

PHRYGIAN TRACES IN THE BİLECİK REGION AND THE VEZİRHAN STELE

BİLECİK BÖLGESİNDEKİ PHRYG İZLERİ VE VEZİRHAN STELİ

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the Bilecik region, which is located between Mysia, Bithynia and Phrygia in north-western Anatolia, during the pre-Hellenistic period, in the 1st millennium BC. The paper aims at understanding the cultural identities of people who inhabited the region by interpreting ancient sources, archaeological evidence and epigraphic data together. Moreover, it analyses the Vezirhan stele stylistically, which was found in the region during the early 1970s. Analogies have shown that the reliefs include both eastern and western elements and the stele has been proposed to be dated to the end of the 5th century BC. The Vezirhan stele with the Old Phrygian and Greek inscriptions and the Fıranlar stele, another Old Phrygian inscription, prove the Phrygian presence in the region. In addition to these, recent archaeological data, including the Iron Age settlements represented by the so-called “Phrygian Grey”, imported wares and tumuli, is evaluated to shed light on the spread of the Phrygian culture, the settlement patterns and land use in the region. When all the data from the Bilecik region is evaluated, it can be understood that the southern half of the region was a part of the Phrygian core land. Despite the lacking consistent data from the northern part, the Phrygians might have inhabited small rural settlements or might have lived as nomadic tribes in the region.

Keywords: Phrygia, Achaemenid, Anatolian-Persian Style, Ancient Greek, Old Phrygian.

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ÖZET

Bu makale, temel olarak Kuzeybatı Anadolu'da Mysia, Bithynia ve Phrygia arasında konumlanmış Bilecik bölgesinin M.Ö. 1. Binyılda, Hellenistik Dönem öncesinde hangi bölge ya da bölgelere dâhil olduğunu sorgulamaktadır. Antik kaynaklar, arkeolojik kalıntılar ve epigrafik veriler kullanılarak bölge halklarının kültürel kimlikleri hakkında çıkarımlarda bulunması amaçlanmaktadır. Ayrıca makale ile 1970li yıllarda bölgeden bulunmuş olan Vezirhan Steli'nin stilistik analizi analogi ile yapılmıştır. Bu yapılan değerlendirmeler ışığında stelin hem doğu hem de batılı öğeler içerdiği görülmekte ve M.Ö. 5. yüzyılın sonuna tarihlenmesi önerilmektedir. Hem Phrygçe ve Hellence yazıt içeren Vezirhan Steli hem de başka bir Eski Phrygçe yazıt olan Fıranlar Steli bölgedeki Phryg varlığını kanıtlamaktadır. Bunlara ek olarak güncel araştırmalardan gelen, Phryg Grisi olarak bilinen seramikler ve ithal seramikler barındıran yerleşmeler ve tümülüsler gibi arkeolojik veriler de eklenerek bölgedeki kültürel yayılım, yerleşim şemaları ve bölgesel arazi kullanımı hakkında çıkarımlarda bulunulacaktır. Tüm bu veriler değerlendirildiğinde Bithynia, Mysia, Hellepontos Phrygiası ve İç Phrygia arasında konumlanmış Bilecik bölgesinin güney bölümlerinin hem konum hem de arkeolojik veriler açısından en yakın olarak İç Phrygia'yla bağlantılı olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Kuzey bölümlerinden çok tutarlı veriler gelmemesi sebebiyle bu bölgenin daha taşra niteliğinde olduğu, küçük kırsal yerleşmeler ve belki de göçebe topluluklar tarafından iskân edildiği düşünülebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Phrygia, Akhaimenid, Anadolu-Pers Üslubu, Hellence, Eski Phrygçe.

INTRODUCTION

This article investigates the Phrygian remains in the Bilecik region which is located between Phrygia, Mysia and Bithynia during the Iron Age in north-western Anatolia. Moreover, it also reassesses the Vezirhan stele, one of the most important artefacts found in the region. Although the stele has been epigraphically mentioned in many publications since the 1970s, the iconographical evaluations are insufficient. Therefore, this article thoroughly evaluates the stele especially in terms of compositions and iconography of the reliefs. With this article, Phrygian remains and current archaeological finds around the Bilecik region are evaluated regarding

sometimes separated by valleys formed by streams in the east-west and north-south directions. Plateaus such as Pazaryeri, Bozüyük and Gölpazarı, which are surrounded by mountainous and hills, contain the remnants of major occupation in the region. The Bilecik region is generally covered with dense forests and maquis shrublands, but agriculture is practised on the plateaus¹. Although there is no detailed study on palaeogeography in this area, it can be thought that land use in Antiquity was similar to - that of the modern age. Notwithstanding no dramatic changes in palaeogeography, it can be thought that forests were wider and denser than today considering deforestation over the centuries (Figure 1).

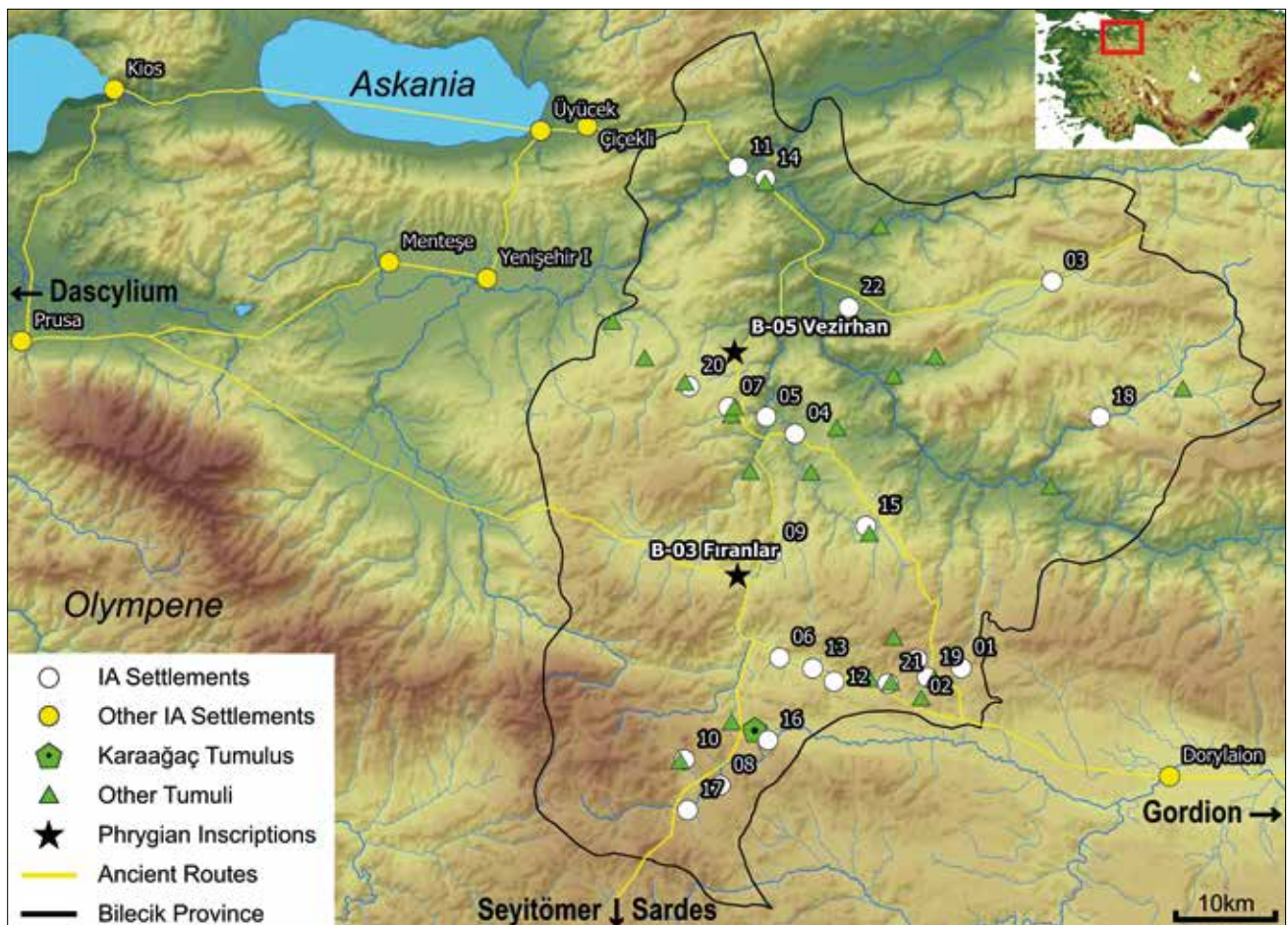


Figure 1: Map of the Iron Age Remains in Bilecik Region / *Bilecik Bölgesi Demir Çağı Kalıntıları Haritası*

their geographical distribution. These shreds of evidence and recent archaeological data contribute to a better understanding of the provincial organisation and urbanisation of the region during the Phrygian and the Achaemenid periods. The Bilecik region consists of a diversity of ecological regions with rich natural resources that were the main factors behind the human inhabitation in the region. - The geography of the region is characterized by mountains and steep hills which are

Although ancient sources have not provided sufficient data on the historical geography of the Bilecik region, archaeological research has claimed that it was located between the so-called Bithynian and the Phrygian cultural regions in the 3rd millennium BC². Some scholars have localized the land of Maşa (later Mysia?), known from the

¹ Nikolayidis 2016: 3-6.

² Sarı 2011: 239-247.

Hittite sources in the second half of the 2nd millennium BC to the north-western Anatolia and Bilecik region³.

Towards the end of the 2nd millennium BC, a new wave of immigration began to form the well-known historical geography of Asia Minor. Accordingly, the Mysian, Phrygian and Bithynian tribes, which were originally attributed to Balkan by some ancient sources, have been assumed to reshape the north-western part of Anatolia⁴. Although the boundaries between these tribes are not clear⁵, it is generally accepted that the Bithynian tribes lived in the Kocaeli Peninsula and its surrounding until the end of the 4th century BC⁶. Xenophon also reports that the Bithynian tribes occupied the northeast of the Hellespontine Phrygia, were allies of the Persian Satrapy at the end of the 5th century BC⁷. On the other hand, it is not clear how far the eastern border of the Mysia reached before the Hellenistic period. Besides, the ancient city of Kios and surrounding regions are referred as Mysia by Pseudo Skylax⁸ in the 4th century BC. Kios and its surrounding area also mentioned as Mysia in *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, which was written in the 3rd century BC but provide information on the earlier periods⁹. In addition to these, Kios¹⁰ and the Olympus¹¹ were mentioned as a part of Mysia in the narratives of Herodotus suggests that the Mysian tribes might have lived in the Bilecik region. Strabo states that in the earlier periods, the Olympus region was inhabited by Mysians who were exiled from their homeland by Phrygians who came from Thrace¹². Additionally, as mentioned in the *Iliad*, the Mysians and the Phrygians lived next to each other in the land of Ascania, in the east of Kios¹³.

The Phrygians, after whom the region (Phrygia or Hellespontine Phrygia) is named before the Hellenistic period, is a group of people who have been claimed to have migrated to central Anatolia from the Balkans. According to ancient sources, the migration¹⁴ took place

before the Trojan War¹⁵, but Strabo dates it just after the war according to Xanthos of Lydia¹⁶. In any case, these migrations from the Balkans to Anatolia have been archaeologically evidenced by hand-made coarse ware from Troia VIIb1 and VIIb2 (ca. 1200-1050 BC) and Gordion YHSS8, 7B and 7A (ca. 1100-900 BC)¹⁷. Therefore, with the 1st millennium BC, Phrygians established a state, whose material culture can be observed in most of central Anatolia is further supported by historical data. The distribution of the Old Phrygian inscriptions, which are the most consistent evidence of the Phrygian presence, shows that the Bilecik region is located outside the core of Phrygia. Bilecik must have been a region where the Phrygian and perhaps Mysian or Bithynian tribal communities lived during the Early and Middle Iron Ages (ca. 1200-600 BC). Nevertheless, as will be presented in this paper, evidence from the region shows that the Bilecik region was in closer connection with Phrygia rather than Mysia or Bithynia before the Achaemenid period.

After the preceding Lydian rule, Persians seem to have practised a new governing system by reorganizing the local states in Anatolia¹⁸. Dascylium, which had also been a significant settlement before the Achaemenid period¹⁹, was appointed as the satrapal court of Hellespontine Phrygia in 539 and controlled most of north-western Anatolia²⁰. A large region, including Greater Phrygia, was ruled from Dascylium and till the beginning of the 4th century BC, under the administrative system established by Darius I²¹. Because of their distance to the centre of the satrapy, these regions were ruled and controlled by subordinate rulers²². Despite the presence of Persian rulers, the ethnic presence of the Phrygians in the region must have continued during the period. While some Phrygians might have played important role in the Persian administrative system, others might have lived in smaller settlements or as nomads in the countryside, far from the central authority. In the final analysis of this paper, the distribution of the archaeological and epigraphical data will be examined and discussed to shed light on the distribution of these local communities.

³ Taş 2007, for suggestions on the localization before Taş, see: Taş 2007: 17

⁴ Sevin 2001: 43.

⁵ Strabo XII.4.4.

⁶ Sevin 2001: 29-32.

⁷ Xenophon VI.4.24.

⁸ Ps. Skylax 93.

⁹ Apollonius Rhodius I. 1163, 1178, 1300, 1321, 1346, 1349

¹⁰ Herodotus V.122.

¹¹ Herodotus I.36

¹² Strabo XII.8.1-3.

¹³ Homer II.858-863. Strabo mentions that it should be understood from Homer's definition of Phrygia as Phrygia Epictetus of his day (Strabo XII.4.5). He states that this region also covers the east of Lake Ascania, a part of it were called Phrygia and the other part was Mysia (Strabo XII.4.8). For detailed information on Phrygia Epictetus, a nomenclature dated after the period examined within the article, see. Şahin 1986.

¹⁴ Herodotus VII.73.

¹⁵ Strabo XII.8.4.

¹⁶ Strabo XIV.5.29. Strabo discusses the subject in the relevant passage using the information he learned from Homer (III. 181-190) on this anecdote.

¹⁷ Tüfekçi-Sivas 1997: 20-21.

¹⁸ According to Herodotus (I.28), the region must have belonged to the Lydian kingdom.

¹⁹ Bakır 2004, Gürtekin-Demir 2002.

²⁰ Sarıkaya 2018: 70.

²¹ Sarıkaya 2018: 72, 76, Duran 2020: 387.

²² For the provincial administration of the satrapy see: Sekunda 1985, Sekunda 1988, Maffre 2007, Sarıkaya 2018: 370-376. For archaeological evidence and discussions in the area on this issue see: Erpehlivan 2021

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No	Name	Periods	Publication
1	Aharköy Höyük	Phrygian and Classical Period	Efe 1990: 411-412, Efe 1991: 166.
2	Ambartepe	Late Bronze Age, Iron Age	Discovered in 2019, haven't published yet.
3	Arıcaklar/Tataion	Classical Period	Efe 1992: 567, Sarı 2019a: 449-450, Sarı 2019b: 404.
4	Bilecik-Yeniköy Höyük	2nd Millenium BC, Iron Age	Efe et al. 2015: 498-499.
5	Bilecik-YHT Tepesi	Iron Age	Discovered in 2019, haven't published yet.
6	Bozüyük	Iron Age?	Koerte 1899, Efe 1992: 564.
7	Çiftlik Alanı	Iron Age, Classical Period	Discovered in 2019, haven't published yet.
8	Çokçapınar Höyük	Classical Period	Efe 1990: 411.
9	Demirköy/Kurtköy Höyük	2nd millennium BC, Iron Age	Efe 1992: 565, Sarı 2017a: 339.
10	Gavur Tepesi	2nd millennium BC, Iron Age?	Efe 1990: 411.
11	Göktepe Höyük	Classical Period	Efe et al. 2015: 499.
12	Hüsümler Höyük	Classical Period	Sarı 2017a: 333.
13	Hüyücek	2nd millennium BC and Classical Period	Efe 1992: 564, Sarı 2017a: 333-334.
14	Kale Mevkii	Geç Tunç Çağı and Iron Age	Sarı 2019b: 402
15	Kalehöyük/Erenler	2nd millennium BC, Iron Age, Classical Period	Efe 1993: 346, Sarı 2019b: 401-402.
16	Kandilli-Kaletepe	Iron Age	Sarı 2017a: 336-337, Sarı 2019a: 440-441.
17	Killi Höyük	Phrygian	Efe 1990: 411, Sarı 2017a: 338.
18	Kocain Mağarası	Iron Age	Sarı 2019b: 405.
19	Oluklu Höyük	2nd millennium BC, Classical Period	Efe 1990: 411, Sarı 2019a: 443-444.
20	Örenaltı Mevkii	Classical Period	Discovered in 2019, haven't published yet.
21	Yapraklı/Çerkeşçetmi	Iron Age, Classical Period	Efe 1992: 563, Sarı 2017a: 334.
22	Zincirlikuyu/Medetli	2nd millennium BC, Classical Period	Efe 1992: 566-567, Efe et al. 2015: 499-500.

Table: Iron Age Settlements from Bilecik Region / *Bilecik Bölgesi Demir Çağı Yerleşmeleri***VEZİRHAN STELE**

The Phrygian culture of the Bilecik region is marked by the so-called Vezirhan stele (Figure 2). The Vezirhan stele (B-05)²³ with its inscriptions, is a quadrangular stele with a rounded top. The stele is 1.55m high, 0.56m

wide and 0.20m deep in size. The Vezirhan stele is currently in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum and was registered with the inventory number, 6219 + 71.27. It was exhibited in the Neighbouring Cultures of İstanbul section of the museum, which is now closed due to the recent renovations.

²³ Neumann 1997. Although the stele is mentioned in the literature with the name of Vezirhan, the exact find place in the museum records was Gülümbe Bahçeleri. The use of Vezirhan is because it was the first settlement that museum experts encountered during their arrival from Istanbul. Gülümbe Bahçeleri is the name given to small fields near Gülümbe village, just a few kilometres north of the city centre, 7 km southwest of Vezirhan. This erroneous naming was included by the literature after Neumann 1997. Unlike Vezirhan, which is located on the base of the valley, Gülümbe is located at a more isolated point.

Although its form shows similarities to Anatolian stelae, the Vezirhan stele differs in its roughly shaped edges. It was founded as broken into three major pieces except smaller fragments. Firstly, the upper part of the stele was discovered by the archaeologists of Istanbul Archaeology Museum in 1968 and the remaining pieces were uncovered later in 1970 and were brought to the museum. The stele, which was reassembled after the



Figure 2: Vezirhan Stele / Vezirhan Steli (compiled by the author from; İstanbul Çevre Kültürleri 1999, 10, Neumann 1997, Abb. 4)

restoration and conservation, has some minor deficiencies at the junction points of the three pieces. However, it does not hinder an understanding of the inscriptions and the compositions of the scenes.

MATERIAL OF THE STELE

The stele was carved on a kind of limestone globally known as Breccia corallina or locally Rosalia, Rose-Beige, which is quarried even today for commercial purposes in the Bilecik region. It is often cream-coloured

with red, orange and brown veins. This type of limestone is almost as hard as marble and suitable for sculpting. It was not only used in local architectural elements dated to the Roman period but also was the most important product which was exported from the Bilecik region, for centuries²⁴.

²⁴ Corsi 1845: 143, Nos. 910, 944, 950. Breccia corallina is a type of limestone used in both sculpting and architectural decoration in Rome and the surrounding cities with their exotic and colourful structures in orange, red and brown tones. Lazzarini 2010: 141-142, Fig. 2e. Examples of this kind of stones can be

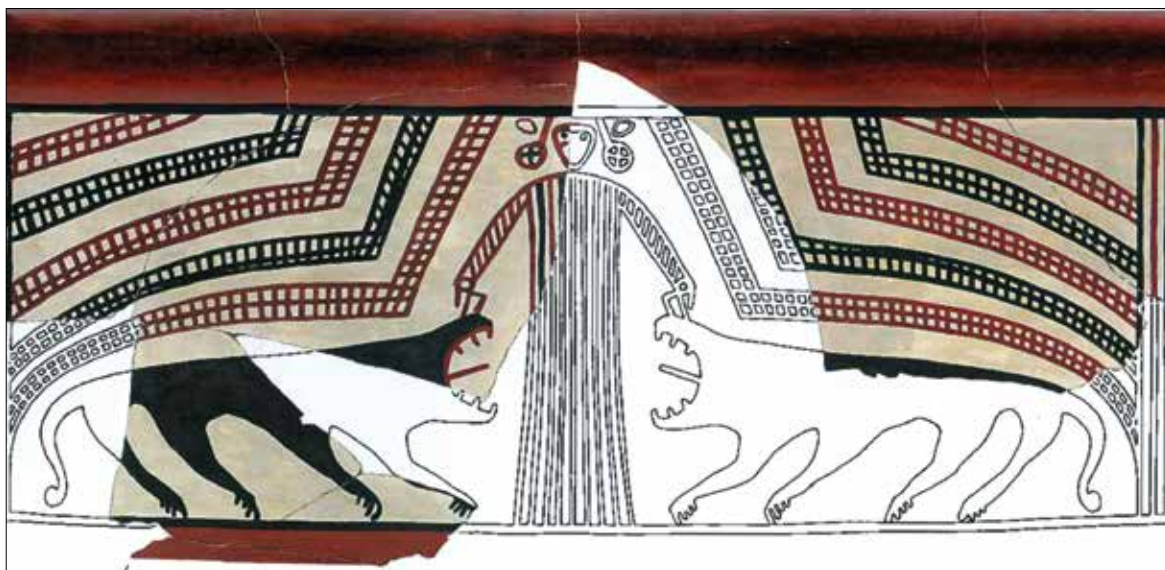


Figure 3: Goddess from Boğazköy / *Boğazköy'den Tanrıça* (Bossert 2000, *Dinos* 272)

RELIEFS OF THE STELE

The reliefs can be defined as three or four registers from top to bottom. The upper register depicts the bust of a goddess, who has a headdress consisting of palm or palmette leaves, with birds on her shoulders and lions on each side. The middle register includes five figures in a ritual scene, and the lower register depicts a hunting scene, composed of two figures, a dog and a wild boar. The figures are not depicted in details, instead silhouettes in low relief. It shows similarities to other reliefs from the Bilecik region and Hellespontine Phrygia in which these missing details were completed with paint²⁵.

In the top scene, the figure in the middle is depicted frontally without any gender indication. The figure represents a bust, its head is embossed in a shape almost round and slightly bent to its left. Ears and the other facial limbs are separated from its round-shaped head with lines. The almond-shaped eyes are formed by engraved lines, and the nose is large and long for its face. Nasolabial lines on each side of the nose are shown. Its mouth is small and is positioned lower than usual. The floral motif, which seems to come out of the head of the figure, depicts a bud at the top with six leaves on the left and five leaves on the right. The depiction of the lower body of the figure is not known due to the fracture point. There are two birds on each shoulder of the figure that are depicted in $\frac{3}{4}$ posture and their heads are facing not the figure, but the opposite direction. The figure reaches to the felines on each side with its arms. The felines are

depicted in profile as facing at the figure. They have a rectangular head with an open mouth and crouched on the ground. The fact that felines' chests are puffier than their bodies suggests that they are male lions considering many parallels of the pose.

The figure dominating the lions in the centre of the upper scene should be regarded as a Mother Goddess in the composition of Potnia Theron, as it is known from similar examples. Artemis, the Goddess of Wild Animals (*πότνια θηρῶν*) mentioned in the *Iliad*²⁶, is also recorded with the Phrygian word *aṛtimitos* (line 3) on the stele²⁷. There can be similarities between stele and some reliefs of Phrygian Kybele in terms of the iconography; the goddess, lions²⁸ and predatory birds²⁹ mentioned before³⁰. However, the details of the composition do not seem to be closely connected with the well-known Phrygian type³¹. The posture of the lions can be argued as a deviation from the Phrygian art. Although lions in this stance can be observed in the earlier finds of the Neo-Hittite and Urartian³² art, their contemporary parallels are mostly

seen in many regions around the Mediterranean, in the Bilecik Museum and the countryside as spolia. A less brecciated stone was chosen for carving the Vezirhan stele.

²⁵ Apart from the known examples, for recently found four stelae in Bozüyük see: Erpehlivan 2021.

²⁶ Homer XXI.470.

²⁷ Neumann, 1997: 21, Brixhe 2004: 67.

²⁸ Prayon 1987: Kat. Nr. 35 (Taf. 13a Aslantaş), Kat. Nr. 39 (Taf. 15a Aslankaya), Though not fully preserved, it can be understood that the lion on the top register is depicted in a standing position based on the comparison with an Anatolian-Persian style stele found in Bozüyük. Erpehlivan 2021: Stele 1 (A-1274).

²⁹ Prayon 1987: Kat. Nr. 72-75 (Taf. 18a-f).

³⁰ Karagöz 2013: 36.

³¹ Fiedler 2003: 102.

³² Bossert 1942: Abb 780-782 (Darende), 845, 857 (Karkamış), Akurgal 1966: Abb 46 (Patnos).



Photo 1: Goddess from Boeotia / *Boiotia'dan Tanrıça* (Dubhrós 2018, Fig. 1.3)

found in Lydia³³, Ionia³⁴, Caria³⁵ and Hellespontine Phrygia³⁶ located in western Anatolia.

Turning back to the general composition, a similar scene of a goddess and lions on each side is painted on a dinos³⁷ unearthed at Boğazköy Büyükkale Ib (650-600 BC) (Figure 3). It is noteworthy that birds of prey are not included in the composition. This composition on the stele has parallels with Potnia Theron iconographies in Greek art. The scene painted on a Boeotian amphora (680-670 BC)³⁸ now in the National Museum of Athens (Photo 1) has similarities in the terms of the lions on each side of the goddess and birds of prey on her shoulders. This scene represents the most similar depiction to the upper register of the stele. Apart from these, there are other examples of the scene on such as golden pendants, on which there is a winged goddess holding lions, found in Rhodes³⁹ and the François Vase with the figures on the handles⁴⁰. In addition to these, another composition, the goddess having birds on her shoulders and her hands, is known from an ivory plate⁴¹ found in Sparta. Other compositions of the goddess with birds and branches in her hands, and the other one with birds on her shoulders and leopards in her hands (Photo 2) appear on two vases from Crete⁴². The frontal depiction of the goddess of wild



Photo 2: Goddess from Crete / *Girit'ten Tanrıça* (Dubhrós 2018, Fig. 6.10)

animals, as in the scene on the stele is noteworthy. If not painted, the goddess on the stele does not have any wings as seen in some Greek parallels.

The headdress of the goddess, which consists of palmette or palm branches, was associated⁴³ with the motifs on the widely known title of the Phrygian Mother Goddess, previously uncovered in Boğazköy and Salmanköy⁴⁴. However, an exact parallel of the scene on the stele has

³³ Hanfmann/Ramage 1978, Kat. 26-29, 34-35, Ratté 1989, Strocka 1977.

³⁴ Meral 2003: 47-70, K1-K19, Aybek 2011: 91, Kat. 88, Aybek vd. 2009: 71-72, Kat. 56-57.

³⁵ Eren 2015.

³⁶ Erpehlivan 2018: 338, Resim 7.17.

³⁷ Bossert 2000: 53, Dinos 272.

³⁸ Dubhrós 2018: Fig. 1.3.

³⁹ Akurgal 1966: Abb 50.

⁴⁰ Dubhrós 2018: Fig. 1.1-2

⁴¹ Dubhrós 2018: Fig. 6.7.

⁴² Dubhrós 2018: Fig. 6.9-10.

⁴³ Karagöz 2013: 36.

⁴⁴ Prayon 1987: Kat. Nr. 7-8, Taf. 3.



Photo 3: Southern Relief of Harpy Tomb / *Harpylar Antı Güney Kabartmaları* (Polat 1998, Levha XIIIc)



Photo 4: Detail from Bozüyük-4 Stele / *Bozüyük-4 Steli'nden Detay* (Erpehlivan 2021, Fig. 15)

not been encountered so far. Apart from the Phrygian examples, the depiction of a lotus-like cap on a vase painting from Crete (Photo 2) represents a similar scene, deviating from other Greek examples. Previous studies have claimed that the floral depiction might have been an ornament or a kind of anthemion indicating the top of the stele⁴⁵. This claim might have resulted from the fact that a complete parallel of the composition is lacking. However, the head of the goddess as well as the floral depiction is tilted in the same axis that seems to be a result of the movement of the head. Therefore, the floral motif must represent an ornament of the headdress maybe the thee of life.

The fact that almost all of the similar scenes discussed above dated to earlier periods than the stele suggests the arrival of the iconography to the region in a later period. This primitive portrayal of the goddess might have been due to the inexperience of the artist to frontal depictions or more plausibly, the primitive portrayal was the norm for the depiction of the goddess. If so, the statue of the goddess could be some kind of wooden xoanon.

In the middle register, there are two figures seated at the centre of the scene. The figure on the left depicts a woman with a mantle covering her head, and on the right was a man with short hair. The man on the right is sitting in a stall with a back, and the woman on the left, although not fully depicted, might have been seated on a stall. A thymiaterion (incense burner) is placed in the middle of the two seated figures. The man holds up the lid of the thymiaterion with his left hand, while he is reaching the thymiaterion with his right hand. Similarly, the woman is reaching the thymiaterion with her right hand and holds an object in an almost quadrilateral form, perhaps a fly whisk, in her left hand. Although details of the clothes of both figures are lacking, none of the figures has a headdress. While the feet of the female figure are not shown under her dress, the feet of the male figure are depicted on the footrest.

Besides the central figures, more figures can be seen at the left and right ends of the scene: A woman in a dress covering her head and a short-haired man. Both figures are depicted dressed and are smaller in size compared to the seated figures. Moreover, if the figures are assumed to be standing, it is noteworthy that they tilted from the vertical axis and are depicted as leaning towards the central scene. The female on the left is holding a circular object in her right hand, which comes out of her long mantle, and another rectangular object in her left hand closer to her body. The woman's feet are not depicted.

⁴⁵ Kisbali 2018.



Photo 5: Audience Scene from Persepolis / *Persepolis'ten Kabul Sahnesi* (Dusinberre 2013, 193, Fig. 111)

The rightmost male is holding an object like a jug with his left hand and bent his legs and his feet are also depicted.

Another figure belonging to this scene is carved in the lower register: A male with short hair and a long dress. This figure is also depicted with a slightly forward-leaning motion and is similar in size to the seated figures. His arms extend forward and he carries an object with both hands. The feet are not shown in his long dress.

The theme of the middle register must be a ritual. Figures, similar to the seated figures of the register, are known from many examples in Anatolian-Persian style⁴⁶ such as Toyçeşme stele⁴⁷ from Dascylium, Harpy tomb⁴⁸ from Lycia (Photo 3), Haliller stele⁴⁹ from Lydia and Bozüyük-4 stele⁵⁰ from the Bilecik region. Compositions consisting of the eastern originated⁵¹ insignia; thymiaterion are known from the Toyçeşme stele, a piece of cloth found in Pazyryk⁵² (Figure 4), and possibly from the Bozüyük-4 stele⁵³ (Photo 4). The thymiaterion on the stele is depicted larger and taller than a usual contemporary metal⁵⁴ and ceramic⁵⁵ thymiateria that are similar in form. The thymiateria, which are similar in size, but not in form, can be seen in the Apadana reliefs⁵⁶ (Photo 5), a piece of cloth from Pazyryk (Figure 4), and a cylinder seal⁵⁷. The lid of the thymiaterion, which is usually depicted

passively in scenes, is opened by the man, and perhaps, he adds a new incense together with the woman as a part of the ritual. The man and woman shown equally in the scene must represent the important role of woman which is common among the Anatolian-Persian stelae. Feasts or rituals in which men and women take part together, also mentioned by Herodotus⁵⁸, classified as a separate group⁵⁹ as known from the Phrygian inscription bearing Manes' stele and many others.

The figures behind the seated man and woman are a matter of discussion in several aspects. According to known compositions, these secondary figures can be family members or servants. However, the fact that the axes of the figures are tilted towards the centre and the depiction of the lower half of the female figure shows similarities to the female-headed birds⁶⁰ on the reliefs of the Harpy tomb (Photo 3) from Lycia. The representation of the male figure is currently unique. Although both figures look like mythological beings, there is no sign of their wings. They also remind of the servants who are bringing the objects. The figure at the bottom right also carries an object to the figures in the centre to contribute to the ritual. The fact that it is depicted larger than other secondary figures can be because it fills the space left in the lower register.

The lower scene of the stele depicts a wild boar hunt which is an example of a common composition in Anatolian-Persian style⁶¹. In the centre of the scene, a man is depicted on horseback, about to throw his spear at the boar. The short-haired male holds the reins of the horse with his left hand, while he carries his spear, almost in the size of the figure itself, on his right hand. The legs of the rider that intersect with the horse are not shown,

⁴⁶ For other examples see: Polat 1998: 18-20.

⁴⁷ Polat 1998: I.ST 2.

⁴⁸ Polat 1998: III.AN 1.

⁴⁹ Roosevelt 2009: 159-160, 250-251.

⁵⁰ Erpehlivan 2021: Stele 4.

⁵¹ Polat 1998: 20-21.

⁵² Rudenko 1970: 219-220.

⁵³ There is a gap between the two seated figures in the scene of Boyüzük stele 4, but the thymiaterion cannot be seen. The thymiaterion might have been added with paint as in many details on the stele.

⁵⁴ Mellink 1967: 172, Fig. 20-21. Uşak İkiztepe Tumulus.

⁵⁵ Risser 2001: 134-135, Cat. 589-593. Corinth.

⁵⁶ Dusinberre 2013: 193, Fig. 111.

⁵⁷ Ackerman 1938: Pl. 123c.

⁵⁸ Herodotus V.18.

⁵⁹ Gusmani/Polat 1999: 140.

⁶⁰ These figures are thought to be associated with Egyptian ba birds that symbolize the soul. Dusinberre 2013: 191.

⁶¹ Draycott 2016: 243.



Figure 4: Fabric Fragment from Pazyryk / *Pazyryk'tan Kumaş Parçası* (Rudenko 1970, Fig. 139)

while his feet are briefly depicted. The legs of the figure must have been painted on the horse. The hunter's horse is depicted in the pose of "flying-gallop"⁶², slightly tilted down from the horizontal axis. The head of the horse is smaller in comparison to its body and leans towards the body, and manes and tail were tied. Its genitalia shown between its hind legs and body indicates that it is a stallion. The walking figure on the left of the scene is a dressed man with short hair. He apparently wears a short chiton and carries several spears on his shoulder, and probably, supports the rider with the equipment. The wild boar which is the hunting animal is depicted in front of the horse, and a dog chases the boar. The wild boar was hit by a spear from its back, trying to escape from the hunters. Compared to the horse, the wild boar and the dog were carved larger.

The parallels of the boar hunt can easily be found in examples of the Anatolian-Persian style reliefs and Achaemenid seals in both the Palace and Greco-Persian

styles⁶³. Despite that, many variants of the composition can be observed through the details. The deer hunting on the Helvatepe stele⁶⁴ found around Dascylium is quite similar to the Vezirhan stele in terms of the composition and positioning of the figures. Another grave stele found in Çavuşköy⁶⁵ around Dascylium bears figures, from left to right, the supporter of the hunter, the hunter on horseback, and a wild boar attacked by dogs. Additionally, there is a tree in the upper right of the scene and a deer behind it complements the natural landscape of the scene in the Çavuşköy stele. The theme of the boar hunt on the Çan Sarcophagus⁶⁶ and another stele from Balıkesir, İvrindi, Gömeniç (inner Mysia)⁶⁷, which bear a very similar scene, but includes a bird on the upper right instead of the supporter of the hunter and dogs. Similar examples bearing

⁶³ Herles 2012: 225-228. Boardman 1970: Fig. 290, Pl. 885, 905, 924-926.

⁶⁴ Polat 1998: I.ST 1

⁶⁵ Polat 1998: I.ST 6

⁶⁶ Sevinç et al. 2001: Fig. 6. The composition of the scene of the boar hunt on the Vezirhan stele is also very similar to that of the battle scene on the short side of the sarcophagus (Fig. 11).

⁶⁷ Polat 1998: I.ST 7.

⁶² Boardman 1970: 312.

the boar hunt are found from Mysia⁶⁸ and Phrygia also the Bilecik region⁶⁹. Especially, the stele from Kütahya-Dumlupınar⁷⁰ is very similar that does not have floor lines.

When the horse on the scene is examined in detail, it is smaller in size compared to its rider. This represents a typical Achaemenid horse depiction⁷¹ with its head being larger than its body, tied mane and tail. The first aspect that differentiates the Vezirhan stele from the parallel examples given above is that there are no other elements such as trees, mountains and tertiary animals to enhance the natural landscape. The lack of landscape elements, which became widespread by the 4th century BC, may indicate that the stele was carved before that date. On the other hand, it can be argued that the landscape elements were replaced by the servant who had to extend from the middle scene. Moreover, the fact that the wild boar and the dog were carved larger than the horse, the rider and supporter might have been an effort to emphasize the perspective. Another factor that contributes to the vividness and sophistication of the scene is that the injured boar flees from the hunter and the dog.

INSCRIPTIONS OF THE STELE

The Phrygian inscription on the stele consists of thirteen lines from left to right in the epichoric alphabet⁷² and seven lines of Greek in two parts (Figure 2). Scholars have suggested that the Greek inscription was added later, and there is no exact bilingualism between the inscriptions⁷³. Although it was written in the epichoric alphabet, the Phrygian inscription contains words from both the Old Phrygian and New Phrygian inscriptions which is called the “Northwest Phrygian” dialect⁷⁴. The Vezirhan stele includes nearly 90 words that make it the richest inscription among all the Old and New Phrygian inscriptions⁷⁵ while the Greek part is a summary of the contents⁷⁶. Although this particular inscription does not have a complete translation, it is thought to have a similar formulation with the Elnaf’s stele found in Köseresul, near

Dascylium⁷⁷. Mistakes in the Greek inscriptions show that it was not carved by a good stonemason and it was carved with a different chisel from the Phrygian inscription⁷⁸. However, suggestions for the translation of the Greek inscription, whose language was found to be successful and thought to be non-rural⁷⁹, are as follows:

Neumann 1997: “Kailias, der Sohn des Abiktos, hat ... errichtet. Wer immer im Bereich des Heiligtums Übles tut oder einen Baum fällt, der soll sein Leben verlieren und keine Nachkommen haben. Und dem, der hierher kommt und dies liest, soll viel Gutes geschehen!”

Brixhe 2004: “Kallias, fils d’Abiktos ... a dédié (ce monument/ce sanctuaire). Puisse quiconque fauterait à l’égard du sanctuaire ou couperait un arbre être privé de la vie et de descendance. Et à celui qui viendra ici et lira (ces lignes), beaucoup de bonheur”

Gorbachov 2008: “Kallias, son of Abiktos, set up $\eta\mu\eta\gamma\epsilon\mu\alpha\varsigma$ ⁸⁰. Who does evil around this sanctuary or fells a tree, may neither livelihood nor offspring be produced (for him), and for him who comes and acknowledges/reads (it) – (may) much good (be produced)”

Simon 2015: “Kallias, Sohn des Abiktos’, hat $\eta\mu\eta\gamma\epsilon\mu\alpha\varsigma$ ⁸¹ errichtet. Wer immer im Bereich des Heiligtums Übles tut oder einen Baum fällt, der soll sein Leben verlieren und keine Nachkommen haben. Und dem, der hierher kommt und dies liest, soll viel Gutes geschehen.”

DISCUSSION AND DATING OF THE STELE

When the geography of the region is examined, the Vezirhan stele is located at a point in the middle of a natural landscape, far from the larger settlements. It contains very unique elements in terms of both its location and iconography and provides significant clues about the formation of the less-known local people of the rural side⁸². Unfortunately, no archaeological data from the

⁶⁸ Polat 1998: II.ST 1.

⁶⁹ Erpehlivan 2021: Stele 1.

⁷⁰ Polat 1998: IV.ST 2.

⁷¹ This global style, which is a source for the Anatolian-Persian style in the depiction of horses, is of course known from the centre, from the Apadana Reliefs in Persepolis. Afshar/Lerner 1979: Pl. 1-3, 5a, Schmidt 1953: Pl. 29b (Armenia?), Pl. 32 (Syria), Pl. 35 (Cappadocia?), Pl. 37 (Saka Tigraxauda), Pl. 42 (Sagartia) Pl. 52 (King’s Horses). As can be seen from these examples, this fashion should have prevailed in many states as well as in the centre.

⁷² Neumann 1997: 15. The letters used in the Phrygian inscription are thought to be an epichoric alphabet related to the Greek alphabet rather than the Old Phrygian alphabet.

⁷³ Neumann 1997: 14.

⁷⁴ Neumann 1997: 27.

⁷⁵ Gorbachov 2008: 91.

⁷⁶ Obrador-Cursach 2018: 22

⁷⁷ Neumann 1997: 28. In the Aramaic inscription of the Elnaf’s stele, the name, quality, origin, or family name of the person who built it, the purpose of the stele, the type of the monument, the stele and the tomb, the phrases protecting the stele and the grave against evil and the gods who are asked to protect the monument are mentioned respectively.

⁷⁸ Neumann 1997: 28.

⁷⁹ Neumann 1997: 31.

⁸⁰ Gorbachov 2008: 93. This word is thought to enigmatically describe the sanctuary or stele.

⁸¹ Simon 2015: 17. The meaning of this string is unclear.

⁸² Sekunda 1985, Sekunda 1988, Maffre 2007. Studies on the culture of local people in northwestern Anatolia are extremely limited, and only superficial studies have been compiled based on limited data on sub-regions and people influenced by the Persian rule.

findspot of the stele has been revealed so far. Although the location of the findspot seems to be an isolated spot at first glance, the fact that analogies of the goddess both in the eastern and western art support the idea that the region experienced intense cultural exchange. Besides, it is proven with the translation of a prothesis from the Phrygian inscription: “whoever reads what has been said while travelling”⁸³, that the findspot must be close to a road that might have used by travellers and merchants.

The Phrygian inscription does not make a definite contribution to the understanding of the function of the Vezirhan stele, but the scholars usually suggested that the stele is a dedication to the sanctuary of the goddess⁸⁴. Even though, there is not an exact example of a votive stele among the Anatolian-Persian stelae⁸⁵ rather than grave stelae⁸⁶. Based on the iconographic and epigraphic data, the stele, which is unlike its parallels mentioned above, clearly indicates that there was a sanctuary in the area. However, the inscriptions do not provide detailed attestation and information on the sanctuary⁸⁷, whether the benefactor named Kallias, son of Abiktos, established the complete sanctuary or only dedicated the stele and planted the trees that he cursed whoever falls them⁸⁸. It is clear that with the unique iconography, closer to the Anatolian cults of Artemis, and her name carved in Phrygian the goddess must have had a status similar to the mother goddess, Kybele. Maybe this stele was marking a tomb and the hieron mentioned in the Greek text was kind of a heroon of the local elite consists of several tombs which were hoped to be protected by the goddess herself. The depiction of the goddess on the stele may reflect a similar example such as the Elnaf's Stele which is protected by Bel and Nabu read from its Aramaic inscription and the Altıntaş stele which was also found in Phrygia bears sphinxes and the tree of life as protectors⁸⁹.

Why were these compositions chosen for carving on the stele? As mentioned above, probably, the upper

scene directly replicates the original statue (xoanon), a relief or a painting of the goddess. In the middle scene, the ritual with a man and a woman probably depicts Kallias⁹⁰ and his wife, who erected the stele, and those behind them probably depicted either their living relatives or dead ancestors, and the outermost figure can be a servant. Although the scene of the incense burning is an oriental composition introduced by the Persians, it can symbolize a ritual for this goddess. The lower scene also depicts a scene from the life of Kallias, a hunt that might have represented an elite practice. This scene is common on the other Anatolian-Persian stelae as a reflection of Kallias' status in society. In summary, the upper scene depicts the goddess herself and her servants, wild animals, the middle scene shows the family life and piety of Kallias, and finally, the lower scene imposes the message that he was from an upper class, elite.

All these aforementioned aspects and the iconography on the stele do not fully explain the ethnic origin of Kallias, but linguists consider that the name of Abiktos, the father of Kallias, is a local name⁹¹. In the iconography on the stele, there are no definite Persian elements except the horse and thymiaterion. On the other hand, this depiction of the horse can be argued to be either the sculptor's tendency to the style or the fashion of the period or more speculatively, a Persian gift to the local elite. Unfortunately, painted details of Kallias' clothes have not been preserved. Women are shown only in long dresses and mantles. The only conclusion about Kallias' ethnic identity can be that he was Phrygian in origin, a local elite indirectly influenced by the Persian culture.

Researchers have suggested different dates for the stele. It was dated to the end of the 5th century BC⁹² and the 6th century BC⁹³ in the catalogues of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. Neumann dated the Phrygian inscription to the end of the 5th century and the Greek inscription to the 4th century BC⁹⁴. The stele was stylistically dated to the 6th century by Ş. Karagöz⁹⁵. C. Brixhe dated it and the Phrygian inscription to the end of the 5th century BC and the Greek inscription

⁸³ Simon 2015: 25-28.

⁸⁴ Brixhe 2004: 67. According to a view based on the Phrygian and supported with the Greek inscription on the stele, Kallias dedicated the sanctuary (and therefore, the stele as well) to the goddess and forested the surrounding area.

⁸⁵ Only the Elnaf's stele was previously attributed to a dedication to protecting caravans by Bel and Nabu yet it is now accepted as a grave stele. Polat 1998: I.ST 4, also see the bibliography of the stele.

⁸⁶ Other examples of Anatolian-Persian style from Bilecik region are also grave stelae. See Erpehlivan 2021.

⁸⁷ Some theories can be put forward about these details: The fact that the headdress of the goddess is not a common Phrygian type makes us think that the image of the goddess was created after the Phrygian period.

⁸⁸ Brixhe 2004: 67.

⁸⁹ Polat 1998: IV.ST 1.

⁹⁰ Neumann 1997: 30. It is controversial whether Kaliya in the Phrygian inscription and Kallias in the Greek inscription are the same person. Since there is a historical difference between the two inscriptions, sometimes it was questioned that Kallias could be Abiktos' son and Kaliya's grandson.

⁹¹ Neumann 1997: 30. Similar names were found in Greater Phrygia (Upper Porsuk) and Phrygian-Mysian border (Bursa, Mustafakemalpaşa, Alpağut).

⁹² Anatolian Civilisations 1983: 60.

⁹³ İstanbul Çevre Kültürleri 1999: 11.

⁹⁴ Neumann 1997: 28-29.

⁹⁵ Karagöz 2013: 95.

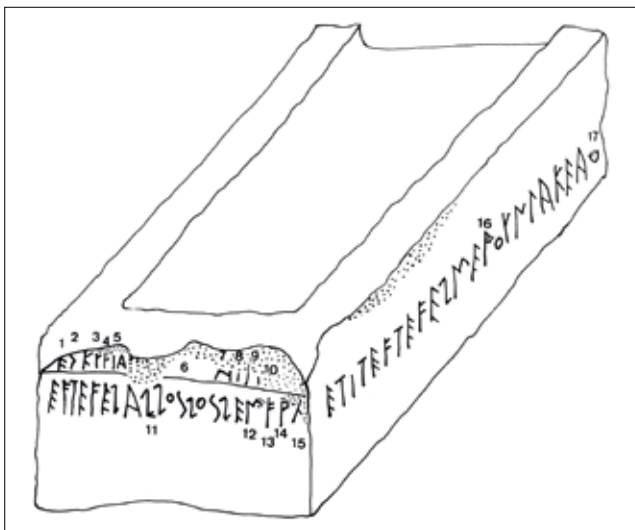


Figure 5: Firanlar Inscription / *Firanlar Yazıtı* (Brixhe ve Lejeune 1984, 70)

to a few generations later⁹⁶. The analogies of the stele with the Anatolian-Persian style stelae, as previously evaluated, provide important evidence for dating. Although the lacking details and some elements do not allow accurate comparisons, they generally have very similar aspects to the reliefs of the 5th and the 4th century BC. In addition to the published stelae, recent finds from Bozüyük are similar to the Vezirhan stele. These stelae are dated to the first half of the 4th century BC in terms of the war scenes, natural landscapes and an anthemion⁹⁷. Unfortunately, there is no anthemion to help to date the Vezirhan stele. Although, the lack of floor lines, position and ratios of the figures in the boar hunt scene mentioned above may be an effort to emphasize the perspective which is also known from the Athenian red figure pottery of the last quarter of the 5th century BC and forth⁹⁸. In sum, stylistically, the Vezirhan stele might have been produced in the late 5th or the beginning of the 4th century BC. As the stele does not bear any war scenes associated with the historical events of the 4th century, and there is no natural landscape to support the composition, which was quite common during the 4th century BC. While the epigraphic data also supports the suggestion of the 5th and the 4th centuries BC⁹⁹, the stele was used actively, in particular, in the 4th century, and it is proved by the Greek inscription added later.

⁹⁶ Brixhe 2004: 66-67.

⁹⁷ Erpehlivan 2021.

⁹⁸ Boardman 2017: 144-145.

⁹⁹ In addition to the literature mentioned above, according to the Oxford University's Lexicon of Greek Personal Names (www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk), in all uses (6th century BC – 3rd century AD) of the name of Kallias has around 45% percent dated to the 5th and the 4th centuries BC.

Finally, who sculpted this stele? The stele has been so long believed to be a unique find in the Bilecik region. However, the recent discovery of the contemporary Bozüyük stelae suggests the existence of a stationary or a mobile local workshop in the region¹⁰⁰. Therefore, the Vezirhan stele might have been a product of this provincial workshop that used local resources.

FIRANLAR INSCRIPTION

Another Phrygian artefact in the region is the Firanlar Inscription, also known as B-03. The inscription was discovered in 1976 in the village of Firanlar in Pazaryeri district of Bilecik province by S. Şahin, who carried out Nikaia-centred epigraphical and historical-geographical survey in the region. Later, during their investigations of the Phrygian inscriptions in 1980 by C. Brixhe and M. Lejeune noted that the stone was re-used under poor conditions¹⁰¹. Before the results of the research were published in 1984, the inscription was purchased by the Bursa Archaeology Museum in 1983 and is preserved in the same museum today with the inventory number; 8731. The inscription was published by G. Neumann in 1981 and then, was evaluated in many publications about the Phrygian language.

This artefact is a rectangular prismatic, beige-coloured limestone block, 0.95 m high, 0.60 m wide, 0.38 m deep (Figure 5). There are various holes for clamp connections and small channels for pouring melted lead. The inscription consists of two lines on one short side of the block (Side A) and in a line on the long side (Side B) from left to right, in the typical Old Phrygian alphabet¹⁰². Although it was preserved only as a fragment, few conclusions can be drawn regarding the analysis of the inscription. According to these, inferences on the *kubileya* (lines 2.1-7, 3.5-11), a curse formula with the phrase “whoever” (lines 2.10-15) and a clause supporting this formula (lines 2.16-18)¹⁰³.

The stone block was found 3 km northeast from the village in Karaağaç Boğazı and was later brought to the village for secondary use. Karaağaç Boğazı is located on the roads¹⁰⁴ possibly connecting Greater Phrygia and Hellespontine Phrygia. There are mounds around the region that were occupied from the Early Bronze Age to the Roman period. The location of Karaağaç Boğazı is on the edge of the modern road today. Therefore, the block possibly belonged to a building in a settlement or a sanctuary next to the main road.

¹⁰⁰ Erpehlivan 2021.

¹⁰¹ Brixhe/Lejeune 1984: 69.

¹⁰² Neumann 1981: 143.

¹⁰³ Neumann 1981: 148-149.

¹⁰⁴ Efe 2007, French 2013: A2,3.

TUMULI AND IRON AGE SETTLEMENTS

Generally, tumuli are considered to be the most remarkable traces of the Phrygians. These famous monuments, which were used around the capital city Gordion during the period of the Phrygian kingdom and later during the Lydian and Achaemenid rule¹⁰⁵, includes various types of burials, including inhumation¹⁰⁶ and cremation¹⁰⁷ with several findings¹⁰⁸. There are also many examples of tumuli in the Bilecik area (Figure 1). However, all of these monuments have not been documented in details. Dating these tumuli is extremely problematic due to the lack of systematic excavations. The fact that the Bilecik region is located between Phrygia and Bithynia further complicates the problem because the tumulus tradition was very common before the Hellenistic period in Phrygia, but it became widespread with the Hellenistic period in Bithynia¹⁰⁹.

There are two tumuli located in the Bilecik region with strong relations with Phrygian culture except the Hellenistic tumulus in Osmaneli¹¹⁰. The first one, the Karaağaç Tumulus, is located at the intersection of Bozalan, Karaağaç and Kandilli villages in the district of Bozüyük. The tumulus, which was previously damaged by illegal excavations, was investigated through a salvage excavation in 2013. Accordingly, the tumulus has a 55 m radius and the square burial chamber was built of irregular stones. Among the metallic finds, there is a large basin, a trefoil mouthed jug, a small cauldron with bull's head attachments, a phiale and a belt. In addition to these, fragments of a human skeleton were found scattered around. The tumulus is dated to the late 8th-early 7th century BC based on the finds and the tomb owner is claimed to a regional ruler or nobleman with close relations with the royal family¹¹¹. Another tumulus is located close to the modern settlement of Bozüyük and was removed during the construction of the train station and railway in 1899. A Phrygian tumulus has been claimed to be present with a stone phallus found from the mound and finds from the tumulus were evaluated by Koerte in 1899¹¹². However, no other supporting data was revealed through Koerte's and Efe's studies¹¹³.

The number of registered archaeological settlements in Bilecik are not many today, since the region is located between Bithynia and Phrygia and has a challenging topography. Although previous research focusing on the prehistoric periods have provided a significant amount of data, it is still insufficient for a thorough understanding of Iron Age settlement patterns, which is hoped to improve through the new data¹¹⁴ coming from newly initiated surveys. The identification of the pre-Hellenistic settlements relies on the Iron Age pottery, including so-called Phrygian grey ware and imported wares. When all the data is put together, Iron Age settlements can be listed as follows¹¹⁵ (Figure 1, Table). These settlements seem to cluster around the north-south and east-west road routes, and mostly unexcavated or non-dated tumuli are located nearby.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the evaluation of the evidence presented above in the article provides some results, it is not yet possible to fully answer the question of which ancient region Bilecik belonged to. As mentioned above, the Bilecik region is often associated with the kingdom of Bithynia, which had control over the region only from the end of the 4th century BC onwards¹¹⁶. The influence of the Phrygian and Persian cultures is supported by archaeological evidence in the southern part of the Bilecik region, which was also located between Hellenistic Phrygia and Greater Phrygia. On the other hand, the northern part cannot be identified yet due to the lacking archaeological data.

The most definitive evidence for the presence of the Phrygians in the north of the Bilecik region is bearing the largest Phrygian text; the Vezirhan stele. The inscriptions on the stele may help to understand the regional context. The stele was suggested to be carved during the Achaemenid period, so, to whom the Phrygian inscriptions and the reliefs addressed? If the Phrygian inscription is considered to have a similar formulation to the Greek inscription¹¹⁷, these detailed informative and cautionary statements were written to inform the visitors of the area and those passing by. If so, the primary addressee of this inscription and reliefs were the Phrygians. The function of the Greek

¹⁰⁵ İL 2009: 25-113.

¹⁰⁶ Young 1981, Kohler 1995.

¹⁰⁷ Kohler 1980.

¹⁰⁸ Liebhart et al. 2016: 628-629.

¹⁰⁹ Bora 2015: 264-270.

¹¹⁰ Bora 2015: 264-265.

¹¹¹ Alp/Aktaş 2019: 749.

¹¹² Koerte 1899.

¹¹³ Efe 1992: 564.

¹¹⁴ Erpehlivan 2022: Ceramic distribution via Kios during the Archaic and Classical periods.

¹¹⁵ Further research on the listed settlements is being prepared for publication by the members of the survey team.

¹¹⁶ Memnon XX.2. Ancient sources mentions that the relations between the Macedonian Satrapy and Bithynians were hostile. Kalas attacked Bithynia, but was defeated by Bas, then Bas must have increased his power in his region.

¹¹⁷ Gorbachov 2008: 96.

inscription, which scholars agree that was added a few generations later after the stele was erected, was to appeal to the changing visitor profile in the region. The evidence compiled in recent years reveals that the Greeks penetrated the region intensively through trading activities in particular in the 4th century BC¹¹⁸. The success of the language of the Greek inscription but the failure of its writing suggest that the inscription was drafted by an intellectual who had a good command of Greek, but that the writing on stone was carved by a local master.

Contrary to the inconsistent remains in the north, the Fıranlar Inscription probably marks the most north-westernmost border of the Phrygian core land. The Karaağaç Tumulus in the vicinity and the settlements identified with Phrygian pottery during surveys also support this theory. Rural communities of Phrygian origin might have lived in the northern part of the Bilecik region, where Iron Age settlements spread throughout the region accompanied by tumuli nearby. Neither the settlements nor tumuli provide detailed data, and therefore, it is not yet known how the land use and settlement patterns were in the northern region. Finally, the Bilecik region can be assumed to have been in Phrygia during the Iron Age. However, additional archaeological data is needed to shed light on which roads are accessed from the core region to the northern countryside.

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¹¹⁸ Erpehlivan 2022: This manuscript dealing with the role of Kios in regional trade is explained by assessing both historical and archaeological findings, and the trade routes between Hellenistic Phrygia and Greater Phrygia are tried to be determined by analysing the Hellenic commercial amphora and fine ceramics distributed to minor settlements.

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