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THE SANCTUARY AT ZINDAN MAĞARASI IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Abstract: The excavation at Zindan Mağarası (cave) began in 2002, under the direction of the Isparta Museum directorate. During the 2002 campaign a mosaic floor was unearthed upon which the head of the God Eurymedon is depicted. During excavations in front of the cave a wall from the second century A.D. and a wall dating from the third century A.D. were discovered. The authors suggest that the former could be a temenos wall while the latter wall could have been a platform, while the apse wall of a chapel, built from spolien was found in the same locality. These excavations supplied considerable architectural material that will help to identify the architectural character of this sanctuary. The excavations in front of the cave exposed a long period of occupation, extending from the Early Hellenistic to the Seljuk Period. In 2003 two important inscriptions were found showing that the temple in front of the cave was dedicated to Meter Theon Veginos. Nevertheless, the evidence obtained both from the excavations and the survey in the vicinity show that the cult centre in front of the cave was dedicated to at least three gods: Zeus, Cybele and Eurymedon. From the finds of coins from Sagalassos, Perge, Selge and Antiocheia from within the excavated area and the fact that this sanctuary was located by an important road connection, it can be suggested that the cult centre had local, but was also of regional importance. The monastery church built upon the hill facing the cave shows that the religious character of the site was maintained for centuries.

The sanctuary of Eurymedon was built at Zindan Mağarası¹ situated two kilometres east of Aksu/Isparta, on the right bank of the Zindan Deresi, a tributary of the Köprüçay (s. map in the article by Takmer-Gökalp in this volume, p. 104). The sanctuary is located in a deep canyon through which the Zindan Deresi flows. In the vicinity there are several caves of various shapes and sizes. Of these, only the Deliktaş Mağarası has been investigated archaeologically. During this work the remains of a small church were unearthed.²

Excavation work at Zindan Mağarası commenced under the direction of the Isparta Museum in 2002.³ The first season of the excavation campaign lasted for six weeks. During this period both the stones and the soil in front of the cave were removed. In 2003 the site was more systematically excavated over the course of seven months. The excavations in 2003

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¹ For Zindan Mağarası s. E. Şengül - A. Şavklıyıldız - M. Bozdoğan, Aksu, Isparta 1996, 11ff.; A. Çevikbaş, Isparta'nın Doğal Mağara ve Kanyonları'nın Turizm Açısından Önemi, in: Isparta'nın Dünü Bugünü Yarını Sempozyumu II, Yalvaç 1998, III 111ff.; M. Başar, Isparta Zindan Mağarası Etüdü, Isparta 1968, 1ff.

² Şengül et al., Aksu (n. 1), 25.

³ We wish to extend our thanks to the Directorate of the İl Özel İdaresi in Isparta, to the Isparta Valiliği, to the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism and to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, for their financial support.

were directed towards the area in front of the cave and on the hill facing it. Members of the academic staff from Süleyman Demirel University in Isparta, Akdeniz University in Antalya, Anadolu University in Eskişehir and Ankara University also participated, investigating the geological, architectural, epigraphical, geomorphological, anthropological and ceramic evidence.

As elsewhere in Asia Minor, research work in this region began in 19th century. The researchers who visited the area were interested not only in the area around Lake Eğirdir, but also in the ruins of Adada and in the route followed by St. Paul.⁴ The city of Timbriada⁵, whose exact location has yet to be established, was the most important settlement in the vicinity of the sanctuary of Zindan Mağarası. Other ancient cities worth mentioning are Tityassos near Lake Beyşehir and Tynada in northern Pisidia.

The city of Timbriada is mentioned by Strabo and Hierocles as well as in church records.⁶ However, none of these mentions the sanctuary at the Zindan Mağarası. On the basis of coins from Timbriada, J. S. Sterrett suggested that this city was located on the Yılanlı Ova, near the springs of the Eurymedon River.⁷ W. M. Ramsay accepted this suggestion.⁸ He tried to locate the city on the basis of an inscription found in Apollonia (Uluborlu) and mentioning a boundary dispute between Timbriada and Apollonia. However, considering the historical topography of the region and the territory of Antiocheia, this can hardly provide any clear indication as to the exact location of Timbriada.⁹

Built near the sanctuary, the Roman bridge¹⁰ over the Zindan Deresi supports the view that the cult centre at Zindan Mağarası had local, but was also of regional importance. A further study, establishing the routes that connected the ancient settlements within this region, both to each other and to the cult centre, should cast a greater light upon this subject. In this respect it is noteworthy that there are two further bridges over the Eurymedon River on the ancient route from Perge to Antiocheia.¹¹ The arrowheads found in front of the cave and the strata carrying traces of fire, indicate that the defence of such an important passage was at times afforded, perhaps against a far greater force.

⁴ For researchers in early periods, see S.S. Yiğitbaşı, *Eğirdir Felakabat Tarihi*, İstanbul 1972, 120–125.

⁵ B. Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor*, Oxford 1967, 9ff.; M. Koç, *Tüm Yönleriyle Isparta*, Isparta 1985, 90; M. Özsait, *İlkçağ Tarihinde Pisidya. Başlangıçtan Büyük İskender Devrinin Sonuna Kadar*, İstanbul 1980, 10ff.

⁶ Strabo 12.7.2; Hierocles, 673, 9; for the church records see Özsait, *Pisidya* (n. 5), 121.

⁷ J.R.S. Sterrett, *The Wolfe Expedition to Asia Minor*, Boston 1888 (*Papers of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens III*), 278f.

⁸ W.M. Ramsey, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, Amsterdam 1962, 406; *ibid.*, *Studies in the Roman Province Galatia: VII - Pisidia*, JRS 16, 1926, 102ff.; *ibid.*, *Res Anatolicae III: Ecce Iterum Pisidia*, Klio 23, 1930, 246.

⁹ Levick, *Roman Colonies* (n. 5), 45 n. 1, points out that there could be no boundary between these two cities.

¹⁰ D. Kaya, *The Sanctuary of the God Eurymedon at Tymbriada in Pisidia*, AS 35, 1985, 47 fig. 12-13.

¹¹ For the ancient roads in the area, s. D. French, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor. Fasc. 2: An Interim Catalogue of Milestones. Part 2. Küçük Asya'daki Roma Yolları ve Mil Taşları*, Fasikül 2: Miltası Ara Kataloğu. 2. Bölüm (Oxford 1988), Map 5; G. Ercenk, *Perge-Antiocheia Eski Yolu*, I. Uluslararası Pisidia Antiocheia Sempozyumu, Bildiriler Kitabı, Yalvaç 1997, 27ff., fn. 7-9, fig. 1.

Of these excavations in front of the cave, the main part was conducted on the terraces. Two of the lower terraces in front of the cave had been constructed at a later period. However, it can be understood from the situation of the first terrace at the entrance of the cave and of the surrounding walls, that these structures form the earliest remaining construction by the cave (Fig. 1).¹²

In the 2002 campaign the soil and stones at the entrance and in front of the cave were removed and several trial trenches at the entrance to the cave were dug and a mosaic floor was unearthed. The main figure depicted on the mosaic, in black, white and partially red pebbles is the head of the God Eurymedon, with a dolphin on either side and some male figures with wings at the head and foot of this scene (Fig. 2 and 6). Unfortunately, this mosaic floor is only partially preserved. The fact that this depiction of head of the God was placed within a panel, suggests that there were perhaps further panels, in which the figures of other gods were depicted (to be mentioned below).

At the end of the excavation of the first terrace a ramp paved with well-shaped stones was discovered with a preserved length of 4 m. The surface of the rock at this location was smoothed to the level of the ramp (Fig. 3). At the west end of this terrace no architectural structures could be found. But, in the midst of the terrace a second ramp was unearthed with a preserved length of 2 m. Here too the surface of the natural rock basement was smoothed and a groove-like hole carved on it, the traces of this structure can be followed to the entrance of the cave. The first ramp on the west side may have been built in the Late Roman Period while the second one may be contemporary with the construction of the sanctuary.

During the excavation of the second terrace, a wall built along the middle of this terrace was discovered, of a preserved length of 11 m. and a height of 1.5 m. The function of this wall could not be determined. In the midst of this terrace a threshold, reused in a building of a later period, was discovered. The wall to the north of the threshold leans against the main wall, with this main wall forming the northern wall. The apse constructed from spolien material at the east end of the terrace is in the same axis as the threshold, while the plaster floor in front of the threshold and the pieces of roof tiles suggest that the building must have been a chapel (Fig. 4).

The excavation of the second terrace was then conducted at the east end, where it joins the rock. Here the rocky surface had been smoothed both horizontally and vertically and some niches were carved, in one of which a dowel hole can be seen. There are two further niches cut in the rock on the west side of the cave. All these niches must be related to the cult. A wall of well-cut quadrilateral stones discovered behind the apse restricted the area in front of the cave to the east. The preserved height of this wall varies between 0.25 and 1.5 m., but it originally must have been as high as the entrance to the cave. 1.10 m. to the east of this wall another wall was found with a preserved height of between 0.50 and 2.00 m. The upper three courses of this wall had been restored in a later period. The structures in front of the cave terminate with this wall. No architectural remains could be found to the east of the wall. The first wall is understood to have been a temenos wall while the function of the second could not be determined.

¹² Kaya, Sanctuary (n. 10), 42.

During studies in front of the cave to the west, a further wall was found which was constructed of pseudo-isodomic ashlar. The preserved height of this wall is 1.10 m. and it is 4.50 m. in length (Fig. 5). From its structure and location it seems to have been a platform. In front of this wall the ground was paved with well shaped stone slabs, some of which seem to have been reused. The wall curves towards the entrance of the cave forming a corner at the south-east. The courses of this wall can be seen in the apse. Considering the height of the courses in the apse, the original height of the front wall of the platform would have been 3.50 m.

From the excavations in front of the cave it was understood that the terraces reflect the borders of the chapel. Due to past illegal excavations and also to the construction of terraces in modern times, an exact stratigraphy in front of the cave could not be determined.¹³ Nevertheless, these excavations exposed much architectural material which would help identify the architectural characteristics of the sanctuary. Three well-preserved upper door lintels with different profiles and dimensions show the sanctuary had three entrances.¹⁴ The various dimensions of the garland friezes and of the architraves indicate that there were various buildings within the cult area.¹⁵ Moreover some architectural blocks from different monuments and the statue bases show that the front of the sanctuary was very well ornamented. Investigations inside the cave reveal that the area 20 m. distant from the entrance has traces of construction and the remains of a wall which seems to have been constructed to form a gate can be seen. This structure could not however be firmly dated because of its fragmentary state.¹⁶ Further, a fragment from the foot of a bronze statue was found during a brief study of the cave's interior.

The excavations in front of the cave show four different periods of occupation: ceramics and coins from the Early Hellenistic Period, architectural remains from the Roman Period, coins and ceramics from the Byzantine Period and coins dating from the Seljuk period.¹⁷

This year two inscriptions were found that show the importance of this sanctuary.¹⁸ According to the information from these inscriptions the temple was dedicated to Meter Theon Veginos. This cult centre which has to date been understood to belong to the God Eurymedon can, in fact, now be attested epigraphically to have belonged the Goddess Meter Theon Veginos. The votive steles with the descriptions of Cybele found some years ago, the coins of Timbriaada with descriptions of Cybele together with Eurymedon¹⁹ and finally the niches²⁰ carved on the rock at the sides of the entrance of the cave attest to this. Further, the architectural remains found indicate that the sanctuary was restored and rebuilt in different periods.

¹³ Kaya, Sanctuary (n. 10), 43 Fig. 2 points out that the terraces in this area might be original.

¹⁴ Ibid., Fig. 3.

¹⁵ Kaya, Sanctuary (n. 10), Fig. 4-6.

¹⁶ For the wall in front of the cave, s. Şengül et al., Aksu (n. 1), 10.

¹⁷ The detailed account of all findings and results is given in the excavation reports of the Museum of Isparta in 2003.

¹⁸ For the inscriptions s. the article by Takmer-Gökalp, nos. 1-2.

¹⁹ G.F. Hill, Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Lycia, Pamphylia and Pisidia, London 1897, cxviii; pl. XLII fig. 7-8. H. von Aulock, Münzen und Städte Pisidiens II, Tübingen 1979 (IstMitt 22), 47f.

²⁰ F. Işık, Doğa Ana Kubaba, Tanrıçaların Ege'de Buluşması, İstanbul 1999, 1ff.; S. for the cult of the mother goddess in the Roman Period, R. Turcan, The Cults of the Roman Empire, Oxford 1996, 28ff.

The evidence obtained from both the excavations and the survey in the vicinity show that the cult centre in front of the cave was dedicated and designed for at least three gods: a) Zeus, as indicated by the votive stele and the relief on a rock near the cave (Fig. 8 and 10); b) Cybele, as indicated by the inscriptions mentioned above, by a votive stele (Fig. 7), and also through the coins of Timbriada; c) Eurymedon, as indicated by the discovery of his statue here (Fig. 9),²¹ of the mosaic floor unearthed inside the cave, of the depiction of Eurymedon on the coins of Timbriada together with Cybele and, finally the keystone on the front face of the arch of the bridge upon which the head of the God Eurymedon was carved. On the basis of coins from Sagalassos, Perge, Selge and Antiocheia that have been found within the excavation area and considering the fact that this sanctuary was located by an important road connection, it can be suggested that this cult centre was of both local and regional importance. People came here from various regions, they worshipped the gods here and also venerated their own gods. Apart from the gods mentioned above, reliefs of Demeter and Hermes were carved on a stele and Mithras²² must have also been worshipped at this cult centre. We hope that forthcoming excavations will cast a clearer light upon this matter.

The architectural construction in front of the cave at Kapılıkaya in the vicinity of the ancient city of Malos provides a similar example, although simpler in plan.²³ Other examples of caves used for cultic purposes until the Early Christian Period are recorded from far beyond the borders of Pisidia.²⁴ Further, other local cults and temples of various plans have been discovered within Pisidia.²⁵

At this stage of the excavations it would be hazardous to say anything about the earliest phases of the sanctuary. Nevertheless, from a fragment of a black glazed bowl, the use of this place, at least as an open-air sanctuary, can be traced back to the Early Hellenistic Period. The present archaeological evidence, however, indicates that the area in front of the cave was given an intensive architectural restructuring during the Roman Period and preserved its importance for many centuries. The monastery church discovered during excavations on the hill facing the cave shows the religious character of this site was preserved for centuries.

²¹ Kaya, Sanctuary (n. 10), 49, Plates a–c.

²² Turcan, Cults (n. 20), 195ff.

²³ D. Kaya, Malos Antik Kenti Temizlik Çalışması, Müze Kurtarma Kazıları Semineri 8, 1997, 307.

²⁴ E. Atalay, Ephesos Yöresindeki Antik Mağaralar, AST 1, 1983, 105ff.

²⁵ M. Büyükkolancı, Pisidia Bölgesi Tapınak Mimarisi, (unpublished doctorate thesis, 1996), 20f.; M. Özsait, Hellenistik ve Roma Döneminde Pisidia Tarihi, İstanbul 1985, 141ff.

ÖZET

Yeni Arkeolojik Veriler Işığında Zindan Mağarası ve Meter Theon Veginos Tapınağı

Zindan Mağarası Isparta İli Aksu İlçesi'nin 2 km doğusunda, Aksu Nehri'nin bir kolu olan Zindan Deresi'nin kuzey yakasında konumlanmaktadır. Mağara içi ve önündeki kazı çalışmaları Isparta Müzesi Müdürlüğü başkanlığında 2002 yılında başlamıştır.

2002 yılında mağara içinde yürütülen kazılar sırasında mağara girişinde, kısmen korunmuş mozaik bir döşemeye rastlanmıştır. Mozağin ana figürü bir panel içine işlenmiş ve iki yanında yunuslarla birlikte betimlenmiş Nehir Tanrısı Eurymedon'dur. Mağara önündeki çalışmalarsa alttaki iki tanesi modern olmakla birlikte en üstteki antik dönemde oluşturulmuş üç teras üzerinde yürütülmüştür. Üstteki teras üzerinde mağaraya girişi sağlayan bir rampanın yanında daha geç bir dönemde devşirme malzeme ile oluşturulmuş ikinci bir rampa bulunmuştur. İkinci terastaki çalışmalarda devşirme malzemeyle inşa edilmiş küçük bir şapele ait apsis ve duvar kalıntıları gün yüzüne çıkarılmıştır. Apsisin arkasında mağara önünü doğu yönünde sınırlayan ve mağaranın kayalık girişine kadar yükselen bir duvara rastlanmış ve bu duvar yazarlar tarafından temenos duvarı olarak yorumlanmıştır. Bunun yanında mağara önündeki mekânı güney yönünde sınırlayan ve pseudo-isodom tekniğinde örülmüş bosajlı bir duvar daha meydana çıkarılmıştır. Platform özelliği taşıdığı düşünülen bu duvar yazarlar tarafından İ.S. 3. yy.'a tarihlenmektedir.

Kazılar sonucu ortaya çıkarılan farklı ebat ve profillere sahip üç adet kapı üst lentosu mekânda üç girişli bir yapılaşmaya işaret etmektedir. Yine, kazı alanında ele geçen ve kaliteli işçilik gösteren girlandlı friz ve arşitravlar kutsal alanın zengin mimariye ve farklı yapılara sahip olduğunu düşündürmektedir. Bunun yanında kazı alanından Erken Helenistik Dönem'den Selçuklu Dönemi'ne kadar tarihlenen buluntular ele geçmiştir. Bu buluntular üzerinde yapılan değerlendirmeler kutsal alanın Zeus, Kybele (Meter Theon) ve Nehir Tanrısı Eurymedon olmak üzere üç tanrı için düzenlendiğini düşündürmektedir. Ayrıca, kazılarda bulunan Sagalassos, Perge, Selge ve Antiokheia kentlerine ait sikkeler kutsal alanın yerel olmaktan çok bölgesel bir özellik taşıdığı izlenimi vermektedir. Mağara'nın karşısındaki tepede ortaya çıkarılan kilise kalıntısıysa mekânın dinsel niteliğini, farklı bir kimlikle de olsa Bizans Dönemi'nde de koruduğunu göstermektedir.

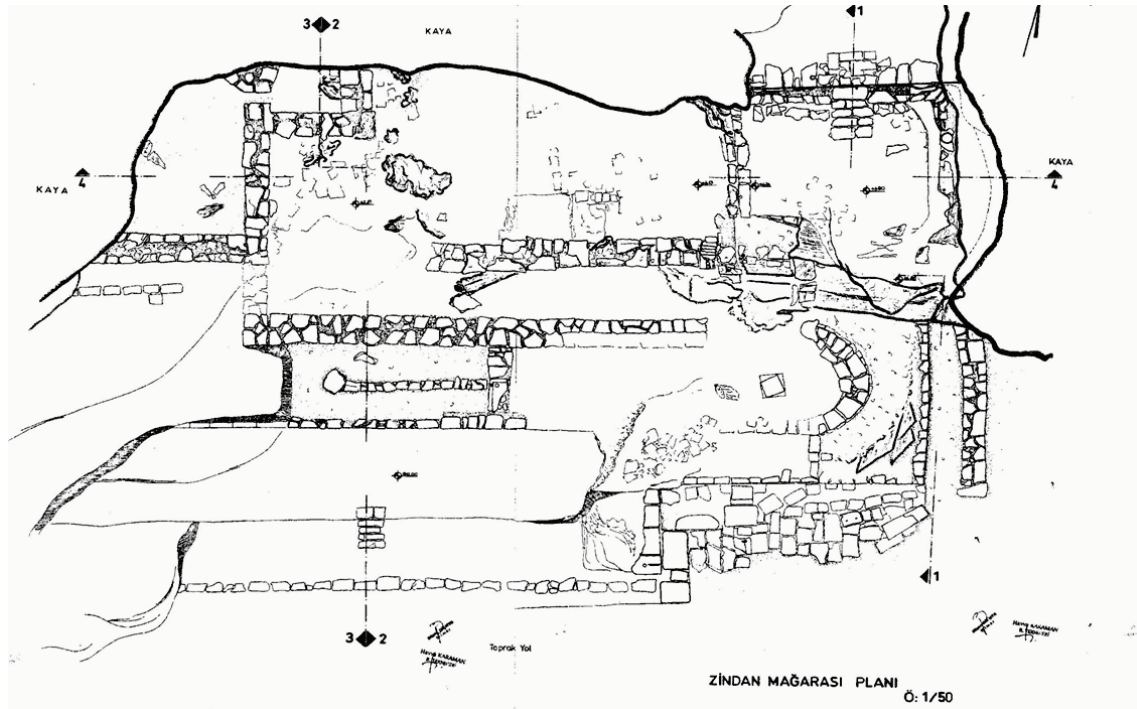


Fig. 1: Plan of the excavated area



Fig. 2: The Mosaic Floor in the cave



Fig. 3: The ramp paved with stones



Fig. 4: The apse of the chapel



Fig. 5: Wall with pseudo-isodomic masonry



Fig. 6: River God Eurymedon



Fig. 7: Votive stele for Cybele



Fig. 8: The Relief of Zeus



Fig. 9: Statue of Eurymedon



Fig. 10: The Relief of Zeus