

## Expressing Regional Cultic Concepts Through Local Art: A New Marble Relief from Blaundos

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### Abstract

*Blaundos Ancient City is located approximately 2 km northeast of the village of Sülümenli in the Ulubey district of Uşak Province. The findings obtained through archaeological excavations conducted in the site since 2018 provide significant information about the religious and socio-cultural characteristics of Blaundos in antiquity. This study addresses a marble relief, discovered in two separate fragments during the excavations conducted in 2018 and 2019 along the Main Street extending adjacent to the Temple of Demeter (Ceres) in Blaundos. The relief is significant not only for its sculptural features such as typology, iconography, and style, but also for bearing traces of the cults in the city.*

*The three figures depicted on the relief represent the Priestess of Demeter, Dionysos, and the Pudicitia Philista type. This scene, which provides new contributions to our knowledge of Eastern Lydia, introduces a previously unobserved figurative and cultic combination in the city and its surrounding region. The findings related to the cults of Demeter and Dionysos, previously discovered separately in epigraphic, numismatic, and architectural forms in Blaundos, are for the first time observed together on the same relief in this study.*

*Stylistically, it is argued that the standard types known from Western Anatolian sculpture are reinterpreted on the Blaundos relief through a local craftsmanship approach. The work is likely to date to the second half of the 1st century AD, around the same time as the temple, when social life in the city was particularly active.*

**Keywords:** Lydia, Blaundos, sculpture, relief, Demeter.

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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Uşak ili, Ulubey ilçesine bağlı Sülümenli köyünün yaklaşık 2 km kuzeydoğusunda yer alan Blaundos Antik Kenti, Ulubey kanyonu'nun batı kıyısında ve Lydia'nın en doğu sınırındaki konumuyla dikkat çeker. Kentte 2018 yılından bu yana sürdürülen sistematik arkeolojik kazılarda ele geçen ve mimariden heykeltıraşlığa, seramikten nümizmatığa değin pek çok türdeki buluntu, Blaundos'un ve Doğu Lydia'nın antik dönemdeki dini ve sosyokültürel özellikleri hakkındaki bilgilere önemli katkılar sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, söz konusu kazılar çerçevesinde 2018 ve 2019 yıllarında, Blaundos'ta, Demeter (Ceres) Tapınağı'na bitişik uzanan ve Roma Dönemi'nde yoğun olarak kullanılmış ana cadde üzerinde gerçekleştirilen kazılarda iki ayrı noktada, iki ayrı parça halinde bulunmuş bir mermer kabartma ele alınmıştır. Kabartma tipoloji, ikonografi ve stil gibi heykeltıraşlık özelliklerinin yanı sıra kentte Roma Dönemi'nde etkin olan kültlere dair izler taşınması açısından da önem taşımaktadır.

Enine, dikdörtgen bir formda ve kaide kısmı dışında çerçevesiz olarak düzenlenmiş kabartma üzerinde biri erkek ikisi kadın olmak üzere üç figür bulunmaktadır. Yapılan ikonografik değerlendirmelere göre, bunlardan soldaki figürün Demeter Rahibesi, ortadaki figürün Pudicitia Philista ve sağdaki erkek figürünün Dionysos tiplerini yansıttığı anlaşılmaktadır. Doğu Lydia'daki yerel heykeltıraşlık faaliyetleri ve bölgesel kültürler hakkındaki bilgilerimize yeni katkılar sunan bu sahne, Batı Anadolu'da önceden bilinen tiplerin kent ve çevresinde daha önce görülmemeyen yeni bir figüratif kombinasyonunu ortaya koymaktadır. Kabartmanın kaide kısmında ise tek satırlık bir yazıt bulunmaktadır.

Dikkatleri Doğu Lidya'nın yerel heykeltıraşlığı ve kültürleri ile ilgili bazı sorunlara çekmekte olan kabartma üzerinde işli figürler literatürden bilinen standart tiplere uymakla birlikte, bu çalışmada söz konusu betimlerle ortaya konulan tiplerin Batı Anadolu'daki dağılımı ve heykeltıraşlıkta kullanıldıkları türler (adak kabartması, mezar steli vb.) hakkında yeni öneriler getirilmektedir. Örneğin; kabartmanın sol tarafındaki figür, daha önce Ionia'da Smyrna'ya özgü olduğu düşünülen Demeter rahibesi tipindedir; lakin kabartmanın bulunduğu Blaundos, antik kenti Smyrna'dan oldukça uzak bir Doğu Lidya yerleşimidir. Keza, ortada yer alan figür daha önce sadece mezar stellerinde uygulandığı öne sürülmüş olan Pudicitia Philista tipini yansıtmakta iken elde, incelenen kabartmanın bir mezar steli olduğuna dair ne epigrafik ne de arkeolojik kanıt vardır. Sağdaki figür ise çalışmada ayrıntılı değerlendirildiği üzere ikonografik olarak Dionysos'a özgü nitelikler taşımaktadır. Esasen epigrafik ve nümizmatik kanıtlardan Blaundos'ta Demeter gibi Dionysos'a da tapınıldığı bilinmektedir. Demeter kültürünün Blaundos'taki önemi en açık şekilde kent merkezindeki Ceres kutsal alanından ve sikkeler üzerindeki betimlerden anlaşılmaktadır. Bu betimlerde görülen tanrı ve tanrıçalardan adına tapınak inşa edilmiş tek tanrıça Demeter'dir. Dionysos'un da kentte saygı gördüğü hem kentin sikkelerinden, hem de bir Dionysos rahibine adanmış onurlandırma yazıtı ve bu yazıtta sözü edilen heykelden bilinmekte olup, 2022 yılı kazılarında ele geçen bir thyrsoş yontusu gibi arkeolojik bulgularla da desteklenmektedir. Her iki kültü dair figürlerin tek bir kabartma üzerinde birlikte betimlenmesi ise Lidya buluntusu kabartmalar üzerinde daha önce karşılaşılmamış bir durumdur. Bu nedenle Blaundos kabartması kentte Demeter ve Dionysos kültürlerinin varlığına ilişkin daha önce ele geçmiş somut bulguları farklı açılardan destekleyebilecek nitelikte yeni bir eser olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu gözlemler bağlamında hazırlanan bu çalışmada, söz konusu kabartmanın tipolojik, ikonografik ve stilistik açılardan ayrıntılı bir değerlendirmesi yapılmakta ve yerel kültürle olan bağlantıları tartışılmaktadır.

İşlev açısından bakıldığında, hem adak kabartması hem de mezar steli özellikleri taşıyan bloğun kaidesi üzerindeki tek satırlık yazıtın korunmuş bölümü, kabartmanın bir "mezar steli mi, yoksa bir adak kabartması" mı olduğu sorusuna ikna edici bir cevap verememektedir. Bu nedenle kabartmanın işlevine ilişkin bu sorun da ayrı bir başlık altında incelenmiştir: Kabartmada tercih edilen figür tiplerinden Pudicitia Philista Batı Anadolu mezar stelleri üzerinde sıkça görülmekle birlikte Lydia'da bir örnek dışında sadece oturan kadın figürlerine uygulanmıştır. Her üç tipin bir arada kullanılmaları Batı Anadolu mezar stellerinde yaygın bir uygulama değildir; bir diğer deyişle Doğu Lydia'da Philista, Demeter Rahibesi ve Dionysos figürlerinin bir arada görüldüğü, aynı ikonografiye sahip bir kabartma ile daha önce karşılaşılmamıştır. Ayrıca Batı Anadolu'da tanrısal betimlere adak kabartmaları üzerinde sıkça rastlanmasına rağmen mezar stelleri üzerinde yer verilmediği de bilinmektedir. Bu veriler ve mermer bloğun genel tipolojisi de eserin daha çok adak amaçlı olarak üretilmiş bir kabartma olabileceğini düşündürmektedir.

Stil açısından değerlendirildiğinde ise, öncelikle Blaundos kabartmasının, Geç Hellenistik Dönem Ionia ve Lidya kentlerinde üretilen adak kabartması ve mezar stellerinin belirgin özellikleri olan yüksek kabartmalı plastik yapıdan ve Lydialı sanatçıların yaygın olarak kullandığı bilinen rozet ve çelenk tasvirlerinden yoksun olduğu görülmektedir. Bu bakımdan kabartma, anılan bölgelerin ana akım atölyelerinin mahir sanatçıları tarafından üretilen heykeltıraşlık eserlerinden farklı olarak, yerel imkânlarla biçimlendirilmiş alçak kabartmalı bir çalışma olarak değerlendirilebilir. Dolayısıyla Batı Anadolu heykeltıraşlığından bilinen standart tiplerin Blaundos kabartması üzerinde yerel bir işçilik anlayışıyla yorumlandığı, bunun da ana akımları takip eden yerel bir atölye marifetiyle gerçekleştirilmiş olabileceği düşünülmektedir. Stilistik benzerleri Doğu Lydia'da bulunabilen eser olasılıkla tapınakla yaklaşık aynı tarihlerden, kentte sosyal yaşamın ve bahsekonu kültürlerin aktif olduğu MS 1. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısı ya da 2. yüzyılın başlarından olmalıdır.

## Introduction

The ancient city of Blaundos is located approximately 2 km northeast of Sülümenli village in Ulubey district, 30 km south of Uşak city center. Its location on the Ulubey Canyon, which forms the natural border between the ancient regions of Lydia and Phrygia, gives Blaundos importance in terms of the archeology of both regions. Archaeological excavations at the site, supported by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, have

been carried out since 2018, under the direction of Prof. Dr. Birol Can from Uşak University.<sup>1</sup> The ongoing excavations in the center, yield archaeological findings that can make significant contributions not only to Lydia and Phrygia, but also to the archeology of the entire Western Anatolia. These findings, ranging from architecture to sculpture, ceramics to numismatics and many other sorts provide important information about the religious and sociocultural characteristics of Blaundos in antiquity. In recent years, sculptural works have attracted particular attention among the excavated artifacts (Can, 2023, p. 453 ff. fig. 3 ff). The relief block to be discussed in this paper is important both in terms of its sculptural features such as typology, iconography and style, and in terms of helping to illuminate the cults in the city.

In this regard, the relief provides new perspectives on certain issues related to the local sculpture of Eastern Lydia. While the figures on the relief adhere to types already known from literature, they provide new insights into the distribution and usage of these types within Western Anatolia. The figure on the left side of the relief is of the Demeter priestess type, previously thought to be specific to Smyrna (Yaylali, 1979, pp. 36, 40) in Ionia. However Blaundos, the location of the relief, is a city of Eastern Lydia quite far from Smyrna. The figure in the middle reflects the Pudicitia Philista type, which was previously suggested to be applied only on grave stelae (Linfert, 1976, pp. 152-153). But there is neither epigraphic nor archaeological evidence that the relief is a grave stele. The last figure, on the right, has Dionysian characteristics iconographically. It is actually known from epigraphic and numismatic evidence that Dionysus was worshipped in Blaundos, (Filges, 2006a, pp. 286, 296, abb. 255 [d]; Kileci and Can, 2020, pp. 297-309, fig. 2) as was Demeter. However, the depiction of both cult figures together on a single relief is unprecedented in Lydia. This study, prepared in the context of these observations, conducts a detailed evaluation of the Blaundos relief from typological, iconographic, and stylistic perspectives and discusses its connections with local cults.

### Find Context

The marble relief block was recovered in two pieces at different seasons. Firstly, the large fragment bearing most of the reliefs was discovered during excavations on 19 June 2018 on the Main Street, in the deposit in front of the demolished blocks of the Propylon (Fig. 1a). On 26 August 2019, while the excavation team was working on the Byzantine buildings that were added later on the Main Street, a smaller fragment was unearthed a few meters away from the one found the previous year (Fig. 1b). The findspots, which are quite close to the sanctuary of Demeter (Ceres), fall to the south of the propylon (Fig. 2). It appears that these two fragments belonged to the same block. The pieces of the block were found in the deposit (not *in situ*) and there is no information about its original context.

### Description and Condition

The top and side edges of the relief are frameless and the lower left and upper right parts are missing. The part below the knees of the female figure on the left and the body of the male figure on the right are missing except for his right arm and feet. The block surface was partially in good condition. The face of the woman in the middle and top of the torch held by the woman on the left were severely damaged.

There is an inscription on the lower frame forming the ground on which the figures stand (Fig. 3). This frame is divided into two by a thin channel and the inscription is engraved on the upper belt:

[ — — — ]IMHN ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς καὶ τέκνων

... for herself and her children...<sup>2</sup>

After the conservation process, the two pieces were attached together and photographed. In its current form, the relief block has an overall height of 28 cm, a width of 36 cm and a thickness of 5 cm. The material

<sup>1</sup> Previously, in 1995, a six-week excavation was carried out by the Uşak Museum in Blaundos, and the Temple of Demeter (Ceres) in the city center was partially excavated: Akbıykoğlu, 1997, p. 29-48. Following this excavation, Axel Filges, carried out surveys in Blaundos in 1999, 2000 and 2002 and published his detailed study in 2006: Filges, 2006a, *passim*. Prior to the current excavations, the work started in 2016 under the direction of the museum and Can's consultancy. For more detailed information about the historical geography, constructions and research of Blaundos, see. Can, 2017, p. 73 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For the translation of the inscription, we thank Dr. Şenkal Kileci, who is conducting the studies of the Blaundos epigraphic data. A comprehensive monograph of all Blaundos' epigraphic data is being prepared for publication by him.

of the block is marble, which can be observed in the geological formation of the Ulubey Canyon surrounding the city. The front of the block is figured (Fig. 4), while the back surface is roughly flattened and left plain (Fig. 5). The relief, which was recorded in the excavation inventory with the number BL'19-870.430-5, was delivered to Uşak Museum Directorate.

### Typology, Iconography and Cults

The scene on a transversely arranged frameless block shows three figures frontally standing side by side. The two figures on the left are women and the one on the right is a man. Only these figures are present in the scene with those in their hands; neither in the background nor in the wide spaces between the figures are any landscapes, decorations or images. The torch held by the figure on the left and the scepter in the hand of the figure on the right divide the scene into three sections and the figures are carved in these spaces (Fig. 4).

The round-looking face of the woman in the center of the scene is heavily abraded, except for the contours (Fig. 6). Her head is slightly tilted to the left. She holds her right arm below her chests and raises her left hand to the left shoulder. The body weight is on her straight left leg and the other leg is slightly extended to the side. A glance at her left foot reveals that she has ankle-strapped sandals. She wears a long chiton and a himation over it. The heavy folds of the draped skirt cascade across the floor, extending between her legs and on either side. The himation scroll extends from the back of the head to the front, wraps around the neck, goes behind the left shoulder and hangs down the back of the left arm. This posture, based on hand and foot movements,<sup>3</sup> reflects the type called "(Pudicitia) Philista" after the name of a statue in Oxford (Pinkwart, 1965, p. 153, fn. 21; Yaylalı, 1979, p. 38, kat. no 3, 6, 22, 28, 31, 34, 39, 52, 55, 76, 81, 82, 99, 108, 110, 117, 121, 123, 131). A. Linfert stated that the Philista type, which is predominantly seen in central area of western Anatolia, was applied only on grave stelae, and one of the two workshops using the type can be localised in Ephesos thanks to a relief (Linfert, 1976, pp. 152-153, fig. 380). Yaylalı suggested that the other workshop must have operated in Izmir, based on the large number of examples found in the region (Yaylalı, 1979, p. 38).

The use of Philista type, frequently carved on grave stelae from the middle of the 2nd century BC, began to decrease towards the end of the century (Linfert, 1976, p. 153; Yaylalı, 1979, p. 38 fn. 25). Almost all of the free statues of this type produced between the early 1st century BC and the middle of the 1st century AD are from western Anatolia (Linfert, 1976, pp. 149, 152-153). The type is mostly encountered with seated figures on Lydian grave stelae in Late Hellenistic Period (Pfuhl and Möbius, 1979, p. 382, taf. 224, nr. 1553; Çekilmez, 2015, p. 123-126, pl. 12, 14; Sonkaya, 2018, pp. 41-42). However, a standing example with a similar posture as the female figure on Blaundos relief is on a stele from the Manisa Museum (Sonkaya, 2018, p. 42, fig. 6). Therefore the figure on the Blaundos relief can be recorded as the second example of the standing Philista type on the reliefs in Lydia for now. More examples of this type of standing figures are found on the group of works defined as "Izmir grave stelae" (Yaylalı, 1979, p. 38, pl. 2 ff. kat. no: 3 ff).

The other female figure, missing below the knees, is squattier than the one in the middle; she has a fleshy round face, broad shoulders and thick arms (Fig. 7). The woman wearing short sleeved chiton and himation wrapping around her waist like a sash has the same posture as the previously mentioned female figure. However, the *contrapposto*, the balanced movements of the head, body and legs in opposite directions, can be seen better in this figure. The object covering the figure's head is most likely a "veil" (*kredemnon*?). Below this, her "long, braided hair" falls over both shoulders down to her waist. The figure holds in his left hand a thick trunked "torch" which is as tall as herself and vertically fluted. These attributes, at first glance, remind us of single-bodied Hecate depictions found in the region around Blaundos, (Akyürek-Şahin, 2016, p. 22, fig. 3, 7) Demeter (Richter, 1967, p. 449, fig. 315; Karaosmanoğlu, 2005, pp. 50-51, fig. 103) and more her priestesses sculpted commonly on the grave stelae of Izmir region (Pfuhl and Möbius, 1977, pp. 137-138, taf. 66-67, nr. 406-410; Yaylalı, 1979, pp. 36, 40 ff. pl. 1, kat. no 1, 8, 14, 21, 32, 65, 71, 100, 102, 109; Känel,

<sup>3</sup> In the typological classification of dressed female statues, the clothing scheme and arm and leg movements are taken into account: Eule, 2001, pp. 15, 221.

1989, pp. 54, 57, taf. 15.1; Schmidt, 1991, pp. 14-15, abb. 20, 21; Zanker, 1993, pp. 226, fig. 25; Karlsson, 2014, pp. 71-73, 80-81)<sup>4</sup>.

Although the figure on the Blaundos relief is similar to the single-bodied Hecate types (Akyürek-Şahin, 2016, p. 22, fig. 7 a-c) in terms of holding a torch, it lacks the most basic attributes of the deity's iconography. The Blaundos figure, wearing a chiton and himation over it, has a veil on her head, independent of the himation. On the other hand, Hecate figures are expected to wear polos and peplos and to be depicted with a dog.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it is not obligatory for every Hecate depiction to be accompanied by a dog; but L. Robert suggested that if the figure has a single body, it must be accompanied by two torches and one dog in order to be identified as Hecate (Robert, 1955, p. 116)<sup>6</sup>. According to description and iconography, it does not seem to be a correct personification to identify the figure as Hecate. Therefore, the female figure holding a torch on the relief must represent Demeter or her priestess.

In order to properly determine the character, it is necessary to look at the cult of Demeter in the region and similar figurative examples from the surrounding area. The Eleusinian Demeter cult and its mysteries, whose origins date back to the Homeric Hymns of the late 7th century BC, settled in Greece over time and spread to Anatolia under different epithets.<sup>7</sup> In Anatolia, the cult of Demeter began to spread in the 4th century BC and her sanctuaries were built in Kaunos, Knidos, Pergamon and Priene (Karaosmanoğlu, 2005, p. 44 ff. 50-51). Demeter Karpophoros (fruit-bearer) was a goddess worshipped in Pergamon, Ephesos and Sardis in Western Anatolia from the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD (Herrmann, 1998, pp. 495-508, fig. 1-4; de Hoz, 2016, p. 195). The cult, which existed in Lydia in the 4th century BC, reappeared in the 1st century AD as a symbol of productivity and wealth (de Hoz, 2016, pp. 195, 214). In relation to the Roman Imperial cult, empresses such as Livia and Agrippina often identified themselves with Demeter Karpophoros, and this practice was reflected on inscriptions or coins from Sardis, Hyrkanis and Dareokome in the Lydian region (Keil, 1923, pp. 253, 258; Grether, 1946, pp. 231-232; Herrmann, 1998, pp. 507-508). On the Blaundos coins of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, Demeter is seen wearing a veil and holding a scepter or torch (Filges, 2006a, pp. 286-287, abb. 256). The strongest evidence that Blaundos was one of the prominent Demeter cult centers in Lydia is a temple built in the city center (Fig. 8). This temple dedicated to Demeter (Ceres) built in the late 1st century AD (Filges, 2002, p. 264, abb. 1; Filges, 2006a, p. 24; Filges, 2006b, p. 58, abb. 10; Can, 2017, p. 79) is the clearest evidence of the importance given to the cult of Demeter in the region. Moreover, as one of the main deities of the city, Demeter is the only deity in Blaundos with both a temple and depictions on coins (Filges, 2006a, p. 290; Tatar, 2024, p. 204).

In this frame, it is understood that the relief is closely related to the cult of Demeter due to the depiction on it. This personification is also confirmed by the expressions "beautifully braided Demeter" and "beautiful haired queen" mentioned about the goddess in the epics of Homer (Homeros, Iliad, XIV.326; Homeros, Odysseia, V.125). In accordance with this definition, in the statues of the goddess, just like on the relief in question, her hair is braided and falls to both sides (Richter, 1967, p. 449, fig. 315). However, this hairstyle can also be seen in the figures of Demeter priestesses in the same style (Yaylalı, 1979, p. 25, lev. 56, kat. 109). It is known from the inscriptions that the priestesses of Demeter were honoured by the citizens.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, it is very difficult to distinguish between the figures of Demeter and her priestesses on the reliefs, especially in such cases where the inscription does not provide adequate information. In Western Anatolia, the priestesses are depicted with the same characteristics as the deity because they identify themselves with her. They reflect the same typology as the goddess with their clothes, veils and torches in their hands (Pfuhl and Möbius, 1977, pp. 136-138, nr. 405-407, 409, 410). Therefore, when it comes to western Anatolia and Lydia, such figures, especially those depicted on grave stelae, are interpreted as

<sup>4</sup> There are also some reliefs of Artemis holding a torch from the 2nd century AD, but their archaic iconography is very different from the Blaundos example: See Lo Monaco, 2021, p. 161, fig. 9.

<sup>5</sup> For discussions on the clothing seen on Hecate depictions and the literature on this issue, see Akyürek-Şahin, 2016, pp. 116-117, fn. 32.

<sup>6</sup> For the cult of Hecate and her types found in the region, see also Akyürek-Şahin, 2016: 117, fn. 34.

<sup>7</sup> For detailed information about the Eleusis Demeter cult and its mysteries, see Mylonas, 1947, p. 129 ff; Sina, 2004, p. 37 ff.

<sup>8</sup> An inscription from Sardis, dating to about 50 AD, records that the people honoured a priestess of Demeter (Karpophoros): de Hoz, 2016, pp. 194-195.



priestesses of Demeter, not as the goddess herself (Pfuhl and Möbius, 1977, p. 136 ff. nr. 405-410; Yaylali, 1979, p. 36; Zanker, 1993, pp. 219, 226).

This type identified as a priestess of Demeter who follow the attributes and characteristics of the goddess is most commonly seen around Izmir. Yaylali identified the type as the second largest group with twelve examples on the grave stelae of Izmir (Yaylali, 1979, pp. 36, 40)<sup>9</sup>. He categorised the type, which he claims to be peculiar to Anatolia and even Izmir, into three sub-groups (Yaylali, 1979, pp. 36, 40). Känel states that the original of this figure type may be a free sculpture of a priestess of Demeter from Izmir dating to the early 2nd century BC. He, like Yaylali, bases his views on the abundance of examples (Känel, 1989, p. 54).

The Blaundos relief, as a local artefact, differs from the Izmir examples both iconographically and typologically. Unlike the Blaundos example, the iconography of the Izmir stelae shows a single or two persons excluding small-sized attendant and child figures. When single, the figure is between two servants. In the Blaundos relief, the type is depicted with two other figures of normal size; she is not the central figure, but on the side. It is typologically close to the third type (Yaylali, 1979, pl. 51, kat. no 100) of the examples in Izmir, thought to be unique to reliefs (Yaylali, 1979, p. 41) in that the himation wraps around the waist and the torch is held in his hand. The foot movements may be the same in the Izmir and Blaundos examples, but the functions of the hands are replaced. All of the Izmir examples hold the torch in his right hand, while the Blaundos figure holds it in his left hand. It is also possible that the unidentified object in her right hand is a plant like the ones in Izmir. As can be seen, the Demeter priestess figure of Blaundos is actually similar to the high-quality Izmir examples of the Late Hellenistic Period in terms of its main scheme and attributes, but it differs from them with its himation design and arm movements. The general composition of the relief, consisting of three figures, is also quite different. These differences, which is considered a normal practice for this type, (Zanker, 1993, p. 226) must be a result of the characteristics of the period and being a local production. The typology of a woman in the customary dress and coiffure of Demeter (priestess) with a torch must have been chosen to portray the woman a dignified appearance (Ashmole, 1951, p. 13 ff. pl. I-IV; Karlsson, 2014, p. 290).

Although the figure on the right section of the relief is mostly missing and worn, the anatomical structure suggests that it is a male (Fig. 9). The scepter in his hand firstly brings to mind the Zeus, Dionysus (Bacchus) and Hades depictions of the Early Roman Imperial Period (Bülbül, 2019, kat. no 5, 6; Lo Monaco, 2021, p. 162, fig. 10). However, the rough boots folded over the shinbone, traditionally worn by Dionysus (Athanasopoulou – Palaiokrassa et al., 2018, p. 232, fig. 30) and his followers as well as the peasants in the countryside, are reminiscent of Thracian boots. In addition to these footwears, the thyrsus-like scepter in his hand suggests that the figure is more likely an image of Dionysus (Athanasopoulou – Palaiokrassa et al., 2018, p. 233, fig. 30; Şahin, 2020, p. 1865, fig. 1, 10).<sup>10</sup> This is not unusual because Dionysus is seen as a god closely related to Demeter and Kore in agricultural productivity and harvest. In Athens, a festival (Haloa) was celebrated that included secret rituals of all three (Sina, 2004, p. 47). Through “his mother Persephone”, Dionysus Zagreus was associated with the underworld in occult religions (Howatson, 2015, p. 256; Alkış-Yazıcı and Üreten, 2020, p. 471). It is thought that ceremonies may have been held for Dionysus as well as Demeter in the sanctuary of Demeter in Kaunos (Bulba, 2019, pp. 68, 73). There are also suggestions that Dionysus had a common cult with Demeter in Ephesus (Alkış-Yazıcı and Üreten, 2020, p. 482).

As the reflections of cultic developments in the art of sculpture, examples of reliefs depicting Dionysus with Demeter date back to the Classical Period. Among these, the scene on the east frieze of the Parthenon Temple comes to mind first. Here, the figures of Dionysus and Demeter are so close to each other that their knees are almost interlocked as if indicating the closeness of their cults (Mark, 1984, p. 291, pl. 61b). Another example where the god and goddess are depicted together is the Mondragone relief found in North Campania. The Mondragone relief of the Late Classical Period, which is thought to be dedicated to a local sanctuary in northern Campania, shows Demeter with a torch in her hand and Dionysus with Thracian boots

<sup>9</sup> According to Karlsson this number is 16: Karlsson, 2014, p. 284. It is also possible that the number of examples of the type will increase as new stelae are found over time.

<sup>10</sup> Dionysus can also be seen with a spear in his hand on votive stelae of western Anatolia: Şahin, 2000, pp. 94, 240-241, LD 1.

on his feet in a crowded scene (Leventi, 2007, p. 107 ff. fig. 1). The fact that Dionysus took a place next to the goddesses of fertility must be related to the fact that he was also respected as the god of agriculture and farmers (Howatson, 2015, p. 348). As a matter of fact, Dionysus was identified with Pater Liber, the god of the countryside in the Roman pantheon, and was worshipped together with Ceres and Proserpina (Persephone) in the temple on the Aventinus Hill (Dürüşken, 2000, p. 107).<sup>11</sup>

It is also possible to explain this situation in relation to the political history of Blaundos, local cults and archaeological finds. Blaundos was politically connected to Pergamon and Ephesus; and administratively and judicially to Sardis (Filges, 2006a, pp. 14, 21; Can, 2017, p. 77) which are the cities where the Dionysus cult existed (von Prott, 1902, pp. 161-164; Üreten, 2004, pp. 202-203; Öztürk, 2010, pp. 83 ff. 122; Michels, 2011, pp. 114-130). During the 2018 excavations at Blaundos, a marble block with an inscription honoring a Dionysian Kathegemon (leader) priest named Tiberius Claudius Lucius, who made significant contributions to the construction of the city, was unearthed (Kileci and Can, 2020, pp. 297-309, fig. 2). The inscription also mentions that a statue was erected for the same person. Besides the epigraphic evidence, a thyrsus fragment (Fig. 10) found during the 2022 excavations in the Sanctuary of Demeter is another sign for the existence of a Dionysian cult in the city. Other material showing the cult of Dionysus in Blaundos are the coins. The coins minted by the city indicate that Dionysus was respected both in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. Some of these coins depict Dionysos on one side and thyrsos on the other (Filges, 2006a, pp. 286, 296, abb. 255 (d), kat. no 30; Tatar, 2024, p. 200, fig. 9-10).

Just as the cult of Dionysus Kathegemon (Üreten, 2004, pp. 202-205) is associated with Blaundos being under the rule of Pergamon (Filges, 2006a, p. 21, 321; Can, 2017, p. 77) the Demeter priestess type on the relief may be a reflection of the cult of Demeter Karpophoros seen in Ephesus, Pergamon and Sardis.<sup>12</sup> This argument and the iconography of the male on the relief, especially the boots on his feet, suggest that the figure must be a representation of Dionysus. Seeing Dionysus in a Demeter-themed relief, as here, is in accordance with cult practices. It is known that Demeter and Dionysus may have been worshipped together in Ionia and Caria and that only one priestess served both (Bulba, 2019, pp. 68, 73). Therefore, these data based on archaeological findings and cultic practices bring to mind the idea that a similar worship may be valid for Blaundos.

### Grave Stele or Votive Relief?

Although these figure types are seen on grave stelae, iconographic combination of them is not a common practice in Western Anatolian grave stelae; there is no relief with exactly the same iconography where the figures of Philista, Priestess of Demeter and Dionysus are seen together. The typology of the relief block and the suggestions made in previous studies (Linfert, 1976, pp. 152-153; Yaylalı, 1979, pp. 36, 38, 40) regarding the figure types raise an important question as to the intended use of the relief. "Is it a grave stele or a votive relief?" The fact that the inscription gives no clue about this issue makes the solution of the problem difficult.

At first sight, it seems confusing that the block has both votive relief and grave stele characteristics. Figure types are common on grave stelae of the Late Hellenistic Period and votive reliefs of the Roman Imperial Period. Linfert's claim that Philista type was applied "only on grave stelae" (Linfert, 1976, pp. 152-153, fig. 380) must be regarded as a view in the context of the Hellenistic Period, when the type was used extensively. This is because the traditional methods of typological analysis of Hellenistic sculpture are not fit for the solution of problems in Roman typology and iconography, (Linfert, 1976, pp. 152-153, fig. 38) as seen in this local example of Blaundos. Although general principles can be put forward in sculpture, they should be evaluated within a periodic and regional framework. For example, the Philista type was also used on some early votive reliefs in Athens (Gaifman, 2008, pp. 94-95, fig. 3). The figure on the Blaundos relief is a local example of this exception and has some differences in clothing design. While in the original sculpture of the Philista type in Oxford the body weight is on the right leg, in the figure on the Blaundos relief the weight is on the left leg like the figure seen on the relief in Manisa Museum (Sonkaya, 2018, p. 42, fig. 6) As can be

<sup>11</sup> For the relationship between Dionysian festivities and Thesmophoria festivities, see also Sina, 2004, pp. 43-44.

<sup>12</sup> For Lydian practices of the cult, see Herrmann, 1998, pp. 495-508, Fig. 1-4; de Hoz, 2016, p. 185 ff; for Pergamon see Wallensten, 2014, p. 197. For Ephesos where the cult had an important place in prytaneion: See Alkış-Yazıcı and Üreten, 2020, pp. 470-474.

expected from a local work, the himation and chiton are quite simple, except for the himation scroll, which is only visible under the left arm.

A situation similar to Linfert's limitation regarding the usage area of the Philista type and local changes in the type can also be observed in the Priestess of Demeter type. While Yaylali states that the priestess figure of this type is peculiar to Izmir in the Hellenistic Period (Yaylali, 1979, p. 42) Zanker does not make such a distinction (Zanker, 1993, pp. 219, 226). This figure is also present on the Blaundos relief with some changes in the himation design. On the other hand, the depiction of a male figure holding a thyrsus (scepter or spear) on the relief is not common in Western Anatolian grave stelae. Moreover, there is no other example of a grave stele in Western Anatolia where these three types are seen together. These features and the ones mentioned above are strong indicators that the Blaundos relief is a votive relief. The presence of two other main figures together with the priestess of Demeter on the Blaundos relief and the position of the priestess on the side of the composition give the relief the characteristic of a votive relief. This is because the priestess figure is depicted either alone or as one of the two figures on grave stelae. Except for small-sized servants, no examples of a Demeter priestess between two other figures have been found in Western Anatolia (Pfuhl and Möbius, 1977, *passim*) The fact that the relief fragments were found in an area close to the Temple of Demeter (Ceres) also supports this idea.

### Style and Dating

The Blaundos relief lacks the high relief structure, rosettes and wreaths, which are prominent features of Izmir and Lydian grave stelae and votive reliefs of the Late Hellenistic Period. It also differs from the high quality grave stelae of these regions in terms of workmanship; it is a low-relief work produced by local means. The dress of the woman in the center is simple and the folds is quite limited in quantity. The large-surfaced, heavy-looking folds falling from the left hip to between the feet are noteworthy. Evenly spaced, unbroken and nonplastic, these folds reflect a linear and schematically designed appearance. Since the relief is worn and some parts are missing, it is difficult to know its original setting and purpose, and special plastic features. Almost all of the free statues of Philista type produced between the early 1st century BC and the middle of the 1st century AD are from western Anatolia (Linfert, 1976, pp. 149, 152-153). Depictions of goddesses reflecting the Philista type, with approximately the same posture as the figure in the centre of the Blaundos relief, are seen in the practices of the region. A relief from Philadelphia dating to the Roman Imperial Period depicts a female figure (Malay, 1994, p. 140, taf. 76, fig. 199) in approximately the same posture and fold style as the one on the Blaundos relief. It is thought that this probably represents a goddess. The schematic structure of evenly spaced folds is typical of the region in the 1st century AD. Reflecting local craftsmanship, stocky-looking relief figures with a relatively large head have been dated to the 1st century AD by Pfuhl and Möbius (Pfuhl and Möbius, 1977, pp. 223-224, 269, nr. 589, 1085). This style differs from the rigid style seen on the Ephesian schematized works of the 2nd and especially the 3rd century AD (Pfuhl and Möbius, 1977, p. 203, 220, nr. 760, 845) where proportion is completely eliminated. Because Blaundos relief with localised craftsmanship has a softer and more plastic appearance compared to the Ephesian examples. It is also possible to see similar, plastic and local workmanship on a grave stele from Blaundos dating back to the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD (Filges, 2006a, p. 282, abb. 252). Stylistic analogues of the figures on the Blaundos relief can be found in closer regions.

The appearance of the priestess of Demeter with round face, fat cheeks, broad shoulders and stocky body build is a characteristic of eastern Lydian sculpture in the 1st century AD. A votive statue of Nike from Silandos in eastern Lydia, dated 83-84 AD and thought to be locally produced (Malay, 1994, p. 48, fig. 24. Dinç, 2015, pp. 31-32), is a good example of this style in free sculpture.<sup>13</sup> The heavy draped folds spread on the ground are also a practice seen on the sculpture of the region in the second half of the 1st century AD (Hanfmann and Ramage, 1978, p. 90, fig. 175).

Both female figures on the relief are characteristic of the 1st century AD, indicating that the relief was produced during a period when the city was socially and culturally active. The iconography on the relief

<sup>13</sup> In 2019, a medallion with the image of Faustina II found on the wall of a Byzantine building on the main street in Blaundos was recognised as an indicator of the relationship between Blaundos and Silandos: Tatar, 2023, p. 193.



coincides with the Temple of Demeter (Can, 2017, pp. 76-80) which is thought to have been built in the same period, and other cults of the period (Herrmann, 1998, pp. 495-508, fig. 1-4; de Hoz, 2016, p. 195; Kileci and Can, 2020, pp. 297-309).

### Conclusion

Although systematic excavations at Blaundos have only been underway for five years, the work continues to reveal a rich repertoire of finds illuminating the archaeological landscape of the city. The numerous sculptural works unearthed during the excavations around the temple, have drawn attention to the artistic and aesthetic sense of the city's inhabitants and to local cults. The marble relief analyzed in this article is quite interesting among the sculptural works found at Blaundos, despite its local level of craftsmanship. Because while the iconography offers new contributions to our knowledge of local sculptural activities and regional cults in Eastern Lydia, typology and figurative combination provides us with information not previously obtained in the region.

The data and considerations mentioned above suggest that the Blaundos relief, with local craftsmanship, may have been produced within the framework of a specific programme including local version of standard types. In this context, the presence of a Demeter priestess type on a grave stele should be seen as an ordinary practice for a city with a Temple of Demeter (Ceres) in its center. The workmanship on the relief suggests that it may have been carved by a local craftsman, and the typology indicates that the workshop must have been familiar with the grave stelae of İzmir region.

Found at the westernmost tip of Lydia, the Blaundos relief, reveals the Lydian characteristics of the city in terms of figure typology. Both the priestess of Demeter and the Pudicitia Philista type are frequently seen in Western Anatolia, especially in the İzmir region. But it is quite interesting to encounter the figure of torch-holding priestess of Demeter, unique to İzmir, for the first time in Lydia, especially at the easternmost end of the region. This can be also considered as a new contribution of Blaundos to our knowledge repository on Lydian sculpture. In conclusion, the Blaundos relief, which is a reflection of the Demeter and Dionysus cults in the city, reveals that local workshops outside the mainstream were able to bend the rules of the central workshops they followed. In other words, the types and styles of the central workshops were blended or modified in many ways in the local production centres. The Blaundos relief is a convincing example of this practice. Although it is not yet possible to say that Blaundos was the production center of the relief, the level of workmanship and similar stylistic examples point to a possible workshop operating in the vicinity.

As we know, myths and archaeological findings offer various insights into the relationship between the cults of Demeter and Dionysus. Some evaluations have also been made on this subject for Western Anatolia. When it comes to Blaundos, we can say that information about these two characters and their cults was previously obtained through separate findings. For the first time in the region, we have come across a relief depicting these two deities together. This raises a new question "Could Demeter and Dionysus have been worshipped together at Blaundos?".

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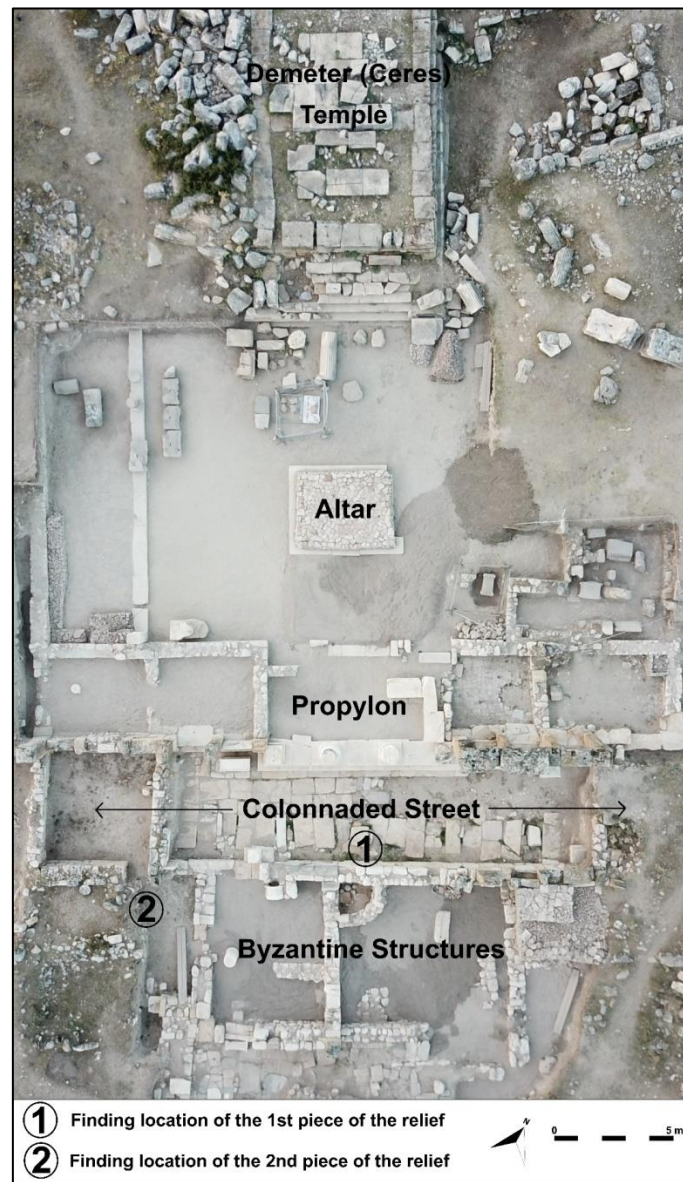
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## Figures



*Fig. 1: Finding positions of the pieces of the relief*



*Fig. 2: Finding locations of the pieces of the relief*





*Fig. 3: Single-line inscription on the lower molding of the relief*



*Fig. 4: Frontside of the relief*

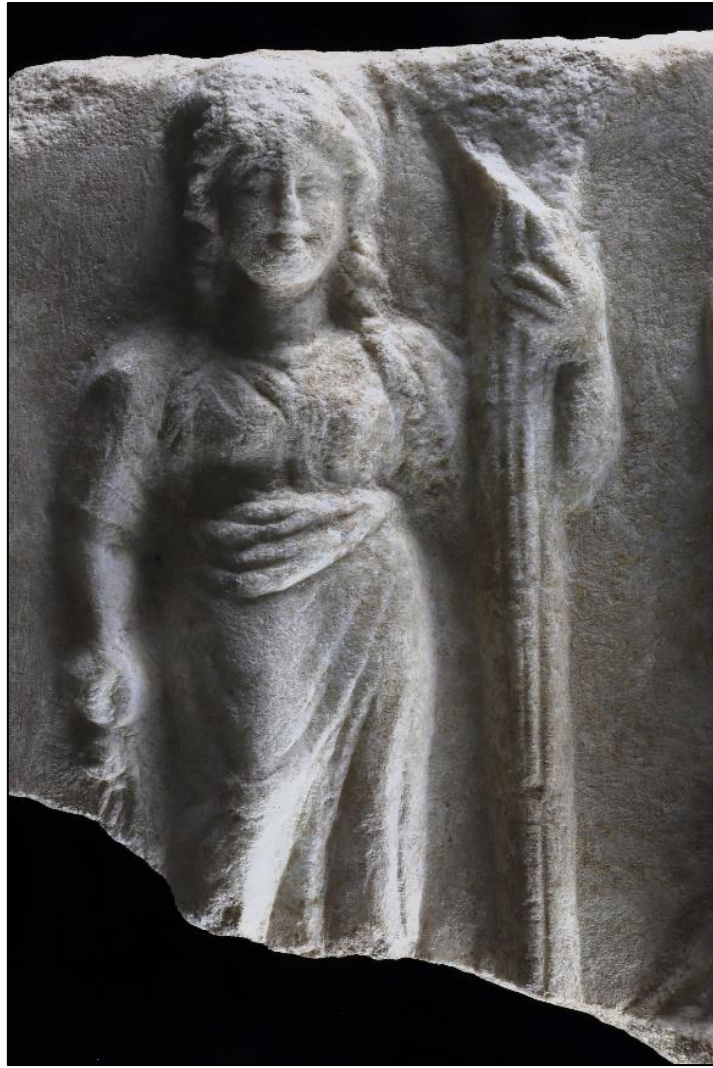




*Fig. 5: Backside of the relief*



*Fig. 6: The female figure in the middle of the relief*



*Fig. 7: The female figure on the left of the relief*



*Fig. 8: Blaundos Demeter (Ceres) Sanctuary (view from southeast)*





*Fig. 9: The male figure on the right of the relief*



*Fig. 10: Marble thyrsos found in the Sanctuary of Demeter (Ceres)*