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# ADALYA

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## New Votive Plates Discovered in the Temple of Men and its Sanctuary in Pisidian Antioch

MEHMET ÖZHANLI\*

### Abstract

There are seven treasury buildings lined side by side next to the road leading to the main entrance on the east of the temple of Men and its sanctuary in Pisidian Antioch. During the excavations carried out in these buildings in 2017 and 2018, marble votive plates as well as ceramic and marble sculptures were unearthed. While most of the votive plates were scattered inside the buildings in broken pieces, two of them were in situ in Building no. 5. Two broken slabs were found in Building no. 7 in a state that they could be completed. Dozens of votive plates were found in the temenos of the temple during the excavations. A sample with decipherable inscriptions among these plates was selected and became the subject of study together with the preserved plates found in the treasury buildings.

The slabs were modeled in the form of a temple façade with a triangular pediment. On the pediment section, the crescent face was upwards; on the lower section, the god Men with crescents on his shoulders or only a crescent were depicted, which was his attribute. The votive inscriptions do not contain any information about the reason they were made; they only give information about who made the offering. Two slabs were found in treasury Building no. 5 affixed to the façade of the altar platform inside the building, on either side of the mounted god Men. While the other two were found scattered in Building no. 7; the one inside the temenos came out of the mound that was dug and piled up in previous years.

### Öz

Pisidia Antiokheia Men tapınağı ve kutsal alanında, tapınağın doğusunda ana girişe gelen yolun kenarında, yan yana sıralanmış yedi tane hazine binası bulunmaktadır. Bu binalarda 2017 ve 2018 yıllarında gerçekleştirilen kazılarda, birçok seramik ve mermer heykeltıraşlık eserlerin yanı sıra çok sayıda mermer adak levhası da açığa çıkarılmıştır. Adak levhalarının büyük bir bölümü kırık parçalar halinde binaların içerisine dağılmış iken, 5 numaralı binada; iki tanesi insitu ve sağlam; 7 numaralı binada; iki adet levha tümlenebilecek biçimde kırık ele geçti. Tapınağın temenosunda yapılan kazı çalışmalarında da onlarca adak levhası parçası görüldü. Bu parçalar içerisinden adak yazıtı okunabilen bir örnek seçildi ve hazine binalarında bulunan sağlam levhalarla birlikte çalışmaya konu edildi.

Üçgen alınlıklı, tapınak cephesi biçiminde modellendirilmiş olan levhaların, alınlık bölümünde ağzı yukarı bakan hilal; gövdelerinde ise omuzlarından ayça çıkan Tanrı Men ya da tanrının sembolü hilaller işlenmiştir. Adak yazıtları, sadece kimlerin adadığı bilgisini verirken niçin adandığıyla ilgili bilgi içermez. 5 numaralı hazine binasında bulunan iki levha, binanın içindeki sunu sekisinin cephesine atlı tanrı Men'in iki tarafına yapıştırılmış biçimde bulundu. Diğer ikisi 7 numaralı binada dağınık bir biçimde ele geçerken; temenosun içerisindeki ise önceki yıllarda kazılıp yığılmış toprak yığının içerisinden çıktı.

Levhaların bulunduğu hazine binalarının son kullanım tarihi, İmparator Julianus dönemidir.

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The last time the treasury buildings in which these slabs were found were used was during the reign of Emperor Julianus. The slabs, dated to the third and early fourth century AD, were made to be applied in the early period and then had a secondary use in the late period.

**Keywords:** Pisidian Antioch, temple and sanctuary of Men, treasury buildings, votive plates

MS 3. ve 4. yüzyıl başlarına tarihlendirilen levhalar, erken dönemde bir yere applike edilmek için yapılmış ve bu son dönemde ikincil bir kullanım görmüşlerdir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Pisidia Antiokheia, Men tapınağı ve kutsal alanı, hazine binaları, adak levhaları

Votive steles/plates<sup>1</sup> constitute an important group among the archaeological and epigraphic data that enable understanding the belief before the divine religions. These votives give important clues about the devotees, the gods, the beliefs, and the rituals of the period. The richest cult in terms of votive plates is the temple and sanctuary of the Moon god Men in Pisidian Antioch. The façade of the temple's southern temenos wall is completely embossed with temple-shaped votive plates decorated with crescents, the most important attribute of the god. Apart from the ones engraved on the wall, there are other higher-quality plates made of marble that have been applied on the wall or elsewhere. These marble slabs of higher quality workmanship offer more detailed information and make important contributions to our understanding of the belief system regarding Men. Excavations of the temple and the sanctuary by W. M. Ramsay and his team uncovered many such votive plates.<sup>2</sup> New ones have been added to these published plates with the ongoing excavations in the sanctuary.

Excavations in the temple, and sanctuary of Men, as well as the treasury buildings to the east of the temple, unearthed many marble votive plates dedicated to the god Men, among other finds. While the marble slabs in the soil piled up by Ramsay's team in the previously excavated temple temenos were broken, the ones found in the treasury buildings were well preserved and in situ. In this study, these newly discovered solid marble votive plates and a broken sample found in the temenos will be introduced to the academic world.<sup>3</sup>

The temple and sanctuary of Men are east of Antioch in the 1600 m high Gemen Grove (Karakuyu), 5 km from the city. The temple and sanctuary were first discovered by Ramsay and his team in 1911, and their excavations started in 1912.<sup>4</sup>

During the excavations, which continued in 1913, drillings were carried out in almost all the structures in the area. As a result of these studies, the plans of many buildings were drawn, and the functions of some buildings were defined. The most comprehensive study of the temple and sanctuary was done by S. Mitchell and M. Waelkens in 1982-1983.<sup>5</sup> After this date, many researchers directly or indirectly have conducted studies on the cult and temple of Men.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The expression "plate" was considered more appropriate for these artifacts, which were flat and made to be applied on a place.

<sup>2</sup> The intact examples of these votive steles are on display at the Yalvaç Archaeology Museum, while the broken pieces are preserved in storage; see Hardie 1912, 111-50.

<sup>3</sup> The inscriptions on the plates were translated by Prof. Dr. Mustafa H. Sayar. We thank him very much for his important contribution. Also, I sincerely thank Mina Şakrak for translating the article into English.

<sup>4</sup> Ramsay 1912a, 45-46; 1912b, 149; 1912c, 226; 1912d, 245-53.

<sup>5</sup> Mitchell and Waelkens 1998, 81-85.

<sup>6</sup> The "votive steles," the subject of this article, are here published for the first time, and there is no other study on them. It is not necessary to review all the studies that have been done so far.



Among these recent studies, the works of G. Labarre,<sup>7</sup> K.A. Raff,<sup>8</sup> and L. Khatchadourian<sup>9</sup> can be mentioned.

The temple was built by leveling the bedrock on the summit of the mountain. It is surrounded by a rectangular temenos extending east-west in Ionic order and in peripteros (6 x 11 m) type. The pronaos of the temple faces east. The temple, built in the Hellenistic period, had rearrangements and additions in the following periods. The main entrance to the temenos is in the east, but there are also smaller gates on the north and south. Other structures in the sanctuary were built by directing them to the temple in the center, depending on the roads leading to the temple and the condition of the land. While there are no civil structures or necropolises in and around the sanctuary, many places used by temple officials and for worship remain until today.

There are two different ways to go from Antioch to the temple area. One way is to exit the west and south gates of the city and pass through its southeast necropolis (Kızılca District). Most of this main road is under the modern one. In certain parts of the road, votive plates engraved on the rocks by the roadside can be seen. The other road goes to the sanctuary by exiting the north gate of Antioch, passing through the lower part of the present-day village of Hisarardı. The northern necropolis runs along both sides of this road. Both roads converge at the assembly square where the only water well in the Karakuyu sanctuary is located. The northern façade of the rock in the south corner of the square is covered entirely with temple-shaped plates (fig. 1).

When Christianity became the official religion of the state, a church and structures attached to it were built on the crag. From here, the road leading to the area of the Odeon/Stadium forked again with one branch going to the south side of the temple from west of the Odeon, while the other went around the eastern gate of the temple through the valley. Numerous artifacts were unearthed inside the temple's temenos and other areas during Ramsay's excavation.<sup>10</sup> Among the finds holding a special place were votive plates proving that the temple was dedicated to the Moon god Men. Apart from Ramsay's reports, these plates are cited in the work of Margaret M. Hardie<sup>11</sup> and J.G.C. Anderson.<sup>12</sup> However, the most comprehensive study of the plates was by E.N. Lane<sup>13</sup> and B. Levick.<sup>14</sup> What distinguishes this Men temple from other temples, apart from its location, are the votive plates found on its southern temenos wall that were made on the 70 m long and approximately 4 m high (fig. 2), and the plates made from marble dedicated to the god Men in the treasury building. The votive plates were carved in the form of a narrow façade of the temple with a triangular pediment with crown and

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<sup>7</sup> Labarre 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Raff 2011, 131-52.

<sup>9</sup> Khatchadourian 2011, 153-72.

<sup>10</sup> The artifacts unearthed during the excavations carried out in this period were taken to the Konya Archaeology Museum. With the opening of the Yalvaç Archaeology Museum in 1966, they were brought to Yalvaç. Since it is not specified how many artifacts were taken to Konya, the number of these artifacts actually returned is unknown.

<sup>11</sup> Hardie 1912, 111-50.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson 1913, 267-300.

<sup>13</sup> Lane 1976, 35-109.

<sup>14</sup> Levick 1970, 37-50; Apart from these studies, all other publications related to the subject will not be repeated here, since Büyükgün summarized them chronologically in his master's thesis titled "Men Kültüyle İlgili Eskişehir, Afyon, Kütahya ve Pamukkale Arkeoloji Müzelerinde Bulunan Bazı Taş Eserler" ("Some Stone Artifacts Found in Eskişehir, Afyon, Kütahya, and Pamukkale Archaeological Museums Related to the Cult of Men").

corner acroters. In some examples, the columns carrying the roof on the sides are given in the form of plaster together with their bases, reflecting a complete temple façade. In the triangle pediment of the roof, a shield, a crescent with its mouth upwards, and a four-petaled flower or patera are depicted. In some examples this area is left blank. On the plates, crescents accompany the bust of Men, with the moon on his shoulders. The crescents were made according to the number of the people who made the votive, as reliefs or drawn with or without a garland and wreath. The votive inscription is written under the crescents. The symbol and attribute of the god is mostly the crescent of the moon. Apart from the crescent, his other symbols include a patera, cone, thyrsus, and statuette of Nike. Other than these common attributes, the god is less commonly seen with a bunch of grapes, a cornucopia, a torch, a roll, a plate full of fruits, a spear, a shield, labrys, or palm branches.

Depiction of Men with his Phrygian cap and crescents coming out from his shoulders became the norm. The Moon god, always portrayed as young and dressed in oriental attire, wears a short chiton, himation, trousers, and short boots. On one of the votive plates, Men is wearing a Phrygian cap on his head and a V-neck cloth; crescents coming out of his shoulders confirm the accuracy of the standard iconography for the god. All the marble votive plates unearthed during the excavations in the temple temenos were in broken pieces, as mentioned above. Among these pieces, two have busts of the moon god Men with a Phrygian cap, while the others have reliefs of crescents with or without a garland. The broken pieces were recovered from the piles of soil that Ramsay's team had dug up in 1912/1913.<sup>15</sup> Excavations in the treasury buildings unearthed many broken marble votive plates, four of which were intact. Two were found in treasury Building no. 5, while the other two were found in treasury Building no. 7. Those in Building no. 5 were well preserved and in situ, while those in Building no. 7 were found broken, upside down on the floor, and later reassembled.

The treasury buildings line the side of the road leading to the temple's main entrance, facing south to the east of temenos (fig. 3).<sup>16</sup> Building no. 5 is distinguished from Building nos. 1-4 by its in-situ materials. The megaron-planned building measures 3.30 x 4.0 m, with an approximately 2-m high preserved wall. A 1-m high platform was built in front of the building's north wall, and cult objects were placed on and in front of this. The limestone column drum in front of the platform was used as an offering table, and votive items, such as oil lamps and small ceramic pots left on and around it, were preserved as they were placed. On a rectangular base placed in the middle of the platform was a marble statue of the god Apollo approximately 90 cm high. On the edges of the base were placed the goddess Cybele sitting on a marble throne with a lion armrest, a figurine of Apollo, and a marble house altar with reliefs on all four sides. The altar was embossed with an ear of wheat, a bull's head, a serpent, and a caduceus – the staff of the god Hermes. A small statuette of the goddess Hecate stood next to the helmeted marble head of the goddess Athena on the right corner of the platform. The façade of the platform is plastered. Affixed on the plaster were a naked person holding a torch with votive plates, a tabula ansata relief with ten dressed figures, a terracotta relief depicting the nine Muses, and a terracotta figurine of the mounted god Men. Depicted on one of the votive plates is a star inside a horn-shaped crescent, while the other has a bust of the god Men and a votive inscription.

<sup>15</sup> The total number of intact marble votive plates found by the Americans is unknown.

<sup>16</sup> Özhanlı 2019, 158-63.

The seat at the bottom and the pediment acroter of the votive plate where the crescent and star are embroidered are broken (fig. 4). Unlike the other plates, the columns carrying the pediment are not given. The crescent is made as a horn carved on the body of the undecorated plate. The star in the middle of the crescent also gives a flowery appearance with six arms and scratches on them. It's not known by whom it was offered, for there is no inscription on the plate which has a roughly made backside.

With a bust of the god Men in the middle, the votive plate of Gaius Ulpius Firmus is carved with a triangular pediment that has a crescent facing upwards. There are closed palmettes-shaped acroters at the corner and top of the pediment (fig. 5). In the lower part of the triangular pediment, Men is depicted with half-rising crescents on his shoulders and a Phrygian cap. The forehead hair of the god, seen under the head, is short and combed towards the forehead. In the bust, which evidences completely local craftsmanship, proportional disorders are seen on the facial limbs that have been processed from the front. The right eye is smaller than the left eye and the lids of the left eye are thicker. The top of the nose, starting from the eyebrows, descends straight, and the tip of the nose is terminated in a line. The mouth is closed, and the lips are lined thin. While his head touches the upper frame, a blank space is left in the lower part. The lower part of the bust, which wears a pleated V-neck, is finished with a round knot. The last line of the inscription, written on both sides of the head and the body of the god, is placed below the bust (fig. 6).<sup>17</sup> The inscription reads:

“C(aius) Ul-  
 2 pius  
 Firmus,  
 4 C(ai) f(ilius) l(ibens) v(otum)  
 solvit.”

*“G(aius) Ulpius Firmus, son of Gaius, fulfilled (his) vow willingly.”*

This plate is made with very high quality and meticulous craftsmanship. When the excavation of treasury Building no. 7 was completed, it was understood that the plan and accordingly its function changed by making late additions to the building. The building was transformed into a multi-space residence in the last phase of its use. Two votive plates were found in different parts of this building. The lower part of one of the votive plates was discovered in the 2017 excavations, upside-down in the corridor that was added to the structure later. The upper part was found in the corridor leading to the entrance door during the 2018 excavations. The other plate was found next to a male bust at the foot of the south wall in the main hall of the building.

The votive plates of L. Lucius Flavius Junior and Abascantus are completed by combining four different pieces. The middle and right acroters are missing, and there are deficiencies due to fragmentation (fig. 7).<sup>18</sup> The back side is left with rough workmanship. Crescents are depicted facing upwards on the pediment and body of the plate. The one on the body is depicted in the middle of a leaf wreath. Columns carrying the roof are elaborately given as plaster with their bases and capitals. The script of the person doing the offering is written under

<sup>17</sup> Height: 40 cm; width: 21 cm; letters: 1.5 cm (height); 2 cm (width); 2 mm (depth).

<sup>18</sup> Height: 50 cm; width: 36.5 cm; diameter: 4.6 cm; letters: 42.28 mm (height); 36.91 mm (width); 2.21 mm (depth).

the wreath, which is the main decoration of the plate and looks like a complete temple façade. The votive inscription reads;

- L(ucius) Fl(avius) Longus  
 2 Iunior et  
 Abascantus Ser(vus)  
 4 L(ibens) v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) m(erito) a

*“Lucius Flavius Longus, the junior and the slave Abascantus fulfilled (their) vow willingly, happy (and) rightly.”*

Lane gave very detailed information about the depiction of the wreath on votive steles dedicated to the god Men.<sup>19</sup> Here, too, embroidering a wreath should be related to a personal “victory.”

The middle and right acroter of the votive plate honoring Men by Smyrnaios and his wife are broken and missing (fig. 8).<sup>20</sup> A four-leaf rosette is made on the pediment, and two crescents facing upwards are made inside the garland on the body. The garland is tied with a ribbon at the corners, and the ends of the ribbon are stretched out into crescents in a wave. The inscription of the offeror is visible below the garland. The votive inscription of three lines is written in Greek and reads;

- “Μηνι Ἀσκαηνῶ εὐχήν.  
 2 Σμυρναῖος Ἀπολλω-  
 νιοῦ μετὰ γυναίκος.”

*“This offering was made for the god Men Askaenos by Smyrnaios son of Apollonios and his wife.”*

A garland is one of the important symbols seen in the Men votive steles of Pisidian Antioch. Here the garland of leaves surrounding the crescents symbolizes a personal success just like the wreath.

The votive plate for Men Askaenos, made by Maximus, Lucius, Thargelius, and Pithia in Temenos, has a different decorative style than the others (fig. 9).<sup>21</sup> The right corner of the plate, made of high-quality white marble, was not found. The pediment is missing and broken. The inscriptions also have missing parts that correspond to the upper right corner of the plate, which is completed by combining the two parts. Grooves were left in the roughly made back side of the plate, probably to ease its insertion into the temple wall. The Greek votive inscription is written with three lines to the top and two lines to the bottom on the upper and lower sides of the crescents forming the main decoration of the plate. The crescents were made as horns and placed in an entwined way. The inscription reads:

- “Μάξιμ[ος ]  
 2 Λούκιος [θαρ]-  
 γέλιος Πιθία

<sup>19</sup> Lane 1976, 62-66.

<sup>20</sup> Height: 30 cm; width: 25 cm; letters: 1.5 cm (height); 1 mm (depth).

<sup>21</sup> Height: 22 cm; width: 19 cm; letters: 1 cm (height); 0.50 mm (depth).

4 [Μ]ηνὶ Ἀσκηνοῦ  
εὐχίην.”

“*Maximos, Lukios, Thargelios, and Pithia made an offering for the god Men Askaenos.*”

The workmanship of the votive plates made of marble is quite similar. Their front sides were made meticulously while the back sides were left rough. It is easy to understand that they were made to be applied somewhere (fig. 10). The boards are attached to the blocks with lead. These plates must have been applied on the temenos wall of the temple or elsewhere when they were made and later reused in the treasury buildings during the reign of the last pagan emperor Julianus. The votives in Building no. 5 are affixed to the wall of the platform. Since the votive plates in the temenos and in Building no. 7 were found broken and scattered, it is not known exactly how they were exhibited.

It is necessary to look at the history of Pisidian Antioch and the temple and sanctuary of Men to give a correct date and to interpret the votive plates. Especially, a chronological index should be made according to the changes done by different administrations in the temple and the sanctuary.

Strabo, referring to other written sources, attributes the foundation of the city of Pisidian Antioch to the Seleucids. While giving information about Antioch, he also reveals detailed data about the temple of Men, which is on top of a mountain right next to the city. The worship of Men, understood to be quite active in Hellenistic northern Pisidia and the surrounding regions according to Strabo, should be evaluated within the history of Phrygian civilization.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is highly probable that the origins of the worship and cult area go back to the Early Iron Age. The temple and the sanctuary, which had their heyday in the Hellenistic period, were brought under new regulations by the Roman emperor Augustus and weakened economically.

Despite trying to identify him with the gods of the Greek and Roman pantheons in the Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods, the god Men always managed to remain as Tyrannos in the region. Pisidian Antioch and the temple of Men are among the pilot cities chosen for the revival of paganism against Christianity, which had gained strength during Emperor Diocletian's reign. Archaeological data prove that the temple and its surrounding structures were repaired, and additions were made during this period.<sup>23</sup> The last arrangement in the temple was made during the time of the last pagan emperor Julianus.<sup>24</sup> During his reign, Pisidian Antioch and its temple and sanctuary of Men were among the regions chosen for the attempted revival of paganism. Within the framework of this attempt, new arrangements and additions were made to the temple and the sanctuary. During Julian's very short reign, it was understood by the excavations in the Oikos that the treasury buildings were repaired, and many cult objects from different periods were brought together.<sup>25</sup> Treasury Building no. 5 reveals how the temple and the sanctuary were arranged during Emperor Julianus' reign with in-situ materials. The fact that the god and goddess statues placed on the platform were used as they were with their old broken and missing parts proves that it was arranged hastily since the temple

<sup>22</sup> Özhanlı 2022, 121.

<sup>23</sup> Özhanlı 2019, 158-63.

<sup>24</sup> Özhanlı 2019, 158.

<sup>25</sup> Özhanlı 2022, 124.

was partially destroyed and looted during Constantine II's reign before Emperor Julianus.<sup>26</sup> However, the death of the emperor by the Persians in AD 363 caused the Christian population in the city to become more vocal, and attacks on pagan beliefs increased. The Christian edict issued by Emperor Theodosius I in AD 391 meant the closure of the temple and the end of the cult of the god Men. After this date, the mission of the new religion was applied to the sanctuary.

Excavations in the treasury buildings show the archaeological data that reveals how the temple was abandoned. The temple was destroyed, and all the stones belonging to the building were used in the construction of the church.<sup>27</sup> Other structures in the sanctuary were similarly demolished. Some of the treasury buildings like no. 2 and no. 5 were destroyed by the pagans themselves. Thus, a precaution must have been taken against looting by Christians. However, the broken and fragmented state of the finds in the other buildings indicates that they were later plundered by Christians. The fact that the lower part of one of the votive plates in treasury Building no. 7 was found in the middle of the corridor and the other part was closer to the eastern exit door supports this view.

Many of the votive plates are embossed on the southern temenos wall of the temple, and those made of marble are generally dated to the period of Diocletian (AD 284-305).<sup>28</sup> Pagan communities (Tekmorion)<sup>29</sup> tried to encourage the youth towards the old religion with festivals and sacrificial ceremonies they financed in the collective struggle against the Christians during this period. The inscriptions on the plates also point to these festivals and sacrificial ceremonies.

Unstated are the fulfilled wishes that made people dedicate these votive plates. These plates and other artifacts found in the treasury buildings were not made for these buildings; they were moved here from other places in the arrangement during the period of Emperor Julianus period. The last time the treasury buildings were used was during his reign (AD 361-363). This period can be suggested as the date these plates were used. Based on the inscriptions and the information of the offerors, we can date the first phase of use for the plates to the third century and the beginning of the fourth century AD.<sup>30</sup> Although it is misleading to precisely date the unscripted plates, the crescent and star plate also points to the same centuries as the other plates. The upper date limit is AD 391.

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<sup>26</sup> Özhanlı 2022, 119, 124.

<sup>27</sup> Özhanlı 2022, 125.

<sup>28</sup> Lane 1976, 66; Levick 1970, 37-50.

<sup>29</sup> Ramsay 1912e, 151-70.

<sup>30</sup> Detailed information about the people who made the offerings is the subject of another study.

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FIG. 1 Votive plates found in the Assembly Area.



FIG. 2 Southern temenos wall.





FIG. 3 Temple and treasury buildings.



FIG. 4 Crescent and star votive plate.

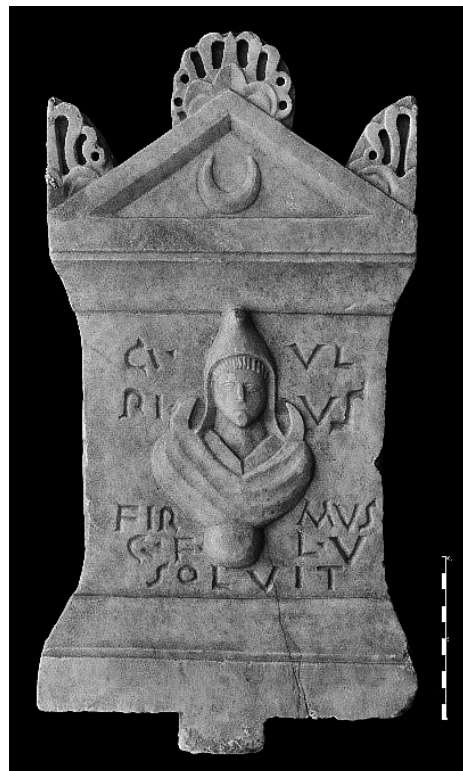


FIG. 5 Votive plate of Gaius Ulpius Firmus.



FIG. 6  
Detail, votive plate of  
Gaius Ulpus Firmus.



FIG. 7 Votive plate of Lucius Flavius Longus Junior and Abascantus.





FIG. 8 Votive plate of Smyrnaios and his wife.



FIG. 9 Votive plate of Maximus, Lucius, Thargelius, and Pithia.



FIG. 10 One of the blocks on which the plates were placed.





