

A TERRACOTTA MASK OF MITHRAS FOUND AT CAMİHÖYÜK-AVANOS, CAPPADOCIA PROVIDING NEW EVIDENCE ON THE MITHRAIC CULT AND RITUAL PRACTICES IN ANATOLIA

KAPADOKYA BÖLGESİ AVANOS CAMİHÖYÜK'DE BULUNAN PIŞMIŞ TOPRAK BİR MİTHRAS MASKESİNİN ANADOLU'DA MİTHRAS KÜLTÜ VE TÖRENLERİ İLE İLGİLİ OLARAK SAĞLADIĞI YENİ VERİLER

Ayşe F. EROL – S. Yücel ŞENYURT

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on a terracotta mask, which was recently recovered during Camihöyük rescue excavations within the scope of a dam construction in Cappadocia, Anatolia. The available pieces of the mask matched each other perfectly making it possible to reconstruct the mask's figure to a great extent. The fact that the mask's facial features resemble to those of the Mithras' iconography, points to its association with the Mithras cult. The mask and its association with Mithras and its usage in Mithraic ritual practises will be the main subject of this study. This article aims to contextualize the mask with its origins and functions, and also to set a date for it by comparing its stylistic features to iconographically similar materials.

ÖZET

*Makalemize konu olan terracotta mask, Kapadokya bölgesinde Nevşehir İli, Avanos İlçesi, Bayramhacı-
lı Köyü'nün yaklaşık 2,5 km güneybatısında yer alan Camihöyük 2009-2010 yılı kurtarma kazılarında bulun-
muştur. Parçalar halinde bulunan mask, restorasyon çalışmaları sonrasında büyük ölçüde tamamlanmış
olup, yüz detayları anlaşılabilir durumdadır. Malzeme üzerinde yapılan çalışmalar, maskın Mithras iko-
nografisiyle olan benzerliğine ışık tutan veriler sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda maskın Mithras kültürüyle olan
bağlantısı ve Mithraik ritüellerde mask kullanımının varlığı, bu çalışmanın temelini oluşturmaktadır.
Makalenin ilk bölümünde tarihsel gelişim süreci içerisinde Mithras kültü ve felsefesi ele alınmış, sonrasında
ise mask işlevsel açıdan değerlendirilmiş ve ikonografik olarak benzer malzemeyle karşılaştırılarak tarih-
lendirme yoluna gidilmiştir.*

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on a terracotta mask which was discovered recently during the rescue excavations at Camihöyük¹ conducted in 2009-2010 within the framework of the Bayramhacı Dam project. The site is located 2,5 km southwest to the village Bayramhacı, on the border of Kayseri and Nevşehir-Avanos districts in Cappadocia (Fig. 1).

Camihöyük is a multi-layered medium-sized mound located on the northern bank of Halys/Kızılırmak River². The rescue excavations (Fig. 2) were held in three main areas: the mound revealing cultural layers from the Chalcolithic to the Roman period, the northern terrace and the necropolis. The terracotta mask under discussion was found during the step trench on the main mound, which was conducted to reveal the stratigraphic sequence of Camihöyük.

In 2009, during the removal of the topsoil, four pieces of a terracotta mask were found scattered in trench BP-35 (Fig. 3). Even though the pieces belonging to the mask were not in situ, we surmise that they belonged to a partially preserved monumental building recovered in the uppermost cultural layer of the mound (Fig. 4); this particular building had evidently been renovated during the Hellenistic-Roman period. In and around the building, a number of scattered architectural elements such as columns, capitals and pieces of frescoes were recovered (Figs. 5-6). Parts of a rectangular chamber have been preserved in the north-eastern section of the building with a possible fire-altar in its corner. The building seems to have been seriously damaged during a tectonic event that probably occurred during the Roman period when the archaeological deposits tilted and subsided. Some of the architectural elements, the discovery of a water resource facility to the southeast end of the mound and the presence of a tunnel that extends to the building on the upper section of the mound, are indicative of the presence of a Mithras cult on the site; thus it is possible to surmise that the building was actually a mithraeum³. Despite the fact that the mask was not found in situ, the resemblance of its facial features resemble with those of the Mithras' iconography and the use of masks in Mithras' hierarchical degrees, point to its association with the Mithras cult.

It is evident that the mask (Fig. 7) will provide ample new evidence on the Mithras cult and its presence in Cappadocia. Accordingly here, along with presenting a detailed description of the mask and assessing its association with Mithras, an overview of the employment of such masks in Mithraic ritual practices will be noted. We shall also focus on contextualizing the origins and functions of such masks and to set a date for it by comparing its stylistic features with the iconography of similar items. Accordingly, the analysis of its stylistic features, iconographical associations and its suggested use of masks in the Mithras cult will be considered within the historical development of the Mithras cult and its philosophy.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MASK

The mask, inventorized during the excavation as "CH 09 BP35-3", is of light brownish (7.5 YR 6/4) ware tempered with very fine straw, sand and tiny grit particles; it was shaped by moulding, hard fired and shaped skillfully. Its surface is self slipped in light brownish (7.5 YR 6/4) with traces of olive yellow (2.5 Y 6/8) paint on brow, cheeks and ears, and pinkish (10 R 8/3) and olive (5 Y 5/4) paint under the left eyehole, the paints applied seems to be as bands. Four pieces of the mask fits with each other, making it possible to reconstitute its figurative features to a great extent (Fig. 7); actually three quarters of the mask have been recovered depicting the right ear, eye, cheek, and fully nose, upper part of the lip contour and half of the left ear. The preserved height of the mask is 20 cm, length 13,6 cm part of the left eye, cheek and lower part of the lip and the chin are missing.

Its caps upper edge was sharpened to a high and round end, and bends slightly downwards. The ears are shown clearly while the ear holes are left empty. In order to render these holes functional, it was surely intended that the ears were not left under the cap or the hairs (Fig. 8). Hair curls are left to fall on the forehead and on the cheeks to the ear level. Only the right side of the mask's parts below the ear level is preserved where braided part of the hair exists. The eye-sockets were carved whereas pupils and eyeholes were left empty (Fig. 9). Only the upper lip's contour was preserved and it is formed with an

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upward curve, which points to the mouth being also carved in. The mask was also equipped with a pointy cap on which two holes were placed. The nose is perfectly observed and the fact that eye pupil, mouth and ear hole were carved and that its dimensions fitted with those of a regular human face renders the mask almost life-size, in other words a plausible artefact that was worn by individuals. Small holes at the top of the mask seem designed for thongs to tie the mask about the wearer's head.

Though not damaged severely, it is partly calcified. Restoration and conservation work revealed articulate facial details along with paint remnants in patches.

THE MITHRAS CULT

GENERAL FEATURES

Despite its common origin, the cult of Mithras appears under different names in various cultures; while the Roman's used Mithras, the Persians preferred Mithra, Indo-Aryan cultures used initially Mitra, which was later replaced with Mitra-Varuna as a result of the establishment of a dual cult with another deity. Through this paper we preferred to use Mithras.

The earliest reference to the worship of Mithras is related to the Aryan pantheon, the name Mithras appearing on a 14th century BC treaty between the Hittite king Shupiluliuma and the Mitannian king, Matiwaza (Garstang and Gurney 1959: 40; CIMRM I 1956: 49 no. 16). This leads to the argument that in the Aryan pantheon Mithras was the god who provided peace and who testified to conventions and treaties.

The same cult appears in the Vedas texts of the Hindus (Pike 1930: 1) where the name Mitra-Varuna is mentioned with the following qualities: protectors of the universe, imperial rulers of this world, beholders of heaven, originators of the rain, eminent deities among the gods, observers of truth, distributors of water, protectors of the holy rights among men, guides in the right way, benefactors (Pike 1930: 82-83). Linked to the great Indian God Varuna as an ally, Mithras helps the plants grow after Varuna brings the rain, as an indicator to its relation with fertility and abundance.

The most extensive information on Mithras is to be found in the Persian sources. In the Avesta, the holy book of the Persians, we see that the cult of Mithras is connected to Zoroastrianism, which is explained in the earliest part of the Avesta, the Zend-Avesta⁴.

Ahura Mazda, while praising Mithras, states that *"when he created Mithras, he rendered him worthy of honour and praise like himself and that Mithras was the great, strong and sleepless watcher, so the lords of the regions would praise him at early dawn and the warriors on horse back, prayed for his aid"* (Yasht, X., 103). Mithras can be found as the lord of the wide pastures, whom Ahura Mazda created as the most brilliant among the heavenly.

Given this close relationship between Mithras and Ahura Mazda's benevolence, the role of Asha should also be pointed out. While Ahura Mazda is the creator of life, the holiest spirit, Asha was the spirit who was given the first fire in the beginning of all life and it stands next to Ahura Mazda (Boyce 1969: 12). In the Avesta, Asha and this fire are stated to constitute the life energy of all living things. The Yashnas, a part of Avesta, express that Zoroaster committed himself to thinking and respecting Asha as long as he lived (Yashnas 43.9). This connection formed between life and fire is central to Zoroastrianism.

It is easy to determine that Mithras in Vedas and the one stated in the Persian sources were similar in nature as a divinity of the good, the benign, and in close association with other gods such as Ahura or Varuna, who were also referred to as powers of Heaven. All in all, across different cultures, Mithra has been worshipped as a benevolent deity, a granter, a provider and a positive force to be looked up to.

THE ARRIVAL OF MITHRAS IN ANATOLIA TOGETHER WITH ZOROASTRIANISM

The cult became affluent in Anatolia with the Persians taking over control of the peninsula. The adoption of Zoroastrianism by the Persian court was greatly facilitated by the role of the Magi, the Zoroastrian priests. When the Persians captured Anatolia in mid-6th century BC, the Magi came first to Cappadocia and Armenia (Cumont 1903: 11). It seems possible that Magi preferred to choice in

Cappadocia was due to its landscape with extensive steppes and plains resembling to that of their native country. Argaios (Erciyes today), being a volcanic mountain, thus offered an appropriate spot for the settlement of the fire cult.

There are numerous indicators of the strong presence of Zoroastrianism in Anatolia. Strabon mentions numerous fire altars burning in Cappadocia during his time (Strabon *Geographica*: XII-31). He further added that the way the Magi in Cappadocia offered sacrifices was highly similar to those mentioned in the Avesta prayers: the rituals performed in front of the fire with an harp, the offerings were presented with holy brunch bundles, milk, oil and honey, and the precautions the priest in charge took for the preservation of the fire as pure (Cumont 1903: 26). Moreover, the Magi are known to be high in numbers in Cappadocia after the 5th century BC with their activities remaining significant up until 370 AD (Mitchell 1993: 173).

A bilingual inscription in Greek and Aramaic found in Rodandos - Ariaramneia (Faraşa), also presents important information on the presence of Mithras cult in the region (Grégoire 1908: 445). The text is dated to sometime between the 3rd century BC and the 1st century AD (Turcan 1996: 200). The Aramaic version reads as follows: "Sagarius, son of Maiphernes, commander chief of Ariaramneia, who became 'magus of Mithras'" (Briant 2002: 711), while the Greek version states Sagarios, son of Magaphernos, strategos of Ariaramneia, who became a priest of Mithras in Ariaramneia (Lipinski 1975: 179), which points to this event being an initiation ceremony. It has been argued that since the inscription was found in a cave close to a spring, this could have been a mithraeum despite the lack of the necessary iconographic supporting evidence (Grégoire 1908: 447, no. 1). A fire altar was also found in Cappadocia near the town of Bünyan, bearing the depictions of the Magi and dating to either the Achaemenid period or to the beginning of the Hellenistic period⁵.

Dated to the beginning of the Hellenistic period and currently exhibited in Istanbul Archaeological Museum, the Aramean inscriptions found in Areb-sun to the west of Avonos are decorated with motifs

that refer to Zoroastrianism (Russell 1990: 2679). These inscriptions point to the latter's development in Cappadocia. Moreover, some of the coins recovered from that region have illustrations on them depicting figures with rayed crowns and a cart with four horses that typically belonged to Mithras. These have been interpreted as evidence to the presence of the Mithras cult in the region (Baydur 1994: 73-78).

Another element documenting the Mithras cult in Cappadocia is an inscription found in Kaisareia. Here, Mithras is referred as Sol Invictus, the unconquerable sun (Cumont 1896: no. 2). When one takes into account the fact that Kaisareia was a Roman garrison and that Mithraism found itself very catchy among the soldiers, it becomes easy to discern the effectiveness of the cult in the region during the Roman period. A coin acquired in Kaisaria, dated to the period of Gordianus III points to the cult of Mithras by illustrating the mountain of Argaios on an altar (Bland 1996: 50).

In the M9 sarcophagus of the graveyard area, 200 m away from the Camihöyük Hellenistic-Roman Imperial settlement, a bronze coin was found depicting the portrait of Emperor Elagabalus (218-222 AD) on the obverse, while the reverse displayed the mountain of Argaios with the name Argeios. As mentioned above, being a volcanic area, the Argaios Mountain must have provided a suitable spot for the cult of fire, which is closely associated with Mithras' cult, especially in its Persian origins. The role of the Magi in spreading the religion in this region and ancient writers' comments on the intense activity of the cult of Mithras around the mountain of Argaios have been pointed out above. It is worth reminding that in the coins of this region, the mountain was often illustrated as either an altar itself, or accommodating altars on it; the Mithras' cart with four horses, or various figures with rayed crowns, which are again symbols of its cult are also depicted on the coins. Another inscription from Tyana also mentions Mithras as the protector of the truth and its epitheton emphasizes Mithras' defense of the just (Cumont 1896: no. 3). All these data presented above point to the settlement of Zoroastrian communities in Cappadocia in which Mithras is worshiped.

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With the weakening of the Seleukos Kingdom, many kingdoms emerged in Pontus, Armenia and Commagene, whose royal dynasties were claimed to go back to the line of the Achemenian rulers. Many of the family names of these kings included the name Mithridates, which testifies to the maintenance of the cult of Mithras in these regions as an assurance for the blessing of their reign from the god of victory and benevolence. The word Mithridates means "that which is given by Mithras", and it was repeatedly used by Hellenistic kings from supposedly Persian descent in naming themselves in accordance with the principle of God-King. While drawing attention to the intensity of the activities of the Magi in Armenia, Polybios stated one Armenian prince being called as Mitridatis (Polybios, *Historiae*, XXV-2). In Commagene, King Antiochus I (69-34 BC) had himself portrayed on the Nemrud Dağı shaking hands with Mithras (Dörner 1990: 186, pl. 52). The god has the rayed crown and the pointed cap with flaps⁶, as he would two centuries later on Roman reliefs. The inscriptions of the Nemrud Dağı add to Mithras' name those of Helios, Hermes and Apollo as equivalents (Turcan 1996: 201). Mithras was assimilated to Attis, Apollon, Helios and Zeus in Anatolia (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 279).

As far as the Pontic region is concerned, the name Mithridates appears to have been a preferred royal name here as well (Saprykin 2009: 259). Mithras was considered as the supreme deity of Trapezus as illustrated in the depictions on coins from that city belonging to the rule of different Emperors (Tsetskhladze 1992: 121): Traianus (Arslan 1992: 85, no. 27), Lucius Verus (Waddington et al. 1925: 109, no. 11), Commodos⁷, Caracalla⁸, Severus Alexander⁹. There were some ruins of a Mithraeum, near Trapezus, which was later on converted to a church (Cumont 1896: 55). Moreover, the inscription carved on a stele obtained from Amasia in the Pontic region mentions the military level in the hierarchy of the Mithras cult (Cumont 1896: 158).

Tarsus was also one of the most important centers in Cilicia for Mithraism. It has been argued that Tarsus, being an important centre for the Stoic philosophy in the Hellenistic period, offered a synthesis between the bull sacrifice ritual of the Mithras cult and the worship of a star in the Stoic school of belief (Ulansey 1989: 68ff). The latter has been suggested

to play a very significant role in the development of Mithraism (Cumont 1903: 31). The relationship between Stoicism and the Mithras religion could be established thanks to the former's emphasis on fatalism and the importance of the stars and the skies.

Mithras is also found on a group of Tarsus coins issued during the reign of Gordianus III (238-44 AD), where it was named as Helios-Mithras and was depicted to wear a rayed crown while sacrificing a bull (Cumont 1903: fig. 9).

THE CULT OF MITHRAS IN ROMAN EMPIRE

Rome was first exposed to Mithras through the campaigns of Pompeius to Cilicia. Plutarchos (Vit. Pomp. 27.4) mentions that it was the Cilician pirates who first celebrated the ways of Mithras. Then, the religion became very popular among the soldiers, with the army becoming the most efficient promoter of Mithras. By the 2nd century AD, it had become popular among the members of the Roman army, and by the 3rd century, its adherents included members of the Roman aristocracy and its imperial court (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 159). Iconographic and inscriptional evidence reveal that membership in the cult came primarily from the ranks of the Roman army, but also included members of the imperial government as well as merchants and slaves (Dürüşken 2000: 147). An absolute secrecy, caveish temples where the members of the cult gathered, and the Tauroctony that plays a very important role in the cult's iconography, are distinctive features of Roman Mithraism.

Temples of Mithras could be found in every part of the Empire during the cult's peak, from the shores of the Black Sea, to the mountains of Scotland and to the very borders of the Great Saharan desert, Mithraeums were present (Cumont 1903: 43). The cult is known to have spread up to England in the castella or in the merchant towns through military and commercial linkages¹⁰ (Vermaseren 1955). This diffusion effect to central provinces of the Empire was also facilitated by the Magi, who accepted to become subjects of the Emperor Nero (54-68 AD) (Maggi 1959: 561). The latter was already willing to be acquainted with the ceremonies of Mazdaism by the Magi, which had been brought to Rome by King Tiridates of Armenia (Dio Cassius 93.1-7; Cumont 1903: 85-86).

Emperor Commodus (AD 180-192) adopted the secret ceremonies of Mithraism and began the official propaganda throughout the Empire. He became a Pater in the Mithras Cult. His bust exhibited in the Salting Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum depicts him in iconographic resemblance to Mithras: he wears a helmet typically worn by the paters of the Mithras cult (Esdaile 1917: fig. 1). Lampridius informs us that Commodus was initiated into the mysteries and took part in the bloody ceremonies of its liturgy (Lampridius, *Commodi Vita* C.9). Another Roman Emperor, Aurelian (270-75 AD) established the official cult of Sol Invictus, which translates as the 'Unconquerable Sun'. The last pagan that occupied the throne of the Caesars, Julian the Apostate, was devoted to Mithras (Cumont 1903: 87-89).

The Mithras cult can also be observed in many Anatolian provinces. An inscription found in the city of Ancyra Sidera located at the border between Phrygia and Mysia, mentions sacrifices being made to Helios-Mithras. The latter is remarkable as a syncretism of Helios, the god of light, and Mithras (Levick et al. 1993: 147, no. 449). In another inscription dedicated to Mithras, that was recovered at Kolophon in Ionia, the god was defined as holy and undefeatable (CIMRM II 1960: 13 no. 24b). On a marble sacrifice stele found in Perge in Pamphylia, there is an illustration of a vaulted cave, which is typical for mithraeums to be built in. There, Mithras is depicted killing a bull under the vault. An inscription acquired from the same place and dated to the second half of the 2nd century AD mentions Markos Loukkios Krispos with his children offering sacrifices to Helios-Mithras on behalf of the Perge's people's council (Beck 2004: 13).

The Cilician region was also an important in the development of the Mithras cult; a sacrifice inscription dated to 3rd century AD, recovered at Anazarbos, presents Marcus Aurelius offering his sacrifices for the promise he made to his country as the eternal priest and father of the undefeatable Helios - Mithras (Erten 2007: 33). The word father here should be evaluated as a sign of the top position of the pater in the Mithras cult.

Moreover, Plutarkhos stated that in Olympos, Lykia, the Cilician pirates had engaged in sacrifice rituals

and some secret ceremonies devoted to Mithras (Plutarkhos, *Vita Pompeii*, 24.7). In addition to that, the sacrifice inscription obtained from the antique city of Oinoanda from the Lycian region, were devoted to the Dioscures, Helios-Mithras, Hermes and Zeus (Milner and Smith 1994: 71, pl. 16/a-b). This underlined the links between these deities (Saprykin 2009).

In the Aiolian region, Pergamon, Kapıkaya, there exists a stone building that is associated with the Mithras cult. It was built with a terrace or a porch to the front. There are seven niches in the building, which is dated to the end of the 1st century AD or the beginning of the 2nd century AD (Radt 1978: 73). Its side-walls to the interior have podiums and stone sofas. These podiums stand as a fundamental feature of the Imperial Mithraeums, whereas the sofas were called as *praeseptum*, designed to serve as a dining place where the special cult food can be consumed with its members facing each other (Radt 1978: 76).

Lastly, in the joint excavation of the Gaziantep and the Münster universities revealed an underground temple to Mithras (Ergeç et al. 2000). It is located to the south foothills of the Keber Mount, close to the village Dülük, not far from Gaziantep. The central niche of the temple houses a relief of the Tauroctony scene in which Mithras is depicted as killing a bull in presence of various figures such as scorpions, snakes, dogs, etc. At the cult-niche end is a rather eroded rock-cut tauroctony, in which the head of Mithras has been knocked off and replaced by a Cross.

Knowledge of Mithraism is derived almost exclusively from the iconography found in the Mithraeums, which are small and narrow caves, artificial or natural, used for places of worship to Mithras. Eubulus informs that Zoroaster was the first to dedicate a natural cave in honour of Mithras, the creator and father of all (Beck 2004: 117). After Zoroaster, others adopted the custom of performing their initiation in these caves and grottoes (Porphyry, *De Antro. Nymph.* 6). The caves represent the cosmos and their vaulted ceilings are intended to represent the celestial vault, the heavens with the zodiac.

Even though the details of the iconography depicted in each temple varies, Tauroctony - a scene where

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Mithras is portrayed to slay a bull in the company of many other figures, is common to all of them. The bull slaying scene is either a relief or a fresco and it depicts the god as young, with bright appearance and wearing a pointed cap. In the relief, the central cult image is frequently accompanied by other pictures—a zodiac and other scenes involving Mithras (LIMC VI/2 1992: figs. 64, 183; Cumont 1903: figs. 12, 25-26, 37). These include Mithras being born from a rock near a stream (LIMC VI/2 1992: figs. 118, 183, 330; Cumont 1903: figs. 15, 24, 30-31, 35). Vermaseren, in turn, underlined that the reason why most Mithras temples were found next to a river or close to a spring is Mithra's own birth having taken place next to a water source (Vermaseren 1969: 513). Another scene portrays Mithras with both rock and water, where it shoots an arrow into a rock and causing water to flow forth (LIMC VI/2 1992: fig. 183; Merkelbach 1995: abb. 3).

There is little information to be extracted from the ancient literary sources about the meaning of the bull-slaying scene. Even if there are a number different interpretations¹¹, more or less there is a consensus that the sacrifice of the bull is intended to grant fertility and abundance to the fields in a way to render the death of the bull meaningful to generate new life in a creative and beneficial way. According to Cumont, Mithras was a hunter, horseman and archer, as were his early worshippers in the Avesta, while one of his titles is the lord of the pastures. Therefore, with the sacrifice it made, Mithras became the tauroctonus hero, the creator of all the beneficent beings on earth.

To come back to the issue of the zodiac, the Mithras cult appears closely associated with the worship of stars. The fact that cult was initiated on giving homage to the seven stars, is a clear indicator of the importance given to the privileged position of the stars. According to Porphyry (Porphyry, *De antro. Nymph.* 6), as a part of religious practices Persians made use of caves where they would introduce an initiate to the mysteries, revealing the path of the heavens. The Mithraic initiation ceremonies which were held to welcome new members to the cult were called the sacramentum (Cumont 1896: 1949). The new initiated person was the neophyte, who would have to go through all the seven steps of the seven stars to

reach the top ranks within the cult (Merkelbach 1994: 77-86).

In this way, the cult of Mithras is argued to consist of seven successive degrees, which is most clearly explained by the testimony of St. Jerome in his *Epistula* and *Laetam* collected by Franz Cumont (Cumont 1896: 1-184, 457-476). As the newly initiated member gained knowledge of and insight into the principles of the cult and fulfilled various requirements, he advanced through each grade and received the titles Corax the Raven, Nymphus the Bride, Miles the Soldier, Leo the Lion, Perses the Persian, Heliodromus the Courier of the Sun, and finally Pater the Father. Each of these degrees was put under the tutelage of a planet (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 167-169), which testifies to the astrological inclination dominant amongst the Mithraic communities.

The archaeological evidence to these seven grades in tutelage of seven planets can be found in many mithraeums, as in the figures of the seven degrees with their names in Santa Prisca mithraeum dated to 202 AD (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 177, 235). The mural on the south wall shows initiates in which all the seven different grades are present, and the grades are accompanied by painted inscriptions above each figure (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 148-178 for wall-paintings, 179-240 for inscriptions). The pebble mosaic at Ostia mithraeum, which was called *Mitreo di Felicissimo*, depicted symbols associated with the seven grades of initiation into the cult of Mithras (CIMRM 1 1956: 299, fig 83). In addition, except for the Heliodromus, all these degrees have been accounted for on a graffiti that was discovered in a mithraeum found in Dura-Europos (Metzger 1945: 226).

There are signs among the cult degrees that point to Mithras' character as a vegetation god, which further sheds light to the bull slaying scene's purpose. The presence of honey in the Perses in Mithraism is explanatory for the deity's relation to preservation of fruits and plants; and thus indirectly to its provision of fertility and abundance. Honey, which was regarded as a preservative in the antiquity, was used to purify the tongue of the Leos from guilt (Porph., *De Antro. Nymph.* 15) and the hands of the Perses, the fifth degree ruled by the Moon. When the initi-

ate wore the pointed cap and the khlamys, which were the typical outfit of Mithras, and used honey as a way to underline the protective/purifier feature of the ceremony, he was to symbolize the preservation of vegetation. In accordance with that, Perses was depicted wearing a pointed cap like Mithras in the Konjica relief (Fig. 10). Bull-slaying scene, in turn, reflected the belief that the moon, the ruler of the fifth degree, passes its protection to the bull's seed to cause the growth of fruit-bearing plants and trees through the shed blood (Cook 1914: 516). Like the Ravens, the Lions wore animal masks, and an inscription at the Santa Prisca Mithraeum indicates their duty to take care of the sacred fire (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 160). The same fire symbolism is also present in the Mitreo di Felicissimo (CIMRM I 1956: 299, fig. 83).

On other accounts, Perses' symbol is sickle, like the one on the Felicissimus mosaic (CIMRM I 1956: 299, fig. 83). Perses appears as the reaper (Herodotus I. 125-126), like Mithras himself, who was the divine reaper as represented on a relief from Dieburg in Germania (CIMRM II 1960: 1247, fig. 323). The Santa Prisca mithraeum also depicts Perses with ears of corn on his left hand, which attests to his quality as the protector of the crops (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 156). A very similar illustration can be found in the Mitreo delle Pareti dipinte at Ostia mithraeum (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 160).

The highest degree was the Pater (Father). The names related to the Pater¹² have been Aristes¹³, Sacerdos¹⁴, Hieroceryx¹⁵, Pater Sacrorum¹⁶ and Pater Patrum (Cumont 1903: 155). He was under the tutelage of Saturn and was the representative of Mithras on earth. In the case of the Pater, four elements are depicted to symbolize the authority that they exercise within the Mithraic community (Fig. 11): the harpe, related to agriculture, also recognized as Saturn's harpe (Gordon 1972: 101).

Reliefs show Mithras as reaper or fruit-gatherer (Turcan 1996: 237). That is why the leader of each Mithraic community, the Pater, Mithras' representative on earth, was placed under the special protection of Saturn. As it can be seen at Santa Prisca mithraeum, one of the attributes of the father is a harpe (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 180). Harpe or sickle was used to represent the harvest god (Nils-

son 1951). There is a close relationship between the Pater, Mithras and Saturn. Mithras and Saturn¹⁷ are both gods connected with vegetation, Mithras having created plants by killing the bull, and Saturn being the divine creator and mower (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 180). Hence the harpe, which is very often the attribute of Saturn when he is represented at Mithras' rock birth, becomes the attribute of the Pater in a Mithraeum at Ostia (Fig. 11). In some other representation of Mithras' birth, Saturn hands over the dagger to Mithras to kill the bull (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 80) or, in his role as the divine reaper, presents him with a harpe.

The seven grades of the Mithraic hierarchy have been studied by H. G. Horn on a relief decorated cup found in Mainz depicting a Mithraic initiation. The scene on one side depicts archery of the Father, and the other side, the procession of the Sun-Runner. Horn identified the former as a ritual of initiation thanks to its striking similarity of composition with the Capua scenes (Horn 1994: 25-28). Of the three figures on Side A, the one to the left, the seated bowman on a throne, is a Pater of the Mithraic community (Fig. 12), identifiable as such in that he wears the garb of Mithras and performs one of the god's actions (Beck 2000: 150, pl. XIII). The Father, here aims an arrow just like Mithras as seen on the bas-relief at Neuenheim, Germany (Cumont 1903: fig. 15). Moreover, the figure below the inscription placed in the Santa Prisca mithraeum is represented as the Pater, with its pointed cap and the sitting position on a high throne (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 155, pl. LIX).

ICONOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS OF THE MASK

In spite of the recent extensive archaeological activity in Anatolia, either as excavations or as surveys, there has been no new evidence on the Mithras cult. Considering the presence of Roman garrisons in Cappadocia and the popularity of the Mithras cult among Roman soldiers, it is reasonable to surmise to associate the iconographic features of the mask to the regions in the west as the evidence from Anatolia does not permit us to assume the existence of an Anatolian prototype of the Mithraic cult-scene. As there are no iconographical documents available to compare, the presence of the Mithras cult in Anatolia can only be detected through inscriptions. The

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only depiction of Mithras found in Anatolia has been obtained from Dülük, where the head had been damaged intentionally during the Christian period by carving a cross on it. Thus, iconographic comparisons are only possible with the materials from the West, which will be presented below.

In the painted representations, Mithras is characterized as an oriental or even Persian deity by a pointed cap, the so called pileum, equally known as mitra and tiara (Vermaseren 1982: 62). It has been argued that this cap was worn especially in Asia as a privilege of the kings and the richly embroidered garment of Mithras in the paintings of both Capua, Barberini and Marino immediately reminds of an oriental king (Vermaseren 1982: 63), or a divine ruler who as at Nemrud Dağı as the protector of his vassal kings (Dörner 1975: 26). The reason behind this line of argument is that Mithraism in the West was rooted in Cilicia, which was the country next to Commagene and that it was annexed to the empire when Pompey subdued the Cilician pirates in 67 BC. In Capua scene Mithras' cap, which covers its curling hair, is decorated with a border on each side from which golden vertical threads run (Fig. 13). In Marino mithraeum, Mithras is a young prince with curly blond golden hair and a white tunic and pointed cap with flaps (Fig. 14).

The Mithras illustrations in the Tauroctony scenes of Capua, Marino, Barberini (Vermaseren 1971: pl. XI-XII) mithraeums, as it is with the mask discussed in this paper, depicts a young facial iconography¹⁸, flapped pointed cap, and curly hair. Since the cult member at the Pater rank is the very representor of Mithras on earth, he had to have the same iconography with the deity. This is why the cult member at the Pater level depicted on the Mainz vessel wears the same pointed flapped cap. On the paintings in the Santa Prisca, the figure presented as the Pater is depicted with a flapped pointed cap and as sitting on a throne while receiving representatives of the different grades (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 128, 155, pl. LIX). Moreover, the Ostia mosaic includes the flapped pointed cap as one of the symbols of the Pater (Fig. 11).

Apart from the above mentioned examples, the Mithras depiction on bas-relief of Hedderheim, Germany (Fig. 15), another Mithras depiction at the

relief from the Esquiline in Rome (Vermaseren 1982: pl. XXII), and the stele of the Via Tiburtina at Rome, produced during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD) (Turcan 1996: 241) (Fig. 16), accomodates a Mithras illustration, whose young facial features in terms of eyes, lip contour, facial ovality and with a pointed cap resemble the most to those of our mask. Commodus' bust exhibited in the Salting Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (Esdaile 1917: 71, pl. 1), depicts him in iconographic resemblance to Mithras: he wears a pointed cap typically worn by the Paters of the Mithras cult. He is shown as Pater in the Mithras Cult.

The iconography offered by both the inscriptions including Mithras references from the Roman period and the Mithras depictions presented above characterizes Mithras with a young facial expression, curly hair, with a pointed and flapped cap. These features have also been observed on the mask under concern here. The use of masks in Mithras' hierarchical degrees has been well known. Since the Pater rank was considered as the earthly representative of Mithras and that he would wear a flapped pointed cap, the mask might be associated with this particular Pater figure. Archaeological evidence to this suggestion can be found in the depiction of the Pater with the flapped cap on either the Mainz vessel or the mosaics found in Ostia mithraeum, or on the Santa Prisca mithraeum's inscription depicting the Pater with a flapped pointed cap and sitting on a high back throne (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 155, 169, pl. LIX). In another scene from Santa Prisca, the Pater who is reclining at the sacred meal has a pointed cap (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 169).

Mithras was often assimilated to other Graeco-Roman gods. In the Mithraic cult, depictions of Mithras in the Tauroctony usually shows a young man, more like Attis; but when Mithras is merged with Attis, the childlike face and round belly seem to be the characteristics that these two deities share. Sometimes the figure is identified as Attis or Mithras, when a mail body rising from a stone (a common depiction of Mithras) is possibly Attis but possibly Mithras (Johnston 1996: 109). Attis was apparently thought to wield power over fruits of the earth. A statue of him in the Lateran Museum at Rome clearly indicates his relation to the fruits of

the earth, and particularly to the corn, for it represents him with a bunch of ears of corn and fruit in his hand, while from the tops of his pointed cap ears of corn are sprouting (Frazer 1922: 362). The facial features of young Attis, with his pointed cap, are similar to those of Mithras. However, even though our mask displays the pointed cap as well, it further has the flap part. Moreover the depiction of ear corns exceeding the top edge of the cap does not apply to the mask at hand. In some areas where the Cybele cult was actively practiced, priests of this religion, the Galli, were told to wear masks, which were also suggested to honor Attis (Ciglenecki 1999: 27). However, none of these illustrations includes the flapped iconography. Moreover, the flapped pointed cap on different Attis depictions is finished with a sharp end¹⁹ while the Mithras depictions have flapped pointed caps upper edge was sharpened to a high and round end. Therefore, despite his depiction with the pointed cap and his features of being the protector of the crops, Attis cannot be attributed to claim ownership of this mask, which rather should be associated with Mithras.

Another deity which can be related to the mask at hand in terms of iconographical resemblance is the god Men. He is depicted with a round face, low eyelids with big eyes, a Roman nose and well-rounded lips. He is also portrayed with a pointed cap with his hair separated in the middle, falling from each side of the cap to his shoulders in a way to surround his face²⁰. However, the mask under concern has young facial expressions with a facial ovality, high eyelids, a well-shaped nose, and unseparated curly hair under a pointed and flapped cap. Moreover, while rituals and ceremonies held within the Mithras cult effectively made use of masks, no such information have been gathered for the cult of Men so far. These differences rule out the possibility that this mask could be associated with the cult of Men.

CONCLUSION

In his fundamental book on masking traditions, Napier states that, as with the designs of the various Pre-Classical masks (Napier 1986: 47) there are four types: sepulchral masks, honorific masks, apotropaic masks, and dramatic masks. It is possible to adapt this classification to the Classical Age. Since Mithras is the deity of benevolence and that

he has been associated with benign qualities in many cultures, any possibility of this mask being an apotropaic should be ruled out. Moreover, given the information that the mask was found in a region where no theatre buildings has been discovered, discards the possibility of being dramatic. Likewise, the place of its recovery, evidently having no connection with a necropolis, does not permit considering it as a sepulchral mask. Therefore, it is to be classified as an honorific mask devoted to Mithras, which is also supported by the presence of masks in the ceremonies and rituals of the Mithraic cult.

Based on the study of some earlier examples, it seems possible to surmise another usage of the mask. After 102 BC, a terracotta workshop at Amisos is known to have produced masks and figurines of Dionysos, Satyros and Silenos, which were deities widely spread throughout the Pontic states, including the North Pontic region and Kolchis (Saprykin 2009: 250). Therefore, since the 2nd century BC the Pontic royalty and the circles around the king appealed to religion and cults as a mean of propaganda to strengthen the power of Mithridates Eupator. A similar argument could normally be made for the mask outlined in this article in the sense that it might have been produced in an attempt to link the ruling power with Mithras so as to reinforce its power through religion. However, the fact that these masks were a lot smaller in size and that our mask is in lifesize form, with carved-into eyes, mouth and ears proposes it was actually meant to be worn by individuals. Even though one might contemplate that the holes on the upper end of the mask were to be used to hang it onto somewhere, the presence of further holes on the ears points to an intention to allow the bearer of the mask to hear properly. Thus, rather than being a simple tool of propaganda as was the case with the masks of Amisos, our mask was a personal item to empower the bearer with certain qualities.

In that sense, another possible function of the mask is related to the tradition of the mask being worn by those present in the hierarchical degrees of the cult of Mithras. The Mithraic devotees were known to dress up in masks (Vermaseren 1963: 101, 168), especially in Mithraic feasts, similar to those described above in the stone sofas facing each other in mithraeums. This is further accounted for by a limestone relief found at Konjica in Bosnia; there,

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while the person to the far right is depicted to wear a lion's mask and the one to the left is illustrated in a raven's mask, two other members stand to the sides of the figures in centre Sol and Mithras are Perses and Miles with mask (Fig. 10). In the highest degree of the Pater, in which the individual is directly identified with Mithras, he might be wearing the mask of Mithras to symbolize their integration in one body. The mosaic in the Ostia mithraeum which displays these degrees with their symbols (Turcan 1996: fig. 5), the Pater is presented with a helmet, that is remindful of the mask under inquiry being that of Mithras and being already produced with a helmet itself. At Ostia the pater's symbols are the harpe, the flapped pointed cap of Mithras and a staff and a ring which represent his wisdom (Fig. 11).

The imitation of the god in a dress is a custom, as it has been exemplified with the priestesses of Isis sometimes have dressing identically with the goddess herself (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965: 159). One may recall the masks and disguises found in the act of Demeter at Phineas (Pausanias VII, 15) as in the Mithraic ceremonies.

By occupying the highest degree in the Mithraic cult, the pater is the representator of the god on earth and is thus portrayed like Mithras in similar clothing. He is considered as a father, a Pater, to his lower degree fellows. He is also the magister sacrorum, the teacher whose wisdom is symbolized by a ring and a staff. He is also one of the Magi who are the high priests, elected by his fellows as the protector father. He is charged with religious tasks such as deciding on the initiation of lower degrees and accepting new members. A pedagogical stick, a ring and finally the pointed cap, identical with the one the god Mithras wears in all of his iconography are important features of the Pater. Within the Eastern context, it is associated with the power of the monarch (Young 1964). The meaning of these

objects was probably to emphasize the Pater figure within the Mithraic community, establishing this as a leadership function, developing the role model for the religious impulse in the Mithraeum and as keepers or guardians of the Mithraic cell.

All the functions of the highest Mithraic initiatic degree should be understood as a representation of the Divine on the local level. He was the teacher of the others (Nabarz 2005: 37) and presided over the Pater Sacrorum (sacred ceremonies). Over all he was the Pater Patrum (Father of Fathers), who held the post until death as grand master of the adepts (Cumont 1903: 155). At the highest stage, the initiate would come to meet the highest rank, who appears like Mithras.

Moreover, Mithras was also depicted as a reaper, a symbol of fertility and abundance with ear of corns and harpe as symbols. In a region like Cappadocia where agriculture was extensively practiced, it was only natural for a fertility and abundance deity like Mithras to gain a solid ground. The regional economy was primarily agrarian. Grain was the most important food in the ancient world and Cappadocia produced enough to export some to neighboring regions. Moreover the discovery of the coin mentioned above, points to the presence of Zoroastrianism in terms of Mithras cult in Camihöyük.

Through this paper, we had to use comparison based on iconographic similarities in dating the mask, as it was found in the topsoil with no clear context, not helpful for assigning a date. Analogies based on stylistic similarities are suggestive of the Roman Imperial period the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Here it is worth reminding that this date concords well with the date set for the coin traced back to Elagabalus's time. Accordingly, all evidence suggests a date of 2nd and 3rd centuries AD probable date of the mask.

NOTES

- ¹ This excavation has been carried out under S. Yücel Şenyurt's supervision. The general archaeological results of this Rescue Project is under study at present.
- ² The previous damage by treasure hunters and a tectonic collapse had an extensive damage to the mound and its

cultural layers. The step-trench excavations, intended to determine the settlement stratigraphy of Camihöyük.

- ³ The results with the ongoing research on this layer and the tunnel will be published soon.

- ⁴ The book was written in the language of Avesta used by the Ari tribes see Darmesteter 1880.
- ⁵ It is on view in Kayseri Museum (Bittel 1956: 32).
- ⁶ On the matter of Mithra's head gear resembling the form of the Persian tiara with its high cap, the rounded peak which bends forward; and a pair of flaps attached to its lower edge, please see Young 1964.
- ⁷ See Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: The Hunterian Museum University of Glasgow I: Roman provincial coins: Spain – Kingdoms of Asia Minor, Oxford 2004: no. 1164; Ehling 2001.
- ⁸ See Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: Sammlung von Aulock: Pontus-Paphlagonien-Bithynien, Berlin 1967: no. 6785.
- ⁹ See Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: The Royal Collection of Coin and Medals Danish National Museum: Bosphorus – Bithynia, Copenhagen 1944: no. 227.
- ¹⁰ For the Mithraeum and the bust of Mithras in Walbrook, please see Toynbee 1986.
- ¹¹ For a philosophical perspective, see Merkelbach 1994; for a Hellenistic-Roman astrological outlook, see Ulansey 1989.
- ¹² For descriptions on the Pater degree, please see Mendez 2010: V-VI.
- ¹³ See CIMRM 11956, 315.
- ¹⁴ See CIMRM 11956, 311, 313, 511.
- ¹⁵ See CIMRM 11956, 513, 514, 515.
- ¹⁶ See CIMRM 11956, 215, 522, 523, 524, 815; CIMRM 2 1960, 1243, 1438, 2250.
- ¹⁷ For the Saturn depiction with his sickle, see Simon 1990: 196, fig. 252.
- ¹⁸ For various depictions of Mithras, please see Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC) VI/2, Switzerland, 1992, pl. 48, 60, 64, 113-114, 128, 132, 135-136, 142, 153, 159, 161, 166, 168, 176, 178, 183, 185, 193, 198, 205, 219, 417.
- ¹⁹ For Attis illustrations with flapped pointed cap, please see Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC) III/2, Switzerland, 1986, pl. 13, 41, 50, 87, 166-167, 169, 262, 266, 275, 294, 367; Vermaseren 1977: 35-38, 40, 51.
- ²⁰ For depictions of Men: Head 1892: pl. 20/5d; Head 1901: pl. XX; Imhoof-Blumer 1901: pl. III, XXX; Regling 1927: pl. IV-V; Hiesinger 1967: pl. 1-4; Lane 1967: pl. I, IV; Lane 1975; Büyükgün 2006.

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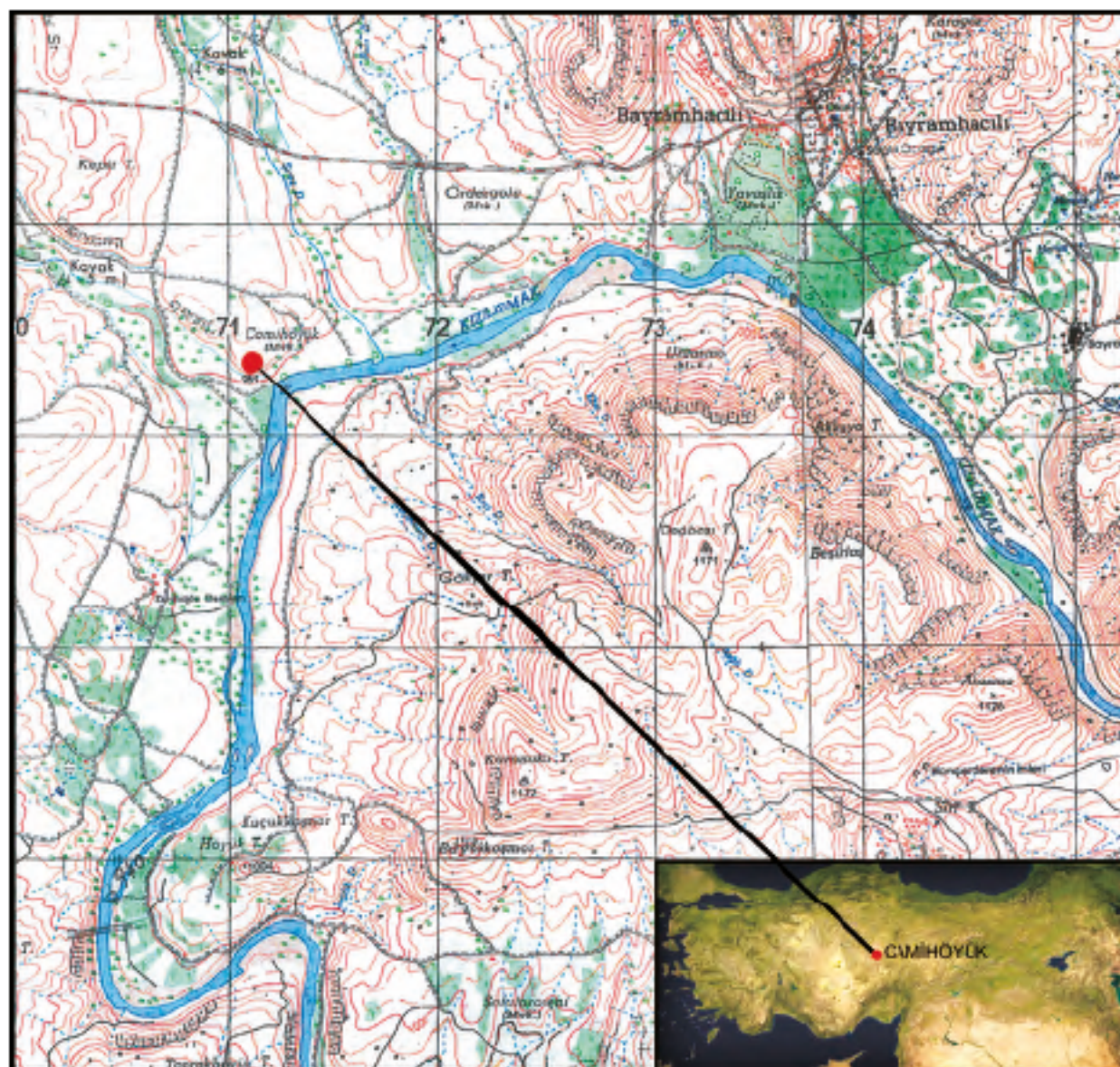


Fig. 1 - Camihöyük and its surrounding in a map of 1: 25,000 scale.



Fig. 2 - General view of Camlihöyük from north.

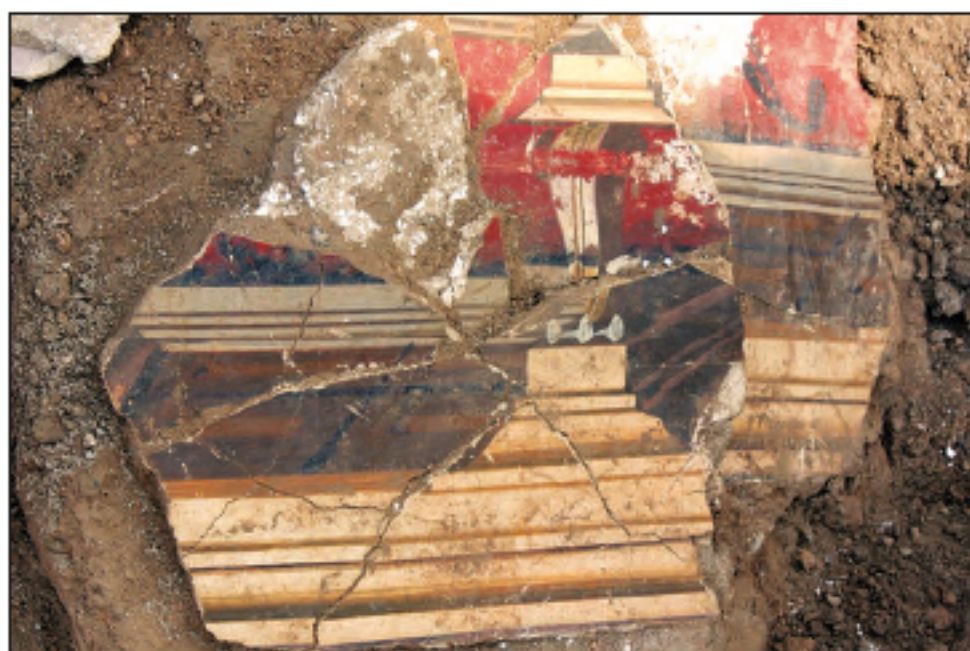


Fig. 3 - Finding position of the mask



Fig. 4 - View of the relationship between the mask, frescoes and the monumental building.

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Figs. 5/6 - The frescoes found around the monumental building on the top layer of the mound.



Fig. 7 - The mask after restoration.



Fig. 8 - Mask from profile.



Fig. 9 - Mask from the rear.



Fig. 10 - Fragment of a bas-relief discovered in Konjica, Bosnia: the Raven and the Perses with masks to the left, and the Soldier and the Lion with masks to the right (LMC VI/2 1992, fig. 435).



Fig. 11 - Mosaic panel from the Mithraeum of Felicissimus with symbols of the Pater (Mendez 2010: 4).



Fig. 12 - The Mainz Mithraic Vessel, the archery of the father (Pater) (Beck 2000: pL X).

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Fig. 13 -
Mithras at
Tauroctony
scene at
Capua
Mithraeum
(Vermaseren
1971: pl.
II).



Fig. 14 - Mithras at Tauroctony scene at Marino Mithraeum (Vermaseren 1982: pl. XXII).



Fig. 15 - Mithras depiction on a bas-relief of Hedderheim (LMC VI/2 1992: fig. 118).



Fig. 16 - Bust of Mithras from the Via Tiburtina (Turcan 1996: pl. 30).