

A New Votive Stele Fragment Dedicated to Arsinoe II Philadelphos from Asar Tepe (Dalaman, Muğla)

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Abstract: This article presents a fragmentary inscription found during the rescue excavation at Asar Tepe, Şerefler Mahallesi, Dalaman, Muğla, between December 2022 and May 2024. The site was considered to be in the territory of Kalynda. The fragment is a votive offering belonging to the cult of Arsinoe Philadelphos and is the first example to show that this cult was also established in Kalynda. This inscription is not only the sole example discovered at Asar Tepe/Şerefler, but also the only one identified from a region potentially associated with ancient Kalynda. It was found near the apsidal building, which was most likely used as a small church, suggesting an earlier sacred area on the hill in its earlier phases.

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The archaeological excavations carried out at Asar Tepe in Şerefler between 2022 and 2024 revealed several new finds, including building foundations, a very large number of pottery sherds dating from the Iron Age to the Principalities, coins, several architectural fragments and an inscription,¹ the last of which is the subject of this paper. The site is believed to have been located within the territory of Kalynda in ancient times². During the Archaic and Classical periods, Kalynda was one of the most powerful cities on the Carian-Lycian frontier, second only to Kaunos. In the Hellenistic period it was a polis with urban institutions, coinage and a Ptolemaic garrison, contested by both Kaunos and Rhodes. In Roman times it was part of the Lycian League, with road links to Telmessos, Lyrnai and Kaunos, as recorded on the Pataran road monument. Opramoas also came to the aid of the city after the earthquake of 141 AD.



Fig. 1) City Plan (Kalynda Excavation Archive)

However, no specific remains belonging to the city centre of Kalynda have been found yet. The largest building complex is on the hill called Asar Tepe in Şerefler. On the hill, there are walls built

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¹ For the publications concerning the results of this excavations see Onur 2023 on history and geography, Dündar 2023 on amphora stamps, Gerçek 2024 on oil lamps, Tatar 2025 on coins and Onur – Koçak 2025 on the hill in general.

² Onur 2023, 185-188.

with polygonal stones in the early period and raised in the later periods, and a tower in the northern corner of these walls³. The foundations include an apsidal building (Fig. 1), around which an inscription and an altar were discovered among the debris of the northeastern façade (Fig. 2), indicating the religious nature of the building.



Fig. 2 a-b) Altar fragment (Kalynda Excavation Archive)

The small, inscribed fragment was found on the surface among the debris collected around the east-facing apsidal building⁴. This building was probably used as a small church in the later Roman and Byzantine periods, possibly built on a possible earlier temple⁵. The inscribed fragment is a limestone votive stele, of which only the upper left corner has survived. There are traces of red paint in the letter grooves. This inscription is the only one currently known not only from Asar Tepe/Şerefli, but also from any area that may have belonged to Kalynda in ancient times. It is now kept in the Fethiye Museum.

H.: 10,5 cm.; W.: 6 cm.; Depth: 3,5 cm.; LH.: 0,6-1 cm.

Ἀρσ[ινόης]

Φιλ[αδέλφου]

Of Arsinoë Philadelphos

The date of the inscription is not earlier than the death of Arsinoë II. From the Pithom Stele, it is known that Ptolemy II built a temple for the cult of Arsinoë Philadelphos in the 16th year of his reign⁶. This event is dated to 270/269 BC⁷. As Hölbl points



Fig. 3. The inscribed fragment (Kalynda Excavation Archive)

³ Onur 2023, 186 Fig. 2; Dünder 2023, 142 Fig. 2.

⁴ It is possible that the fragment was transported from another context; however, the fact that the altar fragment was found in the debris surrounding apsidal structure, and the inscription fragment was found among the debris collected around the apsidal structure, and the fact that structure was constructed along an east-west axis support the hypothesis that the apsidal structure functioned as a temple.

⁵ Tietz 2003, 202.

⁶ *I.Cair.* 22183, 20-21.

⁷ Fraser 1972, 1:217; 2:366, n. 225; van Oppen 2010, 144-149.

out⁸, the *canephoros*, the eponymous priestess of the cult of Arsinoe Philadelphos, is found in Alexandria and the appearance of the first *canephoros* priestess is dated to 269/268 BC. It would, therefore, be appropriate to date our inscription to a time after 270 BC. The forms of the letters Σ and Φ also indicate a date no later than the second half of the 3rd century BC. A similar inscription has already been documented at Kaunos, in neighbouring Kalynda⁹.

Arsinoe II was born in the capital city of Memphis around 316 BC¹⁰. She was the daughter of Ptolemy I and Berenike I and the sister of the future Ptolemy II¹¹. She resided in Memphis until 311 BC, when Ptolemy I moved the capital to Alexandria, where she lived until her first marriage¹². Around 299/8 BC, she married Lysimakhos¹³, King of Thrace, and had three children named Ptolemy, Lysimakhos and Philippos¹⁴. After the king was killed at the battle of Koroupedion in 281 BC, she married Ptolemy Keraunos¹⁵, her half-brother (son of Ptolemy I and Eurydike) and the murderer of Lysimakhos. This marriage ended when Lysimakhos and Philippos, the sons of Arsinoe II, were murdered by Keraunos¹⁶. Then, in 279 BC, Arsinoe II fled to Alexandria¹⁷. It was during this period that Ptolemy II exiled Arsinoe I, to whom he was already married, in 278/277 BC. Arsinoe II is thought to have played a role in this exile, although this is disputed¹⁸. After the exile, Arsinoe II and Ptolemy II entered into an incestuous marriage¹⁹ — similar to the relationships observed in the Zeus-Hera or Isis-Serapis cults — which was unwelcome among the Hellenes. For this reason, Arsinoe became known as Philadelphos²⁰. She and Ptolemy began to be known as the Theoi Philadelphoi, not as a separate deity among the Egyptian gods, but as Synnaos Theoi, i.e., gods who, together with other Egyptian gods, shared a temple. The earliest information from the Hibeh (now El Hiba) papyri suggests that the cult of the Theoi Philadelphoi was founded in Alexandria in 272/1 BC by Ptolemy II in the 14th year of his reign, while Arsinoe was still alive²¹.

⁸ Hölbl 2001, 103.

⁹ *I.Kaunos* 54; For the letter characters in the related votive inscription at Kaunos, see *I.Kaunos* p. 113.

¹⁰ Wilcken 1895, 1282-1287; Clarysse 2000, 29; Carney 2013, 16.

¹¹ Pomeroy 1984, 17.

¹² Clarysse 2000, 29.

¹³ On the possibility that Lysimachus had not three, but four marriages, see Carney 2013, 34.

¹⁴ Ptolemy, the eldest of the children, was probably 17 years old, Dmitriev 2007, 137. At the king's death in 281 BC, Lysimachus was 16 and Philippos 13, as mentioned by Iustinus see Carney 2013, 35; However, Nilsson probably mistakenly interchanged the order of Lysimakhos and Philippos and did not give a reason for this, Nilsson 2012, 2.

¹⁵ Heinen 1984, 413.

¹⁶ Wilcken 1895, 1283.

¹⁷ Carney 2013, 49.

¹⁸ Wilcken 1895, 1283; Pomeroy 1984, 18-19.

¹⁹ Although the date is uncertain, it is generally accepted that it was a marriage following the exile of Arsinoe I. Fraser 1972, 1:117; Wilcken 1895, 1283-1284; van Oppen 2010, 144.

²⁰ As seen on the Pithom Stele, Arsinoe began to be called Arsinoe Philadelphos in the 12th regnal year of Ptolemy II, see Naville 1903, 20. For an example of an inscription in which she is specifically referred to as *Basilissa Arsinoe Thea Philadelphos*, see SEG IX, 357.

²¹ *P.Hib.* II 199; Quaegebeur 1971, 270; Fraser 1972, 1:229; Hölbl 2001, 101; Nilsson 2012, 3; Grabowski 2014, 120; Although the date of his death is disputed, see for the establishment of the cult while Arsinoe II was still alive van Oppen 2010, 145-146.

The cult of Arsinoe II, Philadelphos, was distinct from that of Theoi Philadelphoi, with dedicated temples built in her name²². The king minted coins bearing her depiction, organised festivals known as the Arsinoeia, and allocated part of the dynasty's wine and fruit taxes to the cult²³. Another notable aspect was the founding or renaming of towns in the queen's name.

Grabowski has argued that Ptolemy II's attempts to dedicate cities to—either by carrying out repairs and renaming existing cities, as in the case of Patara²⁴, or by founding new cities and dedicating them to Arsinoe, as in the cases of Cilicia and Pamphylia²⁵—were propaganda designed to consolidate the king's power in the region; he also noted that these cities were used by the dynasty's naval forces²⁶. Among the other epithets of the goddess Aphrodite is εὐπλοία, an epithet also attributed to Arsinoe II, thereby suggesting that the queen was associated with Aphrodite. This epithet is associated with a cult that was followed by sailors and the Ptolemaic fleet. Consequently, Arsinoe's cults were popular among both traders and soldiers, and they spread the cult across a wide area.²⁷ Müller, however, suggests that the Arsinoe Philadelphos cult assumed a protective role over ships departing from or arriving at the Alexandria harbour, which explains why the temple—like her sanctuary at Cape Zephyrion—was located near the sea.²⁸ The establishment of the cult of Arsinoe Philadelphos at Asar Tepe in the territory of Kalynda, a harbour city, and at Kaunos, a harbour city adjacent to Kalynda, can be interpreted as a sign of the dynasty's religious and political dominance in these cities.

The city's close relations with the Ptolemaic dynasty in the 3rd century BC are known from the papyri of the Zenon Archive²⁹. These records include letters from the Kalyndian Iason, son of Kerkion, who temporarily resided in Philadelphia³⁰, addressed to Zenon concerning his agricultural lands and cattle herds.³¹ Another example of the relationship between the Kalyndians and royal officials is provided by letters addressed to Neon, the son of Therarkhos of Kalynda, who had married to Zenon's aunt to be relieved of the responsibility for feeding the soldiers and cavalry—a duty that his father had enjoyed after his death³². The content of the letters suggests that Zenon did not refuse Neon's request; rather, he asked the *oikonomos* Diodotos to draft a petition to the *boule* and *demos* of the city, requesting exemption from these responsibilities. The reasons

²² Grabowski 2014, 121.

²³ Hölbl 2001, 103 ff; Müller 2009, 297.

²⁴ Strab. 14.3.6 states that after the city had been repaired by Ptolemy II, it was renamed Lycian Arsinoe, although the name Patara prevailed. The repairs he mentions must refer to the renovation of the Ptolemaic garrison at Tepecik, see Lenger – Dündar 2020, 46-47; Şahin 2023, 766-767.

²⁵ Cohen 1995, 329, 335-336, 363, 365; Tatar 2023, 31 fn. 26

²⁶ For examples both in Anatolia and in other geographies Grabowski 2014, 128.

²⁷ Grabowski 2014, 35-36.

²⁸ Müller 2009, 281-282.

²⁹ Onur 2023, 189-190. The aforementioned Zenon of Kaunos married a Kalyndian woman and served as a civil servant under the *dioiketes* Apollonios in Philadelphia during the reign of Ptolemy II, Rostovtzeff 1922, 24; Grier 1932, 222.

³⁰ *P.Mich.Zen.* 66 (245/4 BC); cf. Rostovtzeff 1922, 87.

³¹ *P.Cair.Zen* III 59340 (247 BC); see also Onur 2023, 192 fn. 32.

³² *P.Cair.Zen* III 59341 v.c (247 BC); see also Onur 2023, 192 fn. 32, 2.

why Therarkhos and Neon were granted this privilege remain uncertain. However, the correspondence between Neon and Zenon suggests that the Kalyndians were granted certain privileges by Zenon during this period.

The Zenon Archive provides evidence that Theron, a farmer of the Kalyndian *theoros* Theopropos, acquired the privilege of supplying wine to a settlement called Kypranda (Κυπρανδα) in the city's territory for the annual festival by concluding a contract with the city. However, Theron was unable to meet the financial requirements of this venture³³. These examples, together with the fact that Panakestor — who held the same office before Zenon — was a Kalyndian, indicate that the city not only recognised the religious characteristics and political power of the dynasty but also established close relations with it³⁴.

Robert notes that the use of the genitive formulation in votive inscriptions dedicated to the queen serves to represent the ownership of an object by a god or goddess. These votive inscriptions are part of altars³⁵. However, Hölbl argues that these are votive inscriptions found in houses. If Robert's hypothesis is accepted, it may be assumed that the building with an apse among the ruins of Asar Tepe in Şerefli, where this inscribed fragment was found, was used as a temple in the early period and as a church in the late period — supporting Tietz's hypothesis — and that this temple probably served the cult of Arsinoe, probably along with other god(s)/goddess(es).

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³³ *P. Cair. Zen* III 59341 r.a (247 BC); see also Onur 2023, 190-191.

³⁴ Onur 2023, 189.

³⁵ Robert, *OMS VII*, 626-627.

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Asar Tepe'den (Dalaman, Muğla) II. Arsinoe Philadelphos'a Adanmış Yeni Bir Yazıt Fragmanı

Özet

Bu makalede, Aralık 2022-Mayıs 2024 tarihleri arasında Muğla, Dalaman, Şerefler Mahallesi, Asar Tepe'de gerçekleştirilen kurtarma kazısında bulunan bir yazıt parçası ele alınmıştır. Kalinda teritoryumunda olduğu düşünülen alanda bulunmuş bu parça Arsinoe Philadelphos kültüne ait bir adak yazıtı niteliğindedir ve bu kültün Kalinda'da da kurulmuş olduğunu gösteren ilk örnektir. Bu yazıt sadece Asar Tepe/Şerefler'de bulunan tek örnek değil, aynı zamanda antik Kalinda ile ilişkili olabilecek bir bölgede tespit edilen tek örnektir. Büyük olasılıkla küçük bir kilise olarak kullanılan apsisli yapının yakınında bulunmuş olması, tepenin erken evrelerinde daha eski bir kutsal alan olduğunu düşündürmektedir.

Yazıtın Türkçesi şöyledir: *Arsinoë Philadelphos'un*(dur).

Anahtar Sözcükler: Theoi Philadelphoi; II. Arsinoe Philadelphos; Kalinda.