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# ADALYA

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# The Sanctuary with the Relief of the “Twelve Gods” in the Elmalı Highlands: On the Iconography of “Leto, her children, and the Nymphs” in Ancient Southwest Anatolia

S. Gökhan TIRYAKI\*

*„... Sollten auf der Nordseite Leto flankiert von ihren Kindern gestanden haben und auf der Ost- und West Basis die 12 Nymphen?“*

-Borchhardt 2003, 36-

## Abstract

Yukarıovacık, located in the surrounding countryside around Cabalian Oinoanda, promises more than an anonymous work of art recently added to the artistic repertoire of Late Roman southwest Anatolia. Its particular importance lies in its content that enables to recognize for the first time the visual peculiarities of Leto, her children, and the Nymphs, and hence provides a direct contribution to our understanding of Lycian religious iconography.

**Keywords:** Elmalı, Sanctuary, Rock Relief, “Leto, her children, and the Nymphs”

## Öz

Kabalis Bölgesi'ndeki Oinoanda kentinin dağlık kırsalında konumlanan Yukarıovacık Kutsal Alanı, Güneybatı Anadolu tasvir repertuarına eklenen yeni bir kaya kabartmasından daha fazlasını vaat etmektedir. Zira anıt, bugüne değin ancak yazılı kaynaklar aracılığıyla tanıdığımız “Leto, çocukları ve Nympheler”den oluşan tanrılar alayını ilk kez tasvir sanatları aracılığıyla tasdik etme fırsatı sağlamakta ve böylece Likya din tarihi üzerine süre giden araştırmalara yeni ve farklı bakış açıları sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Elmalı, Kutsal Alan, Kaya Kabartması, “Leto, çocukları ve Nympheler”

## Introduction

The fieldwork conducted by the Elmalı Museum in 2011 at Yukarıovacık Yayla enabled the documentation of a series of archaeological finds that were previously absent in academic literature. Among these, a rock-cut relief stands out due to its critical contribution to ongoing

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research in ancient southwest Anatolia. Hence, the present article attempts to examine this particular site and its exceptional imagery. The format to be followed in this work is composed of five sections. In the following part, the location of the site and the historical geography of the region are briefly introduced. After the description of the imagery, the succeeding three sections will focus on the style and iconography of the relief, especially the identity of the figures. The content of the scene and the date of the sculpture are then discussed. Finally, the principal contributions of the article are summarized in some concluding remarks.

### *Geography and Location of the Site*

Yukarıovacık is located in the Yuva Quarter of Elmalı District where the provincial border of Antalya meets that of Muğla. Geographically, this small depression is part of an area that extends along the eastern skirts of Eren (known also as Küçük Akdağ / Lesser Kragos, 2,650 m) and Elbis Mountains (Elbessos [?]<sup>1</sup>, 2,596 m) (Fig. 1)<sup>2</sup>. Separated by steep slopes from Yuva Yayla in the north and Baranda Yayla in the south, the site covers about 2.5 km<sup>2</sup> which is surrounded by Ördek Burnu (1,638 m) in the west, Somaklı Tepe (1,577 m) in the east, and Sarı Mehmet (1,642 m) and Temrencik Hills (1,462 m) in the north (Fig. 2).

Due to its convenient location, the site also forms one of the less-known routes that gives access to both sides of the Akdağ (Kragos) used by pastoralists and transhumance activities both today and in antiquity (see below)<sup>3</sup>. Hence, following the dirt highland road heading westward from the modern Yuva – Kuzköy highway, this route connects Karagöl and Girdev (Kirdüve/Kerdobata) Lake via Aşağıovacık > Yukarıovacık > Kaynarca > Örtülü > Küçük Girdev (Fig. 1) and through the Girdev Pass reaches Seki Valley<sup>4</sup>.

The available data regarding the archaeological landscape and the history of the region is limited. During the research carried out by the Elmalı Museum against illegal digging at Yukarıovacık, the remains of a small necropolis on the western slopes of Somaklı Tepe and Temrencik Tepe as well as two watchtowers on the southern and eastern summits of the same hill were recorded. However, no study concerning these remains has yet been prepared for publication. A few epigraphic documents, on the other hand, make a special contribution to the understanding of the historical geography of the region. These imply that both the natural resources and local transportation opportunities of the region were a significant subject already in antiquity. Accordingly, the conflicts between the Lycians (Tlos) and Cabalians (Oinoandean-Termessos) for the control of the Girdev and its environment ended with an agreement dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC which was found recently in Letoon<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, the Ceaser Treaty records the extension policy of the Lycians to Milyas and Cabalia in 43 AD and confirms that the region continued to be a part of a conflict zone<sup>6</sup>. As is well understood from the festival foundation inscription of the Demosthenia (125 AD), the rural areas extending from Girdev (Kerdobata) to Güğü (Orpenii) remained, however, in the territory of Oinoanda in the Roman period<sup>7</sup>. Thus, referring to these territorial borders, we can designate the Yukarıovacık and its

<sup>1</sup> For the localization of Elbessos, see İplikçioğlu et.al 2000, 200; Wörrle 1999, 47.

<sup>2</sup> For the geography of this depression, see Saraçoğlu 1989, 186-190; TK Elmalı 1:200000 Elmalı 31-32 IId-IIe.

<sup>3</sup> Yücel 1950, fig. 7; Saraçoğlu 1989, 188.

<sup>4</sup> TK Elmalı 1:200000 Elmalı 32 IId - 31IIç.

<sup>5</sup> Rousset 2010, 79-89; Şahin 2014, 215-219.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell 2005, 476-478; see also Şahin 2014, 221-227.

<sup>7</sup> Wörrle 1999, 47; Şahin 2014, 201 ff.

immediate surroundings on the eastern limits of the Oinoanda territorium where the borders of Cabalian Oinoanda meet probably with Milyan Choma<sup>8</sup>.

### *Description of Rock-Cut Relief*

The rock sculpture is located on the western slopes of Temrencik Tepe, approximately 50 m above the fountain, the so-called Sarı Mehmet Çeşmesi. Access to the site is possible via a narrow path situated next to the fountain where fragments of highly damaged rock-cut stelaie lie scattered around. Leaving behind the considerable number of illegal digs, this path reaches a sloping bank which shelters the relief in question (Fig. 3).

The sculpture consists of a rectangular rock-cut panel with triangular pediment filled with figurative imagery in low-relief. It has been badly damaged due to natural causes and the physical vandalism of looters (Figs. 4-5). Hence, details related to the figures' imagery such as facial treatments, hair design, and associated attributes are either partly or completely missing today. Therefore, the following study will address the visible and palpable elements as clearly as possible.

On the pediment, a depiction of an eagle is still visible to the naked eye; its wings are spread along the edges of the triangle (Fig. 5). Standing firmly on the ground line, it looks to the left and carries a snake in his beak (Fig. 6). This ancient and widespread visual image of eagle-and-snake combat was used frequently to symbolize a fight between heavenly and chthonic forces in the ancient Greek world. It became an artistic motif in Roman art<sup>9</sup> as is well documented in southwest Anatolia (Fig. 7)<sup>10</sup>.

The rectangular panel, on the other hand, is restricted to a horizontally composed scene that shows twelve figures posing frontally (Fig. 8). Visual cues help to distinguish the figures numbered 1-3 from the remaining part of the scene (Fig. 9). They exhibit exceptional visual peculiarities in their pose and gestures. In that sense, No. 1 is the only male participant of the scene who carries a chlamys and holds in his right hand a kithara resting on a serpent-entwined column. Dressed in a chiton and himation, the female seen in No. 2 is the only female who is seated on a throne with foot-rest as well<sup>11</sup>. The female in No. 3, also dressed in a chiton and himation, is apparently the worst-preserved figure of the relief. However, her gesture with her right hand towards the seated female makes the figure a part of this triad.

The remaining figures of the scene, namely Nos. 4-12, consist of nine women standing side by side depicted identically (Fig. 10). Beside the intensive deterioration on all the figures, there are also multiple fractures on Nos. 5, 6, and 10-12. All of them without exception wear a chiton and a diagonally draped himation that covers their heads and bodies. Their left hands hang down adjacent to their bodies, and their right hands are removed from the himation and rest against their chests. Further, apart from No. 12, there are jugs with a circular body and flattened neck, apparent in Nos. 4-7 but hardly distinguished in the rest.

<sup>8</sup> For an illustration of presumed territorial boundaries of Oinoanda and Choma, see Coulton 2012, 81 (fig. 4.14).

<sup>9</sup> Küster 1913, 130-131, n. 3; Pérez 2011, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Perdikou 1986, Abb. 6, 8, 12 (Taf. 2, 10); Delemen 1994, 311-313 (pl. 3-4, fig. 11-15); see also Tosun 2015, 2 (pl. 4, fig. 8)

<sup>11</sup> Although the motif which extends diagonally to the left arm in her lap is initially reminiscent of swaddling, because of natural wear it is almost impossible to identify it without using modern visualization (imaging) techniques.

### *The Identity of the Figures*

In addition to the physical condition, the absence of an explanatory inscription makes the identification of the figures more complicated and problematic. In fact, we are only familiar with the iconography of the male seen in No. 1. The visual combination of chlamys, kithara, and serpent-entwined column are the recurring attributes characteristic of Apollo rather than any other male god or a man. This is well attested through various artefacts in the Aegean world from the Classical to the Roman periods (Fig. 11)<sup>12</sup>. Comparable depictions are also present in the visual corpus of ancient southwest Anatolia. Among them the representations of Apollo on coins dating to the period of Gordian III from Patara, Kandyba, and Podalia (Fig. 12) show certain parallels with the Apollo of Yukarıovacı<sup>13</sup>.

Special consideration should be paid to the group's second member – the figure at No. 2 – due to her location in the whole scene and her relationship to Apollo. The enthroned pose of the figure apparently in this respect visually denotes her status, authority, and exceptional identity. This visual reference also provides an opportunity to understand better her identity and suggests that she has a higher rank than Apollo and the other participants in the same scene, thus indicating that she has a divine nature.

The typology of enthroned female deities with distinct iconographic variations is indeed one of the most long-lived visual concepts in art of both the Mediterranean and the Near East that was used over different time periods for miscellaneous goddesses. Nevertheless, the present condition of the figure in question prevents a detailed analogy with any of these deities. However, by taking into consideration the visual relationship between the enthroned deity with Apollo and the female in No. 3, we may ask whether or not they have a causal relation with each other. In this case, rather than any other deities, it is perhaps better to propose the goddess Leto whose relationship with Lycia was one of the popular subjects of ancient mythographers.

The literary sources, derived mainly from Menecrates of Xanthos, note that Leto's legendary arrival in Lycia was traumatic. She was confronted with inhospitable herdsman near a spring called Melite where she had paused to bathe her infants before proceeding to the Xanthos River<sup>14</sup>. Her prominent position in Lycian religion is also well attested through inscriptions indicating that she had cult places in several sites in southwest Anatolia, both alone and with her twins<sup>15</sup>. Archaeological excavations at the Letoon also suggest that an enormous Hellenistic Doric temple was dedicated to the goddess and probably erected at the site of the legendary spring of Melite<sup>16</sup>. By the time the Lycian League was founded in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, she was a prime deity of Letoon and worshipped with her twins as "National Gods of the Country"<sup>17</sup>.

In contrast to her religious importance, however, the iconographical corpus of Leto shows a complicated background. In this respect, ongoing studies demonstrate that it is difficult to define the deity due to a lack of visual attributes which help to identify her<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, almost all figures within the available repertoire who are designated as Leto visually are distinguished

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<sup>12</sup> Lambrinudakis 1984, 314-327.

<sup>13</sup> von Aulock 1974, 74 (nos. 225-229), 79 (nos. 285-286).

<sup>14</sup> Bryce 1983.

<sup>15</sup> Frei 1990, 1744-1753.

<sup>16</sup> des Courtils 2009, 65.

<sup>17</sup> Bryce 1983, 12; Keen 1998, 196.

<sup>18</sup> Kahil 1992, 256 ff.; Krauskopf 1992, 265-266.



either by the context of the scene or the identity of the other participants. Thus, the group of figures representing the child-bearers typologically – found at Elmalı Bayındır D tumulus in Milyas<sup>19</sup>, Xanthos in Lycia<sup>20</sup>, and Klaros in Ionia<sup>21</sup> – have recently been interpreted as "Letoids" through their findspots and imagery. As for the Greek and Etrurian collections of the Archaic and Classical periods, she appears most frequently on 5<sup>th</sup> century ceramics almost always together with at least one of her twins (usually Apollo) or both of them, but never alone<sup>22</sup>. However, the remarkable difference in these representations is the changing status of Leto. Leto did not occupy the focal point in the scene as a child-bearer in Greek versions; rather, she is represented as if she were under the auspices of her adult twins.

Finally, the bullae with figurative decoration representing Letoids as "National Gods of the Country" from Rhodiapolis<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 13) deserve special attention for the corpus of the Letoids imagery in Lycia. Seated on the high-backed throne in the center of the scene, Leto yet retains her prominent status on these bullae, which is a very Anatolian way of representation for the (so-called) Mother Goddess. Her adult twins stand at both sides with their characteristic appearance, as is represented in Greece. The hybrid imagery of the Rhodiapolis bullae in this respect provides a good opportunity for the identification of the figures of both the enthroned female and the triad in Nos. 1-3 in Yukarıovacık as well.

In this context, with reference to their mythological backgrounds together with the distribution of their cult places in the region and the iconography of the Rhodiapolis bullae, we can reliably identify the figure in No. 2 as Leto and this divine triad as Apollo, Leto, and Artemis.

Following the divine triad, the females in Nos. 4-12 (Fig. 10) form a group which is well documented in Lycia and Cabalia through rock-cut reliefs and votive stelae. The rock-cut reliefs are represented by examples at Cyaneai<sup>24</sup>, Dirmil/Kozağacı<sup>25</sup>, and Teke Kozağacı (Tyriaion)<sup>26</sup>. Of these, Dirmil/Kozağacı (Fig. 14) and Teke Kozağacı (Tyriaion) are located near springs and assigned to the nine frontally depicted female figures, which are either completely destroyed or badly eroded today.

The votive stelae, on the other hand, have a widespread distribution in regions recorded at Idebessos/Kozağacı (Fig. 15)<sup>27</sup>, Oinoanda<sup>28</sup>, Teimoussa<sup>29</sup>, Finike<sup>30</sup>, Çandır<sup>31</sup>,

<sup>19</sup> Işık 2000, 65 pp. (pl. 3).

<sup>20</sup> Borchhardt – Bliebtreu 2013, 278-279 (pl. 252.3).

<sup>21</sup> de la Genière 2007, 182 (pl. 22.2).

<sup>22</sup> Kahil 1992, 256-564; Krauskopf 1992, 266.

<sup>23</sup> "(...) Bu alanın en önemli bulgusu pişmiş topraktan yapılmış olan sikke benzeri, boyalı objelerdir. Bir yüzü boş bırakılan objelerin diğer yüzlerinde kabartma figürler ve harfler bulunmaktadır. Figürlerden ortadaki oturan tanrıça Leto, solunda daha küçük boyutlarda Apollon ve sağında da Artemis bulunmaktadır. Figürlerin üstündeki boş alanda "A" ve "Y" harfleri okunmaktadır. Bunlar Likya Birliği'nin simgeleridir. Ve tanrılar da Likya'nın baş tanrılarıdır. İlk kez bir toplantı salonunda bu tür buluntular ele geçirilmiştir. Birlik kararlarının oylamalarında kullanılmış olan oy pusulalarına ilişkin ilk veriler olma olasılığı yüksektir. Değilse ikinci seçenek tiyatro biletleri olabileceklidir" (see Tibikoğlu 2009, 212-213).

<sup>24</sup> Hüllden 2006, 220 (fig. 9).

<sup>25</sup> Nour 1976, 129 (no. 20) pl. VIII, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Nour 1980, 88 (no. 42) pl. XVI.

<sup>27</sup> Pace 1916-1920, nos. 77-78; Metzger 1952, nos. 19, 36-39; Dağlı 2011, cat. no. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Heberdey-Kalinka 1896, 54 (no. 77).

<sup>29</sup> Dağlı 2011, cat. no. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, cat. no. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Metzger 1952, no. 20.

Arykanda<sup>32</sup>, and Yarbaş Çandır<sup>33</sup>. Their visual outlines show common characteristics, namely, they are restricted to a certain number of figures consisting of three, four, six, or nine females represented side by side in frontal pose. Regardless of their numbers, however, the iconography of the figures exhibits variety, which is classified to the groups as figures in dance pose, figures holding music instruments, and figures both dancing and holding musical instruments<sup>34</sup>. Nevertheless, the figural composition in Yukarıovacık does not conform to this classification since they do not dance (or hold hands), nor do they hold any musical instruments. It instead composes another group together with the Çandır Stele (Fig. 16)<sup>35</sup>, where the figures hold nothing and stand motionlessly. The vessels placed between the figures in Yukarıovacık, on the other hand, are not found in this repertoire apart from the single example of a *kalathos* seen on the Arykanda stele (Fig. 17).

Despite the distinctive iconographic characteristics of the stelae, the inscriptions confirm that visual variations are not concerned with the individual identity of the figures; rather, they are all represented as the Nymphai<sup>36</sup>. In this regard, due to the iconographic parallels, the nine women accompanying the divine triad in Yukarıovacık can be reliably identified as Nymphai.

### *On Meaning and Content*

A great deal of research based on the religious history of Southwest Anatolia attests that these divinities were widely worshipped in Lycia, Cabalia, and Milyas. The literary texts, epigraphic documents, and archaeological finds also reveal that each of them have cultic relations with different sites, which take their foundation from various narrations<sup>37</sup>. In addition to their individual cult sites, the available archaeological and epigraphic evidence implies that the worship of the Letoids and Nymphai was indeed not exceptional in the region either. In that sense, the shallow cave with natural spring in Tymnessos / *tuminebi* has recently been redefined as a spring-cult sanctuary, according to which the cave was dedicated to *eliyanas* / Nymphai probably together with Leto, Artemis, and Apollo in the Late Classical or Hellenistic period<sup>38</sup>. Further, there is epigraphic evidence from Oinoanda in Cabalia describing a series of springs which surfaced on the slopes of the hills where the city was founded. These were assigned to the sanctuaries of Leto, Apollo, and the Nymphai<sup>39</sup>. However, when it comes to the historical background of their cult and its organization, the most comprehensible information is provided by the Letoon in Xanthos.

As stated in the studies focusing on the physical evolution of the sanctuary, the underground waters which surfaced on the rocky skirts of a small hill have been the center of religious activities from the earlier stages of its occupation<sup>40</sup>. The drilling excavations under the base level of the Temple of Leto and the portico have recovered archaeological finds in

<sup>32</sup> Dağlı 2011, cat. no. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Metzger 1952, nos. 40-41; Dağlı 2011, cat. no. 17-18.

<sup>34</sup> Dağlı 2011, 102-112.

<sup>35</sup> Even this piece is assigned to the first group; Dağlı 2011, 103. These figures neither dance nor hold hands, and therefore should better be classified to another group with Yukarıovacık.

<sup>36</sup> Metzger 1952, 61 ff.; Dağlı 2011, 124-129.

<sup>37</sup> Frei 1990, 1812-1813 (Leto), 1753-1765 (Apollo), 1767-1775 (Artemis); 1744-1753 (Leto, Apollo, and Artemis); and 1816-1820 (Nymphai). For the recent research in the Asarcık Leto sanctuary, see Işık 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Borchhardt et al. 2003, 35-36 (figs. 19-20).

<sup>39</sup> Hall 1977, 193-197.

<sup>40</sup> Le Roy 1984, 42-44; Courtills 2009, 61-66; Atik-Korkmaz 2017, 188.

the spring dated to the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, which prove that the foundation of the sanctuary goes back to a pre-Hellenic period<sup>41</sup>. Consisting of mainly votive gifts, these finds show also that rituals indeed included the symbolic dedication of a ceramic figurine by a worshipper, supposedly a self-representation, which would have continued into the Roman period<sup>42</sup>. According to the bilingual inscriptions, on the other hand, the sanctuary was dedicated to the native goddesses of the Lycians, most probably referred to in Luwian originally as *eni mabanabi* / “mother of the gods” in Xanthos (and *eni qlabi ebiyebi* / “mother of this precinct” elsewhere)<sup>43</sup>. Her attendants, referred to as *eliyanas*<sup>44</sup>, were conceivably associated with Letoon’s spring during the first half of the millennium. After a series of revisions attributed to the Xanthian dynast Arbinnas in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the *eni mabanabi* left her site to Leto – and her twins – and the spring goddesses continued to be worshipped under the name of their Greek counterparts, namely as Nymphai<sup>45</sup>.

The arrival of the divine triad in Letoon, however, did not cause a radical change in the native tradition. So indeed there is a consensus in the scholarly research that the sacredness of the Lycian mother of the gods and her attendants, the *eliyana*, survived both in collective memory and in the history of the sanctuary<sup>46</sup>. In that regard, Leto’s association with underground waters and the Nymphai in Letoon is not a specific peculiarity of her that was seen in the Greek world<sup>47</sup>. Similarly, the characteristic of Lycian Leto as vengeful and aggressively protective is very far from the Greek mind<sup>48</sup>. In addition, her infants are mentioned in inscriptions which refer to Leto as *ta tekna* or *oi eggonoï*, which is very exceptional in Greece<sup>49</sup>. Furthermore, the relation of the divine triad amongst themselves is another complex issue. Prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC there is no known attachment between Leto and her offspring; Artemis (as Ertemi) appears in 5<sup>th</sup> century native inscriptions, so she predates Leto who only appears in the early decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and Apollo does not occur before the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>50</sup>. In brief, the textual evidence presents a highly complex picture instead of clarifying the role of Leto and her infants in the Letoon. As is so far understood, both the sanctuary and the conception of a triad were indeed embedded in the early history of southwestern Anatolian religion, where the “divine mother” or “mother of gods” was clearly the most dominant figure<sup>51</sup>. Hence, the visual characteristic of the reliefs from Rhodiapolis and Yukarıovacık can be seen as a part of this tradition. In fact, without her twins it is almost impossible to distinguish the Lycian Leto from the common representation of “mother goddess” in Anatolia.

The cult of spring goddesses, on the other hand, is known in Southwest Anatolia through the inscriptions found in Oinoanda, Eleuterai, Telandros, Letoon, Patara, Antiphellos, Myra,

<sup>41</sup> For the stratigraphy of the portico see Davesne 2000, 617 (fig. 1), 619 ff; Courtils 2009; for the stone axe found recently in the deposits of the terrace, see also Atik-Korkmaz 2017, 191.

<sup>42</sup> Le Roy 1990, 28; Megrelis 2013, 151 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Laroche 1980, 3 ff; Bryce 1986, 175 ff.; Keen 1998, 195 ff. For the interpretation of an anthropomorphic statue as “Eni Mahanahi” found in the Letoon, see Işık 2001, 145-151.

<sup>44</sup> Laroche 1980, 4; Bryce 1986, 179.

<sup>45</sup> Bryce 1986, 175 ff; Frei 1990, 1745 ff; Megrelis 2013, 68-74.

<sup>46</sup> Atik-Korkmaz 2017, 186-189. For the detailed discussion and extended bibliography, see Megrelis 2013, 140-164.

<sup>47</sup> Le Roy 1993, 246; Megrelis 2013, 145.

<sup>48</sup> Megrelis 2013, 150.

<sup>49</sup> Le Roy 1993, 245; Megrelis 2013, 143.

<sup>50</sup> Bryce 1983; Le Roy 1993, 244; Keen 1998, 197-201; Megrelis 2013, 143.

<sup>51</sup> Bryce 1986, 175 ff; Le Roy 1993, 244 ff; Keen 1998, 194 ff; Işık 2001, 216.

and Gagai. These indicate that they were worshipped for different purposes, from prophecy to purification and health like their Greek counterparts<sup>52</sup>. The written sources demonstrate also that the Lycians assigned primary status to the spring deities, particularly in the history of their origins and the foundation myths of their cities. Furthermore, they were viewed exceptionally as agents of retribution in funeral tradition<sup>53</sup>. The visual displays of the deities in Lycia and Cabalia make this distinction evident: they consist of a certain number of attendants varying from three to nine and dance and/or play musical instruments such as the salpinx, aulos, kymbolos, and syrinx, which are indeed very characteristic of Muses in the Greek mentality<sup>54</sup>.

The archaeological and written sources derived from various sites in southwest Anatolia fit well with Yukarıovacık, which enables us to define this small-scale highland site as an open-air sanctuary. The sanctuary of Yukarıovacık may have taken its religious references from the local oral traditions which associate the underground waters of Temrencik Tepe with twelve gods who are known to us as Leto, her children, and the nymphs. If so, then it seems reasonable to consider that the sanctuary and its deities may well have served various purposes such as purification, health, fertility, death rituals, etc. In addition to this, special attention should also be paid to the political geography of Yukarıovacık and surrounding areas where the presumed territorial boundary of Oinoanda converges with Choma. Yet, as already noted above, the region was indeed a matter of dispute between the Lycians, Cabalians, and Milyans<sup>55</sup>. Therefore, the process of site selection and the production of sanctuary space may have been based not only on religious but also political and administrative motives. In fact, the archaeological and written sources gathered from the Letoon sanctuary demonstrate that the cult of the divine triad and the spring goddesses is indeed more political than religious, which is one of the well-known characteristics of spring-cult places in ancient Anatolia that goes back to the Hittite Period<sup>56</sup>.

### *Style and Date*

The outstanding feature of the work is the schematic rendering which can be seen equally in the architectural and figurative imagery. The architectural units, in this respect, do not consist of self-contained parts; instead they merge into each other in order to form a frame. Similarly, the large-scale patterns of clothes, which cover the whole body without giving any sign of the anatomical details as well as the continuous flow of the diagonal curves on the mantles, are also part of this schematization. Further, the technique of horizontal line isocephaly and the rigid frontal view constitutes additional characteristics of the workmanship. Hence, the figures are removed from naturalistic forms, particularly in their pose and proportions. In this respect, whether they are seated or standing, the heads of the figures are established on a common level and do not display any sign of liveliness, as if they are statues.

The crude stylistic patterns of the Yukarıovacık relief, which are manifested in schematic, frontal, disproportionate, and stable workmanship, also make it possible to

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<sup>52</sup> Frei 1990, 1816-1820.

<sup>53</sup> Dağlı 2011, 88-89.

<sup>54</sup> Dağlı 2011, 128; Larson 2001, 210.

<sup>55</sup> Rousset 2010, 79-89; Şahin 2014, 215-219; Mitchell 2005, 476-478.

<sup>56</sup> For water in Anatolian religions, see Erbil-Mouton 2012; Harmanşah 2014, 153-158; for the particular location of the Cabalian rock-cut reliefs at the waterside, see Smith 1997, 18-19; for the comparative analysis of Lycian spring-cult and related structures, see Tiryaki 2006.

establish it within the artistic sphere of provincial art, well documented in southwest Anatolia on Lycian, Cabalian, Milyan, and Pisidian votive stelae and rock-cut reliefs of the Late Roman Period<sup>57</sup>.

In addition to these, the Yukarıovacık relief shares another essential feature with these works, namely, the inconsistency between the stylistic quality and the content<sup>58</sup>. Nonetheless, it is clear that the workmanship of Yukarıovacık concentrated on the meaning of the scene rather than its aesthetic value. In this context, despite damage caused by nature and humans, the particular visual references related to the iconography of the deities seem to be arranged properly. Considering the comparative analyses with the Letoids from Rhodiapolis and Nymphai on regional votive stelae and rock-cut reliefs, it can be proposed that the iconography of the Yukarıovacık may have been aggregated from different works of art or was based on an existing example(s) presently unknown to us.

As for the date, the Rhodiapolis bullae remain of primary importance. Unfortunately, the brief note added to the excavation report is not sufficient to provide reliable information on these prominent finds<sup>59</sup>. In addition, the proposed date as “Hellenistic Period” in a subsequent article published by Özdilek<sup>60</sup> is not based on any reliable grounds. In the present case, the votive stelae of Nymphai with inscriptions may be used as comparanda for dating the Yukarıovacık relief, and these are generally attributed to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD<sup>61</sup>.

## Conclusion

Yukarıovacık, located in the surrounding countryside around Cabalian Oinoanda, promises more than an anonymous work of art recently added to the artistic repertoire of Late Roman southwest Anatolia. Its particular importance lies in its content that helps to bridge the gap between written sources and the archaeological records concerning the religious history of Lycia. Thus, Yukarıovacık enables us to recognize for the first time the iconographic peculiarities of Leto, her children, and the Nymphs, who are well known to us through written sources with most being inscriptions from the sanctuary of Letoon in Xanthos.

On the basis of common religious beliefs, Yukarıovacık offers additional information regarding the visual imagination of the Lycians. It may also present new perspectives on the religious iconography at Letoon by suggesting that the assembly of gods in the sanctuary may consist of twelve individual members as Leto, Artemis, Apollo, and the nine Nymphs.

If so, would it be appropriate to designate them as “the twelve gods of Letoon” and include them in discussions on the concept of twelve gods<sup>62</sup> in ancient southwest Anatolia?

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<sup>57</sup> Delemen 1994, 306; Smith 1997, 20; Delemen 1999, 24 ff; Smith 2011, 138.

<sup>58</sup> Delemen 1999, 25.

<sup>59</sup> Tibikoğlu 2009, 212.

<sup>60</sup> Özdilek 2012, 81.

<sup>61</sup> Dağlı 2011, 128-129.

<sup>62</sup> On the concept of a group of twelve gods mentioned in the Greek epigram of the Inscribed Pillar, see Laroche 1980, 2; Bryce 1986, 179 ff.; Keen 1998, 206-207; Gygax-Titetz 2005, 94. For the “Δώδεκα Θεοί / Twelve Gods” of Roman Lycia, see also Freyer-Schauenburg 1994; Schürr 2013; Balzat 2014, 256 pp.; Renberg 2014.

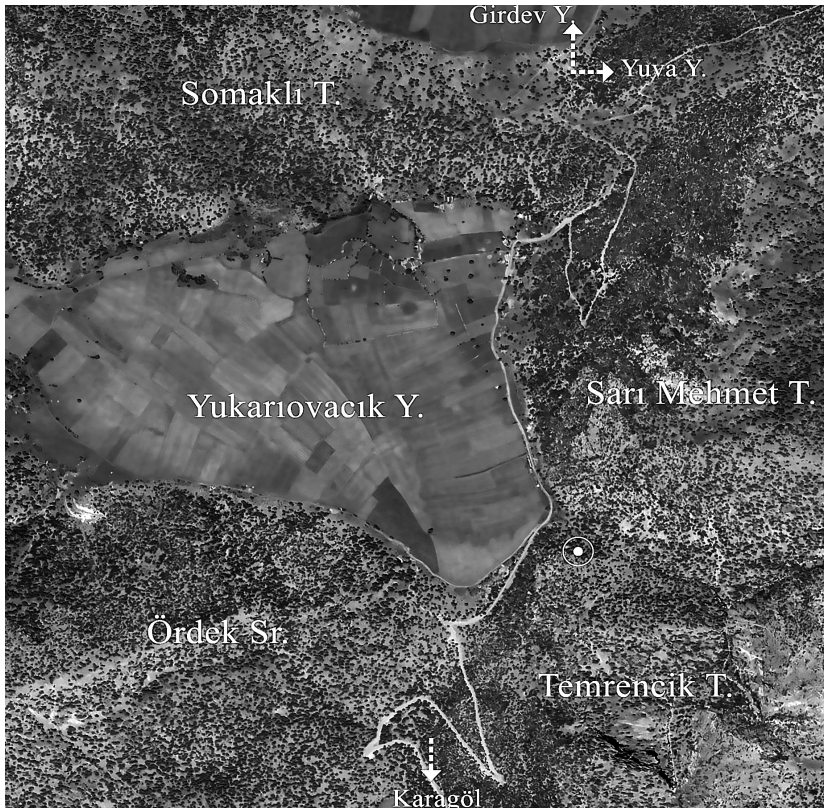
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Figs. 1-2  
Geography  
and location of  
Yukarıovacık



Fig. 3  
Rock-cut relief  
and illegal digs  
at its immediate  
surroundings

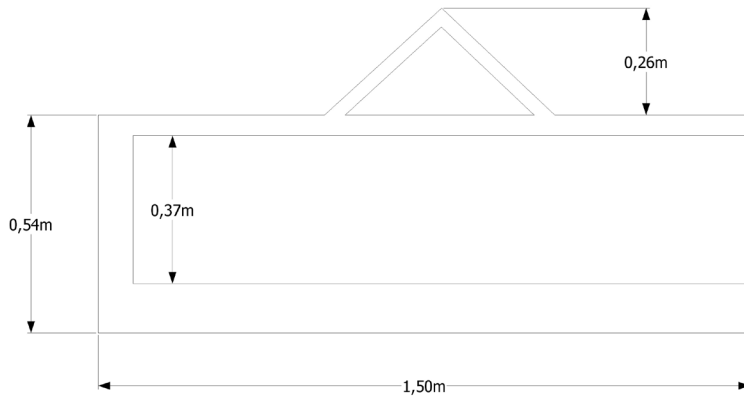


Fig. 4  
Schematic drawing of  
architectural façade  
with measurements

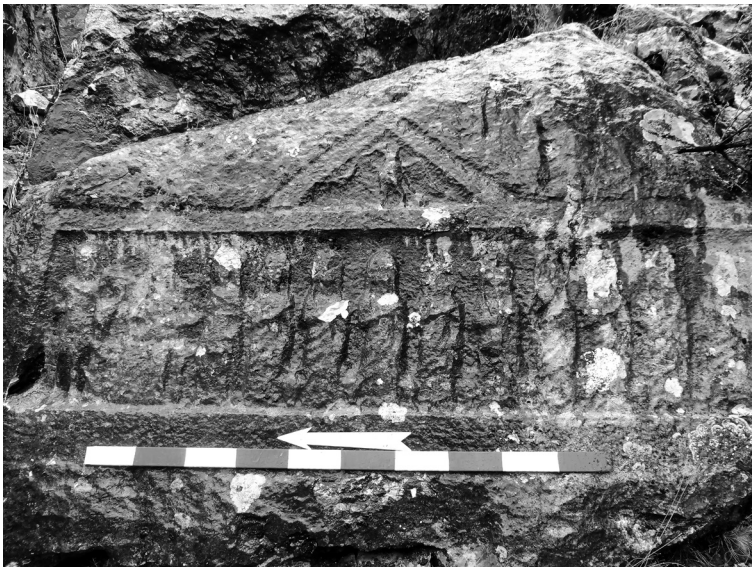


Fig. 5  
Yukariovacik  
rock-cut relief

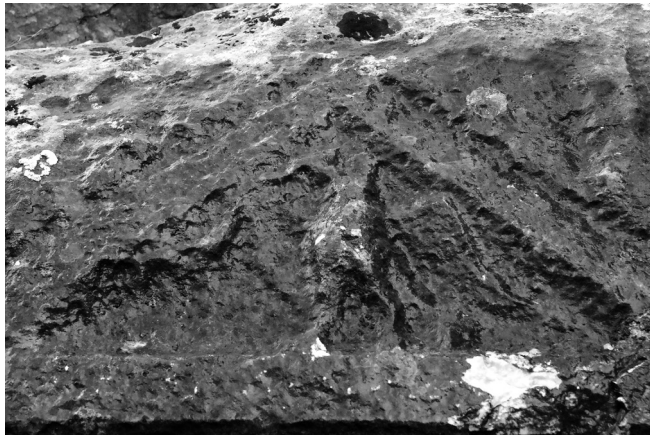


Fig. 6 Eagle-and-snake combat on pediment (detail)



Fig. 7 Votive stele dedicated to the Dioscuri and Goddess (Fethiye Museum)



Fig. 8 Depictions on rectangular panel

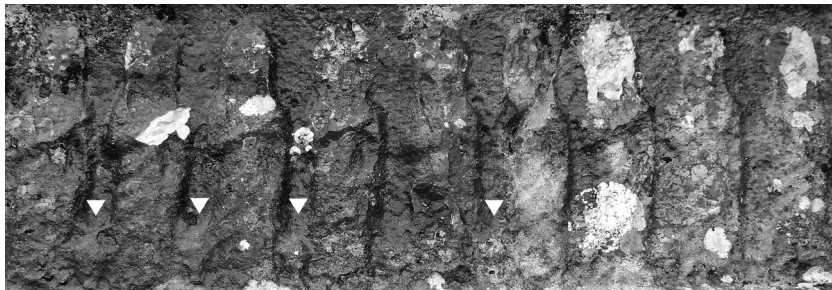


Fig. 9 Detailed view of figures in Nos. 4-12



Fig. 10 Detailed view of the figures in Nos. 1-3



Fig. 11 Votive relief dedicated to Apollo from the Sanctuary of Trud at Tracia (Lambrioudakis 1984, 216, fig. 261a)



Fig. 12  
Apollo on Podalian  
Coin (von Aulock 1974,  
no. 285)



Fig. 13  
Leto, Apollo, and Artemis  
on Rhodiapolis clay seal  
(Özdilek 2012, pl. 59, fig. 107)



Fig. 14 Rock-cult relief showing Nymphai from  
Dirmil/Kozağacı



Fig. 16 Votive stele dedicated to  
Nymphai from Çandır  
(Dağlı 2011, cat. no. 1)



Fig. 15 Votive stele dedicated to Nymphai from  
Idebessos (?) (Dağlı 2011, cat. no. 14)



Fig. 17 Votive stele dedicated to  
Nymphai from Arykanda  
(Dağlı 2011, cat. no. 2)