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The Imperial Honorific Hall (Exedra) in Patara

Şevket AKTAŞ – Semih ORHAN

Abstract

During the 2024 excavation season in Patara, the capital of the Lycian League, an Imperial Honorific Hall oriented on an east–west axis was unearthed to the east of the Baths of Nero. The architectural features and interior layout of the structure display characteristics typical of Roman Imperial architecture. The presence of such a hall offers significant insights into the spatial expanse and social functions of public areas. Moreover, the dating of a statue head of the Athena Giustiniani type—thought to have belonged to this structure—coincides with the Middle Antonine period, consistent with both epigraphic and architectural evidence.

Keywords: imperial cult, Roman public buildings, Patara excavations, Antonine period, honorific halls

Öz

2024 yılı kazı sezonunda, Likya Birliği'nin başkenti Patara'da yürütülen arkeolojik çalışmalar kapsamında, Nero Hamamı'nın doğusunda, doğu-batı doğrultusunda uzanan bir İmparator Onurlandırma Salonu ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Bu yapı, plan tipi ve iç mekân düzenlemesi bakımından Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi mimarisine özgü özellikler sergilemektedir. İmparator Salonu'nun varlığı, kamusal alanların genişliği ve bu yapıların sosyal işlevlerine dair önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır. Ayrıca bu yapı içinde olduğu düşünülen Athena Guistiani tipinde heykel başının tarihi hem epigrafik hem de mimari plastik eserlerin Orta Antoninler dönemi tarihleriyle örtüşmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: imparatorluk kültürü, Roma Dönemi kamu yapıları, Patara kazıları, Antoninuslar dönemi, onur salonları

Patara was a politically and economically prominent center during the Roman Imperial period. Particularly, architectural projects from the reign of Nero significantly reshaped the city's urban fabric and public spaces. In this context, the Baths of Nero and the surrounding architectural arrangements are significant examples reflecting the social and political ideologies of the period (fig. 1).

Located immediately east of the Baths of Nero, the structure identified as the "Imperial Honorific Hall / Exedra" has a rectangular plan. The south façade is articulated by columns set upon a stylobate, while the remaining façades are bounded by double-faced walls constructed with finely dressed ashlar blocks. The external dimensions of the building are 23 x 14.5 meters. The wall heights on three façades vary between 1.17 and 1.25 meters (fig. 2).

The entrance on the south side is marked by six *in situ* Attic column bases seated on a stylobate. The bases

decrease in height from west to east: the one on the west measures 0.47 m, while the one on the east is 0.42 m in height, each with a diameter of 0.64 m. The stylobate is flanked on its east and west ends by pilaster footings measuring 0.40 m in height, 0.90 m in width, and 0.93 m in depth. The façade, delineated by pilaster responds at the eastern and western corners, is architecturally configured to facilitate axial access to the stoa via a colonnade of six columns. The columns, made of conglomerate and approximately 5 m tall, were topped with Corinthian capitals (fig. 3). Above the capital, the entablature—of which only fragments have been recovered—consists of architrave and frieze blocks, topped by inscribed geison blocks (fig. 4). The vertical composition of the entrance measures as follows: stylobate 0.30 m; *in situ* column bases 0.42–0.47 m; columns ~5.00 m; capitals 0.65 m; architrave-frieze blocks 0.70 m; and geison blocks 0.45 m. The total structural height thus reaches 7.57 meters. Aediculae are present on the interior-facing



FIG. 1 Nero Bath-Gymnasium complex.



FIG. 2 Exedra - Imperial Honorific Hall.



FIG. 3 Corinthian capital.

surfaces; while those on the eastern and northern walls are preserved, the ones on the western wall have been largely damaged or entirely removed due to later phases of use. The widths of the aediculae range between 2.12 and 1.84 m, and the intervening wall segments vary in width from 1.84 to 2.12 m, with a standard depth of 1.20 m. Marble revetments on the lower parts of the walls, defined as plinths, were attached using 0.12 m thick mortar. The back walls of the aediculae measure between 1.17 and 1.20 m in width (fig. 2).

The floor was paved with marble slabs of varying colors and dimensions (fig. 2). Near the southeast corner, a sub-floor bedding (statumen) composed of a rubble foundation was identified. Large rubble stones formed the lower layers, while smaller stones set in mortar composed the upper foundation. The top layer consisted of marble slabs placed on thick mortar. White, grey, and bluish-grey slabs were employed: outer zones were paved with 0.95 x 1.80 m grey slabs; the central area featured a square frame of 0.44 x 1.24 m bluish-grey slabs. Within this frame, white-grey slabs were arranged in isodomic fashion, interspersed with 0.14-0.16 m wide bluish-grey plaques. While there is no definitive evidence about the roofing system, it is likely that the building was covered with an east-west oriented barrel vault.



FIG. 4 Inscribed geison block.



FIG. 6 Architrave-frieze block.

FIG. 5 a-b
Fragment of a
Corinthian column
capital.FIG. 7
Coffer.

In the interior of the structure, niches separated by small columns were arranged to create spaces for the placement of statues. Above the aediculae, the composition is articulated with an entablature consisting of a base, marble column, Corinthian capital (fig. 5a-b), and, above these, an architrave-frieze (fig. 6) surmounted by a coffered ceiling (fig. 7). The walls were largely clad with marble panels, Corinthian pilaster capitals (fig. 8), and decorated with opus sectile (fig. 9). This architectural program strongly suggests that the building served a function associated with the imperial cult.

Excavations within the hall yielded ceramic fragments, architectural elements, roof tiles, animal bones, marble revetment fragments, inscribed blocks, various statuary fragments, coins, and plaster capitals. Additionally, an architectural inscription on a geison block, an altar fragment, a relief-decorated spout, and a well-preserved statue head of the Athena Giustiniani type were

recovered. The limited surviving statuary fragments and architectural elements, including Corinthian capitals (fig. 5a-b), indicate that a substantial amount of the original marble decoration was destroyed when the building was repurposed as a lime kiln. As can be understood from these fragments, the aediculae inside the structure are articulated in the Corinthian order, indicating that there were statues within the niches and architectural ornamentation on the walls (fig. 10). In Roman Imperial architecture, such arrangements are spatial reflections of imperial ideology. Marble cladding, monumental façades, and sculpted niches are elements of an architectural program designed to glorify the emperor (fig. 11).

In its final phase, the structure was converted into a lime kiln (fig. 12). Two circular, dry-stone kilns were constructed in the northwest corner for lime production. This reuse likely led to the destruction of the aediculae in this area.

A comparable example to Patara's Imperial Honorific Hall exists in Side, in front of the eastern stoa of the



FIG. 8 Corinthian capital.



FIG. 9 Opus sectile panels.

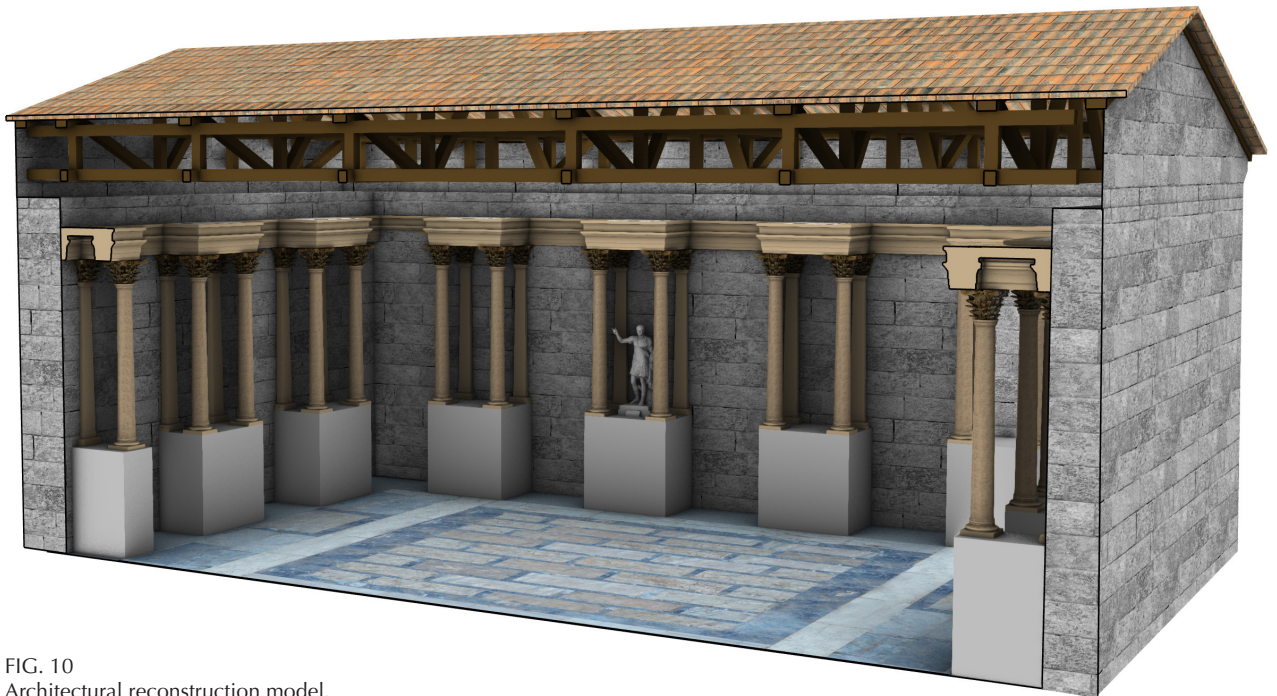


FIG. 10
Architectural reconstruction model.

agora, known as “Structure M.”¹ Similar architectural plans are also found in the Forum Pacis² (in Rome), the Patara Exedra, and the gymnasium of Miletus.³ Structure M in Side resembles gymnasium buildings, which were frequently situated near public spaces during the

Hellenistic period, with notable examples in Miletus,⁴ Pergamon,⁵ and Priene.⁶

Public buildings of the Roman period were not only functional but also carried representational and ideological significance. Corinthian façades, niche-decorated

1 Yurtsever 2021.

2 Karivieri 1994, 102.

3 Kleiner 1968, 91-92; Niewöhner 2016, 75-76.

4 Yaraş 1997, 252, fig. 10.

5 Schazmann 1923, pls. 3-4.

6 Wiegand and Schrader 1904, fig. 271.



FIG. 11 Architectural reconstruction model.



FIG. 12 Lime kiln.

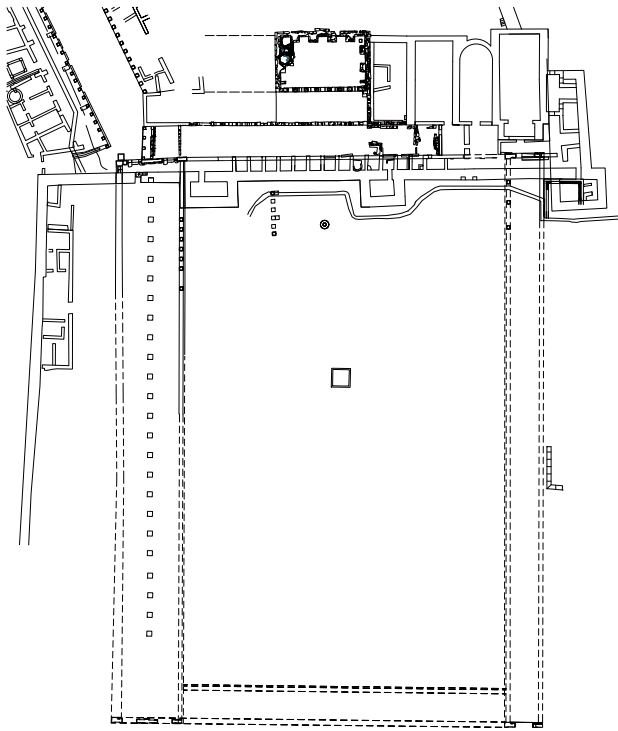


FIG. 13 Patara Bath-Gymnasium complex.

FIG. 14
Head of Athena
Giustiniani.

interiors, and monumental scales reflect the architectural embodiment of imperial ideology. Both the Patara Imperial Honorific Hall and Side's Structure M display striking architectural and programmatic similarities. Structure M, adjoining the South Stoa of the gymnasium complex in

Side, also features a rectangular plan and a façade with six Corinthian columns.⁷ Its interior is clad with marble,⁸ and two *in situ* statues—one male and one female—were found in the niches. Numerous statuary fragments have been recovered from the vicinity of Structure M.⁹ The columns separating the niches feature Corinthian capitals and an architrave-frieze system. These features indicate that Structure M served as an Imperial Honorific Hall, rather than a mere exedra.

In conclusion, the Imperial Honorific Halls of Patara and Side (Structure M) share remarkable similarities in architectural plan, decorative program, and functional transformation. Both structures—distinguished by their six-column Corinthian façades, niche-decorated interiors, marble revetments, and statuary placements—can be interpreted as high-status spaces likely dedicated to the imperial cult. They materially express the representational power of Roman architecture and the connection between imperial ideology and local communities. Given the similarities in form and function and their dating, the Patara structure may also have been part of a bath-gymnasium complex, akin to Side's Structure M¹⁰ (fig. 13). The inscription on the geison block and the architectural ornamentation date the building to the Antonine period. Inscriptions from Eudemos' donations following the earthquake of 141 CE, related to the reconstruction of Patara, mention this building.¹¹ Furthermore, the Athena Giustiniani type statue head uncovered in the excavation offers important evidence for dating the structure to the Antonine period (fig. 14).

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7 Yurtsever 2021, drawings 5 and 7.

8 Mansel 1950, 684.

9 For detailed information on the sculpture program of the Side Imperial Hall / Structure M, see Mansel 1958a, 222; 1958b, 65, 66; 1963, 118; 1967, 20, 21.

10 Aktaş et al. 2024, 271, fig. 9.

11 Aktaş et al. 2024, 253-70.

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Southwest Necropolis of Sillyon Ancient City: An Assessment in the Context of Urbanization

Savaş ALTUN

Abstract

Located in the Pamphylia region, the ancient city of Sillyon occupies a strategic position within the Taurus Mountains. The rocky landscape surrounding the city played a crucial role in both its defense and the positioning of tombs. This study focuses on the spatial integration of khamosorion- and arcosolium-type tombs in the Southwestern Necropolis, their relationship with the city's topography, and comparisons with similar examples in Pamphylia. The tombs were planned in accordance with Sillyon's geomorphological features and constructed on or around large rock masses. During the Roman Imperial period, the close connection between social areas, defensive structures, and the necropolis indicates a holistic settlement strategy. This study provides detailed architectural analysis of the tomb types and explores their urban context. Although many tombs are no longer preserved, the remaining structures offer valuable insight into local construction techniques and period characteristics. A comparative evaluation is also conducted with similar funerary practices observed in other urbanized ancient settlements. Overall, the Southwestern Necropolis of Sillyon sheds light on the city's settlement planning and reflects the architectural and cultural dynamics of the period.

Keywords: Pamphylia, Sillyon, necropolis, khamosorion, arcosolium

Öz

Pamphylia Bölgesi'nde yer alan Sillyon antik kenti, Toros Dağları arasında stratejik bir konuma sahiptir. Kenti çevreleyen kayalık peyzaj hem savunmada hem de mezarların konumlandırılmasında belirleyici bir rol oynamıştır. Bu çalışma, Güneybatı Nekropolü'nde yer alan khamosorion ve arcosolium tipindeki mezarların mekânsal bütünleşmesini, kentin topoğrafyasıyla olan ilişkilerini ve Pamphylia Bölgesi'ndeki benzer örneklerle karşılaştırmalarını ele almaktadır. Mezarlar, Sillyon'un jeomorfolojik özelliklerine uygun biçimde planlanmış ve büyük kaya kütleleri üzerine ya da çevresine inşa edilmiştir. Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi'nde sosyal alanlar, savunma yapıları ve nekropol arasındaki yakın ilişki, bütüncül bir yerleşim stratejisine işaret etmektedir. Makale, mezar tiplerine ilişkin ayrıntılı mimari analizler sunmakta ve bunların kentsel bağlamını irdelemektedir. Her ne kadar mezarların birçoğu günümüze ulaşmamış olsa da mevcut kalıntılar yerel inşa teknikleri ve dönemin özellikleri hakkında önemli veriler sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca, diğer kentleşmiş antik yerleşimlerde gözlemlenen benzer gömü uygulamalarıyla karşılaştırmalı bir değerlendirme yapılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Sillyon'un Güneybatı Nekropolü, kentin yerleşim planlamasına ışık tutmakta ve dönemin mimari ile kültürel dinamiklerini yansıtmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pamphylia, Sillyon, nekropol, khamosorion, arcosolium

Introduction

Sillyon, located within the borders of the Pamphylia region, is located in the Kocagözler locality of the Yanköy Neighborhood of the Serik district of Antalya province. The city is located on a 235 m high rocky hill,

with Aspendos to the east and Perge to the west. Sillyon, which is approximately 13 km from the Mediterranean, has a strategic position as one of the important cities of the Pamphylia region (fig. 1). Sillyon, located between the Taurus Mountains, stands out as one of the most



FIG. 1 Location of the ancient city of Sillyon on the map. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

magnificent and protected settlements of the Pamphylian Plain.¹

The unique geography of the city played a decisive role in the formation of the settlement plan. The acropolis located on the summit of the rocky hill and the lower city extending in the southwest, west and south directions constitute the main settlement areas of the ancient city. This urban development has been shaped by taking into account the landscapes and geographical difficulties offered by nature.²

The archaeological studies carried out in Sillyon have illuminated the historical and cultural structure of the city by revealing the traces of the settlements of different periods. Especially in the excavations carried out in recent years, architectural data on defense structures, water system and settlement areas, especially the baths and stadium, have been evaluated; important findings on social life, economic structure and defense strategies have been obtained.³

The origins of Sillyon date back to the Hittites and it is thought that the name of the city derives from the Hittite term “šalluša.”⁴ The geometric ceramics, dated to the 8th-7th centuries BC and classified among the early archaeological finds, attest to the city's existence during these periods.⁵ Although information on the Archaic and Classical periods is limited, inscriptions, coins and ceramic finds from the Hellenistic period reveal that Sillyon developed during this period.⁶ In the Hellenistic period, the defense structures of the city were strengthened, and during the Roman Empire period, these structures were rebuilt and the city developed on a wider scale.⁷ Sillyon, which reached its social and economic peak especially in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, provides valuable information about its social structure through the inscriptions of this period.⁸ In the Late Antiquity, significant changes were experienced in the urban settlement, and to the inner parts - especially the acropolis - a correct orientation.⁹ Observations for

Bilgin 2019; Demirel et al. 2022; Taşkıran and Uzunel 2024; Taşkıran et al. 2023.

4 Forlanini 1999, 237; Tekoğlu 2000, 49.

5 Bilgin et al. 2020, 34-38.

6 Brixhe 1976, 165; Köker 2020, 234-36.

7 Kolb 1984, 117; Nollé 1993; Taşkıran 2021a, 315.

8 Debord 1982, 73; Adak 2020, 48-49.

9 Taşkıran 2021b, 31-32.

1 Magie 1950, 263, 1135; Brixhe 1976, 163.

2 Taşkıran 2021a, 314; 2025, 173-206.

3 Taşkıran and Kılıç 2023a, 2023b; Taşkıran 2024, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2021c, 2019a, 2019b, 2018; Taşkıran and Palalı 2022, 2021, 2020; Taşkıran 2020a, 2020b, 2018; Özdemir and Taşkıran 2021, 2012, 2010; Özdemir et al. 2011; Taşkıran and Yılmaz 2024; Bilgin and Taşkıran 2023; Taşkıran and Bacanlı 2022; Alkaç et al. 2020; Taşkıran and

this period were also supported by necropolis studies in the city.

Sillyon Southwest Necropolis is one of the areas that stands out in terms of the relationship between urban settlement and topography. As a result of the surface surveys and architectural documentation carried out in the area, twenty-nine tombs most of which belong to the *khamosorion* and *arcosolium* types could be identified.

The tomb structures located on steep rocky areas within the city walls on the southern and western slopes of the city clearly reveal the influence of natural land forms on architectural preferences. The structural features of the *khamosorion* and *arcosolium* type tombs found in the necropolis area in question were evaluated together with the geographical context in which they were located.¹⁰ The use of rocky areas and the fact that the tombs were carved into the rocks or placed on rocky ground reveal the effect of the rugged landscape on the tomb architecture.

The tomb architecture at Sillyon is discussed in comparison with similar tomb structures in the Pamphylia region. The distribution, location preferences and architectural details of the *khamosorion* and *arcosolium* type tombs dating to the same period provide the opportunity to evaluate the burial tradition in a broader context. These comparisons are aimed at identifying the unique or common aspects of Sillyon within the regional architectural tradition. The fact that the city is built on a mountainous and steep topography necessitates that the graves be evaluated not only from a technical perspective but also in the context of settlement strategies. The construction of the tomb structures integrated with the natural rocky surfaces both maximized the physical use of the area and created a form of construction compatible with the geographical conditions. This is important in terms of showing how mountainous cities like Sillyon transformed topography into a building element. When the tomb architecture in Sillyon is compared with examples from other ancient cities in the area, similarities and differences in terms of structural features, location choices, and formal elements become apparent. This comparative evaluation not only determines the position of the Sillyon necropolis within local architectural practices, but also reveals the general character of the tomb tradition in the Pamphylia region.

Due to the fact that most of the tombs were damaged in various periods, excavation data was limited; evaluations were based on surface surveys, photogrammetric

analysis and drawings. The visual data obtained during the fieldwork were used to document structural features such as rockwork, façade arrangements and traces of destruction. This documentation process, together with the existing literature review, contributed to the identification of architectural typologies and the analysis of the location of the tombs within the urban fabric.

The relationship between tomb structures with urban planning; defense lines are handled through spatial connections with waterways and other public spaces. The position of the structures both inside and outside the city walls shows the change of settlement boundaries and area use over time and offers important clues. The spread of the necropolis in different directions is remarkable in terms of its integrity with the urban texture.

Public Buildings Surrounding the Southwest Necropolis

The structures in and around the Southwest Necropolis of Sillyon can be listed as follows: the buildings in the south-western part were built for defense purposes and positioned in accordance with the topography of the city. For example, the tower, which can be accessed from the northern entrance, was built on a rocky area for defense purposes.¹¹ The Bastion, on the other hand, has a cylindrical building form with niches carved into the rock and assumed military functions.¹² In addition, the Main City Gate is a central structure intended to control the road to the acropolis of the city and was planned for defense purposes with two gate towers. The Hellenistic Tower, built to control the entrance to the city, is surrounded by three storeys of solid walls and reflects a defense approach in harmony with the city settlement.¹³ These structures were built as part of Sillyon's defense system, taking advantage of the natural shelter provided by the mountainous landscape, and had a significant impact on the development of the urban settlement.¹⁴ The Roman Bath is an important building located on the western slope of the ancient city of Sillyon, one of the social centers of the city structure. According to published research, the bathhouse was built in the Roman Imperial period from the 2nd century AD.¹⁵ Its location is noteworthy as it is placed on a solid rocky ground, a feature that increases the stability of these structures. The

¹⁰ Özer 2017, 611-20.

¹¹ Taşkiran 2017, 138.

¹² Taşkiran 2017, 138.

¹³ Özer 2011, 39-40; Taşkiran 2017, 139-41.

¹⁴ Taşkiran 2017, 138.

¹⁵ Taşkiran 2021a.



FIG. 2 The western part of the ancient city of Sillyon and its necropolis area. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

Nymphaion is one of the important water structures and is located in the part where the main buildings of the city are located.¹⁶

The city's acropolis is particularly noteworthy for its walled areas. The city wall of Sillyon, as an important structural element reflecting the political and geographical history of the city, was shaped according to the topographical features, developed directly depending on the terrain conditions, and added and modified in different periods.¹⁷ The defense structures in the city are important elements directly related to the urban settlement. The Hellenistic Tower and its surrounding buildings, located on the lower city defense line in the southwest of the city, is one of the examples emphasizing the defensive features of the urban structure. On the other hand, the tower located in the southwest of Sillyon is one of the last points of the city's defense line and is located in a rocky area beyond the residential areas. The tower is carved entirely out of rock and merges with the surrounding rocky area, providing a natural protection. This building is located in a distinctly inaccessible location.¹⁸

¹⁶ Taşkıran 2022a.

¹⁷ Taşkıran 2017, 83-102.

¹⁸ Taşkıran 2017, 83-273.

Southwest Necropolis of the Ancient City of Sillyon (fig. 2)

The current structure of the Sillyon Necropolis was shaped in line with the architectural forms made possible by the natural rocky surfaces in a mountainous and steep terrain. This necropolis area is located within the city walls and the tombs were carved directly into the rock masses. The rocky ground not only allowed the tombs to be preserved for a long time, but also provided a functional solution in terms of the tomb architecture of the period. The sloping and rugged structure of the land has been among the main elements that determine the grave settlement, and in this context, the relationship of the graves to both topography and landscape has become remarkable.

According to the investigations, the majority of the tombs consist of khamosorion type structures. Most of these tombs are single and rectangular in plan and were carved directly into the rock floor. Only one *arcosolium* tomb has been identified in the city. This situation shows that more ostentatious and monumental tomb types were not preferred in the region. However, although the rocky topography of Sillyon is extremely favorable for the construction of rock tombs with façade arrangements, it is remarkable that there are no examples of such tombs. This situation reveals at this stage that the tomb tradition in Sillyon was based on functionality

and that the ostentatious façade architecture was not adopted as an aesthetic priority in the city culture. However, it is expected that new graves / tomb groups will be revealed by excavating the street and its surroundings that pass through the necropolis and provide access to the acropolis.

Many of the tombs have been destroyed. Although this destruction was caused by both natural factors and human intervention, the local limestone of the Karpuzçayı Formation, on which Sillyon is built, is easily eroded and prone to fracture, which has led to the graves being worn away.¹⁹ In particular, most of the grave lids are either completely lost or scattered in different locations from their original positions. On the other hand, it was observed that some examples are still in place, indicating that these buildings have survived to the present day by preserving their original architectural features. The grave types found in the Southwest Necropolis are presented in detail below.

Khamosorion Tombs (figs. 3-9)

The *khamosorion* tombs in the Southwestern Necropolis were placed harmoniously within the city wall and on rocky areas at different points. These tombs show a wide spread in the east-west direction, starting from the west of the Bastion, behind the Roman Bath in the north, and

extending to the south entrance and northeast of the Hellenistic Tower. This topographic distribution reflects a conscious choice that cannot be explained only by physical favorable. The selection of rocky areas may have been influenced by both structural durability and their possible religious and ceremonial use. This meticulousness in site selection suggests that the graves were designed not only as individual burial structures, but also as spaces that shaped social memory.

Architecturally, *khamosorion* tombs are generally simple, undecorated and far from aesthetic concerns. Although they lack stylized elements, they have been carefully adapted to the natural form of the rocky ground on which they were built. This type of tombs have a rectangular form carved into the rock. The depth of the burial pits varies between 50-70 cm on average, while their lengths vary between 1.80-2.10 m and their widths vary between 0.60-0.80 m. In some examples, smaller pits indicating children's graves were also identified.

Although the graves are mostly designed for individual burials, depending on the width of the rocky area, groups of two or three graves arranged side by side are also found. In these multiple arrangements, the grave spacing is usually around 20-40 cm and these spacings were left in accordance with the form of the natural rock. In some areas, these spaces between graves are

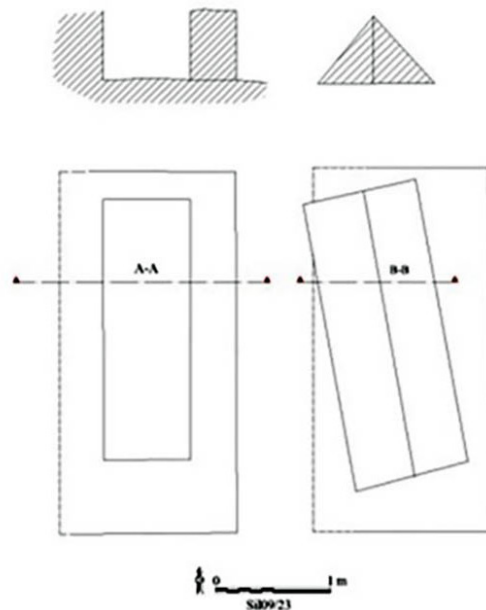


FIG. 3
Khamosorion type tomb with lid.
Sillyon Excavation Archive.

¹⁹ Kumsar et al. 2019.

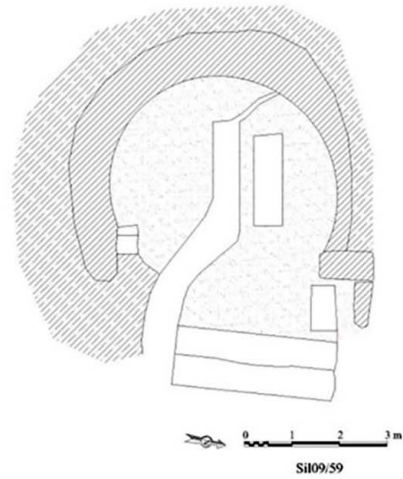


FIG. 4 A cult area shaped by the organization of the rocky terrain and an example of a Khamosorion-type tomb. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

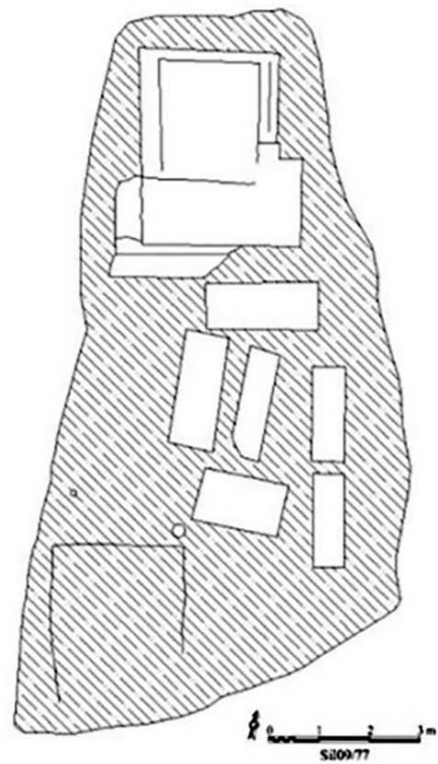


FIG. 5 Examples of khamosorion-type tombs arranged in the high rocky area in the northern part of the necropolis. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

thought to have functioned as transitional or small ceremonial areas.

Although there is no clear axis or hierarchical arrangement in the layout of the graves, it is observed that they are generally located in the east-west direction

according to the topographic slope of the area. These orientations can be associated with visibility or specific ritual orientations. Narrow paths or simple passageways between the multiple tombs were created by leaving the natural structure of the rock untouched or by flattening its surface.

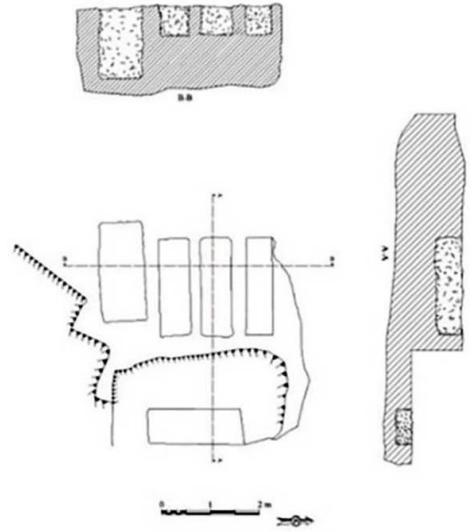


FIG. 6 Examples of khamosorion-type tombs arranged on the rocky mass in the western part of the necropolis. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

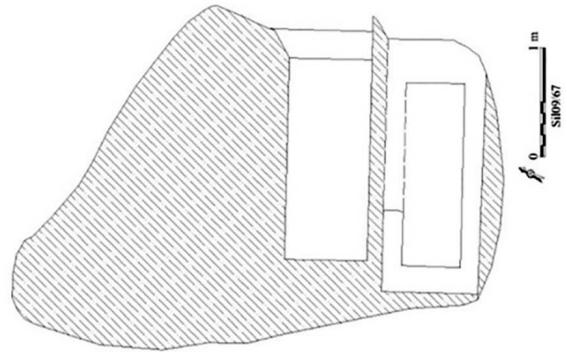


FIG. 7 Examples of khamosorion-type tombs. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

Covers are an important element of *khamosorion* tombs. The intact examples usually have a triangular pediment and are placed on a narrow molding on the upper part of the grave pit. The ledges were meticulously carved into the rock and bordered by recesses averaging 3-5 cm in depth. These were designed to secure the lid and prevent it from moving. Some grave lids also show traces of grips designed to be used for lifting or placing.

One of the most remarkable examples within the Sillyon necropolis is the *khamosorion* grave situated in the semicircular rocky area to the north of the bath structure (fig. 4). This area, shaped like a natural niche, contains a single *khamosorion* carved precisely at its center. The grave consists of a broadly circular rock-cut space, within which a carefully hewn rectangular burial compartment

is positioned slightly off-centre. The elevated rocky rim framing this space clearly defines its boundaries, while a narrow, gently curving access passage connects the interior with the lower terrace. Additional cuttings and low rock walls around the exterior form a small forecourt, suggesting a deliberate architectural arrangement that integrates the circular burial space with a rectilinear approach area, possibly intended for ritual activity.

The semicircular form and the overall layout imply that this area may have served not only as a place of burial but also as a setting for ceremonies or acts of commemoration. The grave's location—on a projecting rocky shoulder overlooking the circulation routes and terraced slopes of the settlement—made it highly visible both from within the city and from the adjacent paths.

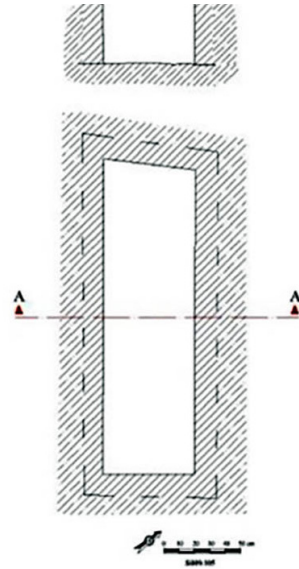


FIG. 8 An instance of a khamosorion-type tomb. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

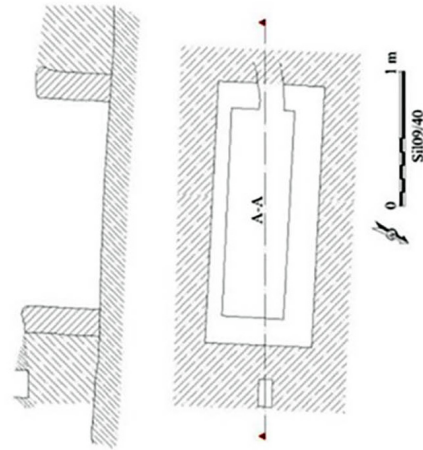


FIG. 9 An instance of a khamosorion-type tomb. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

This prominent placement, combined with its unusual circular layout and carefully executed rock-cut design, indicates that the individual buried here likely held a high social status, and that the tomb was conceived as a marker of particular significance within the khamosorion group.

The other examples generally show similar plan and structural features. However, the orientation, length and depth of the graves may vary according to the form of the rocky area in which they are located. In this respect, the *khamosorion* graves in the Southwestern Necropolis provide important data on both individual and collective burial practices, and also reveal the extent of the relationship between funerary architecture and the natural environment in antiquity.

Arcosolium Tomb (fig. 10)

The arcosolium tomb, an example of which is in the Southwestern Necropolis of Sillyon, is seen in a rock mass that is structurally difficult to process, located to the north of the bath. So much so that this situation prevented the creation of the semicircular arch form, which is the general feature of arcosolium tombs. The upper part, which is almost square in shape, extends to the ground and is completed with a rectangular grave opening down from the ground. This different form of the tomb is an example of the arch form of traditional *arcosolium* tombs not being fully realized due to the physical structure of the rocky area.

Although arcosolium applications, which are commonly encountered in Roman and Late Antique tomb

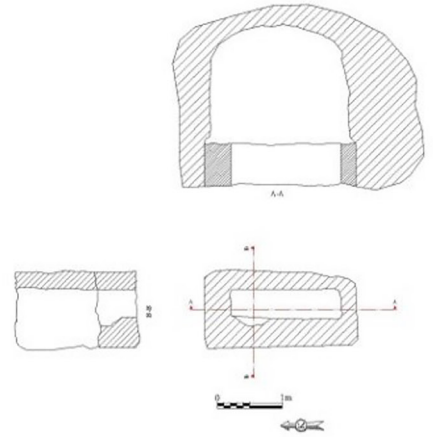


FIG. 10 An instance of an arcosolium tomb. Sillyon Excavation Archive.

architecture in Anatolia, show various typological characteristics in different regions, they can be evaluated through some common architectural approaches. *Arcosolium* tombs are usually characterized by a burial basin carved under an arched niche. This tomb form shows regional differences in terms of the level of architectural decoration, façade arrangement and technical details related to the bedrock in which they were carved. The arcosolium grave in Sillyon draws attention, especially with its arrangement in accordance with this common scheme. The arcosolium seen in the Sillyon example consists of a rectangular burial trough carved into an arched niche. At the same time, as in some examples in Central Anatolia, arcosolia in Sillyon were constructed as individual or multiple tomb groups within the integrity of a necropolis area. In this context, the example at Sillyon should be evaluated as representing typological continuity within the arcosolium tradition in Anatolia, but differentiated by local production methods, bedrock structure and regional aesthetic preferences.

Evaluation

The khamosorion and arcosolium grave types²⁰ in the southwestern necropolis of Sillyon Ancient City are among the grave architectures that have common aspects in different regions of Anatolia in terms of both form and function.²¹ These types of tomb became wide-

²⁰ Özer and Taşkıran 2011, 279, figs. 2, 4; Özer 2012, 38-39, fig. 10.

²¹ Henry 2005, *catalog text*, 20, 172, 191, 224 and 233, 261 and 262, T01, pl. 7, T06, pl. 179, T03, pl. 197, T02, T03, T04, T06, T07, T10, T11, T14, T27, T28, T31, T32, T34, T35, T36, TA, pls. 227 and 236, T01-T03, pls. 267 and

spread, particularly during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and appeared in similar forms across a wide geographical area. The evaluation of the examples from Sillyon is important not only in terms of the formality of these architectural forms, but also in terms of their relationship with the topography of the settlement. In this study, only those examples found in Pamphylia, Pisidia, Cilicia and Caria and which are topographically and typologically related to Sillyon were selected from the large number of documented examples of khamosorion in the literature.

The main reference points for the development of khamosorion and similar grave types in Pamphylia are Karaçalı and Attaleia. Although the khamosorion graves in the Karaçalı necropolis are irregular in terms of their orientation, they are all designed in a simple form carved into the bedrock.²² This irregularity suggests that the natural slope of the terrain played a decisive role in the orientation of the site. Similarly, it is observed that the tombs at Sillyon were placed parallel to the city walls or according to the topography, and in this respect, a direct relationship can be established between the tomb architecture of the two settlements.

268; Özkaya and San 2000, 6-14; 2001; 2003, 121, fig. 17; Henry 2010; Peschlow 1990, 153 and 169, figs. 1-14; 1991, figs. 1, 15; 1997, 141 and 160, fig. 5; Roos 1980, 19, fig. 2; Baran 2017, 7, figs. 9-10; Şahin et al. 2010, 321 and 338; Pamir 2010, 371 and 394, fig. 2; Ergeç 1999, 390 and 394, figs. 3, 4, 8, 10; Altunay 2008, 19 and 23; Becks et al. 2015, 274; Arslan and Önen 2013, 81; Ortaç 2014, 1-22, figs. 2, 10; Aşkın 2015, 104; Aşkın et al. 2016, 176 and 178, fig. 2; Aşkın et al. 2017, 413, fig. 7.

²² Çokay-Kepçe 2006, 10.

The necropolis of the Eastern Garage in Attaleia attracts attention with the advanced forms of *Khamosorion* tombs. Some of the tombs here show simple architectural features, while others have features containing bench or niches.²³ Although the tombs in Sillyon are usually simple, there are examples of traces of bench. While the Attaleia examples are generally located on the outer periphery of the city and in a more planned necropolis area, the fact that the tombs at Sillyon are located inside or close to the city walls shows that the relationship between the city and the necropolis developed in a different model.

In the ancient city of Termessos, which is located in the Pisidia Region, the widely used *khamosorion* grave type stands out as the most suitable burial type for the topography. The *khamosorion* is similar to Sillyon in terms of the spread of tombs on rocky areas, its architectural harmony with the natural topography of Termessos and the relationship between the city and the necropolis.²⁴ The gradual settlement of necropolis²⁵ on the slopes allowed the urban fabric to take shape together with the cemeteries, thus establishing a continuous and visible spatial connection between the living and the dead. These rectangular burial trough carved into the bedrock are the expression of simplicity and functionality in tomb architecture. The tombs were covered with saddle-shaped lids that sometimes featured acroteria or arched forms.²⁶ In some, details such as head pillow protrusion, rounded edges or traces of metal clamp draws attention.²⁷ The dimensions of these tombs vary from those designed for a full human body to much smaller examples.²⁸

The *khamosorion* tomb structures, which are widespread in Cilicia, especially in the mountainous areas around Olba,²⁹ show remarkable similarities with those at Sillyon in both form and layout. In Cilicia, tombs were mostly carved into steep rock slopes, rectangular in form, and covered with plain lids. Although some of these tombs are decorated with triangular pediments or reliefs, the vast majority are unadorned and plain. This simplicity is also observed in the Sillyon examples.

23 Büyükyörük and Tibet 2000, 115-52, graves D3-5, 7, D2, D1 and D6, D8.

24 Akarca 1972, 82; Çelgin 1990, 40.

25 Çelgin 1990, 80-85.

26 Çelgin 1990, 149-50.

27 Çelgin 1990, 193.

28 Çelgin 1990, 193-94.

29 Akçay 2008, 33-34, cat. nos. 19-25, pl. 16, figs. 32-35; Erten and Özyıldırım 2008, 40.

Another remarkable feature of the Cilician³⁰ tombs is the preference for high areas suitable for defense. In this respect, it can be said that a similar settlement policy has been followed with the strategic position of the Sillyon. Especially when the graves around Olba³¹ are located close to the city walls, together with the grave types at Sillyon, it shows that the relationship between *city* and *necropolis* can take different forms.

Although *khamosorions* are common in Anatolia, the most intense and varied examples can be seen in the Caria region.³² This type of tomb, found in the necropolis of Alinda, is quite common in the region.³³ The *Khamosorions* here were found on the surface, and the upper cover of most of them have not survived or have been destroyed. The tombs are carved to every point where the main rock is favorable without showing a certain orientation. This situation reflects both the individual and non-standardized character of these graves as a practical choice that depends on the topography of the land. In some examples, podium-like elevations were built under the rock where the grave was located. Although most of the cover plates do not survive to the present day, it is understood that the grave is closed with several layer plates thanks to the plates preserved as *in situ*. The fact that some of them have holes for rainwater drainage indicates that these tombs were designed with environmental factors in mind and that functionality was also taken into account.³⁴ Alinda shows significant similarities with centres such as Herakleia at Latmos, Labraunda, Alabanda, and Iasos. The tombs in Alinda, with triangular but undecorated caps, are morphologically similar to examples from Herakleia at Latmos,³⁵ indicating that a common typological form prevails in both centres. The *khamosorions*³⁶ found in Labraunda are notable for their material characteristics date to the 5th century BC. This suggests that similar examples in Alinda may decline chronologically to the end of the classical period at the latest. Iasos³⁷ and

30 Hamilton 1842, 326; Cramer 1832, 73; Calder and Bean 1958, 7; Efe 1998, 3, 9.

31 Karaüzüm 2005, 38-42, pls. 27-32.

32 Çekilmez et al. 2022, 192-97.

33 Özkaya et al. 1999, 307, fig. 18; Özkaya and San 2000, 270; Çekilmez et al. 2022, 192-97.

34 Çekilmez et al. 2022, 192-97.

35 Blümel 2018, 218; Peschlow 1990; 1991; 1997.

36 Karlsson et al. 2013, 460-61, figs. 11-12; Henry 2005, 224-33, T02, T03, T04, T06, T07, T10, T11, T14, T27, T28, T31, T32, T34, T35, T36, TA, pls. 227-36; Henry 2010.

37 Henry 2005, 172, T06, pl. 179.

Alabanda³⁸ are also located on the surface, similar examples are encountered. In Iasos, especially the cover decorations are similar to the examples from Alinda. The striking element in the Carian examples is that the tombs are mostly located outside the city, away from public spaces. This presents a different practice from the integrated grave settlement within the city at Sillyon and requires comparative reflection in terms of the grave-city relationship.

The funerary architecture at Sillyon is similar to many other centers in the region, not only in form but also in its relationship with the natural topography. It is understood that the graves were opened not according to a specific plan but according to the position of the existing rock, which indicates a flexible settlement pattern shaped according to the possibilities offered by the topography rather than a uniform orientation scheme. A similar situation is observed in the tombs around Zengibar Castle in Isauria.³⁹ Here the tombs were carved into rocky outcrops and placed in sheltered and highly visible positions. Such location choices can be read not only as practical but also as symbolic status indicators. While the *khamosorion* and *arcosolium* tombs at Sillyon share typological similarities with the above-mentioned examples, they are also original in terms of topographical adaptation, orientation and their relationship with the urban fabric. How these grave types were applied differently in similar geographical conditions provides important clues for understanding both local burial traditions and regional architectural interactions.

Conclusion

The Southwest Necropolis of Sillyon is an important archaeological site that allows us to understand the historical, geographical and cultural structure of the city. The shaping of the grave settlements is remarkable in terms of urban planning and relationship with the natural environment. The location of the city on a high hill dominating the Antalya Plain has prepared the ground for the settlement of necropolis on a mountainous and rocky land. Rocky areas stand out as a natural choice not only for urban defense structures, but also for funerary architecture. Due to their natural defense advantages, these areas offer an example of mixed use, combining both military and religious functions. The tombs intertwined with the defense structures are considered as a part of this multifunctional structure and constitute a

unique settlement example where Sillyon's defense strategy and ritual practice are intertwined.

A comparison with the necropolies of Karaçallı, Attaleia, Isaura, and Termessos in the Pamphylia region and neighboring areas reveals that the Southwest Necropolis of Sillyon is unique in terms of grave architecture and layout, while also displaying chronological and regional commonalities.

It is noteworthy that the *khamosorion*-type tombs at Sillyon are stylistically similar to their counterparts at Karaçallı and Attaleia. Especially the burial trough shaped tomb form carved on the bedrock is directly related to the tomb architecture in Pamphylia with its simple structure and practical construction method. However, the fact that the tombs in Sillyon were located within the city walls, squeezed into the rugged and rocky terrain, reveals both a settlement preference compatible with the natural character of the land and a clear reflection of the practice of burial within the city. This is also observed in mountainous cities such as Termessos and Isaura, suggesting that Sillyon's tomb topography is in line with regional trends.

The fact that some of the *khamosorion* tombs in the Sillyon Necropolis are arranged in groups of two or three, although not as regular as the chamber tombs with planned *dromos* in Attaleia or the necropolis settlements in Isaura, points to a similar planning approach for the efficient use of the area according to the local topography. However, this arrangement is not as systematic as in the Karaçallı Necropolis, suggesting that the grave layout at Sillyon was shaped more according to the possibilities of the natural topography.

In addition, the fact that the *arcosolium* tomb at Sillyon was not shaped in a full-circle form in accordance with the natural rock form instead of the usual semicircular arch arrangement in terms of form shows that the standardization in the tomb architecture in the region was stretched depending on the natural environment. This practice is similar to the different ways in which *arcosolium* tombs were worked on the rocky terrain at Termessos and Isaura, proving that Sillyon shared the trend of architectural flexibility in neighboring regions. Nevertheless, although the loss of most of the *khamosorion* grave lids at Sillyon makes it difficult to assess the decorative richness of the tombs, the simplicity and functionality of the existing examples are in line with their Isaurian similar.⁴⁰ However, the Lycian effective cover types seen at Termessos were not found at Sillyon.

³⁸ Henry 2005, *catalog text* 48, T01, pl. 43.

³⁹ Altun 2016, 15-96.

⁴⁰ Altun 2016, 25, fig. 82.

This suggests that Sillyon remained in a simpler line in terms of tomb architecture.

In conclusion, the Southwest Necropolis of Sillyon shares various similarities with examples from Pamphylia and neighboring regions in terms of both architecture and spatial organization. However, the intra-urban necropolis reveals a distinctive local adaptation and a strong sense of urban belonging through its grave layout and simple architectural forms that harmonize with the rock topography. This demonstrates that the necropolis areas of Sillyon were shaped not only as burial grounds but also as integral components of the city's urban memory and social structure.

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A Preliminary Assessment of a Figural Terracotta Vessel Lid Fragment from Perge

Aytaç DÖNMEZ

Abstract

This study focuses on a figural vessel lid fragment unearthed during the 2024 excavations at the Perge stadium. The relief scene on the lid depicts *damnatio ad bestias*, a form of execution involving wild animals that was characteristic of the Roman Imperial and Late Antique periods. This find not only reflects local interpretations of Roman visual culture but also makes significant contributions to our understanding of spectacle culture in Pamphylia during Late Antiquity.

Keywords: Perge, stadium, execution, Roman visual culture, *damnatio ad bestias*

Öz

Bu çalışma, 2024 yılında Perge Stadyumu'nda gerçekleştirilen kazılarda ortaya çıkarılan figürlü bir kapak parçasına odaklanmaktadır. Kapak üzerinde betimlenen kabartma sahne, Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi ve Geç Antik Çağ'a özgü bir infaz biçimi olan, vahşi hayvanlar aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilen damnatio ad bestias cezasını tasvir etmektedir. Bu buluntu, Roma görsel kültürünün yerel yorumlarını yansıttasının yanı sıra, Geç Antik Çağ'da Pamphylia'daki gösteri kültürünün anlaşılmasına önemli katkılar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Perge, stadyum, infaz, Roma gösteri kültürü, *damnatio ad bestias*

Introduction

The stadium¹ at Perge is one of the most monumental and best-preserved structures of Roman Pamphylia. Measuring approximately 234 meters in length and built with a U-shaped plan, this structure was originally designed for athletic competitions (fig. 1). Constructed in the second half of the 1st century AD, the stadium remained in use until Late Antiquity (3rd-4th centuries AD); during this period, significant architectural modifications revealed that the sphendone section on the northern side of the structure had been transformed into an amphitheatre.²

The vessel lid fragment was found during the 2024 excavation season in the western wing of the running track

(dromos) of the Perge stadium, in a location very close to the amphitheatre area.³ It was unearthed beneath a dense sterile fill, within a layer generally dated to the 4th-5th centuries AD. The find spot is directly associated with architectural modifications indicating that the stadium was transformed into an amphitheatre during Late Antiquity. In this context, the lid strengthens its connection to arena culture both functionally and symbolically.

Description

The terracotta artifact has a convex upper surface and a flat, inward-curving underside, typical of standardized vessel lids attested at Perge.⁴ The fragment, over half of

1 For excavations in the stadium, see Abbasoğlu 1995, 600; Demirel 2019, 423-25; Özdizbay 2012, 78-79; Çokay-Kepçe et al. 2022, 252; 2024, 10; 2025, 207-8.

2 Dönmez 2025a.

3 Dönmez 2025b, 12, fig. 10.

4 Lids of identical form, as well as the moulds used for their production, have been recovered from several excavation areas within the ancient city of Perge. These findings indicate that the vessel lids were locally manufactured see Atik 1995, 107-8, fig. 40, 193-200; Firat 1999, 83-84, cat. nos. 830-43.



FIG. 1 Reused blocks in the centre of arena of Stadium-Amphitheatre. View from north (ABAAM Perge Excavation Archive).



FIG. 2 Lid fragment with a depiction of damnatio ad bestias (photograph ABAAM Perge Excavation Archive).

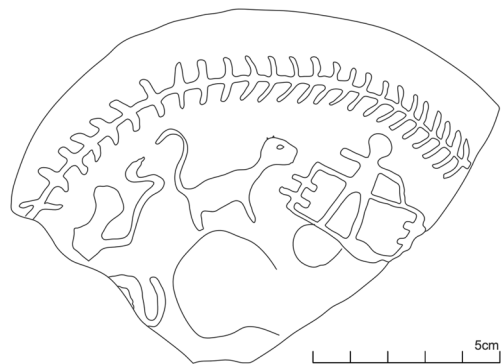


FIG. 3 Lid fragment with a depiction of damnatio ad bestias (drawing C. Yener).

which is missing, measures about 12.8 cm in diameter and 2-2.5 cm in average thickness (fig. 2). The upper surface bears a figural composition executed in high relief, produced using a mold technique. The clay fabric is fine-grained, well-fired, and exhibits a color range from light beige to reddish hues. Although minor surface erosion is present, the preservation of most scene details suggests that the layer in which it was found maintained relatively stable humidity and oxygen levels. It is also evident that the handle of the lid was broken off, as indicated by the remaining traces observed in the central area.

The relief composition consists of three main figural groups: On the far right stands a human figure

positioned on a high platform (fig. 3). While the head and body are rendered in an abstract manner, they are nonetheless clearly distinguishable. In the center, a wild animal is depicted with its front paws raised and its body arched backward. Based on its features, the animal can be identified as either a lion or a tiger. On the left side of the scene, another human figure is shown in an active stance, intervening in the encounter. This figure holds what appears to be a whip or lash and closely resembles the bestiarius—a beast-handler commonly seen in Roman arenas.

The composition closely parallels damnatio ad bestias iconography observed in Roman and Late Antique

mosaics and terra sigillata vessels from the western and eastern Roman world.⁵ However, no directly comparable example of this iconographic theme has been documented in Anatolia to date. In this regard, the Perge example represents both a unique contribution to the visual culture of Anatolia and a rare testament to the local reflections of Roman public executions such as damnatio ad bestias.

Conclusion

The lid fragment recovered from the Perge stadium presents an iconographic scene previously undocumented in the archaeological record of Anatolia. The depiction of damnatio ad bestias not only reveals local reflections of Roman execution and spectacle culture but also supports, within the framework of material culture, previously hypothetical interpretations regarding the installation of platforms and temporary structures in the Perge stadium-amphitheatre. This unique find significantly strengthens current reconstructions of Late Antique arena arrangements and demonstrates that such installations were not merely theoretical or architectural conjectures, but tangible elements visually and physically integrated into the spectacle tradition. In this context, it should also be emphasized that this study represents only a preliminary assessment and that similar fragments unearthed in the area will be examined in greater detail in future research.

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5 See examples: van den Hoek and Herrmann 2001, 232-23, 245, fig. 15; Cook 2012, 77, fig. 2; Kalinowski 2017, 115-28, figs. 1-8; Géraud 2018; Coleman 1990.

Cursing in the Marketplace: Revisiting an Early Byzantine Steelyard at the Pera Museum

Yavuz Selim GÜLER

Abstract

Suna and İnan Kırac Foundation at the Pera Museum houses a wide range of steelyards and weighing implements from the Anatolian Weights and Measures Collection. Among these objects, an Early Byzantine steelyard collection stands out for its unique inscription. This article examines the steelyard's physical characteristics and its weighing capacity and provides a preliminary epigraphic autopsy of the inscription on the steelyard's beam.

Keywords: steelyard, Constantinople, curse, Byzantine, measurement

Öz

Pera Müzesi'nde yer alan Suna ve İnan Kırac Vakfı, Anadolu Ağırlık ve Ölçüleri Koleksiyonu'na ait çok sayıda kantar ve tartı aletini barındırmaktadır. Bu eserler arasında, özgün yazıtı ile öne çıkan bir Erken Bizans kantar grubu dikkat çekmektedir. Bu makale, söz konusu kantarın fiziksel özelliklerini ve tartı kapasitesini incelemekte; ayrıca kantarın kirişi üzerindeki yazıtı ile ilgili öncül bir epigrafik inceleme sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kantar, Konstantinopolis, lanet, Bizans, ölçüm

In antiquity, risk, competition and the challenging environment of the marketplace led the merchants to take precautions. Merchants also resorted to curses, spells, and charms on papyri, personal belongings, and votive objects. They aimed to find success, gain profit, prosper in business ventures, and protect their workshops.¹ Curses and spells can be found on various objects in the Byzantine marketplace to ward off evil with demonic activities.

This article reevaluates a steelyard with a curse inscription from the Suna and İnan Kırac Foundation Anatolian Weights and Measures Collection at the Pera Museum² (fig. 1). Garo Kürkman introduced this equipment in the

2003 catalog *Anatolian Weights and Measures*, though he did not study the physical characteristics and the inscription in detail.³ This article examines this steelyard's physical characteristics as well as its weighing capacity and offers a preliminary epigraphic autopsy.

Physical Characteristics and Weighing Capacity

The steelyard⁴ consists of a bar, which is square in section. Three suspension hooks are attached to the

¹ Venticinque 2019.

² The steelyard was in the possession of Garo Kürkman, a collector of ancient weights and measures. The Kırac family acquired the steelyard from Kürkman in 2005 and donated it to Suna and İnan Kırac Foundation while establishing the Pera Museum. The museum registered the steelyard to the inventory of the Anatolian Weights and Measures Collection with the accession number PMA 589. Although its exact archaeological context is uncertain, it most plausibly originated in Anatolia or somewhere within the Eastern Mediterranean.

³ The catalog entry contains a simple description: "Steelyard, Early Byzantine, 5th-7th century, Bronze, length: 235 mm; height (hook): 55 mm, (inv. no.) KMA 631." See Kürkman 2003, 211, cat. no. 31.

⁴ *Ἐπαρχικὸν Βιβλίον (Book of the Eparch)* mentions a wide range of products weighed using steelyards. For example, the text mentions that grocers were entitled to sell products that could be weighed by steelyards, including meat, salted fish, meal, cheese, honey, olive oil, vegetables, butter, dry and liquid resin, cedar oil, camphor, linseed oil, earthenware, nails, bottles, gypsum, and bowls. On the other hand, products suitable for balance scales, such as those sold by perfumeries or linen drapers, were strictly forbidden for grocers to sell, see *Book of the Eparch* 13.1-13.2.

fulcrum.⁵ From the biconical finial of the bar hangs a bronze suspension apparatus.⁶ Although the omega-shaped yoke of the bronze suspension apparatus is appropriate for an Early Byzantine steelyard, without a secure archaeological context, it remains unclear whether the apparatus was specifically prepared for this steelyard in antiquity or assembled later in modern times. The counterweight and its hook are missing sections of the equipment. Corrosion and patina cover the steelyard set. In the absence of an archaeological context, the steelyard is relatively dated to between the 5th and 7th centuries CE.⁷

The steelyard bar consists of two unequal sections: the longer end of the beam⁸ on the left and the fulcrum bar⁹ on the right. The longer end of the beam features graduation marks on three sides. This section is rotated 45 degrees in relation to the fulcrum bar, facilitating the reading of the graduation marks.

The fulcrum bar contains three points where the suspension hooks are hung. The hooks are inserted into holes and fixed with pins. The bar has decorations on both ends: a pyramidal knob on the left and a biconical finial on the right. The pyramidal knob shows the final point to move the counterweight along the bar. On the other hand, the biconical finial is the section to which the suspension apparatus is attached to weigh the products.

The steelyard features calibration marks on three faces of the bar, allowing for a wide range of measurements. Retrograde Greek alphabetic numerals indicate major

5 The steelyard bar, which weighs a total of 176 grams, consists of four parts: (1) a bar with a maximum length of 237 mm and a maximum thickness of 13.5 mm; (2) fulcrum hook 1 for Face A, with a maximum dimension of 57 mm; (3) fulcrum hook 2 for Face B, with a maximum dimension of 52 mm; and (4) fulcrum hook 3 for Face C, with a maximum dimension of 61 mm.

6 The suspension apparatus, which weighs a total of 119.6 grams, consists of four parts: (1) a omega-shaped yoke measuring 29 mm in height and 48 mm in width; (2) a V-shaped swing measuring 54 mm in height and 35 mm in width; (3) two lengths of chain: (a) one with 12 twisted links measuring 143 mm in length, and (b) one with 11 twisted links measuring 139 mm in length; and (4) two load hooks with maximum dimensions of (a) 59 mm and (b) 56 mm.

7 For the “Typus Konstantinopel,” see Franken 1993, 89-94; It is important to note that steelyards with similar characteristics were used over several centuries; thus, archaeological context mainly indicates the period of use rather than the exact time of manufacture.

8 The long end of the beam is 149 mm.

9 Fulcrum bar is 86 mm in length.

increments, while vertical lines positioned between the alphabetic numerals mark minor calibrations. For clarity, I designate these three faces as Face A, Face B, and Face C, corresponding to weighing ranges from lightest to heaviest.

Face A indicates the smallest measurement range. The bar displays a series of short and long vertical lines, with the Greek letter Alpha (Α) marked on one of the longer lines to indicate one-libra. The shorter lines divide the space between the longer lines into twelve equal parts, each corresponding to one-uncia. A dotted cross marks every six-uncia interval. Accordingly, Face A allows measurements ranging from one-uncia to six-libra.

Face B is used for mid-range weight measurements and features short and long vertical lines. The Greek letters Gamma (Γ) and Epsilon (Ε), the latter in reverse orientation, appear on the longer lines to indicate three and five-libra, respectively. The shorter lines divide each libra into four intervals, each representing a three-uncia increment. Dotted crosses further divide each libra into two intervals, marking six-uncia increments.¹⁰ Therefore, Face B allows for measurements ranging from three to eight-libra.

Face C represents the largest weighing units and features only long vertical lines. The Greek letters Iota (Ι), Epsilon (Ε), and Kappa (Κ), the latter in reverse orientation, mark ten, fifteen, and twenty-libra, respectively. Each long vertical line corresponds to one-libra,¹¹ giving Face C a weighing capacity ranging from eight to twenty-two-libra.

Overall, the steelyard allows for weight measurements ranging from one uncia to twenty-two-libra. However, since the original counterweight and suspension apparatus are missing, the exact values represented by the calibration marks remain uncertain.

Inscription

The inscription on the steelyard¹² starts from the fulcrum bar and continues along Face D, inscribed in punched dots. The inscription is in four sections, which starts and ends with crosses:

+ΑΝΑΘΕΜ Α ΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΙΙΤΟ ΝΤΙΜΕ+

“+ Ἀναθέμ ἂ α ἂ τοῦ ἂ κλέ ἂ πτο ἂ ντιμε +!”

10 Every line is 5 mm.

11 Every line is 10 mm.

12 For the article examining 38 steelyard inscriptions from the Roman and Early Byzantine periods, see Güler 2025.



FIG. 1 A steelyard with a curse inscription from the Suna and İnan Kırac Foundation Anatolian Weights and Measures Collection at the Pera Museum.

The inscription can be translated as “Let him be accursed, he who steals me!” It gives the steelyard the quality of a speaking object and carries an apotropaic meaning. The syntax of the inscription is not perfect: an article in the genitive is combined with a noun in the dative. The inscription is partially legible, and in my opinion its intention was not to convey a message to the thief, but rather to provide the steelyard with a magical property and protect it from theft. The lack of correct word separation in the inscription gives it the appearance of nonsensical text at first glance, possibly imitating incantatory phrases.¹³ Therefore, the message may have been intended to be read only by the person who inscribed it, possibly the owner of the steelyard. The owner might have sought protection through the use of curses to protect this valuable weighing equipment.

To sum up, this article has re-evaluated an Early Byzantine steelyard at the Pera Museum regarding its physical characteristics, weighing capacity and epigraphic autopsy. This brief research, thus, revealed several of its properties that were previously neglected. This steelyard, dated to the 5th-7th centuries CE, contains three distinct weight ranges marked on the beam and has a capacity of weighing loads from one uncia up to twenty-two libra. Notably, the steelyard bears a curse inscription. Protections from evil typically take the form of invocations of God or crosses. However, in this case, the curse inscription, which can be translated as “Let him be accursed, he who steals me,” serves as an apotropaic device—intended to ward off evil in the marketplace and protect the steelyard from theft, as it was a valuable instrument used to weigh heavy loads. Further research in archaeological excavation inventories and museum collections may reveal understudied inscriptions on steelyards. A comprehensive study of these materials would enhance our understanding of protective measures applied to the marketplace instruments in the Byzantine period.

¹³ For curses and spells on marketplace objects, see Pitarakis 2016.

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Roman Provincial Coinage of Adada

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Abstract

Present paper is dealing with the general evaluation of the Roman provincial coinage of Adada and addressing some of the reverse types that seen on its coins. The city has autonomous civic coinage before Roman imperial era in the 1st century BC. The first provincial coins of Adada struck in the reign of Traianus and, even if intermittently, continuous until the end of the reign of Valerianus. During this period, the highest production of coins of Adada, in terms of the number of surviving coins, seems to have occurred during the reigns of Traianus, Marcus Aurelius, and Philippus II, respectively. The coins of this period display a rich variety of reverse types, with 17 different types identified. Consequently, the reverses of the coins feature depictions of Hellenic deities, as well as local and foreign gods and Roman types.

Keywords: Asia Minor, Pisidia, Adada, Roman provincial coinage, coin types

Öz

Bu makale, Adada kentinin Roma eyalet sikkelerini genel bir değerlendirmeye ele almakta ve sikkeler üzerinde görülen bazı arka yüz tiplerine odaklanmaktadır. Kent, MÖ 1. yy'da Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi'nden önce otonom sikke basmıştır. Adada'nın ilk eyalet sikkeleri Traianus döneminde basılmış olup, kesintili de olsa Valerianus'un saltanatının sonuna kadar devam etmiştir. Bu süreçte, günümüze ulaşan sikke sayısı dikkate alındığında, Adada sikkelerinin en yoğun üretiminin sırasıyla Traianus, Marcus Aurelius ve Philippus II dönemlerinde gerçekleştiği anlaşılmaktadır. Bu döneme ait sikkeler, 17 farklı tipin tespit edildiği zengin bir arka yüz çeşitliliği sergilemektedir. Buna bağlı olarak, sikkelerin arka yüzlerinde Hellenistik tanrıların yanı sıra yerel ve yabancı tanrılar ile Roma kökenli tiplerin tasvirleri yer almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Küçük Asya, Pisidia, Adada, Roma eyalet sikkeleri, sikke tipleri

Introduction

Adada, one of the Pisidian cities, is located near the village of Sağrak¹ in the Sütçüler district of the present-day

Isparta province, which is also known as Karabavlu² by the locals. The city is situated on the foothills of Mount Taurus at an altitude of 1200 m. Its geography is

1 Özsait 1985, 120-21. Büyükkolancı 1996, 35; 1998, 5; Mörel et al. 2022, 73.

The first investigation at Adada were conducted by A. Schönborn in 1841, but the city was incorrectly named Pednelissos (Ritter 1859, 572). Then, in 1884, J. R. S. Sterrett recorded some inscriptions during his surveys in the city and localized the city of Adada in the region of Karabavlu (Sterrett 1888, 283). Later, G. Hirschfeld and W. M. Ramsay, who visited the region in 1888, also localized the city to Karabavlu based on the inscriptions they found (Hirschfeld 1888, 587-90; Ramsay 1961, 446). Following an extended period of silence, the city was the subject of several research by Ü. Serdaroğlu in 1968, M. Büyükkolancı

in 1972 and B. Hümmüzlü Kortholt in 2014 (Serdaroğlu 1969, 51; Büyükkolancı 1972; Hümmüzlü Kortholt et al. 2015). In addition to these researches a 4-month excavation work was carried out in the city in 2004 under the direction of Isparta Museum Directorate and under the supervision of M. Büyükkolancı (Büyükkolancı 2013). Finally, research has been carried out by A. Mörel and his team since 2021, and excavations were carried out again in 2024 under the direction of the Isparta Museum Directorate and under the supervision of A. Mörel (Mörel et al. 2022; Mörel and Özdemir 2023).

2 For the name Karabavlu, see Büyükkolancı 1996, 35; 1998, 5.

characterized by sheltered surroundings, with sloping hills to the west and north, a flat ridge to the east, and a valley to the south. The city's strategic location at the intersection of Pisidia and Pamphylia has significant historical and geographical implications.³ The city's sheltered location has contributed to its remarkable preservation, making it one of the most intact cities not only in Pisidia but also in Asia Minor. This is evidenced by the well-preserved state of its public and religious buildings.⁴ The name of the city is first mentioned in the *Geographika* of Strabon, who quotes Artemidoros.⁵ The name of the city is subsequently mentioned in Ptolemy's *Geographika Hypegesis*.⁶ and Hierocles' *Synecdemus*,⁷ as well as in *Notitiae Episcopatum*⁸ and *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesias Constantinopolitane*.⁹ While the name of the city is mentioned as "Odada" in *Synecdemus*, it is mentioned as "Adada," "Dada" and "Atada" in later works.

Although we do not know when the city of Adada became a polis, an inscription found in Termessos indicating a treaty of "friendship and alliance" between the two cities suggests that it was a polis at least in the 2nd century BC.¹⁰ In fact, in the light of the Hellenistic buildings, epigraphic sources¹¹ and the autonomous coins of the city, it is possible to say that local traditions and Hellenic traditions intertwined and formed a synthesis in the city during this period.¹² It is understood that the city, which was within the borders of the Kingdom of Pergamon, remained inside the borders of Provincia Asia, which was established in 129 BC. Adada, which was

included within the borders of Provincia Galatia (25 BC) with the Roman Imperial Period, like other cities, had a considerably increased level of prosperity, especially during the reigns of Emperors Traianus (AD 98-117), Hadrianus (AD 117-138) and Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161), and this situation was reflected in the construction activities in the city.¹³ Emperor Diocletianus (AD 284-305) divided the imperial lands into dioceses and established Provincia Pisidia,¹⁴ which covered the south of Provincia Galatia within the borders of the Asiana Diocese and whose capital was Antiokheia, and the city of Adada was also within the borders of this province. Adada continued its existence in the Byzantine period and became a bishopric center by being included in the church organization established in the 4th century AD together with the big cities in the region.¹⁵ The city participated in the councils of Nikaia in 325 AD, Constantinopolis (Ananios) in 381 AD, Khalkedon (Eutropios) in 451 AD, Constantinopolis (Iohannes) in 692 AD and Nikaia (Nikephoros) in 787 AD.¹⁶ By the 9th century, the settlement is no longer mentioned in the records, indicating that it began to decline and eventually ceased to exist.¹⁷

Roman Provincial Coins

While the first coins of the Adada were minted in the 1st century BC,¹⁸ its Roman provincial coins were minted during the reign of Traianus (AD 98-117) and, albeit intermittently, continued until the end of the reign of Valerianus (AD 253-260).¹⁹ Accordingly, the provincial coins of Adada were minted in the names of 19 emperors, empresses and caesars (graphic 1). There are 23 obverse and 24 reverse dies identified by the die study upon approximately 150 coins recorded. According to both the number of surviving coins and the number of dies identified, the most intensive production of coins of Adada, as in the other cities in Pisidia, was during

3 Büyükkolancı 2013, 200.

4 Büyükkolancı 1998, 5; 2013, 199.

5 Strab. XII.7.2.

6 Ptol. *Geog.* V.5.8.

7 Hierocles, *Synecdemus et Notitiae Graecae Episcopatum*, 674.4.

8 *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesias Constantinopolitane*, I.424; III.377; VII.203; VIII.479; IX.387; X.491; XIII.341.

9 *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesias Constantinopolitane*, I.382; II.448; III.456; IV.397; VII.457; IX.340; X.397; XIII.404.

10 TAM III.1, 7, no. 2; Magie 1950, 264. The inscription, probably dated between 190-164 BC, stipulates a mutual assistance agreement between the two cities to protect their democracy from external threats. D. Magie suggests that the treaty may have been established in response to an attack by the Pergamon kings or a potential attempt at tyranny.

11 Three inscriptions, dated to the Hellenistic era, discovered in the city that reveals the names of mercenaries. For the inscriptions, see Sterrett 1888, 283, nos. 402-3.

12 Brandt 2002, 393.

13 Büyükkolancı 1998, 7; Mörel et al. 2022, 74.

14 Özsait 1985, 101-2.

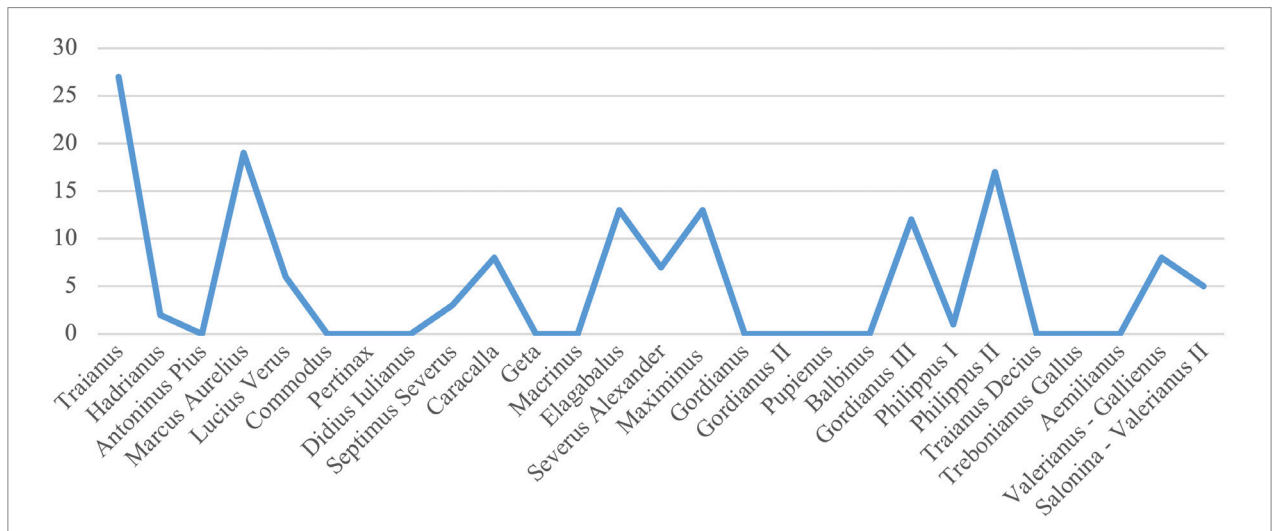
15 Büyükkolancı 1998, 9; 2013, 199.

16 Belke and Mersich 2004, 170. The bishops representing the city of Adada were Ananios at the Council of Constantinopolis in 381, Eutropios at the Council of Khalkedon in 451, Iohannes at the Council of Constantinopolis in 692, and Nikephoros at the Council of Nikaia in 787.

17 Büyükkolancı 1998, 9; 2013, 199.

18 For the Hellenistic coinage of Adada, see BMC Pisidia 171, nos. 1-4, pl. 30.1-30.3, Aulock 1977, 52, nos. 1-37; SNG Turkey 6.1.1, nos. 1-3.

19 Aulock 1977, 53-59, nos. 38-116.



GRAPHIC 1 Numerical distribution of Roman provincial coins of Adada by emperors.

the Severan period (8 obverse and 10 reverse dies). On the other hand, when considered based on emperors, the periods of Traianus and Marcus Aurelius appear to be the periods when coin production in the city was at its utmost (3 obverse dies each). As mentioned above, the increase in the level of prosperity and construction activities in the city in the late 1st-mid 2nd century also affected its economic development. However, while the reflection of this situation is apparent in the coins minted during the rule of Traianus and Marcus Aurelius, it is not evident in the surviving examples of coins minted in the name of Hadrianus (graphic 1). The decline that started with the reign of Lucius Verus was replaced by a significant increase in the reign of Philippus II, which can be attributed to the period between AD 235-284 in the Roman Empire, which has been attributed to the “3rd century crisis.” This period is described as a deep economic, political and military crisis. Conversely, the low level of coin production in Adada, particularly during the Severan and Gordianus III periods, stands in marked contrast to the generally higher levels observed in the Pisidian region.²⁰ The city’s lowest coin production is observed during the reigns of Hadrianus and Philippus I.

Obverse and Reverse Types and Legends

The obverses of the coins feature the busts of the emperor or empress, accompanied by their titles and

²⁰ For a comparison with the coin production of Komama and other Roman colonies in Pisidia during the Severan and Gordian III periods, see Köker 2024, 162. For the coin production of Kremna during the same periods, see Akgönül 2025, 166, 194.

names, while the reverses show depictions of local, Hellenic, and Roman gods and goddesses of the city pantheon, along with architectural elements such as altars and temples, and the ethnic of “ΑΔΑΔΕΩΝ.” The emperor’s busts on the obverse of the coins are depicted facing to the right, wearing laurel wreaths, draped and / or cuirassed, while the empress’ busts are diademed and draped, except for the series with two busts facing each other minted during the reigns of Valerianus and Gallienus. Beginning with the reign of Caracalla, the busts are depicted from the rear of the right shoulder. On the obverse of coins issued in the names of Valerianus I-Gallienus (as Augustus) and Salonina-Valerianus II (as Caesar), the two confronting busts symbolize the concord of emperors and caesars (figs. 1-2).

The reverse types of the coins of Adada display a remarkably diverse repertoire. As illustrated in table 1, there are 17 different reverse types, including Artemis Pergaia, Asklepios, Athena, Dionysos, Dioskuroi, Hekate Triformis, Sarapis, Silenos, Goddess Tykhe, Zeus, Emperors, dexiosis, palm branch, altar, and temple. As is evident, while Hellenic deities predominate in the city pantheon, local and foreign gods, as well as architectural types, are also represented. It is evident that the type of Dioskuroi is significant among these. On the other hand, Artemis Pergaia, Sarapis, and Zeus are used more frequently than the others. Rather than addressing the entire pantheon of the city, it would be more appropriate to discuss the types that emphasize both religious and the social and economic life of the city.

Dioskuroi, the most frequently used reverse type on the coins of Adada, have an important cult both in the city

Emperors/ Empresses → Types ↓	Traianus	Hadrianus	Marcus Aurelius	Lucius Verus	Septimius Severus	Caracalla	Elagabalus	Iulia Maesa	Severus Alexander	Maximinus	Iulia Mamaea	Gordianus III	Tranquillina	Philippus I	Philippus II	Valerianus-Gallienus	Salonina-Valerianus II
Artemis Pergaia					X		X	X	X								
Asklepios							X										
Athena														X	X		
Dionysos								X									
Dioskuroi	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X						X	
Hekate																	X
Sarapis			X			X	X	X									
Silenos										X							
Goddess			X	X													
Tykhe												X					
Zeus	X		X	X							X						
Emperors			X														
Cista						X											
Dexiosis						X											
Palm branch										X							
Altar													X				
Temple								X								X	

TABLE 1 Conspectus of the Roman provincial coins of Adada by emperors and the reverse types.

and in the Pisidia region.²¹ This type used on the reverses of the coins under the names of Traianus, Hadrianus, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Severus Alexander and Valerianus I, are depicted standing facing each other, with their heads sometimes bare and sometimes with a Phrygian cap, and with a star above their success. This standard pose is varied by the different objects they hold in one hand besides the scepter or sword in the other, and by the depiction of a bukranon or crescent above their heads instead of the stars we see in one series. Accordingly, in the first type they are depicted holding a scepter and cloak (fig. 3), in the second type a scepter and shield (fig. 4), in the third type a spear and sword (fig. 5), in the fourth type a handshake leaning on their spears with a crescent moon between their heads (fig. 6), and in the fifth type they are depicted holding a scepter and an unidentified object with a bukranon between their heads (fig. 7).

Artemis Pergaia is another type that is widely worshipped in Pisidia²² and frequently used on the coins

of Adada. The baiylos of the goddess is depicted in an aedicula with two columns on the coins of the city minted in the names of Septimius Severus, Elagabalus and Severus Alexander (fig. 8).

Sarapis, one of the most widely worshipped foreign cults in the region,²³ is depicted on the coins of the city with his bust dressed and wearing a kalathos (fig. 9), as well as sitting on a throne facing left, with his right hand extended to Kerberos at his feet and holding a scepter in his left hand (fig. 10). The depiction of Sarapis on the coins of Adada minted in the names of Marcus Aurelius, Caracalla, Elagabalus and Iulia Maesa.

On the coins of Adada minted in the name of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, the goddess is depicted standing facing left with a kalathos on her head, extending her right hand forward and holding a cornucopia in her left hand (fig. 11). The cornucopia in her hand and the kalathos point to common iconographic features with Tykhe. However, unlike the goddess of Adada, Tykhe is holding a rudder. In this case, although it is impossible to make a definitive interpretation of the

21 For the cult of Dioskuroi in Pisidia, see Karayaka 2007, 134-41; Talloen 2015, 71-72.

22 For the cult of Artemis Pergaia in Pisidia, see Karayaka 2007, 99-105; Talloen 2015, 181.

23 For the cult of Sarapis in Pisidia, see Karayaka 2007, 212-14.

identity of the goddess without any other attributes and written evidence, there is no doubt that she was a goddess associated with fertility.

The type of two emperors facing each other, which is seen only in a series minted in the name of Marcus Aurelius on the coins of Adada, is also seen on the coins minted by Selge.²⁴ This type, depicting Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus shaking hands, is accompanied by the ethnic ΑΔΑΔΕΩΝ and the legend ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑ CΕΒΑCΤΩΝ, which apparently indicates the harmony in the joint reign of the two emperors (fig. 12). A similar type, also indicating the concept of harmony / agreement, is the dexiosis, two hands shaking.²⁵ This type, which appears only on a series minted in the name of Caracalla, does not bear any legends other than the ethnic, but probably indicates the harmonious rule between Caracalla and Geta (fig. 13).

The type depicting a single palm branch (fig. 14), which appears on the coins of the city only in a series minted in the name of Maximinus, may indicate a victory and thus Roman supremacy or prosperity.²⁶ It is possible that this reverse type reflects Maximinus' triumphant return from the Germanic Campaign after he was crowned emperor in AD 235.²⁷

Apart from the types seen in table 1, it is necessary to draw attention to the architectural depictions on the city coins. The first of these is the depiction of an altar, seen only in a series minted in the name of Empress Tranquillina. This type shows an altar on a podium with a single palm branch in a cup on the facade (if not standing in front of the altar) and a crescent moon pointing upwards on top which flanked by two stars. The crescent and star depictions seen in this type are also common in the depictions of Dioskouroi on the coins of the city, so this type is probably related to this cult (fig. 15). However, no comments have been made about this coin type in the studies on the cults in the region so far. Perhaps the excavations in the site will reveal new data on this podium altar.

24 For the coins of Selge, see RPC IV.3, no. 3500 (temporary); RPC IV.3, no. 4960 (temporary). These coins also have the same, ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑ CΕΒΑCΤΩΝ legend.

25 Although the dexiosis scene may seem simple in its essence, it carries different and deeper meanings in Greek and Roman iconography. Especially on coins and reliefs, it was used to signify friendship, agreement, unity, treaty between states or cities, military victory or political unity. For more detailed explanation, see Tosun 2022.

26 Nussbaum 2021, 470-72.

27 Drinkwater 2008, 30.

Temples have an important place among the surviving buildings in the city of Adada.²⁸ As such, it has a privileged place in the Pisidia region. However, there are almost no depictions of these temples on the coins of the city, an example of which can be found only on a series minted in the name of Valerian II (fig. 16). The reverse of this series depicts a temple on the stylobate in the Ionic order with six columns depicted with very high and wide pedestals, with the architrave block indicated, and with a pediment indicated by two triangles, one small which decorated with Pisidian shield, and one large, in perspective. The legend ΤΡΑΙΑΝΕΙΟΝ in exergue, indicating that this was a temple dedicated to the Emperor Traianus.²⁹

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28 At least five temples have been identified in the city. These temples provide important data not only architecturally, but also culturally, religiously and politically. The city's integration into the Roman imperial system was possible thanks to the coexistence of the cult of local gods and the imperial cult. Research show that the temples in question were dedicated to the God Emperors, Emperor Traianus, Aphrodite and Zeus Megistos Sarapis. For detailed information, see Büyükkolancı 1996, 37-55. For the Temple of Emperors and Temple of Zeus Megistos Sarapis also see Mörel and Özdemir 2023, 76.

29 The inscription in the façade of the temple, which the biggest temple in the city, reveals that it's dedicated to emperor Traianus and built between AD 110-114. For more information, see Büyükkolancı 1996, 38-41; Köse 2017, 82.

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PLATE



FIG. 1
Gallienus – Valerianus II
42 mm, 32.60 g
RPC X, no. 63310.



FIG. 2
Salonina – Valerianus II
28 mm, 13.14 g
RPC X, no. 63312.



FIG. 3
Traianus (98-117)
18 mm, 7.72 g
RPC III, no. 2810.



FIG. 4
Traianus (98-117)
18 mm, 7.72 g
RPC III, no. 2810.



FIG. 5
M. Aurelius (161-180)
19 mm
RPC IV.3, 7279 (Temp.).



FIG. 6
S. Alexander (222-235)
20 mm, 5.13 g
RPC VI, no. 5900 (Temp.).



FIG. 7
Gallienus-Valerianus II
(253-260)
42 mm, 32.6 g
RPC X, no. 63310.



FIG. 8
Elagabalus (218-222)
12 mm, 1.25 g
RPC VI, no. 5897 (Temp.).



FIG. 9
M. Aurelius (161-180)
20 mm, 6.74g, ky. 6
RPC IV.3, no. 7278 (Temp.).



FIG. 10
Elagabalus (218-222)
25 mm, 8.34 g
RPC VI, no. 5895 (Temp.).



FIG. 11
M. Aurelius (161-180)
16 mm, 2.73 g
RPC IV.3, no. 7282 (Temp.).



FIG. 12
M. Aurelius (161-180)
32 mm, 20.21g
RPC IV.3, no. 7276 (Temp.).



FIG. 13
Caracalla (197-217)
25 mm, 5.70 g
CNG Auc.137, 87.



FIG. 14
Maximinus (235-238)
19 mm, 5.42 g
RPC VI, no. 5903.



FIG. 15
Tranquillina
23 mm, 8.08 g, ky. 12
RPC VII.2, no. 2440.



FIG. 16
Gallienus- II. Valerianus
32.9 mm, 24.62 g
RPC X, no. 63311.

A Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seal from Side

Feriřtah SOYKAL ALANYALI*

Abstract

In this article, a Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal unearthed in the Harbour Agora of Side is examined in detail with regard to its find context, iconography, and stylistic features. The Lamassu depicted at the center of the seal, flanked by two Apkallu figures, forms a composition that reflects the apotropaic and cosmic aspects of the religious worldview characteristic of the period. The use of chlorite as the seal's material indicates that its owner belonged to a high social status. Stylistic and iconographic comparisons allow the seal to be dated to the Late Neo-Assyrian Period (700-650 BC). The limited assemblage of finds from Side dating to the 8th-6th centuries BCE demonstrates that the city maintained intensive cultural and commercial interactions, particularly with centers to the east. The seal in question adds yet another piece of evidence to these connections.

Keywords: Pamphylia, Side, Neo-Assyrian period, seal iconography

Öz

Bu makalede, Side Liman Agorası'nda ele geen bir Yeni Asur silindir mührü; buluntu baėlamı, ikonografisi ve stil özellikleri çerçevesinde ayrıntılı biçimde incelenmektedir. Mührün merkezinde betimlenen Lamassu figürü, iki yanında yer alan Apkallu tasvirleriyle birlikte, döneme özgü dinsel dünya görüşünün apotropeik ve kozmik yönlerini yansıtan bir kompozisyon oluşturmaktadır. Mührün kloritten yapılmıř olması, sahibinin yüksek toplumsal statüsüne iřaret etmektedir. Stil ve ikonografik karşılařtırmalar, mührün Geç Yeni Asur Dönemi'ne (MÖ 700-650) tarihlendirilmesini mümkün kılmaktadır. Side'de MÖ 8.-6. yy.'lara tarihlenen buluntular sınırlı olmasına raėmen kentin özellikle doėudaki merkezlerle yoğun kültürel ve ticari iliřkiler sürdürdüėünü göstermektedir. İncelenen bu mührü, söz konusu baėlantılara dair kanıtlara bir yenisini daha eklemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pamphylia, Side, Yeni Asur, mührü ikonografisi

Introduction

This article examines a cylinder seal unearthed in the Harbor Agora of Side in terms of its find context, iconographic features, and stylistic characteristics, while also assessing its significance and place within the city's history in the context of Side's historical development and regional interactions.

Find context

The seal discussed in this study was discovered in the Harbor Agora, in privately owned parcel located within the boundaries of the Urban and Third-Degree

Archaeological Site of the ancient city of Side (plan 1). Although a large portion of the Harbor Agora is now concealed beneath modern building blocks, excavations have revealed its layout to a degree sufficient for the identification of its plan features.¹ These findings have demonstrated the existence of a second agora in the city,

¹ The Harbor Agora of Side is a public building situated in the southern part of the city, immediately north of the ancient harbor, preserved almost at foundation level. The agora, whose plan can be discerned in outline, is enclosed on the west, south, and north by double rows of back-to-back shops. The East Stoa opens directly onto the street leading to the Harbor Baths, a layout suggesting that the monumental entrance was situated on the eastern side. At the center of the agora stands a square-plan podium set on a circular foundation wall. Based on its architectural elements, the structure is dated to the mid-2nd century CE.

* I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Kemalettin Köroėlu for sharing his knowledge and insights following the discovery of the Side seal.



FIG. 1 Aerial photograph of Block 802, Parcel 2 after excavation (Side Excavation Archive).



in addition to the Upper Agora. The seal was recovered during excavations in parcel 2 of block 802, one of the many parcels located within the Harbor Agora. This particular parcel lies in the northeastern corner of the agora. The artifact was found in a sondage (N. Sond. 4 / 23) opened in front of the south wall of a shop (Room A) situated immediately behind the agora's north stoa, within a layer (SB2) dated to the Late Antique period² (plan 1, fig. 1).

Description

The cylindrical seal is carved from chlorite, a black and hard stone. Its surface is generally worn, with occasional breaks and losses. The seal measures 4.7 cm in height, 1.8-2.0 cm in diameter, and has a perforation diameter of 0.4 cm. The perforation drilled along the axis of the cylinder suggests that the seal was suspended from a cord around the neck or attached to a belt, indicating that it was intended for personal use (fig. 2). The scene, composed of three figures, features at its center a human-headed, winged, bull-bodied figure with five legs. Flanking this central figure are two standing, bearded, long-haired, winged figures in garments, each holding different attributes (drawing 1, fig. 2). The figures almost entirely fill the scene and are placed in close proximity to one another. The central figure is depicted larger and more imposing than the others, indicating a hierarchical arrangement within the scene. Horizontal lines at the upper and lower edges frame the figural composition. While the upper border follows a straight line, the lower border exhibits a wavy form.³

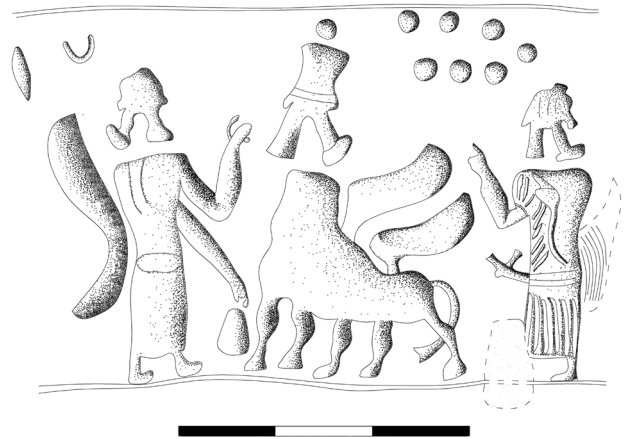
Of the three figures in the composition, the central human-headed, winged, bull-bodied, five-legged figure is shown striding toward the figure on its right. The head

2 Excavations in N. Sond. 4 / 23 began at ca. 3.38 m, corresponding to the floor level of Room A, and concluded upon reaching bedrock at 0.73 m. It was observed that the foundation wall of the north stoa rests directly upon the bedrock. In this sondage, located at approximately 2.65 m, a total of nine stratigraphic units (SB1-9) were identified. The ceramics recovered from SB4-SB7 indicate that the construction of the foundation wall has a *terminus post quem* in the mid-2nd century CE. Ceramics from SB1-SB3 point to a major repair undertaken during the 7th century CE. The cylinder seal discussed in this article was recovered from SB2 (3.09-2.85 m). The ceramics from SB1-SB3 comprise a variety of material dating from the early 2nd century CE to the 7th century CE.

3 For different border arrangements, see Collon 2001, 17: "Single-line borders at both ends, especially those in the linear style, are a characteristic feature of Syrian and Assyrian cylinder seals."



FIG. 2 Cylinder seal and impression on pilaster (Side Excavation Archive).



DRAWING 1 Drawing of the cylinder seal (Side Excavation Archive).

and body are rendered in profile. With a long beard and hair falling to the shoulders, the figure reflects Assyrian male iconography.⁴ Upon its head is a tall headdress that widens slightly toward the top; at its uppermost part is a circular motif, probably representing a star, clearly emphasizing the figure's divinity. Two wings—one in front, the other behind—are depicted on its back, creating a sense of perspective within the scene.

The winged figure on the left is also shown with a long beard and shoulder-length hair. The right arm is bent at the elbow and raised upward, while the left hand holds a bucket. The figure wears an arched, ankle-length garment. The curved or rounded object held in the raised right hand cannot be precisely identified.

The winged figure on the right likewise has a long beard and shoulder-length hair. The right arm is bent at the

4 For the depiction of male heads in different periods of Assyrian art, see Barnett and Lorenzini 1975, 22-26.

elbow and slightly inclined forward. The garment is rendered with fine, diagonal folds on the upper body and thick, vertical folds on the skirt. The figure holds a bow in the left hand, while the hilt of a sword is visible at the waist. Only the outer contours of the wing are discernible, with the feathers partly legible. The figure's foremost leg is broken and missing.

In the upper register of the composition are seven circular motifs representing stars, arranged in a row, along with a crescent-shaped moon motif and, adjacent to it, a disk—possibly representing the sun—depicted as astral symbols.

Iconographic and Stylistic Evaluation

In Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian cylinder seals, scenes of hunting, pursuit, racing, ritual, offering, and cult activities, as well as depictions of hybrid creatures and antithetical compositions, are frequently encountered.⁵ In the Side example, two figures positioned antithetically flank a centrally placed human-headed, winged bull figure.

Such figures are generally referred to as *Lamassu*, though they are occasionally termed *Aladlammu*, *Šedu*, or *Apsasu*; in some studies, a more neutral designation—"human-headed winged bull"—is preferred.⁶

According to Assyrian evidence, the primary role of the Lamassu was to activate protective and watchful powers for the king. For this reason, they were positioned in pairs at palace entrances, serving as both physical and symbolic guardians. While the precise origins of their protective nature and their specific association with royal authority remain uncertain, it is generally accepted that the Lamassu is a Neo-Assyrian creation.⁷

5 Niederreiter 2020, 18-20.

6 This designation, written in Sumerian as *ALAD.LAMMA.MEŠ* and read in Akkadian as *aladlam(m)u*, is attested in two Neo-Assyrian building inscriptions from the reign of Esarhaddon, documented in the city of Nineveh; see Ritter 2011, 69; Laroche 1980, 446-49. For "human-headed winged bull," see Collon 2001, 10.

7 Hybrid creatures with bull or lion bodies, wings, and human heads emerged specifically in the Neo-Assyrian period. These figures appear in palaces and temples, especially between the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II and Esarhaddon, and were widely employed in Nimrud, Khorsabad, and Nineveh. More than 40 examples were present in Sennacherib's palace. Although their production ceased after Ashurbanipal, the tradition was continued by the Achaemenids, reinterpreted in Pasargadae during the reign of Cyrus I. In Persian architecture they were used not only in gateways but also on column capitals, extending their protective function to the entire building; see Ritter 2011, 68.

Although Lamassu figures rarely appear in Mesopotamian seal imagery, in certain Neo-Assyrian seals they are depicted as a threat: hunted by archers, struck down by heroes, or subdued by deities. Such scenes are often connected to narratives such as the slaying of the Bull of Heaven—sent by Ishtar—by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, or the subjugation of chaotic forces by the gods in the *Enūma Eliš*⁸ myth. Based on these traditions, N. C. Ritter argues that the Lamassu was originally perceived as a destructive force, later tamed by the gods and transformed into a protective figure serving the divine order.⁹

In another Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal,¹⁰ the Lamassu is represented as part of the divine order: flanking a baldachin, these hybrid beings accompany a central scene in which a deity, standing upon a bull, receives an offering from a human figure. The Side example reflects a similar approach: here, the Lamassu is not portrayed as a threat, but rather as a calm and majestic central figure, a guardian and protector.¹¹

The winged figures flanking Lamassu are often identified as Apkallu. As with the Lamassu, some scholars¹² prefer the more neutral term "apotropaic beings" for these figures. The term Apkallu, of Sumerian origin, means "great sage" and refers in Mesopotamian mythology to semi-divine beings who transmitted divine wisdom to humanity. In these traditions, particularly in the antediluvian (pre-Flood) era, the "seven Apkallu" were said to have been sent by the god Enki to teach humankind writing, temple construction, and various forms of cultural knowledge. Apkallu figures also employed Enki's wisdom to repel evil spirits.¹³

In the Neo-Assyrian period, Apkallu were depicted in the palaces of Nineveh and Nimrud as protective spirits—either human-headed figures wearing fish skins or bird-headed winged beings.¹⁴ The bucket and cone symbols they hold are associated with purification and fertility, and these figures served an apotropaic function, protecting kings and sacred spaces from evil spirits.¹⁵ The apotropaic beings flanking the Lamassu are typically defined by their bucket-and-cone attributes; even when

8 Ritter 2011, 71. For more detailed information, see Maul 2000.

9 Ritter 2011, 72.

10 Collon 2001, 142, no. 277 (BM WA 132257).

11 Ritter 2011, 72, fig. 9.

12 Collon 2001, 6, nr. 179, 181, 202, 283.

13 Krebernik 2019, 62; Bondzhev 2024, 33-40.

14 Ritter 2011, 72, fig. 9.

15 Wiggermann 1994, 2004.

these objects are absent, their posture suggests that they should be holding them. As in the Side example, they usually appear in pairs, most often in cult scenes.¹⁶

In the Side seal, the winged figure on the left holds a bucket in one hand and a conical object—possibly a *mullilu* (cone)—in the other. This object is considered one of the Apkallu's principal attributes, symbolizing their role in purification associated with sacredness.¹⁷ Such symbols emphasize the Apkallu's devotion to Enki, their wisdom, and their protective role.

The Apkallu on the right is depicted holding a bow, with a sword at the waist. This suggests that the figure represents not only wisdom but also the active defense against malevolent beings, demons, and forces that disrupt order. In this way, the Apkallu is portrayed as both a transmitter of divine wisdom and a protector of divine order. Such depictions, especially when placed at palace entrances or thresholds to sacred spaces, allude to the safeguarding of royal authority against both physical and supernatural threats.

In the upper register of the scene, on the right, are seven circular motifs,¹⁸ and on the left a crescent-shaped moon symbol and a disk—possibly the sun. The seven dots, frequently seen in the upper field of Neo-Assyrian seals, are generally understood to represent the Pleiades¹⁹ (*Akkadian: Sebetu*—“the Seven”), a celestial cluster with both mythological and cosmic significance in the Neo-Assyrian period. These seven divine beings were regarded as protectors combating evil forces and have also been associated with the “Seven Sages” (*Apkallu*). In some seals, as in the Side example, they are depicted as armed figures or accompanied by star symbols. With few exceptions, such motifs appear only in the upper half of the seal. In the Side example, they are arranged

horizontally in two rows: two groups of three dots, with a single dot to the left.

Similarly, the crescent moon motif is another frequent cosmic symbol in Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals. The moon is associated with Sin, one of the principal deities of the Mesopotamian pantheon, evoking his role as the nocturnal observer, regulator of time, and a divine force connected with wisdom and divination. This symbol underscores that the figures on the seal are under divine protection.

General Assessment and Conclusion

The Lamassu figure on the Side seal, flanked symmetrically by two Apkallu, corresponds to an apotropaic composition widely encountered in Neo-Assyrian iconography. The linear borders framing the scene at both the upper and lower edges are a typical feature of the linear compositional arrangement frequently observed in Neo-Assyrian seal art. The depiction of the Apkallu in pairs, standing in a protective stance on either side of the Lamassu, invites interpretation as a symbolic representation of the safeguarding of sacred spaces, palace entrances, or personal protection. The five-legged rendering of the Lamassu, the tall headdress it wears, and the star motif upon that headdress indicate that it is not only a protective being but also possesses a semi-divine quality.

The crescent moon and the seven-dot motifs—common elements in Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals—carry not only astronomical but also religious and symbolic significance. As in the Side example, these motifs are generally placed in the upper portion of the seal, above cult scenes, and are associated with celestial deities (Sin and the *Sebetu*). Their arrangement conveys the impression that the depicted figures act under divine sanction and that the scene unfolds on a cosmic plane. From the reign of Ashurbanipal II onward, these iconographic elements became standardized in seal imagery.

Taken together, these stylistic and iconographic features allow the Side seal to be dated to the Late Neo-Assyrian period, specifically between ca. 700 and 650 BCE. Such seals are known to have been worn suspended from a cord around the neck or attached to a belt. While the identity, status, and role of the owner can only be hypothesized, the presence at the center of the Lamassu—protector of royal authority—flanked by Apkallu who perform both sacred purification and military protection, strongly suggests that the bearer was a high-ranking Assyrian under divine protection. This seal may have functioned less as a means of authenticating commercial documents and more as an apotropaic

16 Collon 2001, 6. See also Collon 2001, 6, nos. 179, 181, 202, and 283 for winged apotropaic figures carrying a bucket and cone. In these examples, the figures are shown flanking a central tree.

17 For depictions in Neo-Assyrian seals of sprinkling water on a sacred tree, see Collon 2001, 6, pls. 12, 151, 154 and 14, 179, 182.

18 Collon 2001, 14. For examples arranged horizontally in two rows of three dots with one dot to the right, see nos. 157, 200, 215, 248, 280, and 369.

19 Collon 2001, 14. Here Collon shares the view of Van Buren: “These seven dots, at least in the earlier periods, represented the ‘seven small stones’ used to determine the fate of individuals or for purposes of divination, and symbolized the seven ancient cities—Ur, Nippur, Eridu, Kullab, Keš, Lagaš, and Šuruppak. These seven cities belonged to the Seven Sages.”; Seidl 2003; Fasching 1998, 186-87.

emblem representing political and religious status. The Side seal recalls the basalt krater discovered by A. M. Mansel in the Temple precinct during earlier excavations.²⁰ Mansel argued that the krater must have been brought to Side by sea from the Southeastern Anatolia-Northern Syria region and, following an extensive comparative analysis, dated it to between the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. This basalt krater is nearly contemporary with the seal, showing close affinities with it in terms of both chronology and provenance. Another seal known from Side should also be mentioned. According to reports, it was acquired in Side from a local farmer by the Italian researchers R. Paribeni and P. Romenelli. The pyramidal seal, made of red chalcedony, bears a suspension hole at its narrowing upper end. On its left side two horizontal lines are visible; above them appear the spade (bel-marru) of Marduk and two styluses representing his son Nabu, the god of wisdom and writing. The scene is most plausibly interpreted as a cult image of the principal Babylonian deities Marduk and Nabu. The three parallel lines in front, interrupted at the center, likely indicate an altar, while the adjacent figure should be understood as an adorant. The seal is dated essentially to the 6th century BC and thus to the Neo-Babylonian Period.²¹ When these finds, which represent the early phases of Side, are considered together, it becomes evident that the city is to be assigned to the cultural milieu of the eastern Mediterranean. The seal presented here makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the early history of Side and should be taken into account in further investigations of the eastern Mediterranean.

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²⁰ Soykal-Alanyalı 2024, 431, fig. 3.

²¹ Soykal-Alanyalı 2024, 431, fig. 4.

