

TWO ALTARS DEDICATED TO DEMETER: THE GODDESS OF FERTILITY

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The Aegean Coast of the Anatolian peninsula stands out for its vast stretches of fertile land enriched by the rivers which flow into these plains leaving behind their alluvial deposits which fertilize the soil to high standards. On such fertile soil one is not surprised to find out how much importance was given in ancient times to Demeter, Goddess of Fertility.

The altar in Manisa (ancient Magnesia ad Sipylum) Museum (Inv No. 244)¹ and the altar in Selçuk (ancient Ephesos) Museum (Inv No 1728)² both dedicated to the goddess Demeter, are the best two of many examples supporting this hypothesis. (Pls. 35-36).

Both altars are made of marble and decorated with bucranion and garland pattern. The first one, which was found in Sardis (Sart), has a cylindrical shape. The second one has the shape of a rectangular prism. Both altars have inscriptions on them. The altar in Manisa Museum bears solely bucrania and relatively thin garlands compared to the altar in Selçuk Museum. The garlands have a uniform thickness and do not become thicker towards the centre. The inscription is not complete due to some breakages.

<p>Ν ϸ Τ Ρ Ι Τ ϸ</p>	<p>ϸ Η Μ Ο Ν Ο Σ Π Τ Ρ Ο Φ Ο Ρ Ο Σ</p>
<p>Μ Η Τ Ρ Ι Σ Κ Ε Π Ν Ο Υ . Α Ν Ε Θ Η Κ Ε</p>	

But from the surviving part it is understood that this altar was dedicated to Demeter by "the Priest of the Mother of Gods...OEMON. Due to the epigraphical character of the inscription this altar can be dated back to the late Hellenistic or the early Roman Imperial periods.

The altar in Selçuk Museum, which was found in Ephesos, has another type of bucrania which have preserved their flesh, skin, hair and organs, like eyes and ears. Its garlands, adorned with different kinds of fruit, are thick and become thicker towards the center. According to its inscription

∟Θ Ε Α ∟ Κ Α Ρ Π Ο Φ Ο Ρ Ω Ε Υ Χ Η Ν

∟Δ Ι ∟ Κ Λ Η Σ Ε Υ Β Ι Ο Τ Ο Υ

this altar was dedicated to Demeter Karpophoros (Demeter the Basket Carrier) by Eubiotos, Son of Diokles (?)³ Again, according to the epigraphical character of the inscription and the artistic style of the garlands, this altar can be dated back to the early Imperial period.

On both altars there are representations of *papaver somniferum* pods which are the attributes of the Goddess. The altar in Selçuk Museum carries spike, torch and basket reliefs which are also symbols of the Goddess. Dr. Cr. H. Greenwalt Jr., from the University of Berkeley, the present director of the Sardis excavations, has recently found a Demeter Karpophoros altar without bucranion and garland pattern. Only the altar in Selçuk Museum shows an empty basket. The altar found in Sardis has a serpent coming out of the basket, which reminds us of the *Cista Mystica* on the Cistophoros type of coins related to Dionysos, god of vintage, wine and drunkenness. As a matter of fact, in most situations the mysteries of Demeter and those of Dionysos are interrelated.⁴

There is a temple dedicated to Demeter in Pergamon (Bergama) constructed in the second half of the III century B.C. by Philetairos, the founder of the Pergamene kingdom, and his brother Eumenes in the name of their mother Boa.⁵ There is a monumental altar in front of the temple which must have been set up after the *templum in antis* plan. Later Apollonis, the wife of King Attalos I had a propylon added to this temple. The temple was rebuilt during the II century A.D.

The baseless columns of the propylon had no grooves and their capitals are different from the usual ones. On the left hand side of the entrance to the temple, there is a votive pit for baby pigs and pastry to be thrown in as offerings to Demeter, Persephone and Hades. On the right hand side, there stood a fountain for purification and ritual ablution. This fountain was covered with a half-dome in the shape of an oyster shell. A 20 meter wide area separates the propylon from the monumental altar. On the northern side of this area, which is higher, are placed ten sitting rows. On the southern side of the area, which is lower, is a chain of rooms which are reached by a stairway. These rooms could possibly have a connection with the mysteries of Demeter in the same way as the sitting rows.

Priene (Güllübahçe) has another temple dedicated to Demeter which has an irregular plan and a well preserved votive pit.⁶ There should be a Demeter temple in Sardis (Sart), in Nikomedia (Izmit),⁷ in Knidos (Reşadiye)⁸ and in Amisos (Samsun on the Black Sea Coast).⁹

The symbols of the Goddess Demeter can also be noticed in many sculptural works.

The Demeter statue in the British Museum was found in Knidos. In the Smyranean Agora (Izmir), a statue of Demeter was uncovered together with another of Poseidon.¹⁰ These beautiful pieces of sculpture are actually on display in Izmir's newly constructed Archaeological Museum.

In Istanbul Archaeological Museum, there is a tripod base¹¹ and a votive relief representing Demeter with her daughter Persephone.¹² The Museum of Bergama houses another relief representing the Goddess before her own altar holding a torch in her hand.¹³ In the same Museum, there are representations of *papaver somniferum* pods.

Roman coins of Erythrai¹⁴ and Smyrna (Izmir),¹⁵ bear figures of veiled Demeter Horia.

The Kharoneion in Akharaka (Salavatlı in Lydia) which was connected to Nysa (Sultanhisar) by a sacred road, must have been related somewhat to the Goddess Demeter.¹⁶

Akharaka is known to be a prominent health centre of the Roman Imperial period. Much is known about Akharaka from Strabo.¹⁷

Notes

- ¹ G.M. Hanfmann - N.H. Ramage., *Sculpture from Sardis. The Finds Through 1975*, Harvard 1978, p. 128, no 160, fig. 307; M. Usman Anabolu, *Batı Anadolu da Bulunmuş Olan Askı (Girland) lı Sunaklar, E.Ü Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, Arkeoloji - Sanat Tarihi Dergisi* vol. 3, Manisa (Şafak Basimevi) 1984, p. 12, no 25, figs. 1a and 1b.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 5 no 4, figs. 14a - 14c.
- ³ Demeter is mentioned with the same epithet in another inscription found in Ephesos (*SIG* 820, 5). Dr. H. Malay has just determined that this epithet was also employed for Agrippina in the early Roman Imperial period.
- ⁴ G. Gruben, *Die Tempel der Griechen*, Munich 1961, pp. 210 and 416.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 413 - 416, fig. 330; G.E. Bean, *Aegean Turkey*, London (E. Benn) 1966, pp. 78/79. The first structure was a *templum in antis* in the Ionic Order. The Pergamenes converted it into a *prostylos* of the Corinthian Order: (E. Akurgal, *Ancient Civilization and Ruins of Turkey, Istanbul 1978*, pp. 92/93, fig 34. For more detailed information see W. Dorpfeld, *Die Bauwerke des Bezirkes des Demeter, Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Archäologische Anzeiger*, vol. 35 (1910), pp. 537-542; *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift*, vol. 30 (1910) pp. 1587-1590.

- ⁶ G. Gruben, *op. cit.* p. 356, fig. 285; M. Schede, *Priene*, pp. 91-96; G.E. Bean, *op. cit.*, pp. 206/207.
- ⁷ C. Bosch, *Die Kleinasiatische Münzen der Römischer Kaiserzeit*, vol. II/1, Stuttgart, 1935, p. 245. Simeon Metaphrastes (Migne, 116, 1073), P.O. Pogodin and O.F. Wulf have met the architectural pieces of the above mentioned temple: see P.O. Pogodin - O.F. Wulf, *Nikomedia, IRAI* vol. 2 (1897) pp. 77-184.
- ⁸ I.C. Love, Excavations in Knidos 1971, *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* vol XX/2, Ankara 1973, pp. 102-103, fig. 29.
- ⁹ M. Usman Anabolu, *Antik Devir Küçük Asya Sikkeleri Üzerindeki Mimarlık Tasvirleri* (in Turkish) (Unpublished thesis presented to the I.Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Klâsik Arkeoloji Kürsüsü in 1949 in Istanbul) p. 124.
- ¹⁰ Akurgal, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 and 51.
- ¹¹ G. Mendel, *Catalogue des Sculptures Grecques, Romaines et Byzantines*, vol. 1, Istanbul (Macon) 1912, pp. 385-390, no. 638.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 566-568.
- ¹³ *Pergamenische Forschungen*, vol. 1, p. 91, fig. 20; *Athenische Mitteilungen* vol XXX, pp. 509-510.
- ¹⁴ B.V. Head, *Historia Numorum. A Manual of Greek Numismatics* p. 579.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 590.
- ¹⁶ H. Pringsheim, *Nysa ad Maendrum Nach Forschungen und Aufnahmen in den Jahren 1907 und 1909* (Jahrbuch des Kaiserliche Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, X, Ergänzungsheft), pp. 57-61, figs. 27-30.
- ¹⁷ Strabo, xiv. 649.

Summary

Two altars decorated with bucrania and garlands and carrying inscriptions dedicated to Demeter are the subject of this paper. The first one was discovered in Sardis and is housed in the Museum of Manisa (Inv. No. 244). The second altar, dedicated to Demeter Karpophoros (Demeter the Basket Carrier), comes from Ephesos and is exhibited in the Museum of Selçuk. They belong to the late Hellenistic and to the Roman Imperial period respectively. A third altar, from Sardis, is also dedicated to Demeter Karpophoros, but lacks bucrania and garlands.

There are two excavated temples dedicated to Demeter in Western Asia Minor, one in Priene and the other in Pergamon.

Résumé

Des deux autels de Déméter, muni chacun d'une inscription et décorés tous les deux de bucrania et de guirlandes, le premier, découvert à Sardis, est exposé au Musée de Manisa (No. d'Inv. 244), le second, découvert à Ephesos, est exposé au Musée de Selçuk (No. d'Inv. 1728). Le premier de ces deux autels de l'époque hellénistique tardive et le second de l'époque romaine impériale. Un troisième autel de Déméter muni d'une inscription a été découvert à Sardis, mais celui-ci ne comporte ni bucrania ni guirlandes.

Deux temples fouillés, dédiés à Déméter, existent en Asie Mineure occidentale, l'un à Priene et l'autre à Pergame. Déméter fut l'objet de plusieurs oeuvres et fut aussi représentée sur les monnaies.