



The Phenomen of Anthropomorphic idol-shaped Steles in the Greek *apoikia*

Grek *apoikia*'sında Antropomorfik İdol Biçimli Stel Olgusu

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the problems of localization, cultural interpretation, and the development of the tradition of using these monuments within the regions of Greek colonization along the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. In the northern Black Sea region, the reliefs are divided into two types. The first type includes tombstones in the form of human busts in high relief (Fig. 1. 1). The second type includes tombstones with anthropomorphic images in low relief or cut by lines (Fig. 1. 2). Sculptural groups are represented by stelae with a round or oval "head" on a rectangular or trapezoidal base and paired busts with a common "body type" (Fig. 1. 3-4). The combination of an anthropomorphic stele or relief with a rectangular stele of the "Greek type" has only been recorded in Tauric Chersonesos (Figs. 2. 1-3). Another region where anthropomorphic sculpture was widespread is Anatolia. Idol-like anthropomorphic stelae and reliefs have been found in Phrygia since prehistoric times (Fig. 3. 1-2). Findings of such monuments in Greek necropolises in the region are extremely rare. One stele was discovered outside the necropolis of Assos (Fig. 3. 3-4). Differences in the form and semantics of the monuments within these regions indicate the interrelated development of this type of sculpture. Furthermore, in each of the identified regions, anthropomorphic stelae and reliefs exemplify intercultural interaction and communication. The local characteristics of these monuments highlight their originality and allow us to tentatively trace the extent and nature of cultural transformations in different parts of the ancient world during the 7th to 2nd centuries BC.

Keywords: Anatolia, anthropomorphic sculpture, Black Sea Region, Mother Goddess, tombstones.

Öz

Bu makale, Akdeniz ve Karadeniz kıyıları boyunca Yunan kolonizasyon bölgelerindeki anıtların yerleştirilmesi, kültürel yorumlanması ve gelişimiyle ilgili sorunlara odaklanmaktadır. Kuzey Karadeniz bölgesinde, kabartmalar iki ana kategoriye ayrıldığı görülmektedir. İlk kategoride, yüksek kabartmalı insan büstlerine sahip mezar taşları yer alır (Fig. 1. 1). İkinci kategoride ise alçak kabartma veya çizgisel işlenmiş antropomorfik resimler bulunan mezar taşları yer alır (Fig. 1. 2). Heykelsel gruplar, dikdörtgen veya yamuk bir taban üzerinde yuvarlak veya oval bir "baş" ile temsil edilen steller ve ortak bir "vücut tipi" ile eşleştirilmiş büstler tarafından temsil edilmektedir (Fig. 1. 3-4). Antropomorfik bir stel veya kabartma ile "Yunan tipi" dikdörtgen bir stel kombinasyonu sadece Taurik Chersonesos'ta kaydedilmiştir (Fig. 2. 1-3). Antropomorfik heykeltıraşlık eserlerin yaygın olduğu başka bir bölge de Anadolu'dur. İdol benzeri antropomorfik steller ve kabartmalar, Frigya'dan tarih öncesinden beri bilinmektedir (Fig. 3. 1-2). Bölgedeki Grek nekropolislerinde bu tür anıtlara dair bulgular son derece nadirdir. Assos'un nekropolisinin dışında başka bir yerden bu tarzda bir stel bulunmamıştır (Fig. 3. 3-4). Bu bölgelerdeki anıtların biçim ve anlamındaki farklılıklar, bu heykel türünün birbirleriyle ilişkili gelişimini işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca, belirlenen her bölgede, antropomorfik steller ve kabartmalar, kültürler arası etkileşimi ve iletişimi örneklendirir. Bu anıtların yerel özellikleri, onların özgünlüğünü vurgularken, MÖ 7.-2. yüzyıllar arasında antik dünyanın farklı bölgelerindeki kültürel dönüşümlerin boyutu ile doğasını belirlememize de olanak tanır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anadolu, antropomorfik heykel, Karadeniz Bölgesi, Ana Tanrıça, mezar taşları.

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The idol-like images of steles and anthropomorphic reliefs represent a distinct group of sculptures in various ancient centers¹. In general, they are frontal schematic images of human figures or busts with flat faces. They possess various features and constrictive elements, such as painted decorations, shapes, and proportions. This article focuses on the problems of localization, cultural interpretation, and the evolution of the tradition of using these monuments within the regions of Greek colonization along the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea².

According to available archaeological data, the greatest number of anthropomorphic idol-shaped steles were localized in the Greek apoikiai of the northern Black Sea littoral, such as Olbia, Tauric Chersonesos and various settlements of the Bosphorus kingdom³. The existence of anthropomorphic funerary monuments in the region covers the period from the 4th century BC to at least the 3rd century AD, taking into account the anthropomorphic steles found belonging to the so-called "Late Scythian culture of the Crimea", whose cultural affiliation remains controversial⁴. Regarding the early date, it should be noted that Genadii Belov's remark about dating the tombstones from Tauric Chersonesos to the end of the 5th century BC is not justified. The location of the graves in connection with the tombstones is the only dating sign for a burial pit without inventory in the bulk layer, which was formed at the latest in the middle of the 4th century BC⁵. As Alla Buiskikh notes, the specific form of the voluminous miniature anthropomorphic tombstone completely disappears at the end of the Hellenistic period⁶. It is also important to note that the tombstones of the first centuries AD. were made in a different style, bringing these monuments closer to the portrait tombstones that became widespread in Roman times. Simplified facial features, pointed eyes, hairstyles and details of clothing characterize

these monuments. Anthropomorphic stelae, used as frames for narrative compositions depicted in relief, also belong to the early centuries of the Christian era⁷.

Based on the characteristics of the form, the tombstones were divided into two groups, namely ones with reliefs and others with volumetric sculptures⁸. The reliefs are divided into two types. The first type includes tombstones in the form of human busts in high relief with painted or carved images of faces and sometimes elements of clothing (Fig. 1. 1)⁹. The second type includes tombstones with anthropomorphic images in low relief or cut by lines (Fig. 1. 2). This type of stele is found only in the Tauric Chersonesos and Nymphaeum¹⁰. Sculptural groups are represented by stelae with a round or oval "head" on a rectangular or trapezoidal base (Fig. 1. 3). A special case within this group is the paired stele from Gorgippia¹¹. The name of the deceased was sometimes carved or inscribed on the surface of the stele. In some cases the niches for inscriptions with the names of the deceased are located in the lower parts of the stelae¹². Some stelae represent a special case within this group. Their form is characterized by busts with short shoulders. Several paired busts with a common "body type" have also been found in the Tauric Chersonesos (Fig. 1. 4).

All tombstones are mounted above the graves. Sometimes there is a pin in the lower part of the monument to fix it in a rectangular base. The anthropomorphic steles are supported by pins in the holes of the upper levels of the pedestals or placed in the *aediculae* and niches of their front parts. The combination of an anthropomorphic stele or relief with a rectangular stele of the "Greek type" has been recorded only in Tauric Chersonesos¹³ (Figs. 2. 1-3). The tombstones under consideration are associated with different types of burial structures, such as earthen graves, crypts, and burials in

¹ This article is an extended re-worked version of the article published in Russian in *Rossiiskaya Arheologiya*, 4 (2010).

² The only examples that have been evaluated within the anthropomorphic stele group subject to the study are previously published examples. At this point, it should be taken into consideration that there may be new examples that are not included in this study in the future.

³ For more details, see: Stoyanov, 2010: 36-37.

⁴ Moleva, 2002: 30 ff; Tsetsckhladze & Kondrashev, 2001: 349 ff; Voloshinov, 2015: 248-249.

⁵ Buiskikh & Zubar, 2006: 17, with reference to the opinion of Genadii Belov (Belov, 1950: 274).

⁶ Buiskikh, 2008: 233-234.

⁷ Ivanova, 1950: 250-251.

⁸ For more information on the classification of anthropomorphic tombstones: Moleva, 2002, 37-70; Buiskikh & Zubar, 2006, 12.

⁹ Buiskikh & Zubar, 2006: 17; Tsetsckhladze & Kondrashev, 2001: figs. 20-21.

¹⁰ Buiskikh & Zubar, 2006: 16-18.

¹¹ Alekseeva, 2018: 11, fig. 2.

¹² Kolesnikova, 1976: 81, 90, no. 255, no. 284; Buiskikh & Zubar, 2006: 15, 20; Posamentir: 2007, 54.

¹³ Posamentir, 2007: 50, 53-54, figs. 9-11, 13.

mounds. Sometimes reused anthropomorphic tombstones have been discovered in masonry walls, including in the lining of tombs. These structural details have allowed some researchers to propose their use as apotropaic¹⁴.

As for the origin of the tradition of anthropomorphic tombstones in the northern Black Sea region, several different opinions have been expressed. Some scholars associate the practice of using such monuments with the tradition inherited from the barbarian population surrounding *apoikiai*. Such an interpretation of the phenomenon, which seems quite plausible at first glance, nevertheless raises numerous questions. Anthropomorphic sculptures were common in the barbarian cultures of the northern Black Sea region and the Crimea in the Bronze Age. These monuments have the form of massive rectangular or conical volumetric slabs with weakly or disproportionately expressed small heads¹⁵.

The semantic content of these sculptures began with the image of the ancestor and evolved into the image of the military leader. Such sculptures were placed above individual tombs and decorated with images of jewelry and weapons as attributes of power¹⁶. The anthropomorphic sculptures of the barbarians were cultic, while the anthropomorphic tombstones represented in the necropolis belonged to the graves of the ordinary population¹⁷. In fact, the peculiar shape and decoration of the barbarian anthropomorphic sculptures have no elements analogous to the anthropomorphic tombstones found in the necropolises of the Greek centers of the northern Black Sea littoral¹⁸.

Anthropomorphic tombstones, in their already established form, appeared in a relatively short chronological period (about half a century) in the *nekropoleis* belonging to the poleis with a different barbarian ethnic environment. However, this phenomenon cannot be explained by Greek-barbarian interactions alone. The nature and extent of such interactions, different levels of social and political organization, as well as the level of cultural development of neighboring barbarian

societies were not the same in all Greek *apoikiai* in the region. Therefore, Greek-barbarian interactions in the North Pontic region could not lead to the emergence of identical and specific funerary traditions within different Hellenistic communities within a short period of time.

It is important to note that anthropomorphic sculpture tradition was not common to all tribes, constituting a permanent presence next to all Greek centers for a long time. In this case, the most significant example is the absence of anthropomorphic statues in the tribes of the Kizil-Koba archaeological culture, constituting the main barbarian presence of the Tauric Chersonesos district. This is a significant fact, since the largest number of anthropomorphic tombstones was discovered in this center. In addition, the researchers point out the lack of regular contacts between the Scythians and the citizens of the city until the middle of the 4th century BC¹⁹.

It is also crucial to emphasize the fact of the total absence of anthropomorphic tombstones in the Greek *apoikiai*, located in the western Black Sea littoral, which had close ties with the Thracians, who, like the Scythians, had anthropomorphic statues in their material culture. Moreover, Greco-Barbarian interactions in the region were no less, and sometimes more, intense than in other parts of the northern Black Sea²⁰. This evidence does not allow us to consider the anthropomorphic tombstones of Greek necropolises as an exclusive burial practice borrowed by the colonists from local barbarian cultures.

The origins of this phenomenon could be found in colonial societies. Some researchers believed that anthropomorphic tombstones represented a local version of the Greek development of sculpture²¹. The location of some anthropomorphic sculptures together with traditional Greek stelae on the same pedestals, the characteristics of anthropomorphic monuments such as the location of the relief in a niche, the presence of a tenon at the bottom, an insert in the form of a rectangular marble slab with a carved or painted name on it, and also the name and decoration painted on the surface of the monuments

¹⁴ Moleva, 1991: 134; Moleva, 2002: 33-34; Moleva, 2002a: 202; Buiskikh & Zubar, 2006: 21.

¹⁵ Toshchev, 2007: 87-93, figs. 40-41.

¹⁶ Shul'ts, 1967: 236; Shul'ts, 1968: 328.

¹⁷ Spitsyn, 1928: 487; Elagina, 1959: 186; Melyukova, 1953: 126, figs. 1-2; Shul'ts, 1967: 225-237; Moleva, 2002: 24 - 25.

¹⁸ Kolesnikova, 1973: 47; Moleva, 1991: 72 ff.; Moleva, 2002: 24.

¹⁹ Stolba, 1990: 12; Rogov, 2002: 142 ff.

²⁰ E.g. Toncheva, 1972: 101 ff.

²¹ Blavatskii, 1964: 83-84; Buiskikh & Zubar, 2006: 20.

testify in favor of such interpretation²².

Based on this hypothesis, various assumptions have been made about the semantics of anthropomorphic tombstones. Vladimir Blavatskiĭ considered the monuments to be a simplified version of the herms produced in the Greek periphery²³. The interpretation does not take into account the tombstones in the form of shoulder busts and paired anthropomorphic stelae, as well as the anthropomorphic reliefs in niches. Considering that anthropomorphic tombstones were a simplified version of herms, we have to explain their absence in some peripheral regions, since traditional herms were widespread throughout the ancient world. In our opinion, the historical relationship between anthropomorphic tombstones in the form of funerary sculptural busts and herms cannot be proven, considering Nikolai Sokolskiĭ's remark that busts emerged from the tradition of voluminous funerary sculpture, representing an independent evolutionary trajectory²⁴.

Lyudmila Kolesnikova offered a hypothesis of the development of anthropomorphic monuments from the traditions of Hellenic sculpture has supporters. She pointed to the monuments found in Corinth as an example of anthropomorphic tombstones²⁵. On the territory of the Corinthian Western Sanctuary and Necropolis, monuments in the form of low columns with rectangular bases, called "*cippi*", were found. According to Henry Robinson, they were used to mark individual tombs, sections of the necropolis, or the boundaries of sacred areas²⁶. In this regard, it is worth noting that rectangular tombstones and conical columns were a routine discovery in the necropolises of many Greek centers²⁷. The presence of such monuments in Tauric Chersonesos is of fundamental importance as evidence of the simultaneous use of cippi and anthropomorphic tombstones, indicating the independent development of these forms. In addition, the Corinthian necropolis yielded two fragments in the form of voluminous heads with smooth facial parts, probably fragments of some sculptures placed on the tombs no

earlier than the beginning of the 3rd century BC²⁸. The uniqueness of these findings does not allow to draw clear conclusions. This form is fundamentally different from the anthropomorphic monuments of the northern Black Sea region. The absence of a "face" is not a convincing parallel in this case, since the facial fragments of at least some anthropomorphic tombstones were painted or depicted in relief. It is likely that this type of sculpture went through a different evolutionary path and is more comparable to sculptural tombstones. Moreover, the Corinthian tombstones belong to the same period as the tombstones from the northern Black Sea region. Therefore, both groups of monuments do not reflect the development of funerary monuments of the same type, but rather traditions that developed at the same time in different parts of the ancient world.

Within the framework of her hypothesis, Kolesnikova linked anthropomorphic tombstones with the burial sites of women, associating the tradition of their installation with the chthonic aspect of the cult of Persephone, which was widespread in Tauric Chersonesos by the late 4th century BC²⁹. As an analogy, she referenced the earlier interpretation of monuments found in the necropolis of Cyrene, which were associated with depictions of Persephone and dated no earlier than the 4th century BC³⁰.

The notable variances in both shape and significance between the monuments from Cyrene and the anthropomorphic tombstones from Chersonesos challenge the explanation offered by Kolesnikova. The sculptures from Cyrene depict a female deity and are not linked to individual burials; rather, they demarcate sections, potentially within the sanctuary, situated within the necropolis. In contrast, tombstones from the Northern Black Sea region have consistently been connected with individual burials.

The correlation between anthropomorphic tombstones and female burials remains unconfirmed.

²² Kolesnikova, 1973: 45; Moleva, 1983: 122; Posamentir, 2007: 50-54.

²³ Blavatskiĭ, 1964: 83-84.

²⁴ Sokol'skiĭ, 1967: 193-203.

²⁵ Kolesnikova, 1977: 94-95; Moleva, 1991: 72-73; Moleva, 2002: 27-28; Buiskikh & Zubar, 2006: 20-21.

²⁶ Robinson, 1969: 7-8, pl. 9.

²⁷ Pfuhl, 1905: 90 ff; Kurtz & Boardman, 1971: 129, 240-243, figs. 51-52; Robinson, 1969: 7, fig. 17; Jehasse, 1973: tab. 167; Pensabene, 1975: 263 ff; Kolesnikova, 1977: 93, fig. 3, 3-4; Petzl, 1982: Nos. 454-456.

²⁸ Robinson, 1969: Nos. 38-39, fig. 16.

²⁹ Kolesnikova, 1977: 89, 92-93, 96.

³⁰ Rowe & Healy, 1959: 3-4, pls. 27-29.

Anthropological evidence indicates that several anthropomorphic tombstones from the region are linked to the burials of males and children as well. It is noteworthy that at least nine stelae with male name inscriptions have been discovered on the Bosphorus. Currently, there are no monuments similar to anthropomorphic tombstones that could illustrate the ongoing evolution of anthropomorphic forms in the burial tombstones of Ancient Greece³¹.

It appears improbable that the anthropomorphic monuments of the Black Sea region originated in Bronze to Early Iron Age Greece or in another Mediterranean region. It is highly unlikely that, all of a sudden, citizens of Greek colonies in the 4th century BC began producing tombstones that were stylized copies of sculptures existing in Mainland Greece over five centuries earlier.

Besides the Pontus Euxine region, anthropomorphic stelae found in other regions of Greek colonization. Idol-like images of stelae and anthropomorphic reliefs, as well as anthropomorphic images carved on monolithic plates, have been discovered during excavations of *tophet* in several Phoenician centers across the Mediterranean. These monuments are associated with burials in urns containing the remains of sacrificial children or animals. The most numerous groups of such finds come from the Carthage *tophet*, dating from the 5th to the 2nd centuries BC³². Additionally, stelae of this form are well-known from the materials of *tophet* found in Thira and other Phoenician centers in the Middle East³³.

Similar stelae are also known in several necropolises in Southern Italy and Sicily. A series of anthropomorphic stelae originates from the necropolis of Pompeii, with the earliest dating back to the 2nd century AD³⁴. Among them, one of the most intriguing stelae features a smooth front surface and a detailed relief of a hairstyle on the back of the head. The inscription carved on its facial side contains the name of a Libyan slave who was a member of the Venus community. According to Valentin Kockel, these sculptures served not as tombstones but rather as distinctive markers indicating places for cult libations³⁵.

The stelae found in tombs belonged to both ordinary and prosperous families, suggesting they cannot be solely associated with the social status of the deceased. Joint discoveries of these stelae alongside sculptural tombstones in the form of busts bearing similar names indicate the independent development of these types of funerary sculptures. Most researchers concur that this style of tombstone originated from Punic burial rites. The epicenter of this tradition appears to be Phoenicia and the coast of Palestine³⁶.

Another region where anthropomorphic sculptures have been prevalent is Anatolia. Archaeological evidence suggests that the tradition of anthropomorphic stelae and reliefs has existed in Anatolia for many centuries. In some regions of Northern Anatolia, the tradition of creating tombstones in the form of anthropomorphic stelae has persisted to the present day. Idol-like anthropomorphic stelae and reliefs have been found in Phrygia since the Prehistoric period (Fig. 3, 1-2)³⁷.

According to Susanne Berndt-Ersöz, the majority of the stelae were discovered while being repurposed in secondary use. Only a few sculptures were found *in situ* with reference to their original archaeological contexts. In several cases, stelae and reliefs were mounted on walls, likely serving an apotropaic function³⁸. Alongside anthropomorphic reliefs, cone-shaped altars (*bosses*), pools, and bowls were carved into the rock. Several anthropomorphic stelae were discovered in or near niches. All of this suggests a strong connection of the monuments with cult activities such as sacrifices and libations³⁹. They are categorized into similar groups and types based on shape, similar to funerary monuments from the Northern Black Sea region, including small-sized stelae and reliefs in the form of anthropomorphic figures.

Anthropomorphic reliefs are further categorized into single, group, and those associated with stepped structures⁴⁰. Step monuments, including those featuring anthropomorphic reliefs, are most likely associated with the symbol of the throne, originating in Hittite religion and

³¹ Kurtz & Boardman, 1971: 56-57, 219-220, fig. 45.

³² Charles-Picard, 1954: Cat. 19, 103-104, 140-149, 158, 169; Gras et al., 1991: 150.

³³ Sader, 1991: 104.

³⁴ Kockel, 1983: 16.

³⁵ Mau, 1902: 418, fig. 240.

³⁶ Brusin, 1958: 39-40, taf. 26, abb. 4; Tusa, 1982: 95-108, taf. 13 c, 14 e.

³⁷ Tamsü Polat et al., 2020: 46.

³⁸ Tamsü Polat et al., 2020: 56.

³⁹ Berndt-Ersöz, 1993: 225, note 969.

⁴⁰ Berndt-Ersöz, 1993: 157-158.

associated with the cult of the goddess *Matar* (Mother Goddess). Hence, the origin of the cult of the Mother Goddess from Anatolia is undisputed⁴¹. It is from this region that it spread through the Greek centers to various parts of the ancient world. According to archaeological evidence, the anthropomorphic stela was the earliest iconographic depiction of this deity. The earliest archaeological sources related to this cult, found in the Greek centers of Western Anatolia, likely date back to the 7th to 6th centuries BC.

In the territory of Greece, the cult of the Mother Goddess (*Cybele*) underwent significant changes, yet it retained many of its attributes inherited from Asia Minor. Its strong connection with funeral practices persisted throughout the entire duration of the cult. It is worth noting that the Greeks referred to this deity not only as *Matar* or its equivalent *Cybele* but also by the names of *Rhea* and *Demeter*⁴².

Findings of such monuments in Greek necropolises in the region are exceedingly rare. One stele was discovered outside the burial complex in the necropolis of Assos (Fig. 3, 3-4). Researchers have dated it within a broad chronological framework⁴³. Another monument is presumed to originate from Cilicia⁴⁴. Several anthropomorphic stelae, lacking specific archaeological and chronological contexts, are housed in the archaeological museum of Bursa⁴⁵. At first glance, this suggests an absence of a tradition of anthropomorphic sculptures in the Greek *poleis* of the region. However, the presence of even a few findings amidst limited knowledge of both the funerary rites of the local population and the necropolises of many Greek centers in the region precludes definitive conclusions. Thus, based on the available materials to date, we can identify four geographical regions of Greek colonization, each with its indigenous traditions of using anthropomorphic steles as funerary or cult sculptures: the Northern Black Sea region, Anatolia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

Anthropomorphic monuments from Phoenicia, Palestine, and the Levant are characterized by steles

featuring reliefs or incised images depicting heads, busts, or schematic human figures representing deities. These steles were typically erected outside settlements at sacrificial sites. Similar types of monuments found in North Africa and Sicily are associated with Phoenician colonization. Monuments originating from the necropolises of Southern Italy, characterized by herms with rounded heads in the upper part, likely have their origins in Punic religion, which underwent transformation by the indigenous population. This assumption is supported not only by their form but also by their function as markers for places of sacrifice.

On the other hand, anthropomorphic monuments from the Phrygian region are typified by sculptural steles and relief images in the form of busts and herms, often associated with the Phrygian cult of the goddess *Matar*. Archaeological evidence indicates their association with a funerary cult, as they were utilized as markers for burial sites, sacrificial or libational areas, and for apotropaic purposes. In a Hellenized form, the cult of *Matar* became widespread in the Greek centers of the region and eventually spread to other parts of the ancient world. However, the anthropomorphic sculptures of this region, based on their distinct form and semantics, represent a type of monument that developed independently from those of other regions in the ancient world.

The origin of anthropomorphic tombstones in the Greek necropolises of the northern Black Sea region presents a challenging puzzle to unravel. As previously demonstrated, it is improbable that the tradition of anthropomorphic sculptures was directly adopted by Greek colonists from local barbarian tribes, as such elements of burial practices are not typically associated with the religious cults of these tribes in the northern Black Sea region.

Instead, the origin of this tradition among the colonists may stem from the adaptation and transformation of anthropomorphic monuments. In this scenario, it is tempting to interpret the combination of anthropomorphic stelae with Hellenic-type grave stelae

⁴¹ Naumann, 1983: 92–100; Berndt-Ersöz, 1993: 243–245; Roller, 1999: 66; Tamsü Polat et al., 2020: 45–46.

⁴² Roller, 1991: 128–144; Roller, 1999: 119–123, 192; Berndt-Ersöz, 1993: 249–250.

⁴³ Stupperich & Serdaroğlu, 1996: 29–30, taf. 12, 5–6; Utili, 1999: 116, abb. VIII.

⁴⁴ Çalık, 1999: Taf. 19. 2.

⁴⁵ I would like to express my sincerely gratitude to Richard Pozamentir, who kindly shared this information with me.

within a single structure as a method of integrating separate traditions of indigenous and colonial society. This phenomenon has been similarly explained in relation to the anthropomorphic stelae found at Pompeii and Cyrene. The colonists likely naturalized these statues and introduced new elements such as language and pictorial decoration into their forms.

This explanation appears quite plausible for the necropolises of Greek colonies in the region, such as Olbia or the Cimmerian Bosphorus. However, another possible means of the infiltration of this tradition into the funerary rites of the colony cannot be discounted for Tauric Chersonesos. The presence of anthropomorphic monuments located in niches on the frontal surface of funerary stelae in the necropolis of the polis suggests common cultural origins, which would only be possible if the tradition of anthropomorphic monuments was initially present among the colonists. According to historical tradition, the metropolis of Pontic Heraclea was Megara, with people from Boeotia participating in its foundation. Colonists typically retained the main cults of the metropolis and reproduced their usual way of life, social structure, and system of relationships with the local population in the new settlement. However, it is evident that anthropomorphic tombstones like those found in Chersonesos were not present in Megara, Delos, or Delion in Boeotia. The necropolis of Heraclea has never been thoroughly explored. The Mariandyni, the native population of the Heraclea region in Northern Anatolia, were likely dependent, possibly in a form of collective slavery⁴⁶.

Unfortunately, literary sources do not provide any information about the involvement of the local non-Greek population in the colonization activities of Heraclea or the foundation of Chersonesos. While we cannot completely rule out the presence of non-Greeks among the colonists, it is unlikely that their numbers were significant. Revision of the onomastic material also did not yield reliable evidence of a substantial presence of non-Hellenized inhabitants in Chersonesos⁴⁷.

The distinct form and decoration of anthropomorphic sculptures from the autochthonous

population of the Chersonesos district lack elements similar to the anthropomorphic tombstones found in the necropolis of the city. This suggests that the tradition originated from the urban community of the polis. Indeed, only Hellenized individuals of non-Greek origin who arrived with the Greeks among the colonists retained their tradition of funeral rites associated with anthropomorphic monuments. The majority of colonies in the Northern Black Sea area were situated in Anatolia, where the cult associated with anthropomorphic monuments was widespread. These connections appear to be more than coincidental. Therefore, the Anatolian origin of the tradition of anthropomorphic sculptures in the Tauric Chersonesos remains highly plausible.

Thus, based on the materials considered, we can confidently identify at least four regions of Greek colonization as the origin of the tradition of anthropomorphic tombstones. Differences in the form and semantics of monuments within these regions indicate the interconnected development of this type of sculpture. Additionally, in each of the identified regions, anthropomorphic stelae and reliefs exemplify intercultural interactions and communication. The local characteristics of these monuments highlight their originality, allowing us to tentatively trace the extent and nature of cultural transformations in various parts of the ancient world during the 7th to 2nd centuries BC.

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⁴⁶ Stobel, 2006: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e508170 (accessed 27 November 2023); Robu, 2018: 278-286.

⁴⁷ Stolba, 1996: 439-466; Tokhtas'ev, 2007: 110-124.

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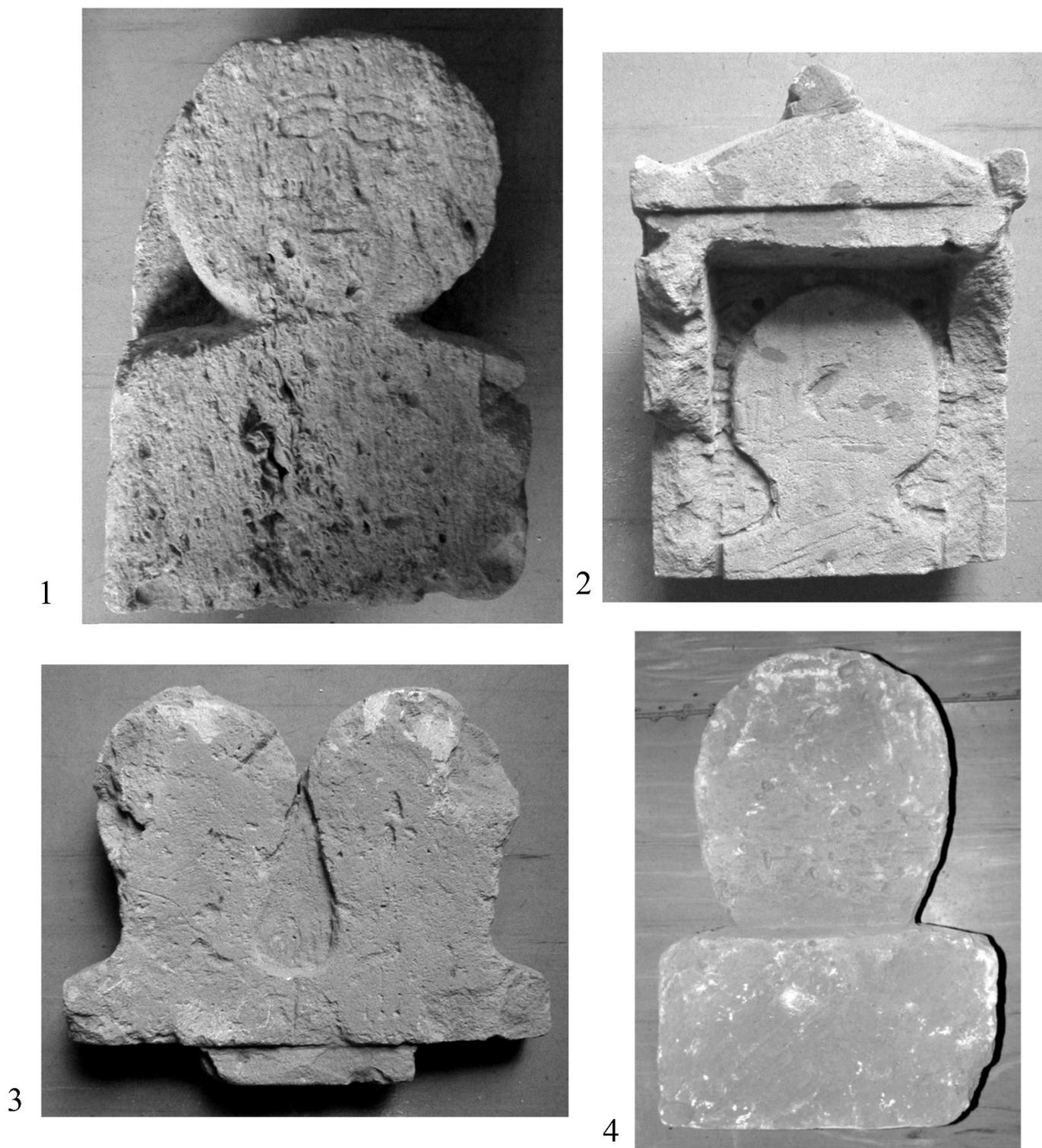


Figure 1. 1-4: Anthropomorphic tombstones from the necropolis of Tauric Chersonesos (Museum Chersonesos, photos by the author).

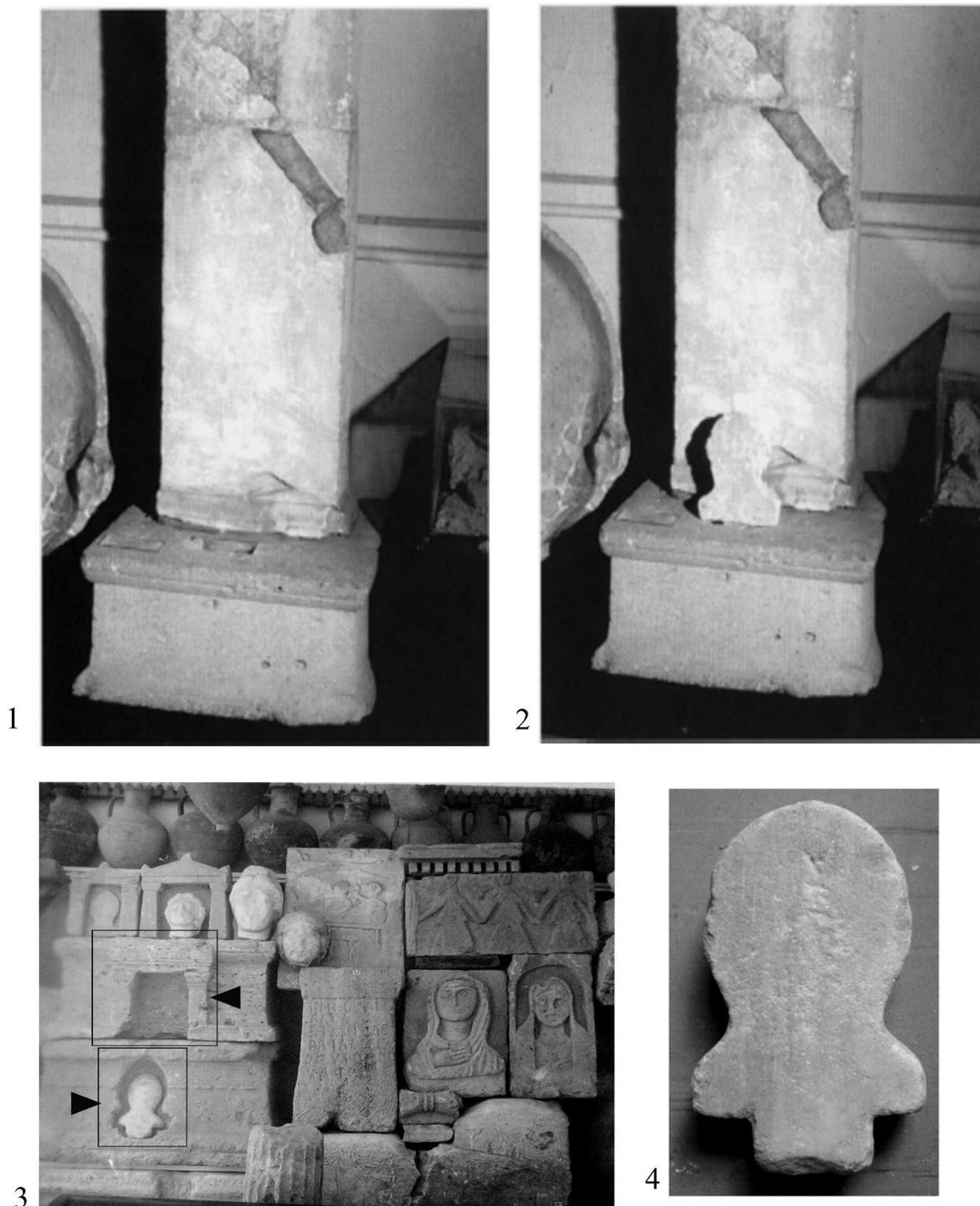


Figure 2: 1-2: The combination of an anthropomorphic tombstone and a rectangular stele on one pedestal (Museum Chersonesos, Inv. No. 36847/477-102), after Posamentir, 2007, Figs. 9-10; 3: Pedestals for a rectangular stele with a niche and aediculae on the front side (Photo-archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences, Negative O. 274.7); 4: An anthropomorphic stele (Museum Chersonesos, photo by the author).

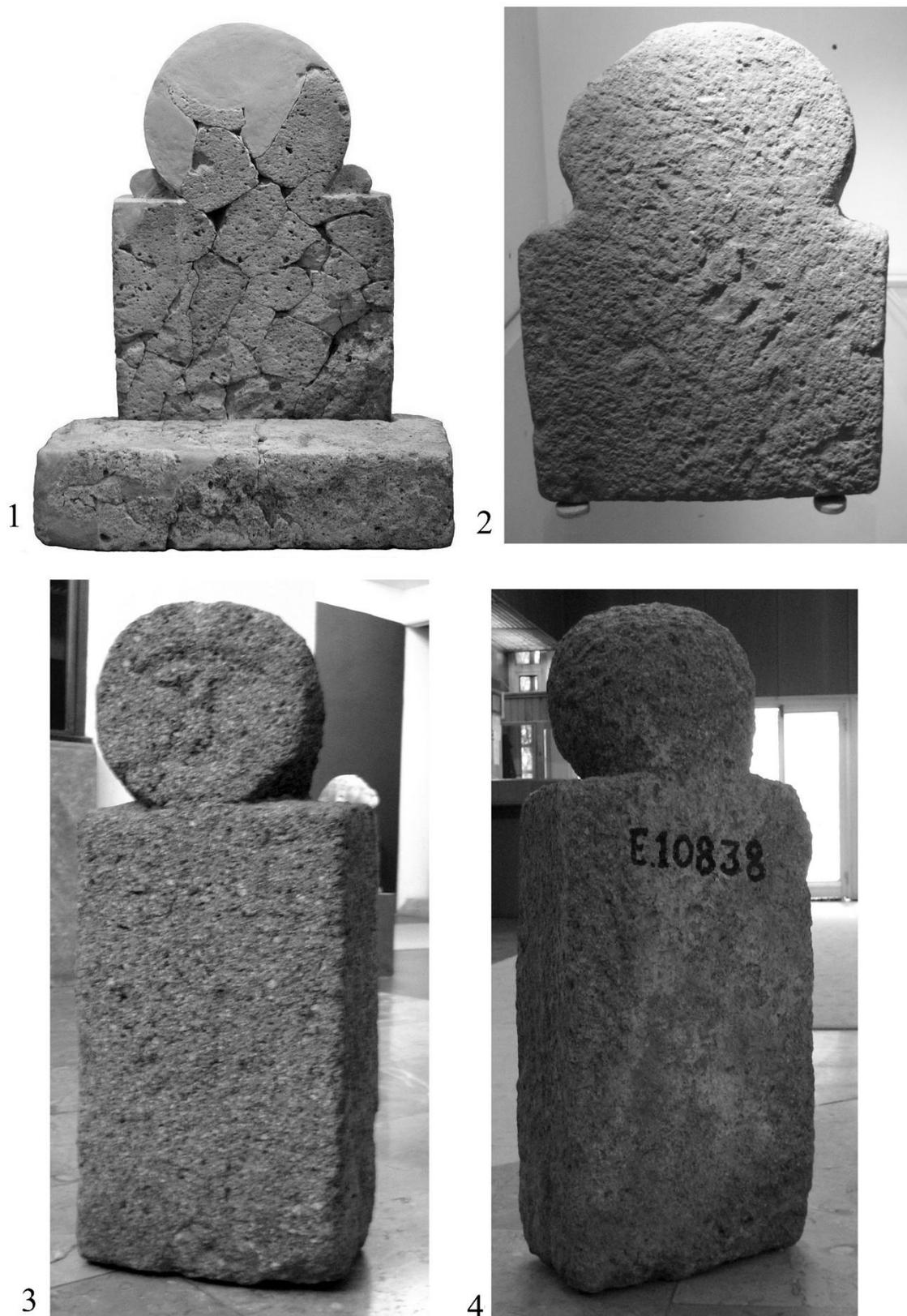


Figure 3: 1: A Phrygian idol found in the inner courtyard of the Cappadocia Gate at Kerkenes, photo by B.C. Coockson (Kerkenes Project, 2010), after Bora Bilgin, www.phrygianmonuments.com; 2: Anthropomorphic steles from Gordion, (Gordion Museum, photo by the author); 3-4: Anthropomorphic stela from the necropolis of Assos, (Troy Museum, photo by the author).