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Further considerations on the cult of Kybele

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Modern scholarship has produced a large volume of literature on the Phrygian goddess Kybele. The image of the Great Mother-Goddess, both on European and on Anatolian soil, has long attracted scholarly attention. Besides works that have become classics (Graillot 1912; Vermaseren 1977), I will list just a few more recent studies (Naumann 1983; Borgeaud 1996; Işık 1999; Roller 1999). The representations of Kybele are gathered in the eight volume *Corpus* by M J Vermaseren (most valuable for the present study being volumes 1 and 2: Vermaseren 1982; 1987). Numerous articles are devoted to different aspects of Kybele's figure and cult. All contributions to the subject must take into consideration the recent exhaustive study on the Mother cult in Phrygia, Greece and Rome by L E Roller (1999). The present paper aims at offering another point of view on some disputable questions and at introducing new comparative material.

Ancient literary tradition attests to a Phrygian migration from the Balkans to Asia Minor (Herodotus 7, 73; 8, 138: Midas' gardens in Macedonia; Strabo 7, 3, 2; 14, 5, 29; 12, 8, 3 = Xanthus; Jacoby 1958: 765 F14, 15). The modern scholarship on this literary evidence has recently been reviewed (Drews 1993: 9-26). The author however rejects the authenticity of the Phrygian migration without offering a plausible cause for the artificial literary construct. Its support in the archaeological record is still debatable, but certain Balkan affinities cannot be denied (Sams 1994: 20-2, 176, 194-6; Henrickson 1994: 108). The similarities between Phrygian and Thracian cult and religious practices were noticed as early as the ancient authors. Probably the most eloquent statement is that by Strabo, who said that the celebrations of Kotyto and Bendis among the Thracians resembled the mysteries of Bacchus, Rea, Kybele, Kybebe and Dindymene; the former originating from the Orphic mysteries (Strabo 10, 3, 15-16). Some aspects of the literary texts could suggest that it was a similar or identical ritual practice in Phrygia and Thrace that accounted for the 'migration' explanation. Accordingly, the present work focuses on the evidence for the Phrygian ritual, as well as on the Thracian comparative data.

The ancient authors unanimously defined Kybele as a Phrygian goddess. The theonym appeared in the Greek language in the sixth century BC (Hipponax: Bergk 1880: fr 121; Masson 1962: fr 156; for the view that this text preceeds Pindar's fragment see Masson 1962: 177; Brixhe 1979: 41; Pindar fr 80: Snell-Maehler 1975: 83; Lehnus 1973: 275-7 suggests that this is a hymn to Kybele; as well as the possible earlier, but quite unreliable quoting of Hesiod: Pseudo-Hesiod: Rzach 1902: 407, fr 251). Direct connections between Phrygia and the Ionian coast were probably responsible for the notation *Kubela* on a sherd from Epizephiris Lokroi (late seventh - early sixth century BC: Guarducci 1970: 133-8). The Great Goddess was, however, called just *mater/matar* in the Old-Phrygian inscriptions (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: M-01c, W-04, W-06, B-01, etc.), while *Kubeleya/Kubileya* was her epiclesis. The rock-cut monuments on which she is mentioned cannot be securely dated, but on palaeographic and general considerations the first half of the sixth century BC seems likely (Brixhe 1979: 43; Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: B-01, W-04, 281). The Goddess had no real theonym in Phrygia and was designated by various epithets in the Old-Phrygian texts which suggest her anonymous nature (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: B-01 *ibeya*, G-183 *imeneia*, B-03 *evteveya*). The indigenous practice may be paralleled by the fragment of Hipponax quoted above: *Κυβελίς*. It is most probably Persephone who is called *Κυβελήνια Κόρρα* in a fourth century BC gold Orphic lamella from Thurii (Diels 1951: 17-18, no 21,1).

The Phrygian epithet *Kubeleya* seems to have produced a theonym in the Greek language. Actually, the name is very rarely mentioned in the Greek texts. There is no example of it in the first volume of Vermaseren's *Corpus*; there are however two (or more, see below) epigraphic attestations from Asia Minor (Cox, Cameron 1937: no 213 from Nacolea/Seyit Gazi), and one probably from the area of Nikaia (Cox, Cameron 1937: 102). It is worth noting that among the very few examples of Kybele in the inscriptions from Asia Minor and the adjacent islands, the earliest attestation possibly matches the Phrygian practice: *Μήτηρ Κυβελείη* (350/300

BC from Chios: Vermaseren 1982: no 560 with commentary in Graf 1985: 115-16; a second or first century BC inscription from the border lands between Apameia and Daskyleion: Corsten 1987: no 35). The Anatolian Goddess was most often referred to as the Mother of the Gods, Great Goddess, *Meter Oreia*, etc. by the ancient Greek and Roman authors. Robertson is right to comment that the name Kybele is more often used by modern scholars than by the ancient authors (Robertson 1996: 239-41).

Meter Megale was accompanied by Pan as early as Pindar's verses: he shared her temple and worship (Pindar *Pythian* 3, 138-40; *Dithyramb* II, 9-10 = fr 70b Snell-Maehler 1975: 73-5). According to Pausanias and the *scholion* to the Third *Pythian*, Pindar built a shrine to the Goddess in front of his house, where young girls sang songs to the Goddess and Pan at night (Pausanias 9, 25, 3; *Scholia* in Pindar *Pythian* 3, 137a; Drachmann 1997: 81). The verses have been extensively discussed (Lehnus 1979: 5-53; Bader 1990: 383-408). According to Robertson it is the local goddess of Thebes that is meant, while *πρόθυρον* should be regarded as a metaphor (Robertson 1996: 264-7). The association of Pan with the Great Goddess puzzles scholars, and Pindar's role in the institution of a Theban cult of the Goddess has been much debated. Haldane emphasizes Pan's musical skills and the mountainous scenery where his piping echoed: these elements would have related the goat-god to the Great Mother's cult (Haldane 1968: 20, 28-9). The author accepts the ritual importance of the verses, as well as that it is the Phrygian Kybele that is meant in them (Haldane 1968: 19, 21). Similarly, van der Weiden does not doubt the presence of the Phrygian goddess here (van der Weiden 1991: 68). Schachter's view about a possible Cabiriac context that might have accounted for the association of Pan and the Goddess is worth noting, as well as Borgaud's emphasis on Pan being a deity that possesses (Schachter 1986: 138; Borgaud 1979: 156-8, 170-1). This would supplement the evidence on the pre-Hellenic antiquities in Boiotia, that are well known and need not be discussed here.

The earliest mention of Bendis, the Thracian goddess whose cult officially entered Athens in the late fifth century BC, is in a fragment by Hipponax, where the poet compares her with Kybele/Kybeke (Bergk 1880: fr 120 = Masson 1962: fr 127; commentary in Masson 1962: 108). This is also one of the earliest texts on the Phrygian goddess. As Hesychius, who preserved Hipponax' verse, said, she is the Mother of the gods, Aphroditis among the Lydians and the Phrygians; she is also Artemis according to others (Hesychius, s.v. *Kybebe*; the same in Charon of Lampsacus: Jacoby 1954: 262, F 5 = Photius *Bibliotheca* 182, 20). Bendis is

explicitly designated as *megale theos* in a fragment by Aristophanes (Hesychius, s.v. *megale theos*). Thracian Sintians worshipped the Great Goddess on the island of Lemnos: the island was named after the goddess (Hecataios: Jacoby 1957: 1F 138a = Stephanus Byzantinus s.v. *Lemnos*).

Euripides is the first to place the worship of Kybele in an explicitly Dionysiac context. The god comes from Tmolos, from the mountains of Phrygia and Lydia, and the ecstatic melody of Phrygian *auloi* and tympana, the inventions of Rhea, accompanied his *thyasos* of Bacchants (Euripides *Bacchae* 58-9, 127-8). The mortal is happy when initiated, celebrates the mysteries (*orgias*) of the Great Mother Kybele, and, crowned with ivy leaves, serves Dionysos (Euripides *Bacchae* 78-82). *Krotaloi* sound on behalf of Dionysos beside the Goddess' lion-yoked chariot (Euripides *Helen* 1301-18). It is Artemis who 'yoked in bacchic frenzy the (wild) race of lions' in Pindar's dithyramb (Pindar fr 70b, 19-21; van der Weiden 1991: 58). Euripides' verses reflect a real scene of an orgiastic cult (Gasparro 1978: 1148-87; 1985: 11-12; Seaford 1982: 57; 1981: 252-75; Versnel 1990: 134-5; Seaford 1996: 31-5). Roller assumes, however, that this is a reflection of the Greek worship of the Goddess (1999: 149). It was the mystery nature of the worship, suggested by orgiastic features, that associated the two gods, as well as divine possession (Gasparro 1985: 9-10, 14-15). Beside the above quoted passages by Strabo on the Thracian-Phrygian cult similarities and the texts on Bendis, it is worth noting that in the fifth century BC tympana were associated with Kotyto, the goddess of the Edonians, as well (Aeschylus *Edonoi* fr 57; Radt 1985: 179-80; West 1990: 27; Carpenter 1997: 112).

Earlier Greek texts emphasised the ritual atmosphere of ecstasy and *mania*, the state of being possessed by the deity, a condition reached with the accompanying sounds of the flutes, tympana and cymbals in the mountainous landscape. The Goddess' most frequent epithet was *Oreia*, sometimes used as her single appellation (Euripides *Helen* 1301; comments in Gasparro 1978: 1169-71; 1985: 1, n 3). The other name of ritual importance might have been *Despoina* (Aristophanes *Birds* 877; Henrichs 1976: 253-86). The mythological narrative concerning Kybele appeared only in the Hellenistic age. Nor is there a story related to the Thracian goddess.

Kybele was known in a group of literary texts, though late, as the mother of the Phrygian king Midas (Plutarch *Caesar* 9; Suidas s.v. *elegos*; Hyginus *Fabulae* 191; 254, 16; Hesychius s.v. *Μίδα Θεός*). Another set of evidence makes king Midas founder of the Mother's celebrations, or of the city of Pessinus

(Theopompus: Jacoby 1929: 115 F 260 (= Ammianus Marcellinus 22, 9, 6-7); Diodorus 3, 59, 8; Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* 2, 73; Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2, 3). A great number of these passages are of aetiological nature, concerning Tmolos, Pactolos and especially the cult at Pessinus. The ruler had already been placed in an Orphic-Dionysiac context by the earlier tradition of his capture of Silenos (Aristotle fr 44; Rose 1886; Theopompus: Jacoby 1929: 115 F 75a; Plutarch *Moralia* 115b; Konon: Jacoby 1957: 26 F1; Vassileva 1997: 13-15). All these references could possibly reflect the role of the Phrygian ruler in the cult of the Great Goddess.

While relating the story of the worship of the Goddess at Pessinus, Diodorus says that the Phrygian king Midas participated in all sacrifices and celebrations of Kybele 'out of his devotion to the beauty', according to the Greek version (Diodorus 3, 59, 8). Midas is 'a Mygdonian king', son of the Mother of the Gods, son of Kybele, according to Hyginus (*Fabulae* 191; 254, 16). Arnobius connects the story with Agdistis — a bisexual creature, born of the Great Mother Mountain and Zeus. *Agdestes*, as Arnobius gives the name, after being reduced to a female by the gods, inflicted madness on Attis on the day of his wedding with Midas' daughter. Midas is called 'king of Pessinus' (Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* 5, 7). Arnobius himself states in a previous passage that the founder of the celebrations of the Phrygian Mother was Midas or Dardanos (*Adversus Nationes* 2, 73). The same is related by Clement of Alexandria, who names Midas as Odyssos' pupil (*Protrepticus* 2, 3).

Ammianus Marcellinus also gives an account of the Pessinus cult, stating that the name of the city was given by Ilos, son of Tros, the Dardanian king, while Theopompus had noted that this was done by Midas, a mighty king of Phrygia in earlier times (Jacoby 1929: 115 F260).

The story by Plutarch reveals a mystery cult closely associated with Dionysiac religion (Plutarch *Caesar* 9). He tells us about a goddess called *Bona Dea* by the Romans, and *Gynaecia* by the Greeks. The Phrygians considered her to be the mother of their king Midas. According to the Greeks, however, she was the mother of Dionysos whose name was not to be spoken (i.e. not to be divulged: ἄρρητος; Liddell, Scott 1996: 247). Her celebration was attended only by women; the *teletai* were performed at night, with dances and music, closely resembling the celebration of Bendis at Piraeus as described by Plato (Plato *Republic* 1, 327-8). Plutarch's text differs both from the Pessinus tradition and from the mythographic story of Attis and Kybele, being centred on ritual. This goddess is practically anonymous as well, her

adjectival appellation resembles that of the Phrygian Mother, and she acquired similar epithets (Brouwer 1989: 245, n 64). As in Euripides' verses, the Goddess is associated with Dionysos, and the mystery aspect of her worship parallels the Orphic rites (Brouwer 1989: 369-70). It is worth noting that the cultic role of the Phrygian ruler is suggested in this context. It is just this element that points to a reflection of an indigenous tradition.

Hesychius' gloss *Μίδα θεός* should be mentioned here as well. The lexicographer tells us that the subjects of Midas worshipped the goddess Mida, whom some of them imagined to be their ruler's mother. Suidas relates the mourning song to the *peribomos* which Midas built for his mother, to worship her after her death (Suidas s.v. *elegos*).

This evidence might have been related to a live folklore reality, observed by the Greeks. It was possibly the ritual context that influenced some narratives to associate later king Midas with Pessinus. Ritual practices provided the core of Hellenic literary evidence.

As has been noted, ancient authors frequently associated Kybele with a mountain, from which they derived her name (Stephanus Byzantinus 389, 9-12; Hesychius s.v. *Kybele*, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Kybele*). Besides being a Great Goddess and Mother of the Gods and Mountainous Mother of the Gods as early as Euripides (*Helen* 1301-2; Brixhe 1979: 40), she was predominantly *μήτηρ ὄρεϊα* (Euripides *Hippolytos* 143; *Helen* 1301; Sophocles *Philoctetes* 391; Nicander *Alexipharmaca* 7; Timotheos fr 15, 124 = Page 1962: no 791; Telestes 6, 2; Page 1962: no 810; Orpheus *Argonautica* 618), *ὄρεστέρα*, and *ὄρεσιδρόμος*. *Oreia* is not only a Greek literary device to point at a wild and unknown country (as Roller 1999: 145). It is true that the epigraphic attestations of this epithet are not numerous and usually of later date. But, if the rock monument at Daskalopetra is one of the earliest cult images of the Goddess in Greek milieu (Roller 1999: 138; on the monument: Boardman 1959: 193-6; Naumann 1983: 150-3), then it can be assumed that the Greeks perceived her rock/mountain association (identification, epiphany). Thus, these epithets would have echoed Phrygian ritual as well. The ritual association of the rock with Kybele was attested by the earlier texts. According to a linguistic hypothesis, *meter Kybeleia*, as known from Old-Phrygian inscriptions, is an exact equation of the Greek *μήτηρ ὄρεϊα*, i.e. the epithet had not been derived from the name of a certain mountain, but just from the word for 'mountain' — her privileged dwelling (Brixhe 1979: 45). Zgusta's interpretation of Hesychius' gloss lays the stress on the rock sanctuary as the Goddess' dwelling (image, epiphany): Kybele is the mountain that bears a cave, either natural or artificial (Zgusta 1982: 171-2).

The most impressive monument in probably the greatest Phrygian rock-cut sanctuary in Yazılıkaya, named Midas City by modern explorers, is the huge façade facing east, the Midas Monument. A monumental dedication to Midas by *Ates* is hewn above the left-hand side of the gable, in the living rock: Midas is called *lavagtaei vanaktei* (in dative: Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: M-01a; Huxley 1959: 85-99). Scholars are inclined to date the inscription to the late eighth/early seventh century BC, following the well attested political activity of Mita/Midas (Haspels 1971: 103-4; Mellink 1981a: 99; ca. 700 BC). Brixhe and Lejeune argue for a date earlier than the sixth century BC because of the absence of *yod* in M-01a (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: 6). Some authors favour an early sixth century BC date, accepting a posthumous hero worship of Midas (DeVries 1988: 55-8; Sams 1995: 1156; followed by Borgeaud 1996: 23). A double-framed niche occupies the lower central part of the façade. Three inscriptions, mentioning *mater*, appear on the inner side posts, two being composed of graffiti (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: M-01c, d). The right-hand side graffito is most probably a dedication to the Mother by Midas (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: M-01d, 14). According to Brixhe and Lejeune, the dedicatee bears the same name as the great Midas, following their belief that the graffiti are later than the monumental inscription above (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: 6). *Materēy* (dative) can be read in one more graffito, executed just to the right of the great niche (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: M-01e).

Despite the conflicting opinions and the dating problems, this Phrygian rock-cut façade nonetheless reflects the role of the ruler in the Goddess' cult. Although later than the monumental inscriptions, the graffiti evidence is still earlier than the Greek sources that mention Midas as Kybele's son. It testifies to an earlier indigenous tradition.

It has long been accepted that a statue of the Goddess was placed in the doorway niches of the façades. The image of the Great Mother still can be seen in the niches of the monuments at a few sites, severely worn away by the millennia (at Arslan Kaya, Delikli Taş, Büyük Kapı Kaya, Küçük Kapı Kaya and Kapı Kaya at Kumca Boğaz: Haspels 1971: 77, 87-90, figs 159, 182-9, 212, 511:2). Most recently special attention has been paid to these monuments (Berndt-Ersöz 1998: 89-90; Roller 1999: 85 with a full list of the sites).

The special place that the niches occupied in the worship of the Goddess is emphasised by the inscriptions found at some of the above-mentioned sites. As at Midas City, the better executed inscriptions on the upper parts of the monuments are accompanied by graffiti in the niches. The text along the tie beam in Arslan Kaya is badly damaged, but the preserved letters favour the

reading *materan* (accusative). The authors of the *Corpus* have not succeeded in closely examining either this, or the other inscription on the border of the niche, the authenticity of which they doubt, because of the presence of *manka* — a word from the New-Phrygian vocabulary (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: W-03, 43-5). The situation is very similar with the façade at Maltaş — the text in the niche is damaged, but the verb for 'dedicate' (*[e]daes*) can be read, as well as the beginning of *mater* (*mate[]*) (Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: 47-9, W-05a, b; a third inscription in the niche has not been confirmed). In all three cases the inscriptions in the niches are either later or written by a hand other than that of the major ones. This might suggest a ritual practice of hewing a dedication to the Goddess on the occasion of successive (seasonal, annual?) celebrations.

Here a Greek literary text should be recalled, which is probably one of the earliest passages that associates the Phrygian ruler with the Mother Goddess, and which is usually neglected by modern scholars. It was considered in detail by Körte in his excursus on the ancient literary evidence on Gordion (Körte 1904: 22) and briefly referred to by Buluç (1988: 21). This is the Midas epitaph, first quoted by Plato in his *Phaedrus*.

A maid of bronze am I, on Midas' tomb I lie
As long as water flows, and trees grow tall
Shielding the grave where many come to cry
That Midas rests here I say to one and all.
(264d; translation Cooper 1997)

The epitaph consists of four verses in Plato, while two more are added in later versions (Homeri Opera *Certamen* 265-70; *Vita Herodotea* 135-40; Diogenes Laertius *Declarorum Philosophorum Viti* 6, 88-93; *Anthologia Palatina* 7, 153). The supplementary verses present a pantheistic view, while Plato's version creates a more specific picture. The latter parallels Phrygian ritual setting: a spring, flowing water and a forest. Later authors obviously missed this message and tried to encompass all the cosmic elements: the sun, the moon, rivers and sea.

It is not said that the maid on Midas' tomb is a goddess, but the association of Midas with a virgin female figure as guardian of his grave is eloquent enough. The funerary context of the Phrygian Mother's worship has already been stressed (Buluç 1988: 20; Roller 1999: 102, 104, 223-4, 250-2). The epigram at the Midas grave is, of course, a product of Greek literature. But it still might have echoed an observed ritual that was performed in front of the rock façades and in front of the images of the Goddess in some of the niches. The importance of the evidence lies just in the noted relation of the Phrygian king to the deity.

Both the Greek literary tradition on Midas and the Phrygian rock-cut monuments associate the figure of the Phrygian ruler with the Mother Goddess in an open-air ritual on the rocky mountain top/hill, in front of the niche, often in a rock-cut complex. Considering the literary evidence of Midas being the son of the Great Goddess, as well as reference to the Phrygian rituals, preserved in the Greek tradition, it is possible to assume that Midas is the Goddess' son just in this moment of a ritual performance. If we accept that Greek and Roman versions of the myth of Cybele and Attis reflected (though sometimes misunderstood) 'older Phrygian rites, particularly the rites of mourning for a dead priest-king' (Roller 1999: 258), this may have been the performance of the sacred marriage. The rock-cut monuments in the Phrygian highlands point to complex rites, which we can probably never reconstruct completely, but the union with the Mountain Mother may have been an important element. The rites possibly included a procession along a sacred road, winding up the mountain, the climbing of steps, and a walk toward a platform, to an elaborately shaped façade or simply to a niche. The so-called 'cup-marks', or bigger rock-cut basins, connected with grooves and channels imply sacrifices or libations. The monuments most often face south/southeast, which suggests solar aspects in the worship of Kybele.

Phrygian shaft monuments have recently been the subject of revived discussion, and new interpretations have been offered (Özkaya 1997: 89-103; Berndt-Ersöz 1998: 87-112). Vertical shafts are attested at five of the sites, running up behind the niches. In three cases there are ledges for an inner or upper lid at the top or the middle of the shaft: at Bakseyiş Monument, Maltaş and Delikli Taş (Haspels 1871: 82, figs 517:5, 520:3; a detailed description by Berndt-Ersöz 1998: 91-2, 98-107). According to Özkaya, not very convincing though, they were meant for wooden constructions through which the blood of the sacrificed bull leaked over the initiate in the *taurobolium* (Özkaya 1997: 95, 97-8). This is however not a new suggestion (for a review of the proposed functions of the shafts, see Roller 1999: 98, n 127). Roller accepts them as depositories for offerings, while Berndt-Ersöz interpretes these as places for oracles (Berndt-Ersöz 1998: 96-8).

A few observations related to the context of these monuments need to be emphasised here. Three of the above sites are obviously parts of larger complexes. The small shaft construction in Fındık is situated in a narrow valley between a rocky hill and a rock plateau, the dimensions of which and impressiveness match Midas City. After Midas City, Fındık Asar Kaya has the greatest number of altars and various rock-cut constructions (Haspels 1971: 95, fig 504). Although on a solitary

rock, the Delikli Taş monument itself could be perceived as a complex. The rock-cut façade is elongated, and the steeply gabled roof resembles an obelisk from afar, as the top of the rock is free-standing (Haspels 1971: 76, figs 209, 512:4). A spacious horizontal platform separates the monument into two at the place where a shaft starts downwards. Near the shaft there runs a rock-cut channel (Berndt-Ersöz 1998: 107). Two similar unfinished monuments are to be found in the immediate vicinity of Bakseyiş.

These open-air complexes, hewn more or less elaborately in the living rock, imply a procession, climbing up, and varied rites performed on the platforms or in front of the façades. The literary evidence emphasising the music and dance in the ritual could support a supposed procession. Although some authors are inclined to believe that the music and dance belong to the Greek worship of the Goddess (Roller 1999: 137, 149, 151), the nature of the rock-cut monuments speaks in favour of indigenous features, reflected in Greek sources. The mountain setting included a water source, while the play of the sun's rays on the rock could also have played a role in the Phrygian festival calendar.

The shaft monuments share common features (the one near Fındık being something of an exception), that relate them to the Midas Monument and to other Phrygian monuments that have no shafts: the architecturally shaped façade giving the impression of a building, the decorative geometric patterns, the traces of the Goddess' image and the presence of inscriptions. The combination of several or all of the above features in one monument makes evident the importance of these rock-cut constructions and almost certainly implies an elaborate ritual.

Rock-carving and rock-cut constructions are known throughout the eastern Mediterranean world, in south-eastern Europe and in many other areas (a rich set of parallels presented by Francovich 1990: 27-43; see also Fol V 1993: 62-6; Triandaphillos 1983: 145-63; Triandaphillos 1992: 141-55; for the Urartian monuments: Işık 1995). The monuments from the adjacent region of Thrace have been, however, generally neglected by modern western scholars as possible parallels, despite the persistent ancient tradition of the European origin of the Phrygians. Progress in their study, made during the last few decades, could offer some data for comparative considerations (Fol 1976; 1982; Delev 1984: 17-45; Naydenova 1990: 85-100; Fol V 1993; 1998: 19-27; 2000).

The written evidence on Thracian cult and the worship of rocks and mountains is scarce. Peak and rock sanctuaries were mainly associated with the cult of Dionysos and Sabazios. We might never discover the

famous sanctuary of Dionysos with an oracle, mentioned by Herodotus, where the Bessoi from the Satrai prophesied just like in Delphi (7, 111). A later text, a fragment of Alexander Polyhistor, quoted by Macrobius, is still more instructive, mentioning a rotunda on the peak Zilmissos dedicated to Liber, whom the Thracians considered the same as the sun and called Sabazios (*Saturnalia* 1, 18, 11). The rotunda was illuminated by the sun from the top (i.e. a circular open-air construction).

As demonstrated above, the rites of the Great Mother-Goddess were closely associated with those of Dionysos both in Thrace and in Phrygia. Recent studies on Thracian Orphism suggest that the rock-cut monuments in Thrace supposed both solar and chthonic aspects of the rituals, and were related to the mountainous/rock image of the goddess (Fol 1988: 66-7). There is no explicit evidence of this, but the reliefs of Kybele with a lion's head and of Artemis Phosphoros near Kabyle (district of Jambol, southeastern Bulgaria; the middle of the first millennium BC is suggested for this sacred place which was possibly associated with a royal/élite residence; Velkov 1984: 215-16) and the rock reliefs of Kybele and Bendis near Philippi (of Roman date: Collart, Ducrey 1975: no 147, fig 179 of Kybele (?), no 148, fig 179 of Bendis or Artemis) could support an earlier tradition of rites performed in the rock sanctuaries, devoted to the Mother.

The dating of the Thracian rock-cut monuments faces the same difficult questions as the dating of the Phrygian ones. Although the Thracian rock monuments do not display such an elaborate architectural shape, some parallels are very compelling. Most often the Thracian rock-cut tombs are also part of larger complexes (for example, tombs 1 and 2 near the village of Vodenicharovo; tomb 13 near the village of Gorni Veslets, southeastern Bulgaria: Fol 1976: 83-5, 95, figs 140-3, 181-4; Fol V 1993: 19-22, 24-5). They can be reached by a few steps, and often platforms or steep open antechambers extend in front of them.

The plans of some of the shafts behind the Phrygian rock façades resemble strongly those of Thracian rock-cut tombs. Some of the latter are executed in solitary rocks which dominate the vicinity, but the smaller monuments, such as niches, grooves and 'cup-marks' placed near them, account for their definition as rock sanctuaries (Fol V 1993: 27). It has been suggested that the penetration of the sun's rays into the rock-cut tombs, which have openings on their tops (fig 1), was of ritual importance (Fol V 1993: 20-1, 26; 2000: 48-56). There are ledges on some of the openings, probably meant for

cover slabs. The mountainous scenery once again presupposes processions, sacrifices and other ritual activities which as yet escape us. An attempt was made to distinguish between mystery and non-mystery rites according to the type of monument (Fol V 1998: 19-27). Could the Thracian rock-cut tombs with top openings furnish a parallel for the rites performed in the Phrygian shaft monuments?

The interpretation of some of the Thracian constructions as tombs would remain highly doubtful. One of the most impressive rock-cut monuments, near the village of Tatoul, district of Kurdjali, in southeastern Bulgaria, consists of two flap-top pyramid-like constructions hewn out of the living rock. The smaller construction features a square niche, and the bigger, more impressive one has a semi-circular niche sheltering a rectangular 'bed' (basin?), with ledges and grooves around it (fig 2). A quadrangular basin is hewn on the top of the latter, which is generally considered to be a grave, the cover slab of which is now missing (fig 3) (Fol 1976: 94, figs 172-80; Fol V 1993: 43-4). A small opening, however, can be seen at the bottom of the 'grave', leading to the front of the semi-circular niche. The theories about its accidental later occurrence should probably be reconsidered (though the initial hole might have been weathered and widened through the centuries) because it opens just into the well-profiled ledge that runs around the niche. The ledge ends in a groove that comes from the step on the western side of the monument. Thus, a libation, or sacrifice which required mixing of liquids can be supposed. The interpretation of the monument as a tomb could probably be retained only in regard to its symbolic meaning.

With its many channels, steps, small platforms, disks cut from the rock, two big niches and 'thrones' (fig 4) facing the semicircular niche, the Tatoul monument is the Thracian site that comes closest to the elaborate Phrygian rock sanctuaries (on the Phrygian double thrones/idols see Buluç 1988: 21; on the Thracian-Phrygian comparative context see Vassileva 1995: 265-76). It is in fact a large cult complex. A close resemblance can be seen in an altar from Pişmiş Kale with its quadrangular basin and alcove-like cutting above it (Francovich 1990: 108-9, pl 167; more parallels in Fol V 1993: 62-3). The steps on the edge of the rock cliff next to it, leading nowhere, closely resemble the ones at Tatoul (as well as those to the right of the facade at Delikli Taş). The complex is far from being well studied and documented, but it can still serve to point out some common aspects of rock-cut sanctuaries in the Balkan-Anatolian area.

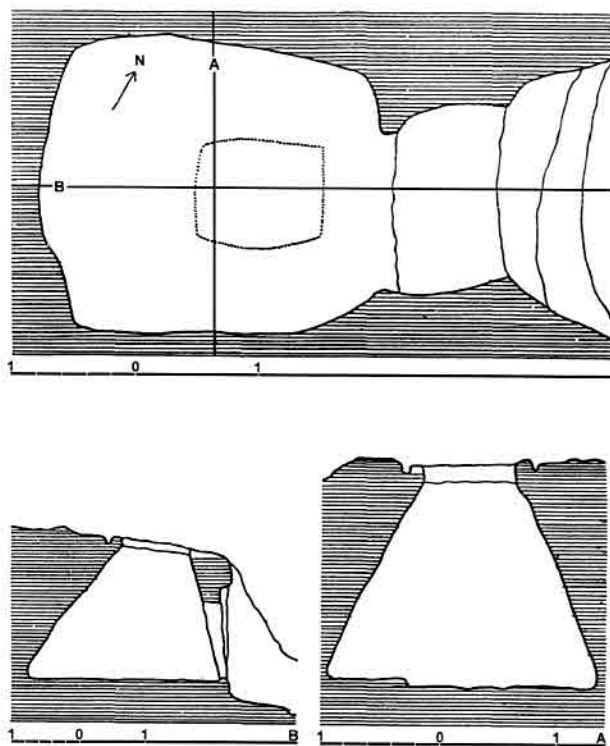


Fig 1. Rock-cut tomb near the village of Vodenicharsko, eastern Rhodope mountains: plan, section and cross-section (after Fol 1976: figs 67-9)



Fig 3. The rectangular basin on the top of the Tatoul monument, district of Kurdjali, southeastern Bulgaria (photograph by M Vassileva)



Fig 2. The semi-circular niche of the Tatoul monument, district of Kurdjali, southeastern Bulgaria (photograph by M Vassileva)



Fig 4. The 'thrones' of the Tatoul site (photograph by M Vassileva)

Another impressive rock-cut sanctuary is to be found in the locality of Glouhite Kamuni, near the village of Malko Gradishte, district of Svilengrad, again in south-eastern Bulgaria (Fol 1976: 99; 1982: 256-8, figs 149-56; Fol V 1993: 46-7). Besides a rock tomb, there are two huge rock outcrops covered densely with trapezoid-shaped niches. Nearby a small rock projects vertically from the ground, containing two miniature niches of the same shape: 30 and 15cm respectively in height, neither of them deeper than 3cm (fig 5). As it is hard to believe that this is just a model for the larger complex, the miniature niches might provide evidence for ritual carving of the rock on special (successive?) occasions, possibly as a personal votive act.

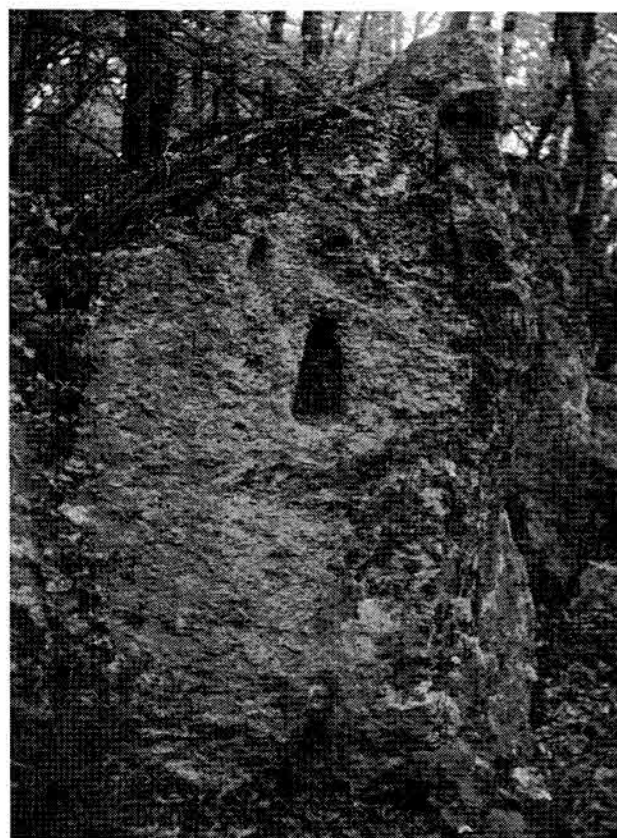


Fig 5. The two miniature niches at the Glouchite Kamuni site, district of Svilengrad, southeastern Bulgaria (photograph by M Vassileva)

The importance of the solar aspects of Kybele's cult could be suggested by the two opened wings of a door, hewn in the niche of the impressive façade at Arslankaya (Haspels 1971: 88). Together with the orientation of the monument, it implies that the image of the Goddess should be illuminated by the sun at a specific moment. The sun's rays should have penetrated the rock. The presence of an open door supposes its shutting (symbolically in this case). Could this be evidence for a mystery cult, possibly already profaned?

The Orphic reputation of Epizephiris Lokroi, where one of the earliest epigraphic occurrences of Kybele is found, as well as the similar context for the gold plaque from Thurii bearing *Κυβελήρια Κόρρα* (Diels 1951: 17-18, no 21,1), may provide a ritual core for the parallels between the Orphic rites and the worship of the Mother drawn by the ancient authors. Similar or common characteristics of the Eleusinian, Dionysiac and Mother rites that could have accounted for the identification of Kybele with Demeter in Greece have been discussed at length (Moreux 1970: 1-14; Turcan 1992: 220, 228-30; Versnel 1990: 153; Gasparro 1978: 1152, n 21, 1158-62, 1178). Although tentative, the parallels with the ritual of the Eleusinian mysteries, suggest an understanding of some of the rock-cut structures as places for libations and sacrifices, for keeping sacred objects, and finally as sacred places in a mystery cult. Maybe the so-called 'silos' should be considered in view of the Eleusinian megara. 'Barrows', 'wells' and 'pithoi' are often part of the rock complexes in Thrace. V Fol suggested that the Thracian rock tombs could parallel the Demeter megara (1998: 25). The pre-Greek context of the Eleusinian ritual is important in the suggested parallels. Thus, an interpretation of both Thracian and Phrygian rock monuments in the light of a similar, if not identical, ecstatic worship is plausible (comparative considerations have recently been offered by Fol 1994: 256-64; Fol V 1998: 19-27; Vassileva 1997a: 193-8).

As I hope I have demonstrated, the rock-cut monuments in Thrace are worth considering as parallels for the Phrygian ones. There are numerous more modest monuments in Phrygia: simple niches and altars, roughly executed 'idols', platforms etc., that are not so well documented, and still are regarded as evidence for the Mother cult, because of the data provided by the images and the inscriptions on the more complex ones. An earlier stage of worship served by simple rock-cut monuments is already suggested for Phrygia (Mellink 1981a: 98-9, 102). Thus, instead of monopolising the Urartian influence on Phrygian façades (Işık 1995), it is probably better to consider the Phrygian-Thracian parallels, as the Thracian monuments are part of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean megalithic tradition.

A great number of the Phrygian rock-cut façades bear an overall geometric decorative design, composed mainly of meander-like patterns and elaborately inscribed or interlaced crosses, which sometime resemble a complex maze. It has long been noted that this decoration closely resembles the patterns on the wooden furniture from the Phrygian tombs. Textiles are usually considered as the initial source of inspiration (Ramsay 1882: 27; Haspels 1971: 103; Mellink 1981: 267). As early as Ramsay the multicoloured rug was

associated with a mystery cult. He gives the example of the Eleusinian initiation, as well as of the Kybele and Attis cult. Although this evidence cannot be directly related to the Phrygian monuments, it could suggest a way of interpretation.

It has already been suggested that the inlaid wooden furniture from the Gordion tumuli represents on a small scale the motifs from the rock façades. The stylised rosettes on the wooden serving stands from Tumulus MM and Tumulus P occupy exactly the same position as the niches on the façades, thus supporting Simpson's assumption that the rosette symbolised the Great Goddess (1998: 636). Stylised lion's paws can be seen on the wooden serving stands (Young 1981: TumP 151, TumMM 378-9). They could be interpreted as another way of representing the two standing lions on both sides of Meter (Simpson 1988: 34-5; 1998: 636). A Near Eastern source for the symbolism of the rosette is likely, but its frequent occurrence in the Phrygian material gives further support to Simpson's interpretation. The play of light and shadow, achieved by the relief rock-carving, corresponds to the combination of light and dark wood of the furniture, and also to the incised patterns on Phrygian belts, suggesting a common religious symbolism used on architectural monuments and objects alike.

Thus, the theory that the grave goods found in the Phrygian tombs were utilitarian, seems unlikely. These

were objects of a ritual value, bearing what were probably images or symbols of the Great Goddess that were placed in the burial chambers. It was Buluç who briefly suggested that the grave goods occurring in pairs in the Ankara tumuli were meant for the king and the Goddess, thus pointing to the role of the Mother in the Phrygian burial customs as well (1988: 22; followed and further emphasised by Roller 1988: 48-9; 1999: 102, 104, 111-12).

The bronze and silver belts discovered in the Phrygian tumuli provide some of the best evidence for the above suggested association. Some of them bear almost the same incised meander-like, cross or square patterns. Most of the belts have long hooks with arch-handle decorations from Phrygian fibulae type (Young 1981: TumP 34-6; Akkaya 1992: no 8, figs 10-11; silver belts from Bayındır: Özgen 1988: no 48, 44; Pehlivaner 1996: 40-1). Sometimes lions' heads are placed at both ends of the handle, while a compass-inscribed rosette can be seen on some of the end-plaques.

Another, probably earlier type of belt is distinguished among the Gordion grave goods: studded leather with disks and open-work end-plaques (figs 6a, b) (Young 1981: TumMM 170-9, 148-54, TumW 25-6, 207-9; Kohler 1981: 236-9). The same way of achieving the geometric design can be seen on some pieces of Gordion furniture: a studded stool from Tumulus P and an inlaid

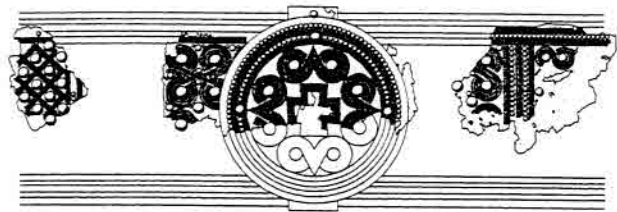
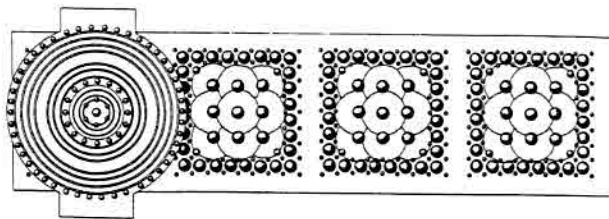


Fig 6. The studded leather and bronze belts from the Gordion tumuli: (a) Tum MM 170; (b) TumW 25 (after Young 1981: 149, 208)

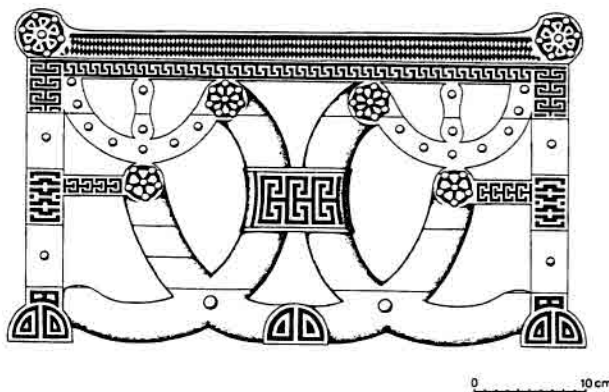


Fig 7. Reconstruction drawing of the front face of the inlaid, studded stool from Tumulus P (after Simpson 1999: fig 67)

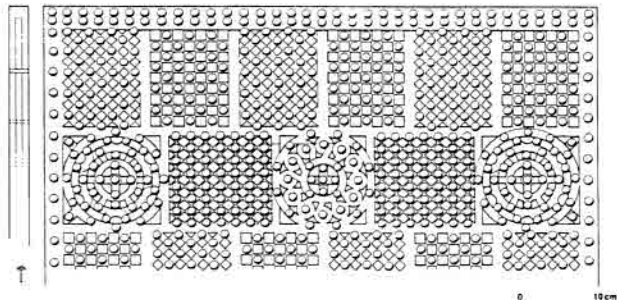


Fig 8. Reconstruction drawing of the preserved section of the inlaid, studded serving stand(?) from Tumulus W (after Simpson 1999: fig 95)

studded serving stand from Tumulus W, carved in openwork (figs 7, 8) (Young 1981: TumP 157, 72-4, TumW 80, 217-18; Simpson, Spirydowicz 1999: 54-6, 68-70, figs 91, 94, 95).

Besides the belts worn by the deceased and found on the skeletons, there are belts placed as grave offerings as well, like the hundreds of fibulae discovered in the richest tombs. The total number of belts in the burial chambers varies: three in Tumulus P, nine in Tumulus MM (possibly a tenth one), one in Tumulus W, two in Bayındır tumulus D, and one in the tumulus near Kaynarca. The interpretation of their number in these chambers is still uncertain, but it might have reflected the ritual status of the deceased.

Belts, fibulae, cauldrons and phialae are among the most frequent Phrygian (or imitation Phrygian) offerings in Greek sanctuaries (Muscarella 1989: 337-9). It is worth noting that belts are usually found in sanctuaries of the Great Goddess type deities: at the Samos Heraion, in Olympia, at the temple of Athena Pronaia in Marmaria, Delphi, at the Artemision at Ephesos and in Old Smyrna: again a 'goddess' (Boardman 1961/2: 179-89; Parzinger, Sanz 1986: 186-8; Bammer, Muss 1996: Abb 93-4, 78; Völlig 1998: 249, Tab 1). The manufacture of the earliest belt dedicated in Chios could be assigned to the late eighth century BC (Boardman 1967: 217). A winged goddess, holding the hind legs of two lions, wears a very similar belt on a bronze plaque from Olympia, ca. 600 BC (Boardman 1961/2: pl 22; Völlig 1998: Abb 6). A Roman copy of an Artemis statue from the Ephesian prytaneum shows the goddess wearing a belt, the hook and handle of which are almost identical with the Phrygian ones (Bammer, Muss 1996: Abb 95; Völlig 1998: Abb 7a, b; according to Fleischer (1973: 89) the fastening of this belt is not Phrygian — it is worth noting, however, that four rosettes and four bees alternate to form the decoration of the belt itself (Fleischer 1973: 62, Abb 1-2)). It is for this reason that scholars have interpreted the Phrygian finds as *παρθενικαὶ ζώναι* (Boardman 1961/2: 189).

The archaic gold and ivory statuettes of a goddess/goddesses, discovered at Ephesos, display the closeness of the early female deity there to the Anatolian type of Great Goddess (Fleischer 1973: 135), as can be seen from their resemblance to those discovered in Gordion (Young 1966: 269, pl 74, fig 5) and in Bayındır, in the period before the canonical imagery of Artemis was adopted. Archaeologists suggest that these might represent Kybele, employing a Kore-like imagery; identifications as Demetra, Kore, Kybele or Leto are also possible (Bammer, Muss 1996: 41, 76-7, Abb 28, 85-7). A meander motif decorates the edge of the deity's veil on one of the gold statuettes

(Bammer, Muss 1996: Abb 87). Another gold statuette of a veiled goddess was found together with three gold fibulae, the arcs of which are decorated with lions' heads among four-petalled flowers; a gold rosette appliqué belongs to the same find (Bammer, Muss 1996: Abb 86, 99-100). This set of gold objects combines the major Phrygian pictorial elements of cultic value as discussed above: the image of the goddess, the lions and the rosette.

Although we cannot estimate the degree of Phrygian involvement in the above mentioned sanctuaries, and probably we cannot go further than the conclusion about 'conscious knowledge of and friendly interaction with Greek society' (Muscarella 1989: 342), the occurrence of the objects and elements that had a role in Phrygian cult is instructive. It can only be speculated what aspects of the Greek deities Phrygian devotees recognised or accepted as belonging to their Mother Goddess. Still, it can be assumed that Ionian offerings were strongly related to or influenced by the Phrygian cult.

The above considerations make the idea that the belts had been worn by women and discovered mainly in female burials highly unlikely. It is probably true that a woman is buried in Bayındır tumulus D (Özgen, Öztürk 1996: 27), but the cremations in the Ankara tumuli and the tumulus in Kaynarca are beyond gender definition (Özgüç, Akok 1947: 63-9; 70-7). The male royal burial at Gordion Tumulus MM (whether Midas or not) and the princely one in Tumulus P speak against such a tendency (Kohler 1981: 239; Simpson, Spirydowicz 1999: 32, 63; Muscarella 1999: 4). Among the 'lesser' Gordion tumuli (inhumations), belt fragments were discovered in TumS: 1, in S1: 11-16 and in J: 22-9: the dead in S is assumed to be male; there is a male skeleton in J; while there is no identification data for the scattered bones in S1 (Kohler 1995: 57, 95).

It is probably better to assume that the belt of a virgin goddess occurs in the royal/aristocratic burials as a sign of the sacred marriage of the king with the goddess, though no direct evidence for such a ritual exists. The belt could also be a sign of an achievement through initiation (on the role of the clothing in the Samothracian mysteries see Mylonas 1974: 279; Cole 1984: 29). Thus, the belts from the rich Phrygian tumuli would mark the ritual status of the deceased, directly related to his role in the Great Mother's cult. The possibility of a priestess cannot be ruled out in the case of the Bayındır burial.

It could be suggested that the rock façades with the niches intended for the image of the Goddess, whose geometric design closely resembles those on the belts, were perceived as places for the sacred marriage of the

Phrygian ruler, as well as his symbolic grave. Phrygian wooden chambers have no entrance or door, and the dead and the offerings were lowered down before the roof was finally constructed (Simpson 1990: 86; Young 1981: 7; Mellink 1981: 264). Similarly, lowering down into a rock-cut shaft behind a niche could have symbolised both a burial and the union with the goddess. This can be, of course, only a supposition with the present state of the evidence. Accepting the shafts as places for votive offerings is still a major possibility. The votives would in this case have marked the union with the goddess, as would have the sun rays entering the rock shaft at certain calendar moments of ritual importance.

Discussing here such diverse groups of evidence is not accidental. The problems of dating and interpretation of each of them deserve a separate study. My point in bringing them together is to emphasise the role of the Phrygian ruler/aristocrat in the cult of the Mother Goddess. Domestic material can support the view that it was just this position of the ruler that points to an indigenous cult element reflected in the Greek and Roman literary texts. His importance in the ritual was recognised by the ancient authors who wrote about Midas being Kybele's son and founder of her celebrations. Indirect evidence could possibly suggest that the Phrygian king was the goddess' lover/husband at a certain ritual stage. The various data considered here reveal this association both in votive and in burial contexts, being symbolically marked in different media. It seems that the cult relation of the Phrygian king with the Mother Goddess was most expressively demonstrated through the rites performed in the mountainous and rock-cut sanctuaries.

As far as we can interpret our evidence, royal ideological values were similar in Thrace and Phrygia, though their realisation was much more imposing on Anatolian soil. The less eloquent Thracian material also attests the ritual connection between the Thracian king and the goddess, who was very often anonymous. The cultural and historical context can justify a comparative study of Thracian and Phrygian rock-cut monuments that betray the performance of similar rites: a combination of chthonic and solar aspects of these rites can be detected, as well as certain Dionysiac/Orphic connotations. The ritual importance of the rock-carving itself is implied by the nature of the monuments, no matter whether a simple niche or an inscription is achieved. The uncertainty in dating, as well as the generally aniconic early Phrygian and Thracian religious imagery, allows only a suggestion of the meaning of the monuments. The rock-cut sanctuaries and complexes were probably multifunctional, with different aspects of their religious importance displayed on different occasions.

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