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The Phrygian Background of Kybele

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Abstract
The cult of Kybele is well known from Greek and Roman sources and well-described in most modern literature on antique religions. The cult, however, is primarily known in its Roman version, which differs greatly from the cult in the ancient Phrygian homeland of Kybele. This article presents the latest research on this subject: iconography and roles, attendants relating to the goddess, cult places, rituals and worship, and transference of the cult from Phrygia to Greece.

The Phrygian goddess, characterised by features of wild nature, was represented primarily by predatory birds, and she was worshipped in mountainous settings. Instead of portraying her as a typical Mother goddess associated with nature, fertility and procreation, new research has argued that her status as a Mother derives from her connection to the king, thus being the mother of the state and the throne. It is also maintained in the article that Attis is a late, Greek invention, and that the cult in Phrygia did not take the form of a mystery religion. In conclusion, it is suggested that the Black sea area played a role in the development and the dissemination of the cult.

Keywords
Kybele, Phrygia, Black Sea, Attis, mystery religions

Introduction

Kybele, Meter Oreia, Meter Theôn, Mater Deum Magna Idaea; these are some of the most commonly used Greek and Latin names for the goddess with the Phrygian name of Matar — *Mother*. A goddess forming a divine couple with her lover, Attis, she was the centre of a worship characterised by raging orgies, bloody self castration, loud music

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inducing ecstasy and madness, taurobolia, and effeminate priests in colourful clothes. This roughly drawn picture is found in much literature; it is, however, a description of the cult mainly in Roman times, and it differs greatly from the knowledge that we now possess of the goddess in her homeland, Phrygia.[1]

The cult of Matar (or Kybele, as she is most frequently called in the History of Religions) has been thoroughly studied in the past century, but generally with a geographical focus on Greece and Rome and a chronological focus on the Hellenistic-Roman age, with special attention to the mystery religion aspects of the cult. Aside from an erroneous description of the early Phrygian cult as a result of applying to it much later Greek and Roman characteristics,[2] other problematic issues are present in some studies by scholars of religion. One is the question of Matar's background. Robertson (1996:240, 246) refers to her as an age-old Greek goddess, also known as Rhea, claiming that the Anatolian traits of the religion were brought to Greece at a later period, during the 4th century. Other works (see below) describe Matar as an heir of the universal, primordial Great Mother, or identify her with Kubaba, another Anatolian goddess. In consequence, Matar is defined by the various characteristics drawn from these alleged predecessors. The opposite attitude is found in Borgeaud, who states: "Phrygia remains for the most part unattainable outside of its mediation through the Greek perspective" (1996:3).

With this article, I hope to present the latest research on the subject in order to balance these two different perspectives. Since the cult of the Hellenistic-Roman Kybele[3] is an essential, perhaps even obligatory, part of teaching or studying the subject of "mystery religions" or "Hellenistic religions," a deeper knowledge of the Phrygian background of this goddess will provide an understanding of the profound degree to which her cult had been transformed, and contribute to a revised view of the characteristics of the Hellenistic-Roman cult. An awareness of this historical development may also serve as a frame of reference when dealing,

[1] This research has been sponsored by the Danish National Research Foundation.

[2] Some of the most well-known Graeco-Roman features, like the emasculated Attis, the mystery rituals, the lions, and the tympanon, are not part of her Phrygian cult.

[3] See the paragraph below on her name.

more generally, with the question of the transformations of the so-called Oriental cults spreading through the Graeco-Roman world.

The very illuminating and thorough book by Lynn Roller[4] from 1999, *In Search of God the Mother*, pays special attention to Matar's cult and iconography in Phrygia. This book, and the growing interest among archaeologists and historians in the background of this goddess since the publication of the book, has resulted in new and important knowledge, but has also raised new problems. In this article, I will discuss these unresolved issues as well as present the more secure knowledge that we now possess on Matar's cult. First of all, before turning to the Phrygian evidence, I will summarise — as a point of reference — some characteristics of the cult in Greece and Rome. Then, the article will proceed with Matar in Phrygia, including a short review of research on this subject and considering different aspects of the religion, such as Matar's iconography, the location of cult places, and other figures of the cult. Finally, I will turn to the question of how, and by whom, her cult spread outside of Phrygia. Even though my primary subject is the Phrygian evidence, I will also include references to the non-Phrygian features that were most distinct in the Greek and Roman versions of her cult, e.g., the presence of Attis and the attribute of the tympanon. Unless otherwise expressed, I will focus on the Paleo-Phrygian period (9th–7th centuries BC) when there was still no influence from the Greeks.

As for her name, Cybele is the Latin version of the Greek Kybele, whereas Meter is the Greek version of the Phrygian Matar, meaning mother. *Matar* occurs in 10 inscriptions from Phrygia, twice with the epithet *Kubileya* ("of the mountain"),[5] from which the Greek and Latin personal names are derived. She is mentioned once with the epithet *areyastin* of unknown meaning, though a possible connection with a similar Hittite word (*ariya-*) might suggest that it is related to oracles and divination (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:106). In this article I will use the name Matar when dealing with the Phrygian roots of the goddess and the name Kybele outside of Phrygia since this is how she is most commonly referred to in the literature.

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[5] Most probably as a natural feature in a landscape, not a specific mountain (Roller 1999:68).

Greece and Rome

The cult of Kybele is probably known in Ionia by the mid 7th century BC[6] and in mainland Greece by the mid 6th century BC.[7] From the beginning of her entry to the Greek world, she is represented seated on a throne. In Athens, she very quickly assimilates with Demeter and Rhea, from whom she gets her new role as Mother of the Gods, *Meter Theôn*, her most common Greek name.[8] In this way she becomes the source of life and, more specifically, the mother of the Olympian gods. She is frequently associated with and worshipped together with Dionysos, either as a *consequence* of similar rites, or perhaps through a Greek identification of a common homeland for Dionysos and Kybele, thus *causing* an adoption of his ecstatic rites. At any rate, a passage in Pindar (*Pyth.* 3.77–79) seems to indicate that nightly rituals were part of her worship by then.

By the 5th century, the representations of the Greek Kybele had become fairly standard, varying only in details: a seated goddess, dressed in Greek clothes, sometimes wearing a *polos* (a tall headdress) or a veil, or both, and holding in her hands a *phiale* (a libation bowl) and a tympanon.[9] One or two lions are always present, either lying in her lap or standing by one or both sides of the throne — sometimes she even uses a lion as a footstool. She was worshipped in the Athenian *agora* and a few other, public places, but otherwise mostly in private shrines (Roller 1999:139), and her worship was, to some degree, linked to the rites of Dionysos and Pan and accompanied by loud, ecstasy-inducing music and wild dance (Roller 1999:143, 149). Her official role as a guardian

[6] This early date is inferred from the find of a shard in Southern Italy (Lokri) inscribed with the name Kubala and dating from the late 7th century. The cult was most probably brought there by emigrants from Colophon in Ionia, which means that the cult must have come to Colophon even earlier than the late 7th century BC (Graf 1984:120).

[7] I generally use the term *cult* when it is clear that some kind of worship has taken place, either related to an image of the goddess, which may be seen by finds of offerings on the spot, or because specific features, like altars, benches, marked stones, worked rocks, niches, cup-marks, or basins, are found in connection with monuments.

[8] This name is the most commonly used in the epigraphic material, whereas *Kybele* is preferred in literary sources.

[9] I will return to the tympanon below.

of democracy and justice can be deduced from the location of her first *metroon* (her shrine) in the *agora* in the same building as the *bouleuterion*. Slowly, during the 5th century BC, a negative attitude towards this foreign goddess emerges. It coincides with a general tendency of growing anti-orientalism, but, ironically, the very features used to point to her foreign nature — the tympana, castanets, cymbals and lions — are not, or very rarely, to be found in her Phrygian iconography (cf. below).

She possesses formidable, awesome, magical powers. People come to her to seek vengeance or justice, and she can possess individuals with madness or illness, or cure them from disease (Borgeaud 1996:27ff.; Roller 1999:156). The sources do not reveal to us why private people worshipped her, but some votives and inscriptions suggest that she was also seen as a protector and nurturer of the sick, mothers and children — a *kourotrophos* (Roller 1999:158). Generally, she is characterised by this dual nature of unpredictable power and beneficent qualities, and the sources reveal an equally dual status in Greek society: she was at once one of the most detested and most beloved of the divinities worshipped by the Greeks.

The goddess was brought to Rome from Asia Minor in 204 BC by state officials in response to a statement in the Sibylline Books that the transference of the Great Mother was the only way to ensure a Roman victory in the Punic wars. *Mater Deum Magna Idaea*, the Great Idaean Mother of the Gods (Kybele's most common public title in Rome) was from the beginning an official goddess, the state representatives being closely associated with her cult, unlike the situation in Greece where the finds suggest a worship of primarily private character. A few years after her arrival, she received a temple on the Palatine Hill. In Rome, Kybele enjoyed great popularity among the lay people, but the worship was practiced most frequently as a part of public processions. This is a result of the almost immediate transformation of the goddess into a Roman deity, the rituals and festivals consequently being of a purely Roman, official character (Roller 1999:279).

The goddess was certainly more popular in Rome than in Greece, and this is probably due to the following circumstances: First of all, she was received as a goddess whose presence had been officially requested by the city's most renowned people. Secondly, she was credited with the honour of saving the Romans from the foreign invaders, led by Hannibal

(Roller 1999:267). In relation to this matter, she was relatively quickly connected with the myth of Aeneas, the Trojan "father" of Rome, and thus, in fact, associated with the establishment and the preservation of the entire empire. Furthermore, as a consequence of being portrayed as a patriotic, Roman goddess, her foreign elements, e.g., her relations with nature, mountains and rural landscapes, were toned down; she became a distinctively urban goddess and was increasingly represented with a sceptre replacing the tympanon as her standard attribute. In other areas (related to the abovementioned features), the Romans adopted, and even emphasised — in their frequent representations of Kybele with a mural crown — a Phrygian feature of Matar, namely her clear, yet un-accentuated role as a city protector.[10] In Rome, Kybele was also particularly connected to fecundity and sexuality (Roller 1999:280), which is attested not only by a number of votives representing fertility symbols such as breasts, genitals and lovemaking couples, but also in the fact that the popularity of Attis grew greatly in the Roman period. These features can probably explain why the literary sources exhibit such a great amount of disdain of the cult, seemingly a contradiction to the archaeological records confirming the cult's popularity.

Phrygia

Having thus presented the most general outlines of the Greek and Roman development of the cult of Kybele, admittedly not including all the important factors, I will now return to Matar in Phrygia. This land covered in the 8th century BC a large part of Western Anatolia, reaching from the southern shore of the Marmara in the north to Lycia in the south, and extending from her neighbours to the west, the Lydians and Ionians, to the Halys River in the east. The Phrygians were said by Herodotos (VII, 73) to be immigrants from Thrace settling in Anatolia. According to modern theories, this would be in the late Bronze age, between the 12th and the 10th centuries BC.

If it is a fact that the Phrygians were descendants of Thracians and brought their cult and religion with them, then the knowledge that we

[10] In Phrygia, she was never portrayed with a mural crown.

possess of the cult and religion in the Thracian region could illuminate the nature of Matar in Phrygia. Convincing arguments for the existence of certain similarities between the religions of the two regions are found in Roller 2002 and 2003. The evidence that speak for a connection between the areas is, among other things, the presence of comparable rock-cut niches and other similar rock-cut structures, suggesting a similar kind of divinity worshipped in mountainous areas. Furthermore, the king in the Thracian area may have engaged in a relationship with a goddess, including a *hieros gamos* and serving as a reinforcement of his power, a situation similar to that in Phrygia, and perhaps surviving there. Another common feature between the Phrygians and the Thracians seems to be a preference for a superior female, quite anonymous deity. These are all interesting points, and a further investigation of the cult in the Thracian area would be valuable in this connection.

Earlier Research on Matar in Anatolia

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a growing interest in the study of Matar, as can be seen in the works of, e.g., Cumont (1906), Graillot (1912) and Hepding (1903). Apart from being limited by a lack of the material that we have today, the work of these scholars is characterised by their primary emphasis on the Greek and Roman cults, Phrygia being mentioned only to explain its "foreign" traits. Moreover, they are clearly marked by the prejudices of their time when expressing the barbaric and savage nature of the Anatolians compared to the civilised Greeks and Romans, a prejudice in fact dating back to antiquity itself. Shortly before that time, in the second half of the 19th century, a series of excavations were undertaken in Anatolia, which in the years to follow introduced the researchers to some of the Phrygian characteristics of the Mother.[11] Later, these were supplemented by the finds made by archaeologists like Mellaart, Helck, Young, Bittel and Haspels (Naumann 1983:16). Especially the two first mentioned had a strong impact on the theory of the universal Great Mother Goddess, to which

[11] G. and A. Körte in 1895, Ramsay in 1895, Reber and Brandenburg in 1906 (Naumann 1983:15).

I will return later. Albright (1928–29) was the first modern scholar to argue that the Neo-Hittite goddess Kubaba was the ancestress of Matar. A collection of material on Matar in Phrygia was published by Vermaseren in the first volume of *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque* (Vermaseren 1987). His book on the cult of Kybele and Attis (Vermaseren 1977) also contains some thoughts on their Phrygian background, and there he repeats the usual presumptions of the researchers of this field: Matar is the direct heir of the Neolithic fertility goddess, and the origin of Attis was Phrygian.

If many of the earlier misconceptions and prejudices about the cult in Phrygia could be explained by the lack of material, this was remedied by Naumann's comprehensive book from 1983 in which, based on her catalogue of finds from Asia Minor to Greece, she describes the development of the iconography of Matar from early Phrygian to late Hellenistic times. Isik's articles primarily deal with the directions of influence in the Anatolian area, focusing on and arguing for, among other things, the Urartian influence on Phrygia, and on the Phrygian influence on Ionian art (Isik 1986–1987). Vassileva (e.g., 2001) and Naydenova (1990) have also studied the connections between Thrace and Phrygia, as has Roller in an article in 2003. In her book from 1999, Roller analyses the Anatolian material and writes a thorough and well-documented narrative on the history and development of the cult of the Anatolian Mother Goddess.[12] She illustrates the lines of development from the Anatolian *Matar* through the Greek *Meter Theôn* to the Roman *Magna Mater.* Furthermore, she makes a convincing case in refuting the thesis that has prevailed from antiquity to modern times, that all the untamed, ecstatic and "uncivilised" aspects of the cult, as we know it in Roman society, were an original part of the cult in Anatolia. Roller also raises the fundamental question: Of what or whom was Matar the mother? Before I take up this and other unresolved issues, and recent research dealing with these, I will summarise the facts that are largely agreed upon today: who was she? And more importantly: who was she not?

[12] See also Roller 1991, 1994, 2002.

Earlier Theories on Matar in Phrygia

The earliest evidence of Matar comes from the early first millennium, as has been clearly shown by Lynn Roller (1999:1). However, there has not always been agreement on this subject, and it is still today often stated that the earliest evidence for the cult of Matar is considerably older.[13] The disagreement stems first and foremost from two strands of opinions:

A Prehistoric, Universal Goddess

One is the view that Matar was but one of many forms of a single, prehistoric Mother Goddess.[14] Research on "The Great Mother Goddess" has often been confusing, especially due to the lack of definition. Moreover, the still growing popularity of this supposedly primordial goddess among non-specialists (e.g., feminists, Wicca adherents, psychologists and transvestites) has cast a shadow of frivolity on the subject. According to this tradition, the worship of Matar goes back to "the dawn of time." This theory claims that a female deity, Mother Earth, was the first divinity worshipped, a view that dates back to Hesiod (*Theogony*, 116–38). In modern times it was re-invented by Bachofen (1861), who explicitly connected this worship of a Mother Goddess with a primitive phase of human society, so that this first expression of religiosity was linked to (an immature) matriarchy.[15]

A slight modification of this belief appeared in E.O. James 1959, where he writes: "Whether or not the Mother Goddess was the earliest manifestation of the concept of deity, her symbolism unquestionably has been the most persistent feature in the archaeological record of the ancient world" (James 1959:11). According to James, the cradle land of the Mother Goddess was the Southern Russian steppe and Western Asia, from where (from the time of Upper Palaeolithic to the Christian era) it

[13] Followers of this theory are known today as the Goddess Movement, and they hold variants of the opinion that Mother Goddess worship was the first kind of religion, as well as the modified conviction that all goddesses are different manifestations of a single Mother deity. Recent examples: Getty 1990; Gimbutas 2001; Gimbutas and Dexter 1999; Robertson 1996; Roscoe 1996.

[14] See also Borgeaud 1996 (preface) for a refutation of this theory.

[15] Bachofen 1975:98–99. See also Borgeaud 1994–95 on Bachofen and Kybele.

spread throughout the world, from India to the Mediterranean, eventually developing into the different religions and divinities familiar to us from this area.[16] In other words, the divine figures known to us as, e.g., Aphrodite, *Potnia Therôn* or the Virgin Mother Mary are hypostases of this single unity, the Mother Goddess (cf. also Vermaseren 1977:10). According to James, the process of this development started with the rise of agriculture as well as of the human species' growing consciousness of the duality and necessity of male and female in the generative process. Due to the circumstance that she was no longer the *Unmarried Mother*, she became associated with the *Young God* as her son or consort, hence producing, among others, the divine couple of Matar and Attis. Having thus explained the nature of religion as a basic question of Procreation, Life and Death, James accordingly, and in complete agreement with almost all other research before and at his time, regarded the emergence of Attis (the male consort of Graeco-Roman Kybele) as contemporary with that of Kybele herself.[17] However, as Roller demonstrates, there is no divine Attis until Hellenistic and Roman times,[18] and Matar was certainly not a traditional fertility goddess, a fact also noticeable in the absence of ordinary fertility symbols, such as ears of corn or children. Instead, her most persistent iconographical features are those of power: she is presented as a figure who controls nature, protects cities, and is accompanied only by predatory animals (Roller 1999:38).

The archaeological finds of nude female figurines that have traditionally been interpreted as Mother Goddesses have been seen as proofs of the universal goddess theory. This, however, is not an unproblematic understanding. First of all, it has been naturally assumed that the figurines are to be interpreted in a religious context, even though the finding contexts, e.g., rubbish dumps or household deposits, might suggest a variety of other possible functions, like teaching devices, toys, servant figures etc. (Roller 1999:15). On the official website of Catalhöyuk, Ian Hodder and Sharina Farid inform us that a certain kind of figurines

[16] James 1959:11–12. Cf. also Burkert 1987:6.

[17] This assumption is repeated in the more recent books of Sfamani Gasparro 1985, Martin 1987, Meyer 1987 and Burkert 1987.

[18] Roller 1994:247. I will return to this subject below.

(found in great numbers), always with their heads broken off, have up till now been classified as Mother Goddesses. Now, a new and complete find shows that they are bears, not women. Secondly, even if the statuettes should be regarded as cultic artifacts, this does not necessarily imply a Mother Goddess cult,[19] especially considering the fact that most of the figurines have no indications of gender,[20] that a large minority of male figures have also been found, and that the women are young as well as old, slim as well as corpulent.

Matar and Kubaba

The other strand of research (though not necessarily unrelated to the former line of argument) is the hypothesis that Matar is essentially the same as Kubaba, an old Hittite goddess.[21] The identification of the two goddesses is not a modern idea, but goes back to the ancient Greeks, and is caused, among other things, by the similarity of the names Kybebe (the Hellenised form of Kubaba) and Kybele (Brixhe 1979:40ff.). In the second millennium BC, this goddess, who is first mentioned in cuneiform texts from the 17th or 16th century BC, was a minor deity in a large pantheon, but at the beginning of the first millennium BC, she rose to a status of primary female divinity in the Neo-Hittite centres, particularly in Karkemish,[22] and later also prominent in the city of Sardis. She is characterised in representations as sitting or standing, always in profile, and often in a triad with two male gods. Her main attributes are a mirror and a pomegranate and, in Karkemish, ears of corn, all of which define her as a fertility goddess as well as a "Schöne Frau."[23] Her clothes (*polos*, veil and mantle), the occasionally attending

[19] See Hodder and Farid 2005. For an enlightening summary of the positions in the discussion, see Hodder 2006a.

[20] Hodder 2006a. See also Hodder 2006b:213.

[21] This theory was first expressed by Albright 1928–29, then repeated in numerous works, such as Laroche 1960; Diakonoff 1977; Vermaseren 1977b; *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 6:264; Naumann 1983. In *LIMC*, the theory of Matar as a prehistoric goddess, and the link between Kubaba and Matar, is also assrted (see under "Kybele," first paragraph).

[22] Roller 1999:44. See also Bittel on Kubaba in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, and Naumann 1983:17–38.

[23] Naumann 1983:36. That is, representative of beauty, like the Greek Aphrodite.

animals, lions, leopards or bulls, and the texts furthermore represent her as Queen of Heaven and Mistress of animals.

Apart from the representational differences, Brixhe concludes on purely linguistic grounds that Kybele and Kubaba are not the same, and that Kybele cannot be viewed as an alteration of Kubaba (Brixhe 1979:45). While the similarities of the iconography of Kubaba and Matar are certainly present (i.e., in clothing, the occasional appearance of attending lions, the pomegranate as well as the resemblance of names), the differences are notably deeper, as Roller demonstrates:[24] Kubaba was not a Mother Goddess, a primary role for Matar (cf. her Phrygian name, *Mother*). While Kubaba is constantly seen in profile, sometimes standing, sometimes enthroned, Matar is always depicted frontally in a standing pose. The differences in main attributes and hence main roles are also striking: Matar's constant companion is the predatory bird designating hunting, while Kubaba's mirror indicates femininity. In addition to this, there is a difference in the primary location of cult places: even though Matar could be worshipped in a variety of settings, e.g., funerary and urban contexts, the rural areas are of great importance (most often in mountains, sometimes near a spring), while the reliefs of Kubaba come almost entirely from court or other urban contexts. Last but not least, in Phrygian cult reliefs, Matar is always represented as standing in the doorway of her house, which is never the case for Kubaba. We can thus conclude that the iconography of Kubaba has influenced the Phrygian representations of Matar, but she was not her predecessor.

Iconography and Roles of Matar

Apart from the features of the Phrygian representations of Matar mentioned above, the following characteristics can be attributed to her. She is the only Phrygian goddess shown iconographically in an anthropomorphic form. The traditional way of representing Matar had been

[24] Cf. Roller 1999:45–53. Furthermore, it can be added that these points of resemblance are by no means restricted to Kubaba and Matar (a *polos* and a veil are common attributes of divinity, the pomegranate also comes with many other fertility goddesses, lions accompany the *potnia therôn*, etc.), but rather indicates a similarity in roles.

formed under the influence of the Hittites, the Neo-Hittites, and the Urartians, at the end of the 8th century BC, from which time it more or less remained traditional until the 6th century BC, when Greek influence becomes apparent. Above all, she is represented as a goddess of the wild and untamed nature, living in the mountains and surrounding herself with wild animals such as the predatory bird, lions or even fantasy creatures, like sphinxes.[25]

Normally, she wears a *polos* from which a veil is hanging down, covering her hair. Her attributes differ slightly from the regions of central Phrygia to the Highlands in the west, the most significant elements being drinking vessels, bowls and occasionally lions — in Western Phrygia — while predatory birds are a persistent attribute in Central Phrygia. Birds of prey were often seen as divine attributes in the Hittite religion (Roller 1999:43).

Tympanon

One of Matar's best known Greek attributes is the *tympanon*. It enters the Greek iconography of Kybele in the late 6th century and is mentioned in literature at probably the same time.[26] It has no precedents in images from Phrygia, but is seen in Assyria, the Neo-Hittite centres of South-Eastern Anatolia, and in the Greek area on Cyprus and Crete, where they were related to the cult of Rhea (Roller 1999:137, 173). The tympanon[27] is seen on a representation of musicians dancing for Kubaba in Karkemisch (Naumann 1983:28). This need not cause the rejection of the theory that Kubaba was not the predecessor of Matar; it can simply be explained by the fact that the Greeks, who did in fact understand Matar as Kubaba,[28] may have borrowed the instruments of Kubaba, assuming that they belonged to Kybele. The earliest Lydian

[25] In the city of Etlik, see Roller 1999:74. This is not an unusual phenomenon in the neighbouring cultures in the Anatolian area.

[26] Despite its Archaic style, the Homeric hymn to *Meter Theôn* is probably to be dated to the last quarter of the 6th century BC (Roller 1999:123).

[27] Together with cymbals, double flute and lyre. These are the very instruments mentioned in the Greek sources, see Roller 1999:151, n.21. Cf. also the instruments played by Matar's Boğazköy attendants, mentioned below.

[28] The early Greek name Κυβεβε is, among other things, a Hellenised form of Kubaba (Roller 1999:124).

representations of Matar/Kybele, who was a mixture of Greek Kybele, Phrygian Matar and Kubaba, show no instances of the tympanon, an observation which thus probably contradicts the theory that the tympanon came from this area.

The presence of the tympanon in the rites of the Cretan Rhea (explained mythologically as the instruments used by the Kouretes to create loud music for baby Zeus), and the representation of this instrument in Cretan iconography already in the 8th century BC, offer another plausible background for the Greek connection of the tympanon with Kybele (Roller 1999:170–74). The Greeks, who conflated Kybele and Rhea at least from the mid 6th century, may have transferred Rhea's symbols to Kybele, perhaps due to the recognition of a similarity of rituals connected to these goddesses, causing an identification of Kybele and Rhea. This theory fits with the chronology of the archaeological evidence, i.e., evidence for an assimilation of Rhea and Kybele in the mid-6th century, and the first iconographical representations of tympana at the end of the 6th century. However, the earliest example of Kybele with a tympanon is from the Western coast of the Black Sea (mid-6th century: Alexandrescu Vianu 1980), then Thasos, Phokaia and Ephesos (early 5th century: Salviat 1964:248; Naumann 1983:136), i.e., from the Ionian cultural sphere. This circumstance points to Ionia (from where the Greek cities of the Black sea coast was primarily colonised), or the Black Sea itself, as a place of origin, and correspondingly, to the reflection that the cult may have been of a peculiar kind in this area.

Aniconic Idols

Aside from the anthropomorphic representations, several aniconic idols of Matar have also been found, in either single or double versions.[29] The earliest of these idols probably date back to ca. 950–830 BC (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:158), which makes them considerably older than the anthropomorphic representations of Matar. The circumstance that the

[29] It has generally been interpreted as a double version of Matar; this is also a characteristic trait of other religions, especially the Greek. It might symbolise two different aspects of the divinity: it may double the force of the deity, or it may represent two related deities. However, Berndt-Ersöz suggests that this is not the case for the Phrygian idols, see below.

Phrygians originally worshipped their goddess in an aniconic fashion, may be a further indication of the similarities between the Phrygians and the Thracians who before being influenced by the Greeks never depicted their goddess anthropomorphically. I will return to the interpretation of the idols in the next section.

Whose Mother is Matar?

Given that only one or two statues of Matar represent her in the company of children,[30] the question remains: of what is she the mother? Finding support in interpretations of inscriptions and in cult locations (in the cities often on or in connection with the city walls and elaborate, expensive buildings), and in the fact that the king was most likely intimately connected to her worship, Roller thinks that Matar was the mother of the State and throne, a feature also surviving in the Greek mainland, where her *metroon*, as mentioned above, was first located in the *bouleuterion* in the *agora*.[31] Mark Munn (2006), who attempts to explain the apparent paradox why the archives of the Athenian democracy were located in a temple dedicated to a non-Greek goddess, agrees with this theory and supports it by discussing the concept of the tyrant copulating with a Goddess in order to secure his future power.[32] There are, however, no sources from Athens to support a theory of a *hieros gamos* in the *agora*. That Kybele was present in the *agora* as a result of her role as a Mother of the State, is certainly likely. The idea, however, of a *hieros gamos* in the *agora* is purely theoretical and less convincing,

[30] Even the best example has not been proven beyond doubt to represent Matar, see Roller 1999:104, fig. 35. Even though Roller mentions that it may be influenced by the cult of Leto, she still refers to the statue as Matar on account of the notable similarity in pose and costume. In my opinion, though, there is no indication that this is in fact Matar. Besides, given the fact that Matar's dress was an ordinary piece of clothing, this would be how they would represent any deity. Only if we know for sure that it can represent no other deity, can we conclude anything from this picture, but since this is a circular argument leading to a much wider discussion, I will leave it at this.

[31] Borgeaud 1996:28, explains this as a result of Matar's dual identity in Classical Greece — one as the ancient Greek, anonymous Mother Earth, the other as a specific foreign deity from Phrygia.

[32] As does Roller in her article from 2002 about rulership and the Great goddess in Thrace.

but need not be employed to substantiate this role. Whether a role as Mother of the State is unrelated to or has influenced Kybele's function as a protector of Justice in the *agora* (an important function, which Borgeaud interprets as the result of a conflation between the Phrygian Mother and an ancient Greek goddess of Justice), remains an open question.

Roller's theory also involves the figure of Attis: she believes that Attis was a royal name, like Midas, and that the king had sacred obligations. Based on evidence from Hellenistic Phrygia, where Attis is actually the title of the High priest, and assuming that this function (i.e., high priest) would be the only remnant of an earlier sacred kingship (under the names of Midas and Attis) in a time when Phrygia had lost its independence, she then proposes the theory that Matar enjoyed common worship with the king, a king to be regarded as divine. Since other circumstances indicate that Matar was indeed regarded as the protector of the state (Roller 1999:111), she could have joined in a *hieros gamos* with the king in Phrygia, thus reinforcing his authority. This would eventually lead the Greeks to confuse this divine priest-king/high priest with a god, thus creating Attis (Roller 1999:70, 112).

In general, Matar's character seems to be that of a protective, powerful goddess, expressing with her predatory birds a helpful and positive, rather than fearful, character — predatory birds being viewed as helpers of human beings in the hunt.

Attendants Relating to the Cult

Attis

Though there is no consensus in research on the existence of Attis in Phrygia,[33] Roller nevertheless presents a convincing theory, namely that

[33] The main argument, e.g., in Vermaseren 1977b, is the story of Croesus and his son Atys, besides the mere assumption that the ancient myths must reflect a much older tradition. Roller refers me to Baumeister 1860, who originally presented this argument. Cf. also Sfameni Gasparro 1985:26, who, realising the late appearance of references to Attis, explains this by the fact that it was simply too abhorrent for the Greeks to accept his existence. For further reading, Lancellotti 2002 (in particular 1–61) gives a thorough account of the research positions on this subject.

there was no divine Attis in the Phrygian period (see above, and Roller 1994). Her arguments are that no iconographic representations have been found before 350 BC (in Piraeus), and that all the literary evidence is equally late. Moreover, the name Attis is given twice in the inscriptions as the donator, not the receiver of dedications (Roller 1999:111). The reference to Atys in Herodotus offers no real reason to assume the opposite, since this was in fact the most ordinary and widespread name in Phrygia (Roller 1999:70), and since Atys in Herodotus has little in common with the Attis of the later Hellenistic myths.

A Male Companion?

Whereas it seems reasonable to say that the god Attis was a Hellenistic development, the assertion of Roller that Matar was the only divinity represented in Phrygia is still being discussed.[34] Berndt-Ersöz argues that the small attendants playing the musical instruments are to be viewed as gods (Berndt-Ersöz 2004) and that in Phrygia a male superior god actually did exist, who is represented in the double idols and was later identified with Zeus. In a detailed line of argument, based on epigraphical and iconographical evidence, Berndt-Ersöz comes to the following conclusions: The superior male god, portrayed aniconically in the double idols, is actually to be seen in the (relatively frequent) occurrences of images of bulls from the earliest to later Phrygian times, not normally related to Matar by scholars. This god was equal to her in status. The most likely god to be represented as a bull would be a Phrygian equivalent of the Hittite Weather god or the Greek Zeus, both of which are represented as bulls (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:205). Berndt-Ersöz does not mention Dionysos in this connection, but the two gods primarily associated with bulls in Greece were in fact Dionysos and Zeus, the very gods who, above all, were connected to early Greek Kybele.

In search of epigraphical support for her theory, Berndt-Ersöz turns to the evidence of the cult of Zeus Papas, i.e., Father, a cult specifically found in Asia Minor from the Hellenistic age. The Anatolian word for father was *atta*, and in the Hittite language *atta-* was also used for the

[34] However, it needs to be specified that it is not a matter of believing that the Phrygians were monotheistic, but that we do not have *iconographical* representations of any other deities in the Phrygian material (Roller 1999:108).

Father of the gods or Father god. *Ata* is a word in the (still not deciphered) Phrygian language, occurring in several Phrygian graffiti and inscriptions, most of them with religious significance.[35] One inscription is clearly a dedication to *Ata*. As a reference, Berndt-Ersöz uses an image of the bull, i.e., the weather god, placed next to a representation of an anthropomorphic, female divinity on a relief from the Hittite period in a manner reminiscent of two later Phrygian images of the bull and Matar from Gordion, the Phrygian capital. Accordingly, she proposes that *Ata* actually was the Phrygian male superior god, *Ata* simply meaning Father, just as Matar means Mother. When Phrygia became Hellenised, *Ata* was identified with Zeus, but in some areas he kept his original name, Father, in a Greek form, *Papas*.

While Berndt-Ersöz, based on the above arguments, refuses the idea that this god, Ata, has anything to do with the later Greek Attis, it is my opinion that, even though Attis may not be directly derived from Ata, there may still be a linguistic unity behind them; the fact that Attis/Atys (and other spelling variants) was the most common personal name in Phrygia, and that it was also a royal and perhaps also a high priestly name, may perhaps be explained by a common source in the very name of Ata, the superior god. We should also bear in mind that the existence of personal names derived from a divine name is a well known occurrence in many cultures. Finally, it should be mentioned that, according to Diodoros and Arrian, Baba/Papas was an alternative name for Attis, and in the later Roman cult was an epithet of the Phrygian Zeus (Roller 1999:70, n.45).

Even though we should be very cautious about regarding later sources as evidence of earlier circumstances, I nevertheless find this theory convincing, since it provides a good explanation for some of the previously unresolved problems, such as the apparent structure behind the appearance of single and double idols,[36] respectively, and the phenomenon (and perhaps also the nature) of the Papas cult in that area. Furthermore, it helps explain the fact that Matar was represented in the company of Zeus (and a young, male god) in a series of later reliefs from

[35] Inferred mainly from their locations, Berndt-Ersöz 2003:207.

[36] Only the double idols, never the single ones (with one exception), were found in connection with step monuments; see Berndt-Ersöz 2003:74.

Ephesos. These are unique, partly because they represent Matar together with a male god equal to her in height, and hence in status, and partly because she is shown in a standing pose, that is, in the Phrygian manner, which is hardly ever the case after the 6th century BC in the Greek world.[37] The epigraphical evidence from Ephesos affirms the identification of the bearded god as Zeus, with the epithet *Patroios*.[38] Whether or not the existence of a male *paredros* is regarded as a satisfactory theory, it still remains unclear why Matar is so prominent in our sources, i.e., why is she the only deity represented?

Roller is not convinced by the thesis of *Ata* as her male *paredros*, but she nevertheless proposes a theory of Matar's prominence that actually does not exclude the existence of *Ata*. As a supporter of the theory of the Thracian-Phrygian migration around the 10th century BC, Roller believes that the Phrygians, after their settlement in Anatolia, slowly built up a powerful royal dynasty,[39] a theory supported by archaeological excavations in Gordion.[40] This dynasty, or perhaps even an individual king, needed a divine protector to support the dynasty's or his own position of power (cf. the paragraph above on Matar as mother, and Munn 2006). A divine mother would be a powerful symbol for a male elite, and a claim of special protection from her would reinforce their position of dominance. This historical development would also explain the fact that Matar was only represented in anthropomorphic form at a relatively late date, i.e., not until the Phrygian dynasty was so developed that it became necessary to employ the anthropomorphic images that the neighbouring cultures — the Neo-Hittites and the Urartians — were used to. This corresponds also with the fact that the gods of the Thracians, too, were not represented anthropomorphically until they met other cultures — the Greeks, in their case.

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[37] The Ionian Greeks introduced the image of a seated goddess, which very quickly became the standard representation.

[38] Vikela 2001:108ff. Vikela comments on these Ephesian types, but refrains from drawing any conclusions, stating only that, "...auf welche mythologische Beziehung (diese Dreiverein) sich gründet, bleibt unklar. Jedenfalls muss er aus einheimischen Vorstellungen entstanden sein" (110).

[39] The theory is described in her 2003 article.

[40] Sams 1994:xxxi, 20; Muscarella 1995:91, Laszlo 1998:41.

Eunuch Priests

Other figures relating to the cult are seen occasionally, one perhaps of a eunuch priest.[41] On a relief from Boğazköy, Matar is accompanied by two small attendants playing the flute and lyre, and in Gordion, two small figures have also been found near a Matar shrine. There is disagreement as to how much knowledge can be drawn from these, but it is safe to say that they are all smaller than the goddess, male youths and represented with objects like bowls and musical instruments. Whether or not they represent other deities is a question of debate. The existence of eunuch priests in Phrygia is difficult to prove, but it is worth bearing in mind that a considerable number of eunuchs were employed in the courts of the Oriental kings, so they were not an unprecedented phenomenon in the area.[42] The evidence for ritual castration in Anatolia is quite vague, though, and defies the idea that this was a predominant feature of the Mother's cult in Phrygia — most of the evidence comes from Rome. The term *gallos*, denoting a castrate priest of the Kybele cult, is first met with in Hellenistic times. Roller, as many with her, is of the opinion that the word derives from the *Galatians*, who inhabited the area of central Phrygia in Hellenistic times. Other possible sources have been suggested, for example a cock (lat. *gallus*) or a river named *Gallos*.[43] A common characteristic of the various suppositions is that they draw on relatively late material (3rd century BC and later), whether iconographical, mythological, historical or epigraphical evidence. The idea has also been proposed that the name *galloi* is derived from Sumeric *gallu*, meaning *in a woman's voice*,[44] an attractive theory that, if correct, speaks for a much older tradition of *galloi* than previously assumed. Last but not least, it should be mentioned that *gallos* could come from an indo-European word with the stem **ĝhel-*, in the sense

[41] Roller 1999:105: one of the very few pieces of evidence within Anatolia of this type of priests.

[42] Diakonoff 1977:338 who in a description of a Urartian document about king Rusa II mentions 3784 eunuchs among his personnel. Other possible sources of comparison could be the megabyzoi of Artemis in Ephesos, but this is not an undisputed fact, see Lane 1996:132.

[43] A river near Pessinous; Lane 1996:123ff.

[44] Borgeaud 1996:77–78; Roscoe 1996:195ff.; Hirschmann 2005:65–66.

of "cutting," probably also present in the English *gelding* and Scandinavian *gilding*.[45]

Lions

In contrast to the Greek and Roman cult, lions appear with Matar in Phrygia on just one, possibly two, representations from the pre-Greek period,[46] excluding other images of lions from Phrygia not directly related to her. In Phrygia, lions are depicted as huge, standing on their hind legs with their paws resting on Matar's head (or on pillars, in the case of her absence).[47] Furthermore, there are *two* lions present in the Phrygian images, unlike the Graeco-Roman representations with between one and three lions. In images of lions without Matar, the lions are portrayed as protectors of tombs, and according to Berndt-Ersöz they are there either because the tombs are under the protection of Matar, or because they are symbols of the ruling class, both interpretations emphasising their role as apotropaic symbols (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:192) — in either case, the lions have no obvious relation to Matar.

Since there is clear evidence that Matar was closely related to the ruling elite class,[48] the presence of lions on the great tombs may nevertheless indicate a Phrygian connection between Matar and lions. If we accept that the lions are representatives of Matar, that would be yet another sign of her relation to tombs, albeit an indirect one like the other references pointing to this relationship.[49] On the other hand, we could also consider whether a common connection with graves was the

[45] This theory is proposed by George Hinge in a private e-mail.

[46] Berndt-Ersöz 2003:192. Besides the lions with Matar at Arslan Kaya, there is a step monument at Karahisar with animals that seem to be lions, on each side of a semi-circular disc (ibid. 70).

[47] Arslan Tas, Yilan Tas, and Midas City (the Pyramid Tomb), Roller 1999:102–3 and Berndt-Ersöz 2003:192.

[48] E.g., her affiliation with the king, and the presence of representations of Matar on the elaborate building structures (Roller 1999:111).

[49] I.e., by symbols possibly symbolising Matar, such as a rosette (Vassileva 2001:59), or a certain similarity between the rock-cut monuments and the tradition of carving tombs into natural rock (Roller 1999:102).

very factor that later caused the image of Matar to be related to lions. As noted above, there is one recorded instance of a connection between lions and Matar in Phrygia (at Arslan Kaya). This may indeed serve as evidence that the later and almost obligatory presence of lions in Greece merely reflects the Phrygian background. However, that they occur only once among the relatively big number of Matar representations may indicate other sources of influence. Roller suggests Lydia as a possible transitional factor between Phrygian and Ionian iconography (Roller 1999:131). A Lydian temple model of the early 6th century represents the Phrygian Matar in Greek style, flanked by snakes and lions. Lions were an important and frequent symbol of Lydian royalty, and perhaps the coupling of Matar with lions became a more permanent feature which may have influenced the adaptation of the lion by the Ionian Greeks, with whom they had strong connections. Rein offers another explanation for the presence of lions on Lydian coins and in the religious iconography, suggesting that the Lydians, being originally associated with the hawk as an animal symbol (Rein 1993:65), took over the lion from the Greek *Potnia Therôn*, thus interpreting the lions as a basically Greek feature. Bearing in mind the unquestionable connection of lions with Matar at Arslan Kaya, the probable presence of lions at Kalehisar and the fact that lions also occur elsewhere in Phrygia, it seems possible to conclude that the lions were a Phrygian feature, although the Phrygians obviously did not attach as much importance to them as did the Greeks and the Lydians.[50] As to the question why the Greeks credited this creature with such an enormous significance that it rapidly became a standard attribute of Kybele, despite its relatively small place in Phrygian iconography, the answer may simply be a matter of recognition. In Phrygia, Matar enjoyed iconographical supremacy, even monopoly, whereas the Ionian Greek pantheon necessitated special attributes to distinguish her from other deities, a demand that birds, bowls or a veil would not effectively fulfil.

[50] About lions in general, it should be noticed that lions are a frequent symbol in Asia Minor, perhaps as a result of Persian influence.

Cult Places and Rituals

Rock-cut Monuments

The finds of statuettes in ordinary buildings suggest that Matar was often worshipped in private houses, and no actual building found in Phrygia has yet been identified as a temple.[51] Nevertheless, it is quite certain that the great monumental façades carved in the mountains have been used as places of worship. Sources on Hittite religion reveal a preference for worship on high places, in mountains, etc., which may have influenced the Matar worship. The Phrygian cult monuments (7th century BC), perhaps better known as rock-cut shrines, are situated in the mountainous landscape and consist of a large façade carved into the natural rock and shaped like a house with a niche in which the statue of the goddess was probably located.[52] This niche represents a doorway (with the doors open, still visible in one of the major monuments, Arslan Kaya) and the surrounding decorations (i.e., the façade monuments) represent the rest of the house with lintel, pediment, gable and *acroterion*. We find Urartian (900–700 BC) similarities in the tradition of cutting into rocks "fake doors" with steps as a location of divine epiphany.[53] The tradition of placing a statue of the divinity is, however, a purely Phrygian feature (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:255). There has been some discussion as to whether this "house" mirrors a temple or a house (Roller 1999:112), but it is perhaps only a question of linguistic interest since a temple is basically the house of a god.

Shafts

The great rock-cut monuments were originally believed to be funerary installations,[54] but even though they resemble the tomb graves of

[51] See my discussion of this below. Note the fact that we have plenty of evidence from the Hittites and Urartians that they built temples for their gods, besides worshipping them in mountainous shrines; see Berndt-Ersöz 2003:179.

[52] Many niches are empty, but some still contain statues of Matar or statue bases. I will return to these cult façades below in the discussion of the connections between Thrace and Phrygia.

[53] Roller 1999:41–62 presents a detailed analysis of the influence of these earlier cultures.

[54] Berndt-Ersöz 1998:92 and Naumann 1983:53.

Phrygia, the tombs face west while these face south or east, and the assumption was primarily based on the existence of the *shafts*. These are rectangular pits descending from a flat area above the niches and going vertically down behind these, ending on the same level as the niches. They are always connected to the niche by means of a round hole, and ledges on their sides show that lids were attached to them. They, too, have been the subject of much debate. Originally, they were interpreted as tombs (Naumann 1983:52–53). There are, however, good arguments against this. First, they do not resemble any other tombs that we know of in Phrygia, and second, their design makes their function as sepulchral chambers unlikely.[55] Roller believes that they functioned as deposits for offerings (Roller 1999:98), as does Naumann (1983:53). Another possible function is that they were used as hiding places for oracles or mediums of the goddess (Berndt-Ersöz 1998:98). The close connection between these cult monuments and the presence of water, often a spring, has often been emphasised.[56] Berndt-Ersöz has shown, though, that this is only true of the type of cultic monuments that have a shaft. Hence, water might suggest some kind of ritual connected with these shafts, and not with the monuments as such. An explanation for this can perhaps be found in Hittite religion, where sacred springs, "holy water," was very important in connection with divination (Berndt-Ersöz 1998:184).

Stelae

It is very likely that the small *stelae* with reliefs found of Matar, set up outdoors in areas not enriched by suitable mountains, are simplified imitations of these grand cult façades, the "niche" and doorway still being indicated. Vikela (2001:72) argues that these *stelae* were viewed as separate cultic shrines and not just as votives or interior decorations — in other words, they functioned as portable sanctuaries with the power of sanctifying the space around them. This is an interesting point of view since it could explain the lack of monumental temples,

[55] Their dimensions, the connecting passage between the niches in front of them, and the lids (designed to be re-opened and re-closed) halfway down the shafts. For a full discussion of this, see Berndt-Ersöz 1998.

[56] E.g., Roller 1999:43, 138, and Vassileva 2001:55.

and it fits very well with the general observations that signs of worship are scattered in many private houses. This might also have survived in the Greek *naiskoi* and in the habit of hanging pictures of Kybele around the neck.[57]

Step Monuments

The aniconic idols, briefly mentioned above, seem to be related to cultic actions since many of them were found in connection with another kind of monuments, called *altars* or *step monuments* in the literature, also to be regarded as early, primitive cult monuments. At a few of these step monuments, signs of animals are still visible. In one case (the step monument at Karahisar), these may be reclining lions. At another (Köhnüs valley), the remains have been interpreted by some as lions, but are more likely to be predatory birds (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:70). As can be deduced from their name, these monuments all have steps (which are also a persistent feature of the rock-cut shrines) and a semi-circular disc on top, as a kind of back-rest. No conclusive facts have yet been agreed upon concerning these. Ramsay called them altars, as does Roller (1999:79). Körte and Akurgal claimed that they were empty thrones of the goddess.[58] Berndt-Ersöz concludes that they were thrones (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:242). She argues that the semi-circular discs on some of the step monuments symbolise divine presence, i.e., Matar alone in the semi-circular disc or in the single idols found elsewhere, or Matar and her *paredros* in the double idols found on the thrones. This would be an expression of early religiosity, before the image of Matar became anthropomorphic (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:198). Indeed, the aniconic idols definitely antedate the anthropomorphic representations, some of them dating back to the 9th century BC, perhaps even further (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:167). In my view, the arguments about the interpretation of the double or multiple idols as representing different deities are in themselves not very persuasive, but in combination with the theory of the male superior god *Ata*, I find it quite likely that the double idols represent two divinities.

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[57] Vikel 2001: 72ff Cf. Herodotus IV, 76.

[58] Körte 1898:118–19; Ramsay 1889:167; Roller 1999:79; Akurgal 1955:97–98.

It is generally indicative that the cult locations are most often found in boundary zones, such as the area between city and wild territory and by crossroads, and more importantly by the city gates, where several images of Matar have been found overlooking the entrance, obviously having a protective role (Berndt-Ersöz 2003:185). This role is also visible in the Roman cult and art where she is commonly depicted with a mural crown, cf. the section on Greece and Rome above.

Worship and Rituals

Only little is known of the kind of worship attached to Matar in Phrygia. An early model shrine (early 6th century BC) from Sardis, portraying the rituals connected with the *Lydian* Kybele,[59] who was, at that time, a blend of the Graeco-Phrygian Kybele and the Neo-Hittite Kubaba, may furnish the best example for comparison of Matar's rituals in Phrygia. Whether these rituals (including music, wine drinking, a mountain procession and, probably, dancing), performed by what seem to be different kinds of female and male priests, also represent cultic activities in Phrygia, is still an open question. What the Phrygian music-playing attendants of the Boğazköy statue testify is that music most likely did play a role in her worship. Unlike the descriptions of the music in Greece as "loud" and "resounding" (Diogenes, Athenaios 1.2; Roller 1999:151) — no doubt caused by the use of castanets and tympana, which were not part of Matar's cult or iconography in Phrygia — the music in Phrygia was probably conceived differently due to the use of other instruments, the flutes, as in the older, Anatolian tradition.[60] The Boğazköy attendants are presented in a manner that suggests dancing, but aside from these, the evidence of dance in the cult is from the Graeco-Roman age. Vassileva suggests, though, that the mere nature of the façade monuments implies rituals of music and dance (Vassileva 2001:55), which is possible, but hard to prove.

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[59] See Rein 1993 for a full analysis of this votive temple. The mere fact that it is an actual temple for the goddess seems to me a reason for caution in using it as a parallel of worship, since we have no evidence of temples in Phrygia, as mentioned above.

[60] The music of flutes is referred to as ἡδυβόαι, sweet sounding in Eur. Bacchae, 127, Roller 1999:110, 151; Sfameni Gasparro 1985:4.

A Mystery Religion?

The issue that naturally arises in connection with worship is the question of mysteries. As mentioned, most previous research on Matar concentrates on the Greek mysteries, but even when the Phrygian background is mentioned, her cult is still referred to as mysteries.[61] I am not familiar with one generally recognised definition of mystery religions as such, but having consulted some of the most important works on this theme, my suggestion is that there was no such version of the Matar cult in Phrygia or, at least, that the evidence at this point is so meagre that it would be too hypothetical to engage in. Some of the widely accepted factors that are part of a mystery religion are, in the words of Burkert: "...initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal, and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred" (Burkert 1987:11). Furthermore, they are attached to certain types of deities, namely chthonic (according to Martin) and/or fertility gods (according to Meyer).[62] According to the guidelines of Sfameni Gasparro,[63] mystery religions also include certain kinds of rituals with a specific purpose, such as illumination, salvation or transformation; an ultimate purpose is also to overcome the vicissitudes of blind *Fortuna* (Martin 1987:59). More specifically, it includes a promise of a happy afterlife (Sourvinou-Inwood 2003:26). According to Martin, the mystery cults concentrate on a myth of a wandering deity, something which is obviously not attested in Phrygia. Bianchi offers a differentiation, based on Plutarch, between "mystery gods" and other gods by characterising the former as "subject to mutability" (Bianchi 1976:2). This fits very well with the later Hellenistic myths about Kybele, but is — again — not attested in Phrygia. Clinton (2003:55) defines a mystery cult by saying, among other things, that the initiands have "to undergo a death-like experience or at least an experience of suffering."

There are a few signs from the Classical period in mainland Greece that her cult had, some way or another, developed in this direction; in Euripides, the rites of Kybele are referred to as *teletai* (*Bacchae* 73), a term that often, though not always (Clinton 2003:53–54) refers to

[61] E.g., Sfameni Gasparro 1985; Fol 1998; Vassileva 2001.

[62] Martin 1987:58 and Meyer 1987:5.

[63] Gasparro 1985:xv, 9, 26 etc.

mystery cults or initiations. If we accept the presence of torch-bearing attendants,[64] e.g., of Hekate, and the occasional references to nightly rituals (Pindar, *Pyth.* Ode 3.79, cf. also Herod. IV, 76) as evidence of mystery cult, then we may safely conclude that this was part of her worship already with Pindar. A krater from Ferrara from 440 BC (Roller 1999, fig. 43) shows a woman carrying a basket covered with a cloth, on her head. This has been interpreted as a *cista mystica*, a basket with a lid holding the secret objects of the rituals, which would then refer to mystery rites. This basket, however, is also seen on reliefs of non-mystery gods such as Asclepius, and probably just represents a basket with offerings.

Based on the design of the Phrygian cult façades, Vassileva proposes the theory that they may have been used in the context of a mystery cult. To begin with, she sees in the shafts appropriate places for symbolic burial and a place for a *hieros gamos* between king and Matar (Vassileva 2001:61). In my opinion, this theory rests on the old assumption that the shafts were tombs, a suggestion now generally abandoned due to circumstances mentioned above. Secondly, Vassileva sees in the niches (representing doorways) a symbolism in the closing and opening of the doors which refers to initiations. Contrary to this, I think that the doors (or "niches") on the mountain side most likely represent a direct influence from the Hittite preference for worship in high places, and from the Urartian tradition of cutting fake doors high up on the mountain side indicating that the divinity dwelled there in his or her house, i.e., the mountain (Roller 1999:54). Moreover, the building structures of mystery cult places are not normally mountains; Lawall (2003:93) mentions as signs of mystery rituals in sanctuaries the existence of interior or enclosed spaces, i.e., "cut-off spaces, which... meant rituals around the altar would be difficult to observe." This is exactly the opposite of the Phrygian mountain façades.[65] Having a niche high above the ground on a mountain visible from miles away greatly reduces

[64] Appearing for the first time in Phrygian representations in the fourth century BC and found on mainland Greece in large numbers, see Roller's references, 1999:149, n.19.

[65] We may disregard the existence of shafts in this connection, partly because the dimensions of these are hardly suitable for initiatory purposes, and partly because only a limited number of the façades have shafts.

the possibility of reserving the epiphany of the divinity to the newly initiated, a necessary attribute of mysteries implied in their secret and personal character.

Last but not least, the mere phenomenon of mystery religions in Archaic times seems to be restricted to Greece (so Bianchi 1976:3) or, later in Hellenistic times, to areas, e.g., Asia Minor, where the inhabitants had long relations to and were influenced by the Greeks.[66] All things considered, I am not persuaded by Vassileva's theories, and I simply believe that the cult of Matar was not a mystery cult in Phrygia — the arguments in favour of a mystery cult being entirely taken from later, Greek material.

From Phrygia to Greece

Between Phrygia and Greek Ionia lies Lydia, where the Greek-inspired Kybele was worshipped. Rein (1993:55ff.) suggests that the Lydians in their representations of Kybele were influenced by the Ionian Greeks,[67] and agrees with Graf (1984), who has convincingly concluded that the reception of Matar in Greek Ionia took place in the early 7th century BC, independently of Lydia. Rein (1993:25) and Roller (1999:127) suggest that the transfer of the Matar cult from Phrygia to the East Greek cities happened through the Northern colonies of Milet and Phokaia on the shores of the Southern Black Sea coast and Propontis, since a close contact and interdependence traditionally existed between metropolis and colony, and because the Ionian Greeks were not in direct contact with the Phrygians. As evidence for this theory, Rein (1993:41) draws attention to the fact that Miletos presents the largest number of archaeological artifacts of the Matar cult. However, it is the coastal cities in general that present large number of finds (obviously

[66] The editor of *Greek Mysteries*, Michael Cosmopoulos, claims in his Preface that mysteries were "by no means restricted to Greece" (xii). The large number of different cults treated in this book includes cults from Asia Minor, but they all come from Ionia, the Greek part of Asia Minor. Also, the oriental mystery gods, obviously not from Greece, like Isis and Atargatis, are not mystery gods until they enter the Greek world in late Classical/Hellenistic times.

[67] Based, among other things, on the fact that the Lydian lions bear witness to Greek influence from the beginning (Rein 1993:66).

due to the fact that the Greeks tended to live there, and that most excavations have, accordingly, taken place there). Ephesos, for instance, presents a larger number of finds than Miletos, but did not have any colonies in the North. Moreover, there are no Archaic, even Classical, finds from the regions of Mysia or Bithynia, according to Schwertheim 1978. This circumstance, however, contradicts the fact that we do know of Phrygian cultural influence stretching this far north. A Daskyleion temple model demonstrates Phrygian influence near the Propontis area from the 8th or 7th century BC.[68] The late dates of Schwertheim's finds also conflict with the story of Anacharsis in Herodotos (IV, 76) confirming a cult in Kyzikos, at least in his own time, but perhaps already in the 7th century when Anacharsis lived. Furthermore, probably other artifacts from this region found within the past 30 years can throw new light on the Matar cult in the northern part of Anatolia, and the iconography of this Black Sea material can reveal whether the cult was primarily carried out by Phrygians, Greeks or Lydians.

The Lydian Influence on Early Greek Representations

Graf claims that the assimilation of the two goddesses, Lydian Kubaba and Greek Kybele, only happened during the gradual Hellenisation of Lydia after the 4th century BC (Graf 1984:119). In view of the fact that Matar arrived in the Greek East before the intervention of the Lydians, I still believe, however, that the Lydians did have an impact on the development of the Ionian iconography before 400 BC: the earliest finds of the Ionian reliefs of Matar represent two types of images. One type (Miletos, Kyme, Samos etc., ca. 550 BC) is identified as Matar because of the standing position and the architectural frame symbolising a house with a gabled roof (a frame known as a *naiskos*), whose similarity with the Phrygian façades is clearly intended. Many of these sculptures hold a pomegranate as an attribute — typical of early Greek figures (as well as of Kubaba), but very rare in Phrygia. This indicates, in my opinion, an influence from Kubaba, possibly through the Lydians.

The other type (from the mid 6th century BC) represents Matar as enthroned, dressed in a Greek *chiton*, and attended by lions — i.e., the

[68] I was averted to this by Roller in a private e-mail.

type that was to become standard in Greece. Rein proposes the theory that the rites of the Greek Kybele (including dance, music and wine, performed by a group of youths, the *Kourobantes*) may actually be a result of the Lydian-Phrygian rites as seen on the Sardis temple model (Rein 1993:73–74).

Conclusion

For now, it suffices to conclude that there was a great difference between the Phrygian and the Graeco-Roman cults of Matar, and that recent research has successfully disposed of some of the old myths in the description of Matar in Phrygia. Going back to some of the preliminary remarks of my introduction, new research has proven that Matar was indeed a Phrygian, not an age-old Greek goddess. Moreover, we can actually come quite far in describing her Phrygian traits without the perspective of the Greeks. This analysis shows that a profound difference existed between the Graeco-Roman Kybele and the Phrygian Matar.

The conclusions in this article are primarily drawn from studies on the cult in Phrygia. These may, however, also point forward to the Greek phenomenon of mystery religions. Whereas, according to old theories, mystery religions originate in a divine couple, exhibit strong agricultural or fertility aspects and include a myth of a wandering deity, this article has tried to show that this is not the case for Kybele. Not only was Attis a late development, even later than the mystery traits in the cult, but the archaeological evidence also seems to show a development from a pair of gods, a Mother and a Father, in Phrygia (not including a mystery) to a prominent, even singular female goddess as an object of worship including traits of mystery cult. Moreover, the strong connections with fertility were not evident until Roman times, long after the development into a mystery cult.

Despite the new knowledge on the subject, there are still a number of unanswered questions regarding the cult of Matar, some of which will probably be answered through further excavations in Anatolia. Other issues, however, may be illuminated through an investigation of her cult in the Black Sea area. Generally, the characteristics of the Matar cult in this area is a subject that has been only sporadically discussed in

Western research.[69] As researchers from the Black Sea Centre in Aarhus have argued (Hinge 2004; Bilde 2006), religion tended to be more shamanistic and eschatological in these areas, which perhaps could account for the early appearance of the tympanon (reflecting a particular kind of rites) on the Pontic North-Western coast. Furthermore, the questions of a common Thracian-Phrygian background, and the problem of determining the transfer of the cult from Phrygia to Greece, can benefit from this research.

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[69] My PhD project entitled "The Mother of Gods — reception and transformation of an Anatolian deity in the Black Sea area," will be an attempt to investigate the characteristics of the cult in this area.

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