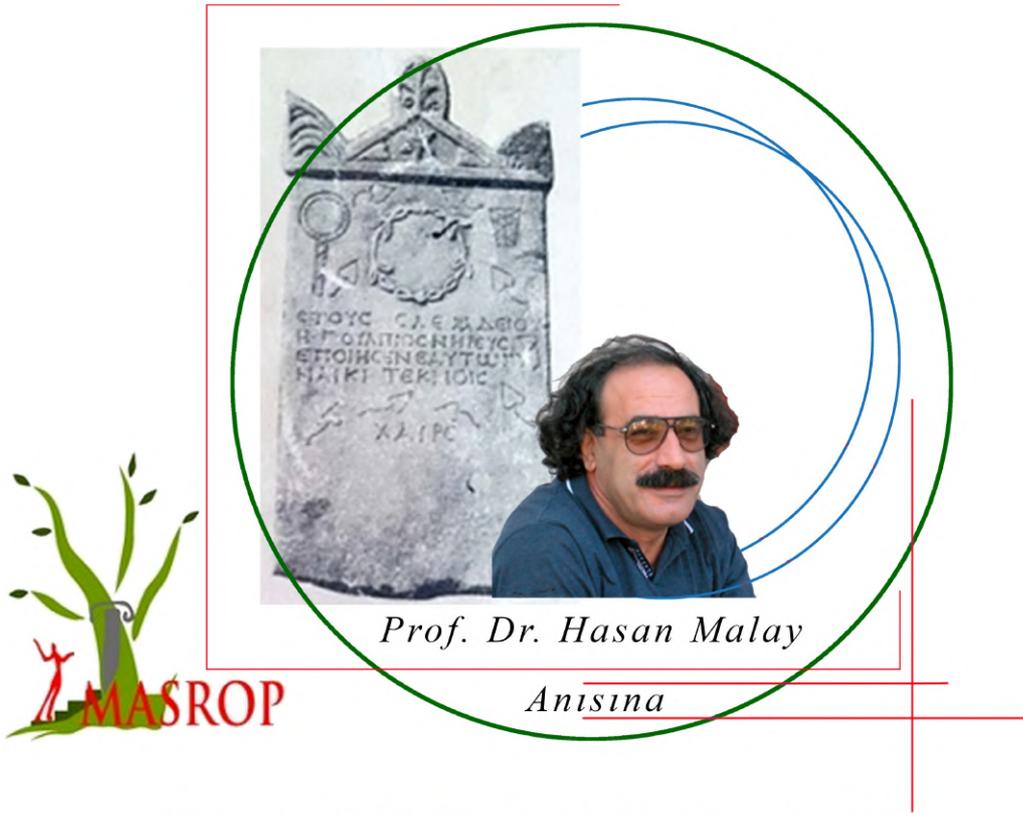


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*Mimarlar Arkeologlar Sanat Tarihçileri Restoratörler Ortak Platformu E-Dergisi*



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Edirne, Nisan 2022

## The Representation of Versatility: A Possible Role of Aphrodite in Perge

*Çok yönlülüğün temsili: Perge 'de Aphrodite 'nin Olası Bir Yönü*

İpek Dağlı\*

### Abstract

This study aims to examine a group of inscribed statue bases found in the city of Perge in Pamphylia to determine their religious context. The inscriptions on these bases state that the *agoranomoi* dedicated the statues of Eros to the city and in one example, to an unnamed goddess. All the inscriptions are previously published and evaluated in the scope of a corpus and all dated to the Roman Imperial Period. The evaluation of these statue bases in regards to their urbanistic context indicates that the statues of Eros were erected related to the buildings or complexes where the city's social, economic, and political life were clustered around such as Agora / *Macellum*, monumental fountains, entrance gates, and colonnaded streets. The source materials coming from other Pamphylian cities and Asia Minor and Greece show that the dedication of Eros statues was a practice neither unique to Perge nor limited to the *agoranomoi*. Instead, it was frequently made by various civic officials who were especially entrusted with supervisory duties, and it can be considered as a part of religious ritual in relation with Aphrodite, a versatile goddess who, among her many aspects, was perceived as the protectress of magistrates from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards. Evidence for the cult of Aphrodite is present in Perge and the other Pamphylian cities, however, based on the extant evidence, understanding the nature of the goddess, ie in regards to what capacity the people worshipped her, is difficult. Thus, these dedications of Eros statues by *agoranomoi* in Perge can allow us to elucidate an unknown aspect of the goddess in Perge, her guardianship over the civic officials.

**Key Words:** Cult, Perge, Pamphylia, Eros, Aphrodite

### Öz

*Bu çalışmanın amacı Pamphylia Bölgesi'nin önde gelen kentlerinden biri olan Perge'de bulunmuş yazıtlı heykel kaidelerini dini bağlamı içinde değerlendirmektir. Heykel kaidelerinin üzerindeki yazıtlar kentte agoranomos olarak görev yapmış bir grup memurun kent için, bir örnek üstüneyse ismi belirtilmemiş bir tanrıça için Eros heykelleri adadığını bildirmektedir. Bir corpus kapsamında değerlendirilen ve yayınlanan yazıtların tümü Roma İmparatorluk Dönemine tarihlendirilmiştir. Heykel kaidelerinin kent bağlamı içinde değerlendirilmesi sonucunda Eros heykellerinin Agora/Macellum, anıtsal çeşmeler, anıtsal kent kapısı ve sütunlu ana caddeler gibi kentin sosyal, politik ve ekonomik hayatının yoğun olduğu yapılar ve komplekslerle ilişkili olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Diğer Pamphylia kentleri yanında Küçük Asya ve Yunanistan'da bulunmuş yazıtlar Eros heykeli adanmasının ne Perge kentine ne de sadece agoranomoslara özgü bir uygulama olduğunu göstermiştir. Aksine, kentlerde özellikle kontrol ve denetimle ilişkili görevler üstlenmiş memurların çoğunlukla Aphrodite'yi bu tür adaklar adadığı görülmektedir. Çok yönlü bir tanrıça olan Aphrodite MÖ 5. yüzyıldan itibaren kamusal hayatın koruyucu tanrıçası olarak; özellikle kentte görev yapan memurlar tarafından, onurlandırılmıştır. Perge ve Pamphylia bölgesinin diğer kentlerinde Aphrodite kültürünün varlığına dair kanıtlar mevcuttur, ancak bunlar tanrıçanın hangi özelliği bakımından tapım gördüğünü belirlemek için yeterli değildir. Kentte agoranomoslar tarafından adanmış Eros heykelleri bu bağlamda Perge'deki Aphrodite kültürünün bilinmeyen bir yönü – kent memurlarının koruyucusu Aphrodite- ve kültle ilintili ritüeller hakkında bilgi verir nitelikte olabilir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kült, Perge, Pamphylia, Eros, Aphrodite

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The ancient city of Perge is situated in the fertile plain of Pamphylia, in the modern province of Antalya. Perge played a significant role in the history of the region and is one of the biggest and most widely investigated sites since the excavation began in 1946<sup>1</sup>. The archaeological research has revealed a great number of buildings, statues, inscriptions, and small finds mainly dated to the Roman Imperial Period that provide information about the public, private, economic, political, and religious life of the Pergaians (Fig.1). This paper aims to evaluate a group of dedicatory inscriptions written on statue bases which state that *agoranomoi* dedicated Eros statues to the city, by focusing on their religious significance and context. By putting them first into the civic and then into a broader regional context, I will attempt to find out why these magistrates specifically chose to dedicate these statues and their possible targeted cult recipients.

Eight statue bases have been taken into consideration in the scope of this paper. Five of them record that an *agoranomos* offered an Eros statue to the city<sup>2</sup>. On one of the bases, the name of the dedicant and his dedication (statue of Eros) have been inscribed but the title of *agoranomos* is lacking<sup>3</sup>. Two of them are broken and thus currently incomplete, unable to suggest whether they mention a dedication or not (Şahin 2004 no.304, 307a). The aorist participle in the inscriptions suggests that the offerings were made by magistrates during or at the end of their office. All the inscriptions are dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. The original locations of these bases are problematic since most of them cannot be securely attached to a context. For instance, base no.1 was first seen and recorded by G.E. Bean and later Şahin was unable to find it, but and benefitted from Bean's notes to describe it (Şahin 2004 no. 299). According to these notes, the statue base was found "between the gates, in front of the stepped structure on the east side". We do not have further information about the exact findspot of the statue base, but judging from the word "gates", we might assume that it refers to the Hellenistic towers (marked as C in the plan), the monumental entrance to the city. In 1953-1955 excavations were conducted in the

<sup>1</sup> For detailed information about the excavations carried on by İstanbul University's Classical Archaeology Department and Antalya Museum see, Abbasoğlu 2001: 211- 216; Özdzibay 2012: 1-21; Kara and Onur 2015: 7-24; Dağlı (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> All the inscriptions were already published by Şahin 2004: 23-28.

No.1:[M.] Αὐρ. Διδύ[μ]ου υἱός [Δ]ίδυμος [ἀ]γορανο[μ]ῶν τῆι [θε]ῶι

τὸν [Ἔ]ρω[τ]α M. Aurelius Didymus, son of Didymus, (dedicated) Eros to the goddess, while he was an *agoranomos*, Şahin 2004: no. 299.

No.2:Αὐρή[λιος] θάαντ[ος τοῦ] Ἄρτεμε[ισίω]νος Ἄρτ[εμεί]σιος ἀγ[ορα]νομῶν [τῆ] πατρίδι [τὸν] Ἔρωτα Aurelius Artemisius, son of Artemision, son of Thoas, (dedicated) Eros to the fatherland when he was an *agoranomos*, Şahin 2004: no. 303.

No.3:τῆ πατρίδι Αὐρήλιος Κυδρόπολις υἱός Κλέουτοῦ δημιουργήσαντος ἀγορανομήσας ἐνδόξω καὶ τὸν Ἔρωτα ἐφιλοτιμήσατο

Aurelius Kydropolis, the son of the former *demiourgos* Kleas, donated Eros to the fatherland in the pursuit of honor after the glorious administration of the office of *agoranomos*, Şahin 2004: no. 305;

No.4:[Αὐρή]λιος Εὐκλιανὸς Μαξιμιανὸς ἀγορανομήσας τὸν Ἔρωτα

τῆ πατρίδι

Aurelius Euklianus Maximianus (dedicated) Eros to the fatherland after his office as *agoranomos*, Şahin 2004 no. 306;

No.5: [N.N] ἀγορανομήσας τὸν Ἔρωτα τῆ πατρίδι [N.N] (dedicated) Eros to the fatherland after his office as *agoranomos*, Şahin 2004, no. 307.

<sup>3</sup> No.6: M. Αὐρ. Πορσοπιανὸς Νάρκισσος τὸν Ἔρωτα τῆ πατρίδι

Marcus Aurelius Porsopianus Narcissus (dedicated) Eros to the fatherland, Şahin 2004, no. 308.

complex and many inscriptions, both Greek and Latin, were discovered in the area<sup>4</sup>. Based on Bean’s information, it is probable that the base was spotted near the *Macellum / Agora* (marked as E in the plan) situated at the east of the complex, although it is not possible to determine the exact location. Base no. 2 and 3 were also first recorded in 1968 by Bean in front of the *Nymphaeum* marked as F2 in the plan<sup>5</sup>. Base no. 4 came from the southwest corner at the intersection of the north-south (marked as Ja in the plan) and east-west (marked as Jb in the plan) Colonnaded Streets, belonging to a public building according to Şahin (Şahin 2004 no. 306). Base no. 5 was found in a shop on the east side of the main north-south Colonnaded Street (Ja) (Şahin 2004 no.307). The last one, no. 6, was recovered the *Macellum / Agora* (E) during the 1971 excavation campaign on the south side of the door situated in the center of the east wall, which is one of the main entrances of the building<sup>6</sup>. On the inscription of this base (Şahin 2004 no. 308), the title of *agoranomos* is lacking however, the location of the find within the *Macellum / Agora* (E), as well as the testimony of epigraphical evidence compiled concerning Eros statues in the city, implies that the dedicant might also have been an *agoranomos* when he dedicated the Eros statue to the fatherland. Based on our current data, the buildings related to these inscriptions are Hellenistic Gates, *Macellum/Agora*, Monumental Fountain F2, and North-south Colonnaded Street, areas that constituted political, commercial, and social centers of the city of Perge where traffic was busy, an aspect that increased the visibility of these statues. The bases were not coupled with their statues and the inscriptions do not provide any information regarding their appearance. In this case, one base (no.6) may provide us with information about the material of the statue placed on top. According to the excavation notes of the 1971 campaign, the statue base found in the *Macellum / Agora* (E) has footprints on it. These are bigger than the normal size with the right foot stepping on the base with his sole and the left only touching the base with the tip of his toes. Therefore, the base once carried a bronze statue, since bases for bronze statues would have had either footprints on top of them at their top face or traces of dowel holes for fastening the statue to the base (Højte 2005: 45-46; Fejfer 2008: 26-27). Since no bronze statues of Eros were found in relation to these bases yet, they must either have been destroyed or intentionally melted since they were made of valuable metal<sup>7</sup>.

One inscription mentions that (No.1) the statue of Eros is dedicated to the goddess, not to the fatherland like the rest of the bases. The goddess in question was not stated in the inscription, however, Şahin interpreted this “goddess” as Artemis since she was the patron deity of the city (Şahin 2004: no. 299).

The dedicants of the statues and bases were *agoranomoi*, i.e. magistrates who were in charge of keeping order in the markets, controlling the market places, the trade, and the money exchange as well as setting prices for certain goods, and checking the accuracy of measures and weights used in market places<sup>8</sup>. They had penal capacities and they were authorized to foreclose the premises of a faulty merchant or to issue fines. Apart from their official duties, the

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<sup>4</sup> For detailed information about the Hellenistic Gates and its transformation towards a more representative complex in the Roman Imperial period, see Bulgurlu 1999; Özdizbay 2012: 52-62; for the inscriptions, see Şahin 1999 116-145.

<sup>5</sup> For *nymphaea* F2 and F4 see below, the evidence for the cult of Aphrodite in Perge.

<sup>6</sup> Information is gathered from the excavation notes.

<sup>7</sup> A bronze statue of Attis seems to have been survived this destruction since it was found in the *Macellum / Agora* of the city of Perge. The bronze statue is now displayed in the Antalya Museum see, Delemen and Koçak 2014: 123-145.

<sup>8</sup> Three examples of lead weight inscribed with the names of *agoranomoi* though to be found in Perge can be evaluated in this context of task description, see Şahin 2004 nos. 300, 301, 302.

*agoranomoi* financed the construction and maintenance of buildings or spaces, such as porticoes, shops, exedras, or donated new equipment intended to be used inside these buildings. They were also in charge of watching over the temples in case of any kind of offense. Although the office of *agoranomia* was usually conducted by an individual on an annual basis, in some cities there could have been councils consisting of two or three members. In cities with intense commercial activities, several *agoranomoi* could have been employed within one year (Magie 1950: 645)<sup>9</sup>.

The dedication of Eros statues by *agoranomoi* was not a unique practice to Perge since this phenomenon has been documented through the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD inscriptions found in various cities of Asia Minor such as Sardis (Buckler and Robinson 1932:100, no. 99), Sagalassos (Contoléon 1887: 221, no. 16), Ephesos (Keil 1923: 100, no. 15), and Laodikeia (Robert 1969: 254). No testimony in connection with an *agoranomos* dedicating a statue of any other deity than Eros has been discovered at Perge so far. However, inscriptions from elsewhere indicate that the act of dedicating Eros statues was also performed by other magistrates. Some inscriptions are more clear about the reason(s) behind this act; we might interpret them in a cultic context and/or they provide information about to which deity these Eros statues were dedicated. For instance, a 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD inscription from Laodikeia mentions an *agoranomos*, who dedicated Eros statues to the city (Brélaz 2005: 81). Judging from a second inscription on the same base, this statue had been stolen and a *strategos* replaced it with a new Eros statue to honor the fatherland at his own expenses. Since ensuring security is among the duties of a *strategos*, he must have donated a new statue to the city as his office dictates to avoid failure in his duty<sup>10</sup>. An *agoranomos* from Termessos who was also a former overseer (*epimeletes*) of the *gymnasion* and an *archiproboulos* dedicated a statue of Eros inside the *gymnasion* to the fatherland with his funds (Çelgin 1994: 117, 131). The statue is described as an “*agalma*”, thus it has a meaning in a cultic context, testifying to a possible cult of Eros in *gymnasia*, a common veneration in these types of buildings alongside Hermes and Herakles<sup>11</sup>. An inscription found in Thespieae, Boeotia in Greece, that is attributed to the reign of Vespasian or Domitian, attests that an *agonothetes* dedicated a statue of Eros, which apparently stood in a temple (IG VII: no.1830). Eros was the main deity worshipped in Thespieae, with a festival called *Erotideia* celebrated by the Thespians every four years along with the *Mouseia* honoring the Muses<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, the dedication of an Eros statue by *agonothetes* probably in charge of organizing those festivals is understandable. These two examples demonstrate that Eros was the object of the cult in Termessos and Thespieae, hence he is the cult recipient. However, other instances point out to a different cult recipient. Aphrodisias has yielded a remarkable inscription on a marble base from the 1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD that mentions that a certain *strategos* dedicated a statue of Hermes, a gilded statue of Aphrodite, two Erotes *lampadophoroi* (*torch-bearers*), and a marble statue of Eros to Aphrodite, *Theoi Sebastoi* and the *demos* (Robert 1965: 118). One example comes from Hierapolis and describes a *neokoros* of Aphrodite Urania who dedicated bronze Eros statues and a silver relief of the Charites to the goddess in return for being elected as a *strategos* (Buckner 1936: 237). Our last example is from Side, another important city

<sup>9</sup> For a comprehensive study about the *agoranomoi* and *agoranomia* in the Graeco-Roman world, see Capdetrey and Hasenohr 2012.

<sup>10</sup> For further information about the officials who were responsible of the security in the cities of Roman Asia Minor, see Brélaz 2015.

<sup>11</sup> The word *agalma* does not always refers to a cult statue, but rather represents an image in a cultic context see, Price 1984: 176-179. For more detailed information about Eros and his cult at *gymnasia*, see Scanlon 2002: 199-274.

<sup>12</sup> For the festival of Eroditeia and Mouseia in Thespieae, see van Nijf and van Dijk 2020: 116-121.

situated in the Pamphylia region. A Late Hellenistic or Early Roman epigram engraved on a round statue base states that Dionysius Malaeis dedicated an Eros statue to Aphrodite when he became an *epistates* of Aphrodite like his father, a superintendent who was responsible for the Aphrodite cult (Nollé 1984: 26). The inscription is important in terms of what the Eros statue looked like. The deity is represented with a thunderbolt in his hand “which once the Cyclops lighted for the lord of gods, for loud thundering Zeus, showing that although I am small the well-winged has a greater power” as the epigram states (Corso 2013 187). These instances show that, unlike Termessos and Thespieae, the object of the cult is not Eros, but another deity: Aphrodite.

### **Aphrodite as Guardian of Officials and Civic Virtue**

Aphrodite was a very versatile and complex goddess whose religious influence covers a wide range of responsibilities that can differ according to regions, cities, and contexts. She represents female sexuality, beauty, and love. She was venerated for her maternal power. She is associated with fertility, abundance, and vegetation. She is the goddess of heavens and waters, therefore she protects sailors<sup>13</sup>. She also has a martial character<sup>14</sup>. In addition to these different aspects, she also had a political role as the guardian of civic officials. Her epithet *Pandemos* demonstrates her relation with the whole people in a given city as a unifier of the *demos*. She ensures public and private peace and concord by protecting the civic officials whose duties require governing a *polis* harmoniously. These dedications can be made by the magistrates during their time of service for the wish of success or after it to express gratitude (Wallensten 2005: 175). Breitenberger’s work indicates that she mainly received dedications from the civic officials who had supervisory duties mainly responsible for controlling the conduct of people and had penal capacities like *agoranomoi*, *epistetai* and *strategoï* (Breitenberger 2007: 39-40). Aphrodite’s patronage over civic officials can be so apparent that in some cases, her epithets may vary according to the office that she was associated with such as Aphrodite *Strategis* or Aphrodite *Nauarkhis* (Breitenberger 2007: 41).

The role of Aphrodite as the guardian of magistrates goes back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, and it especially became predominant in times of political instability when people needed a force to unite them. Dedications from the magistrates to the goddess reached a Panhellenic level from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC according to the study conducted by Wallensten (Wallensten 2003). In addition to linking this phenomenon to the goddess’ internal aspects, such as her being the deity of harmony, Wallensten emphasized that the aspect of Aphrodite as the protectress of officials was mostly related to external historical contexts, since most of the inscriptions she analyzed came from a world politically governed by the Romans. The popularity of Aphrodite as the ancestress of the Romans and her link with the Trojan War might have triggered officials from Greece and Asia Minor to accept Aphrodite as their patron goddess to make up to the Romans. She observed that among the cities that yielded dedications to Aphrodite by magistrates, some of them claimed a Trojan descent for themselves or had mythological stories involving the war (Wallensten 2010: 276-277).

In some cases, the personifications of civic virtues accompanied Aphrodite in these dedications and by this, the political connotation of the goddess was further emphasized. Peitho

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<sup>13</sup> For the maritime character of the goddess, see Demetriou 2010: 67-89.

<sup>14</sup> Aphrodite’s complex nature has generated great scholarly interest over the past decades, therefore the literature about her is abundant. For the state of research developed since 1970’s, see Pirenne-Delforge 2010: 3-17. For general information about the goddess’ different aspects see, Pirenne-Delforge 1994; Breitenberger 2007; Smith and Pickup (Eds) 2010; for her guardianship over women, see Wallensten 2009; for Aphrodite Ourania as a primordial goddess who dominated the sky, see Rosenzweig 2004:59-81; for her martial character, see Budin 2010: 79-113. For the iconographical aspects of the goddess, see Delivorrias 1984: 1-151.

(Persuasion) and Charites (Graces) can be considered among these virtues. Peitho was perceived as the symbol of people's obedience to the *demos* and its institutions whereas Graces represented the ideal of *Concordia Civium*, especially in Athens where the cult of Aphrodite Pandemos was firmly established<sup>15</sup>. Eros, on the other hand, rather than being a mischievous love god, symbolizes an emotion that also has political meanings. In this context, Eros can be evaluated in two distinct but not contradictory aspects: Eros the god, and eros the emotion<sup>16</sup>. In early creation myths, for instance, in Hesiod's Theogony (8<sup>th</sup> century BC) Eros was the firstborn (*protogenos*) at the beginning of time with Chaos and Gaia (Hesiod. Theogony 116-122). Here, Eros is seen as a divine force of cosmic movement and a representative of reproductive energy that makes divine lineages form (Most 2013: 163-175). In this sense, Eros emerged from the Chaos was perceived in the Greek philosophical tradition, establishing the world in harmony (Boys-Stones 1998: 168-174). In the Orphic tradition, Eros finds a place equivalent in Hesiod's Theogony. One of the earliest principles, the Orphic Phanes, is identical with Eros, who is the firstborn and source of all life (Guthrie 1952: 84). Furthermore, an account in Athenaios' *Deipnosophistai* (3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) which was thoroughly analyzed by Boys-Stone states that the Stoic Zeno accepted Eros as the titular god of his ideal state since if his power unites the cosmos together in a harmonious fashion, then he can do the same for the people and the city (Boys-Stone 1998: 170-171). The emotion of eros, on the other hand, is firmly implemented in the political life of mainly Classical Athens as a driving force that connected the people living in the *polis* together<sup>17</sup>. As it created a hierarchical relationship among the people, it developed hierarchical links between the citizens and the city (Azoulay 2014: 94). Eros is also described as one of the political passions and virtues that draw citizens into civic duty instead of forcing them (Ludwig 2009: 296-298).

The idea that Eros, as a primordial god, ensures unity and harmony within the cosmos and as an emotion, provides a connection between the citizens and the *polis* by calling their active participation in civic duties illustrates eros' influence in the political sphere. Furthermore, his natural companionship with Aphrodite who was perceived as the guardian of civic officials from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards enhances his official role. Therefore, magistrates' dedications of Eros statues, either from Perge or from other cities might be evaluated in the broader cultic sphere of Aphrodite focusing on her specific political aspect.

### **The Evidence for Aphrodite in Perge**

Looking at both direct and indirect source materials concerning the cult of Aphrodite in Perge can indicate that an early cult space might have existed in the city's acropolis judging from the terracotta figurines dated to the 4<sup>th</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC found in a bothros in the "Area 1" on the eastern hill on the Acropolis (marked as K in the plan). Based on the recovered material, this area witnessed a continuous settlement from the Late Bronze Age into the Roman period<sup>18</sup>. The

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<sup>15</sup> For the personifications of civic virtues and the *polis*, see Smith 2011: 51-66; for the relation of Aphrodite Pandemos with Peitho and Graces, see Breitenberger 2007: 42-43; Sokolowski 1964: 6-8.

<sup>16</sup> For eros as an emotion in the Greek thinking and its reflections on the Greek society see, Sanders 2013.

<sup>17</sup> The literature concerning the emotion of eros, its place in the Athenian political thinking and the notion of pederasty in political rhetoric is abundant and exceeds the scope of this research. For general information, see the articles compiled in Sanders 2013 and 2019; Ludwig 2002; Zaccarini 2018 with bibliography.

<sup>18</sup>Based on the archaeological material gathered during the excavations conducted on the Acropolis of Perge, the beginnings of the settlement on the Acropolis started in the Chalcolithic period. The research also yielded evidence regarding the Bronze Age settlements. Cultic activities emerged in the area from the Early Bronze Age onwards and continued up to the Early Byzantine Period. The Acropolis hosted the earliest temples built in the Greek style, with an *in antis* plan. During the Roman Imperial period, the Acropolis of Perge maintained its sacral character

absence of epigraphic data prevents us from firmly determining to whom this area was dedicated but the terracotta figurines consisting of a torso of a naked woman, a woman’s head, a seated doll, a dolphin, two bull’s heads, a hand holding a *tympanon*, and a “temple boy” might belong the religious sphere of Aphrodite (Recke 2017: 547-53; Wamser-Krasznai 2017: 427-454). Recke identifies in each fragment some elements related to the goddess, takes into consideration the resemblance of these figurines and their iconography to examples found on Cyprus and the Near East, and therefore connects them to a possible cult for Aphrodite on the Acropolis without ruling out the probability of domestic use for these figurines. “The Area 2” which is located on the western hill<sup>19</sup> also yielded a lead figurine that features Aphrodite in a *naiskos*, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Martini 2017: 292)<sup>20</sup>.

Undoubtedly, one object does not suffice to conclude about the presence of an Aphrodite sanctuary in the area, but the data from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD may show that the votives are in line with Aphrodite’s iconography.

The evidence concerning the goddess’ presence in the city dating to the Roman Imperial period is higher in number. The coinage of the city dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD feature a standing Aphrodite as naked above the waist and draped with a mantle below the waist, occasionally accompanied by Eros or a dolphin<sup>21</sup>. Her cult is further documented by an inscription that was written on a very fragmented altar found in “Room 8” of the Southern Baths (marked as I in the plan). From the remaining parts, it is possible to conclude that it was dedicated to Aphrodite *Epekoos*, “the one who hears the prayers”. The inscription dates to the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD (Şahin 1999: no. 243).

The statuary of Aphrodite occupied a major place in the visual landscape of the city. From the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD onwards but especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, the goddess was represented in a variety of types all around Perge, either in the shape of statues or as reliefs. Four statues have been found in the Southern Baths of the city (Güven 2007: K51, K53, K33, K34 respectively)<sup>22</sup>. Apparently, the Late Roman Gate of the city (marked as C1 in the plan; Mansel 1969: 95), the oval courtyard between the round Hellenistic Towers (C) (Mansel 1956: 106), the north-south (Ja) (Özgür et al. 1996: no. 16; Turak 2013: 85-93) and east-west oriented (Jb) Colonnaded Streets (Kara and Demirel, 2015: 22-3; 2016: 350), the so-called Cornutus Palaestra (marked as N in the plan; Orhan 2017: 13-22) and the so-called Caracalla Fountain (located on the southern part of the east-west oriented colonnaded street; Kara and Demirel 2015: 22-23) were also embellished with the statues of the goddess during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

Apart from statues, Aphrodite is also often represented on reliefs accompanied by Eros at her side. The pediments of the two Severan fountains located west of the square between the

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and this did not change during the Late Antique and Byzantine periods. For the chronological development of the Acropolis of Perge see Martini 2010; 2016: 616-626; 2017: 1-246.

<sup>19</sup> The “Area 2” of the Acropolis of Perge is also identified as a sacred space with a cultic continuity that started from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to the Roman Imperial Period, Martini 2017: 247-310.

<sup>20</sup> Examples similar to these lead figurines have mainly been found in the Western provinces, such as Britannia, Gallia, Germania, Albania, Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia; however, examples from Syria are also known. These figurines may depict a variety of deities, such as Aphrodite, Artemis, and Hermes, For further information on the lead figurines of the Mediterranean, see Baratta 2013: 283-91; Pop Lazic 2012: 151-64.

<sup>21</sup> For Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD), see RPC IV, no. 10661; for Lucius Verus (161-169 AD), see RPC IV, no. 4953; for Commodus (177-192 AD), see RPC IV, no. 10410; for Iulia Domna (193-217 AD), see SNG France 3, no. 419; for Maximus (236-238 AD), see RPC VI, no. 6166.

<sup>22</sup> Further information about these statues can be found in İnan 1983: 8-12; İnan 1984: 204.

Hellenistic and the Late Roman Gates were embellished with reliefs of many deities (F2 and F4 in the plan). The Severan nymphaeum F2 is composed of a two-storey façade with a big pool lying in front. The building can be securely dated based on the inscriptions stating that it was dedicated to Artemis Pergaia, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Iulia Domna by Aurelia Paulina, the priestess of Artemis Pergaia; Thus the date of 195- 204 AD seems appropriate for the building (Şahin 1999: 233-235 no. 195). The pediment of the fountain has depictions of tritons on both corners and relief-busts of Helios and Selene on each lateral side. Artemis Pergaia stands in the center of the *tympanon*. She is flanked by the three Graces and a priestess wearing a long robe and a veil. To the left, a partially naked Aphrodite is crowned by an Eros. A similar *nymphaeum*, F4 is situated directly to the south of F2 and was also built in the Severan period (İnan 1976: 702; İnan 1977: 617-618). The pediment of *Nymphaeum* F4 also bears mythological figures including two Erotes on the left and right ends. The one to the left facing the Graces has an inverted torch in his right hand. The Eros on the right end holds a mirror for Aphrodite, who is standing right next to him<sup>23</sup>. The extant material evidence alongside the numismatic data indicates that Aphrodite became visible in the visual landscape of Perge from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD onwards, especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. This date is also in accordance with the Eros statues dedicated by *agoranomoi*.

Extant evidence from Perge show Aphrodite's significant place in the city's visual media like statuary and coins and that she enjoyed a cult as evidenced by an inscription and perhaps votive offerings but none of these shed light on the aspects of Aphrodite, the rituals performed in her honor, and the possible reason(s) behind her veneration. The situation is similar for the region. Placing the cult of Aphrodite in a broader regional context indicates so far that the earliest traces of her worship started in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC in Aspendos. Her worship in Aspendos might be an indigenous one, perhaps related to a toponym, the Mount Kastnion, and the city's foundation stories<sup>24</sup>. The abovementioned statue of Eros dedicated to Aphrodite by a former *epistates* documents her presence in Side in the Late Hellenistic or Early Imperial period. Another inscription dated to the Roman Imperial period informs about a priestess of Aphrodite in Side (Nollé 1993 no. 98). Similar to Perge, the statuary representations of the goddess- mainly accompanied with Eros, played an important role in the visual landscape of Side and its territory<sup>25</sup>. Magydos yielded numismatic evidence datable to the Roman Imperial Period (Ünal 2018 289-92).

## Discussion

In the absence of more explicit data, the nature of Aphrodite remains obscure for Perge and Pamphylia in general. However, the six statue bases offered by *agoranomoi* in Perge and one statue dedicated to Aphrodite by her former *epistates* can provide information about her possible perception as the protectress of civic officials at least in these cities without a definitive *epiclesis* used for the goddess such as *Pandemos* but through her most known companion – Eros. Although we don't have information about the appearances of statues in Perge, the inscription found in Side informs us Eros with a lightning bolt in his hand symbolized that he had a greater power than Zeus focusing perhaps on Eros' primordial character. Additionally, the inscription of Side documents that the statue of Eros was donated to Aphrodite. Although

<sup>23</sup> For detailed information about the architectural decoration and the dating of "Fountains F2 and F4", see Türkmen 2007: 11-33.

<sup>24</sup> The cult and religious life of Pamphylia has been recently explored by the author of this paper in the scope of a PhD thesis. For general information about the cult of Aphrodite in Pamphylia see Dağlı Dinçer 2020.

<sup>25</sup> For the statues of Aphrodite found in the city and its territory, see İnan 1975: 38-40, 135-136, 140-144, 165-166; for the marble figurines in the Museum of Side, see Öztunç and Erkoç 2019: 123-138.

the inscriptions from Perge are devoid of this information, the decision of dedicating the statues of Eros, most known companion of Aphrodite might express to the viewer the idea of their togetherness. The attributes, or in the case of Perge “companions”, were significant means of communication because they transported cognitive information through visual symbols<sup>26</sup>, thus Eros statues of Perge might have been used to channel the viewer’s visual perception to a specific aspect of Aphrodite. Of course, these statues would have been perceived as merely decorative if the viewer is unaware of the cultic or cultural context behind the image, however, magistrates’ dedications to Aphrodite was a common practice in the Greek and Roman world and Asia Minor was not an exception, therefore we can assume that the Pergaians were also aware of the political connotations of Eros and Aphrodite symbolized. Furthermore, there exists another interesting matter that needs to be mentioned in terms of Aphrodite being the ancestress of the Romans and her connection with the Trojan War: Perge was a city that also claimed a Trojan descent for itself as evidenced by the statues of mythological founders that were once decorated the oval courtyard situated between the round towers which were, in the Hellenistic Period, part of the city’s defense system<sup>27</sup>. After the fortifications had lost their function during the Pax Romana, the complex was visually and functionally transformed into a prestigious building with the endeavors of Plancia Magna, one of the most important benefactors of Perge<sup>28</sup>. Among the mythological founders that Perge claimed for its foundation were Kalchas, Mopsos, and Machaon who traveled to the south in search of a new home after the Trojan War. The political motives behind the decision of erecting such statues of Greek heroes/seers in the courtyard between the gates, immediately at the entrance of the city, was already acknowledged by the scholars (Şahin 1996: 45-50; Özdizbay 2012: 60-62). Perhaps, the Pergaians wanted to emphasize their city’s Trojan descent in connection to Aphrodite’s patronage over the Romans in accordance to the Wallensten suggestion. If this is the case, the statue of Aphrodite found during the excavations of the oval courtyard (see above) must have reinforced the connection between Perge’s Trojan ancestry and Aphrodite, and prompted the magistrates (*agoranomoi* in the case of Perge) to accept them as their patron deity. Since this study proposes a previously undocumented aspect of Aphrodite as the guardian of civic officials in Perge, the goddess mentioned in the inscription No. 1 (see footnote 3) to whom the statue of Eros was dedicated can be interpreted as Aphrodite rather than Artemis.

Determining a cult within a city is not always an easy task. Surely, the source materials involving archaeological, written, and iconographical evidence can provide us the names and epithets of deities, give information about the festivals celebrated in their honor, the location of their sacred space, and names of their cult personnel, etc. However, reconstructing the rituals is far more difficult especially in the lack of archaeological material recovered as a result of systematic excavations and documentation or in the absence of detailed inscriptions or iconographic depictions. As it is known, religious beliefs were manifested through actions in the form of ritual, which enabled interaction with the deities. The dedication of gifts to appease the deities, to seek their protection, or to show gratitude to them created a reciprocal relationship between the mundane and the divine. All these actions could be organized and practiced at the public/civic level or be performed privately in accordance with the traditions that established an action called ritual<sup>29</sup>. Among many descriptions of ritualistic behavior, according to Burkert,

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<sup>26</sup> For the use of attributes and their meanings see, Mylonopoulos 2010: 171-205.

<sup>27</sup> For the inscribed statue bases of *ktistai* see, Şahin 1999a 135 no.101; 136, no.102; 137, no.103-04; 138, no. 105-106; 139, no.107; 140, no.108; 141; no.109

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed summary of the complex’s architectural layout, see Özdizbay 2012, 52-62.

<sup>29</sup> The nature of rituals in Greek and Roman cult practices and discussions around this matter exceeds the scope of this research, however for a general overview of theories of the Greek and Roman rituals, see Larson 2016: 187-246 with bibliography.

a ritual is a schematised action that can be imitated and repeated (Burkert 2006: 23). The dedications of Eros statues by various *agoranomoi* might establish a form of repetitive action that can allow us to reconstruct a ritual that was performed in honor of Aphrodite.

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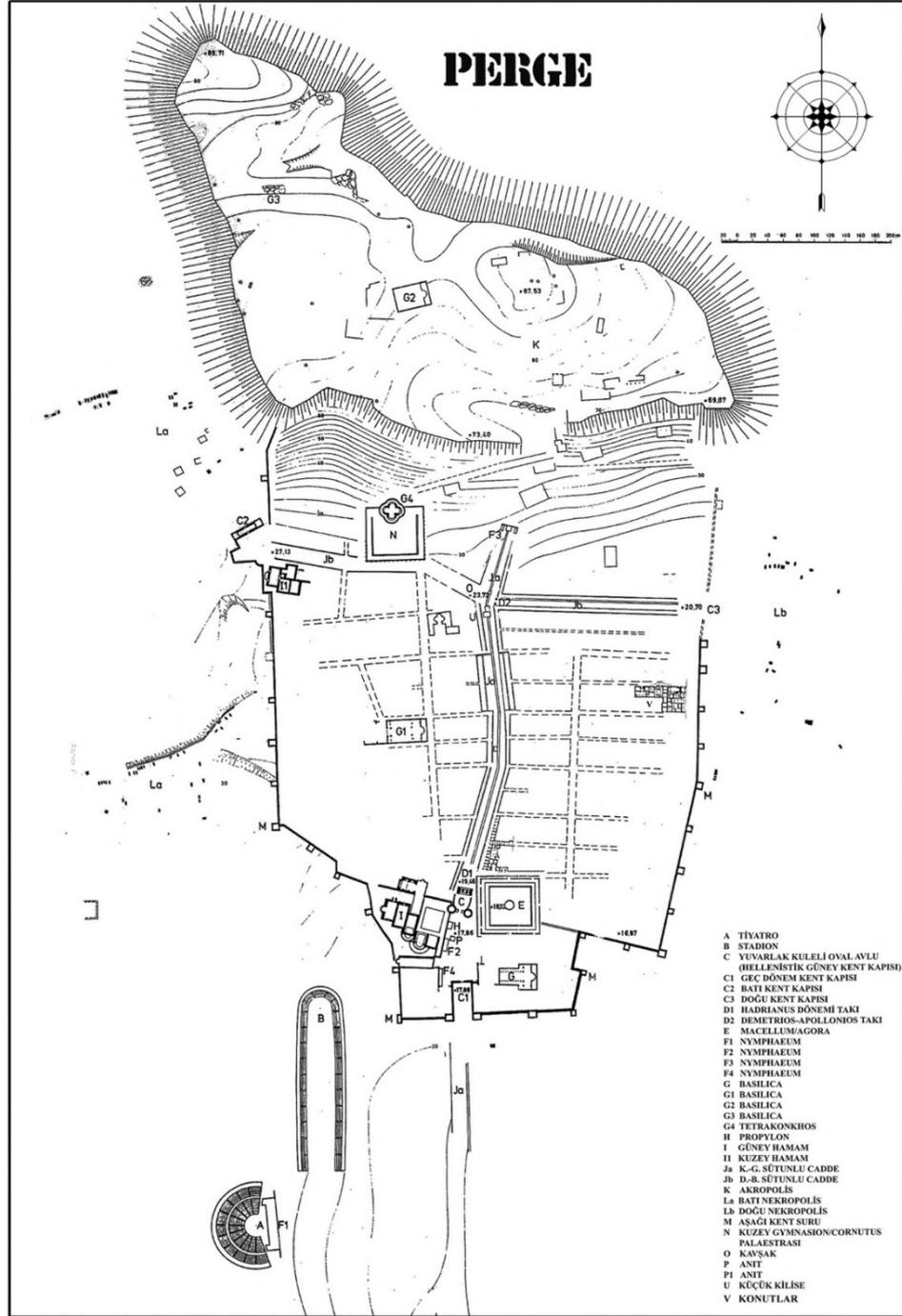


Fig.1: Plan of Perge