky 2018, 1828.

⁴⁷ Dinç – Innocente 1999; Brixhe 2004, 103-106.

In the Phrygian Region, the idols consist of round heads placed a top rectangular bodies. Among all the idols identified on steep slopes of rock, on stepped altars, or on steles, there are also depictions of two heads on a single body or on separate bodies. In that case, if one of the heads represents the Mother Goddess, the identity of the second head has puzzled the scholars. One of the opinions is that the goddess could be depicted twice⁴⁸. In spite of a lack of double depictions in anthropomorphic representations of the goddess, in Kybele's double naiskos of the Roman and Hellenistic Periods, the Goddess is depicted twice holding different natural objects in each of the depictions⁴⁹. In contrast to this tradition, our double idols are not different from one another, are of the same size, and possess no trace of any gender. Only Mellink propounds the idea that, based on the different designs on their bodies, one of the idols on the stele found at Fahared Çeşme depicts a goddess, the other a god⁵⁰. Some researchers suggest that the second figure depicted alongside the goddess is Matar's paredros⁵¹. The figure beside the Mother Goddess was sometimes identified with Attis of late Greek and Roman sources, on the basis of the name Ata or Atas found on some of Phrygian monuments⁵². However, there is no proof supporting the link between Phrygian Ata(s) and the god Attis⁵³. In addition, Attis does not appear as a god during the Phrygian Period⁵⁴. Before the middle of the 4th century BC, there was no iconographic depiction of Attis present in the Hellenistic world⁵⁵. There is even no currently known proof that a god named Attis was worshipped before the Roman Period⁵⁶.

One of the figures next to the goddess thought to be her paredros is Midas⁵⁷. According to Diodoros's narration, Midas was a Phrygian king connected to the cult of Kybele. In the version of Arnabios, Midas was the king of the city of Pessinus⁵⁸. The reign of Midas coincided with the greatest expansion of the Phrygian kingdom, and as a result Midas left a powerful impression on his contemporaries, although the seat of his kingdom was Gordion, not Pessinus⁵⁹. On the so-called Midas Monument he bears the titles (in dative) *lavagtaei* and *vanaktei*⁶⁰, and the fact that his name is found on the monument was sometimes considered the proof that he played a role similar to Attis in the cult of the goddess, that is to say he was a ruler bound to the goddess and

⁴⁸ Naumann 1983, 99-100; Vikela 2001, 78.

⁴⁹ Naumann 1983, nos. 336-354.

⁵⁰ Mellink 1993, 155.

⁵¹ Mellink 1981, 98, 102; Buluç 1988, 20-21; Mellink 1993, 155.

⁵² Brixhe – Drew-Bear 1982, 83, 87.

⁵³ Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 166, fn. 185. There is only evidence of an offering to Attis from Pessinus, but it is uncertain whether this was a god or a high priest.

⁵⁴ Roller 1994.

⁵⁵ Roller 1994, 247; Bøgh 2007, 320.

⁵⁶ Roller 1999, 243.

⁵⁷ Buluç 1988; Vassileva 1995, 275.

⁵⁸ Roller 1999, 246.

⁵⁹ Roller 1999, 246.

⁶⁰ Brixhe – Lejeune 1984, no. M-01a.

had priesthood duties⁶¹. In Greek sources, Midas was also recorded as the organizer of religious ceremonies in the honor of Kybele and he was even described as her son⁶².

A partially preserved Old Phrygian inscription (M-05) on the pediment of a small façade at the Midas Fortress starts with *apelan*⁶³, which sometimes was interpreted as a theonym Apollo⁶⁴. Berndt-Ersöz indicates, however, that the presence of Apollo as a god on façades built in honor of the Mother Goddess is surprising. The word *apelan* is not found in any Phrygian inscriptions except for this single case⁶⁵, but it is noteworthy that Apollo was one of the most commonly worshiped gods in the Highlands of Phrygia during the Roman Period, which is supported by epigraphic and iconographic evidence⁶⁶. At the moment, however, linking *Apelan* to Apollo is unlikely on account of the current archaeological data.

Scholars have been looking for the origin of some Phrygian cultic traditions in Hittite religion, since the Late Hittite culture directly preceded the Phrygian one in Anatolia. The Hittite pantheon, which contained both gods and goddesses, is quite different from the Phrygian world where the Mother Goddess was practically the only divinity in iconographic depictions and written records. However, they shared many characteristics such as the sacred mountains seen in Hittite religious symbolism, birds of prey as divine figures, and the importance placed on water sources and springs in the Hittite religious tradition. In spite of these noteworthy similarities it is unclear whether the Phrygians directly inherited the Hittite cultic tradition. Depictions of goddesses seen in the Late Hittite tradition greatly resemble the physical appearance of the Phrygian Mother Goddess⁶⁷.

There is no mention of the single Mother Goddess in the Hittite literature, and the Late Hittite Goddess was occasionally depicted with her partner⁶⁸. Taking into account all the similarities of the Phrygians and their contemporaries and predecessors, it seems plausible to assume that the Phrygian Mother Goddess could have been accompanied by one or more gods. However, there is not a single known example of the Goddess portrayed with an anthropomorphically represented male god in Phrygian iconographic depictions. Only in a single artifact recovered from Boğazköy do we see Matar accompanied by small, male musicians⁶⁹.

A small relief depicting Matar with a bull was found at Tumulus C in Gordion⁷⁰. Berndt-Ersöz, noting that the size of the bull was larger than that of Matar in this relief and basing her conclusion on the fact that the Hittite Storm God was frequently depicted as a bull in Hittite iconography,

⁶¹ Vassileva 1995, 275.

⁶² Roller 1983, 309.

⁶³ Brixhe – Lejeune 1984, 25.

⁶⁴ Orel 1997, 27-28.

⁶⁵ Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 78.

⁶⁶ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1933-1939; Mitchell 1993, II, 11-31.

⁶⁷ Işık 2012, 279.

⁶⁸ Roller 1999, 5ff.

⁶⁹ Bittel 1958, 57ff.; Bittel 1963, 7ff, pl. 1-8; Prayon 1987, 201, cat. no.5, pl. 2a-b; Roller 1999, 72, fig. 10.

⁷⁰ Kohler 1995, 34, no. TümC, 26, pl. 17D.

suggests that the bull actually represents a male god, a Phrygian god being an equivalent of the Hittite Storm God or the Greek Zeus⁷¹. Linear bull figures are also featured next to the miniature altar found in Boğazköy⁷². However, depictions of bulls are not commonly found together with the Mother Goddess in Phrygian iconography. In addition, it would be dangerous to make this kind of generalizations based on so few archaeological materials.

Even if a male god was not depicted anthropomorphically next to the Goddess in Phrygian iconography, considering the epigraphic sources and the concept of male gods in neighboring cultures, one of the heads seen in double idols, representing the goddess's paredros, can be explained as a depiction of the Phrygian Storm God, the Zeus found frequently in the New Phrygian inscriptions of the Roman Period⁷³.

While the goddess was often depicted alone in her iconography, double idols are also found, either on stepped altars or on steles. We have already pointed to different opinions regarding the identity of the two heads in these abstract depictions, one being the goddess, the other representing her paredros, or another god accompanying her. On the other hand, the idol-like stele we have discovered is unique in its depiction of three heads, the goddess being presumably accompanied by two gods.

A triple idol depiction on a single mass of rock is only found in the Highlands of Phrygia, in the Köhnüş Valley⁷⁴ within the borders of Afyonkarahisar. This rock shows one large idol in the center and two small idols on both sides below. These three idols are reminiscent of the schematized depiction of a centrally located Matar and two small male figures accompanying her in the Boğazköy statue group. The figures next to the goddess were made much smaller than the goddess. The small size of these figures can be explained as symbolizing the superiority of the goddess or that the figures shown are dwarfs or children⁷⁵. Neumann interpreted the male figures in the Boğazköy statue group as musicians playing an instrument and identified them as Daktyls Titias and Kyllenos accompanying the Mother Goddess⁷⁶.

In the triple idol relief found in the Köhnüş Valley and in the Boğazköy group, the Goddess is accompanied by two helpers unequal to her. However, the newly found stele does not have a large, centrally located head and two smaller heads on either side (Fig. 4-5). Two heads are next to each other and have the same size (17,5 cm in diameter), while a smaller head (10,5 cm in diameter) was made between them. The depiction may refer to two equally powerful gods and one relatively younger god. The fact that the stele itself is shaped like an idol and presented in a style that incorporates all the heads must signify unity and the pantheon itself. This interpretation is of course preliminary until more examples are discovered.

⁷¹ Berndt-Ersöz 2004, 49.

⁷² Neve 1970, l56, fig. 9a-d; Naumann 1983, 94ff.; Prayon 1987, 169ff.

⁷³ Vassileva 1999, 178-179; Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 172. In Old Phrygian inscriptions, the Phrygian Zeus can most probably be identified in dat. sg. *Tiei* in NW-101, cf. Brixhe 2002, 4ff.

⁷⁴ Işık 1999, fig. 42; Berndt-Ersöz 2006, no. 55, fig. 66.

⁷⁵ Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 168.

⁷⁶ Neumann 1959, 104ff.; Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 168.

If we accept that one of the heads on the stele represents the Mother Goddess, it is reasonable to assume that the head of the same size be the father god and the central smaller head a young god. This idea brings to mind the triad of Kybele, Zeus, and Hermes of the Greek and Roman pantheons.

The presence of the cult of Meter in the Ionian Region and in Ephesus during the 6th century BC in particular, has been proven with archaeological records⁷⁷. On several offering reliefs in the sanctuary of Ephesus, there is a young man to the right of the goddess and on some both a young man to her right and an elderly man to her left. An inscription found on a nearby rock-cut altar indicates that the altar is dedicated to Zeus Patroos, thus identifying the elderly god as Zeus. While the flat hat and a shoe detail of the young figure on these reliefs make probable that the figure is the Meter's consistent companion in the Greek world, Hermes⁷⁸, some scholars interpret the figure as Attis⁷⁹ or Apollo, whose name is sometimes found in inscriptions⁸⁰.

According to Ancient Greek sources, the epithet Papas (Παπας, Παπιας) was used for Zeus in Bithynia⁸¹, and Papas or Zeus Papas appears on Greek inscriptions in the Highlands of Phrygia⁸². This epithet is known to have also been used for Attis⁸³. Although Nakoleia is usually accepted as the center of the cult of Zeus Papas, this cult is also encountered in northwest Phrygia⁸⁴. The Phrygian Zeus Papas functioned as a god assisting in agriculture in rural areas⁸⁵.

In addition, we find the word *Baba* on a few Old Phrygian inscriptions⁸⁶, and since the primary meaning of Matar is 'mother'⁸⁷, the meaning of this word might be 'father'⁸⁸. Brixhe and Lejeune believe, however, that Baba is most probably not a divine, but a personal name⁸⁹.

We also find the name *Ata* in Old Phrygian inscriptions⁹⁰. While it is usually stated that *Ata(s)* is a personal name of Anatolian origin (for a discussion, see above, in the linguistic section), Brixhe and Drew Bear⁹¹ proposed to consider *Atai* (W-10) a theonym in dat.sg. In Hittite, *atta-* 'father'

⁷⁷ Soykal 1998, 17ff. pl. 26 a-c.

⁷⁸ Vermaseren 1977, 50, cat. no. 175; Vermaseren 1987, cat. nos. 450, 616; Roller 1999, 200-201.

⁷⁹ Knibbe 1978, 490.

⁸⁰ Börker – Merkelbach 1979, cat. nos. 101-102.

⁸¹ Berndt-Ersöz 2004, 50.

⁸² Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 2018-2022; Mitchell 1993, II, 16.62.

⁸³ Şahin 2001, 145.

⁸⁴ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 2018-2022.

⁸⁵ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 2020; Şahin 2001, 146.

⁸⁶ Brixhe – Lejeune 1984, nos. M-01b, G-06, G-121, G-184.

⁸⁷ Roller 1999, 2.

⁸⁸ Berndt-Ersöz 2004, 51.

⁸⁹ Brixhe – Lejeune 1984, nos. M-01b, G-121, G-184.

⁹⁰ Young et al. 1981, no. MM 69, 130, 273-275; Brixhe – Lejeune 1984, nos. G-107, W-08, W-09, W-10.

⁹¹ Brixhe – Drew-Bear 1982, 82-84.

also referred to the Father God⁹², so that they suggested a similar situation in Phrygia. Once Phrygia became Hellenized, *Ata(s)* then became synchronized with Zeus. If this is correct, one of the larger heads on our stele may represent the Mother Goddess, and the other head would be a depiction of Zeus, the Father God. What is the function of the smaller head?

The Mother Goddess was especially venerated by the shepherds. Cloaked male shepherd figures were depicted with her on a group of offering reliefs dated to the Roman period⁹³. On these reliefs, which show that the goddess remains a cultic character in Phrygia up to the Roman Period, we see that the shepherd figures are represented smaller in size than the Goddess⁹⁴. In major cities in Asia Minor and even in Greece and Rome, the goddess's paredros is a shepherd god. In fact, Attis is also frequently depicted as a shepherd. In both Greece and Asia Minor, one of the gods who most frequently accompanies the Goddess is Hermes, the god of shepherds and cattle. Soykal Alanyalı correctly states that the original pantheon of Asia Minor must be the reason why the Mother Goddess is depicted in a triad with Zeus and Hermes in major cities such as Ephesus, Samos, Magnesia on the Maeander, Metropolis, Tyrrha, Smyrna, Magnesia ad Sipylum, Kyzikos, Nikomedia, Tenos, Tomis, Athens, and Rome⁹⁵.

This evidence suggests that one of the large heads on the new stele may belong to Matar, the other to a local Phrygian god who later became identified with Zeus. The small head may represent a young shepherd god depicted in Phrygian iconography as accompanying the goddess. He was found as her paredros on offering reliefs dating to the Greek and Roman periods.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The stele in an idol shape with an Old Phrygian inscription on it discovered in the territory of Nakoleia is a one of a kind artifact of the Highlands of Phrygia. We see here three simple and linearly formed heads together with their necks or bodies, similar to abstract idol depictions found on the rocks, on the stepped altars, and on some steles. The depiction of all the heads together reflects symbolic unity.

The geography of the areas where Phrygian idols are found may provide some clues regarding their function. The idols built into solid rock along with stepped altars are generally found on high plateaus, near the entrances to cities and fortresses, at watersides, and on rockwork high above the ground overlooking plains fed by flowing waters. The idols in the form of steles are found at the entrances of cities and fortresses. One example is the Matar group of statues from Boğazköy, which was found in situ inside a niche at the city entrance⁹⁶. An example in the form of a stele is seen on a few steps from the entrance to the so-called Cappadocia Gate of Kerkenes⁹⁷ (Fig. 6). It seems therefore likely that those idols were built in order to protect the cities.

⁹² Berndt-Ersöz 2004, 51.

⁹³ Soykal-Alanyalı 2011 147ff.

⁹⁴ Soykal-Alanyalı 2008, 55-68.

⁹⁵ Soykal-Alanyalı 2011, 149ff.

⁹⁶ Bittel 1963; Prayon 1987, no. 7, pl. 3a-c.

⁹⁷ Summers et al. 2003, 12,13, fig. 14-17.

The newly discovered stele was found on the eastern slope of the Eski Cami Mound (Fig. 3). Its original site and position is unknown, however, and if our interpretation of the inscription is correct, this monument appears to have been a boundary stone.

There is a sanctuary in Beygir Tokadı (Yazidere), located approximately 13.5 km northwest of the Eski Cami Mound (Fig. 1). In 1979, a short-term excavation project was carried out by a crew led by the Eskişehir Museum Director Tokgöz in the area known locally as Beygir Tokadı just 2.5 km north of the Village of Yazidere. 120 inscribed artifacts were found during these excavations⁹⁸, among which there were 59 votive steles presented to Zeus Limnenos, more than to any other god. The name of this god is only known from this sanctuary, and one very broken inscription mentions a certain Neikias Limnenos. Akyürek-Şahin assumes that Limnenos could also be an ethnicon referring to a place name, called after a lake in the neighborhood (cf. Greek λίμνη ‘pond, lake, marsh’). According to her, people would thus come to this sanctuary from a far to make offerings⁹⁹.

During interviews with locals it has turned out that 630 m west of the Eski Cami Mound, there was a source and a lake called Ma Başı (this is also the old name of Gümüşbel Village), which is confirmed by the air photos taken between 1954 and 1957. The lake dried up in the 1980s when DSI (State Hydraulic Works) opened new canals. The proximity of the sanctuary of Zeus in Yazidere to the water source found next to the Eski Cami Mound suggests that the village “Limne”, mentioned above, could have been in or around Gümüşbel Village (Fig. 2).

Epigraphic research on the Phrygian Region shows that many local gods and cults are actually due to Hellenization of very old cults native to Anatolia and that the Greek names of gods found in inscriptions, when seen together with their epithets, are actually more often than not referring to local gods¹⁰⁰. In addition, many epithets and different epigraphic and iconographic materials of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods reveal that many offerings were made to Zeus¹⁰¹. In Northwest Phrygia, people living in rural areas in particular presented many offerings to Zeus, often provided with an epithet. Akyürek-Şahin suggests that the frequency with which Zeus is mentioned can be explained by the presence of a belief in a strong, patriarchal father god connected to the earth which stretches back to very ancient times in Phrygia¹⁰².

In conclusion, inscriptions from nearby surroundings can be interpreted as continuous veneration of a local Phrygian god who later became synchronized with Zeus. Thus, one of the two same-sized heads on the newly discovered stele should be interpreted as the primitive form of a father god whose cult continued through later periods in the area.

Idols symbolize faith in the image of gods and were seen as their epiphany in a settlement. The platforms in front of idols carved out of the steep sides of rocky cliffs and the steps in front of the idols on altars are special places for presenting offerings. The fact that the new stele was placed on

⁹⁸ Akyürek-Şahin 2006, 1.

⁹⁹ Akyürek-Şahin 2006, 13-14.

¹⁰⁰ Akyürek-Şahin 2006, 3.

¹⁰¹ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1915-2032; Mitchell 1993, II, 22-24.

¹⁰² Akyürek-Şahin 2006, 3.

a pediment, as seen in a very similar object from Kerkenes, is a noteworthy characteristic of its form and suggests that offerings were presented in front of it.

A group of plaque-shaped idols presents us with information relevant to the dating of idols. The idols recovered from Gordion were found in Tumulus B¹⁰³, the inlay of the wall of the X building¹⁰⁴, and in the damaged strata in front of the terraced area¹⁰⁵. The idols from Boğazköy were found in the northern room of the entrance gate of the city, inside the Phrygian wall of Büyükkale, in the vault of temple number I¹⁰⁶, at the entrance of the Palace complex of Kerkenes, its Cappadocia Gate¹⁰⁷, and at Ovaören / Yassihöyük¹⁰⁸. The idols in Tumulus B of Gordion, which is dated to approximately 630 BC, were used as filling during the construction of the tumulus and must thus be dated to the late 8th- early 7th century BC, before the construction of the tumulus¹⁰⁹. The idols at the entrance of the Palace complex of Kerkenes and its Cappadocia Gate were dated to the middle of the 6th century BC¹¹⁰, and the idol of Ovaören / Yassihöyük to the Middle Phrygian Period (800-550 BC)¹¹¹.

Our newly found stele, with its similarity in form to the idol of Kerkenes, can be dated to the same period, towards the end of the Middle Phrygian Period. This chronology also fits the paleography of the inscription, which must have been written after the introduction of yod and thus does not belong to the oldest stratum of Old Phrygian inscriptions of the 8th century BC.

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¹⁰³ Kohler 1995, 20-23, nos. Tüm B 33, Tüm B 34, Tüm B, 35, pl. 11A-B, 12 H-M.

¹⁰⁴ DeVries 1990, fig. 36.

¹⁰⁵ Kohler 1995, 13-14, 20-21, nos. Tüm B 17, pl. 11 A-B.

¹⁰⁶ Naumann 1983, 94.

¹⁰⁷ Summers – Summers 2012, 171, fig. 9, 174, fig. 15.

¹⁰⁸ Akçay 2015, fig. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Kohler 1995, 20-23.

¹¹⁰ Summers – Summers 2012, 174.

¹¹¹ Akçay 2015, 53.

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Nakoleia Territoryumunda Eski Phrygce Yazıtlı Idol Şeklinde Bir Stel

Öz

Eskişehir İli Seyitgazi ve Han ilçelerinde gerçekleştirdiğimiz yüzey araştırmalarında, 2019 yılında Eskişehir İli, Seyitgazi İlçesi'nin 15 km doğusunda, Gümüşbel Köyü'nün 1 km güneydoğusundaki Eski Cami Höyük (eski adı Hüsnüabad, Ma Başı) ziyaret edilmiştir. Üzerinde İslam Dönemi'ne ait bir mezarlık bulunan höyüğün korunduğu kadarıyla çapı 180 m, yüksekliği ise 3,5 m'dir. Bu ziyaret sırasında, höyüğün üzerinde ve eteklerinde, Son Kalkolitik Çağ, İlk Tunç Çağı 2-3, Klasik Dönem ve MÖ 8. yy'a tarihlenen Demirçag seramikleri saptanmıştır. Höyüğün güneydoğu eteğinde ise tuf taşından yapılmış, üzerinde Eski Phrygce yazıtlı idol şeklinde bir stel bulunmuştur.

Bu makalede Eski Phrygce yazıtlı idol şeklindeki stel tanıtılmakla birlikte, bu stelin Phryg ikonografisi ve dilbilimi için önemi tartışılmaktadır. İdol şeklinde betimlenmiş tuf blok üzerine kazıma şeklinde yapılmış olan üç baş ve uzun gövdeler (?) Ana Tanrıça ve birlikte ona eşlik eden tanrılarla birlikte gösterilmiş olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Başlardan ikisi yan yana yapılmış ve çift sıra kazıma çizgi ile sınırlandırılmış, diğer üçüncü baş da bu iki başın tam ortasına, iki başı sınırlandıran ve ortada buluşan çift sıra çizginin kesiştiği noktaya yapılmıştır. Stel üzerinde, başların üst kısmında bir satır, başların altında ise üç satır Eski Phrygce yazıt bulunur. Yazıttan anlaşıldığı üzere idol şeklindeki stel muhtemelen bir sınır taşı olarak kullanılmıştır.

Yazıtın tercümesi şu şekilde olmalıdır: "Atas. Benim anıtım bir sınır taşıdır".

Anahtar Sözcükler: Eskişehir, Nakoleia, Gümüşbel Köyü, Eski Camii Höyük, Phrygia, Eski Phrygce yazıt, idol, paredros.

An Idol-shaped Stele with an Old Phrygian Inscription in The Territory of Nakoleia

Abstract

During the archaeological surveys conducted in Seyitgazi and Han Districts of Eskişehir Province in 2019, we have visited Eski Cami Höyük (formerly known as Hüsnüabad) which is located 1 km southeast of Gümüşbel Village, 15 km east of Seyitgazi District in Eskişehir Province. The mound is under a cemetery from the Islamic Period and has a preserved diameter of 180 m with a 3.5 m height. During this visit, Iron Age ceramics were identified on the mound and its skirts, dating to

the Late Chalcolithic Age, the Early Bronze Age 2-3, the Classical Period, and the 8th Century BC. On the south-eastern skirt of the mound, an idol-shaped stele with an Old Phrygian inscription was found.

In this article, we describe the newly found stele and the inscription and discuss its importance for the Phrygian iconography and linguistics. Three heads and a long body (?) engraved on the idol-shaped tufa block may signify the Mother Goddess together with the gods that accompany her. Two of the heads were made right next to each other and are bordered by a double engraved line. The third head was placed between the other two, made at the point where the double engraved lines that border the two heads meet in the middle. On the stele, there is one line of an Old Phrygian inscription above the heads and three lines just under them. It follows from the inscription that the idol was probably used as a boundary stone.¹¹²

The clear part of the inscription can be translated as follows: “Atas. My monument is a boundary stone.”

Keywords: Eskişehir, Nakoleia, Gümüşbel Village, Eski Camii Mound, Phrygia, Old Phrygian inscription, idol, paredros.

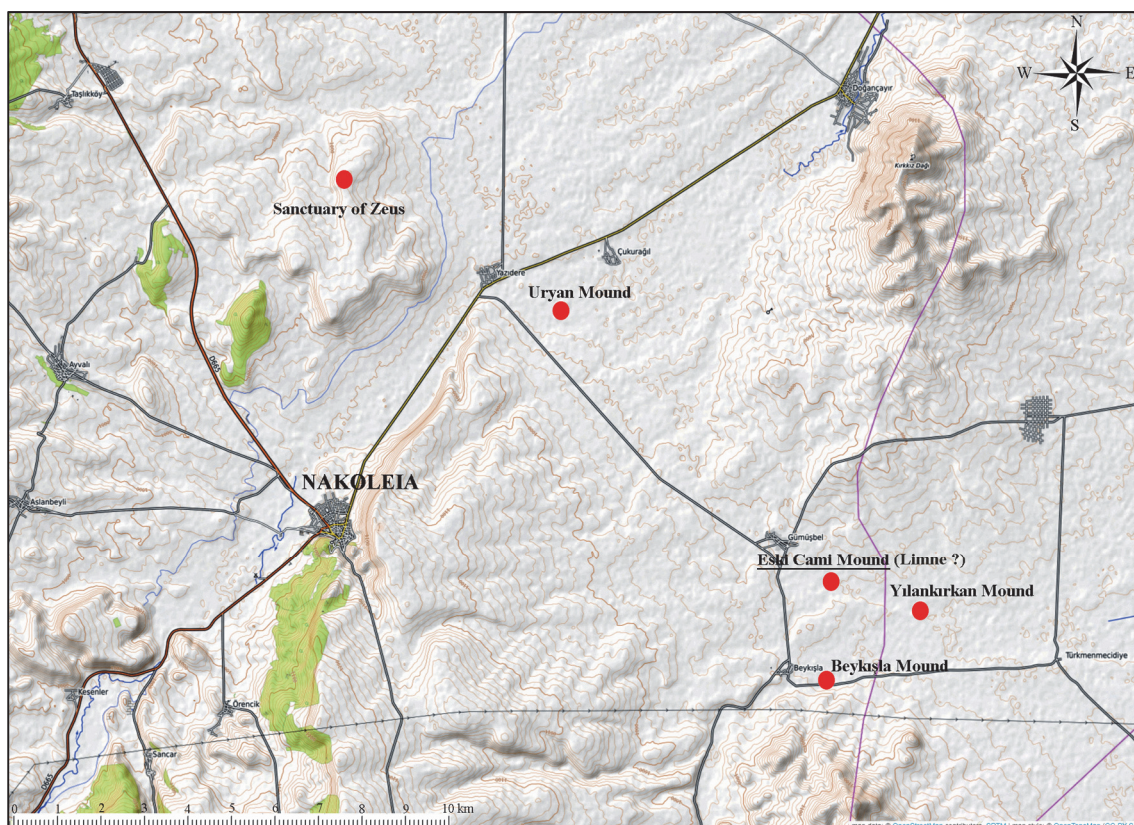


Fig. 1) General map of the mound and its surroundings

¹¹² The research of A. Lubotsky was partly supported by the “Multilingualism and Minority Languages in Ancient Europe” project, funded by HERA, Uses of the Past.



Fig. 2) Aerial Photo of 1954



Fig. 3) Find location of the idol shaped stele



Fig. 4) Photo of the idol-shaped stele (R.Tamsü Polat-Y. Polat)



Fig. 5) Drawing of the idol-shaped stele (R.Tamsü Polat-Y. Polat)



Fig. 6) Semi-iconic stele / idol at the Cappadocia Gate. It was placed at the Yozgat Museum in 2010 (photo by Y. Polat)