

Traces of the Place of Water in Phrygian Religious Life

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Abstract. *Since prehistoric times, people have preferred to settle near water sources. Because of its importance for human life, water has been given deep meaning in different periods and cultures, considered 'sacred' and playing a key role in religious life, becoming the centerpiece of rituals. In the religious life of the Phrygians, one of the Iron Age civilizations in Central Anatolia, water and water sources also occupied a privileged place. However, there is currently a lack of direct information on the relationship of water to the religion and religious practices of the Phrygians. In this article, Phrygian rock monuments, sacred sites and a group of reliefs depicting the Mother Goddess Matar in the form of stelae, and the ritual actions of the goddess called Kybele and Magna Matar, who was revered as the Phrygian Goddess in the Greek and Roman Periods, in relation to water in ancient sources, question the relationship of the Mother Goddess with water resources in the Phrygians. In addition, it is suggested that the monuments with shaft, which are distinguished from other Phrygian rock-cut monuments by their round holes drilled on the back wall of the niches and the wells connected to these holes, which continue to the base of the roof of the facade, serve a different ritual in Phrygian religious practices, and the importance of water in Phrygian culture is emphasised.*

Rezumat. *Încă din timpurile preistorice, oamenii au preferat să se stabilească în apropierea surselor de apă. Datorită importanței sale pentru viața umană, apa a căpătat o semnificație profundă în diferite perioade și culturi, fiind considerată „sacrată” și jucând un rol cheie în viața religioasă, devenind astfel piesa centrală a ritualurilor. În viața religioasă a frigienilor, una dintre civilizațiile din epoca fierului din Anatolia Centrală, apa și sursele de apă au ocupat, de asemenea, un loc privilegiat. Cu toate acestea, în prezent există o lipsă de informații directe referitoare la relația apei cu religia și practicile religioase ale frigienilor. În acest articol, monumentele rupestre frigiene, locurile sacre și un grup de reliefuri care o înfățișează pe Zeița Mamă Matar sub formă de stelae, precum și acțiunile rituale ale zeiței numite Kybele și Magna Matar, care era venerată ca Zeița Frigiană în perioadele greacă și romană, în raport cu apa în sursele antice, pun sub semnul întrebării relația Zeiței Mamă cu resursele de apă la frigieni. În plus, se sugerează că monumentele cu puț, care se disting de alte monumente frigiene săpate în stâncă prin găurile rotunde forate pe peretele din spate al nișelor și prin fântânile conectate la aceste găuri, care se continuă până la baza acoperișului fațadei, servesc unui ritual diferit în practicile religioase frigiene, subliniindu-se importanța apei în cultura frigiană.*

Keywords: Phrygians, Matar, Water, Ritual, Shaft Monuments.

Water is a chemical compound that is necessary for all living things to sustain their vital activities. Humanity has cared about water from the moment it has existed throughout history, realizing that it is necessary for the continuation of life, and preferring regions close to water resources while choosing living areas since prehistoric times. Due to its importance in human life, deep meanings have been attributed to water in different periods and cultures. Thus, water has been accepted as “sacred” and has taken its place in these practices by forming the most important step of rituals in religious life.

On earth, soil has been regarded as the protector, harboring and nourishing living creatures, and water as the source of life. While the water in the soil emerges in the form of

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springs, rivers and lakes, it also reaches the soil from the sky as rain and enables plants to reproduce. This vital cycle formed the main religious elements of ancient societies³ and was adopted as a cult element in various cultures and societies throughout history. While water symbolizes both death and rebirth, contact with water signifies revitalization and fertility⁴.

Anatolia, surrounded by seas on three sides, is home to important river resources as well as settlements in the valleys between mountain ranges and mountains. This geography attracts attention with its rich flora and fauna as well as its underground riches. Anatolia's strategic position in the world has made it an ideal living space for every period in historical continuity.

Although the choice of Anatolian lands as settling area dates back to prehistoric times, it is known that there was an intensive habitation especially in the Bronze Age in the Central Anatolian Region. In the second half of the second millennium BC, a period of drought affected Anatolia with the cooling of the climate, and the sea level fell below the present level⁵.

The rainy and hot climate that prevailed for a short period at the end of the second millennium BC was replaced by a cool and dry period in the first half of the first millennium BC (900-450 BC). These climatic changes increased the importance of water resources and became determining factors in the selection of settlement areas for basic activities such as agriculture and animal husbandry.

In the Halys (Kızılırmak) River basin, while the Hittite State, which reached the level of a strong state, was in existence, by the end of the second millennium BC, new immigrant groups, including the Phrygians,⁶ migrating from the southeast of Europe, especially from Macedonia and Thracia⁷ settled in the Halys and Sangarios (Sakarya) basins.

The Phrygians, who entered the interior of Anatolia with migrations lasting approximately 400 years, have existed in a wide geographical area as a political power centered in Central Anatolia since the 9th century BC⁸. The area under the influence of the Phrygians was called the Phrygia Region after this culture lost its effectiveness and withdrew from the stage of history.

The most important water resources of the Phrygia Region are the Halys (Kızılırmak) and Sangarios (Sakarya) rivers. The Sakarya River, which originates near Eskisehir, is one of the most important water sources of Central Anatolia, and while it was called Sahirija or Sahiriya by the Hittites⁹, it is referred to as Sangarios in ancient sources¹⁰. The Tembris (Porsuk) and Kappadoks (Delice) rivers¹¹, Seyit Su (Parthenios Stream), Sarısu (Bathys, Hermos) Stream and many small streams contributing to these streams formed the important fresh water streams of the mountainous region¹². These water resources increased the water potential of the region

³ ÖKSE 2006, 47.

⁴ ELİADE 1992, 182.

⁵ ÖKSE 1998, 305.

⁶ BARNETT 1967, 3.

⁷ Hdt. VII, 73, 385; Str. XII, 3, 20, 550, 405; Plin. NH. V, 41, 145, 329.

⁸ The present borders of the Phrygians are Ankara Province and its surroundings: Çorum, Tokat and Kırşehir to the east of the Kızılırmak River; Samsun to the north; Niğde and Konya to the south; Burdur and Elmalı Plain to the southwest; Eskişehir, Afyonkarahisar and Kütahya to the west, and Bandırma to the northwest (see TÜFEKÇİ SİVAS 1999, 34).

⁹ ÜNSAL 2012, 211.

¹⁰ Str. XII. 3, 7.

¹¹ Sevin states that the name of Delice stream, the largest tributary of Kızılırmak, is Kappadoks and the name Kappadokia originates from the name of this stream (see SEVİN 2007, 216).

¹² CHAPUT 1941, 91-92; HASPELS 1971, 24-25; SİVAS 1999, 9-10.

and contributed to the development of the surrounding settlements. These water resources were among the main factors affecting the settlement potential and density of Central Anatolia in prehistoric and historical times, and thus these lands have been home to many cultures almost continuously.

Water, which is necessary for human beings to sustain their vital activities, has also formed the most important part of religious teachings and rituals in many cultures. Properties such as cleansing, purification and treatment have increased the meanings attributed to water and water resources, giving it a privileged sacredness. These multifaceted religious meanings attributed to water have been the scene of worship around water sources and rivers in the historical process, and the water source has expressed life and continuity¹³.

In antiquity, nature itself and the natural events that took place, which were considered sacred, were personified, and the tendency to deify these events and phenomena increased, as well as the diversity of worship. In almost all the mythologies of ancient societies, the water that brings fertility is placed under the control of the divine power that can utilize it in a beneficial and correct way¹⁴. In rituals, this idea finds its expression in the expectation of kings to perform ceremonies at major seasonal festivals designed to guarantee water and rain for the coming year¹⁵.

The water-related rock monuments¹⁶ found near rivers¹⁷, and Hittite tablets dating to the Hittite Period in the Bronze Age in Central Anatolia¹⁸ provide important information about the importance of water resources in culture and the religious activity of water. Among this information are the existence of rituals of cleansing and purification with water before divination rituals, the necessity of washing with water and being physically and spiritually cleansed in order to be able to enter the temples, which were the home of the gods, to pray, to offer sacrifices, and to appear before the king, who was identified with the gods¹⁹.

The privileged place of water and water resources in the Phrygian culture, one of the Iron Age Civilizations, can be understood by the locations of settlement areas and cult monuments²⁰.

The Phrygians, who chose the Central Anatolia Region—with its fertile agricultural lands, water resources, and areas suitable for settlement—as their habitation area, constructed open-air cult monuments of varying architectural types and sizes in the

¹³ ELIADE 2003, 206.

¹⁴ In ancient Mesopotamian beliefs, it was believed that Abzu, the creator of the world, which means the water of life, fed the springs and rivers. Enki, the chief god of the Sumerians, was the “lord of Abzu” and was equated with Ea, the water god of Mesopotamian societies (see ÖKSE 2006, 48).

¹⁵ GASTER 2000, 321-322.

¹⁶ ERBİL, MOUTON 2012, 53.

¹⁷ Especially during the period of drought, in the late 2nd millennium BC, many water monuments of the Hittite Period were built near water sources in and around present-day Konya.

¹⁸ The reason for the construction of these monuments on the roads is to provide water for the travellers, to show political power to the neighbours, to ensure political dominance against the rebellions in the region, to irrigate the agricultural areas of the dams and ponds in the agricultural areas, and to request water from the gods due to drought and famine (see BAHAR 2005; 2017, 865; TURGUT 2015).

¹⁹ Purification was the first condition for people not to be punished by the gods; the temple was the house of the god and the priests were his officials (see MURAT 2012, 126). Purification was also one of the most important religious rituals of ancient communities (see KÜLAHLI 2024, 94).

²⁰ Barnett, taking into account the proximity of the rock monuments to some springs and streams, looks for signs of a water source cult in the rock monuments, which turn out to be open-air temples of the mother goddess, and assumes that these monuments are religious monuments related to the water source cult, as in the Hittite examples. Barnett's view alerts us to the existence of a water source cult in Phrygia (see BARNETT 1953, 80-82).

region known as Phrygia Epiktetos. This area corresponds to the western part of today's Central Anatolia Region²¹ and encompasses the valleys to the south and southeast of the zone situated²² between the present-day provinces of Eskişehir, Afyonkarahisar, and Kütahya, which they called "Matar," in locations where the rocky plateaus were suitable for their goddesses.

The presence of relief depictions of the goddess in a group of facades, rock niches and in the middle of *stelae* found around Ankyra (Ankara) and Gordion (Yassihöyük) constitutes the most concrete archaeological evidence that the Phrygians placed this goddess at the center of their beliefs in Anatolia, in contrast to the polytheism of other Anatolian communities²³. Apart from these concrete but limited archaeological evidences, many issues such as the life of the Phrygians, their relations with other cultures and their religious practices are still mysterious. For this reason, researchers working on Phrygian religion and cult practices have searched for traces of cult practices in the religious life of the Phrygians in predecessor, contemporary and successor cultures in line with the available sources of information.

The symbols found in the Phrygian expressions of divinity include the Hittites, the most active people of Central Anatolia in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, the Urartians and the Late Hittites, who settled in the east and southeast of Anatolia, contemporary with the Phrygians in the Early Iron Age. Among these cultures, the importance of water and the meaning attributed to water for the Hittites is clearly manifested by the rock monuments related to water, especially in rocky areas, many of which have relief depictions²⁴.

In the Konya Plain, which was a center of agriculture and farming for the Anatolian states as it is today²⁵, the rock relief dated to the Late Hittite Period built on the rock in the area of the İvriz Stream and its source, which plays an important role for the agricultural activities of the region, is interpreted as the scene of a ritual (i.e. the offering of agricultural products - grapes and wheat - obtained with the sacred water), while the monument built next to the water source clearly expresses the meaning attributed to water. It is also stated that spring water comes out of the rocks where the Ambarderesi Monument with the depictions of Tarhunzas and Warpalawas is located, near the Ereğli district of Konya²⁶.

As in many other societies, water and water resources played an important role for the Urartu Kingdom²⁷. In fact, this culture created many dams, canals and ponds, and water resources, plants, mountains, trees and rocks were considered sacred in this civilization where nature came to the forefront in the religious structure, and among these sacred elements, the

²¹ Yazılıkaya, Doğanlı and Kümbet Valleys approximately 70 km south of Eskişehir Province, Köhnüş and Karababa Valleys approximately 30 km north of Afyonkarahisar Province, Doğuluşah Valley near Doğuluşah Village, one of the villages of the Central District of Kütahya Province, Fındık Valley near Fındık Village, İnli Valleys near Ovacık Village.

²² ROLLER 1999, 66.

²³ Information on Phrygian religion and its ritual practices is limited to a few Greek literary texts and a small number of surviving Old Phrygian cult inscriptions. In this case, the main evidence for the culture is the archaeological finds from the cult centres (see ROLLER 2012, 202).

²⁴ For some of the important Hittite monument see NAUMANN 1974 (Eflatunpınar); HARMANŞAH *et alii* 2014, 13; HARMANŞAH, JOHNSON, 2014, 377-394 (Yalburt Rock Monument); BAHAR *et alii* 1996, 48 (Hatip Su); BAHAR *et alii* 1996, 52; TURGUT 2015, 341 (Köylütölu Monument); NEVE 1971, 35-36 (Fraktin Monument); DİNÇOL 1982, 115; DARGA 1992, 178-181 (İmamkulu Monument); BAHAR *et alii* 1996, 46 (Sirkeli Monument).

²⁵ BAHAR 2017, 866.

²⁶ TURGUT 2015, 348, 345.

²⁷ Among the group of gods in Urartian religion is Suinina, the god of the sea and waters (see PİOTROVSKİY 1965, 46).

tree of life symbol became the most prominent element of plant symbolism in Urartian religion²⁸.

The connections between the sacred mountain concept, water sources, predatory animal symbols and religious ceremonies, which are prominent symbols in the Phrygian expressions of divinity, are also prominent in the aforementioned cultures. However, it should not be ignored that these concepts continue to recur in different cultures with different time periods and that each concept is actually in the “basic consciousness” of the peoples living in the region, rather than having a sacred meaning specific to a single ethnic group²⁹.

Although some parallels between the Hittites and Phrygians, such as the cult of water and springs, show that there are obvious similarities in Hittite and Phrygian religious and cultural traditions³⁰, it is not yet clear how the transmission of these religious and cultural values was carried out. However, the temples and sanctuaries seen near water sources and springs show that water has always been the main source of life for Anatolian peoples. On the other hand, there is no information about the direct relationship of water in Phrygian religion and religious practices. However, the Phrygian rock monuments found near water sources³¹ and a group of reliefs depicting the Mother Goddess Matar in the form of *stelae*³² and the knowledge of the ritual actions performed in ancient sources related to water³³ of the goddess called Kybele and Magna Matar (who was revered as the Phrygian Goddess in the Greek and Roman Periods), make it necessary to question the relationship of the Mother Goddess with water resources in the Phrygians. In this direction, it is necessary to correctly interpret the ancient sources and archaeological data available in contemporary and successor cultures.

The cult monuments that the Phrygians equipped the valleys with consist of facades, altars and niches. The rock-cut monuments, called facades, generally reflect the front facade of the building model called “megaron”, which we have seen examples of in Gordion, the capital of the Phrygians, with hill acroter, triangular pediment, gable roof and carved on the steep surface of the bedrock. These facades, which are generally common but differ in details, are monumental and small in size. The monumental facades, with their large courtyards in front, side spaces and galleries opening to the courtyard, are special areas dedicated to the cult of the Mother Goddess, which should be considered as a large “open-air cult complex”. In almost all monumental facades, the triangular pediment and facade are decorated with geometric and floral motifs. The most important part of the facades is the central niche symbolizing the gate, in which a statue of the goddess or a relief of her is placed. In some facades, the relief of the Mother Goddess was carved inside the niche, thereby simulating a continuous epiphany, that

²⁸ BAŞTÜRK 2009, 135.

²⁹ ROLLER 1999, 44.

³⁰ ÖZKAYA 1996, 104, fn. 42-43.

³¹ Both rock facades and rock-cut altars, rock idols and rock niches are located near water sources.

³² At the capital Gordion (TEMİZER 1959, 186, pl. 39; MELLINK 1983, 349-50, pl. 70; NAUMANN 1983, 64, cat. no. 19, pl. 5,3; PRAYON 1987, 203, cat. no. 15, pl. 5c; ROLLER 1999, 72, fig. 7), Ankara/Bahçelievler (BULUÇ 1986, 426; ROLLER 1998, 43; BULUÇ 1988, 18) and Etlik (NAUMANN 1983, 65-66, cat. no. 20, pl. 5,4; PRAYON 1987, 204, cat. no. 27, pl. 9b), none of these are “in situ”. The relief from Gordion was found outside the citadel in the bed of the Sangarios (Sakarya) River.

³³ The name of the goddess is used in Palaeo-Phrygian inscriptions as “Matar”, “Mother”, with the epithet Matar “kubileya/kubelaya”, “areyastin” (BRIXHE, LEJEUNE 1984), matar: M-01 c, M-01 d I, M 01 d II, M-01e, W-01 b, W03, W-06; kubileya/kubelaya: W-04, B-01; areyastin: W-01 a. The Phrygian cult of the Mother Goddess was also adopted by the Greek and Roman world and integrated into their own worship. The goddess, who is referred to as “Μήτηρ” (Mother), Agdistis or Agdistis “Meter Thea” “Μήτηρ Ῥ Θεά” (Mother Goddess) in ancient sources, was called “Meter Megale”, Megale Theia”, “Μεγάλη Θεία” (Great Goddess and more commonly Kybele) by the Greeks and “Magna Matar” (Great Mother) by the Romans (ÇAPAR 1978, 12, fn. 1; ROLLER 1999, 240-241; 244-245; 144; 189).

is, the appearance of the goddess to those who believe in her³⁴. There is also a group of facades in the center of the niches without the relief of the Mother Goddess. For these monuments, it can be assumed that portable statues of the goddess were placed in the niches in the center of the monument at certain periods, or it can be suggested that the believer worshipped and became one with his goddess by thinking that the goddess was behind the closed door, that is, in the essence of the rock³⁵.

Among the Phrygian rock-cut monuments, the first in terms of numerical density are the altars³⁶ with one or more steps in front and behind these steps a round head, in some examples two heads and quadrangular body(s), or a relief-shaped idol depicted in the form of a curve, or an architectural device to place the idol, which is thought to symbolize the Mother Goddess. The steps most probably symbolize the ascent to the presence of the god or goddess, creating a bond between the believer and his/her god³⁷.

The niches consisting of quadrangular and oval shallow cavities cut into the steep faces of the rocks are the simplest monuments in terms of architectural features compared to the Phrygian facades and altars. Some of the niches, most of which are easily accessible from the ground, found in the areas where traces of Phrygian culture have been identified in the geography called Mountainous Phrygia³⁸, have slots on the back wall, ceiling or floor where the Mother Goddess figurine is placed³⁹. In front of some of the niches there are also small platforms where offerings were probably placed for the goddess. In a way, it is possible to interpret these monuments as the simplest, plainest reflections of the niches in the facades⁴⁰.

The Phrygian rock-cut monuments were located at the entrances of the valleys on the road routes, in the castles built on rocky plateaus, at the entrances of the castles and in the rocky areas at the skirts of the castles, near the rock tombs. In addition, almost all of these monuments were built on rocks near a water source, close to lands where agriculture and animal husbandry, the lifeblood of agriculture, could be carried out. This situation reveals the necessity to consider that the monuments may be directly related to water in religious practices (Figure 1).

Although our current knowledge of Phrygian religious practices is limited, the fact that Cybele and her rites are described as Phrygian in Roman sources makes it easier to understand Phrygian religion, since it is possible that Phrygian religious practices were also transferred to

³⁴ The examples with goddess reliefs in a niche are Gökçeğüney Monument, Keskaya Monument No. 2, Kümbet Berberini Monument, Kuzören Tavukpınarı-Bel Mevkii Monument in Günyüzü District, Aslankaya Monument, Büyük Kapıkaya Monument, Küçük Kapıkaya Monument, and Kumcaboğaz Kapıkaya Monument in Afyonkarahisar.

³⁵ TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 185-186.

³⁶ TAMSÜ-POLAT 2008, 439-440, figs. 2-6; 2010, 207-208, figs. 3-7.

³⁷ Rock-cut altars of various forms and sizes were found at Yazılıkaya/Midas Kale on the borders of Eskişehir (Fig. 15-16), Menekşe Kayalar on the borders of Afyonkarahisar, and Fındık Asarkale on the borders of Kütahya. Outside the borders of the Mountainous Phrygia Region, the Dümrek Village in the Mihalıcık District of Eskişehir, the Tekören Village northeast of the Sivrihisar District (DEVREKER, VERMAULEN 1991, 114, figs. 9-10; DEVREKER *et alii* 1995, 131, pl. 1; TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 168, pl. 139 a-b, 140) and Zey Village in the North (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 2005, 221, pl. 8-9) and Kalehisar Hill of Çorum/Alacahöyük in the east of the Halys (AKURGAL 1955, 62, 96, fig. 55, pl. 44; PRAYON 1987, 47, 202, no. 9) are other important centres where Phrygian rock-cut altars have been identified.

³⁸ TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 191-192.

³⁹ In the Deliktaş niche at the southern entrance of the Deliktaş Fortress on the borders of Kütahya, there is a relief of a goddess in front of the back wall of the niche, as on the facades.

⁴⁰ Examples of niches can be seen at Yazılıkaya/Midas Kale in Eskişehir (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 175-176, pl. 159-161), Köhnüş Valley in Afyonkarahisar (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 176-177, pl. 162), and Fındık Asar Kale in Kütahya (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 177-178, pl. 163-165).

Rome⁴¹. Accordingly, there is information in Roman sources that water had a ritual equivalent in the cult of the mother goddess. Herodianus reports that in the ceremonies held on the banks of the Gallos River in Pessinus in Phrygia, it is rumored that the idol of the goddess Cybele was washed on the last day of the ceremony⁴². The washing ceremony of the goddess called “*Lavatio*” and the day of mourning for the goddess (*Dies Sanguinis*) were also of Phrygian origin, which Showerman states with references to Ovidius and Arrianos⁴³. It is known that the “*Lavatio*”, that is, the washing and cleansing stage, was the most important part of ceremonies⁴⁴, which took place between 15-28 March in the Roman world in the name of Attis and Cybele at certain intervals. In this celebration, on 27 March, the statue of the goddess, her terracotta chariot and a procession accompanied by a Phrygian priest with *quindecimvirs* at the head, were taken to the Almo Stream, which flows into the Tiber River outside Rome, and washed there⁴⁵. At the end of the 1st century AD Arrian states that certain features of the annual festival in honor of the goddess were carried out according to Phrygian tradition, while Servius mentions that the Romans were governed by Phrygian worship⁴⁶.

Ritual contact with water is interpreted as a behavior symbolizing regeneration. While entering the water symbolizes rebirth, leaving the water is seen as a repetition of the act of creation. Water, which grants rebirth in the rituals of rejuvenation, heals in magical rituals, and guarantees birth after death in funeral ceremonies, is seen as an element that gathers all potential forces in itself and symbolizes life with its energy. At the same time, water has the ability to purify, recreate and rebirth. The person who enters the water is just like a sinless child⁴⁷. In addition, in many cultures and beliefs from past to present, water has been accepted as the basic element of cleanliness, which is a prerequisite for worship, and similar practices have been passed down from generation to generation in many cultures⁴⁸.

At Midas Fortress in Eskişehir, where the most famous examples of Phrygian cult monuments are found, the excavations of the first period yielded fragments of statues belonging to two women whose lower torsos were recovered and which are probably goddesses (Figure 2). One of these statue fragments was found in the place where the spring water called Çeşme C, which is located to the northeast of the castle today, flowed and was organized as a sanctuary⁴⁹ and the other one was found in the stairs (staircase B) belonging to the water cistern, also to the northeast of the castle. The existence of water-related rituals of God and Goddess statues in many cultures other than the Phrygians⁵⁰, and the tradition of washing the statue of the goddess, an important ceremony in the cult of Magna Mater, who was revered as a Phrygian goddess transferred to Rome, provide important information about the possibility that the rituals performed with water in the Phrygians may be the source of inspiration. In

⁴¹ ÖZKAYA 1996, 106.

⁴² HERODIAN. I. 11.2

⁴³ SHOWERMAN 1969, 19; ÇAPAR 1978, 179.

⁴⁴ SHOWERMAN 1969, 56-57; VERMASEREN 1977, 113-114.

⁴⁵ ÇAPAR 1978, 181.

⁴⁶ ÇAPAR 1978, 180, fn.51.

⁴⁷ ELIADE 2003, 196-197, 202.

⁴⁸ For the Hittites, the first condition of worship was cleanliness. In order to enter the house of the gods, that is, the temple, to pray, and to offer sacrifices, one had to be clean (MURAT 2012).

⁴⁹ ÖZKAYA 1996, 99-100.

⁵⁰ For the Mesopotamian cultures, for example, it is stated that the statue of Dumuzi was washed and then oiled in the ritual held in July (MCCALL 2011, 109; KIYMET 2014, 25). In Hittite rituals, ceremonies related to the purification/cleaning of clothes, cult objects, statues of gods and the ritual master with water are also mentioned in detail in the tablets (MURAT 2012, 132).

addition, a spring sanctuary consisting of a water channel carved out of the bedrock and a rock idol, altar and niches built on the rocks bordering this channel, is located approximately 300 m south of Fındık Asar Kale, in the west of the Phrygia Region, within the borders of Kotiaëion (Kütahya), in the village of Sabuncupınar today⁵¹ (Figure 3). The presence of this channel where the waters of a spring are collected and the presence of cult monuments and idols with symbolic depictions of the goddess on the rock just above the channel clearly emphasize the importance of water, which is almost consecrated with cult monuments of Phrygian religious life. Apart from these examples, a group of rock facades among the Phrygian rock monuments differ in design from the other facades with round holes (diameter: 0.40-0.70 m) drilled in the back wall of the niches and quadrangular shaped wells connected to these holes, drilled in the roof of the facade and continuing to the base. These monuments, defined by the researchers as monuments with wells due to the differences in architectural arrangements, are the Bahşeyiş Monument on the borders of Eskişehir⁵², the Maltaş Monument in the Köhnüş Valley on the borders of Afyonkarahisar, the Değirmen Yeri Monument in the Karababa Valley, the Delikli Taş Monument on the borders of Kütahya, and the Fındık Monument, which is much smaller than these monuments and evaluated in this group (Figure 4-10). This difference in the architectural design of the monuments indicates that these may be a reflection of their functional use.

Regarding these monuments, which are seen in Phrygian rock facades and differ from the general pattern, researchers such as Brandenburg and Ramsay considered these monuments as grave structures due to the presence of wells in the monuments⁵³. Körte, on the other hand, pointed out that these monuments with wells should be considered as a religious element and stated that these monuments were offering pits where sacrifices were made for the Mother Goddess. Körte also pointed to the purification ceremonies in the cult of Cybele and Attis in the Roman Period as the basis for this idea, and commented that the wells would have been used for "*haemobolium*" (blood offering) in connection with the *taurobolium* and *criobolium* ceremonies, which were a practice of the cult of Cybele in the Late Roman Period⁵⁴. Haspels states that the mystery of the wells remains unsolved, but that they may have been built for some religious purpose, while Naumann identifies the wells as sacrificial pits, but does not give details of the sacrifices and how they were carried out⁵⁵. Işık analyzed two examples of monuments with wells and found similarities with the hollows in Urartian chamber tombs⁵⁶. Özkaya, assuming that the idea put forward by Körte seems possible, carried the thesis that these wells were used for the *taurobolium* ritual further and emphasized that the *taurobolium* rituals in Rome may have been transferred from Phrygia to Rome through the cult of Cybele⁵⁷. Geza de Francovich, on the other hand, suggested that the well may not have been used for the *taurobolium*, but for the *criobolium* prepared for Attis⁵⁸. Naumann suggests that they were

⁵¹ On the steep faces of the rock masses bordering the 75 m long and 0,75 m deep canal running in the north-south direction, at the beginning and end points of the canal, two rectangular niches with a slot in their bases where a statuette of the Mother Goddess was probably placed, 7 rock altars in groups on the upper parts of the rocks and triple goddess idols made in groups (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 2003, 9).

⁵² HASPELS 1971, 100.

⁵³ BRANDENBURG 1906, 687; RAMSAY 1882, 17.

⁵⁴ KÖRTE 1898, 97-98.

⁵⁵ NAUMANN 1983, 53-54.

⁵⁶ IŞIK 1989, 21-22.

⁵⁷ ÖZKAYA 1997, 103.

⁵⁸ DE FRANCOVICH 1990, 88-89.

symbolic sacrificial pits, but the wells are too large for a symbolic pit and this cannot explain their functionality. Sivas, another researcher who analyzed the monuments in detail, based on the information provided by ancient sources and the interpretations put forward by these researchers, states that the origin of this cult is in Anatolia and that it gained identity in monuments with wells and reached Greece and Rome from Anatolia. However, as stated in Roman sources, the designs of the monuments make it difficult to bring the ram or bull to be sacrificed to the mouths of the wells, and for this reason, the sacrifice was performed elsewhere and the sacred blood was brought in a container, carried to the mouth of the well and offered there⁵⁹. Hemelrijk, approaching these monuments from a different perspective, suggests that they were a storehouse of valuables. He questioned whether these wells served as *opisthodomos*, where the gifts offered to the gods and goddesses in Greek temple architecture were stored, or they could be a variation of the treasury buildings at Delphoi. Based on the connection between the well and the niche, Ersöz suggested that the well was used as a place of divination. Thus, the priest who conveyed God's answers would be hidden in the well, making it appear that the prophecy and all the answers were coming from the goddess or the facade. In addition, Ersöz stated that the lid covering the wells also served as a cover for the priest to hide. In addition, Ersöz states that a similar practice of the cleric hiding inside the cult statue and conveying the commands from the god as if the cult statue was speaking, may have also taken place in monuments built with wells⁶⁰.

Based on Ersöz's view that the wells were places where the cult statue was placed, the ritual identity of the Phrygian well monuments should be approached from a different perspective. In this context, the presence of water-related rituals performed in honor of the Phrygian goddess in festivals held in the name of the Phrygian goddess in pre-Phrygian and contemporary cultures and in Rome, together with their architectural design, suggests the possibility that these monuments, whose function we do not have precise information about, may be associated with water. In the monuments with wells in the Phrygian cult facades, the portable statue of the goddess was symbolically washed by immersing it in the water filled in the well, thus suggesting that the statue washing seen in the Roman Period may be a practice of Phrygian origin (Figure 11). It is also possible that this ceremony, just like the one carried to Rome, was performed in accordance with the calendar heralding the arrival of spring. During this washing process, it should be taken into consideration that water was discharged through the slot in the center of the central niche, which is one of the most important parts of the monuments and connected to the well, with the weight of the statue immersed in the well. Thus, it is possible that both the washing of the statue of the goddess and the water, which is vital for the existence of abundance and fertility, were part of a ritual in which the Goddess Matar blessed and bestowed abundance and fertility to her believers (Figure 12).

In conclusion, besides the fact that water is a part of religious rituals in almost all ancient societies, it also has important effects in Phrygian culture; the use of water in Hittite religious life, the fact that almost all of the Phrygian rock monuments are located near a water source, the presence of sculptural artefacts and idol depictions of the goddess found around the water sources show that water should be considered as an important ritual element in Phrygian religion⁶¹. In addition, the fact that Greek and Roman sources include water-related practices

⁵⁹ TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 197.

⁶⁰ BERNDT-ERSÖZ 1998, 98-99.

⁶¹ For newly discovered idol depictions see POLAT 2019, and TAMSÜ POLAT *et alii* 2020; TAMSÜ POLAT 2022.

in the cult rituals of the mother goddess, who is accepted as the Phrygian Goddess, reveals that water played a central role in the religious life of the Phrygian culture.

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Figure 2. Fragment of sculpture from Midas Kale C (Photo by R. Tamsü Polat).



Figure 3. Kütahya Fındık Sacred Area (Photo by Y. Polat).

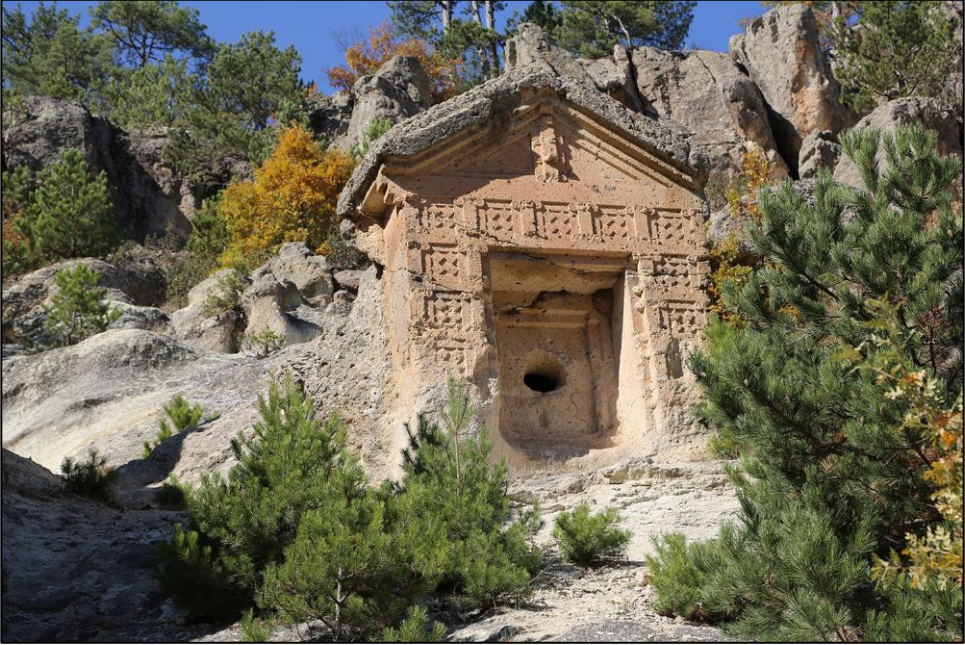


Figure 4. Eskişehir Bahsayış Monument (Photo by Y. Polat).



Figure 5. Shaft detail of the Eskişehir Bahshayish Monument (Photo by Y. Polat).



Figure 6. Maltas Monument in the Köhnüş Valley of Afyonkarahisar (Photo by Y. Polat).

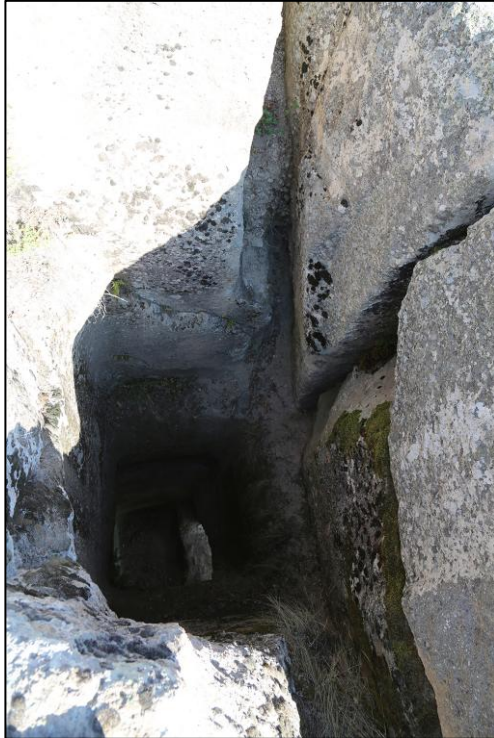


Figure 7. Detail of the shaft of the Maltas Monument in the Köhnüş Valley of Afyonkarahisar (Photo by Y. Polat).

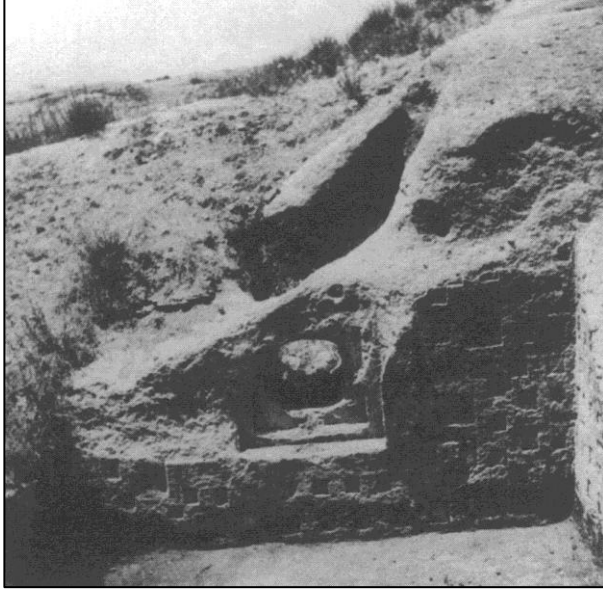


Figure 8. Afyonkarahisar Degirmenyeri Monument (Berndt-Ersöz, 1998, fig. 13).



Figure 9. Kütahya Deliklitaş Monument (Photo by R. Tamsü Polat).



Figure 10. Kütahya Deliklitaş Monument shaft detail (Berndt-Ersöz, 1998, fig. 17).

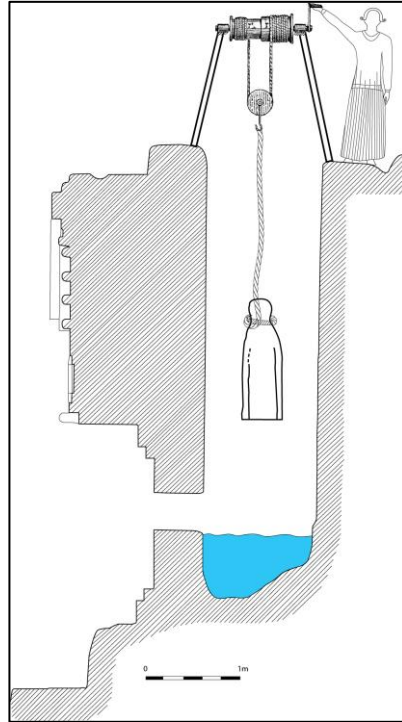


Figure 11. Illustration of the use of monuments with shaft (Draw. Y. Yılmaz)

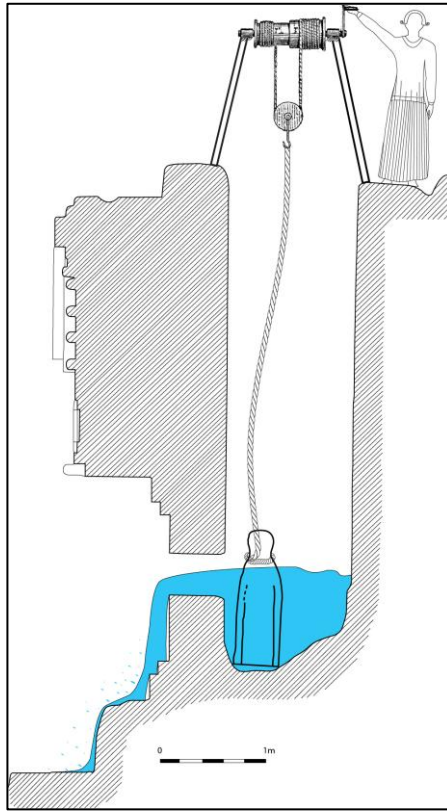


Figure 12. Illustration of the use of monuments with shaft (Draw. Y. Yılmaz).



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