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Ancient Quarries in the Vicinity of Başara and a Local Roman Grave Stele Workshop

AHMET OĞUZ ALP*

Abstract

In course of the excavations and surveys carried out in recent years at the village of Başara in Eskişehir province, ancient quarries exploited in the Roman Imperial period have been discovered. Four sites with open-air quarries have been observed where extraction traces can still be seen on metamorphic rock in the vicinity of the ancient settlement. Grey-colored marble was used in the construction of two Byzantine churches unearthed at the excavations and for the grave steles found by us. That the votive stele, discovered at the excavations and providing the name for the settlement *Atyie / Atyia*, had been dedicated by stonecutters (*Λαυνοί*) provides epigraphic support for the existence of the surrounding quarries. The excavations carried out in Han, not far from Başara (c. 4.5 km), and the surveys conducted in the region present reliable evidence that in the second-third centuries AD the main production of the workshop or workshops utilizing marble extracted from the quarries was doorstone grave steles.

Keywords: Phrygia, Başara, ancient quarries, doorstone funerary stele, heroon-facade grave monuments

Öz

Eskişehir, Başara köyünde, geçmiş yıllarda gerçekleştirilen kazılarla eş zamanlı olarak yapılan yüzey araştırmalarında, yakın çevrede Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi'nde işletildiği anlaşılan Antik Çağ taş ocakları keşfedilmiştir. Antik yerleşimin güneyindeki kayalık yamaçlarda, ana kaya yüzeyinde taş çıkartma izleri açıkça gözlemlenen dört ocak sahası tespit edilmiştir. Köyde, daha önce farklı araştırmacılar tarafından kaydedilenler dahil olmak üzere, kazılarda açığa çıkartılan Bizans Dönemi kiliselerinde spoliyen olarak kullanılan mezar stellerinin tümü yakın çevredeki taş ocaklarından çıkartılan gri renkli mermerden yapılmıştır. Kazılarda ele geçen ve yerleşim adı veren (*Atyie / Atyia*) Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi'ne ait bir adak stelinin taşcılar (*Λαυνοί*) tarafından adanmış olması, yakın çevredeki mermer ocaklarının varlığını epigrafik olarak desteklemektedir. Ayrıca Başara'dan çok uzak olmayan (yak. 4,5 km) Han ilçesindeki Roma-Bizans nekropolü yakın çevresi ve yerleşim içinde dağınık olarak bulunan mezar stelleri, MS 2.-3. yüzyıllarda Başara yakınlarındaki taş ocaklarından çıkartılan mermeri işleyen atölye veya atölyelerin başlıca üretimlerinin kapı tipi mezar stelleri olduğu ve bunların yakın çevredeki diğer yerleşimlere dağıldığını gösteren güvenilir kanıtlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Phrygia, Başara, antik taş ocakları, kapı tipi mezar steli, heroon cephe mezar anıtları

A version of this paper entitled "A Local Roman Quarry and Grave Stele Workshop in Phrygia (Turkey)" was presented as an oral presentation at the XI. International ASMOSIA (Association for the Study of Marble & Other Stones in Antiquity) Conference held in Split, Croatia, between May 18-22, 2015.

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Introduction

The existence of an ancient settlement near the village of Başara (Başaran / Başören), located 4.3 km southeast of the Han district of Eskişehir province, was first suggested by W. M. Ramsay in the late 19th century. Initially Ramsay associated the toponym *Κακκαβόκομη* (Kakkabokome), mentioned on a Roman inscription he found in Han, with Başara. But later he changed his mind in favor of Han, where the inscription was originally recorded.¹ Although the Roman-Byzantine grave steles and architectural blocks related to them, recorded by W.M. Calder in Başara in 1925, proved the existence of an ancient settlement in the immediate vicinity, however, its location remained uncertain until recently.² Some architectural remains were unearthed in 2005 during the construction of a water reservoir and canals to provide water to the village. The directorate of the Eskişehir Archaeology Museum decided to conduct research to understand the remains, so rescue excavations were carried out under the museum and the scientific direction of this author between 2006 and 2009.³ Excavations conducted on the northern and southern slopes of a shallow valley formed by a gully 300 m west of the modern settlement unearthed Early and Middle Byzantine churches near each other and some chamber tombs to the southwest, thus forming a necropolis.

The Quarries

Parallel to the excavations carried out on the site, ancient quarries were discovered during the surveys conducted in the immediate vicinity. Three of these were close to one another on the rocky slopes of Yörükyurdu Tepe (1283 m) 300 meters south of the settlement. Another one was found on the northern slope of Habalı Tepe 2.5 km away (fig. 1).

At the first quarry, the smooth surface of the bedrock of the extracted stone blocks, deep canals, and traces of the stonecutters' tools can be clearly seen. (fig. 2). Also, crosses and circles, carved possibly by a Christian stonecutter, were observed at the first quarry area. At the second quarry site, located on the north bank of the now dry Çırpılı rivulet and 250 m east of the former, the traces of quarrying are much clearer. Preserved are the edges of the impression of an extracted block measuring approximately 2.00 x 1.00 m on the rock outcrop and the traces of the short and long crowbars used to extract the block (fig. 3). Here also deep circular bore holes to the left of the bedrock can be seen. These must be related to previous quarrying activities. The third quarry site is shaped like a large rock outcrop. The smooth surface of the bedrock of the extracted stone blocks measures of 4.00 x 2.00 m (fig. 4).

The last quarry site located on the slopes of the Habalı Tepe (1394 m) is reached by a 2.5 km-long pathway. The clear abrasion traces on the path, which may have been caused by the long-term use of ox carts or carriages, suggest that the path may have been used in ancient times (fig. 5). The quarry site has a stepped form on the slopes close to the top of the hill, and the rock formation has horizontal and vertical fractures (fig. 6). Although no clear traces can be seen on the rock surface related to extraction, rough blocks scattered around the site and two Roman grave steles were found here (fig. 7). The rock formation around the ancient settlement is made up of gray, white-veined, non-porous or slightly porous, and partly fractured metamorphic marble.

¹ Ramsay 1887, 500-1; 1890, 233.

² Calder 1928, 207-11, nos. 398-403.

³ Alp and Çağlar 2009, 193-97.

Contrary to expectations, the excavations carried out within the settlement instead of the quarry sites provided the most important evidence for when the quarries were in use. A votive stele, made of the local gray marble and found in the “South Church,” bears a dedication inscription to *Zeus Bronton* by the stonecutters of *Ατυηνοί* (Atyie / Atyia). This is important evidence, since it gives the name of the ancient settlement and also that the quarries near the settlement were in use in the Roman Imperial period (fig. 8).⁴

Λατύποι Ατυηνοί
Δί βροντῶντ[ι]
εὐ[χρήν]

Trans: The stonecutters of *Atyie / Atyia* (dedicated this) to *Zeus Bronton*

Another votive stele with the very similar toponym, devoted to the Mother Goddess (Cybele), was found in the village of Çaykoz near Pessinus. The name of the settlement (Ἀτυη) is the same as in the Başara inscription, except for the letter iota.⁵ The evidence and possibilities offered by the inscriptions for the localization of the settlement will not be discussed here in detail, since it is beyond the scope and purpose of this article.

Grave Stele Workshop

At this point, the first question that comes to mind regarding the inscription is what kind of production the stonecutters were making. Further evidence came not from the quarries but from the excavations we carried out by chance. On two rectangular blocks used as a spolia in the Early Byzantine period in the walls of the “South Church,” panels of doorstone which were started but were never finished can be seen (fig. 9). These blocks, processed from the marble extracted in the quarries nearby, indicate that grave steles constituted an important part of the quarry products. In addition to these unfinished blocks, more than 10 doorstones made of the local gray marble in the “North” and “South” churches, scattered throughout the village, and many architectural blocks related to the grave structures have also been found.

Another center where the production of this grave stele workshop can be followed is 4.5 km north of the village at our other excavation site in Han. Over 20 grave steles were found in the immediate vicinity of the Roman-Byzantine necropolis located southwest of the district center, where more than 150 tombs were uncovered. Some were reerected in the necropolis (fig. 10). As in the other excavation areas in Han, the rock formation of the necropolis and its immediate vicinity is wholly volcanic tuff. This suggests that the gray marble grave steles must have been brought from somewhere nearby. The doorstones found in the Han Necropolis are very similar to the samples in Başara in terms of their type, dimensions, and execution. The four-panel door steles ending with a triangular pediment reflect a scheme that can be considered a standard for the entire Phrygia region.

The high finial with the bull and lion reliefs symbolize the soul of the deceased and protective posture. These along with the figures of the tomb owners depicted standing on a

⁴ The stele is broken in two pieces (height: 0.73 m, width: 0.35 m, thickness: 0.11 m, height of letters: 2 cm). The sides of the pediment and the bottom right are broken. At front is found a bust of Zeus with beard and right hand across his chest in high relief. In the triangular pediment is an eagle with open wings.

⁵ Strubbe 2005, 188-89, no. 171. He stated that Ἀτυηνοί seems more likely to be an ethnic.

protruding horizontal plane can be considered as the distinctive characteristics of the Başara grave stele workshops.

In this regard, among the grave steles in the Han necropolis, the one with a relief of a cart pulled by a couple of oxen carrying a cubical load is remarkable (fig. 11). Since there is no inscription on the stele, the only clue to the occupation of the tomb owner is this relief. The inscription $\lambda\epsilon\kappa\tau\epsilon\kappa\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$, the Greek form of the Latin *lecticarius*, on a Roman grave stele exhibited in the Afyonkarahisar Archaeological Museum (inv. no. 1552/29), which depicts marble blocks on a cart pulled by a couple of oxen on its lower panel, indicates that the tomb owner engaged in stone transportation.⁶ If the load depicted in the Han examples is a stone block, the stele should belong to a person engaged in the transportation or trade of the material extracted in the Başara quarries.

Types of Doorstone Funerary Steles and Heroon Facade Grave Monuments

More than 30 grave steles have been found in Başara and Han, which can be considered a sufficient number for a proposal of typology. Considering the numbers of forms and panels, there are three main types (fig. 12). The first type, consisting of longitudinal rectangular single-panel steles with a triangular pediment, are the most common, and similar steles can be found all across the Phrygia region. These are flat at the bottom and top, and protruding at the upper part, thus creating an image of a high bomos. Some of these steles end with lion-bull reliefs on high finials, which give them a monumental appearance. The second type includes doorstones with two or more latitudinally rectangular panels. Some examples have inscriptions on the profiled upper border and reliefs of the tomb owner/s. Basically, the third type is a combination of the first two types. This type, which can be called as grave monument, consists of two protruding steles on the sides and middle slab with door-type panels between them. In this combination, the blocks on the sides are defined as bomos-shaped by M. Waelkens and called “Pilastersteine” by Th. Drew-Bear and T. Lochmann. Across the Phrygia region today, none of the monumental tombs defined as “Type K” by M. Waelkens⁷ and as “Kleinen Heroa” or “Heroon Fassade” called by Th. Drew-Bear and T. Lochmann have survived *in situ*.⁸

In 1925 W. M. Calder observed steles used in heroon-type monumental tombs in two areas – one 300 m east of Başara and the other at the beginning of the road connecting the village to Han. Very close to them were terrace-formed substructures on which the steles stood.⁹ Although no traces can be seen at the first area today, the missing parts of the steles found scattered in the second area west of the village were detected by Th. Drew-Bear and T. Lochmann. A reconstruction drawing was made for the inscriptions and monumental tomb.¹⁰ Accordingly, the monumental tomb consists of bomos-shaped, thicker and protruding steles with reliefs of a reclining bull and lion group on the finial. Three panels with the relief of the tomb owners are on the middle panel (fig. 13). Our excavations in the area originally observed by W.M. Calder are very close to the stele pieces which he considered to be a platform on which the steles stood. The excavations indicated that a wall about 11 m in length and

⁶ Buckler et al. 1933, 10, no. 32; Waelkens 1977, 288; 1986, 196, no. 486, table 75.

⁷ Waelkens 1986, 9, table 107.

⁸ Drew-Bear and Lochmann 1996, 117; Kelp 2008, 76-77, fig. 3; 2015, 72, table 19.1.

⁹ Calder 1928, 208-9, nos. 399-401.

¹⁰ Drew-Bear and Lochmann 1996, 115, 125-26, fig. 5.

consisting of five large blocks ran in a straight line from east to west. This should be considered as a platform on which the grave steles were placed, thus confirming the opinions of previous researchers (fig. 14). However, no grave related to the steles could be found in the excavations in the area.

During the excavations of the “South Church,” two doorstone grave steles were found. These were used as spolia when the church was rebuilt in the Middle Byzantine period (10th or 11th centuries) (fig. 15). While the first stele comprised three door-type panels and had the tomb owners on their reliefs at its center, the second stele has two panels.¹¹ The steles lateral, nearly square rectangular forms of relatively narrow thicknesses and without any inscription, suggest that they were not originally independent. But as Th. Drew-Bear and T. Lochmann indicated, they were middle slab completed by bomos-shaped steles at the sides (fig. 16).

Heroon facade grave monuments were not limited by the Başara examples. Similar steles exist – one in the quarry site near the settlement and the other in the Han Necropolis. The intact grave stele found in the former on the slope of the Habalı Tepe provides more reliable clues regarding heroon facade monumental tombs (fig. 7 left). The monolith stele, made of gray marble extracted in this quarry, consists of a slightly higher *bomos* at the sides and a middle slab with two door-type panels. On the steles at the Han necropolis, clamp sockets on the sides and top of some grave steles indicate that they were also used in heroon facade monumental tombs consisting of three or four blocks, the same as those in Başara (fig. 17). It seems that some steles with a finial with bull-lion relief were clearly more prestigious and costly with their high relief figures. Some of uninscribed and *bomos* shaped steles, would then be expected to form the sides of a three-partite stele group where the inscription would have been on the middle slab.

Conclusion

The epigraphical and archaeological research carried out in Phrygia so far has clearly revealed that there was an unprecedented increase in the production of grave and votive steles in the second and third centuries AD. Meeting this demand required that operational local quarries, some of which were already available or newly opened, along with many workshops to process these materials existed. In fact, some of the local quarries and workshops discovered in the Upper Tembris Valley of Phrygia not only meet the needs of their immediate surroundings, but also produced for distant regions such as Rome on special order.¹²

The examples from Başara are remarkable among the local grave stele workshops from the Roman Imperial period which can be found across the Phrygia region. For it is one of the few centers where the stone sources, stele types, and the distribution of products in the immediate vicinity can be tracked. In conclusion, the doorstone funerary steles were the primary products of the stonecutters from Atyie / Atyia. The stonecutters processed the marble extracted in the quarries in the second and third centuries AD and left reliable archaeological and epigraphic evidence which suggest that the workshop can be distinguished from the heroon facade grave monuments. This shows that they can be regarded as more monumental than the others.

¹¹ The dimensions of the steles are respectively: Stele 1: height 0.71 m, width 1.39 m, thickness 0.30 m; Stele 2: height 1.36 m, width 1.34 m, thickness 0.37 m.

¹² Waelkens 1985.

Finally, it should be noted that the large number of architectural and liturgical elements made of gray marble in the Early Byzantine period recorded in Başara and Han by us show that the quarries in the vicinity of Başara continued to be intensively exploited after the Roman Imperial period.

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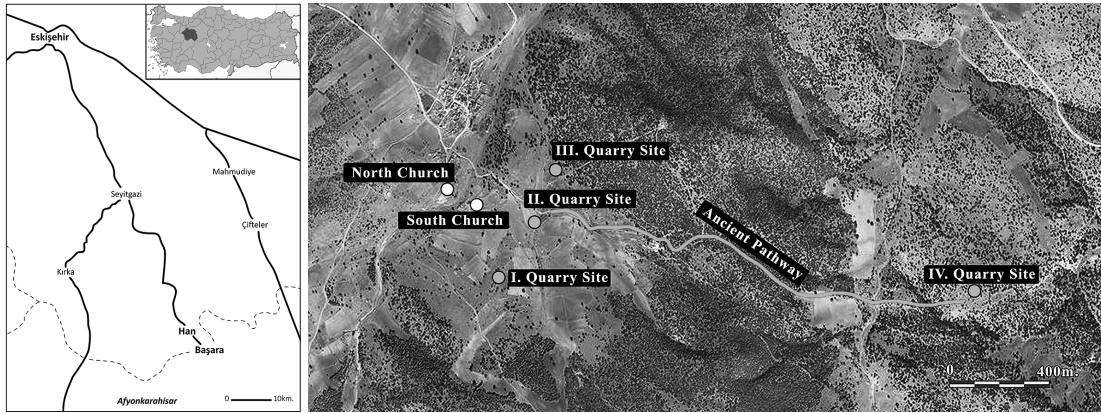


FIG. 1 Locations of quarry sites near Başara (Drawing: G. Işık).

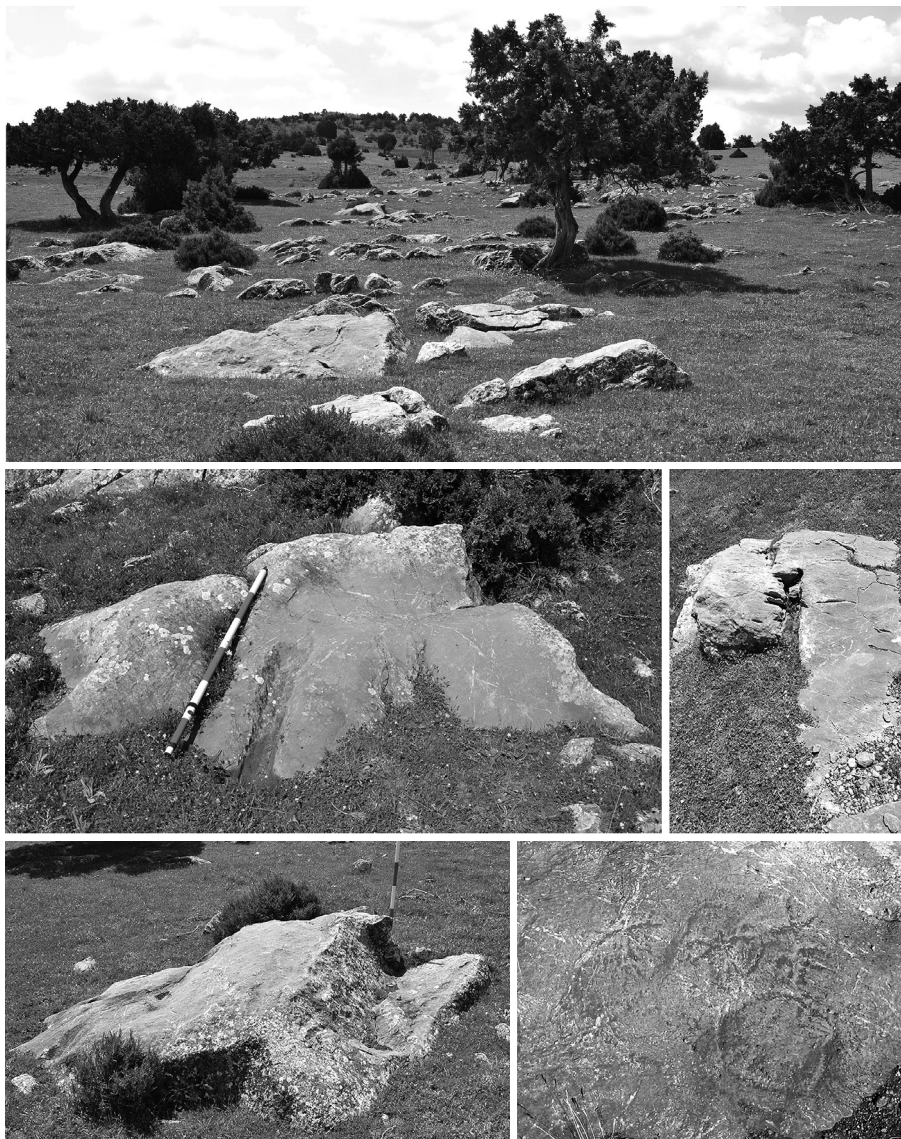


FIG. 2 First quarry site, general view and exploitation traces on bedrock (Photo: A.O. Alp).

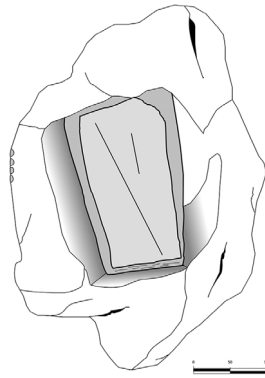
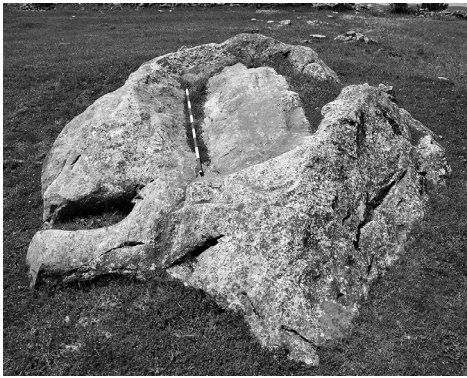


FIG. 3 Second quarry site (Photo: A.O. Alp, Drawing: G. Işık).

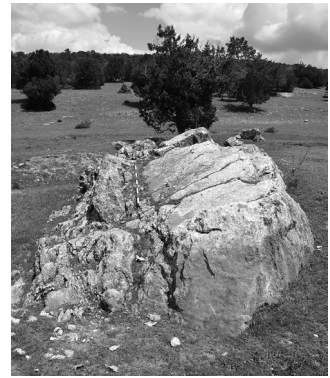


FIG. 4 Third quarry site (Photo: A.O. Alp).



FIG. 5 Ancient pathway to lead fourth quarry site (Photo: A.O. Alp).



FIG. 6 Fourth quarry site at northern slope of Habalı Tepe (Photo: A.O. Alp).



FIG. 7
Grave steles near
fourth quarry site
(Photo: A.O. Alp).

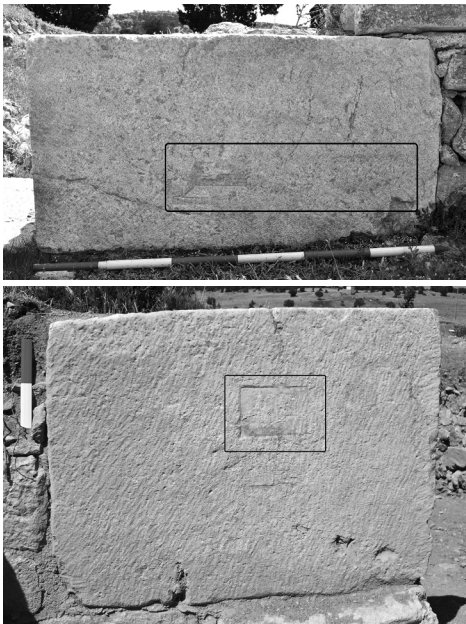


FIG. 9
Unfinished “doorstone”
grave steles reused in
“South Church” walls
(Photo: A.O. Alp).



FIG. 8 Votive stele
dedicated by stonecutters
(Photo: A.O. Alp).



FIG. 10
Reerected
Roman grave
steles in Han
necropolis
(Photo:
A.O. Alp).



FIG. 11 Grave stele with oxen cart relief in Han necropolis (Photo: A.O. Alp).

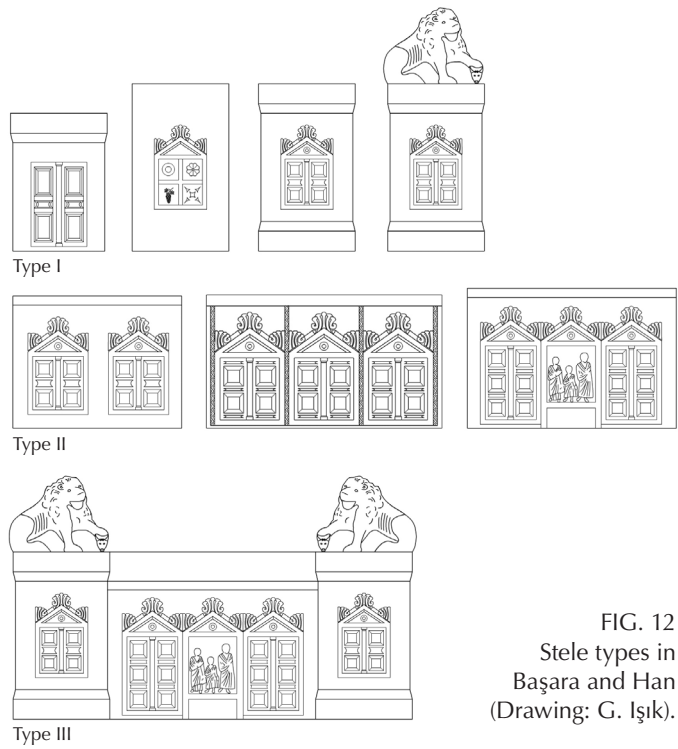


FIG. 12 Stele types in Başara and Han (Drawing: G. Işık).

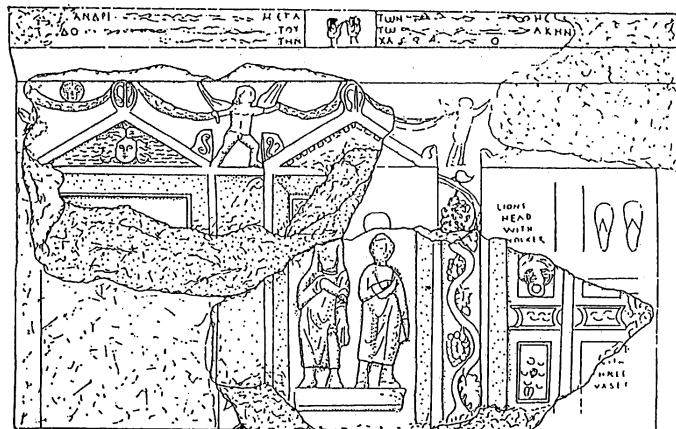
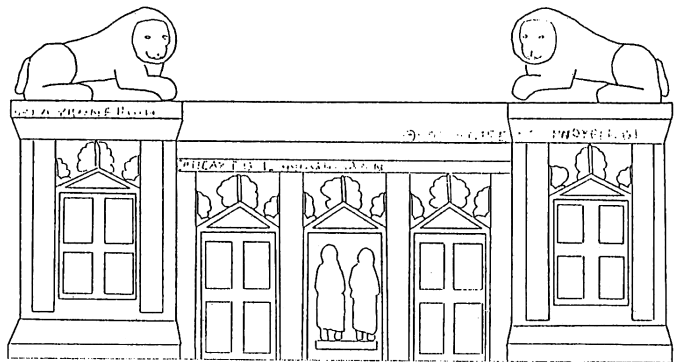


FIG. 13 Reconstructions of Heroon facade grave monument in Başara (bottom, Calder 1928, no. 399a; top, Drew-Bear and Lochmann 1996, figs. 4-5).



FIG. 14 Podium of Heroon facade grave monuments in Başara (Photo: A.O. Alp).

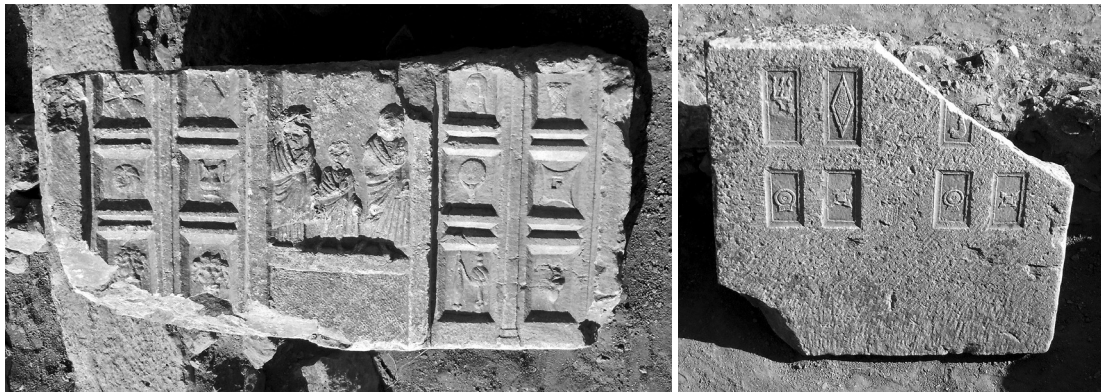


FIG. 15 Middle slabs of Heroon facade grave monument uncovered in "South Church" (Photo: A.O. Alp).

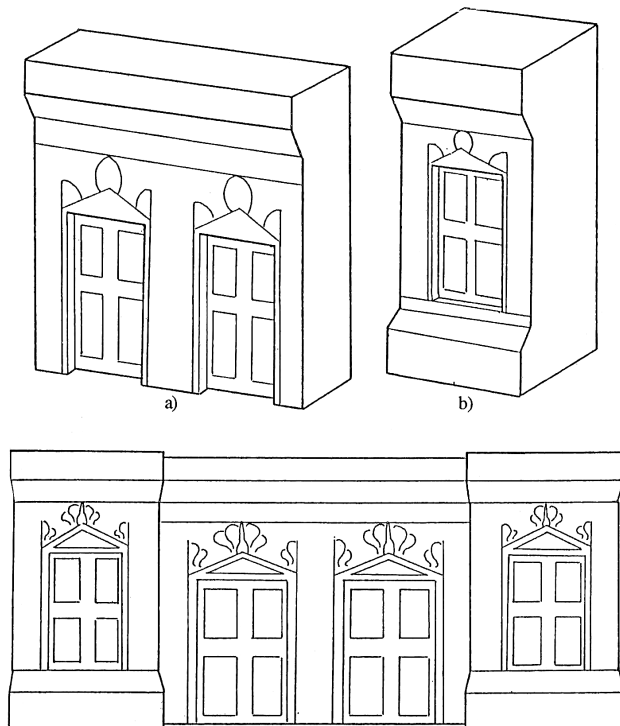


FIG. 16 Main components of Heroon facade grave monument (Drew-Bear and Lochmann 1996, figs. 2-3).



FIG. 17 Doorstone grave steles in Han necropolis (Photo: A.O. Alp).

