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### A REVIEW ON MOTHER GODDESS PARADOX IN LYDIAN SYNCRETISM

#### *Lidya Senkretizminde Ana Tanrıça Paradoksu Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme*

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#### ABSTRACT

The cultural mosaic of the Lydian civilization manifests itself most intensely in its religious structure. Many gods and goddesses attract attention in Lydian syncretism. While goddesses stand out with their different characteristics, the problem of the mother goddess has long been a subject of curiosity for today's researchers. This situation has the nature of a paradox as there is no consensus on this situation with different opinions. Lydian goddesses of Anatolian and Greek origin stood out with their different characteristics and spheres of influence. However, which one is the mother goddess remains a mystery. Artemis, Demeter, Kore, Kybele and Athena are the goddesses most frequently mentioned in ancient sources and most frequently depicted in visual finds. In this case, the Greek goddesses, who are numerous in number, and the famous Anatolian goddess Kybele, whose sphere of influence is quite wide and in a powerful position, face each other in the same pantheon. In this study, an evaluation was made by considering the influence areas of Lydian goddesses and their frequency of reflection in existing epigraphic and numismatic finds. In this evaluation of the mother goddess paradox in Lydian syncretism, ancient artifacts, Sardis inscriptions and coins were mainly examined.

#### ÖZ

Lidya uygarlığının kültürel mozaïği, en yoğun şekilde dini yapısında kendini göstermektedir. Lidya senkretizmi içinde oldukça fazla tanrı ve tanrıça dikkatleri çekmektedir. Tanrıçalar farklı özellikleri ile öne çıkarken ana tanrıça sorunu uzun zamandır günümüz araştırmacılarının merak konusu olmuştur. Farklı görüşlere sahip olan bu durum üzerine bir fikir birliği sağlanamadığından bir paradoks niteliği taşımaktadır. Anadolu ve Yunan kökenli olan Lidya tanrıçaları, farklı özellikleri ve etki alanları ile öne çıkmışlardır. Ancak hangisinin ana tanrıça olduğu konusu gizemini korumaktadır. Artemis, Demeter, Kore, Kybele ve Athena antik kaynaklarda en çok isimleri geçen ve görsel buluntularda en sıklıkla tasvir edilen tanrıçalardır. Bu durumda sayıca fazla olan Yunan tanrıçalarının varlığı ve etki alanı oldukça geniş olan ve güçlü konumdaki ünlü Anadolu tanrıçası Kybele aynı panteonda karşı karşıyadır. Bu çalışmada, Lidya tanrıçalarının etki alanları ve mevcut epigrafik ve numizmatik buluntulara yansıma sıklıkları ele alınarak değerlendirme yapılmıştır. Lidya senkretizmindeki ana tanrıça paradoksu üzerine yapılan bu değerlendirmede antik eserler, Sardis yazıtları ve sikkeleri ağırlıklı olarak incelenmiştir.

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## **1. Introduction**

The polytheistic religion of the Lydians, who are geographically located where eastern and western civilizations merge, has strong ties with both Anatolian and Greek traditions. In this context, in Lydian syncretism, some gods and goddesses are essentially Anatolian, while others are partly or entirely Greek (Hanfmann, 1983: 90-95). It is quite difficult to understand the cult activities of the Lydian rulers, as well. Parallels in Anatolia show that they represent the divine power on earth and likewise rule over their own dominions from the divine world. The dependence of ancient societies on agricultural success leads us to expect that cult activities also revolved around the abundance of nature. This is reflected, to a very limited extent, by some aspects of the goddesses attested in Lydia. For example, the goddess Malia was associated with water, wine and grain, or Kuvava and Kore were associated with vegetation. It is also thought that seasonal festivals dating back to the Hellenistic period existed to celebrate spring and harvest time in the honor of the goddesses (Payne, 2019: 236-237).

The oldest of the finds that shed light on Lydian religious rituals is a seal dating back to the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. The smallest one is a bilingual Lydian-Greek inscription on a column from Pergamon, dated to 330–325 BC. If we relate these dates to Lydian history, it extends well beyond the period of Persian domination that began with the fall of Sardis, from the beginning of the Mermnad dynasty under Gyges (before 640 BC) to just after the conquest of Alexander the Great, that is, to the beginning of the Hellenistic period. In fact, the majority of Lydian inscriptions belong to this period (Greenewalt, Cahill and Rautman, 1987: 30-49; Payne, 2019: 231-232). In the Lydian cult practice, which can be verified and illuminated by epigraphic and numismatic evidence, importance was given to drawing attention to the divine presence and offering sacrifices to ensure this, and this importance is reflected in archaeological findings. Most notable ones are a number of finds buried in pits, interpreted as items used for dinners. These include jugs, cups, plates, knives, and pots containing dismembered but probably uneaten puppy skeletons. They appear to have been common in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and served as protective measures for buildings in the region (Payne, 2019:7).

The male and female gods in the Lydian pantheon are multifaceted, and the spheres of influence of each are very important in Lydian syncretism. The flow of culture in this pantheon has led to the emergence of similarities and differences between god cults and rituals. In this way, as rulers of the Lydian religion, we can get to know the gods and goddesses better. Ultimately, they are cultural stones that are of great importance in illuminating the religions of Ancient Anatolia. However, understanding the nature of Lydian god and goddess cults is not easy and is still a matter of debate today. Although there is still no consensus on the identity of the Lydian mother goddess, the inscriptions and coins of Sardis provide important information on this subject. (Buttrey, Johnston, MacKenzie and Bates, 1981:7).

There are many sources that provide information about the ancient period. When the numismatic information, which is one of them, is evaluated together with the written sources, we can find the opportunity to reach important information about the period. In this respect, Lydian coins are considered among the most important finds illuminating the period. When Head's catalogue (Head, 1901) is examined, it is understood that Lydian coins reflect the internal and external politics of Lydia, with electrum before the time of King Croesus and gold and silver afterwards. In addition, the existence and importance of gods and goddesses in Lydian syncretism is reflected in the coins. The most comprehensive coin group belongs to the city of Sardis, and the density of coins in the "cistopphorus" style, which started with the Kingdom of Attalos, continued in the Hellenistic style with tetradrachms and drachmas. Roman imperial coins were used extensively from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD (xcviii-ci).

In Lydian syncretism, the goddesses of different origins came to the fore and each of them had different characteristics. While these goddesses carried the characteristics of the culture they came from, they could also be referred to by local names. These goddesses who ruled the Lydian religion appear in archaeological findings. Artemis, Demeter, Kore, Cybele and Athena, especially in numismatic and occasionally epigraphic finds, are known as Lydian well-known goddesses. However, the question is whether all of them has the same importance or some served as mother goddesses in Lydian religion.

The existence of such important goddesses in the Lydian religion makes us wonder which one stands out as the mother goddess. Researchers have different opinions on this subject. (Johnston 1981; Hanfmann, 1983; Gusmani 1971, Lindner 1994; Roller 1999; De Hoz, 2016; Gürcüm, 2019). These different views create a paradox regarding who the mother goddess of Lydia was.

## **2. Mother Goddesses On Lydian Epigraphic and Numismatic Findings**

On epigraphic and numismatic findings clearly refer five main goddess: Artemis, Demeter, Kore, Kybele, Athena. They are also mentioned by some ancient writers so there has always been a controversy regarding to their importance and power. In this context, the frequent use of them on coins and inscriptions of some votive objects should be examined in detail in order to evaluate their significance in the Lydian religion.

### **2.1. Artemis (Artemuk/ Artimus)**

Artemis (Ἀρτεμις), which takes its name from the places where it is worshiped, reflects significant differences in terms of the characteristics of the cults in Greece and Anatolia. Artemis, as 'Mother of the Gods', 'Great Mother' and 'Mother Goddess', is an indicator of universal female (matriarchal) qualities in prehistoric Anatolian societies. With these qualities, the goddess Artemis is also the Lydian deity best known both in inscriptions and in the archaeological records (Payne, 2019:240). This Anatolian Artemis is neither a Greek, nor a Indo-European goddess both in name and character. Artemis, called Artimus in Lydian language and Ertemi in Lycian language (Munn, 2006:123) favored the Troians during the war with the Greeks and represented as a supporter of Troy where her twin brother Apollo was considered as the goddess in chief (Gürcüm, 2019: 224).

Anatolian Artemis was the goddess of hunting and wild animals and also the protector of women and girls. Pausanias (4.31.7 & 8.13.1) wrote that Amazones of Anatolia were traditionally dedicated to Artemis Ephesia and that the priests of Artemis Hymnia in Arkadia live their whole lives in purity, not only sexual but in all respects, as the “entertainers” of Artemis Ephesia live in a similar fashion for a year (Gürcüm, 2019: 225).

The archaeological records show that the cult of Artemis spread in Lydia from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Classical writers mention important archaeological records before Herodotus. Herodotus (V. 102) states that around 500 BC, after the destruction of the temple of Cybele, a monumental altar in the form of a stepped pyramid was built in the Pactolus Valley on the south side of the city. Xenophon (1.6.7) claims it is the altar where Cyrus and Orontes swore their oath before 401 BC, according to Xenophon. This altar depicts Artemis next to Cybele and they are both standing and holding staffs in their hands. One is depicted as taller and with a deer in its arms, while the other is shorter and with a lion cub (Hanfmann and Nancy, 1987: 78-83; Cahill, 2010: 438, no.35). It indicates that the relationship between Cybele and Artemis was like mother and daughter (Munn, 2006: 167; Payne, 2019: 232-233). This is considered the oldest depiction of Artemis at Sardis and is also known as the joint Artemis-Kuvava/Cybele stele (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup> (Buttrey et al, 1981: 8; Evans 2017: 10, fig.10).



**Figure 1.** Artemis and Kuvava-Kybele joint stele

<sup>1</sup> Figure 1, Evans, 2017, s. 10, fig.10.

Her iconography confirms that Artemis is a Greek goddess. This relief is known as the only representation of Artemis in Sardis before the 2nd century BC and she carries her sacred animal, the deer, on her chest with her flowing dress and veil. (Buttrey et al, 1981: 8).

The name of the goddesses is evident from the epigraphic inscriptions written in Lydian language between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC and called Artimuk/Artimus (Gusmani, 1964; Buttrey et al. 1981:7-8). The construction of a new major temple at the beginning of the 3rd century BC (Ramage, 1978: 2) marks a new phase, confirmed by abundant Greek epigraphy. A long inscription from this century shows that the sanctuary carried out significant economic activities and owned large lands. Additionally, the dedication of a statue of this goddess as a votive offering can also be dated to this period. The continuity and importance of her cult is evidenced by the existence of many Greek inscriptions found dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to AD. During the period of greatest political strife between 41 and 31 BC, the priestess Moschine dedicated a prayer to the goddess Artemis for the city of Sardis to be permanently saved. The continuity and importance of the Artemis cult in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD is revealed by the dedication of the demos to the high priestesses of the goddess (De Hoz, et al. 2016: 186-189).

During the pre-imperial period, various cults of the goddess Artemis are attested at Sardis, such as the cults of Ephesia, Anaitis, Koloene, Kordaka, Tmolia, Leukophryene and Sardiane. However, it is controversial that Artemis is not at least explicitly mentioned on the Sardis coins (Buttrey et al, 1981: 7; De Hoz et al, 2016: 186-189; Sina, 2017: 105).

Ancient writers mention Artemis, who was worshiped in Lydian cities such as Magnesia, Koloe in Menderes and Tmolos and Sardeis, named after the mountain, is similar to Artemis Ephesia in character. They claim that the most famous Artemis in Lydia are the Artemis of Ephesus, Sardis and Koloe. The cult of Artemis at Sardis and Koloe is much better known from later Greek and Roman sources, and the relationship between the Mermnad kings, especially Croesus, and Artemis features prominently in Greek literature (Strabo, 13.4.5; Herodotus, 1.22, 1.26, 1.92; Polyaeus, 6.50; Aelian, 3.26; Diodorus Siculus, 9.25.1-2).

Herodotus (1.14; 1.22; 1.25.2; 1.50–51; 1.92) states that Lydian sanctuaries also interacted with Greek sanctuaries in western Asia Minor and the Greek mainland. As a matter of fact, this is confirmed by a column votive offering from the temple of Artemis in Ephesus and in the inscription fragments dated to 550 BC, it is written “King Croesus dedicated (him)”<sup>2</sup> (Cook, 1990: 273-74; Kerschner, 2006: 284; fig. 3).

Hanfmann and Mierse (1983: 65, 95) claims that Lydian inscriptions portray Artemis in the role of protector of the dead, and the orientation of her altar towards the necropolis hill has been considered concrete evidence of this aspect of her. The largest surviving sanctuary of the Artemis cult in Lydia is the Temple of Artemis in Sardis, and in its current form it dates back to the Hellenistic period, that is, after the collapse of the Lydian Empire, 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (Hanfmann and Walfbaum, 1969: 264). Among the evidence found at the Hellenistic level at the base of the walls near the temple of Artemis (Butler, 1922: 127-28) and at the Roman level under the floor of a building in Area 49, respectively, are pottery vessels, metal tools such as nails and needles, ritual objects such as pierced eggs and coins. (Cahill, 2014: 419).

On a boundary stone dating back to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> century BC from İğdecik Castle, the inscription fragment indicates that this stone belongs to the land of Artemis: “Sacred boundary stone (of land) of Artemis which has been set up according to the description (of the boundaries) made by Moschion and Ilos and Potamon and Ilos, (the) strategoi”<sup>3</sup> (Malay and Petzl, 2017: 65-66, no.21; Petzl, 2019: 105, 432).

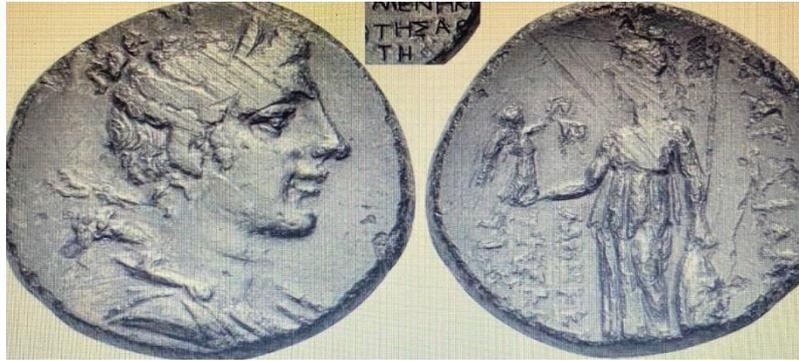
Epigraphic evidence shows that the people of Sardis made vows to the priestesses of Artemis as priestesses of the city's main deity in the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. In some cases, the Goddess is mentioned, but her identity is clear given the location of the inscriptions in the sanctuary of Artemis, in other cases she is referred to as Artemis or Artemis Sardiane. These offerings, or at least some of them, appear to be contemporary with the cult images on the coins. During the period when this cult image of archaic and Asian origin emerged, the Lydian term “kauein” (καυεις) was revived at Sardis to name the priestess of Artemis (De Hoz, 2016: 213). On a stele of white marble dating back 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD from Sardis, East Road, the inscription points out that

<sup>2</sup> ΒΑ ΚΡ ΑΝ ΘΗΚ ΕΝ, βα[σιλεύς] Κρ[οῖσος] ἀν[έ]θηκεν.

<sup>3</sup> Ὅρος ἱερὸς {ἱερὸς} Ἀρτέμιδος ὁ τεθεῖς κατὰ τὸν γενόμενον περιορισμὸν ὑπὸ Μοσχί-ωνος καὶ Ἴλο[υ] καὶ Ποτάμωνος καὶ Ἴλο[ο]-υ στρατηγῶν.

Anto[nios?]", son of Philostratos, (dedicated the stele) to Artemis Anaeitis and Men Tiamou as ex-voto for his wife Glykonis<sup>4</sup> (Petzl, 2019:122, plate 454).

The depiction of Artemis in Sardis coins, which is the most common group among numismatic finds, took place within a certain rule. As a matter of fact, this rule appears to be compatible with each other in BC and AD. When Sardis coins are examined, as of 133 BC, there is a bust of Artemis on the obverse and a depiction of Athena on the reverse. While Artemis is depicted with an arrow and a quiver on her shoulder in all of them, the depiction of Athena standing also bears common images such as palladium in her hand (Figure 2)<sup>5</sup>.



**Figure 2.** Bust of Artemis and standing Athena

AD Sardis coins, where we can find the reflection of Lydia's communication with neighboring cultures during the Roman imperial period, appeared with different names such as Artemis, Ephesia and Anaitis. Another element common to all of them is that Artemis is depicted together with Kore (Head, 1901: 259, no.145). For example, as a result of the cultural relationship with Ephesus, the Artemis Ephesia cult symbol on the left and the Sardis Kore on the right are depicted side by side on the back of a Sardis coin dated to the Commodus period, 177-192 AD (Figure 3)<sup>6</sup>. This coin is just a prototype for the ones to follow. On another coin dated the Caracalla period, 198-217 AD, Artemis Ephesia was depicted again, representing the alliance with Ephesus<sup>7</sup>. These coins are important since they reflect interstate politics between the nations.



**Figure 3.** Artemis Ephesia and Sardis Kore

On an example dating back to the Caracalla period, 198-217 AD, the Sardis Tyche on the back of the three of them, and it bears the Koren cult image and looks at the Ephesus Tyche opposite. The Tyce of Ephesus also

<sup>4</sup> “Ἀρτέμιδι Ἀναεῖτι [καὶ] Μηγὶ Τιᾶμου Ἀντώ[νιος ?] Φιλοστράτου ὑπὲρ [Γλυ]- κωνίδος τῆς συνβ[ίου] εὐχὴν.

<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Mrs Dane Kurth from wildwinds for the permission to use 12 coins from this website: <http://www.wildwinds.com/coins>. Figure 2, GRPC Lydia 218 with permission of Roma Numismatics, 27, 230, AE 23. [www.wildwinds.com](http://www.wildwinds.com), May 2016 <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Figure 3, Weber 5906; Mionnet VI, 481; GRPC Lydia 462 with permission of wildwinds.com, ex Gorny & Mosch, Oct. 2012. <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

<sup>7</sup> The coin, BMC 215-216 with permission of Pecunem & Gitbud & Naumann, Dec. 2013. <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

holds the statue of Artemis Ephesia in his hand<sup>8</sup>. Again, during the reign of Caracalla and on three coins of the same date, she was depicted with the name Artemis Anaitis, who was depicted together with Kore from Sardis. (Figure 4)<sup>9</sup>.



**Figure 4:** Korean cult image and Artemis Anaitis

On the reverse side of a coin belonging to Mastaura (near Nysa, modern near Nazilli, Aydın) (Strabo, XIV. 1.47; Sevin, 2001: 112), an important commercial city near the Menderes plain, dated to the 3rd century AD, Artemis is depicted with her twin brother, Apollo and her mother, Leto (Head, 1901: 160, plate XVII.7.; Üreten, 2007: 26, plate I.1.)

## 2.2. Demeter

Demeter (Δημήτηρ) is a Lydian goddess who has frequently been the subject of epigraphic and numismatic finds. Demeter, who symbolizes the fertility of the city on the coins and is associated with the Panhellenic myth about the abduction of Persephone to the city in question, is not just a symbol. Her cult is attested in a Lydian inscription from the 4th century BC, and reappears with the epithet “Karpophoros” (Καρποφορος) in an inscription dated to approximately 50 AD (De Hoz, 2016: 194). Pausanias mentions this epithet as representing the general characteristics of the goddess, meaning “the donor of fruits, grains and sheaves of crops” (8.53.7). Additionally, there are two honorific inscriptions on opposite sides of a white marble rectangular altar located northeast of the ancient city of Sardis, Sart Mustafa village, approximately 1 km west of Pactolus. One of these was dedicated to a priestess of Demeter Karpophoros (Greenewalt, Cahill and Rautman, 1987: 44–46; Petzl, 2019: 40, plate 337). On the remaining sides of the altar, it is possible to see two torches connected by a bow and a “kalathos” with a snake emerging on either side of the two torches. The inscriptions clearly refer the importance of the goddess Demeter in Sardis. For example, on the inscription, Demeter is mentioned as follows: “The People have honored Claudia, the daughter of Theogenes, priestess (kaueis), wife of Claudius Diodoros Lachanas, mother of Claudius Theogenes, Claudius Menogenes, and Claudius Diodoros, priestess of Demeter Karpophoros, who is dedicated here.”<sup>10</sup>(Petzl, 2019: 40, plate 337).

The epithet “karpophoros” of the goddess Demeter, understood as a result of the epigraphic finds, points to a most appreciated feature in the city of Sardis. Her cult is attested in nearby cities such as Pergamon, Ephesos and Dareiukome, 40 km northeast of Sardis. In addition to the iconography of the torches on the inscribed altar and the “cistamystica” (sacred-magic basket) (Polatçil, 2019: 1 ff.), numismatic iconography also probably refers to the celebration of mysteries. Demeter was used in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD as a symbol of the productivity and wealth of the city of Sardis, in connection with Roman panegyrics, and as an element linking Panhellenic myths with ancient local traditions (De Hoz, 2016: 195).

<sup>8</sup> The coin, Naumann Numismatic, Mionnet auction IV, 757, GRPC Lydia 535, Feb. 2016. <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Figure 4, Imhoof MG 34; GRPC 539, with permission of Münzen & Medaillen auction, April. 2003. <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.) The others are GRPC Lydia 532 and 538.

<sup>10</sup> Ὁ δῆμος ἐτείμησεν Κλαυδίαν Θεογένους θυγατέρα καυειν, γυναῖκα δὲ Κλαυδίου Διοδώρου Λαχανᾶ, μήτηρ δὲ Κλαυδίων Θεογένους καὶ Μηθ νογένους καὶ Διοδώρου, ἱέρειαν Δήμητρος Καρποφόρου, ἥτις ἐνθάδε καθιέρωται.

The numismatic finds in Sardis clearly show the importance of the goddess. A coin dated by Head (1901) to after 133 BC shows the figure of Dionysus on the obverse and Demeter on the reverse. Demeter is depicted standing and dressed, holding heads of grain in her right hand and a long torch in her left (Figure 5)<sup>11</sup>.



**Figure 5.** Depiction of Demeter on the reverse

Demeter, who was represented with a veil, grain heads, and poppies until the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, was supported by a scepter bearing the inscription *IEPA ΣΥΝΚΛΗΤΟΣ* and the bust of the senate on the obverse of the coins (Head, 1901, plate XXIV.17; Johnston, 1981: 46; De Hoz, 1916: 190, BMC Lydia 60). During the period when grain heads began to appear on Sardis coins, grain heads were depicted on the head of Octavia on the obverse, while on the reverse side, Demeter was symbolized as a goddess with a long chiton and flowing veil, riding on a chariot driven by two winged serpents. A crescent moon can be seen above the image of the goddess carrying a long torch in both hands (Figure 6)<sup>12</sup> (Head, 1901: 254, no.125; De Hoz, 2016: 190). The use of the chariot as Demeter's vehicle is a Roman motif first seen on Roman Republican coins from 76 to 48 BC (Linder, 1994: 123-124).



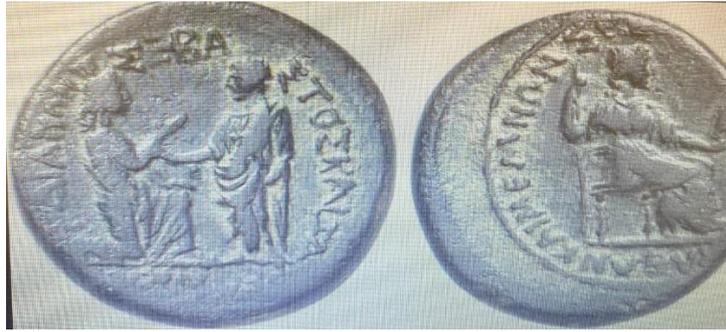
**Figure 6.** Bust of Octavia and Demeter holding a torch and driving a chariot with the moon symbol

In the 1st century AD, Apollonius of Tyana calls Demeter the goddess of Sardis. This goddess appears next to the head of Tiberius on coins and is indirectly associated with Livia and Octavia, and later alone in connection with the myth of the abduction of Persephone (De Hoz, 2016: 186-189). The coin, for example, dating back 17- 37 AD shows this relation. Tiberius, standing left, offering hand to turreted Tyche of Sardis kneeling right before him. Livia as Demeter seated right, holding scepter and grain-ears (Figure 7)<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Figure 5, BMC 61, with permission of Roma Numismatics, August 2013.  
<https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.)

<sup>12</sup> Figure 6, RPC 2999; BMC Lydia 125, with permission of JF Richards, ebay: taterthecat, June 2009.  
<https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.)

<sup>13</sup> Figure 7, Imhoof, LS 4; RPC 2991, 14, with permission of Courtesy of the Münzkabinett, Berlin.  
<https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.)



**Figure 7.** Tiberius and Demeter; Reverse, Livia as Demeter

However, on some other coins, the goddess Demeter is depicted standing, either supported by one or two torches or holding them, with snakes coiled at her feet or a snake emerging from the earth. On a coin from the reign of Antoninus Pius, Demeter directs a burning torch towards an open pit from which a coiled serpent emerges (Head, 1901: 349, no.143; BMC Lydia 138, plate XXVI.11). The connection between the numismatic iconography of Demeter and the Eleusinian myth at Sardis is revealed by the clear iconographic motif of the abduction of Persephone found on coins of Vespasian, Trajan, and again from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Johnston, 1981: 50, no. 277; BMC Lydia 131; BMC Lydia 89, plate XXVI.1).

The image of Demeter in a chariot drawn by two serpents brought from Rome, the identification of empresses with her and the use of her attributes - especially the wheat head - in conjunction with the image of Tiberius are part of the typical Roman policy. The connection of this goddess with the Eleusinian myth develops as a vehicle of Hellenic representation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD and demonstrates a commitment to a general Greek culture shared with many other cities of Asia Minor (Prince, 2005: 115–24). For example, on the reverse side of a Sardis coin with the depiction of Julia Domna, there is a depiction of Demeter holding cornucobas, a torch and a snake on the ground (Head, 1901: 261, no. 154, BMC 154). The one with the common motif of all these coin depictions is the Sardis coin, dated to 235-260 AD, with the depiction of Valerian on its obverse. On the reverse, Demeter is depicted holding a torch in both hands and riding on a chariot driven by winged serpents<sup>14</sup>.

### 2.3. Kore

Another goddess who is claimed to have a cult during the Lydian period is Kore (Κόρη), which means "Young Girl-Virgin" and is the daughter of Demeter and is known as the goddess of (Buttrey et al. 1981: 9; Payne, 2019: 237). The name of Kore is mentioned in some epigraphic sources (Johnston, 1981: 13; De Hoz, 2016: 199). For example, two depictions of the goddess Kore, thought to have been dedicated to a community from Sardis in Rome, date to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Although these images have been lost, the dedications still remain and the inscription that reads “θεῶν-Κόρην Σαρδιανοῖς” might be a good example. However, the name of Kore is not found in the epigraphy or on coins of Sardis until the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, perhaps the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. There is not a single testimony about Kore in Sardis in the literature. It is also unlikely that in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD the city chose a new goddess who did not have a long-standing tradition in the region as the symbol of the coins of alliances with other cities (De Hoz, 2016: 199, 213; Petzl, 2019: 244). However, despite the fame of the Artemis temple, information about the existence of the Korean temple is insufficient. It is stated that Sardis-Allahdiyen is a possible location of Kore’s sanctuary (Petzl, 2019: 91). On a plaque of coarse-grained white marble with gray veins dating back 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD from Allahdiyen<sup>15</sup>, the inscription<sup>16</sup> shows the importance of the goddess Kore as follows: “Apphion, the treasurer

<sup>14</sup> The coin, BMC 154 and BMC 206, <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

<sup>15</sup> It was found by H. Malay during his survey in 2009 and now is in Manisa Museum; see for the fragments assembled in Petzl, 2014, 301-3, with photographs p. 307 (SEG 64, 1193).

<sup>16</sup> “Κούρης γαζοφύλαξ καὶ Πλουτέος Ἀπφίον ἔρξε ν αὐτῇ σῆμα τόδε καὶ τροφίμοισιν ἑοῖς, ν τοῖς καὶ ἔλευθερίην θῆκεν πάρος. Εἰ δ’ ἀθεμίστως ν ἐνθάδε τις θάψη ἀλ- λοδαπὸν φθίμενον, ν ὡς ἀδ λιτρὸς τείσειε θεοῖσιν, π- ρόστατα Λυδῶν, ν οὐατότεν λειτουργῶν ἐξ δέπας ἀργύρεον.

of Kore (Persephone) and Pluteus, had this tomb built for herself and for her foster children, to whom she had formerly bestowed freedom. If anybody unlawfully buries here a foreign corpse, he should, because he is a sinner, give to the gods as a fine, o head of the Lydians, a silver goblet with handles weighing six pounds.” Moreover, the inscriptions no. 411 and no. 452 clearly addresses the cult of Kore coming from Allahdiyen (Petzl, 2014: 229-230, plate 691).

There seems to be a lot of emphasis on Kore on Sardis coins. The fact that Artemis was not depicted on coins in the early Roman imperial period and the depictions of Demeter and her daughter increased (Buttrey et al. 1981: 9) may have caused this judgment. Its appearance in primitive form, whose appearance dates back to the 2nd century AD, can be seen on the coins of Sardis and other Lydian cities, precious stones and other works of art from the Roman period. The use of the goddess image identified with Persephone and Demeter on Sardis coins shows its importance. These coins contain a political feature, showing Sardis' close relationship with other cities. As a matter of fact, the first example of the type is thought to be a bronze coin with Marcus Aurelius on the obverse; and Kore on the reverse (Figure 8) (Head, 1901: cx, 391; Fleischer, 1973: 187-191; Buttrey et al. 1981: 8; Hanfmann, 1983: 92- 93). This coin depiction continued to develop and remain uniform throughout the century and became a Korean cult image. For example, the depiction of Tyche on the obverse of the Sardis coin dated between 198-244 AD. On the reverse side, Kore is depicted sitting and wearing a polos, with corn on her left and poppy seeds on her right (Figure 9)<sup>17</sup>. In another coin thought to belong to the same date, in addition to the same symbols, a crescent-shaped moon symbol was added in the upper right corner of the back<sup>18</sup>.



**Figure 8.** Kore of Sardis and Artemis of Ephesus



**Figure 9.** Tyche and Kore seated between poppy and corn

<sup>17</sup> Figure 9, Mionnet IV, 676; Paris 1164B; Paris 1162, with the permission of Courtesy of Helios Auction 5, June 2010, lot 844. gallica.bnf.fr. <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

<sup>18</sup> The coin, Paris 1971.405i, Courtesy of the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

Games were celebrated in Sardis in honor of the goddess, whose sanctuary was thought to be located (Head, 1901: cx, 391; Fleischer, 1973: 187-191; Hanfmann, 1983: 92-93). The depiction of the Korean cult image on the Sardis coin dated 193-217 AD as between two temples surrounded by a star proves that it was the cult area of the goddess (Figure 10)<sup>19</sup>.



Figure 10. Julia Domna and Koren cult image between two temples

“Koraia Aktia” (Johnston, 1981: 13) and “Χρυσάνθινά”- Chrysanthina festivals (Head, 1901: cxiii; Buckler and Robinson, 1932: 82-83) celebrated in honor of Kore, were the subject of coins. A coin of Caracalla is accompanied by an inscription commemorating the festival of Koraia Aktia<sup>20</sup>.

#### 2.4. Kybele (Kuvava)

One of the principal goddesses of the Lydian pantheon was Cybele (Kybele) (Κυβέλη), Kybebe, or Kuvava, who was closely related to the Phrygian Cybele or Matar and other important female deities of Anatolia. Herodotus attributed her as the chief goddess of the city of Sardis and explained the importance of her cult (5.102). The name Cybele was not used in Sardis and the Lydian goddess should be referred to as Kybebe or Kuvava rather than Cybele. It is depicted as seated on a throne with frontal lion by her side (Berndt and Ersöz, 2013: 154. Petzl, 2019: 121, plate 453; Gürcüm, 2019: 224).

Kuvava is the Lydian name of the Anatolian Goddess Late Hittite Kubaba. Even the description of Kuvava is a continuation of the Anatolian Kubaba. It is known that there are many statue and figurine finds representing Cybele and that these are called Kuvala in the Lydian language (Hanfman and Ramage, 1978: fig. 9-10; Buttrety et al. 1981: 8). A marble piece dated to 560 BC, showing a goddess holding a snake in her right hand between two columns at the entrance of the temple (Hanfmann and Ramage, 1978: 42-43), should also be identified as Kuvava.

There is a small altar to the goddess Kuvava in the gold refinery area of Sardis, dated to 570-560 BC (Ramage, 1978: 2; Ramage and Craddock, 2000: 74; Berndt and Ersöz, 2013: 156-63). The corners of the original altar are decorated with sandstone lion statues. The lion is known as the sacred animal of the Anatolian goddess Kubaba and her Lydian manifestation Kuvava, and is also the symbol of the Lydian royal house (Herodotos, 1.84; Hanfmann and Ramage, 1978: 41ff; Munn, 2006: 120-125; Payne, 2019: 232-233). Among the elements reused in the Kuvava sanctuary are the lion statues (5th-4th centuries BC), the marble model of the Kuvava temple (c. 540-530 BC) and the above-mentioned votive stele depicting Kuvava and Artemis side by side (5th-4th centuries BC) (Hanfmann and Ramage, 1978: 43-51, and fig. 20-50). This votive relief carries a lion and tympanum, confirming the typical Anatolian goddess (Buttrety et al. 1981: 8.). Their varying dates suggest minimal use of the sanctuary from the mid-6th to the 4th centuries BC, including the Ionian Revolt. In fact, the reuse of spolia during the Late Roman period may indicate that the temple was still in use during the Roman period (Payne, 2019, p. 234). The presence of Kuvava's lion altar at the gold refining site serves to emphasize her role as patron of the gold and silver industry, and the existence of a small pottery piece bearing her name

<sup>19</sup> Figure 10, Mionnet IV, 731-732; Paris 1251 with the permission of Courtesy of the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.)

<sup>20</sup> The coin, Mionnet IV, 754; Paris 1266. <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

is also known nearby. Finally, her name appears clearly in a funerary inscription that addresses the trio of “Sántas, Kubawa and Mariwda,” that is, the “dark one.” This trio is reminiscent of the religious traditions recorded in Luwian hieroglyphic inscriptions (Payne, 2019: 240-241).

The depiction of virgins and men in procession at the temple of Kuvava suggests that they formed part of Lydian religion by 540–530 BC, but were also part of religious practices during the imperial period. Although it cannot be determined for sure whether these figures will be identified as priests and priestesses, it can be considered likely (Payne, 2019: 236). Kuvava cult image, on one of the Sardis coins dated 253–268 AD, there is a representation of Salonia on the left, and on the right, a depiction of Cybele sitting with a “patera” in her hand, her left arm leaning on a drum, and a lion standing on the left (Figure 11)<sup>21</sup>.



**Figure 11.** Salonia and seated Cybele with her lion

On another coin of Sardis dating back to the 3rd century AD, Cybele and Leto are depicted as "mother goddesses" on the reverse side. The crown made of towers on their heads, showing that they are the "founder and protector of the city", proves that they are mother goddesses (Üreten, 2007: 27-28). This coin actually points out the similarity in character between Kybele and Leto. This "mother goddess" similarity comes from the "maternal" feature they both have (Güler, 1986: 71).

## **2.5. Athena (Malia/Maliya)**

The written existence of Athena (Ἀθηνᾶι) can be found in a new edition of a Lydian-Greek inscription found in Pergamon during the Attalos dynasty. However, this inscription led to the identification of a new Lydian goddess, Malia (Payne and Sasseville, 2016: 66-82). In this regard, Malia is believed to be the Lydian name of the Greek goddess Athena (Laroche, 1967: 243; Hawkins, 2013: 127-128). In fact, Hutter states that after the 4th century BC, Malia was identified partly with Athena, one of the Hellenic Goddesses, and sometimes with Artemis (Hutter, 2003: 231). As a French scholar, Emmanuel Laroche claims, Athena Polias, the protector god of many cities in Lycia during this period, was the Hellenic counterpart of Malia (Taracha, 2009: 173). There are traces that the tradition of Goddess Malia continued in Lydia. The “Malia stream” and the nymph named “Malis”, whose existence is proven in this region, can be considered as examples (Hutter, 2003: 232; Taşkın, 2015: 174-175). Additionally, a silver vase found at Pithom displays strong iconographic connections to Athena, but identifies the goddess by her Lycian name Mal[ija] (Barnet, 1974: 893 ff). In this context, it would not be wrong to say that before Hellenization, the Athena cult took a distinctly Lydian form within the Malia cult.

In fact, Malia, known as the Luwian goddess, gradually entered the Lycian and Lydian goddess group (Taşkın, 2015: 174-175). A piece of artefact from Lesbos, where cultural interaction is high, indicates that Malia was known there: “Malia has spun a fine thread.” Referring to the goddess with the name Lycia-Lydia proves that the cult of Malia transcended language boundaries. This claim can be further supported by a small find. The ivory female figurine found in Ephesus is a representation of a woman wearing a Lydian headdress and weaving (Akurgal, 1969: 99, fig. 17).

<sup>21</sup> Figure 11, MC 210; Paris 1340; Babington 10 in NC 1866, with permission of Courtesy of the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. [https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/salonina/\\_Sardis\\_BMC\\_210.txt](https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/salonina/_Sardis_BMC_210.txt).)

The stele inscription from the Lycian city of Xanthos points to the goddess Maliya, who seems to have had a cult in her honor in Xanthos. The context of the references to her in this inscription suggests that she was considered primarily a warrior goddess. This possibility is also supported by his appearance on a sarcophagus lid in which he appears in a battle scene with the Amazons. Maliya almost certainly originates from the early Anatolian goddess who provides the origin of many personal and place names in Hittite and other Anatolian texts from the second and first millennia BC. The Hittite goddess Ma-a-li-ya (Barnett, 1974: 901; Bryce, 1983: 6) is also considered an Anatolian precursor of Malia in some Hittite texts<sup>22</sup>.

In some texts<sup>23</sup>, this pioneer goddess, who emerged as a prominent Luwian goddess in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, has a connection with water and was recognized as the river goddess (Hutter, 2003: 231; Serangeli, 2015: 376-88). Maliya also has the role of goddess of vegetation, especially wine and corn in some texts<sup>24</sup> (Hutter, 2003: 231) as “the mother of wine and grain” and it has the title of “The Malia of the Garden” in some modern sources (Taracha, 2009: 115; Taşkın, 2015: 171). It is also stated in a number of Lycian inscriptions that this goddess protects cities and tomb monuments such as Rhodiapolis (Payne, 2019: 242).

Although some ancient writers assert that the Greek literary tradition mentions the temple of Athena in the Lydian kingdom (Herodotus, 1.19–22; 1.92; Pausanias, 10.8.7), the cult of Athena seems not to have been very prominent in Lydia. As a matter of fact, the cult was not documented in inscriptions at Sardis until the Attalos dynasty (180-133 BC). Even during this dynasty, she was a goddess rarely mentioned, although she was common in Sardis. It is asserted that an inscription dating back to 166 BC found from Salihli and now in Manisa Museum (inv. no. 459) is the honor of the goddess Athena Nikephoros (Petzl, 2019: 9, plate 306, 10-11). In this inscription, which is about celebrations, competitions and sacrifice distribution, it is thought that the competitions were in honor of Athena Nikephoros and Eumenes II<sup>25</sup>.

There is a typical depiction of the head of Athena on a Sardis coin dated to 246-241 BC during the Seleucid rule (Head, 1901: 30, no.30; 245, plate PI. xxv. 5; 254, no.161; Buttrely et al. 1981: 81, 66). The common element on Sardis coins dated to 133 BC and later is the head of Artemis on the obverse and the depiction of Athena standing on the reverse (Head, 1901, p.70, no.4; p. 243, no.53). For example, on the obverse of a Sardis coin dating to this period (Figure 2), we see a bust of Artemis carrying an arrow and a quiver on her shoulder, and on the reverse, we see a depiction of Athena standing, holding Nike carrying a wreath and carrying a spear and a shield. However, in 70 AD and later, the depiction of Athena continued on Sardis coins without the image of Artemis. For example, on the front side there is a bust of Athena wearing a helmet and with an aegis on her chest, on the back side there is a two-step tetra stela style temple, and nine stars in a circle on the pediment are depicted (Figure 12)<sup>26</sup>.



**Figure 12.** Bust of Athena with helmet

<sup>22</sup> KBo 27.108 iii 24, 27; KUB 12.44 iii 12; KUB 12.26 ii 21; KUB 12.44 iii 11; KUB 2.3 iii 33–35; KUB 35.135 iv 14–16; KUB 40.10.

<sup>23</sup> KBo 2.16 obv. 4, KUB 38.33 obv. 5; KUB 40. 101 obv. 8.

<sup>24</sup> KUB 2.13 iv 23–24, KUB 12.26 ii 20; KUB 12.44 iii 10–11.

<sup>25</sup> θιερωμένων ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου εἰς τὰ Παναθη[ν]αία καὶ Εὐμένεια, ἀφ’ ὧν ἀπὸ τῶν προ.

<sup>26</sup> Figure 12, SNG Keckman 378, with permission of Agora Auction, Aug. 2015, Lot 39-087, <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/lydia/Sardis/i.html>.

Additionally, on the reverse side of a Sardis coin dated to 81-96 AD, there is a depiction of Nike and a seated Athena, holding a spear and placing her arm on a shield (Figure 13)<sup>27</sup>. This position of Athena is not common for the succeeding Athena figures. The following depictions are always standing. For example, during the 2nd-3rd century AD Sardis coins, it is common to depict standing Athena carrying a spear and her left hand on the shield next to her. However, the Sardis coin dated 198-217 AD, in which she is depicted as Athena carrying a patera, is one of the most striking one (Figure 14)<sup>28</sup>.



**Figure 13.** Nike and seated Athena carrying a spear



**Figure 14.** Athena standing holding a patera and a spear

### **3. Conclusion**

Lydia appears as a region where many religious traditions interacted and influenced each other not just once but many times. For example, the depiction of Greek mythological scenes on the Kuvava temple model coincides with the Greek account of the extensive contacts of the Lydian kings of the Mermnad dynasty with the Greek world. Additionally, the adoption of Anatolia's inherited lion goddess motif through Lydia Kuvava in many Ionian cities are other examples of the Lydian cultural mosaic. In this case, it would be more correct to ask whether the undoubted Hellenization of Lydia was also a means for the transmission of eastern traditions

<sup>27</sup> Figure 13, RPC II 1320; Paris 1225; Mionnet IV, 703-704; SNG Munich 515; Johnston Sardis 279, GRPC Lydia 400, with permission of [https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/domitian/RPC\\_1320.txt](https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/domitian/RPC_1320.txt).

<sup>28</sup> Figure 14, Mionnet IV, 742; Paris 1261 ("Caracalla"); GRPC Lydia 575, with permission of Forum Ancient Coins, online store., May 2014. [https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/elagabalus/\\_Sardis\\_Mionnet\\_IV\\_742.txt](https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/elagabalus/_Sardis_Mionnet_IV_742.txt).

to the Greeks. There is no single model that fits all available evidence, and each goddess in the pantheon has a different story. It is clear that the relationship between cultures in contact is complex and the interaction is multifaceted. Moreover, it is thought that the obstacle to tracing the transmission of traditions inherited from Anatolia from the Late Hittite cultures to early Lydia was the elusive nature of the Early Lydians.

Artemis, whom the Greeks called the mother goddess, was also accepted as a very important goddess for Lydia, an Anatolian civilization. The joint Artemis-Cybele stele in Sardis is the oldest known archaeological find depicting the goddess. Although it is in Anatolia, it is the prototype of the Greek goddess Artemis. Also, this stele shows the mother-daughter relationship of two goddesses. Existing epigraphic finds between the 6th and 4th centuries BC show that her name changed to Artimuk or Artimus. Again, the inscriptions show us that the temple of Artemis was an important economic and social sanctuary. A piece of inscription on a boundary stone found in Igdecik Castle states that this stone is the sacred stone of Artemis' domain. The continuity of the Artemis cult dates back to the 2nd century AD. This situation manifests itself in the importance given to the priestesses of the cult. The existence of various Artemis cults with different local names in pre-imperial Sardis attracts attention. Among these goddess variants frequently mentioned in Greek and Roman sources, the similarity of Lydian Artemis to Ephesia is obvious. The depiction of Artemis on the Sardis coins, which present the largest archive among Lydian numismatic finds, appears to have two separate characters, BC and AD. In BC fashion, a bust of Artemis, depicted with an arrow and a quiver on her shoulder, is accompanied by Athena on the other side. The goddess, who appears with different names on AD coins, reflects the cultural and political relations of Lydia during the Roman imperial period. Especially the frequent presence of the image of Kore suggests that the characteristics of Artemis may have been transferred to this goddess.

As a Greek goddess, Demeter came to the fore with the epithet "Karpophoros" in Sardis epigraphic finds, first in a Lydian inscription of the 4th century BC and later in another inscription dating to 50 AD. In a recent study, one of the inscriptions on the altar found in a village called Sart Mustafa confirms this epithet and states that it was dedicated to a Demeter priestess with this epithet. The goddess, who was also the subject of Sardis coins, appeared as a prototype goddess carrying heads of grains, poppies and a torch in her hands until the 1st century AD. After this date, it became a symbol representing the wealth and prosperity of the city. The striking depiction of Demeter with Roman motifs depicts the mother goddess dressed in long chitons, driving a chariot driven by winged snakes, and carrying a torch in her hand. This depiction model, which lasted until the next century, is also associated with the abduction myth of Persephone.

Known as the daughter of Demeter and the goddess of vegetation, Kore's dominance in Lydian syncretism dates back to very late dates. The temple, which is thought to be the sacred area of Kore and can be seen in inscriptions dated to the end of the 2nd century AD, points to the Sardis-Allahdiyen region with new studies. Inscription samples dating back to the 2nd century AD on a find from this region have been accepted as the most important epigraphic finds showing the existence of the Korean cult in the region. In this period, when it was understood that the influence of the Artemis cult was decreasing, Kore's influence on Sardis coins increased, just like her mother Demeter. Since these coins have a political character that reflects Sardis' close relationship with neighboring cultures, Kore is depicted side by side with other goddesses. A Sardis coin dating to the late 2nd century AD and the beginning of the 3rd century AD is perhaps the best example of Kore's influence. This coin, which contains the Korean cult image depicted between two temples and the Koraia Aktia inscription, is unique in that it shows that this was the sacred area where festivals and games were held.

Cybele, an Anatolian goddess, was called Kibebe or Kuvava in Lydian syncretism. The goddess, whose activity is thought to have started in the 6th century BC, is similar to the Late Hittite goddess Kubaba, and her representation is present in the Lydian art. Additionally, the presence of lion statues in a Sardis altar dating back to the same century also points to the goddess's sphere of influence. The fact that this altar is a gold refinery area further strengthens the importance of the goddess. The Artemis-Kuvava joint stele proves that the Lydian religion is a cultural mosaic. The goddess who began to appear on Sardis coins in the 3rd century AD is the seated Kuvava, depicted with a lion next to her. The fact that the symbol of the Lydian royal house is the lion and that this goddess temple was also used in the Roman period shows the extent of Kuvava's influence. Kuvava, who was depicted in a very early period within the scope of archaeological findings, is rarely seen in epigraphic and numismatic finds, suggesting that the goddess was not considered politically important during the Roman imperial period. The only finding showing Kybele's effectiveness is her depiction with Leto on a Sardis coin dating 3th century AD. Judging by the feature of the crown on both of their heads, it is understood

that they are mother goddesses, and this feature actually coincides with the prominent feature of "being a mother" in both of them.

Although ancient Greek sources mention the temple of Athena in the Lydian Kingdom, findings about the goddess cult in Sardis are not available until the Attalos dynasty. The inscription found in Salihli shows the existence of the Athena cult. Moreover, another inscription from this period indicates that the goddess Athena was a Lydian goddess named Malia. Malia, who was actually a Luwian goddess, must have been called the Lycian and Lydian goddess over time. As a matter of fact, some archaeological findings in Lesbos and Xanthos confirm the name Malia. Additionally, there are even sources that mention the Hittite goddess Maliya as the forerunner of the goddess Malia. This goddess, known as the Luwian goddess, came to the fore with her roles as the protector of vegetation, wine, grain and finally the protector of cities.

As for numismatic data, the depiction of Athena with Artemis is common on BC Sardis coins. Holding a Nike statue carrying a spear and shield, and a wreath, Athena is depicted partially different from the AD Sardis coins. As a matter of fact, the bust of the goddess, who is no longer seen with Artemis, appears with a helmet. In the following years, Athena, who was generally standing, came to the fore as the goddess carrying a spear and a shield.

We think that the evidence indicates that the archaic image on the coins identifies Artemis, and thus she remained the mother goddess of the city during the Imperial period, at least until the end of the 2nd century AD. It is true that some Korai games have been attested in numismatics and epigraphy since the time of Caracalla, and that the archaic image of the goddess appears on a coin next to an agonistic painting with the inscription Korai Aktia. Her cult and presence as the symbol of the city changed during the Imperial period in Asia Minor, and replaced by Kore under the influence of the cult of Demeter, which is evidenced in Greek coins from the 2nd century to the 1st century AD and in Greek epigraphy from the 1st century AD. However, the epigraphic findings available for Kore are very few.

Changes in coin iconography are indebted to changes in style and art, to political and propaganda motifs, as well as to the process of religious syncretism that occurred during the Imperial period and peaked precisely in the second half of the 2nd century and the 3rd century AD. What limits our knowledge of Lydian religion is not only the changing coins and the quantity of surviving text documents but also the type of inscriptions. The limitations and obstacles present limited information in determining the importance of goddesses in Lydian syncretism. The problems of interpretation raised by literary, epigraphic and numismatic sources regarding the identity of the mother goddess of the Lydian kingdom may have led modern scholars to propose different, sometimes contradictory, alternatives.

As a result, a picture of Lydian religious traditions emerges at the intersection of Anatolian and Greek traditions. The fact that female gods are very active in the pantheon actually seems to be more suitable for Anatolian motifs. It has become clear from the findings that the goddesses were mostly in the Greek sphere of influence and their importance changed over time after the interaction of their cults. The truth of which of these goddesses is the mother goddess seems relative. The findings obtained show their importance according to the periods. Artemis and her relationship with Demeter and Kore is a very clear example of the evolution of an archaic cult during the Imperial period and its appropriation and adaptation by the city's cult and self-representation policies. Although it is known that the Anatolian goddesses Cybele and Maliya were in the Lydian pantheon, the available findings are not satisfactory enough to indicate that they were mother goddesses. Thus, in light of the available numismatic and epigraphic findings, it is highly likely that Artemis was the mother goddess of Lydia. The fact that a Greek goddess could be a mother goddess in Lydia, an Anatolian civilization, is quite compatible with the Lydian cultural mosaic. Moreover, we believe that the problem of the mother goddess will become more clear with the findings obtained through further studies on the goddesses in Lydian syncretism.

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