

Introduction

Phrygia in the second and third centuries CE offers perhaps more vivid evidence for what has quaintly been termed ‘lived ancient religion’ (for what is unlived religion, or who has ever taken that as a subject of study?) than any other region of the ancient world; it can certainly claim primacy among Greek-speaking parts of that world with the possible exception of late antique Egypt. In contrast to Greece itself, the documents that illustrate this religion are neither literary nor primarily issued by cities or by powerful inhabitants of cities but by agriculturalists: they pray for the welfare of their families, their crops, and their cattle, and these last appear, mute and touching suppliants, in many votive reliefs: ‘lovely tawny workers, ploughers of the earth’ as an epigram describes them—to kill one was supposedly a capital offence.¹

A rare window is opened into the world of what Syme called ‘the voiceless earth-coloured rustics’ who are ‘conveniently forgotten.’² Unlike peasants in most historical periods, the farmers of Phrygia in the second and third centuries have left numerous stone memorials of themselves, both gravemarkers and also, what is crucial for our purposes, dedications to their gods. Some from central Phrygia are carved on the famous Dokimeion marble, precious and highly exportable in large

1. ἐργατιναὶ καλοὶ ξανθοὶ γαίης ἀροτῆρες: *MAMA* IV 140. 6 (*Steinepigramme* 16/62/01; discussed by Robert, *A Travers l'Asie Mineure*, 224–25); capital offence: *Ael. NA* 12.34. Prayers for livestock are unexpectedly rare in mainline Greco-Roman religion, though note Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.88.3, *Ov. Fasti* 4. 745–76 on the Parilia, and (with Chiaï, *Phrygien und seine Götter*, 265n815) the recipe for an offering *pro bubus* in Cato, *Agr.* 83. Not literary: for the paltry remains of *Phrygiaka*, see *FGrH* IIIC 833–39.

2. R. Syme, *Colonial Elites* (Oxford, 1958), 27.



FIGURE 1. Dedication of Artemas to Zeus Ampeleites. Kütahya museum, SEG XXXIII 1145, photo J. Potts.

slabs, but also inevitably yielding small waste pieces that almost anyone could afford.

Others from northern Phrygia used marble from the quarries at Soa, administered as a filial of those at Dokimeion. (But where there were no local workshops, the lights become much dimmer for us.) A little paradoxically, therefore, we owe much of this evidence for local life to exploitation of the Dokimeion quarries by the Roman state; the explosion of marble monuments in Phrygia from the second to the fourth century CE indeed ‘corresponds to the period of intensive Imperial quarrying in the region.’³ Rural sanctuaries were crammed with dedications; what were probably quite minor shrines can be known to us through dozens or even hundreds of pieces (some of them uninscribed but showing the dedicator, whom

3. J. Massegla in *Roman Phrygia*, 96; on p. 95 she stresses the ‘broad sweep’ of social statuses represented in consequence. On the quarries, see *Phrygian Votive Steles*, 13–14, 42; on their economic importance, see Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1, 159. On the lack of local workshops, see Lochman, *Studien*, 185n5, on the Kotiaion region. Other possible motives for the upsurge in dedications (assertion of Phrygian identity; concurrence with Christianity) are discussed by Chiai, *Phrygien und seine Götter*, 363–69, 444–45, 531. But most of the dedications in question are too humble to justify the former explanation.



FIGURE 2. Vow of Sateira to Zeus Alsenos. *Phrygian Votive Steles* no. 140

the god would recognise, presumably).⁴ Occasionally, the contents have been excavated as a group; more often they have entered the art market through clandestine excavation and been scattered but brought back together on the page by scholarship on the basis of iconography and distinctive local epithets. Yet this enticing material is little known except to specialists.

The period in which Phrygian paganism flourished so visibly to our eyes was also the period in which Christianity, introduced by the apostle Paul, took root, as early and as successfully as in any part of the Roman world. The sources seldom allow us to see the two world-views in direct confrontation, but it would be a strange limitation, a neglect of one of history's great stories and great enigmas, not to consider how and why the new religion strangled its predecessor and tried to meet for Phrygians the needs hitherto met by Zeus and the rest of the gods.

But, before turning to religion, a word first about 'Phrygia'. Phrygia and Phrygians have been commonly spoken of from (at least) the time of Homer to this day; in Greco-Roman iconography, one could always tell a Phrygian from his cap; but what exactly is one studying in studying Phrygian religion in the Roman period?⁵ We are far removed from the glory days of the expansive early Phrygian Empire (eighth through sixth centuries BCE), but it left linguistic traces in the concepts of 'Hellaspontine Phrygia'⁶ or 'Phrygia by the Sea'; the Roman Phrygia of this book, however, will be a landlocked region. The dominant language of inscriptions in Roman Phrygia, as in all Asia minor, was Greek, but in the late first century CE there appear inscriptions in 'neo-Phrygian' which are taken to attest to its survival as a spoken language. Can we then adopt a linguistic criterion? But to define Phrygia by neo-Phrygian would create a surprising result: it is unattested in much of the west and south-west of the 'Phrygia' of modern maps, but extends eastwards

4. For two, see *Phrygian Votive Steles*, passim; for another, see SEG LVI 1513–1665, the hitherto unknown Zeus Limnenos. Uninscribed: e.g. *Phrygian Votive Steles*, most of nos. 90–139, nos. 218–35.

5. For rare attempts to be explicit, for the Roman imperial period, see M. Waelkens, 'Phrygian Votive and Tombstones', 293–94n2; cf. *Türsteine*, 42–44 (unfortunately hard to follow for those lacking a good modern map, even with Tafel 109 in his *Türsteine*) and, usefully, Kelp, Grabdenkmal, 26–36 with Farbtafel 2 (but my Roman Phrygia reaches north to Dorylaion).

6. Still found e.g. in Strabo 12.4.3, 563; 'by the sea' *Hell. Oxy.* 22.3. For earlier references, see Ruge, 'Topographie', 801; this is also 'Lesser' Phrygia (for the distinction, see already Xen. *Anab.* 1.9.7), only the inland part of which became Phrygia Epiktetos (Strabo 12.4.3, 563, 12.4.5, 564 for Epiktetos as inland; on the various designations, see *ibid.*, 12.8.1, 571; S. Radt, in his edition, reads ἡ δὲ μικρὰ ἢ ἔφ' Ἑλλησπόντῳ καὶ [ἡ] περὶ τὸν Ὀλυμπον to avoid a further sub-division; cf. also S. Şahin, *EpigAnat* 7 [1986], 136n39). The tribute-paying Phrygians in the territory of Zeleia in the late fourth century BCE (*Syll.* 279. 4–5) recall their early diffusion.

into their ‘Galatia’.⁷ If, accordingly, we extend our Phrygia into Galatia (as doubtless we should, to some degree), we are abandoning, rightly, any attempt to make use of Roman administrative divisions to define Phrygia.⁸ Galatia indeed raises special problems of its own. It only emerged (as a human reality, not until 25 BCE as a province) when, in the third century BCE, the incoming Celtic Galatians settled and became politically dominant, but without expelling the previous Phrygian inhabitants who still made up a majority of the population:⁹ a Galato-Phrygian region, therefore, within which falls Pessinous, centre of the cult of the Mother.

We should obviously take account of what those alive in the relevant period judged to be Phrygian. By this criterion, the self-description under examination of one Hierax, martyred in Rome around 165 CE, shows that Iconium (nowadays assigned to Lycaonia) could still be seen as Phrygian at that date, as it had been for Xenophon (‘Phrygia’s furthest city’) half a millennium before.¹⁰ At home Hierax would have seen neo-Phrygian inscriptions in the cemeteries. If given to Phrygia, Iconium would bring with it Laodikeia Katakekaumene a little to the north, again

7. The confines of Palaeo-Phrygian are ‘a vast quadrilateral area, at the corners of which are Daskyleon, Boğazköy, Tyana and Elmalı’, of neo-Phrygian ‘Eskişehir/Dorylaion, Kütahya/Kotiaion, Eğirdir Lake, Laodikeia Katakekaumene and the northernmost tip of Lake Tatta’ (Brixhe, ‘Greek and Phrygian’, 248; cf. Kelp, *Grabdenkmal*, Farbtafel 3.). Cf. L. Roller, ‘Attitudes towards the Past in Roman Phrygia’, in E. Simpson (ed.), *The Adventure of the Illustrious Scholar: Papers Presented to Oscar White Muscarella* (Boston, 2018), 124–39. Roller disputes Brixhe’s arguments for the persistence of Phrygian as a spoken language. In the south-east, Pisidian also comes into play: see 17n63.

8. Phrygia was initially divided between the provinces of Asia and Galatia; ‘from the Flavian period, if not before’ an entity called Phrygia was recognised administratively as a sub-unit within Asia (Thonemann, *Maeander Valley*, 115, with details; for a more recent bibliography, see H. Güney, *ZPE* 216 [2020], 148n14), excluding, therefore, the part of Phrygia subsumed within Galatia. On the creation of a province of Phrygia and Caria by 250 CE, see Mitchell, *Anatolia II*, 158; Bru, *Phrygie Parorée*, 19n20. The division within Phrygia, between Pacatiana (centre Laodicea on the Lykos) and Salutaris (centre Synnada), came with Diocletian. Cf., on all this, the works cited in *SEG LXV* 936 and 1242 and the long note of A. Filippini in Ameling, *Christianisierung*, 418n17. On the division between Apameia as Phrygian and Apollonia Mordiaion as Pisidian, see M. Christol, *REA* 120 (2018), 439–64.

9. Darbyshire et al., ‘Galatian Settlement’ (a most useful study), 78. On ‘Galatic Phrygia’, see *MAMA VII* ix–xvi; this is the ‘eastern Phrygia’ of *LGPN V C* xv–xvi, the ‘tract of land comprising the territory of Laodikeia Katakekaumene and the treeless steppe to its north, which, on various grounds, could equally have been treated as part of either Phrygia or Galatia’. For the barely visible Galatian impact on cults, see 170 below.

10. Xen. *Anab.* 1.2.19; Hierax, in the *Acts of Justin* (G. Krüger, *Ausgewählte Märtyrerakten* [Tübingen, 1965], 15–17), IV 8 (and, by implication, Acts of the Apostles 14:1 with 6). So, still in 256 CE Bishop Firmilian, who attended a synod there, in his letter to Cyprian (Cyprian, *Letters*, 74), section 7. Cf. Ruge, ‘Topographie’, 790. This eastward extension of Phrygia is rejected by G. Laminger-Pascher (‘Lykaonien und die Ostgrenze Phrygiens’, *EpigAnat* 16 [1990], 1–13), who perhaps seeks an inappropriately unambiguous answer.

mostly put in Lycaonia today.¹¹ The Hellenistic funerary inscription on Rhodes of ‘Meniskos from Phrygian Neapolis’ will also give that town in the Kyllanian plain in the south-east to Phrygia, not Pisidia.¹² Unfortunately, contemporary testimony, such as that of Meniskos and Hierax, is rare. One might attempt a definition by material culture, or selected aspects of the same. But it is notoriously difficult to align material culture exactly with the self-understanding of its users. An onomastic investigation could certainly be of interest;¹³ but, again, a name inherited within a family need not correlate with the self-understanding of its bearer.

There may be some comfort in the fact that Strabo already found Phrygia, Caria, Lydia and Mysia ‘hard to distinguish’ (δυσδιάκριτα); he speaks of certain ‘part-Phrygian’ (μυξοφρύγιος) small towns ‘which also have a Pisidian element’. The naming of an important town in the south-east as Antioch ‘by Pisidia’ is in itself a revealingly hesitant designation.¹⁴ Very likely the self-identification of inhabitants of some of these regions (and self-identification is all that is at issue) would have been hesitant or variable. Reference works arranged by province are obliged to draw firm distinctions, and the inscriptions from, say, Laodikeia Katakekaumene find themselves assigned now to Lycaonia, now to eastern Phrygia. *LGPV VC* finds it necessary to introduce a blurred category, absent from many entries but occasionally well-populated (see e.g. cases of Ἰκάν listed as of ‘Phrygia (S.E.)—Pisidia (N.)’). Maps have the advantage over lists in that the regional identifiers can hover over the centre of each region in question, without any attempt being made to draw boundaries at the edges. I too shall hover mostly over what no one would deny to be Phrygian, while noting, and noting the status, of interesting material from the marginal areas.

A word should be said about a ‘*koinon* of Phrygia’ which appears on coins of Apamea in the first and again in the third centuries CE. Apamea was also an assize centre—that is, a place where the provincial governor periodically held court; the assizes were a major event in the city’s calendar, occasion for a major market and for

11. Lycaonia: so *SEG, BE, Steinepigramme*, following a majority ancient view (but Pisidia was also mentioned: see Cohen, *Hellenistic Settlements*, 347); east Phrygia: *LGPV V C*. But G. Laminger-Pascher (*Lykaonien und die Phryger* [SAWW 532, Vienna, 1989], 41–53), seeks to dissociate the two topics of her title; cf. previous note.

12. Maiuri, *Rodi e Cos*, 97; cf. Bru, *Phrygie Parorée*, 41.

13. Cf. Bru, *Phrygie Parorée*, 258–85, for one region.

14. Strabo 13.4.12–13, 628–29; cf. 12.4.4, 564 διορίσαι χαλεπόν, 12.8.3, 572, citing Xanthos *FGrH* 765 F 15 on the mixed dialect of Mysia. Cf. *LGPV VA*, xii: ‘the poorly defined borderlands between Mysia, Lydia and Phrygia’. Antioch is given to Pisidia by *SEG* and *LGPV*, to Phrygia by Cohen (*Hellenistic Settlements*, 278). On a coin of Laodicea on the Lycus of the time of Caracalla (*BMC Phrygia* 317 no. 228; plate XXXVIII 2), the city stands between personifications (named) of Phrygia and Caria. Towns that in different ancient geographers do or do not belong to Phrygia are quite frequent: see Ruge, ‘Topographie’, 790–801 (even Ankyra was contested between Phrygia and Galatia: Steph. Byz. α 33); for ancient unclarity over ‘lesser’ Phrygia, see Kelp, *Grabdenkmal*, 28n153.

the ephebes to compete in games. Two of the individuals who issued ‘*koinon* of Phrygia’ coins in the third century appear on different coins as agonothetes or panegyriarchs—that is, magistrates charged with organising games. The bold proposal has been made to conflate the games associated with the assizes with games presided over by the issuers of the ‘*koinon* of Phrygia’ coins.¹⁵ If so, the coins tendentiously present the convergence of people from much of Phrygia on Apamea, a consequence of the assizes and thus of external domination, as an expression of ethnic feeling and an acknowledgement of Apamea’s privileged place within Phrygia (the relevant coin inscriptions in fact present themselves as being issued by ‘*koinon* of Phrygia, Apameans’). On that view the *koinon* of Phrygia is merely an ‘imagined community’, one imagined or rather invented in the interests of Apamea. Why it appears so intermittently is mysterious. But on no view is it an important institution.

Defining Phrygia is problematic, therefore; but more important is the difficulty of drawing sharp distinctions between the ‘religion of Roman Phrygia’ (whether at its smallest or greatest expansion) and the religions of its neighbours. Louis Robert often warned against all attempts to generalise about Asia Minor; but, equally, no attempts to segment it neatly in social and cultural terms can succeed. Two of the gods most prominent in Phrygia, Zeus and Apollo, are prominent throughout Anatolia; Mother and Men are not quite ubiquitous, but still present in much of the peninsula. So-called confession inscriptions—ones where an individual who has fallen ill or suffered in some other way sets up a monument to acknowledge fault and honour the offended god—are regularly seen as a prime symptom of Phrygian religiosity. A typical example: ‘I Sosandros of Hierapolis came to the shared altars when I had broken an oath and was impure. I was punished. I proclaim to all not to despise (Apollo) Lairmenos, since he will have my stele as warning example.’ But many more confession inscriptions have been found in eastern Lydia than in Phrygia, and within Phrygia none in the east or even in the Upper Tembris valley which is otherwise so prodigal of inscriptions.¹⁶ Phrygia can, by contrast, claim a majority of dedications to the remarkable god or gods *Hosios kai Dikaios*, but Mysia *Abbaitis*, too, offers a good number and the cult spills over in other directions too.¹⁷ At a different level, the village is the main context and focus of Phrygian religious activity in a way unfamiliar from mainland Greece and even

15. Thonemann, *Maeander Valley*, 109–17. Coins: *RPC* I 3136–37; II 1389; VIII unassigned, ID 20601–2 (translated by C. Marek, *Geschichte Kleinasiens in der Antike* [Darmstadt, 2010], 520: ‘die Apameier [richten aus] den gemeinsamen [Wettkampf] Phrygiens’; but supplying the bracketed words is hard). Games: *IGR* IV 788–89 = *MAMA* VI 180 I and II.

16. For distribution, see the map (no page number) at the back of Petzl, *Beichtinschriften*. The example quoted is his number 120.

17. On Phrygia and east Lydia, see N. E. Akyürek Şahin, *Gephyra* (2013), 5–6; she sees the influence going from Phrygia to Lydia. Lochman (*Grab- und Votivreliefs*, 204) pleads for Mysia *Abbaitis* as a part of Phrygia, not of Lydia at all.

some regions of Asia Minor (e.g. Caria, Lycia). But this emphasis is shared with (again) Lydia¹⁸ and also Bithynia. The cult association of Xenoï Tekmoreioi brings together devotees from south-eastern Phrygia and northern Pisidia. In the plain of Karayük in the extreme south-east, tomb violators are threatened with the wrath of the ‘Pisidian gods’.¹⁹ Not everything that will here be discussed is exclusive to Phrygia, therefore. And even within Phrygia there is local variation; not much is pan-Phrygian.²⁰ But everything here discussed does indeed occur in substantial areas of Phrygia, whereas any generalisation about Asia Minor or even about an extended segment of it, such as ‘Phrygia, Lydia and Bithynia’, would, like the curate’s egg, be good only in parts.

The timescale for the presentation of Phrygian polytheism which is the core of the book is dictated by the evidence, which comes, a few early swallows aside, from the second century and first half of the third century CE. But, in trying to answer the question of how Christianity met the religious needs hitherto met by paganism, I look onwards somewhat in chapter 9; and chapter 10 is a brief retrospect to the little that can be known about religion in Phrygia in the pre-Roman period.

18. Note the very useful study of M. Ricl, ‘Rural Sanctuaries’; or Robert, ‘Dieux des Motaleis’, 45, ‘Ces régions (Phrygie, Lydie, Bithynie, Pisidie et Lycie avec la Kibyratide) sont saupoudrées de sanctuaires de divinités locales accessibles et familières’. On Bithynia, see F. Ferraioli, ‘Culti rurali e culti urbani nella Bitinia ellenistica e romana’, *ARYS* (19), 97–129.

19. Robert, *CRAI* 1978 279 = *OMS* V 735 20–21; *SEG* LXII 1148–51, with note. Xenoï: 20n47 below.

20. Note e.g. Lochman, *Grab- und Votivreliefs*, 186, on the absence from south-west Phrygia of funerary ‘doorstones’ and the presence of the Greek *Totenmahl*; see, more generally, Thonemann, ‘Anarchist History’, 36–37.